

**ABSTRACTS** (in the program order)

**Patricia Holland (Bournemouth), Peter Watkins' *The War Game: Fact or Fiction?***

In this presentation I will look at Peter Watkins's *The War Game*, made for the BBC, in 1965 but not transmitted until 1985. This unprecedented delay was due to what could be described as an extended debate between the BBC and representatives of the Government about whether the film, which portrayed the experience and aftermath of a nuclear attack, was actually fact or fiction. Peter Watkins described it as a documentary.

I start from the premise that an overlap, or an interleaving, of fact and fiction is basic to the documentary form. The relationship between them has been at the centre of the numerous disputes concerning the definition and ethics of documentary which have characterised the history of the genre. Many documentary makers have questioned the possibility of a completely truthful recording of 'reality', and alternative ways of representing a deeper 'truth' have taken several different forms. For example, abandoning the appearance of objectivity and focussing on the nature of the medium itself has involved drawing attention to the choices which shape the structure of a film (the archetypal example is *Chronicle of a Summer* (1960) directed by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin). Another approach has been the use of drama-documentary, involving reconstruction based on careful factual research (discussed by Derek Paget in his significantly titled *No Other Way To Tell It* 1998).

*The War Game* adopts the second approach. Betsy McLane describes its form as 'staged documentary' (2013). However, unlike many examples of historical reconstruction, it deals with events which have not happened, and may well *not* happen. What sort of 'reality' can it claim to 'represent'?

I will give an account of Peter Watkins's approach in making the film. He had previously made *Culloden* -a convincing re-construction of a battle which took place in 1746- using amateur actors. *The War Game* used the same approach, in this case, based on *pre*-construction, but equally drawing on careful research -into the effects of nuclear and other attacks (Dresden as well as Hiroshima and Nagasaki)- and with extreme attention to detail. (I have some insight into the editing of this film, as I was a junior assistant editor on the production. I have a keen memory of Peter Watkins' intense involvement, as well as the vast amount of footage that was shot but not included in the final film.)

My presentation will focus on two main issues: a textual analysis of the film itself, stressing its detail and factual accuracy, and an account of the secret negotiations between representatives of the BBC and members of the Government, which led to the decision not to broadcast the film as scheduled. At the time the BBC claimed that the decision had been taken independently by the Corporation, but Cabinet Papers, released in 2015, revealed that the BBC had been in continuous contact with the Cabinet Office over the production period (Cook 2015).

It seems that this scripted narrative film, performed by amateur actors, was sufficiently 'factual', to convince representatives of the Cabinet Office that the public should not be alerted to this information -it should not be publicly discussed. Official information about the possibility of a nuclear attack was carefully controlled, and the lived experience, as represented in *The War Game*, was simply too realistic, even though, at the time the film was completed, the events enacted were only possibilities. It was argued that the film would be seen as CND propaganda while the UK government was committed to the 'nuclear deterrent'.

I will note that, although it was not broadcast, the film was given public screenings in the 1960s, and won an Academy Award for the Best Documentary Feature in 1966.

**John Cook (Glasgow Caledonian University), *What is the Difference between ‘Documentary’ and ‘Fiction’?***

These are the words of British filmmaker, Peter Watkins (born, Norbiton, Surrey, 1935-). For nearly sixty years, Watkins, both in his film practice and in his associated theoretical writings (eg. <http://pwwatkins.mnisi.net/dsom.htm>), has been radically and persistently challenging what he sees as the too-neat assumed categorical distinctions between ‘documentary’ on the one hand and ‘fiction’ on the other. If, for Watkins, the practice of making a ‘documentary’ is as highly constructed as putting together any fictional film, then so, too is there a role for ‘fiction’ or ‘drama’ in attempting to reflect a wider ‘truth’. In Watkins’ kind of modernist-inflected, self-reflexive practice, ‘truth’ is decoupled from the reporting of mere ‘fact’ and allied instead to ‘fiction’ via the use in his films of dramatic re-enactments and other forms of fake documentary techniques which critique and challenge traditional forms of documentary ‘objectivity’ but also gesture at other more radical means of alternative media practice. From his famous documentary reconstructions made for BBC TV in the mid-sixties, *Culloden* (1964) and *The War Game* (1965) through to his final film (to date), the acclaimed *La Commune (Paris 1871)* (2000), Watkins’ practice and allied theoretical writings have been attempts to argue and to demonstrate via artistic example that there are political, social and personal ‘truths’ about the world which institutionalised forms of media practice and thinking, with their often hierarchical and compartmentalised distinctions between so-called ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’, have failed adequately to reflect. In this way, consideration of Watkins as a case study seems important to a conference such as this one devoted to exploring documentary and the fiction/non-fiction divide.

Indeed, as this paper will demonstrate through citation of historical research and evidence, Watkins was one of the early pioneers who began to question and to chip away at the fiction / non-fiction divide with regard to documentary. A mere four years after Robert Drew and his associates’ US breakthrough of hand-held camera and synch-sound recording with *Primary* (1960), Watkins was already in *Culloden* (1964) questioning how much audiences should accept this new powerful form of ‘fly on the wall’ documentary as true objective ‘fact’, via his own successful replication of the style within his acclaimed historical reconstruction of the 1746 battle of Culloden. If the ‘fly on the wall’ style could be co-opted so successfully to make Watkins’ dramatic re-enactment of the past seem so powerfully ‘real’ to modern audiences, what, it was implied, did this reveal about conventional documentary? What audiences recognized as ‘real’... - was this as much a question of the style in which the particular documentary was shot than any ‘truth’ inherent within its so-called non-fictional content?

Also fundamental to the conception of *Culloden* was the use of community re-enactment and reconstruction of a hitherto marginalised or suppressed aspect of public history – in this case, Watkins’ recruitment of dozens of amateur actor participants drawn from local communities across the Scottish Highlands who agreed to dress up and to re-enact for television audiences what it must have felt like to be their ancestors going into battle against Government forces over two hundred years earlier. Here, Watkins was developing the idea that conventional documentary relay of the ‘mere’ facts was failing to convey what events must have ‘felt’ like as lived experience. Melding his own carefully researched reconstruction with the involvement of local communities actively recreating their own history, Watkins was indicating it might be possible for alternative forms of documentary practice to emerge which could better convey the wider ‘truth’ about reality and history via an amalgamation of factual and fictional modes of exposition.

The paper will end by tracing the subsequent development of this hybrid ‘fiction/non-fiction’ practice; one which arguably reaches its apotheosis with *La Commune (Paris 1871)* (2000), Watkins’ final film (to date) in which he reconstructed, over twenty-three hot days in July 1999 on the site of Georges

Méliès' old film studio in Eastern Paris, the events of Paris 1871, when Parisian citizens took to the barricades to protest their hated Versaillaise Government. Here, the paper draws upon direct participant observation of watching Watkins at work on his final film as he reconstructed with the help of over two hundred contemporary French citizens as amateur actors what it must have *felt like* to be part of those heady days of the Paris Commune in 1871. On the twentieth anniversary of the shooting of the film, it seems appropriate to reflect on what were Watkins' successes and failures with the project – the film was initially consigned to a one-off early hours showing on French TV by its backers ARTE who disliked it but has since gone on to be acclaimed as one of the best films of the 21st century so far.

