Inspired by a True Story …

An assessment of how the dramatic elements of pity and fear can be applied by a producer seeking to transform historical events into narrative drama for television

Based on a case study of the production of the telemovie, *Sisters of War* (2010)

Andrew Wiseman

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This thesis is accompanied by two DVDs

School of Film and Television
Victorian College of the Arts
The University of Melbourne

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iii

Statement of Authorship ........................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................... vi

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Thesis Proposition ............................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 Contribution to Knowledge ............................................................................................... 3
       1.2.1 Types of History Drama ........................................................................................ 4
       1.2.2 Women in War Drama ......................................................................................... 7
       1.2.3 Investigating the Production Path ........................................................................ 7
       1.2.4 Connecting History and Screen Drama .............................................................. 8
       1.2.5 The Poetics and Screenplay ............................................................................... 10
       1.2.6 Summary ............................................................................................................. 11
   1.3 Television and History – Impact and Reach ................................................................. 11
   1.4 The Telemovie – Potential and Limits of the Form ....................................................... 13
   1.5 Critical Framework .......................................................................................................... 14
   1.6 Examining the Production Path .................................................................................... 17

2. SUBMITTED TELEMOVIE – SISTERS OF WAR (2010) ............................................. 18
   2.1 Production Details ......................................................................................................... 18
   2.2 Ratings ............................................................................................................................. 19

   AUTHORIAL ROLE ........................................................................................................... 20
   3.1 The Producer as Facilitator ........................................................................................... 20
       3.1.1 The Producer as Maker – Technē and Poïēsis .................................................... 22
       3.1.2 The Producer – Writer Relationship .................................................................. 26
   3.2 Sisters of War (2010) as Micro-History ........................................................................ 28
       3.2.1 The Micro-Story and Hidden History ............................................................... 31
   3.3 Reconciling History and Screen-Story ........................................................................ 35
       3.3.1 Narrative and Manipulation ............................................................................. 36
3.4 The Producer's Perspective and Objectives ................................................. 39  
        3.4.1 The Producer's Interpretive Base....................................................... 41  
        3.4.2 Creative Impulse ............................................................................. 43  
        3.4.3 Dramatic Intensity .......................................................................... 45  
        3.4.4 "Sufficient Imagination" ................................................................... 47  
        3.4.5 The Enemy as "Other" ....................................................................... 51  

4. DRAMATIC PROPERTIES OF PITY AND FEAR ............................................. 53  
        4.1 The Relevance of the Poetics .................................................................. 53  
        4.2 Aristotle's Critics .................................................................................. 56  
        4.3 Aristotle and Emotion ........................................................................... 57  
                      4.3.1 Emotion and Cognition ............................................................. 59  
                      4.3.2 Cognition and Limitations .......................................................... 62  
        4.4 Linking the Rational and the Figurative ................................................. 64  
        4.5 Pity and Fear in Mimetic Context ......................................................... 67  
        4.6 Pity ....................................................................................................... 71  
        4.7 Fear ..................................................................................................... 76  
                      4.7.1 Screen Fear as Artificial Emotion ................................................. 79  
        4.8 Reversal and Recognition ..................................................................... 81  
        4.9 The Producer’s Assumptions about Pity and Fear ............................... 84  
        4.10 Pity, Fear and the Authorial Role .................................................... 87  

5. DISC 2 SISTERS OF WAR – SCENE SELECTIONS (2011) ......................... 91  

6. PITY AND FEAR ASSESSED IN SISTERS OF WAR (2010) .................... 92  
        6.1 Thematic Emotions .............................................................................. 94  
                      6.1.1 Innocence .................................................................................... 95  
                      6.1.2 Hope ......................................................................................... 97  
        6.2 Scene Selections .................................................................................. 99  

7. CONCLUSION ............................................................................................. 135  

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................... 146  

FILMOGRAPHY ........................................................................................... 155
Abstract

This thesis argues that, as one of a team of authorial agents, the producer of a television historical drama should understand the challenges, limits and benefits of shaping the dramatic elements of pity and fear in order to sustain historical veracity within the work whilst meeting the narrative requirements of mass-broadcast media.

Accordingly, this research assesses how Aristotelian descriptions of particular emotive indicators in drama, specifically pity and fear and pitiable and fearful incidents, may be considered and applied by a television producer seeking to adapt oral histories to the specific needs of a telemovie inspired by historical events. Using Aristotle’s treatise, the Poetics (and to a lesser extent, The Art of Rhetoric) as a framework, an assessment is made of the dramatic properties of pity and fear with a focus on the cognitive base of these emotional indicators and their role in linking the rational and the figurative.

The research then examines key creative and financial decisions in the development and production phases for the Australian telemovie, Sisters of War (2010). Through this process the research assesses the producer’s authorial role and manipulation of emotional elements as he attempts to reconcile the application of dramatic and emotive effect – the imaginative and figurative requirements of story – with the empirical matters and eyewitness accounts associated with the historical referent that inspired the story.

The two women who provided the oral histories that inspired the telemovie are Sister Berenice Twohill and Mrs Lorna Johnston (nee Whyte). Sections of transcript from their primary research interview (March 27th and 28th, 2008) are mapped as they are developed in the written documents and subsequently filmed and edited. The dramatic elements of pity and fear in the completed telemovie are then identified and tested for their ability to implement the producer’s stated objectives.
This thesis asserts that, with critical qualifications, far from being antithetical to the goals of conventional historical practice, television drama can utilise the key emotive elements of pity and fear to create an intense and meaningful correspondence between our understanding of past events and our desire and need for an imaginative representation of those events.

Note to Reader

1. This thesis refers mainly to the case study telemovie which I produced. For clarity and ease of reading, where reference is made to the producer the male pronoun will be used.

2. The DVDs accompanying this thesis are intended to be viewed in the following order:

Following Chapter One:
Disc 1 *Sisters of War* (2010)
DVD of completed telemovie (broadcast on November 14th 2010) including DVD extras containing the mini-documentary *Sisters of War – the Women Behind the Film* (2010).

Following Chapter Four:
Disc 2 *Sisters of War – Scene Selections* (2011)
Time-coded DVD with selected scenes relating to chapter six.
Statement of Authorship

This is to certify that

i) this thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used

iii) the thesis is fewer than 48,000 words in length, exclusive of the bibliography and the filmography
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1. INTRODUCTION

In October 2007, Miranda Dear, then the Head of Drama at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), invited me to look at a new proposal for a telemovie which she had received from the writer John Misto. With a working title of *Sisters of War*, this concept dealt with events that occurred on the island of New Britain and in Japan during World War II. Dear knew of my interest in Australian history of that period because I had recently produced a telemovie about Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, *Curtin* (2007).

After reading the initial concept document for *Sisters of War*, I was highly enthused by the prospect of developing the work through its writing stages and of subsequently producing a television drama that would attract and sustain the attention of a large audience. That enthusiasm was tempered by the knowledge that creating drama inspired by historical events contains many challenges. These challenges are located in the apparent tension between transforming actual events and their agents into partially fictionalised representations; between the discipline of written history where analytical assessments are often made on the basis of empirical studies and the discipline of television drama and the imaginative and figurative requirements of story in that medium. Nevertheless, I agreed to produce the telemovie, *Sisters of War* (2010) that forms the case study for this research.

1.1 Thesis Proposition

The combination of war, history and television is a dramatic and emotional mix. Tragically, war is no less prevalent in our time than it has been for millennia and perhaps as a consequence, our desire to represent war through story and via a range of media is undiminished.

The proposition of this thesis is that a nuanced understanding of the role and effect of pity and fear in drama can assist the producer of a television history
production to utilise these key emotive elements to create an intense and meaningful correspondence between the audience’s understanding of past events and their desire and need for an imaginative representation of those events. The correspondence between past event and television story acquires meaning when the drama respects the implicit narrative need of history to authoritatively inform and for television narrative to entertain.

To test the proposition, this thesis assesses the extent of the producer’s authorial role, the character of their objectives and the inherent attributes of pity and fear. Following this assessment an examination is made of how the producer’s decisions impact on the arrangement of the emotional elements of pity and fear in the script and completed work of the case study telemovie.

My clear objective as a producer is to bring to a television audience a drama about a period of history that is little known yet memorably illuminating. In doing so I work to create an intense and coherent story that makes full use of classical storytelling elements embedded in television drama. Further, I strive to ensure the story vividly prompts consideration of the broader themes contextualising the events that inspired the work. In short, the producer’s role is to respect and exploit both the story form and the story’s inspiration so that there is a lasting set of meaningful connections between the specific story and its historical referent.

My goal is to produce a work that is both entertaining and edifying through the application of dramatic elements that are available to the producer. The aims of this dissertation are to test to what degree this objective is met in the production of *Sisters of War* (2010) and to assess to what degree the producer’s agency, as expressed through application of the dramatic elements of pity and fear, assists or hinders this objective.
1.2 Contribution to Knowledge

A gap exists in the literature and discourse concerning history and screen drama; the role of producers and the investigation of their authorial voice are under-represented. Though writers such as Parer (1995) and Turman (2006) describe the practical functions of the producer and detail the myriad steps involved in development, financing, production and marketing, insufficient consideration is given to how the producer’s overarching objectives, their philosophical framework, impact on the manipulation of the key creative elements in the process of forging the completed work.

Thompson and Bordwell (2003) draw attention to the critical role of the director in screen production and reference the seminal commentary of Truffaut (1954) in the discussion regarding the principal creators of screen works. While writers such as Campbell and Reeves (1990) acknowledge the collaborative nature of screen production, the authorial role of the television producer, their creative impulses and their philosophical, intellectual and ethical considerations are not examined in detail. Bell and Gray (2007) assert that, “very little is known about the processes whereby an expert body of knowledge is mediated, shaped and transformed through television for mass audiences” (p. 142). There is, however, a growing body of literature that investigates historical works for the screen but these works do not adequately address the role and influence of the producer.

The literature in this area contains an imbalance, with a greater emphasis on the discussion of film, not television historical drama. Notable exceptions include works by Paget (1998) and Lipkin (2002). Paget investigates a range of matters concerning the transformation of historical events into various forms of ‘dramadoc/docudrama’ (p. 2). Canvassing areas such as the difference between traditions in British and American television and the legal and regulatory processes involved in these transformations, Paget uses the case study of the project Hostages (1992) to examine the documented tensions between those who are depicted on screen and the objectives of the creative team. These considerations are embraced by his overall support for documentary-drama
formats and his belief that “the best have something to offer that no other form can achieve, uniting within one text television’s historic popular mission both to inform and to entertain” (p. 3).

Lipkin (2002) is similarly positive about the ability of visual storytelling to engage with history and he points to the crossover between film and television asserting that in America an upsurge of feature film docudramas in the mid to late 1990’s may have been influenced by the success of the format on television in the decade prior. Where Lipkin looks specifically at television drama that is stimulated by history his research concentrates on American movies-of-the-week and he asserts, “… these works depend upon being recognised by their audience as topical and current” (p. 55). This is useful analysis but the research in this dissertation as it applies to *Sisters of War* (2010) makes a contribution by examining the challenges to be found in producing historical dramas when the inciting events are many decades removed from production. In addition, this thesis extends the work of Paget and Lipkin by exploring these challenges as they pertain to Australian production patterns where the producer is often charged with the responsibility of making critical decisions about sensitive interpretive matters before the director is engaged with the project.

1.2.1 Types of history drama

To contextualise these discussions it is useful to make succinct distinctions about different types of historical drama. Hughes-Warrington (2007) notes that genre is a flexible concept with a “nebulous nature” and that given the sheer quantity of works produced and the varying cultures from which they are made and received, “offering a clear, consistent and coherent account of the ‘historical film’ would seem to be a tall order, if not impossible” (p. 36).

Hughes-Warrington (2007) also contends that historical dramas are often a blend of stories drawn from documented events and fictionalised accounts that happen to be set in the past. Historical dramas that primarily use the past and its settings as lively backdrops or seek to valorise the past are defined by Higson (1993) as “heritage” films, a term he applies in particular to a group of British productions.
in the period from the 1980s through to 2000. Describing films such as *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *A Room with a View* (1986) as “quality costume dramas” (p. 109), Higson contends that these films and others like them avoid a sense of the political and implicitly evoke nostalgic reactions to the drama.

Toplin (2002) adopts the term “faction” to describe screen history that is “loosely based on actualities” and which mingles invented characters with verifiable incident to create “invented fables” (p. 92). He cites works such as *Gladiator* (2000) and *The Patriot* (2000) as examples of history as faction.

Where a narrative is simply imposed upon the past but could conceivably be set in any era, McFarlane (1987) applies the label “period film”. As Hughes-Warrington (2007) asserts, all three terms, heritage, faction and period are “identifiable by their lack of historiographical complexity” (p. 28).

Rosenthal (2007) prefers the label “docudrama” and avers that there are two main streams to this hybrid form – that of biography and entertainment and a category with a more rigorous search for truth that he refers to as “reconstructive investigations” (p. 289). He cites, as examples of the former, films such as *Michael Collins* (1996) and *Erin Brockovich* (2000) and as an example of the latter category television works such as, *Dead Ahead: The Exxon Valdez Disaster* (1992) and *Who Bombed Birmingham?* (1990). Acknowledging that there may be significant overlaps of these strands within a particular work, Rosenthal (2007) states that, “in spite of its problems, documentary drama has a tremendous appeal to serious filmmakers” (p. 290).

Evidence of this appeal is given voice by Jeremy Sandford, screenwriter for the docudrama *Cathy Come Home* (1966) which deals with the struggles of the homeless. Asked why he chose drama rather than a more conventional documentary approach for the work Sandford replied, “I wouldn’t have been able to do justice to the emotional reality of the people living there” (Rosenthal, 2007, p. 291).
A contrary view is expressed by Kuehl (1988) who contends that significant tensions have been evident in the filmic depiction of actual events since the earliest days of cinema and cites films such as the *Trial of Captain Dreyfus* (1899) and *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) as examples.

Kuehl makes explicit his concern about the problems of drama and history when he contends that those who work in this field believe that drama documentary methods “make it possible for audiences to understand far more than they would by viewing films made by the traditionally minded” (p. 105). Kuehl extends his argument by making important distinctions about the nature of “understanding”. He outlines how the concept of understanding can relate to the causal links in historical events and also to the intentions of its agents and he emphatically suggests that drama documentaries are not capable of dealing with “causal or intentional accounts of persons and events in the real world” (p.107). His argument is based on the flawed assumption that the makers of these works are primarily concerned with assisting an audience to understand the events of the past only in the sense of causation and intention and that the audience are uncritical receivers of the historical drama. He undervalues the objective of creating an intense engagement with the world that the historical events are inspired by, an engagement that may prompt further enquiry.

*Sisters of War* (2010) is a telemovie inspired by oral history, and one of the producer’s authorial goals is to depict complex characters who are identifiably based on real people. Thus, the telemovie situates itself as one that combines elements of the two strands identified by Rosenthal in that it is a drama about real people that seeks to both entertain and investigate the historical events that motivate the oral histories. While creative manipulation is evident in this history production as it strives to do justice to the emotional reality of those oral histories, neither the characters nor the setting are arbitrary.
1.2.2 Women in war drama

Much of the discourse of screen drama concerned with history and war narratives focuses on the role of men, either in positions of strategic power or in front-line combat. Toplin (2002) argues that combat movies constitute an identifiable subgenre of historical drama and he outlines common character and plot elements within this subgenre that are a mark of the relationships between a diverse group of men within a military unit.

*Sisters of War* (2010) depicts the actions of two women who, like front-line soldiers, face travail and extreme tension. The telemovie provides a rare opportunity to present the voices of women faced with this kind of peril and to explore the nature of pity and fear as it pertains to their experiences at the very centre of major conflict. The testimony of the two women who inspired the work (and who are alive at the time of writing) strengthens the claims of the telemovie to present a faithful rendering of the events and provides a foundation from which the producer’s authorial decisions can be assessed.

1.2.3 Investigating the production path

Historians and commentators engaged as advisors on film and television projects can reflect on the finished artefact from their own perspectives, can surmise what led to its creation and discuss how effectively the work met its dramatic and historical objectives. In this manner Rosenstone (2006) provides insight into his work on the feature film *Reds* (1981) based on his book, *Romantic Revolutionary: A Biography of John Reed* (1975), and Davis (2000) comments on her role as advisor on the film *Le Retour de Martin Guerre (The Return of Martin Guerre)* (1982).

Both historians draw attention to the strengths and limits of the films to deal with the density of the inciting material while acknowledging the potential of the emotional properties inherent in the form. This contribution helps to illuminate the wider parameters of the argument. However, the discourse about these issues predominantly focuses on completed screen works. Completed works have much
to offer but the construction path of the scripts and the filming process can also be informative. O’Connor (1988) acknowledges this position when he states, “in a few cases, the behind-the-scenes production story … has been shown to be even more revealing than the study of the films themselves” (p. 1205). The detailed assessment of the identification, manipulation and implementation of the elements of pity and fear in *Sisters of War* (2010) provides a more rounded examination of the relationship between inspiring events and their depiction via dramatic narrative.

### 1.2.4 Connecting history and screen drama

The discourse relating to the role of historical advisors on works of screen-history takes place within the context of a broader discussion about the ability of screen drama to meaningfully connect history and its visual representation.

Founding works by Ferro (1983) and Sorlin (1980) in this area investigate the potential of the screen to address matters of history but find that screen-history is more adept at reflecting the position and times of the filmmaker than illuminating its historical referent (Hughes-Warrington, 2007). This approach creates a limiting dichotomy in the discourse and when Sorlin (1980, as cited in Hughes-Warrington, 2007, p. 4) suggests that an historical work on the screen is “a reconstruction of the social relationship which, using the pretext of the past, reorganises the present”, he assumes that the creative personnel behind an historical drama have a limited range of objectives most of which are focused on addressing social conditions in the present. It is a view inconsistent with two of my objectives for *Sisters of War* (2010): to challenge the audience to assess the events of another time and to assess the potential links between human actions in different time periods, especially as those actions relate to the prosecution of war. Ferro (1977, as cited in Rosenstone, 2006, p. 22) poses a guiding question when he asks “does a filmic writing of history exist?” Initially he answers this in the negative and states his belief that filmmakers are shackled by the politics and national sentiments of their own countries. His categorical position is softened when he concedes that a few filmmakers, notably Andrei Tarkovsky, Ousmane Sembene, Hans Jurgen Syberberg, and Luchino Visconti confront their own
historical assumptions and by doing so make “an original contribution to the understanding of past phenomena and their relation to the present” (p. 22).

Consolidating the overarching concept that the screen has much to offer in the creative correspondence between narrative and history, O’Connor, as a founding editor of the journal, *Film and History* (1971) and in *Image as Artifact: The Historical Analysis of Film and Television* (1990), asserts that television is a pivotal means by which intellectual curiosity about history can be generated. He also contends that a sophisticated understanding of television production methods and those who control them assists to fuel this curiosity. My research involving *Sisters of War* (2010) supports these contentions and provides a practical assessment of the nexus between the producer’s role, the vividness and reach of the drama and the inciting effect of pity and fear.

Responding to Rosenstone’s article “History in images/History in words” in *American Historical Review* (1988) in which the author points to the ability of film to “humanise” the past, White (1988) attempts to create a new space for the discourse by inventing the term “historiophoty”. For White (1988) the term historiophoty provides a way of assessing the specific power and “relative adequacy” (p. 1193) of images to connect the viewer with history.

In his other works, notably *Metahistory* (1975) and *Figural Realism* (2000), White also avers that processes of narrative are inextricably linked with historical representation and, moreover, in some forms of expression about the past, including screen narrative, the metaphorical indicators of the work should be assessed to determine their ability to meaningfully engage with history. These claims are assessed via the investigation of *Sisters of War* (2010) especially with regard to the ability of the work to provoke consideration of the personal within the broad sweep of events and the connections between particular plot incidents and larger themes of war and conflict in general.
Following White, Hughes-Warrington (2007) argues that historical films should be valued as “aesthetic expressions”, and further, that historical films are “sites of relation” and may be better understood by examining the tensions and relationships between all of the key players, including “film producers, critics, scholars, promoters and viewers” (p. 6). This dissertation provides insight into the many facets of the producer’s role as he works with the dramatic elements of the production, and in doing so addresses some of the layers of Hughes-Warrington’s contention.

Expanding the debate regarding the particular properties of screen drama that might best work with the presentation of history, both Rosenstone (2006) and Toplin (2002) insist that the emotional elements of the screen assist to draw the audience to a vivid engagement with the past. They also contend that emotion is established through a thoughtful application of dramatic elements that incite emotional reactions, notably the telling of the personal story within the broader narrative drawn from the past.

While these writers refer to the specific attributes of screen drama, their discussion of the emotional impact of screen drama does not go far enough in isolating and identifying the particular elements of drama that create emotional reactions, nor the consequence of those reactions. This thesis seeks to address this gap by drawing on the work of Aristotle and his examination of the specific emotive elements of pity and fear as they operate in tragedy and drama.

1.2.5 The Poetics and screenplay

Existing analysis of Aristotle’s work, including the Poetics, is voluminous but the role of pity and fear, as described in Aristotle’s definition of tragedy in section VI of the Poetics, has not been examined in detail with regards to its function and effect in history-based television drama. Popular works relating to script writing including those by Field (1984) and McKee (1999) acknowledge the continuing influence of the Poetics, but they cite his key precepts in an attempt to buttress their own highly formulaic prescriptions for script construction. As a result their references to Aristotle do not illuminate the subtleties and nuances of the Poetics.
Tierno (2002) succinctly extracts key concepts from the treatise to illustrate a range of applications in the modern screenplay, but the core role and impact of pity and fear are subordinated to discussion about dramatic structure as articulated by Aristotle.

1.2.6 Summary

The literature relating to the producer’s authorial role in television drama is limited in its approach, largely overlooking the underlying motivations and creative decisions that inform the development and production stages.

Further, there is an inadequate assessment of particular emotive elements in television long-form drama, and this is evident in those works that deal with scripting matters as well as those that investigate the linkage between screen drama and history more broadly. These limitations in the discourse invite the following investigation.

1.3 Television and History – Impact and Reach

Television is a significant source of information and entertainment. This remains true even in an environment of increased media fragmentation. A Screen Australia report indicates that despite pressures from a range of new distribution access points, in the last five years established forms of media, including television, have retained their audience appeal.

Television remains the leading method of viewing screen content, at over three hours on average per day. In 2010, 96 per cent of people indicated that they had watched a television program in the preceding week, similar to the rate for the last five years. Free-to-air and subscription services have each remained steady with participation rates of 94 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

(Screen Australia, 2011a)
The sustained appeal and attractiveness of the medium leads Rosenstone (2006) to contend that:

if we do not acknowledge the reach and influence of cinema’s, “electronic offspring, television” then we condemn ourselves to ignore the way a huge segment of the population has come to understand the events and people that comprise history. (pp. 3-4)

_Sisters of War_ (2010), the telemovie upon which this dissertation is focused, is situated within a group of recent Australian dramas in both television and cinema that seek to work in their own terms and deal with matters of history. Television programs such as _My Brother Jack_ (2001), _Curtin_ (2007), _Bastard Boys_ (2007) and _Underbelly_ (2008), and feature films such as _Balibo_ (2009) and _Beneath Hill 60_ (2010) construct drama out of events that have an Australian perspective and which occurred within the last one hundred years. _Sisters of War_ (2010) was produced at a time when screen drama with a history base was being presented to Australian audiences at relatively frequent intervals.

To place this programming in context, according to Australian Film Commission data, in the period 1987-1997 134 Australian produced telemovies were screened. Fewer than 10 telemovies within this period deal with historical narratives, only three carry the specific descriptor of historical drama and only two focus on World War II: _Fragments of War: The Story of Damien Parer_ (1988), and _Darwin 1942: Australia’s Greatest Shame_ (1986) (Australian Film Commission TV Drama, 1998).

Given that the supply of historical drama on television has increased over the past decade and that awareness of historical incident is often mediated through television, it follows that the narrative integrity of our television history drama is important for engaging and informing the viewing audience. Those who produce this drama need to approach the task armed with information about how story works within the medium and how story and its intrinsic dramatic elements work within the format they have chosen.
1.4 The Telemovie – Potential and Limits of the Form

For the purposes of this thesis a telemovie is defined as a one-off, self-contained narrative drama of between 60 and 120 minutes in length. It is designed to be aired on television in one continuous viewing and engage actors to convey its drama. The telemovie does not usually incorporate the conventional documentary devices of interview with actual subjects or narration but may use voice-over from the actors. The story is designed to be viewed as a whole and does not require other parts or episodes to make sense. It may generate a sequel but is constructed initially to air as a stand-alone work. This definition is supported by Murray (1996) when he states:

Strictly speaking, a “tele-feature” is made specifically for television but may also have a release on video. (A tele-feature) meets the world archivist standard of being a drama at least 60 minutes in length, which has been shot on a major film gauge … (p. vi)

There are many similarities between feature films designed for cinema release and movies designed for television release, and many of the matters raised and assertions made in this thesis are applicable to both formats. There are, however, notable differences between feature films and telemovies which have an impact on this research.

Telemovies are usually produced under an industrial production model in which the broadcaster or narrowcaster has a very clear sense of its audience base and the timeslot allocated to the work. In order to fit pre-arranged time slots, the overall duration of a telemovie will be more tightly prescribed than a feature film. In addition, telemovie budgets are traditionally smaller than feature film budgets. According to research from Screen Australia (2011b, 2011c), over a 10-year period from 2000/01-2009/10, 32% of feature film budgets in Australia exceeded $6,000,000 whereas in the same period only 5% of Australian telemovies exceeded this figure. As a consequence of these production matters the overall
scale of dramas for television will, on the whole, be more limited than for cinema release.

The telemovie format has strengths and weaknesses as it employs its emotional elements of storytelling to present drama inspired by events of the past and, as Ricoeur (1990) claims, “transferring history into the circle of poetics is not … an innocent act and cannot lack consequences …” (p. 163). But there are also strengths and limitations of the raw material of the past and in the myriad modes of its expression – a claim acknowledged by White’s (1975) assertion that, “History, like Tragedy, has its false as well as its true, its killing as well as its liberating, aspects” (p. 334).

Television dramas based on historical incident and event may, and do, stand alongside other forms of communicating history – forms which clearly contain their own unique and powerful methods of selection, analysis and presentation.

1.5 Critical Framework

While the telemovie *Sisters of War* (2010) provides a practical example of how the producer works with and influences story elements, the theory of the role of tragedy, emotion, pity and fear is explored through the framework of Aristotle’s *Poetics* (and to a lesser extent, *The Art of Rhetoric*, *The Nicomachean Ethics* and *De Anima*).

Since Aristotle wrote these works there have been countless interpretations and much debate about definitions of the specific terms that underpin his arguments. As a result, various critics have condemned the way the arguments of these works have been distorted, especially those of the *Poetics*. For example, Jones (1968) contends, “the *Poetics* has exerted more influence through the ideas people have read into it than through those it contains” (p. 1). Similarly, Bal (1982) in referring to the “rules” of drama embedded in the treatise suggests that often they are “given an absoluteness they never claimed” (p. 171). Against this backdrop of
contention, why should a television producer use Aristotelian concepts and arguments to assess his own approach to story and history?

