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## Transgressing the Non-fiction Transmedia Narrative

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## EDITORIAL

### TRANSGRESSING THE NON-FICTION TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVE

Over the last decade, the technological tool set for audiovisual storytelling has vastly expanded. On-going developments in fields including data visualisation, social media, interactive video, second screens, haptic devices, artificial intelligence and virtual reality have led to a proliferation of opportunities for media makers to reconceptualise linear narrative formats, to embed them in non-linear structures and networks, or to abandon them altogether.

The term ‘non-fiction’ has been used in film language to describe movies that are not in the area that the industry and the audience define as ‘fictional cinema’. Audiovisual non-fiction is a vast field containing documentary, journalism, film essays, educational videos, museum exhibitions, scientific films, institutional, industrial or propaganda videos, etc. Over the last years, interactive digital media have greatly affected the logics of production, exhibition and reception of non-fiction audiovisual works, leading to the emergence of a new area called ‘interactive and transmedia non-fiction’. While the audiovisual non-fiction field has been partially studied, a few years ago emerged a new field focusing on interactive and transmedia non-fiction narratives, an unexplored territory that needs new theories and taxonomies to differentiate from its audiovisual counterpart.

How have established media organisations responded to these developments? While some have provided support networks, funding, and online broadcast opportunities to help foster experimentation in the cross-over domain of ‘transmedia’, other media organisations – including many public service and commercial broadcasters, archives, and publishers – have stuck to known business models. The result is that many areas of transmedia (for example, interactive documentary) remain niche offerings.

With this issue, we aim to offer a scholarly perspective on the emergence of transmedia forms, their technological and aesthetic characteristics, the types of audience engagement they engender, the possibilities they create for engagement with archival content, the technological predecessors that they may or may not have emerged from, and the institutional and creative milieu in which they thrive (or don’t).

The nine articles in this issue give varying perspectives on where broadcast, narrative and stories meet. Di Crosta and Leandro open this special issue with a discovery article ‘Story, History and Intercultural Memory: Can a Transmedia Approach Benefit an Archive-Based Documentary Project?’, which could have fitted in well with our eighth issue on ‘Archive-Based Productions’. It recalls archive-based television series such as INA’s *Mystères d’archives* and the transmedia production *Farewell Comrades!*, which served as research material for the production *Histories of Brazil* made by Di Crosta and Leandro themselves: a transcontinental, transmedia collaborative project of an archive-based documentary. Joakim Karlsen takes us to Norway in his article ‘Aligning Participation with Authorship: Independent Transmedia Documentary Production in Norway’, where he builds on extensive conversations with documentary producers and creators to explore the impact that the transmedial paradigm has had on the documentary-filmmaking community; an impact, he argues, that is making them move away from a more straightforward broadcasting logic.

The other articles in the Discovery section take us further away from the realm of broadcasting. In the article entitled ‘Crossroads. Life Changing Stories from the Second World War: A (Transmedia) Storytelling Approach to World War II

Heritage', Calvi and Hover bring into the spotlight their project *Crossroads*, focused on transmedia storytelling in the domain of museums and cultural heritage. In an attempt to connect by narrative means four different institutions dedicated to the heritage of World War II, they turn to non-fiction transmedia narratives as a way of telling a homogeneous story and creating a cohesive experience for visitors. Laura Schlichting's article 'Interactive Graphic Journalism' explores novel storytelling techniques in graphic journalism through the lens of two case studies: *The Nisoor Square Shooting* (2013) and *Ferguson Firsthand* (2015) by Dan Archer. Adrian Miles closes the Discovery section with his article 'I'm sorry I don't have a story: an essay involving interactive documentary, Bristol, and hypertext', a meandering, hyperlinked story on *Filming Revolution*, to be explored by clicking back and forth through the sections of text.

In the Exploratory section, Matthew Freeman conceptualises transmedia through the lens of charity politics in his article 'Small Change – Big Difference: Tracking the Transmediality of Red Nose Day'. He uses the Comic Relief charity campaign in the UK to trace how the social traditions, ways of life and sensibilities associated with Red Nose Day have evolved into emerging digital technologies to shape this charity campaign across the borders of multiple media platforms.

Richard Lachman presents in his article 'Emergent Principles for Digital Documentary', several design strategies for driving experimentation in digital documentary above and beyond the specific of platform and technology. Treating digital documentaries as experiences, with an expanded range of designable moments, Lachman takes a strategic approach to designing interactions and offers different methods that could lead to innovations in the field of digital documentary design.

In 'Korsakow Perspective(s): Rethinking Documentary Knowledge in Digital Multilinear Environments', Franziska Weidle draws on her ethnographic study of the Korsakow System to explore the field of interactive documentary and analyses media software as part of a situated visual knowledge practice that challenges story as primary organizing principle in computational networked environments.

Hook's, Barrios-O'Neill's, and Mairs Dyer's article 'A Transmedia Topology of 'Making a Murderer' closes this special issue by bringing into discussion audiences and how they have become part of the transmedia textualities of the Netflix Original series *Making a Murderer* by speculating, discussing, exploring the gaps in the narrative and becoming part of the fabric of investigation surrounding the events.

**Arnau Gifreu-Castells, Richard Misek and Erwin Verbruggen**

## Biographies

Arnau Gifreu-Castells is a doctor in communications and has a master's degree in digital arts from the Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). He is a research affiliate at the Open Documentary Lab (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and part of the i-Docs group (University of the West of England). He has published various books and articles in his research area, interactive and transmedia non-fiction, and specifically on interactive documentaries. He is a lecturer at ESCAC (University of Barcelona) and at ERAM (University of Girona). He coordinates interDocsBarcelona and collaborates with the 'Somos Documentales' project from **RTVE.ES** (Spanish TV).

Richard Misek is a film-maker and Senior Lecturer in Film at the University of Kent. His current research focuses on (and exists within) the interstices between film and online video - in particular, the video essay. He is the author of *Chromatic Cinema* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); his articles have been published in journals including *October*, *Screen*, and the *New Review of Film and Television*. His essay film *Rohmer in Paris* (2013) has been exhibited in five continents and received widespread critical acclaim.

Erwin Verbruggen has worked at the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision since graduating from the Preservation & Presentation of the Moving Image MA programme in Amsterdam in 2009. He is a project lead at the department for research and development, where he participates in local and international projects that involve access to collections, search retrieval, interoperability, user studies and digital preservation. Erwin is network liaison for the EUscreen Foundation, provides publishing support for VIEW and has been a guest lecturer on audiovisual archiving at Utrecht University, the University of Amsterdam, the ENCRyM School for Conservation and National University in Mexico City.