The paper will argue that his *La Commune* film is fundamental to understanding the challenges to the traditional 'fiction / non-fiction' divide which Watkins' unique practice throws up, for, as the long hot tiring days of the shoot wore on, his citizen participants no longer came to be just playing their assigned parts, they started to live out an intense communal experience so that by the end of the shoot in early August 1999, the lines between 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' had blurred irrevocably. By the end, *La Commune* had become at one and the same time both a dramatic re-enactment of a largely undiscussed event in public French history *and* an accurate documentary depiction of the attitudes and feelings at that moment in time of the amateur actor participants whom Watkins had gathered from all walks of life to learn about and recreate it.

In this way, Watkins' 'documentary' constructions destabilise traditional notions of 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' in ways that make them fascinating to consider in terms of the dialogue this conference seeks to promote between film scholars and philosophers, theorists and practitioners.

**Katerina Loukopoulou (UAL), *Lives on Screen: On the Aesthetics of Film Portraits***

While the genre of biopics tends to attract dedicated scholarship, its non-fiction counterpart remains under-researched. Research on the auto-biographical mode and the personal film has grown, mainly thanks to Michael Renov's *The Subject of Documentary* (2004), but what about the study of the lives of others on screen? Building on John Corner's 2002 intervention 'Biography Within the Documentary Frame: A Note', my paper focuses on the 'film portrait' mode of biographical documentaries and its aesthetics. I will explore what a film portrait is and how it differs from the 'bio-doc' by drawing on both documentary film studies and art historical writings on the art of portraiture. To a certain extent, they share similarities, but what makes a documentary come closer to the art of portraiture is what art historian Richard Brilliant (1991) has described as a "heightened degree of self-composure that responds to the formality of the portrait-making situation." In the case of film portraits, I will argue that the four key performative elements of the documentary subject (facial, gestural, corporeal, vocal) become more pronounced and prolonged. The encounter between the individual and the camera becomes an act of (self-)presentation in a time-based medium, which retains the aspects described by Brilliant, but transposed to a constructed film world. My presentation will be illustrated with examples from landmark film portraits of famous modernist artists (Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Henry Moore), whose own work's aesthetic principles informed and influenced the film portraits of their lives. This paper extrapolates from previous research on film portraits of Moore (to be published in the collection *Documenting the Visual Arts*, edited by Roger Hallas, 2019), and aims to offer a broader schema for the study of film portraiture and its aesthetics.

## **Stuart Mitchell (Gloucestershire), *We Can Be Anti-Heroes... But Only if They're Fictional?***

In this paper, I wish to examine some recent portrayals of 'morally flawed' characters within film and TV documentaries, and to analyse how their narratives and stylistic strategies encourage us to empathise and emotionally align ourselves with their protagonist's thoughts, feelings, hopes and outcomes.

As such, this paper is a direct challenge to the theoretical stance proposed by Margrethe Bruun Vaage, in her recent articles and books, in which she insists on a strict non-fiction/fiction divide, and asserts the inability of documentaries to generate the same sort of emotional investment we see granted to the 'anti-hero' protagonists of TV dramas such as *The Sopranos* and *Breaking Bad*.

Over the last decade, numerous cognitive moving image scholars have sought to explain how and why we root for and empathise with such 'morally flawed' fictional characters as Tony Soprano, Don Draper and Walter White. Utilising evolutionary and experimental moral psychology, our emotional engagement with such 'bad guys' has been explained by their transgressive allure; our desire to vicariously experience a way of life we would not wish to risk in real life; their redeeming traits; central characters being the 'best of the worst' within their fictional world; and by their familiarity and our tendency towards "Partiality" and an "In-Group Bias" towards those in our most immediate company or 'moral tribe'. All of these factors are offered as potential factors steering our perspective-taking and subjective alliance with characters whose deeds we would ordinarily distance ourselves from and disparage in real-life.

This apparent disparity, between our attitudes to fictional characters and those in real life, leads Margrethe Bruun Vaage to suggest that their fictional status grants us a moral relief from the costs and consequences of the real-world and that "the same effect would not be possible if these characters were real and we were instead watching them in a documentary".

At first glance Vaage's theory appears to follow common-sense and her theory has so far gone largely unchallenged – after all who on earth would care and root for a real-life criminal such as Tony Soprano? I would agree that the fiction/nonfiction distinction should and often does make a difference, however, I question whether it necessarily makes the difference.

As a TV documentary practitioner who has sought to gain the audience's understanding and empathy for characters with whom we would not ordinarily want to be associated with, let alone sympathise or root for, I instinctively found myself rejecting Vaage's theory. And, when I sought the response of other practitioners I found that, without exception, they all shook their heads and cited films they felt significantly contradicted Vaage's assertion.

In this paper, I examine some of the examples given by these filmmakers, and outline the strategies they adopt to complicate and influence our moral positions and emotional perspectives. And I scrutinise the research in moral psychology, which Vaage uses to underpin her theory of 'Fictional Relief and Reality Checks', and suggest how the ideas and evidence provided by these empirical studies may also apply to documentary, should the filmmakers have the opportunity and inclination to construct their films in similar ways.

I argue that one of the reasons Vaage may overstate the effects of the fiction/non-fiction distinction is because she draws upon two particular studies, one by Deborah Prentice & Richard Gerrig<sup>7</sup> and another by Rolf Zwann, which both conclude that our genre expectations, or 'Situational Models', significantly influence our emotional and cognitive response. However, what I feel isn't captured by these studies is how our emotional response to a film's 'subjective narration' can nevertheless

overwhelm our rational “cognitive guard”. And that techniques of subjective narration can be available to documentary as well as fiction; albeit they are often harder to achieve in documentary.

By exploring documentaries that are not so centred around the sort of heavily linguistic and analytical types of documentary selected by Vaage to make her case, I hope to outline a more complex notion of our response to documentary than a straight-forward one of ‘Reality Checks’.

I am certainly not denying that we can and frequently do adopt negative emotional and cognitive responses to “bad” characters in documentary, and that we are often invited to take critical and largely dismissive stances towards them by filmmakers. However, documentary filmmakers, given the right inclinations and opportunities, can encourage, and maybe even compel us, against our better instincts, to care about characters we would not ordinarily root for. Being fiction is not the decisive, overriding factor that Vaage claims.