Aristotle’s *Poetics* remains relevant for, as Halliwell (1998) contends, Aristotle is one of the first writers to lay out a system of evaluating the dramatic arts. Kruse (1979) concurs when he states:

> Twenty-four centuries after their inception, Aristotle’s principles can still serve as the basis for the establishment of generic criteria which assist in both the identification and the production of tragic drama, the formulation of analytical instruments … (p. 162)

The *Poetics* examines the fundamental connections between the emotional aspects of story and their rational underpinnings – a contention supported by Gassner (1951) when, alluding to the enduring power of this slender work he contends, “we are attracted, I would suggest, by a way of looking equally at art and humanity as objects of rational inquiry and ideal expectations” (p. xxxviii).

Exploring the emotional links between reason and imagination, and in *Sisters of War* (2010) the links between the truth of the claims in the oral transcripts and the creative methods of their presentation, lies at the core of this thesis. Further, this work explores the links between the literal and the figurative and situates this discussion within a broader view of the purpose of art and the human desire to learn, and thus the Aristotelian approach to assessing how tragedy works, and for what purpose, is apposite to the objectives of this dissertation. Aristotle’s words are pertinent because they are based on elemental notions of how we connect experience with narrative and understand history through story.

Emotional elements of drama are, of course, not the only elements that assist in the process of meaningful historical representation. These emotive elements of pity and fear were chosen for investigation for several reasons.
Firstly, these terms occupy a central place in Aristotle’s definition of tragedy (49b 24-28) that itself forms an integral part of the *Poetics*. Indeed, Kimball (2004) claims that for Aristotle, “pity and fear are the quintessential tragic emotions” (p. 307) and his assertion is borne out by Aristotle’s emphatic statement that pity and fear are the “distinctive feature” (52b 33) of an imitation that involves tragedy. The influence and importance of these emotions for tragedy as proposed by Aristotle is supported by work by neurobiologist Antonio Damasio (1994) who refers to fear as one of the “primary emotions” (p. 131).

Secondly, these key emotions of pity and fear are stimulated by cognition and evaluative judgements of their causes (Nehamas, 1992). The interplay between cognition, an inciting historical event and imaginative representation of the event lies at the heart of an assessment of the relationship between authorial objective and outcomes. Further, if reason and emotion are not to be considered polar opposites, then pity and fear and our awareness of them assist a self-reflexive response to the construction of the drama (Lear, 1992).

Thirdly, television drama is a medium in which the properties of image and sound, skilfully combined, create an intense emotional reaction for its audience. Emotional properties are embedded in the structural and dramatic devices inherent in all story forms but given a special charge because of the visual and aural impact of screen presentation and the intimate manner in which television drama is received, leading to a state that Caughie (2000 as cited in Chapman, 2007, p. 18) describes as “an aesthetic of immediacy which is unique to television”.

Thus, pity and fear, elemental emotional properties of drama and tragedy are also key factors of a time-based medium that provokes emotional reactions. These same emotional elements contain a complex mix of cognition and reaction, providing a base to examine the tensions and potential connections between the actual and the figural in television drama.
1.6 Examining the Production Path

The methodology adopted to test the ability of the television producer to harness pity and fear to connect history and narrative is an interrogation of critical stages of the production path of *Sisters of War* (2010). Key passages from the original research interview with the two main participants, the primary sources for the history base of the project, are identified and then mapped as they are developed in the written documents and through filming and editing.

Ten scene-sequences from the completed telemovie are un-packed and their embedded elements of pity and fear are analysed with reference to Aristotle’s observations about the impact of pity and fear in tragedy, the producer’s overall objectives and the influence of production logistics.
2. SUBMITTED TELEMOVIE –

*SISTERS OF WAR* (2010)

2.1 Production Details

**DISC 1**  
*Sisters of War* (2010)

Producer: Andrew Wiseman  
Director: Brendan Maher  
Writer: John Misto  
Executive Producer: Miranda Dear

Broadcast at 8.30pm on November 14\textsuperscript{th} 2010 on ABC1.  
Includes DVD extras containing the mini-documentary  
*Sisters of War – the Women Behind the Film* (2010).  
Duration: 95 minutes 25 seconds (excluding DVD extras).

Filmed entirely in Queensland, Australia.  
Capture format – Super 16mm.

© Screen Australia, Australian Broadcasting Corporation,  
Screen Queensland, Film Victoria and  
Pericles Film Productions Pty. Ltd.  
ISAN 0000-0002-8E97-0000-Q-0000-0000-X
2.2 Ratings

- The audience for the telemovie was 883,000; the broadcast achieved a FTA (Free to Air) metropolitan share of 17.9% of viewers across five cities (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth) (OzTAM & RegionalTAM Consolidated data, Wk 47 2010, WebTrends).
- The telemovie attracted 75,000 extra viewers (9% of the total) due to time-shift viewing – any viewing that took place after the scheduled date, but within seven days of initial broadcast (OzTAM & RegionalTAM Consolidated data, Wk 47 2010, WebTrends).
- The combined Metro and Regional average audience for the telemovie (including Tasmania) was 1,300,000 (OzTAM & RegionalTAM Consolidated data, Wk 47 2010, WebTrends). To place this in context, the highest rating telemovie in the previous year was *A Model Daughter: The Killing of Caroline Byrne* (2009) with an audience of 1,058,000 (Screen Australia, 2011d).
- Segments from the initial research interview were selected to create a mini-documentary, *The Women Behind the Film*, of 7 minutes 49 seconds in duration.
- The mini-documentary, which screened immediately after the telemovie, achieved an audience of 686,000 viewers but a higher FTA share of 19.2% because there were fewer people watching other stations at that time of night (OzTAM & RegionalTAM Consolidated data, Wk 47 2010, WebTrends).
3. SISTERS OF WAR (2010)

THE EXTENT OF THE PRODUCER’S AUTHORIAL ROLE

3.1 The Producer as Facilitator

The intention of this chapter is to provide an overview of how I, as producer of Sisters of War (2010), conceptualise the role of the producer and how I approached the producing tasks for this particular project.

Film and television production is often referred to as a collaborative medium, one that requires the input of experienced creators, technicians and cast. Set against this position is the concept of the “auteur” famously given voice by Francois Truffaut (1954) in his article, Une certain tendance du cinéma français (A certain tendency in French cinema) in Cahiers du Cinéma (Notebooks on Cinema). As Monaco (2000) explains, the auteur theory is misnamed as the manner in which Truffaut describes it, (Politique des auteurs) “wasn’t a theory at all but a policy” (p. 10) – a policy in which the director could be viewed as the most important agent in the creation of the work largely because of the personal nature of their influence on all areas of the production. Although Truffaut was specifically commenting about the role of the director in cinema, his comments are applicable when discussing the movie crafted for television for two reasons.

Firstly, as Thompson and Bordwell (2003) claim, one of the most important ideas in screen history is the concept that the director is the central agent in a work’s “form, style and meanings” (p. 415). Secondly, the relationship between the television director and the television producer is comparable to that of cinema. In both instances the joint objective of producer and director is to craft a work from the screenplay of the highest order and negotiate overlapping responsibilities regarding the project’s creative elements. The extreme and exclusionist nature of
the “Truffaut policy” has been countered by critics who point to the complex set of creative relationships involved in film and television production. Thus, Howard and Mabley (1993) note that, “the interdependencies of the family of filmmakers who produce, shoot and edit a film are much too strong for any one contributor to be the sole author of the work (p. 13).

While the Truffaut policy incorrectly placed too much emphasis on the role of only one member of the creative team, its recognition of the importance of the personal motivations behind film construction provides a pathway for examining how the personal considerations and responsibilities of the producer also shape the work. It is in this context that an examination of the television producer’s role as facilitator can take place.

Many writers have provided definitions of the producer’s role and most of them focus on the notion of creating momentum for the project. Thus Turman, (2006) contends “a producer is the person who causes a film to be made. A good producer causes it to be made well…” (p. 9). The corollary of “causing a film to be made” is that the producer must deal with every aspect of the project’s development and production with the creative aspects and creative relationships an overarching priority. Schreibman (2001) puts it succinctly by saying, “the producer is the creative force behind a project” (p. 1). Parer (1995) states that the four overlapping core responsibilities of the producer are:

- The person whose job it is to get the picture made;
- The person who is ultimately responsible for the delivery of the film in the agreed style and at the specified length;
- The person in control of budget and personnel;
- The person who, more often than not, is the first one on the project and, years later, after the marketing is completed, the last one off. (p. 2)

For the purposes of this dissertation it is important to make the distinction between “the producer” and other positions that may include the term producer. For example, as Parer (1995) explains, an executive producer is usually engaged with a narrower band of responsibilities often relating to securing finance.
Similarly, a line producer is engaged by the producer with a strict brief to oversee the production aspects of the work, and while this may well entail having to make some creative decisions there are limits to their authority and they are almost never engaged during the development stages. The main producer of a work will oversee and be ultimately responsible for any work carried out by these other producer positions and, as Parer (1995) suggests, the number of subordinate titles that are attributed to the role is an indication of its myriad and involved tasks.

The case study telemovie was a collaborative exercise managed by the producer to facilitate an environment in which all members of the production crew, particularly director and writer, exercised their creative talents. Within this approach, the producer is responsible for the legal and financial elements and for the creative whole. In this regard the producer is one of the agents of creation and change throughout the life-cycle of the work and it therefore follows that the manner in which the producer operates, their relationship with other key players, their perspective and objectives and their emotional connection with the production have a profound impact on the completed work.

3.1.1 The producer as maker – technê and poiêsis

Aristotle’s use of two keywords – technê and poiêsis – underpinning the craft of tragedy prefigure the role of the modern television producer. In this manner the Aristotelian framework that this thesis adopts to examine the key terms of pity and fear commences with an insight into how, using Aristotle’s system of classification, the producer’s role may be defined and why it is of some magnitude.

Halliwell (1998) believes that Aristotle was aware that the common usage of the word technê held that it meant “practical skill and … the systematic knowledge that underlies it” (p. 44). Halliwell (1998) goes on to assert that Aristotle’s definition of technê in his Ethics expands the definition of the word so that when in the Ethics (1140a 8-10, 20f.) Aristotle refers to technê as “a productive capacity involving true reasoning” (p. 46), he is alluding to the artistic work as one which not only depends on its maker and their intentions but that “is concerned with
bringing into being, by intelligible and knowledgeable means, objects whose
existence depends on their maker” (1140a 10-14). The producer of the television
drama is one of the agents who cause the work to be made and the system of
knowledge that embraces the endeavour is, in part, formed by the producer’s
intentions for the work.

Technê is the broad concept embracing the notion of the application of a skill, and
the particular skill that is featured in the Poetics is that of poiēsis. While the two
terms, (technê and poiēsis) support each other, the latter term is particularly
concerned with the details of the poetic construction. And so, where poiēsis is
particularly concerned with “making and producing”, Aristotle believed that
technê embraced poiēsis and “that the former is the rationalised, systematic
capacity for the latter” (Halliwell, 1998, p. 56).

As one member of the authorial team, the television producer works to combine
the essence of technê and poiēsis. The producer strives to communicate to the
writer and the director the reason for the production and the knowledge base that
surrounds it. The producer also seeks to influence the details of the poetic
construction – the writing process and the production process – for the script and
the realisation of the script are inextricably linked.

For the project Sisters of War (2010), I set up meetings with researcher Rod
Miller and the director Brendan Maher so that the process and motivation behind
the creation of Rod’s manuscript, Lost Women of Rabaul (2007), could be
explained. In addition, I discussed with the director the key elements of the
transcripts of the main research interview. We also viewed the visual recordings
of the interview and visited Sister Berenice Twohill to obtain first hand her
thoughts about her time as a prisoner of war.

This overall process of technê commences with the initial selection process for
story material. This thesis establishes that the television drama inspired by the
events of the invasion of Rabaul by the Imperial Japanese Army in January 1942
was one of the first times this segment of history has been brought to the attention
of a screen audience. The producer makes a decision at the outset about what
events and people from history to engage with. In making these selections, story and its emotional subsets connect with history as soon as the narrative task begins, for as Finley (1965) claims: “the past is an intractable, incomprehensible mass of uncounted and uncountable data. It can be rendered intelligible only if some selection is made, around some focus or foci” (p. 283). Carr (2008) corroborates this position when he states that, “the facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he (sic) who decides which facts to give the floor, and in what order or context” (p. 11).

Before a process of representation begins for either the historian or the television producer, a selection takes place. The blending of story and history begins at the point of selection of the base material, a process common to both disciplines. The producer’s authorial role also begins here and a key consideration of the selection of story material is that which lends itself to exposition through the personal and the emotive.

After story selection, technē and poiēsis are evident in the very first stages of the development of Sisters of War (2010). There are many writing stages for this telemovie, all of which require research and reflection. As part of the initial research process, myself, the writer (John Misto) and the researcher (Rod Miller) spent two days recording interviews with Sister Berenice and Lorna Johnston. The research interview (Johnston & Twohill, 2008) was held at Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Kensington, New South Wales on March 27th and 28th, 2008. Also in attendance were a cameraman (Paul Ree) and sound recordist (Leo Sullivan).

I began the major research interview with Lorna and Sister Berenice by providing an overview of what the telemovie was trying to achieve and an insight into the strengths and limitations of the telemovie form. This included explaining the 100-minute duration of the drama, which broadcaster would be involved and drawing attention to the use of actors who would present the words of the script as opposed to a traditional documentary approach, which might incorporate limited drama and convey its information via voice-over and narration. Through imparting this information I hoped to create a base from which the two key participants could
assess the system of knowledge and the broad intentions of the producer behind the work and also attain a sense of how the “doing” of it, the poiēsis, might affect the final outcome.

Crucially, I was trying to explain that to be effective the work would not be a chronicle of events but an imaginative representation of events whose main objective was to be an emotionally authentic reflection of the oral history.

During the research the two women told their stories with gusto and power and the way they created an emotional reaction for me, as interviewer, was to emphasise those events that created an emotional resonance through oral history. This was their history and they intuitively used the properties of that form of storytelling to raise the emotional stakes. For instance, Lorna (2008) told us about the endless inspections at gunpoint from her Japanese guards, “(it was) a very numbing experience because you didn’t feel anything … you kept on thinking well if only they’d shoot me – shoot us and get it finished with …” (p. 41).

In a television work based in part on oral histories of eyewitnesses to the events to be dramatised, it is useful for the producer to explain to the interviewees how the placement of emotional elements will affect the dramatised process of manipulation. This is not just a question of ethical editorial practice. By alerting the witnesses to this process, they may be encouraged to provide deeper insights into their own emotional reactions to the events. These insights may then be incorporated into the project, providing a more authentic representation of what happened and of how the events affected its key agents.

Segments from the initial research interview were selected to create a mini-documentary, Sisters of War – The Women Behind the Film (7 minutes and 49 seconds). This short work had a twofold purpose. Firstly, an early version was used to introduce cast and crew to the project and provide them with an insight into the women who inspired the drama and a brief overview of its historical context. In this regard it was both informative and intended to provide a sense of the “emotional authenticity” of the individuals involved.
Secondly, on completion of the telemovie, the mini-documentary was re-edited and made available to the audience on a range of platforms which included: broadcast immediately after the telemovie, as a DVD extra and as a segment on the project’s accompanying website. In this manner, the mini-documentary provides a very practical example of how elements of the technê, the underlying motivations of the craft, may be presented to crew and audience.

### 3.1.2 The producer – writer relationship

It is necessary to make a distinction between the writer as author and the producer as facilitator of the work. The intent here is not to privilege the work of the producer over that of the writer but to identify responsibilities and relationships in order that a more nuanced conception of the producer’s role can be obtained.

Clearly, the writer is charged with the task of writing the development documents and ultimately the scripts. McKee (1999) contends that the word author is attributed to novelists and playwrights but less often to those who write for the screen. He extends his observation by stating, “but in the strict sense of ‘originator’, the screenwriter, as creator of setting, characters, and story, is an author. For the test of authorship is knowledge” (p. 185).

John Misto, the screenwriter for *Sisters of War* (2010), is the acknowledged originator of this work whose knowledge of the characters and their histories, combined with his knowledge of his craft, creates an authorial base. However, the context of his work as author is the production process for television drama about which Allen (1987, as cited in Campbell and Reeves, 1990, p. 13) tells us:

> Where better to observe the circumscribed role of the author in contemporary cultural production than in commercial television? Because of the technological complexity of the medium … it is very difficult to locate the “author” of a television program – if we mean by that term the single individual who provides the unifying vision behind the program.
Commenting on Allen, Campbell and Reeves (1990) state that, “television authorship always takes place in the context of collaborative storytelling” (p. 14). The producer is a key figure in this collaboration and, as Parer reminds us in the points above, it is the producer who has carriage of the entire production, who must negotiate all of the elements, including the creative elements, and who must deliver the work. Cleary (c.2002) from the Arista development program echoes Parer’s words when he states that:

Development is the professional business of getting a story into the right shape, in its scripting, financing and marketing elements, in order that the film gets made in a way that is true to the creative vision of the team that has developed the story. (p. 19)

The producer seeks to create and nourish a productive relationship with the writer and the producer must also institute the required legal base from which to organise the development and production stages. So while Grazer (as cited in Turman, 2006, p. 74) is correct when he says, “for me, the idea is the employer of everything”, it is necessary for the producer to legally control the idea that propels the work.

Pericles Film Productions Pty Ltd was the controlling production entity for *Sisters of War* (2010) and I am one of two directors of the company. The contracting stages for the project, involving the production entity, the writer (John Misto) and the ABC, took place between December 2007 and March 2008. The writer’s contract for *Sisters of War* (2010) and the development contract with the ABC contain clauses that, in strict legal terms, clarify and determine the nature of the creative and legal relationships that exist between producer and writer and producer and broadcaster. Clause 3.1 of the writer’s contract (2008) states that, “the Writer agrees to write and deliver the Script to the Producer in the following manner.” The clause then details the time frame in which the writer will deliver the various documents. Clause 8 buttresses this arrangement by stating that, “the Producer owns all rights in and to the Script without limitation.”
These legal arrangements are required so that the producer can deal with the copyright and that the financial backers have confidence they are dealing with the sole owner of the work. The legal base of the work creates a framework within which the producer has a facilitating role and the authority to contribute to the manipulation of creative elements, including those of pity and fear, within the script and production stages. It follows from these observations that the television producer’s facilitating role is given meaning by several overlapping responsibilities and motivations. As a member of the authorial team, the producer seeks to create an environment conducive to the creative aspirations of their colleagues. The producer is charged with the task of moving the project ahead and must create a tight legal base in order to do so.

In addition to the producer’s practical responsibilities, the producer has a major emotional stake in the production. The producer has a duty of explanation to the witnesses of the historical events and must be present for the entire production and all of its stages.

All of these points are embraced by Halliwell’s (1998) translation of Aristotle’s definition of *technê*, “it is concerned with bringing into being, by intelligible and knowledgeable means, objects whose existence depends on their maker” (pp. 46-47).

### 3.2 *Sisters of War* (2010) as Micro-History

The case study production, *Sisters of War*, (2010) is motivated by the lives of two women, Lt Lorna Johnston (nee Whyte) AANS (Australian Army Nursing Service) and Sister Berenice Twohill (of the order of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart), who were captured and interned by the Japanese military in Rabaul, New Britain on the 23rd of January 1942 (Miller, 2007). In 1942 Rabaul was the capital of the Mandated Territory of New Guinea (Wigmore, 1957, p. 392). Both Lorna and Sister Berenice witnessed the initial invasion.
If you could imagine Rabaul Harbour just absolutely full of submarines and aircraft carriers and battleships and with (a) pittance of men here to fight – it’s like a fly going against an elephant.

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 102)

It is important for the producer to consider how their work sits within the overall context of television drama, not in order to draw restrictive boundaries around its creation and production by ascribing a limiting genre tag, but in order to understand the base from which decisions about the manipulation of emotional elements of the story will take place. Given this cautionary note, there are various ways to categorise *Sisters of War* (2010).

It is reasonable to position *Sisters of War* (2010) as a telemovie in which the central characters are prisoners of war. *Sisters of War* (2010) is the story of how these characters fought to endure as captives and how they struggled to remain decent humans in their efforts to survive. Individuals thus play a core role. In this regard *Sisters of War* (2010) owes something to the German concept of *bildungsroman* (the novel of formation) in which the viewer observes the moral and psychological formation of the protagonist or main characters.

*Sisters of War* (2010) is primarily a personal history (a “micro-history”) and is clearly not a broad history of the Japanese invasion of Rabaul. When Burke (1991, as cited in Curthoys and Docker 2006, p. 202) describes micro-histories as creating narratives of “ordinary people in their local setting”, he draws attention to a practice that reveals a bridge between emerging forms of writing about history and approaches that work within television narrative. Alluding to the strengths of micro-history, Curthoys and Docker (2006) suggest that “historians seemed to have found a way to narrate the lives and thoughts of the relatively unknown, the ordinary and powerless people of the past” (p. 202).

Micro-history in television is intimate storytelling and it follows that the arrangement of the emotional tropes of the story are a critical means by which to mediate the history in this form. Edgerton (2001) believes that, “history on TV
tends to stress the twin dictates of narrative and biography” (p. 2) and points to the natural corollary of this observation by suggesting that “intimacy and immediacy” are vital elements of the television medium. With its focus on two women and their mutual reliance as they struggle to survive captivity, *Sisters of War* (2010) reflects Edgerton’s contention.

One common criticism of history presented on screen is that because the form demands an emphasis on individual action it distorts any appraisal of the history base of the story, making it difficult to gather a sense of the larger forces at work within that history. Rosenstone (2006), an advocate of the reach and power of screen history, contends that this criticism is often presented as one of the limiting aspects of history by “Hollywood”. If, the argument runs, screen history is obsessed by the intentions of solitary agents and the outcomes of their individual actions the form will forever be shackled to the restriction of a process of micro-history.

These criticisms must be viewed in the light of the changing nature and approaches of historiography itself. Over the last thirty years a shift to acknowledging the invigorating role of the individual has become apparent, a view outlined by Iggers (1997) when he comments that “the new historiography changed as the centre of gravity shifted from structures and processes to cultures and the existential life experience of common people” (p. 100).

An example of this emphasis on the role of the individual in history can be detected in the work relating to slavery. When commenting about the copious research into slavery that focused on the statistics of the slave-trade, Gordon-Reed (2008) draws attention to the importance of the personal, “the numbers told a story but … it is a safe bet that most people respond more forcefully and intensely to other people than to numbers” (p. 22). This new focus on burrowing down into the detail of everyday life gathered momentum during the 1980s and beyond, a period which coincided with an upsurge in television drama production in the telemovie and miniseries form (Screen Australia, 2011e).
The importance of the common event and its ability to provide a base to consider the larger context is given voice by Kracauer (1960) when he contends that “the small random moments … can indeed be said to constitute the dimension of everyday life, this matrix of all the other modes of reality. It is a very substantial dimension” (p. 304).

The consequence of this shift to the consideration of the personal narrative is further explored by Rosenstone (2006) when he points out that through “synecdoche”, the dynamic between individual and major event can “serve to exemplify larger historical themes” (p. 14). This concept of synecdoche, in which the specific can inform the whole and vice versa reveals how concentration on individual lives can offer an effective means by which to work concurrently with the particulars of a story and the broad sweep of history. *Sisters of War* (2010) is an example of a micro-history that speaks to a broader history beyond the horizons of the individual players.

Synecdoche is applicable to the description of the workings of micro-history because as Reitz (1979, as cited in Kaes, 1992, p. 172) suggests, the entire landscape of the stories of a nation and its personal stories flow from a boundless array of event and experience. The personal informs the larger set of events and as Kaes (1992) observes “this anecdotal approach to history will result in stories that interlock like a giant jigsaw puzzle” (p. 172).

Television drama lends itself to the portrayal of the personal. Further, details of individual experience infused with emotional elements, form links between the events of the solitary life and the web of lives and events that are the constituent parts of a nation’s history. The story process that the telemovie form is working with lies adjacent in this sense with some forms of historical writing where there have been substantial shifts favouring the exploration of micro-narratives.

### 3.2.1 The micro-story and hidden history

A benefit of the micro-story – the intimate story that is to be found in *Sisters of War* (2010) – is that it can bring to life stories that might otherwise have been
ignored and left in the shadows of historical inquiry. The unpublished manuscript by Rod Miller, *Lost Women of Rabaul* (2007), is the motivating source material for the telemovie. Miller stumbled upon the story of the women of Rabaul when he came into possession of the diary of one of the Rabaul nurses, Grace Kruger. The diary was written (as Miller describes it) “in cryptic prose or poetry using nicknames, Pidgin English and shorthand to hide the meaning of its contents from the Japanese …” (2007, p. 3). In this case the history was obscured and unclear and made deliberately so by the participant. *Sisters of War* (2010) is part of the puzzle-breaking process aiming to illuminate a personal and hidden history.

The Rabaul nurses’ story provides a research challenge because there is scant source material to be found in Australian official archives. Miller (2007) posits that the reason for the paucity of official documentation is that Australian authorities were embarrassed by a flawed exchange of prisoners with the Japanese which occurred at this time. Lorna and Sister Berenice (Johnston & Twohill, 2008) also believe the Australian military authorities were keen to obscure their lack of preparedness on Rabaul. Investigating these viewpoints in detail lies beyond the scope of the telemovie and this dissertation, but it should be noted that Lorna and Sister Berenice are, at the time of writing, the only survivors of the prisoners in Rabaul and the primary sources for the work.

It is instructive to note that Lorna stated in the major research interview that the original diaries she kept at the Vunapope mission contained greater detail than those written after she was moved to Japan. However, at Vunapope, Lorna and her friends feared for their safety if the diaries were found by their captors and eventually they disposed of their writings. The subsequent diaries written in Japan were deliberately devoid of emotional content.

The Reverend Mother at the convent said – advised us – not to keep a diary and not to have a diary because, she knows that the Japanese would probably have decapitated (us) … even though we kept a diary we never wrote our actual feelings … it was more light-hearted.

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 236)
Recording events as they were unfolding was a danger too great to contemplate for some of the participants. Those who ignored the advice kept their emotions on a tight rein. Fortunately, for the preservation and representation of the history, a few brave souls had the temerity to keep written records. *Sisters of War* (2010) assists to make connections to past events by utilising fragments of diary, re-asserting emotional elements of pity and fear that for pressing reasons could not be inserted in the diaries at the time. The refreshed diaries are made possible because the oral histories recorded years after the initial events were blended with the properties of the storytelling medium of television.

For *Sisters of War* (2010) there is a linkage between the personal and emotive nature of the oral histories as recounted by the two women and the micro-history form of the telemovie. Further, these oral histories stem from events that have received limited treatment in other forms of communication, including official histories. When the written history and the oral history lie at the periphery of historical memory, an opportunity exists to exploit the properties of the telemovie to bring these events and recollections to the fore.

When Lorna was asked (in the research interview) why she thought so few Australians knew about the history of Rabaul, she responded:

> The whole of Australia were (sic) involved with the war in Europe, that’s all they knew and all they thought … the big thing was Singapore. Rabaul was just something that was there, it was the front door of Australia, but they didn’t bother about it.
>
> (Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 106)

Researcher and project consultant Rod Miller concurred when he stated in the same interview:

> It’s an untold story … when I first started this, I like everybody else in this room (had) never heard of the Rabaul nurses. At school we always studied Gallipoli and Singapore, we never touched on the history of Rabaul.
>
> (Miller, 2008, p. 242)
In the telemovie format, *Sisters of War* (2010) can assist to illuminate hidden history and can draw inspiration for this process from other forms of expression. In the afterword to his novel *Ransom* (2009), inspired by a segment of the story in Homer’s *Iliad*, David Malouf comments on the aim of the novel and also on this notion of drawing into light historical matters that otherwise may have remained obscure.

… why stories are told and why we need to hear them, how stories get changed in the telling – and much of what it has to tell are “untold tales” found only in the margins of earlier writers.

(Malouf, 2009, p. 223)

In these lines Malouf acknowledges that manipulation is an inherent feature of the storytelling process. Malouf also draws attention to the “need” for story and that one of the attributes of story is its ability to spin off from suggestions and slices of other stories to reveal “untold tales”. Similarly, the telemovie can accomplish this by bringing to life the smaller, personal and hidden parts of history that exist within broader historical narratives.

In essence, the marginalia of history that may find it difficult to justify its place in other media can be given a fuller airing on television because it is a medium that craves stories about lives under threat and the intimate emotions which swirl around these threats. In that it can, “drastically redirect our gaze towards unexplored areas of the past” (Camporesi, 2001, p. 163), the telemovie, under the guidance of the producer and the creative team, can assist to rescue some narratives from oblivion, a benefit acknowledged by Lorna when she stated, “thank you for all you’ve done because actually without you really we would go to our graves and we wouldn’t have been heard of would we Sister B?” (Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 244)
3.3 Reconciling History and Screen-Story

The producer’s authorial role requires decisions about how best to harness the various filmic techniques of narrative manipulation – such as concision, conflation and invention – in order to create the most telling and memorable connections between the story and the referent. These decisions regarding manipulation require an appreciation of the relationship between history and screen-story.

A key part of the producer’s role in a telemovie adapted from oral histories is to harness the properties of the drama, especially those of pity and fear, in such a manner that they release the intensity of the form and the emotional authenticity of the underlying oral histories. The producer also works to prompt the audience to enquire further about the underlying events. The producer should not be cavalier in this task. Respect for the inspiring material is critical, for as Sorlin (2009) states the “historical capital” (p. 15) of a nation, the shared understanding of the influential events and agents of the past, is an essential part of that culture.

The producer is aware that he or she is producing a work of “public history”. Tosh (2008) provides one definition of public history when he refers to it as a “history for citizens” (p. 103), one that prompts public debate. It is in this spirit that producers of a television historical drama embark on their work, not in order to convince the audience about a particular point of view but to stimulate and provoke enquiry and to make meaningful connections between television drama and history by assessing their shared attributes and acknowledging their differences.

Various concerns about the ability of screen expression to work with the past are motivated by the overarching question: can screen narrative “do” history well? Thus Davis (2000) writes, “what is film’s potential for telling about the past in a meaningful and accurate way?” (p. 4). While Davis goes on to examine and support many of the positive aspects of history on screen, posing the governing question in this way sets the enquiry on a limited and misleading path.
Countering the approach by Davis, Rosenstone (1995) suggests that film, and by implication other screen forms, should not be compared and contrasted with text-based history as the guiding criteria for their value but rather should be investigated for their “own rules of engagement” (p. 3).

Television producers understand that their work is not ancillary to written history, not a means by which to merely support other forms of expression and enquiry. It is a unique form and it, and the historical referent, are best served when the essential properties of the form are respected. Thus, when White (2009), contends that “we are inclined to use visual images as a complement of written discourse, rather than as components of a discourse in their own right” (p. 54), he guides the producer to a position where the focus is on crafting the dramatic elements of the story. Further, by removing the master-slave dichotomy from the examination of history and screen drama, an informed enquiry about the inherent properties of historical drama on the screen can be carried out.

### 3.3.1 Narrative and manipulation

Myriad and overlapping congeries of incidents make up the past. As a consequence, creating story inspired by history requires manipulation, for all art is about processes that involve selection and rearrangement. These processes are also common to forms of presentation of history for as White (2009) contends “every written history is a product of condensation, displacement, symbolisation and qualification exactly like those used in the production of filmed representation” (p. 55).

The various forms of manipulation that are common to conventional history practices and those of fictional works for television are embraced by the concept of narrative. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the many layers of narrative theory that relate to presenting history but the producer needs to be aware of the critical lines of intersection between narrative in history and screen narrative, for it is at this juncture that pity and fear operate in television drama.
Before addressing narration, history and manipulation a distinction needs to be drawn between the past and history. As Munslow (2007) makes clear, “the past is a category of content … history a category of expression” (p. 9). From this assertion he deduces that, “history … is a corpus of narrative discourses about the once reality of the past produced and fashioned by historians” (p 9). Seen in this light, history is the formation of intelligible comment about events of another time, and intelligible comment is often embraced by narrative that weaves elements of the inciting incident with dramatic techniques. Thus White (1990) contends:

Historiography is an especially good ground on which to consider the nature of narration and narrativity because it is here that our desire for the imaginary, the possible, must contest with the imperatives of the real, the actual. (p. 4)

Stone (1979) begins his seminal article “The revival of narrative – reflections on a new old history” with the assertion that “historians have always told stories” (p. 3). He follows this by claiming that since World War II there has been a perceptible shift back to an approach to history in which narrative has a significant role to play. Stone, in focusing on the upsurge of interest in narrative, crystallises the bridges between the properties of story and some of the properties of historiography.

Stone’s contention that imitation and story are key attributes of historical practice, coheres with Barthes’ (1975) belief that “narrative … like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural” (p. 237). In both Stone’s and Barthes’ work it can be observed that the desire to represent through narrative imitation is an implicit human drive and that it is not imposed by a creative few. Consonant with this notion is the view expressed by filmmaker Sayles (1996) that history is “part of the ammunition we take with us into the everyday battle of how we define ourselves” (p. 11). At a very basic level history and story share and meet deeply seated needs of the human experience – to learn and to apply that learning and to utilise narrative as a powerful and essential tool to do so.
Sisters of War (2010) is an example of a particular narrative form seeking to make memorable connections between an audience and certain events in World War II by blending the intrinsic storytelling patterns of the oral histories with story patterns and elements of the telemovie format. As producer I sought to create an emotionally intense work that would assist the audience to respond to the emotion of the dramatic form and the narrative and emotional aspects of the history that lies behind the telemovie.

The storyteller and the historian are entrusted with the task of creating coherence out of the raw material that feeds the story or is the basis for historical enquiry. This process of creating coherence, that which Ricoeur (1983) refers to as “the triumph of concordance over discordance” (p. 31) leads inevitably to some tension between the inciting material and the representation of that material as forms of manipulation are exploited to tell the story.

During the research interview with Lorna and Sister Berenice I explained the approximate length of the telemovie and the consequent need for manipulation of the story elements, and there was an exchange with the writer, John Misto, in which Lorna spoke about her time as a prisoner of war.

Lorna
[it was] hours of pure boredom and I wonder how anybody could ever make anything out of it.

John Misto
War, they say is hours of boredom and minutes of excitement.
We’ll put in the minutes of excitement.

Lorna
You’ve got it right. Yeah you’ve got it right.

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 6)

Lorna understood at an intuitive level that conflation was required to present her story with veracity. The role of the producer in creating television historical drama, using images and sound to form partially fictionalised representations,
begins with an understanding that the process has its own unique properties and is not an adjunct to other forms of expression.

Further, the role entails understanding the narrative possibilities and the requirements of the manipulative processes involved in transforming the raw research material into an intelligible and cohesive story. From this base the producer can better comprehend the specific role of pity and fear in the television historical drama.

### 3.4 The Producer’s Perspective and Objectives

The governing principles of how a television producer employs the emotional properties of storytelling in the process of presenting a war-history may be assessed, firstly in the overall context of the producer’s general creative perspective, and, secondly, through the prism of his specific authorial objectives for the particular project.

Combined, the creative perspective and the specific objectives form the ethical and philosophical platform from which the other producing decisions about story and history are made. The following sections detail my objectives for *Sisters of War* (2010) and my ambitions for the work.

A nuanced understanding of the role of pity and fear and their role in connecting history and television narrative is affected by a producer’s interpretation of the inciting texts and the primary sources of the work. If a producer seeks to harness the emotional elements of pity and fear – those elements that relate to the emotional arc of the characters and to the potential emotional response of the audience – then the producer should also be cognisant of the emotional factors that motivate them and how these factors may propel or limit the creative process. As Cleary (c.2002) states, “the first method you use to start to understand and judge the emotional value of the story is by examining the emotional effect it has on yourself …” (p. 3).
Not all writers agree that examining the methods and objectives of the key creative principles in a history-based screen work critically illuminates the finished production. Sorlin (2001), for instance, claims that as the purpose of the filmmaker is of no concern to the audience, it should be of no concern to those analysing the completed work. This erroneously assumes that intention has little effect on construction and the assertion that the audience is focused exclusively on the work and not on the methods and motives of the makers is flawed. If it were true then there would be little or no demand for allied works, including DVD extras, which provide information about filmmaker intent.

It is true that one of the objectives of the television producer is to construct the drama with such vividness that the audience, at least at the time of watching, is oblivious to the creative drivers of the work. However, following transmission both audience and those analysing the work will assess the motivations of the production team and are invited to do so through a variety of means which, for *Sisters of War* (2010), includes DVD extras, the mini-documentary and various publicity and marketing outlets including the production website (http://www.abc.net.au/tv/sistersofwar/default.htm).

The weaving of story and history in a visual form is a complex undertaking and any attempt to quarantine intention from application fails to grasp the interconnectedness of the production processes undertaken by the producer. Sorlin (2009) undermines his own argument that filmmaker intention is of no interest to the audience when he asserts that “fiction and history react constantly on one another” (p. 16). An integral part of that reaction is to be located in the authorial disposition of the maker/s, a position supported by Toplin (1996) when he suggests that concentrating only on finished works is something of a “hit and run” (p. x) endeavour and by ignoring the production context, especially how the makers deal with questions of history and the exigencies of production, very little can be assessed as to the success or otherwise of the work’s ability to present and dramatise the past.
3.4.1 The producer’s interpretive base

At the outset of a new, history-inspired television drama the producer should be aware of the position from which he interprets the raw material that forms the basis of the work. He should also assess his own creative impulses. Combined, these form the story-space of the producer and direct his authorial goals and intentions. In full awareness of his interpretive stance the producer should be mindful that his interpretation of initial research documents for the project – diaries, interviews and manuscripts – is a hermeneutic exercise and that there is a complex link between creation and the hermeneutic approach. Said (1981) draws attention to the link by stating “interpretation is first of all a form of making: that is, it depends on the willed intentional activity of the human mind; moulding and forming the objects of its attention with care and study” (p. 156).

Here, Said references the key theme of “making”. Aristotle begins the Poetics with the line “Let us discuss the art of poetry … and the correct way to construct plots …”(47a 1). Similarly, the producer’s role is one of construction, of causing actions to occur in the pursuit of making a work of drama. The research that precedes the construction is an act of interpretation that is inextricably linked with the concept of making. Said (1981) goes on to suggest that all interpretation stems from a base that is both “situational” and “affiliative”, that “no interpretation is without precedents or without some connection to other interpretations” (p.156).

The producer’s authorial role requires a self-assessment of his starting point for the work. My situation is that I produced Sisters of War (2010) 65 years after the events occurred, long enough for many of the participants to be unavailable for interview but recent enough that my judgements were influenced by commentators who witnessed these or similar events. One aspect of my affiliative position is that my father was a pilot in World War II, and from an early age I was exposed to his stories and ideas about the role of the Imperial Japanese Army and military at that time. My approach as producer on Sisters of War (2010) was to be aware of my influences but to privilege the construction of the drama as it stemmed from the words and insights of the eyewitnesses.
Accordingly, having established that the process of interpretation involves an assessment of the base from which we interpret, the producer can consider the ramifications as he moves from interpretation to application of the findings.

When Gadamer (1975, as cited in Said, 198, p. 157) refers to the individual engaging in the hermeneutic process of a new or alien text he insists that this:

involves neither “neutrality” in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one’s self, but the conscious assimilation of one’s own foremeanings [that is, those meanings or interpretations that already exist as a result of past experiences] and prejudices.

The ability of the television drama to work with story and history is aided or limited by the ability of one of the creative team, the producer, to understand and accept his own bias when confronted with the historical referent. This will be most evident and most important at the moment of selection of the raw material upon which the arrangement of the plot is based.

Having established the importance of the base from which the producer is working and avoiding what Megill (1989) terms “hermeneutic naïveté” (p. 636) – an interpretative state in which the individual mistakenly believes he is neutral – the producer must then ask himself some related questions. How can I approach the creative task conscious of the subjectivity of my starting point and influence of my “foremeanings” but confident enough to explore the world of the narrative from a personal perspective? The concomitant question is: what bearing does this dilemma have on the emotive elements within the work?

If the television producer of an historical drama is motivated by a sense of nostalgia, and the emotional elements are arranged in order to merely create a romantic connection to the referent, then the potential to make meaningful connections between history and story may be compromised. Neighbour (2011) articulates the dangers of this approach when she refers to “Australia’s romantic fixation with its military history”, and her belief that the tone of recent political comments about these matters, “almost invariably, is one of awed and sentimental
reverence” (p. 10). If the objective of the producer is rhetoric and not drama then the emotive elements will be skewed and, consequently the dramatic potential will be diminished. Rosenthal (1988) places these concepts of filmmaker intent and perspective in context when, in reference to Peter Watkin’s *The War Game* (1965), he asserts that “all art, however, is propaganda in one form or another, and to seek ‘objectivity’ in a film about the atom bomb seems to me to be a red herring” (p.593). *Sisters of War* (2010) seeks to blend oral history with narrative drama and, as producer, I concede some subjectivity in this approach.

Tellingly, in the research interview, Lorna stated that when she was in Japan she used story and its elements to distance her audience, who were also captives, from the horror around them. When the nurses had been moved to Totsuka and were starving through winter she said, “if you could make up a story, any sort of story and fabricate it … everybody’s spirits would go up” (Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 26). In Lorna’s situation an entirely understandable objective of storytelling was to create an emotional response that denied the truth in order to alleviate despair and fright. But the producer’s aim is not to placate or calm, it is to create an emotional state that is immersive and prompts enquiry. If the producer, as one of the authorial agents, adopts any form of *argumentum ad misericordiam*, of deliberately appealing to the audience’s feelings and co-opting pity to convince them of a position about history that the producer knows is dubious, simplistic, or mired in personal bias, then the potential for a vivid and authentic work will be undermined from the start.

In order to release the full weight and power of the emotional elements of the television drama the producer’s perspective should, as far as possible, be self-knowing and adopt an approach of *sine ira et studio*, that is, approaching the research material “without anger or fondness”. From this base the producer’s objectives can be layered into the work.

### 3.4.2 Creative impulse

My general creative impulse for *Sisters of War* (2010) was this: to investigate people under pressure in a time of war and to explore the theme – what do we
believe when our very existence is threatened? By doing so I want to learn more about whether it is possible to imagine the fear and the pity of those who suffer in war.

If the primary drive was not storytelling but an impulse to engage with the specific history and its constituent parts, then the television drama producer is working in the wrong medium. Storytelling is an integral part of many forms of filmmaking, including documentary. Noted documentarian Ken Burns (1995, as cited in Cripps, 1995, p. 745) has this to say about his approach to his craft and history:

I’m a popular amateur historian. That is what I do secondarily. I’m first and foremost a filmmaker. I happen to use history, American history, the way some might choose to use oils or pastels or charcoal or water colour.

In making this claim Burns is not downgrading his interest in American history but rather alerting his viewers to his primary motivating instinct which is to be a filmmaker, to tell stories in this medium. It is a view shared by Kuehl (1988) when he asserts that history on the public screen should not be compared to the doctoral dissertation but rather “the reflective essay in which nothing is said recklessly but in which the flow of the text is not burdened with a scholarly apparatus …” (p. 451). History is best served on the small screen when the story layers that embrace it are well crafted and when the producer knows why he is connected to storytelling traditions and to the particular story under construction.

The specific authorial objectives for Sisters of War (2010) which flow from the general creative impulse are to:

- Utilise the unique communicative properties of the form to create a work of dramatic intensity
- Assist in the creation of “sufficient imagination” for the audience so they might better assess the savagery of war
- Create a space that allows the audience to consider an empathy for the enemy, the “other”

Each of these objectives will now be examined separately.
3.4.3 *Dramatic intensity*

A core part of the producer’s authorial role and therefore a core objective for *Sisters of War* (2010) is to create a work that is vivid, intense and memorable. An intense work is likely to resonate with the viewer during and after reception and will thus aid the goal of learning from the experience and of seeking out the history in other forms after the initial interaction via television drama. A television producer can craft a work of intensity and memorability by releasing the emotional elements of its story.

MacMullen (2003) draws these concepts together when he states “vividness, we may say, has emerged in the course of evolution as the key to remembering” (p. 60). Part of the producer’s role is to employ the emotional elements of storytelling so that the work is vivid and memorable.

Television history drama should not be restrained. It aims to create impact, to create a visceral reaction. However, the capacity to create an intense reaction through harnessing emotional storytelling properties is not antithetical to also engaging reason.

Simon Schama, an historian who also works with television history, is convinced of the power of the television medium to engage the faculties of imagination and reason if it leaves a telling impression on the viewer. Schama (2004, as cited in Bell and Gray, 2007, p. 144) calls on Whig historian Thomas Macauley when he makes the following point about television and history:

> If it has the courage of its own convictions, and reinvents its own way of visiting the past, not just struggling to translate the issues of printed history … then it has a fighting chance … of making history which is not only “received by the reason but burnt into the imagination”.

Sorlin (1980) also refers to the potential power and impact of visual history, but unlike Schama he views this potential as being mutually exclusive to achieving an
intellectual comprehension of the material: “… visual history, designed to strike by its evidence and through immediate contact, instead of convincing through reason and deduction.” (p. 4). This simple dichotomy is misleading and fails to consider how “immediate contact” is by virtue of its ability to create memorability, a mediating link with story and reason.

The intense emotional reaction sought by the television producer as a way of making the drama memorable is not intended to inflame viewer passions for the sake of it. Harlan (2003) comments on the effectiveness of Ken Burns’ television projects, “… his histories work because he makes images from the past resonate in the present. History mediated by images” (p. 175).

Harlan (2003) suggests that to achieve this end Burns attempts to soak his material with “emotional associations” (p.175) and indeed Burns has stated that “the consensus I seek is an emotional consensus” (Burns, 1995, as cited in Harlan, 2003, p.176). Images should resonate in the present but not with the intent of immersing the viewer in emotional reactions that are designed to elicit a uniform response. An intense emotional reaction is sought precisely because it allows viewers to make their own individual and cognitive connections to the matters that inspired the response. Intensity is not about homogeneity but about providing a way for the viewer to reimagine the past and to be immersed in its complexity.

This concept of reimagining facilitated by the intensity of the drama assists in an appreciation of the objectives of the television producer working with story and history. Reimagining the past by being exposed to vivid re-enactments is, as Burgoyne (2007) suggests, a way of creating a link between the imagination and the intellect and he uses Ricoeur to support this position: “Re-enacting does not consist in re-living but in re-thinking, and rethinking already contains the critical moment that forces us to take the detour by way of historical imagination” (Ricoeur, 1984, as cited in Burgoyne, 2007, p. 4). Historical imagination is aided and abetted by the emotional intensity of the work. Intensity and imagination are conjoined and historical imagination can be considered in several ways.
3.4.4 “Sufficient imagination”

Working in concert with other art forms, television drama can assist to draw our attention to war’s pitiful waste, to the “yoke of war” (Weil, 2005, p. 22), and in doing so serves a highly important artistic function. This is the bedrock personal motivation that underpins a desire to tell a story about war that happens to be set in the past. My objective is not, in the first instance to tell a history story; it is to tell a gripping story that, through emotional elements, prompts a reaction to the complexity of war.

I am drawn to stories of war because there is an opportunity for the “tele-intimacy” (Sontag, 2003, p. 9) of tele-visual drama to play a part in reminding every successive generation of the brutality of armed conflict. If, as Arendt (1970) believes, war is “from time immemorial the final merciless arbiter in international disputes” (p. 3), then maybe story can assist to mediate in those disputes before violent arbitration is unleashed. Many artists, working in a variety of media and “avant l’image” – before the advent of photographic media – used words to render the brutality of war. I choose television not because it is a superior medium but because it can work alongside other forms of communication and because of its powerful emotional elements.

In World War I, English poet Siegfried Sassoon famously risked his reputation with the publication of a letter in which he eloquently and succinctly laid out his reasons why the war should not continue to be prosecuted. In the telling final lines of his letter of July 1917 in The London Times he exhorted the people of England to oppose the direction of the conflict, accusing them of not having sufficient imagination to appreciate the “continuance of agonies” of war.

I am making this statement as an act of wilful defiance of military authority, because I believe the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it … I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacence with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they have not sufficient imagination to realise.

These two words, sufficient imagination, are applicable to any creative endeavour that seeks to illuminate the dark recesses of war. The words suggest that those not actively involved in war may not be in a position to imagine its savagery and in this there is cause for mournful reflection about our inability to conceive the dark things in which we may be complicit. And yet, hopefully, the words also conjure the possibility that with creative assistance, sufficient imagination can be induced, and that a deeper understanding of the confusion and complexity of war may result.

One of my specific goals as a producer of a war film is to try to mesh history with emotional story elements to create at least a part of this sufficient imagination, and to challenge what Sassoon referred to in his letter as the “callous complacence” of those who are not required to fight. In World War II, Australian war cameraman Damien Parer echoed Sassoon’s sentiments when he was advised not to take photos of a young soldier on the Kokoda Track having his hand bandaged on the grounds that it was a “sordid” image. Parer replied, “this is what they’re bloody well going to see. The complacency down there; they’ve got to be shaken out of it” (McDonald, 2004, p. 216).

Two critical questions are prompted by this authorial desire to use image and emotional intensity to create impact and imagination. Firstly, will the images and emotion actually convey a sense of the brutality of the past? Secondly, even if they do, will they have the intended effect or may they even be counter-productive?

During the American Civil War, poet Walt Whitman (1892) addressed both questions when he asserted, “the real war will never get in the books … future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background, of countless minor scenes and interiors of the Secession War …” (p. 101). Would Whitman have been as confident about this pessimistic prediction if he had prescient knowledge that in addition to the nearly one million still photos taken during the Civil War, future wars, beginning with the Spanish-American War of 1898, would also be documented with moving images? Or was Whitman making the broader point that no form of communication – no matter how graphic, no
matter how successfully it creates for its audience a visceral connection to the mayhem of war – can ever truly convey the “seething hell” of war?

Perhaps Whitman was foreshadowing the comments of his countryman, Oliver Wendell Holmes who, in a memorial address of 1884, also said of the Civil War: “we have shared the incommunicable experience of war. In our youths, our hearts were touched with fire” (Holmes, 1992, p. 86 & p.93). Even if there is a layer of truth in these observations of Whitman and Holmes, it does not diminish the responsibility of the artist, and in my case the television producer, to assist the audience to try and imagine the savagery of war, even if it’s an impoverished or imperfect imagining.

One of my ambitions for *Sisters of War* (2010) is to use pity and fear in the telemovie to disprove Holmes’ contention about the “incommunicability” of war and, paradoxically, to touch the hearts of the audience with “tele-visual fire” as a way of doing so. One of my objectives has been to employ pity and fear as devices to transform the emotional recollections and memories contained in the oral histories of eyewitnesses into vivid emotional elements in the drama in order to challenge Whitman’s assertion that the reality of war will never be communicated.

If art can assist to alleviate suffering and mitigate the human propensity for armed struggle then a more nuanced engagement with the telling of war is crucial. In this manner television historical drama can be one creative factor that assists to overcome the tension that Tosh (2008) perceives when he states that “we are confronted by the paradox of a society which is immersed in the past yet detached from its history” (p. 6).

Allied to the concept of “unrepresentability” is the concern that if images, story and emotion are used to represent war these elements may work in opposition to the artist’s stated intentions. Sontag (2003) confronts this stark possibility when she declares that graphic images from the Spanish Civil war should cause distress in the viewer but then questions the response flowing from that distress.
Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses. A call for peace, a cry for revenge. Or simply the bemused awareness continually restocked by photographic information that terrible things happen. (p. 13)

In these lines Sontag poses the vexed proposition that emotional images may fuel hate and/or desensitise. An ambition for *Sisters of War* (2010) is to harness the properties of television storytelling in a way that overrides the possibility of “bemused awareness” on the part of the viewer. The specific objective described above, that of wishing to create a work of intensity, is a part of this approach and chapter five will investigate how pity and fear can be employed to achieve the specific objective without alienating the viewer or playing into a sense of complacency.

It has been demonstrated that *Sisters of War* (2010) fits a sub-genre of war films in which the prisoner of war and those who incarcerate are examined. It is, in part, a story about those who are supplicants and of those who wield force. As prisoners of war, Lorna Johnston and Sister Berenice were literally at the mercy of their Japanese captors: they were supplicants. Sister Berenice recounts how the Japanese, terrified that the nurses and nuns were hiding a radio, conducted a major search, the purpose of which was unknown to the women at the time.

One big (search) was early in the morning and they said come down stairs quick, quick … we never undressed or anything. We all had to kneel down and all these (guards) came along with their ropes and their spades and their bayonets, of course and they said kneel along there … and we thought oh this is it – we thought they were going take us in the room and finish us off you know …

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 51)

*Sisters of War* (2010) has as one of its objectives the intent of letting the audience see, and therefore imagine, how a civilian captive in war is subjugated and how in the words of Weil (2005) “the sight of a human being pushed to such an extreme of suffering chills us like the sight of a dead body” (p. 6). This depiction of war is
not just about violence that culminates in death or injury but also involves deprivation of liberty. A consideration of the nature of deprivation and its attributes of pity and fear awakens us to other elements of human behaviour and is a further illustration of the proposition that these dramatic elements assist to create links between story and history.

Deprivation is brought about through force and here again the telemovie has a role to play in informing the audience about the nature of force and helping it to imagine its complexities. The application of force has the capacity to destroy those who receive and also those who deliver it, a contention supported by Weil (2005) when she asserts that, “thus it happens that those who have force on loan from fate count on it too much and are destroyed …” (p. 15). Imagining war as brutality, as a system that enslaves and as a process where force both crushes its victim and intoxicates its oppressor leads ineluctably to a final and arguably more disturbing challenge for sufficient imagination, which is to imagine the foe as a reflection of ourselves.

3.4.5 The enemy as “other”

Imagination fuelled by intense drama may assist viewers to challenge their preconceptions of the acts and agents portrayed in the drama. Image, emotion and story can be co-opted to reveal shibboleths and to prompt a re-consideration about a range of war related matters. Sufficient imagination can prompt reflection on those who are controlled and those who control with force, and both of these responses combine to assist an audience to reflect on the role of the enemy – the other.

The role of the other should be seen in a broad context. Sisters of War (2010) explores how people behave under threat in a time of war and through that exploration attempts to reveal what truth lies in the lines of the introductory passage of The Song of Hiawatha, “In all ages every human heart is human” (Longfellow, 1865, p. 269). This sentiment may be considered as an extension of the concept expressed by Terentius, Homo sum: humani nil a me alienum puto – “I am a human being, so nothing human is strange to me” (as cited in Abrams,
Testing this proposition of Longfellow assists to illuminate the guiding authorial question for *Sisters of War* (2010): what do we believe in when our very existence is threatened?

One method to achieve this end is to explore the actions of characters in another time who are dealing with pressure and by doing so to pose the questions: what are the bonds and limits of humanness? How did the characters respond to those pressures and those threats to their humanity? Would we and would I respond similarly? The objective here is not to create an elevation of emotional response for its own sake, but rather to use this process to allow an audience to examine the possibility of interconnectedness of people between groups and across time.