## **Elizabeth Cantalamessa (Miami), *Mockumentary as Revisionism: The Case of Martin Scorsese's Rolling Thunder Review – A Bob Dylan Story***

What does it mean for an artist to use historical footage of their past to rewrite their history? In this paper I'll analyze Martin Scorsese's recent film *Rolling Thunder Review: A Bob Dylan Story* (*RTR*) in relation to the fiction/non-fiction divide in the philosophy of documentary film and the possibility of 'mockumentary film' as a subgenre. I'll argue that Scorsese's film occupies a unique position *vis-a-vis* three dominant theoretical frameworks in the philosophy of documentary film (Currie (1999), Nichols (2010), and Carroll (1997)) because *RTR* uses historical footage of its primary subject in order to *rewrite* that subject's history while simultaneously painting a contemporary portrait of one of the most influential and enigmatic artists of the past century. Further, and perhaps most crucially, the main subject in the narrative is himself privy to and part of the rewriting process. Along the way I'll explore how Eynine's (2015) theory of genre as tradition helps us explicate the aesthetic significance of parody and subversive docu-films, more generally. This paper proceeds as follows. First, I'll briefly introduce three dominant views on the nature of the so-called fiction/non-fiction distinction in the philosophy of documentary film. I'll then introduce *RTR* and argue that the film uniquely recontextualizes historical footage in a way that resists application of standard conceptual frameworks. Next, I'll extend the account of genre given by Eynine (2015) to sketch a theory of mockumentary as a proper subgenre. I'll conclude by reconsidering the relevance of the fiction/non-fiction divide in the philosophy of documentary film and the nature of disagreements over the classification of subversive works.

### *I.*

#### *Three Views in the Philosophy of Documentary Film*

Questions of veracity and authenticity naturally arise when we take a critical perspective on cinematic works that purport to record or retell history. Films of non-fiction like documentaries can reflect an author's attempt at straightforward retelling or present intentionally constructed narratives aimed at a particular conclusion. Documentaries can also *distort* reality in their quest to tell the truth, whether through re-enactments, hired actors masquerading as real figures, or staged scenes. Thus, documentaries naturally bring into focus the nature of the relationship between art and reality, and the author's responsibility therein. I'll focus on three dominant views on the nature of documentaries and their relationship to the truth. Gregory Currie (2004) has argued that documentaries, like photographs, essentially involve "traces" of reality, and so function in some sense as a type of assertion. Currie suggests that the medium itself is one that shares more with photography than painting in virtue of instantiating authentic traces of its subject matter. Bill Nichols (2010) has argued that in order for a documentary to be effective as testimony of a particular event or series of events it must convince its audience of its authenticity. Nichols argues that reflexive documentaries (what I'll call 'mockumentaries') do not aim to transmit truths but to "readjust the assumptions and expectations of its audience, more than to add new knowledge to existing categories" (198). Noël Carroll (1997) argues that we should replace 'documentary' with the categories 'film of presumptive trace' and 'films of presumptive assertion' because these concepts can allow for the use of fictive elements, such as reenactment, in the service of representing real events. As we'll see, each of these frameworks faces difficulties when faced with a film that uses historical footage to *rewrite* history.

### *II.*

#### *Mockumentary as Revisionism: A Bob Dylan Story*

Typically, if a film presents itself as non-fiction but involves heavy elements of fiction we rightfully criticize the makers for misleading us (*Nanook of the North* being a paradigmatic example). Martin Scorsese's recent film *Rolling Thunder Review: A Bob Dylan Story* is a peculiar case, to say the least.

Netflix promoted the film as a documentary about the famed 1975-1976 tour, in line with Dylan and Scorsese's previous 2005 effort *No Direction Home* - a standard documentary by all accounts. However, a majority of the content in *RTR* is fictionalized - including actors giving interviews as if they were involved with the tour, doctored photographs, and factually inaccurate statements. That the film was not a straightforward retelling of events that happened during the tour was not made obvious to those without a background knowledge of Dylan's personal and artistic activities during that period, and many reviews of the film criticized it for failing to make the fictional elements obvious until the end credits.

### *III.*

#### *Towards a Theory of Genre of the Mockumentary*

The focus of this paper will be what works sometimes referred to as "mockumentary" or "fake documentary". Exemplars of this tradition include *This is Spinal Tap*, *Real Life*, and *I'm Still Here*. In the context of this paper, 'mockumentary' refers to those films that utilize, subvert, or exploit the style, syntax, content, and/or form of documentary and non-fiction films as a mechanism for artistic purposes including satire and parody. I'll explicate and extend Evnine's (2015) theory of genre as a historical particular. I'll show how his theory helps make sense of the historical trajectory of documentary films leading up to 'mockumentary' and *RTR*. I'll also argue that Evnine's framework better accounts for subgenres that involve parody and subversion than Friend's (2012).

### *IV.*

#### *Conclusion and Further Implications*

In conclusion I'll explore some implications of revisionist mockumentary films for the fiction/non-fiction divide, survey a few possible problems with my theory of mockumentary as genre, and note some lessons for understanding disagreements about subversive works.



## Manuel García-Carpintero (Barcelona), *Norms of Fiction-Making: The Fictionality of Films*

Under the influence of Walton (1990), several writers including Currie (1990), Lamarque & Olsen (1994), Davies (2015) and Stock (2017) have proposed accounts of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction on which the former essentially involves an invited response of imagining or make-believe. Forcefully contesting these views in a recent series of papers, Stacie Friend (2008, 2012) argues for the claim that “there is no conception of ‘imagining’ or ‘make-believe’ that distinguishes a response specific to fiction as opposed to non-fiction” (2012, 182-3), recommending “that we give up the quest for necessary and sufficient conditions for fictionality” (2008, 166). Matravers (2014) offers a more radical version of her criticisms. As an alternative, Friend advances an account of fiction and non-fiction as *genres – super-genres* encompassing species such as the historical novel on the one hand or literary biography on the other. Following here another influential work by Walton (1970), she proposes a relational, historical, context-sensitive account of such *genres*. Friend (2012, 188) appeals to Walton’s distinction between standard, non-standard and variable properties; in particular, she counts prescriptions to imagine as a *standard* property of fiction. In thus relying on some relatively intrinsic properties, over and above the purely relational ones, her account is an *impure* version of genealogical-institutional accounts of kinds, thereby relevantly differing from the infamous account of *art* as a category conferred without constraints by “the Artworld” (2012, 193).

In my contribution, I will defend a version of the *prescriptions to imagine* account of fiction from Friend’s criticisms, focusing on the case of films. Like Currie and the other writers, I propose to think of fictions as (results of) speech acts; unlike them, however, I take the normative characterization literally, assuming an Austinian account of such acts in contrast to the Gricean account in terms of communicative intentions that these authors rely on. For the case of films, Currie (1999), Ponech (1997) and Plantinga (2005) promote the Gricean version, and Carroll (1996) a more Austinian view. Independently of the present dispute, a normative account fares better relative to the intentionalism/conventionalism debate about the interpretation of fictions, or so I argue. More to the present point, by separating the constitutive nature of fiction from the vagaries of context-sensitive genre classification, it allows us to grant the forceful points that Friend makes, while rejecting her main claim.

On the suggested view, prescriptions to imagine are not mere Waltonian standard properties of fictions, but are constitutive of them, and thus imagining does distinguish a response specific to fiction as opposed to non-fiction. The historically changing, contextual features that Friend relies on have an important role to play; not in the determination of the fiction/non-fiction normative kinds, but rather of their applications to particular cases – i.e., in establishing when a work is to be evaluated as one or the other of those kinds, if this is a determinate matter at all. I will thus argue that narrative fiction and narrative non-fiction (such as documentaries, in the case of visual narratives) are constitutively at odds. Narrative non-fiction consists of an *assertoric* core – a speech act governed by a norm requiring truth for its correctness. Fiction consists of a core of *fiction-making* – speech acts governed by a norm not necessarily requiring truth for correctness, such as one requiring rather for correctness that imaginings interesting on different relevant dimensions are invited. This is compatible with fictions involving truth and allowing for the acquisition of knowledge, on at least two counts. In the first place, like other speech acts (say, rhetorical questions), acts of fiction-making can indirectly convey assertions. Secondly, fictions in some genres (biopics, fictionalizations of actual events) assert background facts about the time, the place, or the people setting up the fiction. In this paper I present and discuss illustrative examples of both kinds. For the first, I will use as illustrative examples Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, *Vertigo* and *North by Northwest* and Lynch’s *Mulholland Drive*, which, I claim, indirectly make assertions precisely about the philosophical topic of this paper, whether fictions can convey

knowledge. For the second, I will discuss praise of *Bohemian Rhapsody* (Singer 2018) for the reproduction of the *Live Aid* concert or *Vice* (McKay 2018) for Bale's characterization of Cheney, and criticisms of these films for their (gross) factual inaccuracies.

**Catalin Brylla (West London) and John Corner (Leeds), *Documentary Strategies and Cognitive Dissonance***

This paper explores how factors of ‘cognitive dissonance’ are variously brought into play in the spectatorship of documentary film. The term broadly indicates the experience of inconsistency between related cognitions, resulting in a psychological discomfort, which the spectator typically attempts to reduce (Cooper, 2007, p. 6). In the context of documentary, cognitive dissonance is a distinctive kind of experienced difficulty, going beyond narrative complexity, grounded in the registering (sometimes as a ‘shock’ or ‘surprise’) of inconsistencies or contradictions in the aesthetic and/or thematic elements of a documentary. This can be unintended, a consequence entirely of spectator knowledge and expectations, or it can be a feature of design, intended precisely to puzzle and provoke and to make spectators ‘work’ for resolutions). In the latter case, it can involve, for instance, play-offs between what is heard and what is seen, instability in time-frames and characterisation and radical shifts in the moods cued (including by music) as appropriate for viewing. In first-person films, it can complicate simple identification of the filmmaker’s screen and implied real-life persona, raising issues both about authorship and performance. Questions about the ways in which dissonance is experienced raise important issues concerning the cognition and emotion of documentary spectatorship, including those about negative experiences of frustration, blocking and denial, and positive ones of intensified engagement and enhanced pleasure and understanding beyond the terms of conventional documentary comprehension. This paper will proceed first by defining the key issues of cognitive dissonance and documentary spectatorship in general, and then it will specifically explore these in relation to documentaries with clear social agendas, involving strategies of persuasion and promotion. Such films deliberately use schema tensions and conflicts to elicit cognitive dissonance in the viewer for broadly attitudinal ends, triggering deeper reflection and possible attitude change as part of the dissonance-reduction strategy, one which may result in related action tendencies (Tan, 1996; Harmon-Jones, 2002, p. 107ff; Grodal, 2006).

Two very different examples of what we are interested in would be the Amnesty International campaign video *Waterboarding* (2008; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IksjJ702nsU>) and the internationally-acclaimed Italian documentary *Fire at Sea* (Gianfranco Rosi, 2016). They would provide the basis for a brief comparative analysis of the spectator experience across its aesthetic-affective-cognitive profile. This experience involves the relation of cognitive orientation to emotion regulation within different scenarios to mitigate or resolve the dissonant state (Cancino-Montecinos *et al.*, 2018), a relation in which the valence of emotions and consequential outcomes frames the mode of attempted resolution for dissonant elements (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 1999; Cooper, 2007). Reference will be made to different models of dissonance in what is now a broad literature of analysis and debate (e.g. Festinger, 1957; Harmon-Jones, 2002; Cooper, 2007).

In many ways, the disruptive processes at work in these examples connect more broadly with the much-discussed unstable generic identity of documentary and both its epistemological and aesthetic interconnections with fiction (Winston *et al.*, 2017). One way in which they do the latter is the various scope they elicit or allow for imaginative work by the spectator within their documentary framing who may be temporarily put in the position of a viewer of fiction rather of documentary (and possibly thereby required to reconsider generic borders and relationships). The paper will finally raise questions about the likely productivity of ‘dissonant’ strategies with different audience groupings, including those whose cognitive-affective responses significantly deviate from the expected responses of a target audience, as well as those watching outside the frame of ‘experimentalism’ within which formal disruption has become an expected and familiar part of spectatorship. Some indications of productive directions for future study will be offered, too.

**John Ellis (Royal Holloway, UL), *How Documentaries Mark Themselves out from Fiction***

Approaches to documentary informed by a genre perspective (Bruzzi 2000, Ellis 2012, Nichols 1991 etc) are broadly social constructionist in approach. They emphasise that the truthfulness of documentary is a constant negotiation between filmmaker, institution and viewers. The truthfulness or fictionality of any documentary therefore cannot be judged from examination of the film text alone, but also requires attention to the historical and institutional context for which it is produced. This approach also emphasises that documentaries attempt to present evidence of encounters in the past through mechanisms that are often closely allied to those of fiction (narrative construction, time elision, multiple points of view, insertion of mood inducing material, sound mixing etc). In order to be perceived as 'documentary' such films have to inscribe into themselves the markers of their authenticity as records of past encounters. Since the crisis in documentary credibility in 1999 (Ellis 2005), the principle marker of the truthfulness of documentary material (against the increasingly liberal use of the devices of fiction) has been the insertion of the filmmaker into the text itself. Documentary narratives have become narratives of the search for truth by filmmakers as varied as Broomfield and Zaki. A second tendency could be called 'reconstructionist': filmmakers from Errol Morris's *Thin Blue Line* to the work of Forensic Architecture examine the origin of footage and events, returning to the places where they happened, collating visual evidence from a wide variety of sources.