With reference to Stone’s Vietnam film, *Platoon* (1986), Draper (1991) suggests that “this is ultimately the point of the Vietnam films, that the alien we engaged with in that war was not foreign but familiar” (p. 112). Emotion can be used by the producer to assist the imaginative process and part of that process is to imagine the commonalities of the combatants. It is a goal echoed by Sister Berenice (Johnston & Twohill, 2008) from the research interview when she states “to be able to live in peace every nation has to respect the culture of the other people and try to understand” (p.209).

This chapter has detailed the scope and nature of *Sisters of War* (2010) and set out the extent of the producer’s authorial role, both in general terms and how it relates specifically to this production. The nature of the emotional elements of pity and fear and how the producer influences them can now be assessed.
4. DRAMATIC PROPERTIES OF PITY AND FEAR

Pity and fear, whether felt in response to actual events in life or to the depiction of events in mimetic art … require an active perception and understanding of human realities, not just a raw instinctual response to suffering.

(Halliwell, 2002, p. 221)

My subject is War, and the pity of War.
The Poetry is in the pity.

Wilfred Owen, from a preface to a planned book of his poetry.

(Lewis, 1963, p. 31)

4.1 The Relevance of the Poetics

There are many theories that deal with script structures and approaches to drama in film and television. In the Poetics, as Butcher (1951) contends, Aristotle provides one of the first detailed examples of a theory of drama and tragedy.

In this chapter I demonstrate that the properties of pity and fear examined by Aristotle in the Poetics are essential dramatic ingredients that, for a range of interrelated reasons, assist to make connections between historical drama and their referent. In this regard these elements of pity and fear are as relevant for the contemporary telemovie as they were to the construction and appreciation of ancient tragedy. In this chapter I will show that, as Halliwell (2002) asserts, pity and fear are “the peaks of a cumulatively unfolding response to the intelligible significance of the plot in its entirety” (p.222).
This thesis concerns itself with examining how components of story may work to link different facets of human experience, in particular our knowledge of past events and our expression of them in dramatic form and how these elements are influenced by one of the authorial agents. It follows, therefore that examination of a writer who investigates story form will be valuable if that writer displays an enthusiasm for the myriad ways in which humans interact with life and provides a guide to those whose task it is to construct drama. Aristotle’s approach to his enquiry in the Poetics provides this overview, for as Gassner (1951) suggests, the Poetics investigates both the aesthetic and the practical matters of life and that within this overarching approach, Aristotle “continually mingle with his judgments on art a sense of how man, the public at whom every artist aims his effects, is apt to respond to nature, moral bent and emotional involvement” (p. xxxviii).

In the first instance, Aristotle has meaning for the television producer because his works, and particularly the Poetics, delve into properties of story and tragedy that are both theoretical and practical and place these inquiries within a broader ethical and philosophical context. To further understand the relevance of the Aristotelian conception of pity and fear it is necessary to comprehend Aristotle’s method of argument and his mode of classification in the Poetics especially with regard to his definition of tragedy, which embraces the role of pity and fear.

In the Poetics Aristotle introduces his use of the terms “pity” (eleos) and “fear” (phobos) in the famous definition of tragedy in section VI. Pity and fear and the adjectival phrase “pitiable and fearful events” (which Aristotle introduces in section IX) are situated within an Aristotelian consideration of the nature and function of tragedy. Aristotle’s definition of tragedy in the Poetics, at section VI, states:

Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions. (49b 24-28)
Aristotle leads into his definition of tragedy by stating that, “let us resume the discussion by stating the definition of its essence on the basis of what has already been said” (49b 22). Two critical points are contained in this sentence, both of which affect our understanding of how the twinned concepts of pity and fear are to be regarded.

Firstly, Aristotle makes it clear that his definition provides the “essence” of tragedy, that these words do not prescribe the ideal form of that which tragedy should achieve but rather reveal its inherent attributes. Hardison (1981) points out that in Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, an influential text for literary theory in the Renaissance era, a set of “prescriptive rules” (p. 65) were advanced as a guide to the construction of poetry, rules drawn from an examination of completed works. In contrast, the *Poetics* is a “methodical philosophical investigation into the nature of literary art” (Hardison, 1981, p. 65). Thus the *Poetics* has enduring relevance for the modern television storyteller working in a range of genres, as it does not slavishly rely on an analysis of particular Greek drama to defend its position.

Secondly, Aristotle tells us that his definition of tragedy flows from what “has already been said”. Hardison (1981) alerts us to Aristotle’s deductive method of argument in the *Poetics* and the corollary that the definition of tragedy logically flows from the arguments preceding section VI.

In the second sentence of the *Poetics* Aristotle writes “let us proceed according to nature with firsts” (47a 11), which Hardison (1981) translates as “let us follow the order of nature beginning with first principles” (p. 68). The emotive elements of tragedy identified by Aristotle in his definition in section VI can usefully be applied by television producers as they attempt to bridge history and story, because these elements are deduced from philosophical first principles. In concert, these two notions of essence and first principles indicate that, for Aristotle, tragedy and the shared and individual attributes of pity and fear are inherent in the manner in which an audience receives these emotions via story.
4.2 Aristotle’s Critics

To contextualise this investigation of the relevance of the *Poetics* it is useful to analyse how Plato and other critics diverge from the Aristotelian position on the role and impact of the emotional response in drama. For some, both ancient and modern, emotion is antithetical to a rational understanding of empirical events – their view is that emotion distorts a nuanced appreciation of history.

According to Fortenbaugh (2008), when Aristotle attended the Academy of Plato, he studied the role of emotion “as distinct from bodily sensations and bodily drives” (p. 9). When eventually Aristotle developed a position in *The Art of Rhetoric* which illuminated the role of cognition in emotion, Fortenbaugh claims “dramatic poetry was free from Platonic charges of corrupting reason” (p. 9).

For Plato, emotion induced by tragedy is to be distrusted; he makes this position clear in Book X of *The Republic* when he writes, “poetry … when it represents … desires and feelings of pleasure and pain … it waters them when they ought to be left to wither, and makes them control us when we ought … to control them” (Plato, trans. 1974, p. 437).

Butcher (1951) interprets Plato at this point as saying of emotion that “it makes anarchy in the soul by exalting the lower elements over the higher, and by dethroning reason in favour of feeling” (p. 246). In this description we detect a fundamental difference in the Platonic and Aristotelian approach, for whereas Plato seeks to create a dichotomy of emotion and reason, Aristotle reaches for connections. Curran (2001) explains how Aristotle’s holistic conception “values tragedy precisely because it elicits emotions that operate in conjunction with a cognitive understanding of ourselves and the world” (p.167).

By investigating how emotion was based on rational and cognitive measures Aristotle’s great contribution was to show how elements of emotion in drama could no longer be viewed as an attachment to drama but rather as an integral part of its make-up. Plantinga (1997) summarises this position when he claims:
Some critics presume a duality between an emotional response deemed naïve, self-indulgent, or even perverse, and an intellectual, vigilant, cognitive response based on reason and critical judgment. The facile duality between reason and emotion lies as the unspoken premise behind many discussions of affect and the spectator, as though emotion must be “bridled” or “mastered” to allow reason to function adequately. (p. 373)

Plato finds support from more recent writers. When Sherman (2000, as cited in Konstan, 2007, p. 32) poses the question “what Aristotle doesn’t explore is why some emotions don’t reform at the beck and call of reason, why doesn't rational discourse undo irrational emotions?” we observe the continuing desire to place emotion at an antagonistic distance from reason and the rational. This flawed position fails to recognise the cognitive connections between the rational and the emotional and works from the assumption that emotion in all media has a debilitating effect that must be cured prior to a clear assessment being made.

Evidence of this flawed and constricting approach can be found in an interview in the *American Historical Review* (1995) when Cripps asks this question of Ken Burns, creator of the *Civil War* (1990) documentary series: “do you want to raise an emotional response in a person or an intellectual one?” (p.743). Emotional properties of storytelling, well utilised, make this question redundant. Emotions, as Hughes-Warrington (2007) makes clear, “can’t be sequestered from historical understanding” (p.172). Emotion does not extirpate reason; emotion is a powerful link between the rational and the imaginative.

### 4.3 Aristotle and Emotion

Before examining Aristotle’s approach to pity and fear it is necessary to investigate his overarching approach to the nature of emotion – the set of responses that embrace pity and fear. Aristotle provides a definition in part two of *The Art of Rhetoric*:
Emotions are those things by the alteration of which men differ with regard to those judgments which pain and pleasure accompany, such as anger, pity, fear and all other such and their opposites. (1378a)

By focusing on the centrality of the word “judgments” in these lines, Gross (2001) contends that “passions condition our very ability to evaluate the world” (p. 313). This observation, which refers to the evaluative property of emotion, is integral to the investigation of the role of pity and fear in linking story and history because it alludes to the connection between the emotional elements of story and the manner in which the emotion is induced.

This assessment of emotion as evaluation and judgement begins with Aristotle’s schematic overview which embraces particular emotions. Lawson-Tancred (2004) points out that Aristotle is not content with providing a broad definition of emotion (pathos) from which he can examine particular emotions (pathe) but creates a “subtle schema” (p. 140) with which to create a more sophisticated examination of these terms. Aristotle divides the discussion of emotion into three categories: the state we are in as we feel an emotion, the events that provoke the emotion and the object of the emotion. A process of evaluation and judgement is evident in all three stages and Lawson-Tancred (2004) indicates the significance of this process of categorisation by suggesting, “as Schofield has pointed out, [it] is conspicuous for its clear appreciation of the rationality of emotion” (p. 140).

As part of the emotional equation in a television drama, pity and fear and pitiable and fearful events assist to bring about the producer’s authorial objectives, including those of building bridges between story and history. At the very foundation of an emotional response is a process that rests on judgement and appraisal of stimuli, for as Konstan (2007) contends, “insofar as a pathos is a reaction to an impinging event or circumstance, it looks to the outside stimulus to which it responds” (p. 4).
4.3.1 Emotion and cognition

Nussbaum (2008) provides a succinct definition of cognition when she says that cognition is “concerned with receiving and processing information” (p. 23). Though Aristotle pointed to the cognitive underpinnings of emotional response, this approach was not universally accepted. Indeed, as MacMullen (2003) points out, as recently as the nineteenth century William James posited that emotion relates directly to the bodily change that is experienced following the exciting incident – that emotion is the bodily reaction to perception. Plantinga (1997) reveals the limitations of this description when he states “my galvanic skin responses and heart palpitations cannot define my emotions; what particular emotion I experience depends on my cognitions about my situation” (p. 379).

Plantinga’s statement aligns with Aristotle’s position when, in his De Anima (On the Soul) he states that emotions are “form in matter” (403a 24). Aristotle famously provides an example of the “matter” of emotion when he refers to the notion of anger by insisting that it is not just “a boiling of the blood or warm substance surrounding the heart” (403a 29). The boiling of the blood, according to Aristotle is the “material condition” of anger but it does not constitute the entire emotion itself. Belfiore (1992) argues that the sensation of anger is a cognivist reaction to another force, to an “efficient cause” (p. 181). Shields (2007) defines efficient cause as “a kind of cause which is responsible, as an active feature, for the bringing about of some change” (p. 64). As Guthrie (1998) points out, Aristotle argues that there are four identifiable causes (aitia), material, formal, efficient and final and that all four are required “for anything to come into being” (p. 223).

In his definition of anger in The Art of Rhetoric, Aristotle tells us that it is “a desire, accompanied by pain, for revenge for an obvious belittlement of oneself … the belittlement being uncalled for” (1378a 309-2). As Fortenbaugh (2008) reveals, Aristotle builds into his definition of anger the efficient cause – the outrage that creates change – and in doing so he is insisting “on the essential involvement of cognition in emotional response” (p. 12). This process can also be observed in the definition of fear when Aristotle says, “let fear then be a kind of
pain or disturbance resulting from the imagination (*phantasia*) of impending
danger, either destructive or painful …” (1382a 21-23). Fear emanates from the
thought of impending danger and is motivated by cognition of other forces.

A clear example of Aristotle’s contention regarding the cause of an emotion, in
this case anger, can be observed in scene 68 of the telemovie. Len, Lorna’s
boyfriend, has been executed and she believes the mission’s leader, Bishop
Scharmach, is complicit.

LORNA
Scharmach’s a collaborator. Sam
told me so.
BERENICE
(stunned)
No. This was not the bishop’s doing.
LORNA
(firmly)
Did you confess your sin to Scharmach?
Did he know that I’d helped Sam?
BERENICE
(upset)
Bishop Scharmach is not a traitor.
If anyone’s to blame for Sam’s death,
it’s the generals of your army. They
were the ones who left you here - nurses –
soldiers - wounded-men - when a half-drunk
native could have seen that you were doomed.
If the Bishop hadn’t rescued you, you’d
all be dead right now!

And Sister Berenice exits.
Lorna waits until Berenice has gone, then she
breaks down and weeps.

(Draft 6, p. 36)
The anger displayed by both women in this scene is revealed verbally and in the edited scene we witness the physical breakdown of Lorna out of anger and despair – her “boiling of the blood”. But their anger flows from cognition, from beliefs about causes that result in change – Lorna’s belief that the bishop is collaborating and Sister Berenice’s belief that mistakes of military command led to their predicament and, by extension, Len’s death. The audience is invited to assess whether the reasons stated by the protagonists for their grief and anger are reasonable, and the emerging plot and its attendant elements of pity and fear lead to questions about the agents at work within these historical incidents.

In *The Art of Rhetoric* Aristotle advocates that physical reaction and efficient cause are part of the emotional equation, one that depends on cognition. Having demonstrated that pity and fear and similar emotions evolve through cognition of their causes, it follows that these emotions are themselves susceptible to rational interrogation, a concept crystallised by Fortenbaugh (2008) when he concludes, “by constructing thought or belief as the efficient cause of emotion, Aristotle showed that emotional response is intelligent behaviour open to reasoned persuasion” (p.17). This link between cognition, emotion and then the rational forces to which emotion is itself exposed, reveals that emotion is not the final state of the viewer but a base from which further reflection takes place.

While favouring a view of emotion that is cognitively based, Konstan raises a concern that needs to be addressed. Konstan (2004) asserts that the ancient Greek concept of emotion in general, and specific emotions in particular, may differ sharply from our current conception. Suggesting that the actual range of emotions may vary across eras and that “our emotional repertoire” (p. 5) may alter, Konstan (2007) cautions against a position that insists that emotions and their expression are “universal and invariant across cultures” (p. x).

Narrative forms and their expression of pity and fear do not remain fixed and are not immune to cultural influence. However, regardless of the story prompts that incite pity and fear in an audience, cognition and evaluation are the underlying forces that create a base for these emotions and it is the manner in which story
colludes with cognition and evaluation that determines their ability to create bridges between story and history.

4.3.2 Cognition and limitations

Cognition of the forces that motivate an emotional reaction does not necessarily denote understanding of event and agent, nor does it prove that that which incited the emotion is a true representation of other events. Nevertheless, it does reveal that a system of processing the information has been ignited and, as with any process forged by cognition, this process is susceptible to further inputs.

In section IV of the Poetics at (48b 5), Aristotle states that imitation flows from a desire to learn. Heath (1991) contends that Aristotle qualifies this concept of learning by suggesting we learn “what the imitation is an imitation of” (p. 399), rather than learning something new about the object. Indeed, Heath (1991) moves on to argue that Aristotle suggests at (48b 17-19) that in order to understand the notion of imitation, we “require prior knowledge of the object imitated” and as a consequence “the cognitive processes involved in the grasp of poetic action presupposes an understanding of the world, rather than producing it” (p. 399). Qualifying his own position, Heath concedes that the cognitive process may allow us to re-evaluate the “unrecognised implications of our existing grasp of universals”. Despite this concession, Heath’s concern is made explicit when he contends that the cognition derived from imitation may simply reinforce falsehoods held by the receiver of the story (p. 399).

Heath’s concerns must be placed in the overall context of the producer’s objectives. The producer’s authorial objective is to engage the audience. The intense and vivid possibilities of the emotional dramatic elements are employed to achieve this end. In Sisters of War (2010) these emotional elements align to provoke, via cognition, a consideration of the broader themes relating to war. These broader themes are, by nature, general. They speak to change, remind the viewer as to the uncertain and fragile paths of the past, and invite evaluation of the brutality of war and the relationship of its combatants. It may be that the viewer harbours a false belief about past events. The engagement of pity and fear
in a history-based television drama is a powerful means by which the viewer is shaken and encouraged to re-consider the rupture and complexity of the past.

Television drama is not information-rich; it is emotionally demanding; it seeks always to engage. Therefore, through imagistic representation the television producer must look to the metaphoric strengths of the medium. Rosenstone (2006) reflects on the central role of metaphor and the place of story in its illumination: “perhaps in a visual culture, the truth of the individual fact is less important than the overall truth of the metaphors we create to help us to understand the past” (p. 132).

In section IV of the Poetics Aristotle uses the word “singular” when speaking of the events of history. Hardison (1981) contends that the role of the poet is to “discover actions – simple, unified processes – in a world of undifferentiated singulars” (p. 290). An apparent tension arises when we realise that the producer must find order out of “undifferentiated singulars”, but the level of tension is ameliorated by the recognition that the pursuit of verisimilitude for its own sake is not the overarching goal when presenting the past. Rosenstone (2006) claims, “the ‘truth’ of history does not reside in the verifiability of individual pieces of data, but in the overall narrative of the past” (p. 133).

Similarly, the “truth value” of the television history drama does not reside in the authorial ability of the producer to craft and manipulate emotional elements that create cognition of incontrovertible pieces of evidence of the inciting incidents. These emotional elements of pity and fear are not adept at translating the minute details of the historical referent. They are not arranged in order to transmit a chronicle of activities, nor do they proclaim to make seamless correlations between fact and representation. As Rosenstone makes clear, drama is not data.

In the Poetics Aristotle suggests that “stories, even ones that have been the subject of a previous poem, should first be set out in universal terms …” (55a 33). For Sisters of War (2010) the “previous poem” is the collection of oral histories obtained in research. From these the producer seeks to extract elements that lend themselves to expression of universal themes that surround: captivity in war,
power structures in war, savagery in conflict, the enemy as comrade and inciting questions related to what we believe in when our belief systems are threatened in times of conflict. The emotional authenticity of these areas is anchored by the previous poem generously provided by the eyewitnesses to this conflict.

4.4 Linking the Rational and the Figurative

MacMullen (2003) points out that some emotional reactions are instantaneous but others arise over time from “a perception attended by reflection” (p. 61). Whether emotions are primarily connected with physical and cognitive reactions immediately following perception or more closely aligned with careful appraisal over time, or an amalgam of both, the critical observation is that both these phenomena require cognition of the inciting incident and from this notion MacMullen concludes that “the kernel that historians may notice is the admission of feelings into the description of decision-making” (p. 62).

Emotion is not to be separated from the business of enquiry or from asking questions and making decisions about history, and in this we perceive its congruity with one of the key authorial objectives, which is to harness pity and fear to the task of creating respectful links between story and history.

The notion of the connective link between the rational and the imaginative lies at the very heart of the assertion that emotional reactions effectively and productively make connections between story and history and are therefore crucial to the objectives of the producer. The rational and the empirical are part of a continuum that also includes the imaginative and the figurative, for both the rational and the emotional have at their base a raw cognitive awareness of that which incited them.

Damasio (1994) is adamant that our emotions “provide the bridge between the rational and the non-rational processes” (p. 128) precisely because “our emotions are triggered only after an evaluative, voluntary, nonautomatic mental process” (p. 130). Emotion creates a reciprocating flow of understanding between these states because it shares properties of both the cognitive and the fantastical. Emotion
flows from a cognitive understanding of and search for the elements that induced it, and emotion is an empathetic base from which an audience can imagine the emotional state and motivations of historical agents.

A shared element of historical enquiry and dramatic construction involves identifying motivation for its players and by doing so examining the complex web of causation of events. McKernan (2008) asserts “why people do the things they do is at the heart of every historical enquiry and might seem to us at times simply unknowable” (p. 32). But if the passion and emotion of human agents are fundamental elements of the movement of history then communication forms which employ emotional properties and devices can bemeaningfully engaged to reveal the history and to help us understand why its agents acted as they did.

Clendinnen (2003) tells us that “the historian’s situation is complicated because we have to look through other people’s masks if we are to see anything of the world we want to fathom” (p. 13). Masks are a means of hiding emotion and story is a means of accessing that emotion, of removing the mask of history. Emotional engagement through story allows an audience to empathise with the intentions of the people of history and maybe, albeit vicariously, to share that emotion, for, as MacMullen (2003) suggests “we understand within our selves the force of what was in their minds and so governed their acts” (p. 133).

When referring to the rationalists of the Enlightenment and their determination to confront the superstitions of the times with a pursuit of rational enquiry, White (1975) elucidates this concept of the overlaps between the empirical and the imagination when he states:

The philosophes needed a theory of human consciousness in which reason was not set over against imagination as the basis of truth against the basis of error, but in which the continuity between reason and fantasy was recognised … (pp. 51-52)

The rational and the irrational, the empirical and the fantastical are mediated, are locked in conversation through emotional links. They need each other and
respond to each other. They assist an audience in placing history in context, confronting its demons, revealing it and its shadowy margins to themselves and making it vivid.

The philosopher Raimond Gaita places these concepts in a broader context when he examines the adaptation of his memoir, *Romulus, My Father* (1998) into the feature film *Romulus, My Father* (2007). Gaita (2011) refers to his written work as a “tragic poem rather than a biography” (p. 9), and writes of the need for art to mesh with cognition in order to create clarity about inspiring events. He summarises one of the criticisms of emotionally charged works in this manner:

… that if we are rationally to accept what has moved us, we must abstract what we take to be its cognitive content – content suited to the understanding rather to aesthetic appreciation – in order to make that content more tractable to reason …

(Gaita, 2011, p. 96)

Emotionally charged dramatic elements in drama are useful not merely because they may release an audience to consider the rational aspects of the work, they are useful because they also assist to connect and intertwine the rational and the figurative. This is a position supported by Gaita (2011) when he asserts that form, style and intellectual content are often fused.

One of the benefits of emotion prompted by drama is its ability to make connections between audience and history when the history and its agents are alien to the life experience of the viewer. Barton and Levstik (2004, as cited in Metzger, 2007, p. 6) refer to the benefits of “perspective recognition”, the ability to consider the intentions and beliefs of those from another era. This type of recognition is aided by cognition of the environment in which the agents of the past are operating.

Creeber (2004, as cited in Gray, 2008, p. 120) believes a telling recent example of this attribute of television story is the American series *Roots* (1977), where he claims a “national audience was actively made to identify with black characters and black history”. Gray (2008) contends that in *Roots* (1977), an “emotional
reality” was created and that viewers had “an affective passport into that history … into the experience of history” (p. 120). *Sisters of War* (2010) presents a setting – a prisoner-of-war camp – that is foreign to most of its potential viewers but emotional connections through story allow them a window into this history. In this regard emotion forms a *tertium quid*, a third thing that assists to create a correspondence between the past and its representation, between the rational and the figurative.

The television producer attempts to manipulate story elements to engender emotional reactions so that the audience will consider their orientation to the history that forms the base of the story and to their own beliefs about that history. Emotion is also a mediating force because much of historical enquiry seeks to understand motivation and causation and motivation is inextricably entwined with passion and emotion. Emotion mediates because emotion is common to the wellsprings of history and to the telling of it.

### 4.5 Pity and Fear in Mimetic Context

Aristotle contends that pity and fear play a central role in the production of tragedy and he makes this explicit in his definition of tragedy at (49b 24-28). Their role is crystallised in Woodruff’s (1992) statement that “tragedy succeeds only in so far as it elicits the emotions of pity and fear” (p. 85). Aristotle is emphatic when he states that, “the construction of the best tragedy … should also be an imitation of events that evoke pity and fear, since that is the distinctive feature of this kind of imitation” (52b 1). According to Aristotle, pity and fear are interlocked with other elements including the concept of *mimesis* (imitation) that begins the definition of tragedy.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to venture into an examination of the myriad facets of the nature, function and definitions of *mimesis* as discussed by Aristotle and other key writers, including Plato and the Pre-Socratics. It is necessary, however, to provide an overview of *mimesis*, for as Halliwell (1998) contends “*mimesis* is the concept within which the other notions of manipulation are found
and from which they draw their authority and meaning” (p. 126). Halliwell also posits that “mimesis was the key to the primary question of the relation between works of art and the world” (p. 109).

This is why the term is so important for the producer wishing to bridge history and story. Whether a definition of “imitation” or “imitative representation” is adopted, storytelling, to ourselves and to others, is one of the means by which mimesis manifests itself and mimesis helps us to understand and appreciate that which the mimesis is based on – it is a powerful means of connecting art and life.

Heath (1996) warns that the modern interpretation of the word imitation may limit our understanding of Aristotle’s meaning, which is less about literal translation – the reflection of an object or situation – and more about the individual discovering similarity between that which is observed and that which is presented through mimesis. Heath goes on to claim that “an imitation need not be a straightforward copy of the object imitated; the similarity between the object and its likeness may reside in a more oblique and abstract correspondence” (p. xiv).

When referring to artistic mimesis, Plato, in book X of The Republic, suggests a negative relationship between mimesis and its referent. Woodruff (1992) puts it plainly by claiming that Plato believed a form of deception is being undertaken with mimesis and that in the performing arts mimesis, “bewitches our power to judge between reality and illusion” (p. 77).

Critically, Halliwell places Aristotle’s notion of the importance of mimesis in stark contrast to the Platonic view that mimesis trivialises because many forms of it attempt to be a mirror reflection of that which it portrays. For Halliwell (2002) Aristotle rejects a “conception of mimesis as a counterfeiting of the real” and suggests that he does this principally by creating a position of “dual-aspect mimeticism”. He describes this dual-aspect as, “an aesthetic axiom that mimesis constitutes the materially embodied and internally organised identity of certain art forms at the same time as it designates the ‘outward-facing’, representational significance of their contents” (p. 172).
The key insight for the producer of a television history drama that flows from an appreciation of the differences between Plato and Aristotle on the nature of *mimesis* is that the mimetic power of story lies in its ability to connect the literal and the figurative and that the properties of story, including the vital emotional elements of pity and fear, should be harnessed so that our power to judge is not “bewitched” but sharpened. Where Plato saw *mimesis* as distraction, Aristotle viewed it as an essential path to awareness.

*Mimesis* creates a correspondence between story and its inciting material in which the actions, patterns and intelligible structures of the drama draw attention to the comprehensible patterns of the inciting incidents. This correspondence occurs as a result of the interrelated actions, the *praxis* that form part of the drama. Aristotle refers to the concept of action at (49b 24) when he defines tragedy as *mimesis praxeos* – imitation of action (Belfiore, 1992).

Aristotle uses the concept of *praxis* in multiple self-reinforcing ways and they should be examined in the light of his analysis of the elements of dramatic structure. It is often noted that Aristotle draws attention to the primacy of plot (*muthos*) in his categorisation of the six component parts of tragedy, specifically stating that “every drama alike has spectacle, character, plot, diction, song and reasoning” (50a 5). He reinforces this notion when at he writes, “the plot is … the soul of tragedy” (50a 22).