**PANEL: Chinese Cinema Aesthetics: From Fact to Fiction**

Panel Convener: Kiki Tianqi Yu (QMUL)

Panellists: Chris Berry (King's College London), Kiki Tianqi Yu (QMUL), Lin Feng (Leicester)

Chair and discussant: Alisa Lebow (Sussex)

**Chris Berry (King's College London), *Jia Zhangke's Memory Project, 24 City: Rewriting History and Historiography***

This essay examines multiple award-winning Chinese director Jia Zhangke's *24 City* (*Ershisicheng Ji*, 二十四城记, 2008) as a memory project. Indeed, the Chinese title of Jia's film includes a word that is missing from the English title – 'ji' (记). *Ji* is also the first part of the composite word 'jìyì' (记忆), which means 'memory', so the full translation of the title could also be *24 City Memories*. The bulk of the film is taken up with nine interviews with factory workers being laid off from a state-run enterprise in Chengdu, and their memories of working there and, in some cases, growing up there. However, the film was very controversial because four of the interviews were not only scripted, but also performed by famous film and television stars. This blurring of the lines between fact and fiction disturbed some viewers. However, this paper points out that the film is composed of even more heterogeneous and incommensurable elements, including poems, songs, highly composed tableau shots, and more. It argues that this combination is as confusing at first as the equally heterogeneous elements making up another famous text with *ji* in the title: Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji*, 史记), where 'ji' is translated as 'records.' Sima Qian is widely regarded, along with Herodotus, as one of the earliest historians. Although there is no reason to believe Jia Zhangke is intentionally invoking Sima Qian, this paper argues that the combination of heterogeneous elements in their texts underlines to the reader that the cosmos exceeds a single unified explanation, and that all explanations, fiction or fact-based, are grounded in story.

**Kiki Tianqi Yu (QMUL), *Landscape of Mind in Chinese Moving Image: Ideo-realm, Daoism, Fiction and Truth in Symbiosis***

This paper aims to offer a philosophical understanding of the fusion of fiction and nonfiction through the aesthetics in traditional Chinese poetics and landscape painting, which, I argue, continue to influence contemporary film practices.

Chinese calligraphic landscape painting, evolved as an independent genre in the late Tang Dynasty, demonstrates longings of literati class to escape from their quotidian world and high politics, and retreat into the natural world, hence merging their personal feelings and Daoist pursuits of spiritual freedom with impressionist representations of landscape. The concepts of 'yijing' (ideo-realm, 意境) and 'xushi xiangsheng' (fiction and fact/truth in symbiosis, 虚实相生), first discussed in poetics, were also developed in landscape paintings. Literally meaning the realm of ideas or meanings, 'ideorealm' consists of two parts: an actual realm and an imaginary realm, which indicates hiding the author's subjective feelings within natural settings, and the actual meaning is created beyond the totality of images or scenes. Hence the feature of 'xushi xiangsheng', which can be translated as 'fiction and fact/truth in symbiosis', and the phrase 'xushi' can also mean fake and authentic, empty and full, deficiency and excess, etc. These features later became the essence of traditional Chinese art.

Taking an interdisciplinary and comparative approach and in dialogue with current studies on poetics of cinema, documentary and philosophy, this paper examines how these traditional aesthetics are evident in cinema, by examining a number of films and artist moving image, in Pre-Mao era, and contemporary

China, with a case study of *A Yangtze Landscape* (2017). Republic Filmmakers, such as Fei Mu and Zheng Junli, began to experiment with traditional aesthetics in their film practice in the 1930s. Contemporary artists and filmmakers also consciously or unconsciously incorporate such aesthetics and philosophies in their works. Among them, Yang Fudong ‘paints’ with his camera to explore the role of modern literati and the fusion of the real and the imagined in his series of moving image works, *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forests* (2013-2017). Gao Shiqiang experiments with digital camera technology to create the huge multi-screen installation, *Landscape* (2018), offering a Daoist critique of the anthropocene. In his image-writing *Behemoth* (2015), Zhao Liang hides his sharp commentary on Inner Mongolia’s wounded landscape, through impressionistic imageries, and the narrative structure borrowed from Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.

This paper, then, takes Xu Xin’s non-narrative film *A Yangtze Landscape* (2017) for detailed analysis. The film is a black and white cinematic landscape scroll across thousands of kilometers, presenting a poetic but disquieting impression of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was filmed while Xu was following the production of a fiction film *Crosscurrent* (2016), traveling along the river. Xu’s film consists of steady long shots of real lives along Yangtze, and observations of the film scenes, without pointing out what is from the reality and what is fictional. This paper interprets Xu’s use of ‘fiction and truth in symbiosis’ to create cinematic ideorealm, and points out that it reflects the filmmaker’s creative response to cultural heritage and current political conditions.

### **Lin Feng (Leicester), *Performativity in Chinese Artistic Documentaries: A Case Study of Xie Jin’s Huang Baomei (1958)***

Only ten years after the Communist Party founded People’s Republic of China in 1949, Chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976) launched a nationwide economic campaign known as the Great Leap Forward. With the global tension of Cold War, this campaign intended to rapidly transform China into an economic advanced nation through fast industrialisation and collectivisation. In order to overtake advanced Western countries, especially United States and Great Britain, there was an anxiety in various Chinese industries, including its film industry, to maximise their production, even at the cost of quality, variety and accuracy of statistic data.

In terms of documentary making, one direct impact was that many films adopted similar structure and repetitive narrative that told a story of how a model worker overcomes difficulties in order to contribute to the nation’s development. As a response to the poor quality of these standardised films, China’s first Premier Zhou Enlai (1898-1976) put forward a notion of “artistic documentary” in one of his meetings with filmmakers in 1958. He suggested that filmmakers could combine feature film style with documentary storytelling to enhance a film’s artistic quality (Zhu 2016).

This paper takes Xie Jin’s *Huang Baomei* (1958) as a key case to analyse performativity of the so-called Chinese artistic documentary produced in the 1950s. Jane Chapman (2009, 8) defines documentary as “a discursive formation, presenting first-hand experience and fact by creating a rhetoric of immediacy and ‘truth’, using photographic technology.” At first glance, *Huang Baomei* appeared to confirm to Chapman’s argument. However, a close reading of the film will reveal that Chinese artistic documentaries go beyond presenting first-hand experiences to incorporate performativity in various aspects, including but not limited to, mise-en-scene, performance, and narrative. In this regard, I argue that this film not only blurs the line between imagination and authenticity, but also challenges the idea that documentary and feature films are two different film forms. Instead, it places both on a same spectrum of cinematic art.

### ***PANEL: Documentary Picturing***

Convenor: Nina Mickwitz (University of the Arts London)

Panelists: Bella Honess Roe (Surrey), Nina Mickwitz (University of the Arts London), Julia Eckel (Ruhr-University Bochum)

The papers in this panel examine three forms of documentary that challenge a received conflation of documentary and recording technologies: animation, graphic narratives or comics, and games. The point of departure is an understanding of documentary as a narrative construction, paired with the acknowledgement that the tool-box of visual non-fiction discourse has historically involved a number of means; for presenting equivalents for the lived and comprehensible world, from observational drawing in both sciences and journalism to conceptual maps, graphs and, more recently, infographics. In fact, some of these modes are used to present information as elements within conventional documentary films and programmes. The papers here, however, showcase and attend to instances where texts construct their documentary propositions while more fundamentally and comprehensively eschewing the paradigm of recording.