Butcher (1951) makes the connection between plot and *praxis* when he states that “plot in the drama, in its fullest sense, is the artistic equivalent of ‘action’ in real life” and that “it marks an activity, an inward process that looks outward” (p.334). Hardison (1981) believes that this *praxis* is not just activity but action that leads to change, and Halliwell (1998) contends the *Poetics* uses *praxis* in a novel and all-embracing form to mean the overarching arrangement of the structural elements:

For the action of a play is not simply the sum of the component actions or events; it is a coherent and meaningful order, a pattern which supervenes on the arrangement of this material and arises out of the combination of purposive individual actions. (p. 143)
According to Aristotle, the *muthos* (plot) is a *mimesis* of the *praxis* (50a 3) and leads to discernible and comprehensible patterns. In the *Poetics* a clear line of argument is developed by Aristotle in which the importance of order within drama is formulated. This is evident in many passages that deal with the concepts of beginning, middle and end and the matters of complication and resolution, and crystallised by Aristotle’s belief that a combination of the proper magnitude of the work and the proper order of its constituent parts creates unity and order in the drama not unlike the beauty that is to be enjoyed in well-constructed objects or a living organism (50b 34).

In this regard the *praxis* of story and tragedy reveal order and draw attention to the patterns of the actions of the agents of the drama for, as Aristotle rightly claims, “action is performed by certain agents” (49b 36). As the internal arrangement of dramatic elements “look outward” to that which they represent these actions reflect another order. They are as Butcher (1951) suggests “a coherent whole, animated by a living principle – or by something which is at least the counterpart of life” (p. 189).

Television history drama is a record of actions requiring choices and decisions by its characters. According to Halliwell (1998), actions are not just *pragmata* which may be interpreted as the mere individual events of a work without the impact of agency. Through the considered actions of characters we perceive the drama as a whole, unified and ordered work in which we perceive the patterns of the character’s actions and the cause of such actions.

The case study telemovie is a *mimesis* of events drawn from oral histories, and in this manner the *mimesis* of the *praxis* of the agents in *Sisters of War* (2010) is a means by which drama links the patterns of story with the patterns of the real lives behind the story, not as mirror reflection or a facsimile correspondence but *mimesis* of emotional states and reflections about a time of war and captivity as received through oral history. This is a powerful and meaningful form of *mimesis*, for drama and its emotional constituents and references are inextricably linked and, as Belfiore (1992) claims “imitation has the unique function of leading us to contemplate, for their own sake, objects that also arouse us emotionally” (p. 67).
4.6 Pity

The following sections investigate particular aspects of the manner in which pity and fear operate in drama, but it is critical to note that these are self-reinforcing terms and attention will also be paid to their common attributes and the effect they have when working in concert.

In the Aristotelian assessment, both pity and fear are required for the full realisation of the potential of tragedy. If we just invite pity, as Kearney (2007) tells us, “empathy might veer towards an over identification with the imaginary characters unless checked by a countervailing movement of distance and detachment” (p. 52). For Kearney, fear provides this balance and the producer must look to the balance he brings to the arrangement of these elements.

When referring to pity in the Poetics, Aristotle uses both the words eleos and oiktos. Often used as synonyms, Nussbaum (2008) suggests we can trace their path of translation into classical Latin as misericordia, in Italian as pita and in the French as pitie. Konstan (2004) draws a subtle distinction when he asserts that oiktos may be more accurately described as a lamentation, a narrower concept of pity that refers to an expression of sadness, whereas eleos, the form more commonly adopted by Aristotle, is a broader formulation drawing together the concepts of pity and compassion.

Before examining the definition of pity provided by Aristotle in The Art of Rhetoric and his use of eleos in the Poetics, we must consider whether the term and its cognates have maintained a consistency of meaning over time and thus whether they are pertinent to a discussion about modern media. When we speak of a sense of pity in our time, are we considering the term in a manner that resembles that of the era of Aristotle? Nussbaum (1992) places this discussion in an appropriate context when she asserts that pity and compassion may be used interchangeably and that compassion is both common to all human experience as well as being “a painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person’s underserved fortune” (p. 300).
For Nussbaum, while pity and its congeners such as compassion, sorrow, and sympathy may contain shades of meaning, the overarching sentiment generated by all of them relates to how individuals feel psychological pain when observing others under stress. Ben-Ze’ev (2000, as cited in Kimball, 2004, p. 302) concurs with this position when he states “in pity we overcome our natural tendency to look away from people who suffer”.

By constructing a definition of pity in this fashion, Ben-Ze’ev reveals how, at a very basic level, this crucial emotional element in drama assists the process of linking story with history by allowing the audience to overcome a natural reluctance to engage with the harsh realities of the past and the human aspect of those realities. In a history drama about war, such as Sisters of War (2010), pity assists the authorial objective to engage an audience with violent events.

While Nussbaum (2008) suggests that pity and compassion are interchangeable and points to their use by Hobbes in Leviathan in which Hobbes states that the words are to be considered proper synonyms, Kimball (2004) argues that there are important distinctions to be made especially with regard to the experience of narrative tragedy. These distinctions have a bearing on the role of pity to assist the audience to make connections between fiction and history and therefore have a bearing on the relationship between the producer and dramatic emotions.

Kimball (2004) makes a distinction between “benevolent pity” which he believes is indistinguishable from compassion and “contemptuous pity” (p. 305) asserting that the latter form developed around the time of the nineteenth century and that “contemptuous pity” entails a sense of condescension of the person being pitied and a sense of superiority by the pitier. This concept of “contemptuous pity” does not engender a form of concern for another being and as a result is incompatible with the aims of creating connections between audience and subject material.

With this in mind, it is critical that the producer works towards instilling in the written documents and final form of the work pitiable episodes which lean on and create a sense of benevolent pity and not contemptuous pity. This aim is
congruent with the producer’s objective in *Sisters of War* (2010) to create a sense of connection with the captors as well as the captives.

Kimball (2004) moves on to further narrow the definition to identify a form of the emotion he calls “tragic pity”.

> Tragic pity is a kind of pity because it includes the passivity and psychological detachment of more generic pity … but it does not include the attitude of comparative superiority … characteristic of contemptuous pity. (p. 309)

As we examine Aristotle’s views on the nature of pity, similarities with these modern definitions may be observed. In *The Art of Rhetoric* Aristotle defines pity as:

> Let pity then, be a certain pain occasioned by an apparently destructive evil or pain’s occurring to one who does not deserve it, which the pitier might expect to suffer himself or that one of his own would, and this whenever it would seem near at hand. (385b 13ff)

Aristotle lists a range of predicaments and conditions that may elicit pity, and while not exhaustive, the salient feature of this listing is its commonality across time. Aristotle writes, “the painful and destructive things are death, bodily tortures and injuries, old age illness, lack of food, lack of friends, separation from friends, physical weakness … and reversal of expectation”. (386a 6-13)

Nussbaum (1992) draws our attention to the three cognitive elements that are suggested by the Aristotelian definition.

1. The suffering is serious and not trivial.
2. The suffering is undeserved.
3. The possibility that the person experiencing the emotion is similar to the one who is suffering. (p. 306)
Each of these criteria contains elements that assist the process of linking history and story and all of them reveal that a cognitive awareness of the inciting incidents and agents is required to generate the emotion. Cognition, as discussed earlier in this chapter, is not just about reviewing and processing information but the subsequent process of evaluation, and each of these criteria requires evaluation of that which generated the emotion.

Aristotle rightly points out in his definition that we do not pity someone who has undergone a trivial setback. As Nussbaum (2008) suggests, if we feel ourselves in a state of pity we also recognise that what we pity is of a serious nature. The awareness of the emotional state of pity engendered by reacting to a character in a drama mediates the narrative and the history in that it immediately tells us that the inspiring material is of sufficient magnitude to generate this emotional response and is therefore of some importance.

In his definition, Aristotle is emphatic that pity is created when we see that the subject of our pity is undeserving (anaxios) of the suffering. According to Nussbaum (2008) this notion of undeserved suffering also encompasses those without merit if we perceive that their suffering is not in proportion to their action. In this manner pity acts as a mediating force even when we are asked to respond to characters in a drama who are engaged in acts of wrongdoing. The pity that is generated works on a range of levels and draws our attention to those we might naturally empathise with, as well as the other, which in the case of the western audience for *Sisters of War* (2010), is the Japanese military. We cannot pity in any accurate sense of the word unless we understand not only the kind of suffering someone else is undergoing but perceive how the suffering is undeserved – we must intellectually deduce why the causes are unjust. The feeling is not isolated from its causes.

The third part of the definition creates direct associations between pity and fear by contending that pity generates a link between the sufferer and the suffering that viewers might imagine for themselves. Pity and fear are intertwined and both, with different emphasis, contain attributes of altruism and self-regard.
In the Aristotelian paradigm we pity those who we believe have suffered undeservedly and we fear that we may suffer a similar fate or that the exposure of our own misjudgements will lead to suffering. There is, in this sense, an objective quality that adheres to pity and a subjective quality that connects us to fear generated by drama. However, it would be wrong to draw these distinctions too tightly. In pity we are reminded of our own vulnerability and so there is an admixture of altruism and self-regard.

As Nehamas (1992) suggests, while fear is predominantly subjective it is not exclusively so in that the fear for our own state is cognitively prompted by an awareness of the predicament of others. Pity and fear assist the producer to achieve their stated aims because both of these dramatic elements create a complex mixture of subjective and objective reactions for the viewer, a mixture that provides a multi-layered base from which to assess the drama and its referent.

Placing pity in its objective context also allows us to assess Aristotle’s claim that pity is not created when we empathise too strongly with the subject whom we believe is suffering. He makes this clear in The Art of Rhetoric when he states, “what is terrible is different from the pitiable and drives out pity” (1386a 18-23). For Aristotle, pity becomes terror or grief if we are too close to the object of pity, for instance if we are related to the person under duress. There is a balance between pity as a force of engagement and its distancing effect. This psychological space that pity demands creates a reflexive mode for the audience as “it can never lose at least a subliminal awareness of itsspectatorial role” (Halliwell, 2002, p. 216). This property of vividly connecting the audience with the drama but in such a way as to remind them, concurrently, of the space between them and the agents of the drama is also to be found in the nature of screen fear (examined shortly).

The examination of pity (and of fear) must also be considered in the light of Aristotle’s overarching conception of *eudaimonia*, the concept of human flourishing. Nussbaum (2008) makes it clear that if we accept a translation of *eudaimonia* as encompassing actions which are virtuous – for these are actions that assist others and make the agent’s life complete – then the connection
between the ability to flourish and the emotions is established. Not only are the emotions that we feel for characters in a tragedy partly directed by our appreciation of how their prospects for flourishing are being aided or restricted by other forces, but the value we place on these emotions is connected to how we perceive our own ability to flourish in similar circumstances.

Thus, Nussbaum (2008) writes that “[emotions] insist on the real importance of their object, but they also embody the person’s own commitment to the object as a part of her scheme of ends” (p. 33). This dynamic, between a perception of another’s ability to flourish and our own, draws together the subjective and objective properties of pity and fear and incites what Nussbaum (2008) refers to as a “eudaimonistic judgement” (p. 319). If the sufferer (in this case a character in a television history drama) is vulnerable, am I similarly vulnerable? In the story and history linkage the question becomes: is the pity that I feel for a character of another time similar to the vulnerability I feel for myself in this time or for the vulnerability I would feel if I transport myself into the world of the drama and had to make judgments that the characters must make?

Pity generated in television drama creates temporal fascinations and connections because it generates a shared sense of vulnerability, and in this regard it assists the producer’s authorial intentions to make vivid and intense connections between audience and the historical referent and to prompt audience members to consider their relationship to the past.

4.7 Fear

An examination of Aristotle’s definition of fear reveals similarities with some of his key observations about the nature of pity and two critical differences. In this regard it is clear that the effect of these dramatic elements can be felt both jointly and severally but their presence in drama in a twinned state is required to lead to the most powerful reaction from the viewer. As intensity of reaction is a major objective, it is important for the producer to consider the arrangement and effect of both elements.
In *The Art of Rhetoric* Aristotle tells us “let fear be a kind of pain or disturbance resulting from the imagination (*phantasia*) of impending danger, either destructive or painful …” (1382a 21-23). A little later in the treatise he goes on to state that, “fear, for instance, is a reaction to potential suffering that makes people inclined to deliberation” (1383a 7-9).

In these connected passages Aristotle is stating both intrinsic properties and the cognitive potential of the emotion. The similarities between fear and pity are made clear. Both involve pain induced by an awareness of something that has been harmful or is potentially harmful and therefore the emotions suggest the inciting agent is of some magnitude and worthy of consideration.

Butcher (1951) highlights the “correlated” nature of the feelings when he states “pity, however turns into fear where the object is so nearly related to us that the suffering seems to be our own” (p. 256). Konstan (2004) points to the differences between the Aristotelian definitions of pity and fear when he notes that whereas pity is felt by the pitier towards the pitied, the incitement of fear has an effect because the fear may directly affect ourselves. In addition, in fear there is no sense of moral judgement about whether the emotion is deserved or not.

One level of the cognitive property of fear is immediately evident in the Aristotelian definition by the use of the word *phantasia* and the notion of the image of the fearful. Though pain is unwelcome and part of the nature of the fear, we fear things that portend pain (Konstan 2007) and thus fear involves an assessment of that which might induce harm.

Another indication of the nature of the cognitive process attached to fear is the outline of matters that Aristotle believes lead to fear. Many of these depend on an acute understanding of, or curiosity about, the hierarchies and power structures that may lie behind the causes of fear. And so an audience’s appreciation of the fear they discern in a character and the partial fear they may feel for themselves rest on an understanding of the complexities and the “efficient causes” that initiate the emotion. Konstan (2007) believes that these complexities involve “sophisticated social judgements” (p. 132) about the underlying causes of the fear.
Aristotle’s list of matters that can inspire fear includes:

- Injustice backed by power
- Those able to do wrong to those able to be wronged
- Those who are fearsome for one’s superiors; for they would be more able to harm us, if they could harm even them
- All fearsome things are the more fearsome in so far as one’s errors cannot be rectified, but are either completely unsusceptible of being put right or not in one’s own power but in that of one’s enemies
- All things are fearsome which, happening to others or likely to, are pitiable (1383a 35)

In this grouping Aristotle reveals the subtlety of the emotion when he asserts that we fear those who are more powerful than us and also those of whom our superiors are fearful. It is, as Nehamas (1992) points out, a syllogistic appraisal for “[we] are to be afraid of those of whom people stronger than we are; are themselves afraid” (p. 296). This attribute of fear is particularly relevant to the war and historical drama and the authorial objective of drawing attention to the role and plight of the enemy and the manner in which the enemy is made familiar by revealing that not all of the enemy share the same convictions as their leaders and that many may be fearful of their own leaders.

We are fearful for those with whom we most closely identify but we can also be fearful for those of another grouping, and through this awareness attention is drawn to the complexities of the inspiring events. An associated reaction to fear is at work here in that an evaluation takes place as we assess the relative power balance that may lead to one party being fearful of another (Konstan, 2007). This calculation and desire to understand the relative strengths of individuals and groups links the emotion to an evaluation of the situation and its context. It is immediately noticeable that these descriptions pertain directly to the predicament of Lorna and Sister Berenice in *Sisters of War* (2010) – two women in a position of supplication and fearful of their captors, lacking in power and yet aware that their immediate captors are themselves afraid.
If, as this thesis contends, the incitement of pity and fear is crucial to the creation of a vivid story, then these factors should clearly be in evidence in the telemovie, either because they are naturally imbedded within subject material or the producer has brought them to the fore. Pale versions of these factors will mitigate the effectiveness of the movie to attain its stated objectives because it will be less vivid, less reflexive and less memorable.

4.7.1 Screen fear as artificial emotion

Fear has a crucial role to play as the producer crafts story that stems from history in that the nature of screen fear creates a self-reflexive understanding of the constructed nature of the drama. We are aware, even as we react to a story which incites the emotion of fear, that this emotion, while similar to the emotion we would feel if we were truly confronted by the actual events, is nonetheless tempered by the rational notion that we are not in actual danger. Butcher (1951) believes this to be the case when he states that the emotion of fear we feel as we are moved by a drama is “the sympathetic shudder we feel for a hero whose character, in its essentials resembles our own” (p. 259). Thus, the audience is reminded constantly in the viewing of a work that they are watching a story that is separated from the real and the level of their emotional response proves this at every moment.

The emotion of fear informs the audience that the story and history are connected but are not the same. Paradoxically, the more heightened the sense of “screen fear” the more the audience is reminded that it is a different degree of fear than they might expect to experience in a real-life situation. Lear (1992) claims that the important corollary of this concept is that the audience’s “identification must remain partial” (p. 237). Partiality, induced by emotion, helps to create a base to assess the history and the story and, as Plantinga (1997) suggests, this “background awareness of its artificiality” allows an audience to be at once moved by a drama on the screen and yet at the same time not “forfeit their intellectual reaction to that drama” (p. 379). This partiality echoes a similar effect observed in the effect of dramatic pity. In order to pity, the emotion must be for
someone at some remove from the viewer. If the pitied is a loved one and in extreme danger then pity becomes terror.

This reflective attribute of fear is one of the key emotional drivers that assist an audience to look beyond the work. For *Sisters of War* (2010) the very artificiality of its screen fear assists to create bridges between the temporal specifics of the plot and the actual events that lie beyond the boundaries of the telemovie. The television producer welcomes this function of screen fear for, as Edgerton (2001) tells us:

> Television as historian should never be feared as the “last word” on any given subject, but viewed as a means by which unprecedentedly large audiences can become increasingly aware of and captivated by the stories and figures of the past, spurring some viewers to pursue their newfound historical interests beyond the screen and into other forms of popular and professional history.

(p. 9)

To comprehend another means by which exposure to screen fear assists an audience to see beyond the work in question we can look at the emotion that lies opposite to fear which, in *The Art of Rhetoric*, Aristotle suggests is confidence (*tharros*) (138a 10). The purpose and goal of the drama is not to entrench viewer preconceptions about the world from which the story is drawn. The role of fear is, in part, to unnerve the viewers, to draw them from a sense of complacency and ingrained confidence about the world of the story.

Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, 3.5.5-6, as cited in Konstan, 2007, p. 135) claims that, “confidence [to *Tharros*] instils carelessness, negligence and heedlessness, whereas fear makes people more attentive”. Fear is a dramatic means by which to entice the viewer to consider events and agents of those events that might not have been known to them. Its function is to lead the viewer from untested belief to a level of disquiet that will be conducive to absorbing new information.
Pity and fear maintain a primacy in the discussion of story and history because these are the emotional triggers that, working in concert, assist an audience of a television drama to consider their own relationship to the drama and the events that incite the drama. All of the elements of dramatic construction are required for a successful story but, in tandem, pity and fear are the capstone that seers the experience for the viewer and thus fulfils one of the main objectives of the producer, which is to induce engagement that is both contemporaneous with the viewing experience and durable so that a process of reflection is provoked.

4.8 Reversal and Recognition

Pity and fear are essential ingredients in the production of an intense and memorable drama. It follows then that the plot elements that most effectively induce pity and fear must be investigated and understood by the producer.

In section X of the Poetics Aristotle introduces his concept of the complex plot, which he believes is marked by the concepts of reversal (peripeteia) and recognition (anagnôrisis). Aristotle makes it clear that the best kind of plot, a complex plot, involves both of these elements whereas the simple plot contains a change of fortune without recognition.

The importance that Aristotle attaches to these plot elements is clearly stated when he writes, “the most important devices by which tragedy sways emotion are parts of the plot, i.e. reversals and recognitions” (50a 35-36). Reversal for Aristotle is a complete change of fortune from one state to its opposite. He describes recognition as “a change from ignorance to knowledge disclosing either a close relationship or enmity …” (52a 22). Importantly, he asserts that “recognition is best when it occurs simultaneously with a reversal …” (52a 31-33).

Heath (1991) points out that Aristotle’s definitions of pity and fear indicate that they possess the same object, namely destructive and painful harms. However, there are important differences in the proximity of the harm, for whereas pity may
be for the harm that some may have experienced, fear is defined as an impending destructive force, “a progression from harm anticipated to harm realised” (p. 401). In concert, pity and fear assist to draw attention to the underlying universal concept of change and reversal.

Reversal is a key concept in understanding how emotion creates a vivid and meaningful link between story and history because it reveals to character and audience alike that outcomes may depart wildly from intentions, and as Halliwell (2002) claims “expose the precariousness of the control that human beings try to exercise over their lives” (p. 221).

When an audience realises, through exposure to a reversal of fortune, that the characters in the story are not in control of their respective destinies, they are forced to consider the complex nature of the forces of history. Clendinnen (2003) makes the same claim for written works when she states “doing history teaches us to tolerate complexity, and to be alert to the shifting contexts for actions and experience” (p. 3). Both written and televised history alert the reader/viewer to complexity and to the uneven paths of history.

While Aristotle is clear that he considers reversal to be of fundamental importance, he is also adamant that a structural logic guides the reversal. Hence, in the Poetics he states that in an ideal reversal, “events occur contrary to expectation but on account of one another” (52a 1-4).

A reversal in plot should be constructed without resorting to dramatic tricks – merely attempting to turn the plot one hundred and eighty degrees – if the shift does not flow plausibly from previous segments of the plot. Aristotle makes this clear by writing that “there is an important difference between a set of events happening because of certain other events and after certain other events” (52a 19-21). In the same passage Aristotle makes the link between reversal and pity and fear by explicitly stating that pity and fear are caused by events that are contrary to expectation.
The producer should look at the underlying historical material (in the case of *Sisters of War* (2010), the interview transcripts) and identify those areas of plot that provide reversal and also look to those events that lead plausibly to the reversal. By doing this the producer creates guidelines for manipulation in this area in that the reversal should be from one position to its opposite, that this change should flow from the main action and not sit outside it, and that the change, while unexpected, should have a clear causal chain of events.

Approaching the material in this manner will assist to avoid the Aristotelian concern that while it is possible to evoke fear and pity from spectacle alone it is much better to let them flow from the events of the plot and so he writes, “those who use spectacle to produce an effect which is not evocative of fear, but simply monstrous, have nothing to do with tragedy” (53b 7-9). The television producer, guided by Aristotle’s insights in this area, should align the plotted elements to assist emotion to blend with history and not be seduced by the quick fix of spectacle or the tempting but counter-productive reliance on *deus ex machina* (inserting a dramatic element to solve a problematic plot point).

With regard to the concept of recognition, Hardison (1981) tells us that it is similar to reversal in that if properly employed it results in “a change in the action – a change from ‘friendship’ to ‘hostility’ or (presumably) the reverse” (p. 169). The plotted elements that release the reversal bring forth recognition, a move from ignorance to knowledge that leads to new action. Jones (1968) makes it clear that Aristotle’s concept of recognition is focused on the situational not the personal and that “he is talking about a reversed state of affairs … discovering the truth about a state of affairs which was unknown before or misapprehended” (p. 16).

My notes following the first draft of the telemovie show that I was keen to urge the writer of the screenplay to take another look at incorporating the diary device into the second draft. One of my reasons for doing so was to make it easier for the characters to reveal their reactions, their recognition of changed status caused by the reversals of fortune that were occurring to them. In this regard, the notion of recognition is located primarily within the personal rather than the broader situational concept that Aristotle alludes to, but this form of recognition is both
the first step for the characters to begin to imagine the wider context of the forces arrayed against them as well as being a prompt for the audience to consider the historical currents that influence the plot elements of the story.

When an audience is aware of the process at work in reversal and recognition, *peripeteia* and *anaganôrisis*, when they are aware of the plot elements that incite pity and fear, they are being encouraged to consider the connective threads between story and broader historical events. It is another demonstration of how they are cognitively attuned to the historical matters that suggest these story properties. The emotional constructions lead the audience to an intellectual assessment of the forces at work within the drama. In short, these vital emotional beats of story – reversal and recognition – lead the viewer to be aware of and assess matters of causation, the tension between intention and outcome that accompany history at every turn.

### 4.9 The Producer’s Assumptions about Pity and Fear

To contextualise my examination of Aristotle’s discussion of pity and fear, it is useful to note my assumptions regarding these dramatic elements prior to the production process of *Sisters of War* (2010) and how these assumptions may have altered after production and reflection following this research. This assessment is useful in creating a set of findings and suggestions that may be adopted for future projects.

An analysis of these assumptions can be made by investigating the research interview process and, in particular, the key questions I asked during that process. In addition, the approach I adopted in a key meeting between Claire van der Boom (the actor playing Sister Berenice) and the real Sister Berenice illuminates this assessment.

My underlying assumption before the research interview was that fear is the dominant emotion of someone held captive in war. I also assumed that the fear
was derived exclusively from a concern of imminent harm and possible death. Hence my question mid-way through the interview;

Lorna … you were obviously very frightened when the Japanese first came … and you were concerned that you were going to be killed … after that initiation you felt strong or confident that you would survive. The question is, why did you think you were going to survive and how did you survive?

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 48)

Framing the question in this manner did not invite a response directed more broadly at the concept of fear. It did not open up the discussion to include other areas of fear that Aristotle discusses, such as fear that the oppressor may also be under threat or that fear may be intimately linked with pity and a sense of the undeserved suffering for self or others. My assumption in the interview was that fear is a solitary emotion and I did not consider that by exploring links between pity and fear a more nuanced reflection on memory and the events may be forthcoming from the eyewitnesses.

Crucially, my question did not address the central matter of the potential sources of the fear; it glossed over the cognitive base of the emotion. The question was not phrased in such a way as to elicit comment about whether the subject thought the fear made her consider her surroundings in a new light.

I did not consider in depth the relationship between fear and the reversals of fortune that may have affected the emotional state of the participants. The line of questioning concentrated on thoughts about survival and the day-to-day requirements of captivity. This was useful but, on reflection, more attention should have been paid to eliciting the eyewitnesses’ thoughts about the gap between their intentions at the time and the outcomes of their actions. More detailed questioning about reversals and notions of recognition flowing from a changed status may have led to greater detail about the participants’ knowledge of or thoughts about the events around them.
Before a detailed reading of the *Poetics* and prior to filming I assumed that the
dominant emotional reaction expressed by an audience after exposure to *Sisters of
War* (2010) would be one of pity for the characters. But the pity I conceived was
more closely aligned to Aristotle’s use of the word *oiktos*, sadness for the plight of
the characters and not that of compassion, a more complex state that embraces
concepts of sorrow and empathy. As with my approach to the research interview I
did not consider how, for an audience, pity and fear may be self-reinforcing
elements. I did not consider how they might combine to create a range of potential
responses – responses that may both intensify the viewing experience while also
generating a self-reflexive approach to the work that draws attention to the forms
of creative manipulation at work in this narrative form, the power structures of the
combatants and the reversals of historical incident that create pity and fear for the
characters.

On March 26th 2010, during the pre-production period for the telemovie, Claire
van der Boom and I paid a visit to Sister Berenice in Sydney. The purpose of the
visit was for Claire to obtain information from Sister Berenice about her daily
rituals while a captive and in particular to acquaint herself with the appropriate
religious observances. This work was valuable but an opportunity was missed to
further explore the emotional world of the eyewitnesses to the history. Fidelity to
the history requires enquiry into physical and emotional realms, and a discussion
with the actors about the concepts of pity and fear and their connections to the
emotional wellsprings of the history would have benefited the production.

The key finding from these observations about my assumptions regarding the
emotional elements of drama as they applied to the eyewitnesses and to the
audience is that in a history program based on oral testimony or eyewitness
accounts, the emotional chronology of the key participants is as important as the
chronology of the inspiring events. Establishing the emotional chronology, the
order in which the participants remember their emotional reactions, may trigger
insight and reflection about the events and agents that caused dramatic reversals
and in turn how the participants recall the cognitive base of their states of pity and
fear.
4.10 Pity, Fear and the Authorial Role

An interim summary can now be made of the theoretical links between the producer’s authorial role and their objectives and the manner in which the dramatic elements of pity and fear assist or impede these objectives. The manner in which the producer works with and manipulates the story construction with regards to pity and fear may then be assessed as an examination is made of specific scenes in *Sisters of War* (2010).

As stated, the producer of the television historical drama, as one of the creative team, has an authorial influence for a range of interconnected reasons, though chief among them is the requirement for the producer to oversee the work from beginning to end. In a history-based television drama where oral histories have been obtained as part of the research, the producer attempts to convey to the witnesses of the history the possibilities and constraints of the telemovie format.

Cognisant of the challenges of working with history and story the producer reflects on his motivations for creating the drama and proceeds from a basis that seeks to enquire and investigate, not to proselytise. From this self-analytical base, the producer seeks to understand his overall creative impulse and his specific objectives for the particular work.

For *Sisters of War* (2010) I acknowledged the underlying tensions between history and story but approached the task with a desire to make meaningful connections between the two by utilising the dramatic form to craft an intense and highly memorable work. Further, the goal was to use this intensity to create a story-space in which the viewer would be encouraged to imagine the complexities of this story of war and of war in general. These complexities included consideration of the savagery that cruels both captor and captive, and of the audience’s perception of *the other* in war. Through this process, I wished to create a work that provided an immersive experience for the viewer, one which satisfied a desire to be moved by a mimetic representation of the events and agents of the past and to learn more about those events after the initial exposure to the narrative.
As the producer of *Sisters of War* (2010), my objectives may be summarised as wishing to craft a television history-based drama that induces:

- Immersive pleasure
- Intense emotional reaction
- Memorability
- Respect for the witnesses to history and to the inciting events
- Consideration of the complexity of war
- A desire to enquire further

The properties of the twinned emotions of pity and fear may be summarised as:

- Flowing from cognition of that which induced them and require evaluation and appraisal of causes
- Assisting an audience to confront distressing sights
- Drawing our attention to the suffering of others and how we might suffer
- Drawing our attention to the scale of the inciting event
- Requiring some level of detachment leading to an appreciation of context
- Incited by an appreciation of harm and disturbance leading to intense reactions
- Inciting consideration of broader themes including awareness of power structures, hierarchies and who is afraid of whom
- Drawing attention to fractures in history
- Assisting to create awareness of the modes of dramatic construction
- Compatibility with personal stories and personal stories drive micro-history, a form that is naturally congruent with the intimacy of television drama

Thus it may be observed that the inherent properties of pity and fear lend themselves to the application of the producer’s objectives in a television historical drama. Through careful construction of its emotional elements, notably pity and fear and pitable and fearful events, the work should draw the viewer to an appreciation of the undeserved suffering of the characters and to the allied concept of fear caused by imminent danger, a fear that the viewer may imagine
themselves being subjected to. This undeserved suffering will, in part, be caused by reversal of fortune and, ideally a state of recognition of the underlying causes of the changed status. An awareness of the processes of reversal of fortune and of the concomitant liminality of the characters draws attention to the fundamental role of change that permeates past and present.

As pity and fear are cognitively based, a process of evaluation of that which caused the emotions occurs. Further, the emotions contain properties that cause the viewer to reflect on the constructed nature of the drama, leading to an appreciation that this micro-history is inspired by real events but does not seek to mirror them with unqualified veracity. Crucially, pity and fear create intense reactions and the potential for immersive experience.

The lines by the World War I poet Wilfred Owen that began this chapter, and which embrace the notion of pity and war, speak to two vital areas of the discussion about emotion and history. Firstly, they remind us of the authorial objective outlined in chapter three concerning the desire of the author to use his particular form of expression to warn each generation about the waste of war.

Secondly, Owen makes a telling point about the relationship between form and emotion. By articulating that “the poetry is in the pity” (Lewis, 1963, p. 31) Owen reveals that the form and emotional content are inextricably bound, that poetic expression is to be most clearly revealed in one of the constituent parts of the form. This is also true of a telemovie dealing with war and history. The drama and the tragedy reside in the pity and the fear of the work, and it follows therefore that these emotional elements are absolutely crucial to the success of the work and, as they are cognitively based and are themselves susceptible to reason, they work with and mediate history and are not inimical to the telling of history. Form is not divorced from content and story is not divorced from history.

What an audience remembers is not the concept of a telemovie, nor the descriptive and clinical form but the emotional force, the challenging thought-provoking essence. Butcher (1951) contends that what must be maintained in drama is “the intimate alliance between pity and fear” (p. 263). Chapter six
examines whether *Sisters of War* (2010) is successful in maintaining this alliance and assisting the producer to deliver his authorial objectives. The theoretical connections between authorial vision and pity and fear are tested in the reality of production.
5. DISC 2  SISTERS OF WAR –
SCENE SELECTIONS (2011)

The following DVD sections are to be found on Disc 2. Each of them will be examined in chapter six.

DVD Section #1  Scenes  1-3
Opening/Title sequence

DVD Section #2  Scenes  14-21
The mission is captured

DVD Section #3  Scenes  33 & 72
Sister Berenice and Suzuki

DVD Section #4  Scenes  35-37
Lorna’s boyfriend, Len, is executed

DVD Section #5  Scenes  75-79
Search for the radio/prisoner exchange

DVD Section #6  Scenes  86-88
The Japanese wounded

DVD Section #7  Scenes:  91-95
Aftermath of bombing on the Vunapope mission

DVD Section #8  Scenes:  117-118
The Japanese captain collapses

DVD Section #9  Scenes:  118-120
Sister Berenice – liberation

DVD Section #10  Scenes:  121-122
Lorna – liberation
6. PITY AND FEAR ASSESSED IN 

SISTERS OF WAR (2010)

History on film is largely about emotion, an attempt to make us feel as if we are learning about the past by vicariously living through its moments. And this experience comes in stories that … both engage the discourse of history and add something to that discourse.

(Rosenstone, 2006, p. 118)

The present of past things is the memory; the present of present things is direct perception; and the present of future things is expectation.

(Saint Augustine, 1961, p. 269 bk.11, sec 20)

The purpose of this section is to assess how various scenes and scene-sequences in the case study telemovie contain and induce the dramatic and emotional elements of pity and fear. An assessment can then be made of the relationship between these elements and the authorial objectives of the producer, with a critical focus on whether this dynamic assists to create meaningful links between the history and the story in this form.

One means by which these particular scenes will reveal the relationship between authorial objective and pity and fear is the degree to which they assist to illuminate the question posited in chapter three. This question is: what do we believe in when our very existence is threatened? Exposure to this central question should provoke a wider consideration of the complexity of conflict. The question will be brought into sharp relief if the telemovie’s scenes assist the viewer to imagine the fear and the pity of those who suffer in war.
In this process of assessing particular scenes, I examine the forms of manipulation that the producer exploits when transforming oral history into visual storytelling. This includes investigating how production matters assist or impede the satisfactory placement of pitiable and fearful events in the drama.

*Sisters of War* (2010) was inspired by oral histories. Historian Rod Miller and writer John Misto conducted research into empirical matters considered important to the storytelling, but the key referent was the set of recollections provided by Lorna Johnston and Sister Berenice Twohill. The relationship between the producer’s authorial goals and pity and fear was affected by the collective memories of these two women and the question arises as to whether the story remains faithful to memory or owes a broader allegiance to other knowledge bases when the two appear to be in conflict.

*Sisters of War* (2010) is received in the present as a result of Lorna and Sister Berenice remembering, in Saint Augustine’s phrase, “the present of past things”. The following scenes reveal that memory, as a mode of connection between past event and current belief, directly affects how the producer manipulates the emotional elements of the drama to meet his own objectives.

The following scenes were chosen with a particular consideration in mind. A key objective for television historical drama is to make the multitudinous incidents that have occurred in the past intelligible and memorable and, as a consequence, every scene must work in concert with every other scene to seamlessly build the story into a cohesive and satisfactory whole.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle contends that because the best plots imitate a “single unified action … the structure of the various sections of the events must be such that the transposition or removal of any one section dislocates and changes the whole” (51a 32). This also becomes a guiding principle for the producer considering the creation, insertion and arrangement of pity and fear and pitiable and fearful events. If the scene can be removed without discernible effect or if it can be transposed with another without affecting the emotional charge of the whole work, then its claim to a place in the drama is tenuous.
Notwithstanding the importance of every scene in the overall construction of the
drama, ten scenes or scene-sequences from *Sisters of War* (2010) that demonstrate
various forms of pitiable and fearful events were identified, and these are assessed
with regard to the following criteria:

- **Synopsis and intention**
  A statement of what occurs in the scene and the background to its
  intention, construction and placement.

- **Manipulation – from research interview to screen**
  What aspects of pity and fear does the scene engender? In what manner
  have the elements of pity and fear and their inciting historical referent
  been manipulated through the development, production and editing
  processes? Have these processes of manipulation diminished or heightened
  the role of pity and fear in these selected scenes?

- **Pity, fear and the producer’s objectives**
  An assessment is made of the strengths and limits of the scene and the
  degree to which its elements of pity and fear have been harnessed to meet
  the producer’s authorial objectives.

This assessment provides a base to test the proposition that television historical
drama can utilise the key emotive elements of pity and fear to create an intense
and meaningful correspondence between our understanding of past events and our
desire and need for an imaginative representation of those events.

### 6.1 Thematic Emotions

Before examining the selected scenes it is important to note that the research
interview with Lorna and Sister Berenice reveals two overarching themes and
sentiments, those of innocence and hope. The two women refer to these themes at
regular intervals in the research interview, and as recently as April 2011 (in a
newspaper interview) Sister Berenice reinforced her position by stating:
I always knew we were going to come out on top. I never felt we were going to be beaten – none of us spoke in that vein – we were too busy counting planes and living day to day.

(Smith, 2011)

These themes of innocence and hope pervade the script and production as a whole and provide a prism through which the other emotive elements can be viewed. The producer should consider the overarching themes that develop through discussion about a history-based project prior to embarking on the initial writing stages. Setting parameters in this manner provides a context within which the specific emotional terms can be applied.

**6.1.1 Innocence**

The first of the overarching themes is that of innocence. The elements of pity and fear and pitiable and fearful events embodied in the telemovie flow from the initial belief of both participants, Sister Berenice and Lorna, that they were not in danger. Indeed, until December 1941 and the attack on Pearl Harbour they thought their work was being carried out in tropical splendour. Lorna stated, “to be perfectly honest … we thought we were in the island of paradise and the war was in Europe and would never be down in the Pacific” (Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 93).

Notions of pity and fear do not occur in a vacuum. They are brought into sharp relief when they are preceded by a belief that the environment for the characters is either benign or where questions of life and death are not immediately present. Even when the narrative begins in medias res, at a point when narrative elements have already begun to operate, the drama is enhanced if the level of jeopardy has not peaked. The emotional elements must be given space to evolve. The ability of the drama to mediate the story and history is, in part, dependent on the ability of the story and the storyteller to provide an entry point which already contains some dramatic movement but which also allows pity and fear to develop.
By entering the drama at a point where elements of the central conflict are already underway, a limiting factor for history-based television drama is immediately evident. The amount of information pertaining to the historical events leading up to and causing the drama is restricted. The “back story”, which a prose description may be able to delve into at some length, must necessarily be curtailed. Conventional devices used to address this challenge include the use of a narrator to set the scene or on-screen text to provide background. These words are usually kept to an absolute minimum or they will impede the commencement of the drama. For *Sisters of War* (2010), the script called for three title cards reading as follows:

1. On January 22nd, 1942, the Japanese attacked Rabaul. The poorly-armed Australian troops soon found themselves trapped.
2. Eighty-four wounded diggers and their Australian nurses were evacuated to Vunapope, a Catholic mission station.
3. This is the story of what happened next. It is inspired by real people and events ...

The final version of the telemovie has two title cards that read;

1. On January 22nd, 1942, the Japanese attacked Rabaul.
2. The Australian nurses and their patients were evacuated to Vunapope. This is the story of what happened next. It is inspired by real people and events ...

Concision was deemed necessary to propel the story even though some detail was lost as a result. A sense of innocence, part of the emotional crucible within which subsequent elements of pity and fear will also be found, is established by using text to emphasise the sudden move from peace to war and these words are given visual reinforcement by interweaving the words with images of the nurses dancing with naïve abandonment on the beach at Rabaul.
6.1.2 Hope

The second overarching theme is that of hope. Lorna and Sister Berenice are survivors. Proving that hope played a part in their survival is not germane to the thesis proposition but hope is allied to notions of pity and fear for a sense of hope denied or delayed fuels our sense of undeserved suffering for the characters. On more than one occasion in the research interview (Johnston & Twohill, 2008) Lorna referred to their approach to hope, “well you know honestly we just never gave up hope. We never gave up hope” (p. 48) and Sister Berenice continued, “well death it comes to everybody doesn’t it … and you meet these things as they occur … faith I suppose comes through to you (p. 107).

While there are few explicit lines of dialogue within the drama in which the women talk of hope, their actions, tenacity and in Sister Berenice’s case, religious belief and observances speak of their will to survive. In scene eleven of the sixth draft, the first scene of sustained dialogue between the two women, Sister Berenice indicates that she is hopeful that they will be saved.

BERENICE
(trying to be brave)
Oh, I’m not scared. I’m sure that
God will protect us.

LORNA
Like he’s looked after the rest
of Rabaul? Your God isn’t white -
he doesn’t play cricket - and he won’t
give a hoot what happens to you.

Lorna’s immediate rejection of Sister Berenice’s faith and optimism alerts the audience to the tension that surrounds the desire to endure the threat of captivity. This demonstration of fortitude and desire to prevail also provides a backdrop against which the other privations can be assessed.
The naïve sense of safety and innocence and then the overarching but contested concept of hope are the twin elements that bring the emotive properties of the whole story into dramatic relief.

The correlation between hope and fear is given voice in *The Art of Rhetoric* when Aristotle states, “fear sets us thinking what can be done, which of course nobody does when things are hopeless” (1383a 5-6). This precept assists to guide the creation of scenes in the telemovie. If fear, as this thesis contends, is a vital ingredient in the dramatic construction that leads to a connection between audience and history, then the plot elements that embrace this emotion cannot create a sense of hopelessness. However, to suggest that the key characters harbour hope it is not necessary to blandly insert dialogue, voice-over or action in which they overtly speak of liberation or escape from harm. Fear and hope, like pitiable and fearful events, are intertwined and the expression of one often summons a sense of the other.

This Aristotelian concept guided the drafting of additional voice-over towards the final stages of the edit. In order to strengthen this sense of hope, the voice-overs for both Lorna and Sister Berenice were changed considerably during the last stages of the picture edit. As producer, I considered this necessary because the weight of the scenes up to the point where the Vunapope mission is bombed revealed the deprivations that the women were suffering but they did not adequately reflect the sense of hope that had been suggested in the interview material.

The alteration to voice-over described above created a greater fidelity between the stated beliefs of the agents of the history and the representation of that belief. The word “hope” is not required in the voice-over as the fusion of the sense of fear and the sense of hope is contained within the set-up of the scene, i.e., hope is suggested by the expression of fear and the images of the group walking defiantly from the burning remains of their mission.

The final voice-over for scene 98 is presented below with the later additions in bold.
BERENICE
(v/o)

Night after night the Americans return and pound Vunapope into dust. And timber and prayers are no match for bombs. **But we carry our faith inside - and nothing can destroy that.**

We have nothing left – no food, shelter, no water to wash in. By now I must smell like a chook-house in a heat wave. So we weren’t surprised when the Japanese announced we, too, are being moved. Forty miles away - to a place called Ramale. **There are no raids there. So we shall have some peace and quiet at last.** We left our mission - and all our dreams - on the 6th of June, 1944 (sadly) - a date no one will remember but us. **We are now in the hands of God.**

In *Sisters of War* (2010), the two women who are the source of the research material revealed their innocence and naïveté before the hostilities commenced but even under the harshest of conditions were hopeful of survival. The arrangement of pitiable and fearful events therefore had to be used in the construction of the drama in such a way as to be faithful to these emotional states. In addition, by re-working voice-over in the edit. a sense of hopelessness was avoided which assisted to maintain the beneficial tension of fear.

### 6.2 Scene Selections

**DVD Section** # 1

- Opening/Title sequence
- Scenes 1-3

**Synopsis – Opening/Title sequence**

The opening titles are superimposed on images of handwriting on parchment paper. The writing dissolves into newsreel footage accompanied by narration telling us that Australian “diggers” are headed for New Britain and, “are poised to reveal Australian might in action and dispel any fears of a Japanese invasion”.

99
Text on screen provides information about the state of the war in Rabaul. Following the text the two main characters are introduced. We see Lorna assisting patients in the back of a military vehicle and asking the driver, Len, for whom she obviously has a fondness, where they will be evacuated. We then see a nun, Sister Berenice, reacting to the sight of a Japanese fighter plane skimming above the jungle canopy.

**Intention**
The script calls for an opening scene that seeks to set up swiftly and with energy a notion of tropical paradise that reflects the complacent sense of security of the central characters but also points to the broader mind-set of the country as a whole. The faux newsreel was written to establish the naïve state of affairs preceding the invasion. The intention at scripting was to create a base of optimism that would eerily foreshadow the impending decent into the anguish of war, a base from which the twinned dramatic elements of pity and fear can operate. Scenes 2 and 3 are designed to reveal that the protagonists are bewildered by the swift turn of events as the Japanese military approaches.

**Manipulation – from research interview to screen**
The sixth draft of the script begins with the newsreel. During the pre-production stages it was also decided (by the producer and director) to film a montage sequence depicting, with extreme close-ups, the writing of letters and diary material that feature later in the movie and to insert this prior to the newsreel. Working in concert, the intent of this montage material and the newsreel was to establish a mood that calls for an emotional response from the audience and to provide some key factual information about the events of January 1942.

Many of the imprisoned nurses kept diaries (Miller, 2007) and Rod Miller’s patient work over eleven years which uncovered those diaries was the inciting research that provided a catalyst for this production. The use of diary and writing images in the opening titles foreshadows the use of a diary and letters later in the telemovie.
Lorna kept a diary but the telemovie does not quote directly from her writings, rather it invents new words, a manipulation deemed necessary in order to use these new words to reflect her observations from the research interview of 2008. A more marked manipulation is the creation of letters written by the character of Sister Berenice, letters she commences when the two women are separated and Lorna is taken to Japan. Sister Berenice did not write any letters during her period of captivity.

The creation of Sister Berenice’s letters is an example of manipulation and creative invention being utilised to preserve a sense of the historical sequence of events. In the initial script discussions a suggestion from the broadcaster was to keep all of the drama in New Britain and not to include any material in Japan, as to do so would create a separation between the two characters that might diminish the dramatic tension. Had this suggestion been implemented, only events as they occurred in the six months in which the two women were actually together could have been presented or the time-line grossly altered to suggest they spent more time together in New Guinea than was actually the case.

It was decided that to present the history with greater veracity it was important to retain Lorna’s move to Japan and to overcome the physical separation of the two lead characters by creating a “correspondence” between them. In the following scene we “hear” Sister Berenice and the words of her letter to Lorna and are invited to reflect on the pity she feels for the Japanese soldiers and the fear she has for Lorna’s fate.

INT. VUNAPOPE CONVENT – DAY 84
And now we see Sister Berenice, sitting on her bed in the Nuns’ Dormitory, writing to Lorna.

BERENICE

(v/o)
And he’s ordered me to apologize, Lorna.
But since you’re gone, I can only do it in writing – and hope that by some miracle – my letters might reach you one day.
(later in the same scene the V/O continues)

Last night some of the wounded were taken outside, then the Japanese doctors went around and medicated each with a bullet. And soon the thought occurred to me. If the Japanese would kill their own men, what must they have done to you? To you and all the nurses?

This invention provides a clear example of how the producer’s desire to harness pity and fear through the insertion of non-historic elements assists to create a bridge between the story and its referent. Further, one of the key reasons for the creation of the letters was to deepen and sustain the connection between the two women, a connection that allows a fuller presentation of pitiable and fearful events that occur both in New Guinea and Japan and to see how they arouse pity and fear for each other even though they are separated.

In the final version of the telemovie Lorna is seen writing in her diary in Japan on two occasions. In the first edits she does not refer to Berenice but her voice-over was re-written and re-recorded to create a clearer sense that her words are directed towards her friend, to deepen the emotional resonance at this point by sustaining the notion of correspondence between the two women.

In alignment with the Aristotelian concept of reversal, *Sisters of War* (2010) contains reversals in which it is evident that the wills of the protagonists run contrary to their fates. In the letter and diary devices of the script the audience “hears” their thoughts but they see how their “ends” are manipulated by their captors. In witnessing the liminality of the characters as their sure boundaries around them collapse, both at the point of invasion and during incarceration, the audience are invited to consider the unenviable forces that confront the characters.

With regard to the newsreel, archival footage from the time was blended with constructed footage. The archival footage that was chosen was not specifically from the Rabaul location, as appropriate footage of New Britain could not be
located. The manipulation of the newsreel was justified as it met one of the key objectives of the producer, which was to intensify emotional response: the images selected from the archival material were intended to meet the demands of the script by portraying the sense of complacency that existed in New Britain prior to the invasion by Japanese forces.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the original opening of the first draft of the script incorporated text to set up how many nurses, nuns and wounded soldiers were moved to the “safety” of the Vunapope mission twenty kilometres from Rabaul. The text concluded with the line “this is the true story of what happened next”. The writer agreed to alter this text to “this is the story of what happened next. It is inspired by real people and real events…” Story and its self-reflexive emotional properties, especially those related to pity and fear, assist the audience to consider the work as a fictionalised account. However, if text is being used to convey information of a purely factual basis, then qualification must be built into the text when it moves beyond the known facts and is providing a guide for the entire realm of the story.

Textual qualification may also be justified if the style of the film is such that it attempts to mimic documentary approaches. For instance, after Gillo Pontecorvo directed The Battle of Algiers (1966) he made the statement “everything was filmed with a telephoto lens which gave it a graininess, the look of real events captured spontaneously” (Pontecorvo, 1967, as cited in Davis, 2000, p. 9). Following discussion about the truthfulness of the film in 1967, Pontecorvo added the following words to the version of the film with English subtitles “this dramatic enactment of the battle of Algiers contains not one foot of newsreel or documentary film”. Sisters of War (2010) utilises a conventional filmic approach which obviates the need for additional text to remind the audience that they are watching images which have been constructed and directed, but the shift from stating that “this is a true story” to one “inspired” by actual events is an important alteration.

A subtle but important distinction can be made between the construction of words, “inspired by real events” and “based on real events”. It was decided to use the
word inspired as it suggests in a clearer and stronger fashion than the word based that the drama will use the inspiration of documented events and craft new, additional and imagined images and sequences that flow from the empirical base. In that the word inspired also contains an emotive resonance, whereas the word based connotes a mechanistic approach, the former is a more appropriate and more telling way to commence a visual story in which the emotive elements are harnessed to connect story and history.

**Pity, fear and the producer’s objectives**

The opening of the telemovie creates a base from which key emotional elements of the drama can be fashioned. This is most evident in the creation of a sense of hope and innocence that set the scene for fearful and pitiable events.

Quite deliberately, the emotional pitch of pity and fear in these opening scenes is limited, providing room for dramatic escalation. However, the proximity of danger, one of Aristotle’s prerequisites for a sense of fear, is manifest in the sight of wounded soldiers being cared for and the chilling image of a fighter plane skimming the treetops. At a cognitive level we are aware that the danger is caused by the presence of an enemy and that the scale of the attack represents an historical event of great magnitude. Our temporal understanding is situated in the written explanation of the cards but also by the notion of impending danger and an understanding that the fear of the characters may be similar to that experienced by others in a time of war.

**Limitations**

The limits on the ability of the opening scene to connect history and story are to be found in the speed with which it must set up the drama and the consequent restriction of the amount of information that can be provided to the audience about that which preceded these events. The invasion of New Britain and Rabaul by the Japanese military occurred over three weeks, with the first major air raid beginning on January 4th 1942 and the actual invasion commencing on January 23rd 1942 (Wigmore, 1957). Lorna was stationed at Rabaul and was evacuated to Vunapope on the 22nd and 23rd of January (Miller, 2007). In *Sisters of War* (2010) the chronology of the actual events is compressed in order to move the drama
ahead and to intensify the emotional response. This compaction is evident in the speed with which the drama brings together the two main characters and glosses over the period when they suspected the Japanese were going to invade.

The singularities, the range of particular incidents that led to the predicament for these nuns, nurses and their patients are beyond the scope of this telemovie to articulate or dramatise. The intent was to create coherence within the narrative through the judicious selection of an entry point and then layering the dramatic elements plausibly and compellingly from that point onward. In part, the entry point was chosen because it provides the swiftest method of introducing characters and setting up the manner in which we might pity their circumstance and fear for their future.

**DVD Section #2**
The mission is captured
Scenes 14-21

**Synopsis – The mission is captured**
This sequence depicts the hours in which the Japanese troops stormed the mission and ordered the nuns, the nurses and their patients to parade in the compound. We see a machine gun being set up and then the intervention of Bishop Leo Scharmach as he confronts the Japanese captain.

**Intention**
The sequence is designed to reveal the immediate threat to the women and patients and to convey how swiftly their circumstances changed. The intention is also to introduce the Japanese commander and his interpreter and observe their dilemma as they decide how to treat their captives.

**Manipulation – from research interview to screen**
In the interview material which motivates this sequence Lorna tells us:
… and their bayonets banging and they’re – you know screaming and yelling and pulling us all – pulling the boys out of bed and we got out on the lawn and it was about 8 o’clock … And there we were all standing with our hands above our heads for what must have been about three hours.

… it was a very frightening – a frightening experience you know … you kept on thinking well if only they’d shoot me – shoot us and get it finished with …

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 42)

Lorna made it clear that when the Japanese arrived they made her and her colleagues and patients assemble in the compound for many hours. These events are compressed in the telemovie in order to provide momentum for the drama and to create a scene of great tension and to amplify the twin emotions of pity and fear.

In the scene in which the first Japanese soldiers confront the nuns in their convent, the script called for the following exchange between two of the soldiers.

JAPANESE SOLDIER 2
(in Japanese, puzzled)
Why would females dress like this?
JAPANESE SOLDIER 1
(in Japanese)
Perhaps they’re widows.
MARTHA
(gently to Berenice)
Don’t panic, Sister.
JAPANESE SOLDIER 2
(in Japanese)
Or their husbands are at war - and they don’t want other men looking at them.
JAPANESE SOLDIER 1  
(in Japanese)  
Now we know what our wives  
should be wearing.  
The Japanese Soldiers laugh.  
JAPANESE SOLDIER 2  
(fiercely at the Nuns)  
Outside! Outside!  

(Draft 6, p. 17)

The intention of the dialogue is to humanise the enemy and as such meets one of the objectives of the producer. In edit, this dialogue was dropped (against the writer’s wishes) as it was considered that it undercut the momentum and drama of the sequence. This excision is a clear example of the tension that exists between temporal and emotional concerns, between the rhythm of dramatic construction and the goal of imbuing every scene with words and images that convey key themes and objectives. In this case the duration of the scene and the cumulative running time of the movie were deemed more important than the authorial goal of presenting the “other” as complex characters. This tension between time and the dramatic elements of pity and fear will be examined in other scene illustrations to follow.