Our contention is that, just as narrative construction does in and of itself not diminish or jeopardise the non-fiction credentials of a documentary, neither does an image that is not produced by a recording device automatically undermine its documentary status or somehow render it closer to fiction. This is not a novel argument. 15 years ago, Keith Beattie (2004:13) argued that documentary has proven too complex to derive its truth-claim from a purist sense of recorded evidence. Not long after that WJT Mitchell performed a useful uncoupling of medium and genre by the claim: ‘Realism is not “built into” the ontology of any medium as such’ (2018 [2006]: 61). His contention that ‘realism is a project of photography, not something that belongs to it by nature’ (ibid: 64) consequently opened up the consideration of different realisms, different strategies for describing aspects of reality, different ways of picturing.

The aim of the panel is not to present arguments about whether or not animated film, animation in games and the graphic narrative of comics can qualify as documentary. Our interest instead lies in examining how these diverse means are put to use and what they contribute to the category of documentary.

Approaches to documentary informed by a genre perspective (Bruzzi 2000, Ellis 2012, Nichols 1991 etc) are broadly social constructionist in approach. They emphasise that the truthfulness of documentary is a constant negotiation between filmmaker, institution and viewers. The truthfulness or fictionality of any documentary therefore cannot be judged from examination of the film text alone, but also requires attention to the historical and institutional context for which it is produced. This approach also emphasises that documentaries attempt to present evidence of encounters in the past through mechanisms that are often closely allied to those of fiction (narrative construction, time elision, multiple points of view, insertion of mood inducing material, sound mixing etc). In order to be perceived as ‘documentary’ such films have to inscribe into themselves the markers of their authenticity as records of past encounters. Since the crisis in documentary credibility in 1999 (Ellis 2005), the principle marker of the truthfulness of documentary material (against the increasingly liberal use of the devices of fiction) has been the insertion of the filmmaker into the text itself. Documentary narratives have become narratives of the search for truth by filmmakers as varied as Broomfield and Zaki. A second tendency could be called ‘reconstructionist’: filmmakers from Errol Morris’s *Thin Blue Line* to the work of Forensic Architecture examine the origin of footage and events, returning to the places where they happened, collating visual evidence from a wide variety of sources.

**Bella Honess Roe (Surrey), *First-Person-Once-Removed Animated Documentary and the Facilitation of Knowledge Through Imagination***

The existence of animated documentaries calls into question any easy or simplistic association of documentary with the witnessed and recorded. Since the earliest days of cinema, but particularly since the 1990s, filmmakers have productively used animation as a representational strategy in non-fiction media. From *The Sinking of the Lusitania's* (Winsor McCay, 1918) reconstruction of historical events to more recent films such as *Feeling My Way* (Jonathan Hodgson, 1997) and *Eyeful of Sound* (Samantha Moore, 2009) that give insight into subjective experience, animation has been shown to be a tool that can broaden and deepen the documentary's epistemological potential (as I argued in my 2013 book *Animated Documentary*).

In this paper, I will explore animated documentaries that seem to present a particular philosophical quandary – films that encourage spectators to *imagine* the world from a particular, subjective point of view that they most likely do not share and through this imagination gain knowledge of that subjectivity. As such, we might think of these films as offering a way of gaining knowledge of other minds. However, to add to the quandary, these films are also first-person-once-removed documentaries, in that they are not made or animated by the subject of the film. For example, Andy Glynne's landmark series of short films, *Animated Minds* (2003 & 2009), allow viewers to understand the experience of various mental health issues, including agoraphobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. This understanding is facilitated by the animation, which provides a visual 'excess' in the face of the 'absence' of expected live-action footage (Honess Roe, 2013). This excess is something that has to be contended with by the audience in their comprehension of the film's subject-matter. Yet, this is also created by animators who were interpreting the subject's testimonies under the guidance of series director Glynne. There are myriad other animated documentaries that work in this way.

Documentary scholars have long since abandoned any commitment to a rigid distinction between fiction and non-fiction in documentary. In this paper I will explore how first-person-once-removed animated documentaries facilitate knowledge of the subjectivity of others through means that are traditionally understood as 'fictional' – the constructed and non-indexical forms of animation.

**Nina Mickwitz (University of the Arts London), *Documentary Comics: Factuality Pictured Differently***

Understood as a sequence of still images and the emphasis on subjective interpretation brought to the fore by their drawn images, comics do not necessarily fit easily into conventional understandings of documentary. They foreground the agency and subjective interpretations through which situations, experiences, environments and relationships are configured and lived. Yet, understanding documentary as a visual narrative that claims to represent real people and actual historical events and recognising its images an equivalent (rather than a duplicate) of the reality it speaks to, opens up a space for documentary comics (Mickwitz 2016).

Conceiving documentary as a mode of address and a proposition thus challenges the notion of documentary as a medium specific category. This broader conception of documentary has previously been put forward in John Corner's (2007) essay 'Documentary expression and the physicality of the referent'. But different forms still offer distinctive constraints and advantages for such undertakings. The aim of this paper is to outline some of the affordances of comics in relation to documentary ambitions, in order to ask what comics and graphic narratives contribute to 'the documentary project'.



Using an example that adopts realist tropes and conventions (observation of surface detail, and careful constraint of expressive gestures to signal their documentary intentions) I will first show how the spatial articulation of time in comics can be used as a strategy for constructing meaning, and offers particular possibilities for his documentary undertakings. The final part of the paper will attend to the way that drawing lends itself equally to observation and conceptual communication. The drawn image can foreground embodied and subjective frames and evoke the porousness between external situation and internal states through composition or style (El Refaie 2012). It can also employ visual metaphor to render aspects of experience more tangible (Miers 2017). As this paper show, these affordances can be harnessed not only to construct that which is imagined or imaginary but to deal with and express the actual.

**Julia Eckel (Ruhr-University Bochum), *Let's Re-Play! Documenting Games, Documenting Animation***

Contemporary digital gaming seems to be a domain of fiction – where orcs and elves go on mythical quests and cowboys ride and fight, where candy is crushed and cars are crashed – virtually. But looking closer at gaming culture reveals that it is not only about the gameplay itself, but more and more incorporates practices of documentation. Aside from the phenomenon of ‘Documentary Games’, we find practices such as Let’s Play videos, walk- and playthroughs, in-game-photography and -cinematography, tech demos, and other types of screenshots and screencasts which can be seen as documentary formats that deal with the fluidity and fugacity of gaming as a half-real, half-virtual activity and which, despite their fantastic settings, are based on a factual “inter(re)activity” (Arsenault/Perron 2009) between an animated image and a player.

Hence, the seemingly contradictory relation of gaming (as a present- and future-oriented activity) and documentation (as an approach towards the past resp. a present that has passed) is challenged by these activities – as well as the fiction/nonfiction divide. Because swinging a hammer in a fantasy game world is a fictitious act that nevertheless implies and documents a factual game action (a user giving commands to do so). The swinging hammer on the computer screen therefore is a fictional thing with a nonfictional cause – and this relation, again, can be documented.

The animated images of computer games thus seem to invite their users not only to ‘play’ with(in) them but to ‘save’ and ‘re-play’ them somehow; to preserve what happens in these fantastic digital realms and to be able to re-experience, evaluate, and prove these processes. Documenting game animation therefore means to document a fictional world, a factual gameplay, and animation itself (as an image technology and aesthetic).

The talk will focus on different types of these documenting practices and relate them to more general theoretical debates about documentary games and documentary animation. In doing so, it sheds a light on the ambivalent relation of fiction and nonfiction within gaming and the practice of documenting it.

**Marco Meneghin (Concordia), *Archives and Repertoires in Moana with Sound***

After the box office success of *Nanook of the North* (1922), Robert J. Flaherty started to look for another topic that would repeat the success of his first feature film. The search was not long, and after reading Frederick O'Brien's popular 1919 fictionalised travel book *White Shadows of the South Seas*, Flaherty and his wife Frances decided that their next film was going to be set in Polynesia, and particularly in the Samoan archipelago. This decision was made for two main reasons. The first had to do with the theme of the film which, as with *Nanook*, would be centred on the depiction of the vanishing way of life and traditions of the Samoan people. The second concerned the private life of the Flaherty family. Neither Robert nor Frances wanted to repeat the experience of the production of *Nanook*, which took almost ten years and divided the Flahertys for long periods of time. Samoa was the polar opposite, as far as climate was concerned, of the Canadian North, and therefore an ideal place for the double task of shooting a movie and raising a family. Moreover, the move to the Samoan Island of Savaii would allow the Flahertys' daughters "to be schooled in the way of nature"<sup>1</sup>, as their father put it. This decision would have far reaching consequences for *Moana* (1926), the film which the Flahertys produced during their stay in Savaii. It would be their daughter Monica who, in 1980, revived the film with a new soundtrack which she composed drawing from her own childhood memories and with the active collaboration of the people of Savaii and the Samoan community in Hawaii.

Both the 1926 *Moana* and its 1980 sound version, *Moana with Sound* will be the focus of this paper. Following Diana Taylor's definition of 'archive' and 'repertoire', I will contend that both versions of the film draw from particular kinds of repertoires (indigenous traditions and childhood memories) which are then archived through the medium of film. In particular, I will argue that both *Moanas* are originated from the repertoire of embodied memories belonging both to the Samoan people of Savaii and of Monica Flaherty, thus complicating the relationship between fiction and non-fiction, and between cultural traditions and personal memories.

I'll approach these themes by looking closely to the production processes of both versions of the film. Firstly, I will focus on the 1926 *Moana* and I will argue that, by employing a semi-participatory method, previously experimented by Robert Flaherty during the production of *Nanook of the North*, the film can be seen as a complex, and often ambiguous, ethnographic work. Indeed, it partakes of all the problematics linked to what Mary Louse Pratt defines as "contact zones"<sup>2</sup> yet, at the same time, its semi-participatory method of production allows for what Michelle J. Raheja defines as "visual sovereignty"<sup>3</sup> on the part of the Samoan population. Secondly, I will focus on the production of the soundtrack undertaken by Monica Flaherty (with the help of Richard Leacock) to revive *Moana* as *Moana with Sound*. I will argue that the production of the soundtrack, while being methodologically similar to the way the original film was produced, can be assessed also as a work of auto-ethnography on Monica Flaherty's part. The production of the soundtrack of *Moana with Sound* was not only a way for a daughter to revive a lost work in her parent's filmography and an important archive of Samoan traditions, but it was also a way for her to re-connect with her childhood memories. In order to argue this, I will draw on the definition of auto-ethnography proposed by Catherine Russell in her book *Experimental Ethnography* (reworking for the film medium the original definition by Mary Louse Pratt). Finally, I will propose that the kind of auto-ethnographic rhetoric used by the Flahertys' daughter resonates with Domietta Torlasco's thesis about archival practices in filmmaking that construct films in the "future anterior" tense, the "what will have happened"<sup>4</sup> that Monica Flaherty tried to engage with by reviving her childhood memories in the soundtrack of *Moana with Sound*.

**James Peter Moffatt (Liverpool), *A True Story Based on Rumour and Hearsay: Deconstructing the Approaches to Scoring the Music for the 2017 Feature Documentary Mansfield 66/67***

The 2017 feature documentary film, 'Mansfield 66/67', is an examination of the last two years of movie star Jayne Mansfield's life, including an alleged romantic dalliance with Anton LaVey, head of the Church of Satan, and the rumours that surround her untimely and gruesome death.

The presenter of this paper was the music composer on the film, and a current PhD student, who reflects on their experiences with the directors and producers in their collaborative approach to tell 'a true story based on rumour and hearsay' through the medium of documentary film.

Through a combination of literature-based, case study and practice-led approaches this paper addresses some of the issues faced by narrative driven documentaries, the hybrid between fiction and nonfiction and the role of truth in cinematic entertainment. Additionally, the many forms of re-enactments that form a basis of storytelling in 'Mansfield 66/67', and how this challenges the fiction/nonfiction divide are discussed. First-hand interviews with industry professionals also offer an insight into a collaborative industry in flux, with technology democratising the rise of independent production, as tensions surrounding identity, creative labour and the wider cultural industries unfold.

This paper sits in a wider context of study examining the impact of technology on the production, distribution and consumption of film and film music and the evolving role of the composer in this industry in flux.

**Stefan Dux and Christian Iseli (Zurich University of the Arts), *The Impact of Camera Innovations on Visual Aesthetics in Documentary Film***

The visual aesthetics of films are influenced by the availability of specific camera technologies. As new and especially low-cost cameras are often used first in documentary films, due to typically lower budgets, the impact of technological change can be observed particularly well in this field. This paper presents a mixed-methods research project that investigates the interplay of camera innovations and visual aesthetics in documentaries from a filmmaker perspective and its possible effect on cinema audiences. On the basis of qualitative interviews with known filmmakers, the study focuses on milestones and key elements of aesthetic changes that were initiated by the digitalization process of film and audiovisual media.

Innovations in camera technology often impact directly on the visual aesthetics of films. This is especially true for documentary filmmaking, where consumer- and semi-professional models are frequently used (Ellis, 2012). Documentary filmmakers have strongly responded to the new possibilities of digital camcorders and other mobile devices and introduced new visual styles. However, the accompanying new possibilities of image creation do not replace conventional ones, but establish themselves as parallel choices.

The practice-based research project "Gadgets, Phones and Drones - Technical Innovations and the Visual Aesthetics of Documentary Films" looks at three major shifts in camera innovation and their influence on the image: the introduction of digital palmcorders in the mid 1990s, the DSLR cameras around 2005 and the incorporation of small action cams, drones and mobile phones to record additional footage in the last nine years. These camera developments established alternative documentary practices and aesthetics alongside the formerly predominant, bulky shoulder cameras. Small digital camcorders were quickly adopted by professional filmmakers and allowed more intimate filming (Zimmermann, 2006) that led to a more spontaneous, home-video like visual style (Ellis & McLane, 2005). The introduction of the Canon 5D cameras around 2005 reestablished a cinematic look as they were able to shoot HD Video and could use a shallow depth of field. The use of multiple small cameras like GoPros, smart phones and drones emerged around 2010 and brought a renunciation of the anthropomorphic, single camera view. Carl Platina (2013) concludes about "*The Cove*" (2009), that the use of multiple, hidden and technomorphic cameras is an attempt to generate objectivity in a film that is very much characterized by subjectivity.