Pity, fear and the producer’s objectives
This sequence is an example of another of the key objectives of the producer, which is to create a sense of sufficient imagination regarding the chaos, brutality and initial helplessness of those who are captive in war. The key participants move from a state of relative security and there is dramatic immersion in pitiable and fearful scenes in which the efforts of the nurses to care for their patients are threatened and their own lives are also threatened. These are pitiful and fearful events and an indication of the manner in which the states of pity and fear are connected. As Halliwell (1998) contends, “our pity for others’ undeserved suffering depends in part on our sympathetic capacity to imagine, and imaginatively fear, such things for ourselves …” (p. 177). The intention for this
scene-sequence is for the audience to experience both pity for the plight of the captives and a sense of imaginative fear for themselves.

It is critical to note that pity/fear is evoked from the actions to which the characters are subject; the audience reacts to pitiable and fearful events. The actions of the Japanese soldiers create the pity and fear inherent in these events. The viewer is led to consider the historical incidents because the agents within the drama react to the actions of others and the viewer is left to contemplate how the actions of the soldiers may be dictated by others (their superiors). This is made evident when, in the second part of this sequence, the Japanese commander gives orders to his machine gun team not to fire upon the captives after the Bishop of the mission has informed him that it is a German protectorate.

This sequence meets many of the Aristotelian conditions for the presentation of fearful matters. This is both true in the general sense when Aristotle contends that “things at a great remove are not feared” (1382a) and then in the particular when he states that “fearsome things are the more fearsome (when) completely unsusceptible of being put right or not in one’s power but in that of one’s enemies” (1382b).

The emotive elements of pity and fear operate in other ways within this sequence. While the audience may pity the predicament of the captives and imagine their own fear in a similar situation, they are also aware that the nature of their response is similar to but not the same as the fear they would experience in that situation. We recall Butcher’s (1951) claim (examined in chapter four) that:

The emotion of fear is profoundly altered when it is transferred from the real to the imaginative world. It is no longer the direct apprehension of misfortune impending over our own life. It is not caused by the actual approach of danger. It is the sympathetic shudder we feel for a hero whose character in its essentials resembles our own. (p. 258)
In this sequence, the audience’s understanding of the relationship between drama and the history that inspired it is suggested by the expression of emotive elements that have a dramatic reality and an actual reality. No script device or filmic artifice is required to provoke this reaction. The emotive elements assist to mediate story and history in that they remind the audience of their “partiality” and draw their attention to the methods of story construction even as story presents the history.

The placement of these scenes also creates an expectation for the viewer that the lead characters will continue to journey through the film. Fear that the characters may be killed at this point by the machine gunner is tempered by knowledge of elemental notions of screen grammar. The lead characters have been made known to the viewer. It is almost inconceivable that they will all be killed so early in the drama. In this manner, the fear that is experienced in these scenes is a reminder of the dramatic construction taking place within the script and the produced scenes and that there is a constructed correspondence between the past events and the telling of them.

Limitations

This sequence provides an opportunity to consider the tension that exists between the desire to create an emotional reaction for the audience and the costs and logistics associated with producing that effect. Does budget constrain the authorial objectives of the producer? Does budget impact on the ability of pity and fear to operate effectively?

Several key scenes and sequences in the drama bring this matter into sharp relief, and this scene-sequence illuminates the limiting effect of the practical aspects of production and how they may militate against the desire to harness emotional elements to link story and history.

Extensive location searches in the six-month period leading up to the start of pre-production revealed that there was no existing location within a reasonable distance of the production’s Gold Coast (Queensland) base that might be used for the main set of the Vunapope mission. It was conceivable that a more authentic
combination of ocean and coastal flats existed further north but the cost of transporting crew and cast was prohibitive. This led to a decision to build the mission set from scratch on Mount Tamborine, a location situated within 25 kilometres of the production office. The 25 kilometre arc is an important consideration, because beyond this distance extra travel costs are incurred for the crew.

The emotional impact of this sequence and indeed of the whole film depends, in part, on the audience “believing” that the set and locations that the actors inhabit have an authenticity that does not stretch credulity or interrupt the dramatic flow. The decision to build the mission as a set rather than use an existing building created an overspend. The total overspend in the art department was $237,262 (cost report dated 30th March 2011). A significant proportion of this figure relates to the construction of the major set.

Constructing this set placed additional pressures on the filming schedule and budget and meant that it was not possible to re-film scenes that might have been improved with more work. The final set is appropriate in that it creates a surround in which the emotional elements of pitiable and fearful events and their cathartic ends may be presented, but it is limiting in that had a bigger budget been available the set would have been centred in an area that was more like the topography of the actual Vunapope mission in New Britain.

A specific example of deviation from the known particulars of history caused by production logistics and cost is the construction of the chapel at the convent. At the actual Vunapope mission a large stone cathedral existed and was destroyed in bombing raids by the Allies. A much smaller chapel was conceived for the telemovie but even this had to be scaled down due to budgetary pressures, and eventually a stylised cross was erected on a hilltop. This cross is an inaccurate reflection of what actually existed. I contend, however, that as a powerful devotional symbol, one that assists to establish depth of faith, the cross represents a faithful universal concept of the religious concerns of the Order of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart at Vunapope.


**Synopsis – Sister Berenice befriends Suzuki, a young Japanese soldier**

A key subplot for this drama involves an evolving conversation between Suzuki, a very young Japanese soldier, and Sister Berenice. In their first encounter in scene 33 we see Lorna waking at night and discovering that Sister Berenice is giving solace to the fifteen-year old Suzuki, who has shown her a picture of his mother. Lorna is dumbfounded by this demonstration of kindness to the enemy. Later, Lorna discovers that an utterly distraught Suzuki has been involved in bayoneting Australian soldiers.

At scene 72, Suzuki proudly informs Sister Berenice that he is leaving the camp to be part of a fighting unit, “Me tough guy. Me go to war”. As he moves off after being upbraided by an officer for speaking with a nun, Suzuki surreptitiously drops a photo of his mother for Sister Berenice. This photo later protects Sister Berenice from a violent attack from a Japanese guard. When Suzuki does not return from the battle, Sister Berenice is clearly distraught.

**Intention**

The inclusion of this subplot meets one of the producer’s objectives by conveying broad themes: that the savagery of war is inflicted on the young and innocent of all armies, and that there are always some participants of war who attempt to reach out to the enemy and who try to resist hatred in their own hearts. The consideration of the enemy as *other* embraces both of these themes. The intention is to arouse a sense of pity for the youth of war by revealing that their youth is corrupted by violence.

**Manipulation – from research interview to screen**

Motivation for the scenes that develop this subplot was drawn from a range of responses in the research interview.
We learned really what human life – human nature was. Now we talk about what the Japanese did, but look, every army did the same thing. War brings out the worst in humanity and it brings out the best.

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 66)

Later in the interview Sister Berenice informed us that Sugai, one of the Japanese interpreters, came to her and said, “I’ve got to go to war, I don’t want to go, … I’ve got to go and fight” (p. 69).

The subplot of the conversation between Suzuki and the nun was designed to convey Sister Berenice’s attitudes towards her captors as she revealed them in the interview. The character of Suzuki is a fictional amalgam of several guards to whom Sister Berenice referred. In order to further reinforce her position that hatred must be resisted in war, in scene 67, set on the night before Sister Berenice and Lorna believe they are to be executed, the following section of dialogue was included.

LORNA
On our last night alive, I would like some companionship.

BERENICE
I haven’t got time. I’m too busy praying for you.

LORNA
I don’t want your rosaries. I want a schooner of beer - a Clarke Gable movie - and to hear you say you detest the Japs.

BERENICE
(indicates her heart)
Did you ever stop to think that this is where all wars are born?
Yes, a part of me wants to give
in to it, Lorna - but I’m
fighting to resist that.
I will not leave this life with
hate in my heart.

(Draft 6, p.54)

Draft 6 contained one other scene regarding the relationship between the women and Suzuki. In scene 74, Berenice and Lorna observe a line of bleeding and injured Japanese troops returning to the hospital. Suzuki is not among them and Lorna delivers the following line to Sister Berenice who is clearly concerned about the missing Suzuki: “Don’t you dare pray for him”.

In the final version of the edit, all of the scenes in the Suzuki/Sister Berenice subplot remain except scene 74. The director and I considered that it was clear that Suzuki was not returning and the line from Lorna was too harsh. The scene was included in the DVD extras as part of the segment for deleted scenes. Inclusion of the deleted scenes segment is another method by which the manner of manipulation is made manifest, allowing the viewer of the DVD to appreciate the creative choices that are inherent in the process.

**Pity, fear and the producer’s objectives**

The manipulation of the Suzuki sequence, including the conflation of multiple real characters, served to expound on the theme surrounding the question; what does a person believe in when their ethical and moral frameworks are threatened by the savagery of war? The pity that Sister Berenice expresses for the plight of a young soldier and her refusal to compromise her faith was directly prompted by Sister Berenice’s responses in interview and is an example of the effectiveness of pity to meet authorial intent and to link oral history with story.

One of my stated objectives for the drama, as detailed in chapter three, was to draw attention to the complexity of war and the complexity of the relationships between combatants, between captor and captive. To this end several overlapping emotional elements are at work in this scene-sequence. Pity for the undeserved
suffering of the captors is invoked by recognition of Suzuki’s youth and his despair at being part of a brutal event over which he clearly has little control. The pity rests on cognition of his situation and the exploitation of the young for acts of war.

As pity is generated, an evaluation may be induced about the relative culpability of soldiers as it relates to age and authority. Our pity for Suzuki is unlikely to be of a contemptuous variety and therefore our benevolent pity for the individual prompts thoughts about the experiences of the youth of war. Pity may also invoke our imagination for wars beyond the war being depicted.

**DVD section** #4

Lorna’s boyfriend, Len, is executed

Scenes 35-37

**Synopsis – Lorna’s boyfriend, Len, is executed**

Prior to scene 35 the audience have been introduced to the character of Len and his relationship with Lorna. Len assists his men by escaping into the jungle when the Japanese invade but is captured shortly after and, following torture, is beheaded by the Japanese authorities.

**Intention**

The sequence is designed to convey the deadly horror that surrounded the captives and reveal the depths of Lorna’s suffering.

**Manipulation – from research interview to screen**

This scene is an invention and there is no research transcript to support its inclusion. Both Lorna and Sister Berenice witnessed pain and suffering through their time in captivity. Both women became aware of the Tol plantation executions in which several escaping Australian soldiers were killed (Wigmore, 1957). Originally, the scene was written to show an unknown soldier being killed but a decision was made to personalise this pain with respect to Lorna in order to
create a deeper level of empathy from the audience and to expose us to her undeserved suffering.

**Pity, fear and the producer’s objectives**

The intensity of the emotional elements of the scene is intended to provide a searing moment at the 34-minute mark of the drama. The scene attempts to generate a fusion of pity and fear as we feel for the hopelessness of the soldier, pity Lorna’s plight and her sense of loss and grief and imagine the fear that we might experience in such a situation. As discussed in chapter four, our fear is partial as we are aware that the sensation is similar to but not the same as fear generated by a “real” event. And so the viewing experience and the creation of the emotion remind us of the constructed nature of the work. A combination of pity and fear intensifies our reaction to the past while at the same time alerting us to the means by which the past is being represented in this form.

**Limitations**

In the pre-production period leading up to filming I flew to Auckland, where Lorna currently lives, to discuss the project and this scene in particular. Lorna had a boyfriend in the months leading up to the invasion by the Japanese but lost contact with him during the invasion and did not see him again until many years after the war. The relationship was not as intense as that portrayed in the telemovie and her boyfriend was not killed as depicted in the drama. I spoke with Lorna about this and she agreed that the inclusion of the scene was warranted.

I suggested to Lorna that the character of Len was necessary in order to dramatise a particular plot line. In interview, Lorna expressed her doubts about the motives of Bishop Leo Scharmach: she was concerned that in his efforts to protect his flock he associated too closely with the Japanese authorities. In the telemovie it is clear that Lorna believes that the Bishop has betrayed her boyfriend, and Len’s execution provides a clear motivation for Lorna’s subsequent actions and provides a point of tension between Lorna and Sister Berenice regarding the Bishop and his intentions.
Crucially, the invention of the execution scene is part of a sequence of plausible events and is not inserted merely to arouse fear at any cost. In the *Poetics* Aristotle contends that “it is possible for the evocation of pity and fear to result from the spectacle, and also from the structure of the events itself” (53b 1-14). In this same section Aristotle contends that structure rather than spectacle is preferable and that the test of its effectiveness is that even when the events are described rather than performed they will cause the listener to “shudder with pity”. As previously marked, he also insists that, “those who use spectacle to produce an effect which is not evocative of fear, but simply monstrous, having nothing to do with tragedy …”

The violence of the execution scene in *Sisters of War* (2010), which almost certainly led to its rating of MA (mature audiences), was the middle point of a set of scenes designed to strengthen the dramatic structure and link the two protagonists. The fear that is generated by the scene is not therefore, “monstrous”, in the Aristotelian sense and earns its place within the drama.

As part of my original consultation I drew Sister Berenice’s attention to scene 111 in draft 6 in which Bishop Leo Scharmach questions his own faith and judgement. He has received a letter informing him that the nurses (who he allowed to be sent to Japan believing they would be part of a prisoner of war exchange) are to remain in Japan at great peril. Unaware of the letter, Sister Berenice asks the Bishop to give the last rites to the dying Sister Marie.

BERENICE
She trusts in God’s will.

BISHOP SCHARMACH
God’s will! God looks on us with scorn.
I am dried up inside. I have no faith left.

(Draft 6, p. 82)
Sister Berenice was adamant that the Bishop would not have made such a clear public declaration relating to his faith. As producer I thought it reasonable to maintain most of the scene, but as a result of the meeting with Sister Berenice it was decided by myself, the writer and director to delete the lines above. In addition, I dropped a filmed scene in which, on the walk to the Ramale valley, the Bishop drops his rosary beads and makes no attempt to retrieve them. The scene is in the deleted scenes segment on the DVD.

The extent to which the dramatic elements of pity and fear may be arranged via the producer’s authorial role to mediate history and story are dependent, in part, on the producer’s relationship with the individuals who inspired the history. In this case, a negotiation with Sister Berenice led to a shift in emphasis in a critical sequence. The shift did not make the scene unworkable but it provides an example of the adjustments that occur when oral history is mediated with story.

The representation of the past is influenced not only by the form of communication and its inherent strengths and limitations, but by the memories of those who were witness to the events of the past. In the Augustine formulation stated at the beginning of this chapter we see that memory relates to the past but also to a set of beliefs that exist in the present and to aspirations for the future. Thus, the ability of pity and fear to mediate story and history are in themselves constrained by the negotiations between producer and primary source. From this we may conclude that there is no “pure” telling of the history but rather a telling that is a contested set of ideas, perspectives and personal desires which, in this instance are under the guidance of a producer seeking to respect the wishes of the eyewitnesses as well as the demands of the medium.
**Synopsis – Search for the radio/prisoner exchange**

The nurses and nuns are woken by their Japanese guards who ransack their quarters. The Japanese captain orders all of the women to leave but then, following protest from the Bishop, he relents and allows the nuns to stay.

**Intention**

To reveal the brutal fragility of the women’s existence and to show the moment when the two women are parted.

**Manipulation – from research interview to screen**

In the research interview, both Lorna and Sister Berenice referred to times when their captors ransacked their dormitory and forced them outside. Lorna believes they were searching for radios that the Japanese assumed the nurses and nuns were using to alert the Allies to Japanese movements. Lorna believed this was triggered after the Battle of the Coral Sea, a military stalemate which prevented the Japanese navy from sailing to Port Moresby and which eventually forced the Japanese to attempt to take Port Moresby by an overland route, the Kokoda Track.

The source for this scene is a section of interview in which Lorna and Sister Berenice recount a terrifying incident in which they were ordered from their sleeping quarters.

… we all had to kneel down and all these [men] came along with their ropes and their spades and their bayonets of course … and they said we’re going to see each one of you … and we thought this is it. We thought they were going to finish us off you know. They were always looking for radios. They never trusted us. Right to the last day they thought we had radios, which we didn’t …

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 52)
In the same interview section, Sister Berenice noted that while they were waiting outside and fearful for their lives they managed to throw some incriminating objects, including several diaries, into the Banjo (toilet). A record of history was literally being flushed away. This incident gives further credence to the notion that a micro-history in the form of a television history drama such as *Sisters of War* (2010) can assist to preserve what otherwise may be lost forever.

While the telemovie does not refer to any particular sea battle that motivates the Japanese to ransack the convent, the most obvious actual event (as Lorna believed) was the Battle of the Coral Sea. Both Lorna and Sister Berenice believe firmly that they heard this battle (Johnston & Twohill, 2008). The Coral Sea covers a wide area, but almost certainly it would have been impossible for Lorna and Sister Berenice to have heard this battle from Vunapope, which is several hundred kilometres from the northern extremity of the Coral Sea.

These scenes reveal the tension that may exist in a drama based firmly on oral histories. In this instance there is a tension between the memories of eyewitnesses and the documented status of the events that trigger the oral history. The consequent dilemma is whether story should be faithful to one and not the other as it seeks to represent the past. Given the implausibility of Lorna and Sister Berenice hearing the Battle of the Coral Sea, the drama does not refer by name to the encounter but uses the event to drive the drama. A more striking example of deliberate manipulation is to be found in the re-ordering of the battle with other events.

The Battle of the Coral Sea occurred between the 4th and the 8th of May 1942 (Wigmore, 1957). The sinking of the Japanese ship, the *Montevideo Maru*, occurred on July 1st 1942. This ship features in the drama when it transports the troops for whom Lorna has been caring. The plot line of *Sisters of War* (2010) deliberately reverses the order of the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* and the Battle of the Coral Sea because, in dramatic terms, the battle and subsequent ransacking provides the catalyst for the Japanese captain to order the nuns and nurses to be taken from the mission and sent to Japan.
I deemed this manipulation to be justified because ensuring that the dramatic bridge between the two major locations of Vunapope and Japan was sound was essential in maintaining coherence and tension in the story. It also meets the Aristotelian requirement of building events which are “probable and necessary”. To adhere strictly to the actual chronology of events at this point would be to deny the dramatic flow, severely diminish audience involvement and therefore undermine the overall mediation of the history and the story in this medium.

**Limitations**

On two occasions within the last week of pre-production this scene-sequence relating to the ransacking and the separation of the women was reduced, sections of scenes deleted and one scene deleted entirely. The reasons motivating these deletions were both creative and pragmatic and reveal the pressures inherent in the telemovie format as it strives to present history and drama. The final predicted timing on draft 6 was an overall length of 103.10 minutes. The ABC licence agreement stipulated delivery of a production running between 90 and 100 minutes. Precedent indicates that actual timings of completed scenes tend to run longer than predicted timings and if this pattern held true for this production then the first cut of the telemovie may have been as much as 110 minutes. Ten minutes of unusable material represents up to two days of filming.

Allied to this concern about length of program was the indication from the First Assistant Director (Peter McLennan), whose task it is to schedule the filming days, that the scripted scenes could not be filmed within the budgeted twenty-six days. As each day costs approximately $40,000 – $50,000 and the overall budget was under immense pressure, this position was not tenable and I requested that the schedule had to be contained. This position motivated the changes requiring cuts to the radio and ransacking scene sequence. The sequence involving the radio was considered necessary to keep in some form because in interview both Lorna and Sister Berenice stressed that it was highly memorable to them, and because of its vivid depiction of another occasion in which the lives of the women were under threat.
The day before the filming of these scenes the Daily Progress Report (DPR – day 14, May 10th 2010) calculated that the overall final timing would be 106.55, so I decided to contract the scenes. (The last DPR sheet predicted a running length of 117.20.) This was made possible by removing a scene with the nurses and nuns in the compound that originally formed part of this sequence.

This is a clear example of the manner in which broadcast contractual elements and production realities combine to limit the length and complexity of certain scenes which are based on authenticated historical incident. Contraction of this kind does not necessarily prove that the mediation between the known past and its representation is unreasonably distorted, but it does reveal that the telemovie form imposes real limits on the faithful depiction of scenes designed to reflect the details of oral history.

The quickest way to reduce running time is to delete entire scenes. Naturally, caution must be taken not to delete scenes that are logically connected to others. Scenes 40 and 108 were identified as stand-alone scenes – scenes which would not cause harm to other scenes if excised; they and the rationales for their deletion are described below.

Scene 40 depicts the Japanese translator Sugai surprising Sister Berenice by playing a piano piece that she was practising (Jesu Joy of Man’s Desiring, by Bach). A conversation ensues which covers a range of themes including their shared interest in this music and Sugai’s contention that they are similar in their preparedness to defend their beliefs, to defend what they respectively perceive as glory.

This scene is an invention but is motivated by Sister Berenice’s stated belief that there are humane and humanitarian connections between combatants. The piano scene is a powerful beat in the drama which supports my intention to investigate the complexity of the relationship between captor and captive. By seeking to avoid a stereotypical portrayal of an enemy combatant, the scene invites the audience to consider the motivations of all those within a conflict. It was excised
from the penultimate edit to bring the production to length and maintain dramatic rhythm but was included in the DVD extras.

The deletion of this scene diminishes the authorial objective with regards to providing a more rounded view of Japanese military forces in World War II and looking at how beliefs are tested in the cauldron of war, and is a direct result of production and financial pressures. By failing to make the scene indispensible, those dramatic elements of pity and fear embedded in the scene, which might otherwise have assisted one of my authorial objectives, were lost.

Scene 108 depicted a Christmas Mass in the Valley of Ramale in which German and English-speaking missionaries sing alternative verses of the hymn Silent Night while their Japanese guards, touched by the music, look and listen. A powerful and emotionally charged scene on the page and one which was also intended to draw attention to the human response of all those involved in the conflict, the scene was never shot due to time constraints. It is a telling example that if a scene carries important content either in raw information or emotional resonance but is not linked to other scenes it may fall victim to production pressures.

Producers must be aware that if they wish to exploit pity and fear to deliver on their overall objectives for an historical drama, scenes carrying such dramatic elements must be woven into the overall plot structure. Pity and fear must find a balance across the work and not be isolated within particular scenes.

**DVD Section #6**

The Japanese wounded

Scenes 86-88

**Synopsis – Execution of Japanese soldiers**

Sister Berenice witnesses Japanese doctors shooting their own wounded soldiers.
Intention
To reveal the brutality of war. To reveal that the savagery of war is not confined to the violence waged between foes but permeates every stratum of the conflict. To provide a setting which tests the belief structures of one of the protagonists.

Manipulation – from research interview to screen
In the research interview Sister Berenice gave her eyewitness account of Japanese doctors executing their own injured soldiers. In the interview, Sister Berenice states that she believed the wounded soldiers were deliberately placed near the nurses in order that they could see and hear this brutality occurring.

… on this side they put their shell-shocked, men, screaming and yelling all day. The wounded soldiers were there right under our eyes … but you’d see the doctor come along and … give them an injection and that’d be the end.

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 111)

The screen fear generated by watching Japanese soldiers being killed by their own forces reflects Aristotle’s belief in *The Art of Rhetoric* that the “fearsome is the proximity of the frightening” (1382a). One of the indicators of fear is “… those who are fearsome for one’s superiors; for they would be the more able to harm us, if they could harm even them” (1382b).

In the script we manipulate this material by having Sister Berenice witness a Japanese doctor shooting his own patients. The decision was made to construct this as a shooting and not as an injection because the visual impact of casual violence sears the emotional impact and reinforces the elements of pity and fear.

Pity, fear and the producer’s objectives
The scene containing the shooting of the soldiers is described in an invented letter from Sister Berenice to Lorna. This letter allows the drama to convey Sister Berenice’s inner thoughts, to reveal the connection between the event and how it triggers her pity and fear for Lorna. In the script, these lines of voice-over are given to Sister Berenice: “… and soon the thought occurred to me: if the Japanese
would kill their own men, what must they have done to you? To you and all the nurses?” (Draft 6, p. 70)

This scene creates a space where pity is not reserved for just one group but is felt for prisoners and captors alike. In doing so the scene meets one of the requirements of the producer’s general impulse – to harness emotional properties of storytelling to the goal of creating empathy for the other and, in addition, making connections between people from periods other than our own. The audience is invited to feel pity for Sister Berenice as she witnesses the death of a wounded soldier and in turn she fears for the safety of Lorna and the others.

The audience is also invited to empathise with the fate of the shell-shocked Japanese soldiers. Alexander (2009) points out that in the quintessential western work about war – Homer’s *Iliad* – Homer reveals that more Trojans died than Achaeans.

… the *Iliad* is dense with the descriptions of enemy warriors who die pathetically … the *Iliad* ensures that the enemy is humanized and that the deaths of enemy Trojans are depicted as lamentable. The *Iliad* is insistent on keeping to the fore the price of glory. (p. 66)

Alexander’s use of the word “lamentable” in this context is entirely appropriate. It echoes one of the possible definitions of *oiktos* that Aristotle uses along with *eleos* to describe pity in the *Poetics*. Lamentation provides a nuanced sense of grieving for the fate of the other in a history drama that depicts war and therefore this scene in *Sisters of War* (2010), in which the death of the enemy is portrayed, earns its place.
Synopsis – Aftermath of bombing on the Vunapope mission
Scenes 91-95 detail the aftermath of an American air raid on the Vunapope mission, a pitiable and fearful event. The nuns and nurses had dug tunnels into the surrounding hills of the mission to protect themselves from the bombs. This sequence reveals the nuns taking shelter and then emerging to find that their mission has been devastated by the raid. Sister Berenice picks up body parts and those that are identifiable from Japanese soldiers are handed over to a small party of guards.

Manipulation – from research interview to screen
This stark example of the presence of pity and fear in the telemovie is drawn directly from the testimony of Sister Berenice and became a pivotal sequence in the script and completed work. Sister Berenice recounted what she discovered after one particularly heavy bombing raid when both captors and the captive were caught in the open.

We’d gone over to run to the trench which was some distance away; when we came back there were bits – bits of bodies everywhere, soldiers everywhere. Their bodies, legs, arms and heads, everything, we had to pick them up and hand them over the fence.

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 111)

In the sixth draft the scene is presented like this:

93     EXT. VUNAPOPE MISSION – DAY
One hour later. Silence. Stillness.

A terrified chook emerges from the air-raid tunnel and runs off squawking. Then slowly the missionaries come out.
The missionaries look around, stunned and shocked. The Vunapope Mission now resembles a lunar landscape. It is a bombed-out, smoldering shambles of a ruin. As the wind blows the smoke away, bodies can be glimpsed. Dead missionaries, dead natives and dead Japanese are scattered all around. Some Japanese bodies hang off the wire fence. They were killed as they tried to climb over it in order to escape the conflagration.

This is truly a glimpse of Hell.

The missionaries and the natives, dirty, exhausted and shocked, survey this carnage in disbelief. Sister Berenice stares at the wreckage that once was the hospital. A slab of the painted Red Cross from its roof lies nearby. Japanese bodies – mostly parts of bodies – are scattered everywhere. Sister Berenice is overwhelmed by the sight and is struggling to come to terms with it when Bishop Scharmach approaches.

Bishop Scharmach surveys the wreck of Vunapope.

BISHOP SCHARMACH

(haunted, heart-broken)

I built this mission as a place of peace. And look at it now. Where was God when this was happening? Where was he, Sister?

94 EXT. VUNAPOPE MISSION - DAY

On the soundtrack we hear Copland’s Concerto for Clarinet. Sister Berenice walks slowly around the ground near the hospital site. She is placing body parts – limbs, feet, hands, into a bucket. We do not need to see too much of this gruesome activity – just the look of despair on her face. From time to time Sister Berenice uses her sleeve to wipe away tears of rage from her face. The music continues into the next scene.
FADE INTO:

95     EXT. VUNAPOPE MISSION - DAY

Two hours later. Some Japanese soldiers have appeared. They are also in a state of shock. Sister Berenice approaches them, bows low, and passes the bucket to a Japanese soldier. He takes it from her and salutes, struggling to retain his composure. Then the Japanese soldiers walk away with the remains of their friends. Sister Berenice, meanwhile, sits down on a rock, puts her head in her hands and cries.

(Draft 6, p. 73)

*Sisters of War* (2010) contains just one scene in which the mission is bombed by aircraft from the United States Air Force. In actuality, this occurred on many occasions. Conflating the events in this manner was deemed necessary to maintain dramatic intensity. This scene is notable because there is very little change in the path that links the oral history to script and screen.

**Pity, fear and the producer’s objectives**

This sequence presents the death of Japanese soldiers as well as those from the mission. This tragic revelation of the brutality of war reveals several ways in which pity and fear and the producer’s authorial objectives are intertwined. This scene-sequence provides a clear example of how the writing might elicit from the audience an Aristotelian notion of pity – of undeserved suffering. In the case of the bombing the audience is immersed in the grief and despair that Sister Berenice experienced. Pity is generated for the pain observed and there is fear for the impending repeat of this harm. The audience observes that this pitiable and fearful event strikes all those that inhabit the landscape.

A reversal of fortune for the Japanese military has precipitated these events and the audience is invited to recognise that the complexity of war means that allies and enemies are not strictly demarcated terms – that war, as a complex arrangement of motivation and action, is ultimately indiscriminate and punishes all who take part.
An appreciation of the reversals of fortune, those events of the past that lead to change and sweep hierarchies of power aside, also has the potential to incite consideration of the forces behind the individual stories of the telemovie. In turn, the audience may be prompted to compare and contrast the reversals that have occurred in recent history, a process that Tosh (2008) believes is an essential and productive way of, “thinking with history” (p. 7).

Some of the themes suggested by this scene-sequence find expression in a depiction of war in another medium. The drawing together of enemies in death is reminiscent of the final lines of the poem *Beach Burial*.

```plaintext
Dead seamen, gone in search of the same landfall,
Whether as enemies they fought,
Or fought with us, or neither; the sand joins them together,
Enlisted on the other front.

(Slessor, 1957, p. 109)
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As producer, I found the emotional elements of this scene-sequence from the telemovie to be immersive; elements that motivated reflection about other works concerning war, such as the Slessor poem. This transferral is a process of mediation, one that is energised by the elements of pity and fear in the scene construction. Cognition in this sense is to be found in the cognition of the similarities between this work and others. Whether this process occurs at the moment of viewing or, as is more likely the case, after the work has been completed is immaterial. Reflection and curiosity and enquiry are a direct result of the vividness of the scene, vividness engendered by the generation of pity and fear.
The final scenes of the telemovie are designed to dramatically draw together the emotional threads of the work in a manner that allows the audience to confront the brutality of the experience. Collectively, they are the capstone that locks in the effect of the preceding scenes, especially those that speak to notions of reversal, recognition and pitiable and fearful events.

These final scenes should be vivid and intense. They should sear the imagination and allow an intellectual appreciation to be fused with the emotive intensity as the cognitive base of the emotive reaction draws the intellectual and the imaginative tightly together. The clear purpose of these final scenes is to induce the kind of immersive pleasure that well-constructed tragedy should elicit: the pleasure of learning via exposure to tragedy; the pleasure of recognising the universal within the particular; the pleasure of attempting to understand the motivations of the agents within the drama and the paradoxical pleasure of coming to terms with horrific sights and imaginings.

These final scenes in *Sisters of War* (2010) will assist the producer’s authorial objectives if they:

- Are induced by a balance of elements of pity and fear created by reversal and recognition
- Build upon layers of plot structure (*muthos*) that are probable and necessary
- Lead to a state of clarification about the underlying incidents
- Are sufficiently well constructed so that the audience can confront the stark reality, even the horror, of some of the incidents presented in this television history
- Draw our attention to fractures in history
- Create a memorable and vivid experience which may prompt other levels of inquiry
Synopsis – The Japanese captain collapses
Following the fire-bombing of Tokyo, the captain of the Japanese police who have been guarding Lorna and her colleagues in the small town of Totsuka receives a telegram informing him that his wife and children have been killed in the raids. Utterly distraught, he confronts the women who are digging a ditch and threatens to shoot them. The captain’s subordinate attempts to placate him and then matron Kay Parker also assists to ease the deadly tension. The police captain collapses.

Manipulation – from research interview to screen
Lorna revealed in interview that their guards in Japan had complete control over them, were extremely harsh and didn’t appear to answer to other authorities. Towards the end of the war, however, these guards were replaced by other guards, including a kinder man whom the women christened Poppa San.

At the end of the war Poppa San was still with us and he came one day and he said he was terribly sorry … but he’d been given instructions that if the Americans arrived in Japan that something terrible was going to happen … and (that) we had already dug our graves.

(Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 145)

Lorna then described the night of the fire-bombing of Tokyo and how in the morning matron Kay Parker gave them some more information about what had happened to the homes and families of their guards, “… the palace was not hit, the Emperor’s all right. But Fuji lost his house, Moreley lost his house, Kamara lost his house … and they all lost their houses and their families … (Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 154)

In the construction of this scene the key lines were written not for Lorna but for the character of the matron, Kay Parker. The reason for this was that the production was attempting to attract a high-profile actor who would appeal to DCD Rights, the distributor handling international sales. It is another example of how the financial imperatives of a production directly affect the relationship
between authorial intent and the emotional elements of the drama. The following is an expurgated version of the scene.

117 EXT. TOTSUKA – DAY

KAY PARKER
(calmly, to the Guard)
Please tell the Captain how sorry we are.

JAPANESE CAPTAIN
(in Japanese, pointing at the ditch)
Tell them I will bury them there. The dogs will eat their bones!

Later in the scene

KAY PARKER
I wish I could speak your language. I wish I could say that I understand why you want to end your life. We have all seen more than we can bear. But if your children could talk to you now, they would beg you not to do this. They would ask you to live - to rebuild your city - piece by piece - in their memory.

(Draft 6, p. 88)

In the final version the words in bold in these lines from Kay Parker were removed and a form of these words was given to a Japanese guard who convinces the captain not to shoot himself. These alterations were intended to weave pity and fear into the scene in such a manner that both captor and prisoner are affected by the emotions. In this manner the scene seeks to meet one of the producer’s objectives of revealing the shared humanity of combatants in the face of destruction. Alford (1993) argues that Aeschylus’s conception of “pathēi mathos, the wisdom that comes from suffering”, as expressed in Agamemnon (ll.200-210)
is directly related to, “the felt connection to that of others” (p. 273). A scene such as this attempts to marry pity and fear for friend and foe, to draw connections between others and to create an intense reaction to events that, while fictionalised, are inspired by oral testimony.

**DVD Section**  
**#9**  
Sister Berenice–liberation  
Scenes: 118-120

**Synopsis – Sister Berenice – liberation**  
The final scenes, the cathartic scenes, relate to those moments when both women believed they had literally dug their graves and yet days later were liberated.

The nuns have been ordered to dig trenches which they believe are to be their graves. In voice-over we hear from Sister Berenice as she hides a bundle of the letters she has been writing for Lorna.

**Manipulation – from research interview to screen**  
The line in bold below was added in post-production with the intent of making the possibility of death even clearer for the audience and thus deepening the emotional reaction by reinforcing the Aristotelian concept of the proximity of danger.

118  
**EXT. RAMALE – DAY**

The missionaries - the ones who can still stand - are hacking a tunnel into the mountain wall of the valley. As Sister Berenice digs, we hear her final letter to Lorna.

**BERENICE**  
(v/o)  
We’ve been ordered to dig a tunnel. They say it’s for air- raids but one guard has confessed
the truth... **There is a death squad on the way.**
I’ve been told you’ve died already, Lorna. I hope -
with all my heart - it’s not true. But if it is, please,
please, forgive me.

Sister Berenice looks around - waits for a moment, until the Japanese guard
moves away - then she places a small packet of her letters into the tunnel
wall and packs dirt against them.

**BERENICE (CONT'D)**

Whoever finds these, pray for me - and for all of us -
who are forgotten. Sister Berenice Twohill - July 1945.

And the missionaries continue digging their tomb.

(Draft 6, p. 89)

In the following scene, Sister Berenice wakes to find that the Japanese guards are
gone. To the astonishment of the nuns and the Bishop, Australian soldiers appear
at the top of the valley. The scene was motivated from the following selection
from the interview with Sister Berenice; the intention was to provide a moment of
release in which pity and fear are purged. “Well it was in the morning, early
morning about 11 o’clock and all of a sudden …we heard the cooee on top of the
gully. And we cooed back. (Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 192)

**DVD Section #10**
Lorna – liberation
Scenes: 121-122

**Synopsis – Lorna – liberation**
Lorna tries to hide an ailing friend, Cal, as soldiers enter her quarters. Lorna is
amazed when the soldiers turn out to be American.
Manipulation – from research interview to screen

In the research interview Lorna made it clear there was no particular moment when they knew they were going to be free. The day after Hiroshima was bombed guards told the women that the city had been destroyed. From that moment on they received a bit more food and then they heard a radio broadcast from the Emperor so they assumed Japan had surrendered. “And so that was that. But then nothing was officially told to us that the war was over” (Johnston & Twohill, 2008, p. 195). A few days later Lorna saw trucks in the distance and assumed they were Germans until she saw a jeep with an American flag.

In our interview it became clear that for Lorna and her colleagues the process of liberation was reasonably drawn out. To construct an intense and tragic release at the end of the television history drama the elements of pity and fear need to be tightly bound. In earlier drafts of the script Lorna meekly waited for the end. As producer, I was keen to suggest an attempt at escape, however futile, to extend this dénouement and to construct a tighter connection between the twin elements of pity and fear at this moment of tragic release. This manipulation reveals that the process of ensuring that pity and fear are satisfactorily concluded may run counter to the depiction of the actual run of events.

Test screenings of various cuts of the movie revealed that when still photos of the actual nurses and nuns taken immediately after liberation were placed directly after the scenes depicting Lorna and Sister Berenice being freed, the sense of cathartic relief for the audience was extremely strong. A natural emotional connection is generated by juxtaposing the fictional women with images that are clearly taken from actual events. Here is a mediation of different realities, between the reality of the viewing experience of a drama and the reality of exposure to images depicting historical events.
7. CONCLUSION

Fear doesn’t get much of a run when it comes to war movies. Bravery, yes, and chaos and cruelty, but real gut-knotting terror seems surprisingly hard to conjure on screen. So, too, grief and compassion. But to be brave you must first feel fear and to feel grief you must have compassion. This … telemovie brings to the table all these emotions and more, immersing the viewer in an unflinching and true tale of survival.

Elliot (2010) – Sisters of War review

There are myriad paths to our relationship with the past, its events, agents and repercussions. One means of representing the past to ourselves is the medium of television, and on that platform the self-contained telemovie has the ability to capture, captivate and provoke a substantial audience. Therefore, it is critical that one of the authorial agents of the telemovie, the producer, is cognisant of the relationship between his role, objectives and the key dramatic ingredients of the form.

This thesis has tested the proposition that television drama can utilise the key emotive elements of pity and fear to create an intense and meaningful correspondence between our understanding of past events and our desire and need for an imaginative representation of those events. Three areas of investigation were pursued to test the proposition: the extent of the producer’s authorial role, the nature and dramatic effect of pity and fear, and how pity and fear were utilised in the case study telemovie to realise the producer’s objectives.

This thesis established that the telemovie Sisters of War (2010) is a micro-history about prisoners of war and that it is inspired by oral histories of eyewitnesses who were still alive at the time of the movie’s production. As television drama lends
itself by scale to the portrayal of the personal, the story process utilised by the
telemovie form lies parallel to some forms of historical writing in which there
have been substantial shifts favouring the exploration of micro-narratives. These
connections provide a base from which the television producer can attempt to
achieve authorial objectives by harnessing the emotional properties that adhere to
the revelation of the personal within the broad sweep of history.

An additional positive attribute of the micro-story – the intimate story that is to be
found in *Sisters of War* (2010) – is that it can bring to life stories that might
otherwise have been ignored. Sister Berenice and Lorna Johnston made it clear
that most of their written records from the period of incarceration had to be
destroyed. The case study telemovie provides a vehicle to vividly present a part of
their story that otherwise is likely to have been lost.

The thesis has assessed the authorial role of the producer and concluded that,
within a collaborative process, the producer has an overarching authorial
influence. The producer, as an agent of creation and change, is ultimately
responsible for the delivery of the work and has a cradle-to-grave overview of the
production.

As part of this responsibility, the producer is required to facilitate the financial,
legal and creative aspects of the work. Prior to working with the dramatic
elements of pity and fear the producer seeks a thorough grounding in the events
that form the historical referent. It is unlikely that the producer will be as well
versed in the events as others working full-time in the field and so, naturally,
advice in this area may be required. For this project, in addition to utilising
eyewitness oral histories, the producer sought advice from researcher Rod Miller,
who unearthed the diaries of the women imprisoned in New Britain.

The producer’s responsibilities also align with Aristotle’s concepts of *technê* and
*poiēsis* in that he strives to understand the system of knowledge that embraces the
producing tasks and be aware of the broad intentions of the endeavour as well as
the specific craft elements. For an historical drama based on oral histories of
surviving witnesses to events, this knowledge of process and craft should be
conveyed to the witnesses in order to inform them of the methods of manipulation at work and to elicit further information that might imbue the work with greater emotional authenticity.

For *Sisters of War* (2010) I attempted to provide Lorna Johnston and Sister Berenice Twohill with a sense of the scale and limitations of the project and the motivations of the creative team. On future projects I would consider making this process more tangible by outlining how the *Sisters of War* (2010) telemovie departed from the oral histories that inspired it and why.

For this project I did not sufficiently understand how a discussion with the two women about their perceived states of pity and fear might illuminate their thoughts about their time as prisoners of war. This impeded my ability to access the emotional foundations of their experience and, in turn, the ability of the project as a whole to exploit these emotive indicators to make connections between the story and the history.

If, in future projects I have access to eyewitnesses of actual events, I will strive to establish a chronology of events and cross-match this framework with the emotional chronology of the participants with special reference to their states of pity and fear. Further, I will use this chart to identify the key reversals that may have triggered the emotional reactions. This material could then inform scene construction and plot development so that the actions of the agents might better serve the narrative and consolidate the links to the oral history.

This research established that – as well as explaining the parameters of the project to those involved in its construction – the producer should interrogate his own perspectives. From what position is the producer assessing the history and why has he chosen the base material as an entry point into the story? Having established this perspective, the producer can then lay out his overall objectives for the work, both specific and general. These matters then became the embracing framework as the producer uses his authorial role to influence the shape of the work from research stage to final release.
The objectives of the producer for this telemovie were clearly established. They were to produce a work of intensity that would become a memorable experience for the audience. Further, vividness of presentation was intended to produce an immersive experience that may trigger further enquiry. A key objective was to provoke a sense of sufficient imagination such that the audience might deeply consider the complexity of the conflict, its savagery and the possibility of the shared humanity of the combatants. These objectives were encapsulated in the inciting question; what do we believe in when our very existence is threatened?

Having established the nature of this work and the producer’s authorial role and intent, the thesis then sought to investigate how the properties of pity and fear assist or impede the producer’s objectives. This assessment was guided by the Aristotelian conception of these terms, a conception that is still applicable in the modern era because of the universal relevance and validity of some of the core underlying assessments of the nature and function of pity and fear and the role of emotion in narrative.

This thesis has stressed that emotional reactions such as pity and fear are not antithetical to the objectives of priming meaningful connections between story and the past, because the cognitive base of the emotions creates a state for engagement, evaluation, reflection and enquiry. Emotions are not merely a bodily reaction to external stimuli but operate alongside a cognitive understanding of that which induced the emotion. As cognition underlies both a rational and imaginative approach to events of the past, emotive elements are one means by which story may create links with its historical referent.

The cognition that is part of the emotive reaction in a television historical drama does not seek to draw distinct correlations between incontrovertible data of the past and the narrative, but rather to draw attention to broader themes embedded in the past events and in doing so to provoke and agitate the audience to enquire further. This thesis concludes that a useful method of assessing the value of television history drama is to investigate its unique properties rather than adopting assessment criteria used for other media. Rosenstone (2006) corroborates this position when he states:
In terms of informational content, intellectual density or theoretical insight, film will always be less complex than written history. Yet its moving images and sound scapes will create experiential and emotional complexities of a sort unknown upon the printed page. (p. 159)

After examining the general role of the emotions, this thesis investigated the core emotional elements of pity and fear. There are other dramatic and emotional elements of pity and fear, but it is argued that the proper acknowledgement and utilisation of these factors is critical for a nuanced approach to bridging story and history, because in concert these emotional indicators are the *sine qua non*, the very essence of powerful television drama. These emotive tropes are the essence of *Sisters of War* (2010), as explained below.

Three aspects of the Aristotelian definition of pity were examined and their ability to create links between story and inciting historical event were tested. These aspects stemmed from the overarching concept that pity is generated when the viewer perceives pain in another and may feel a similar pain for themselves. The three classifications of pity were that the suffering perceived in another is not of a trivial nature, that the suffering perceived in another is undeserved and that perception of the suffering creates empathetic links between viewer and character. All of these areas are stimulated by a cognitive awareness of inciting factors and assist to make links between story and the scale of the historical events. They provoke enquiry into how the suffering is undeserved – what forces and causes led to the nature of the suffering. Further, pity may generate sympathies that contain properties of altruism and self-regard as the viewer is concerned for the plight of others and imagines their own fate if confronted by similar circumstances.

Pity and fear assist the producer to create meaningful links between television drama and the historical referent because both of these dramatic elements create a complex mixture of subjective and objective reactions for the viewer, a mixture that provides a base from which to assess the drama and its history from both personal as well as dispassionate perspectives.
Both fear and pity have at their base an appreciation of harm, but whereas pity is associated with existing harm, fear is more often based on a cognitive awareness of impending harm and in turn draws the attention of the audience to the power structures and hierarchies that may lie behind the impending danger. Thus, one of the properties of dramatic fear is that it draws attention to the complex web of events that underpin the dramatic incidents being presented. The case study telemovie includes scenes and sequences in which the power structures within the Japanese military are revealed through the narrative revelation of the fear felt by Lorna, Sister Berenice and also by their captors.

The production of dramatic fear assists a reflexive approach to the work as the audience is reminded that the fear is “partial” and of a different order to that which they may experience if they were confronted by the actual events being fictionalised.

The benefits of cognition in bridging the implicit narrative need of history to authoritatively inform and for television narrative to entertain are revealed when we appreciate that cognition works on multiple levels. An awareness of the pain and disturbance of the emotions is triggered by matters of magnitude and therefore of matters worthy of consideration. The cognition may lead to a reaction that spurs reflection. Pity and fear are incited by a process of reversal and recognition, drawing attention to the changes inherent in history and to the ruptures of the past. When evident in appropriate proportion, pity and fear create engagement and curiosity – a level of enquiry firmly balanced by the cognitive and evaluative processes that propel the emotional reaction.

Through the case study of the production of *Sisters of War* (2010), the proposition of the thesis was tested as the relationship between the producer’s role and pity and fear was assessed. The examination of particular scenes in this history-based television drama revealed that the relationship between the producer’s authorial role and pity and fear is complex and embraces significant benefits and limitations.
Following the production process and after consideration of the Poetics, a key discovery was the manner in which the dramatic elements of pity and fear work in tandem to create emotional reactions. My objective of provoking sufficient imagination for the audience was hampered by an assumption that this would be best served by arranging the dramatic elements so that the audience were invited to empathise with and pity the plight of the main characters.

The consequence of not appreciating the coordinated nature of pity and fear was that some scenes contained elements of only one of these emotive states, and therefore were susceptible to being dropped either during production or in edit. This potentially diminished the capacity of the scenes and the narrative as a whole to present critical parts of the history. In future I would instigate a more rigorous appraisal of the emotional capacity of individual scenes and scene sequences to ensure, where possible, that a balance was formed within each scene.

Sisters of War (2010) attempts to engage with its historical referent by creating an intense and memorable television experience. This objective is assisted by several dramatic elements, but the key elements are those plot developments in which pitiable and fearful events and character actions incite pity and fear. If intensity of reaction is created then a dynamic may form for the audience which shifts between altruism and self-regard. The altruism is engendered through the tension for the suffering of others and self-regard is induced by the fear that the viewer may be vulnerable in similar circumstances. In this manner, pity and fear are harnessed in Sisters of War (2010) to confront the savagery of war.

Examination of the scenes within the telemovie reveals that pity and fear may combine in a manner that also allows for some detachment from the work. If the pity becomes contemptuous or the fear dissolves to terror, then the underlying ability of these twinned emotions to make connections between story and inciting material is compromised. The immersive potential and strength of these emotional indicators is released in Sisters of War (2010) in a range of sequences, but is most notable in scenes showing Lorna and Sister Berenice under direct threat from their Japanese captors at the time of the invasion, when the two women were separated.
after a search for a radio had been undertaken, and when Sister Berenice was confronted by the aftermath of a bombing raid.

Various forms of dramatic manipulation are evident in the telemovie as the detail from the oral histories was adapted to the screen. Where this manipulation heightened the presence of pity and fear but remained true to the spirit of the views expressed in the research interview, the thesis reveals that pity and fear were harnessed to connect story and its referent. An example of this approach is in the creation of a boyfriend for Lorna, a man who is executed. This invention allowed the dramatisation of a conflict between the character of Lorna and the Bishop of the mission and the expression of concern that the “real” Lorna had about the Bishop’s part in the events.

The examination of various scenes also revealed that the full realisation of the producer’s objectives was compromised in some instances. The selected scenes reveal that the relationship between the authorial objectives and pity and fear and pitiable and fearful events is not without tension. This tension is primarily located in the realisation that the drama is working within prescribed time limits and must select specific incidents to dramatise from a vast array of past incident.

The apparent locus of concern for those who doubt the ability of television historical drama to engage meaningfully with its referent is that its emotional factors compromise its ability to provide an authentic connection, that they distort and undermine rational considerations. This criticism is misplaced. Time, not emotion is the agent that threatens to diminish the ability of television drama to meaningfully engage with history. This case study revealed that without proper consideration, a complex alignment of time pressures may combine to compromise the ability of pity and fear to work at maximum effectiveness in a television drama and that time pressures at multiple levels diminish the ability of a telemovie to provide layered information about past events.

The contractual limit for a movie of no longer than 100 minutes enforced a boundary which necessitated deletion of scenes that may have provided a more rounded version of the inciting historical events. In addition to the pressures of
overall duration, the need for dramatic rhythm within particular scripted scenes led to the excision of critical material in this work.

Time constraints, and my inability to adequately foresee and deal with their consequences, limited the ability of this work to provide a more comprehensive story about the events in question. In *Sisters of War* (2010) this was most evident in the deletion or contraction of scenes whose script intent was to provide a complex depiction of the Japanese military, one that reflected the contested attitudes of those providing the oral history. *Sisters of War* (2010) strives to use pity and fear to create emotional power, but as producer I failed to prevent time and financial pressures from adversely affecting the means by which pity and fear could be harnessed to create a more nuanced sense of *the other*.

Several critical scenes that carried the theme of *the other* were deleted or shortened. Production factors of time and finance were allowed to compromise the ability of the emotional elements to operate with strength so that the sense of undeserved suffering was directed with greater intensity towards those characters with whom the audience was most familiar. As a result, the desire to address the question of how our values are threatened in a time of war was also compromised because this question is intimately linked to how the characters perceive those around them and how their preconceptions may be challenged or reinforced.

This research focused on the function of the dramatic elements of pity and fear as they operated in an historical drama based largely on oral testimony, in the telemovie format. Scope now exists to extend this work by examining whether these dramatic elements act in a similar manner when the source of the history is not that of an eyewitness account.

These elements were also assessed in a narrative format that is linear and presented in a specified time slot. This research invites further investigation of how pity and fear may be assessed when the history is presented on other platforms, such as game devices and interactive dramas created for computers. Such platforms engender new questions, including:
- Do the Aristotelian precepts regarding the primacy of pity and fear still hold when the mode of delivery allows the audience to manipulate narrative outcomes and to source the drama at a time of their choosing?
- Are the Aristotelian insights in the Poetics technology-neutral?
- Are concepts of undeserved suffering and the self-reflective attributes of fear diminished if the muthos (plot structures) are partially controlled by the viewer?
- Do emerging storytelling techniques and delivery modes impede or enhance the opportunity for an audience to be enthralled by the story and to make meaningful connections to the inciting historical events?

Working in concert, pity and fear are emotional fuel, the absence of which in television drama leads to detachment from the past, its agents and events. My authorial objective for Sisters of War (2010) was not to harness pity and fear to amplify emotional responses for their own sake, but to assist in the formation of the immersive and intense pleasure of confronting matters drawn from the past even when those matters concern war and its attendant violence. The limits of television drama are conceded and the producer looks to harnessing the emotional elements, not to create a direct correlation between inciting incident and narrative, but to provoke and sear the imagination in ways that incite a critical and intense reaction to the history.

The case study of the production of the telemovie Sisters of War (2010) reveals that the relationship between the producer’s authorial objectives and the core dramatic elements of pity and fear is complex and may be influenced by a range of production matters relating to pressures of time and finance.

Taking this into account, I would broadly categorise the manipulation of the dramatic elements of pity and fear in Sisters of War (2010) as a process that has assisted to release the dramatic potential of the form. Through the post-production stages I sought to emphasise some of the Aristotelian findings about the function of pity and fear, most notably those that reveal the links between reversals of fortune and the characters’ experience of pity and fear.
Though a more nuanced understanding of the role of these emotive indicators would have altered my approach to the initial research and writing stages, overall, the dramatic exploitation of the finished work’s emotional elements of pity and fear allowed it to make a meaningful and respectful connection between its narrative form and the oral histories that inspired the work.
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Romulus, My Father (2007) [Film]
Directed by Richard Roxburgh, Produced by Robert Connolly & John Maynard, Australia
Room with a View (1985) [Film]
Directed by James Ivory, Produced by Ismail Merchant, United Kingdom

Roots (1977) [Television]
Directed by Marvin Chomsky, Erman, John, Green, David, & Moses, Gilbert, Produced by Stan Margulies, USA

Sisters of War (2010) [Television]
Directed by Brendan Maher, Produced by Andrew Wiseman, Australia

Trial of Captain Dreyfus (1899) [Film]
American Mutoscope & Biograph, USA

Underbelly (2008-2011) [Television]
Directed by Tony Tilse, & Seet, Shawn, Produced by Brenda Pam, Elisa Argenzio, Greg Haddrick & Des Monaghan, Australia

The War Game (1965) [Television/Film]
Directed by Peter Watkins, Produced by Peter Watkins, United Kingdom

Who Bombed Birmingham? (1990) [Television]
Directed by Mike Beckham, Produced by Mike Beckham, United Kingdom
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Author/s:
Wiseman, Andrew

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