The research project is structured into three parts. During the first phase we look at aesthetic changes through the eyes of filmmakers. We conducted qualitative interviews with film professionals who were part of these changes. The second and third phase consist of practice-based studies, that will undergo present-day analysis and will be tested by audience research. The first experiment looks at the difference in sensor and camera size. The second experiment focuses on the difference between the anthropomorphic view of a single shoulder camera and the multi view of versatile new cameras. Both should allow a systematic comparison of visual aesthetics and its impacts on storytelling and authenticity.

This paper will present findings of the first part of the research project. It focuses on how filmmakers experienced the usage of new camera technologies, its aesthetic and narrative implications and the influence on content and authenticity in documentary films.

Some of the early findings are:

- The growing popularity of documentary films increased audience's expectations about storytelling and visual aesthetics. The look of the films resembled more and more the aesthetics of feature films with shallow depth of field, color grading, and similar dynamic range.

- One of the most important achievements in digital and electronic camera technology compared to analog film was the possibility to shoot for a longer time with almost no additional costs. This led to more footage and a growing importance of editing and postproduction.
- There is an increase in intimate and personal stories in the mid 90s, because the new DV cameras were easy to use and allowed directors to shoot by themselves. - Visual aesthetics can influence the perceived authenticity. The more polished a documentary film looks, the more suspicious it may feel.
- Content, style and technology influence each other. Camera technology alone doesn't make a visual style, how it is adapted by the filmmakers defines the look and feel of a film.

**Michael Grabowski (Manhattan College), *Production Artifacts as Fluid Narrative Codes in the Documentary Genre***

Though most stories easily can be classified as fiction or non-fiction, enough works in multiple media transgress this boundary to defy essential conditions of definition. Friend (2012) has offered a “non-reductionist, contextualist account of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction,” arguing that properties of a work may be standard, contra-standard, or variable to a particular genre, while genres themselves are established by the repetition of standard properties common within works within a particular genres.

While the subject of Friend’s analysis is text, categorizing fiction and nonfiction cinema and television programs as genes rather than modes of discourse can be fruitful. Though Nichols (2017) convincingly categories documentaries among six modes (Expository, Poetic, Observational, Participatory, Reflexive, and Performative), he asserts that documentaries are about “something that actually happened” and feature real people. However, Eitzen (2018) argues that documentaries are undergoing a “storytelling turn” that devalues clear divisions between fact and fiction in favor of entertainment and commercial viability. This paper examines some standard elements of the documentary genre that assert its real-ness, and it documents how those elements flow between documentary and fiction genres.

The presentational form of audiovisual documentaries engages deeper perceptual systems than text. Grodal (2009) offers a PECMA flow model of cinematic form, in which images and sound engage perceptions, emotions, cognition, and motor action that had evolved within the natural world. McLuhan (2003) proposed that media are extensions of the human nervous system, allowing the perception of the world beyond the boundaries of the human body but also amputating the senses not extended. Hoffmann (2019) has used computational models of evolution to argue that humans have not evolved perception to produce an accurate representation of reality, but to maximize fitness for survival. The perceptual realism of cinema in general, and the documentary genre in particular, enacts and extends the PECMA flow tuned to survival, rather than accurately representing the world.

Grodal (2018) demonstrates that perceptual realism engages cognitive processes to assert its reality status not only in non-fiction works but also docudramas and other fiction genres. While documentaries use perceptual realism to assert a perceptual reality tuned to fitness for survival, Grabowski (2018) argues that audiences are conditioned to accept “artifacts of production” as evidence that documentaries are about real people and places. These artifacts provide evidence to audiences that the events depicted have been documented.

Thus, the documentary genre uses standard features that make assertions of reality that may conform to perceptual realism but also rely on codes that are artifacts of documentary production itself. Viewers internalize these codes through habituation as they become standard elements of the genre. Filmic jumps or videotape noise, microphone bumps, lens flare, and digital noise all foreground footage as having been recorded. These codes are fluid, and they flow not only across works in various documentary sub-genres but also cross into fiction works, serving as contra-standard properties to provide novel variation in fiction genres. Occasionally a code, such as the handheld camera shot, becomes a typical property of a fiction genre.

Artifact codes themselves evolved from obstacles to transparently documenting events. Historically, shaky handheld camera shots were not desirable but a necessary compromise in classic documentary

production. Shots were shaky despite the operator's attempt to hold the camera steady. Telephoto shots, in cases where documentarians could not physically be close to an event or subject, exaggerates the effect. The mark of a good camera operator during the pre-electric silent cinema era was how constant they hand-cranked a camera, preserving a steady rate of movement and heightening perceptual realism. However, one of the properties that signifies early silent film today is the variable rate of recording (along with frame-variable exposure flashes, black and white images, and scratches, hairs, and missing frames) that infer the viewing of a distressed historical artifact.

After identifying and tracing the history of several production artifact codes, this paper examines how some codes have flowed from documentaries to several fiction genres. To illustrate the case, the paper compares several classic and contemporary documentary and fiction works, including *Fyre Fraud* (2019), *Making a Murderer* (2015-18), *Robot World* (2010), *13 Reasons Why* (2016-18), and *A Wrinkle in Time* (2018).

**Julian Koch (Royal Holloway, UL), *Perpetrating Narrative: Metalepsis and the Fiction–Nonfiction Divide in Oppenheimer’s The Act of Killing***

In his review of Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Act of Killing*, Bill Nichols claims that fiction and nonfiction are problematically entangled (Nichols 2013). In the 2012 film several perpetrators of the 1965–1966 Indonesian massacres of more than 500,000 communists, union members, and ethnic Chinese direct a film reenacting their killings. Oppenheimer, in turn, films the making-of of this film. I will argue, against Nichols and others, that Oppenheimer pursues two metaleptic strategies in his film, the first of which deliberately merges fact and fiction, yet the second enables the viewer to tell them apart.

First, I will examine a type of metalepsis in the film which merges diegetic levels. I will argue that this diegetic levelling fictionalises the diegetic layers involved in the metalepsis. Much of the criticism directed at the film by Fraser, Crichtlow, Tyson, and Meneghetti takes issue with this element of the film (Fraser 2013; Crichtlow 2013; Tyson 2014; Meneghetti 2016). For instance, Oppenheimer’s shot composition sometimes seems to deliberately liken reenactments, which are at times highly fictional although revolving around a real core, and scenes that actually did take place. Furthermore, perpetrators play their own historical selves in the reenactments through which they glorify their past actions. Thus, the perpetrators “from the level of representation introduce themselves on the level of what is represented” (Klimek 2011, 24). Following Currie’s distinction between “trace” and “testimony,” the films of Congo and other perpetrators reenacting their killings are traces of their current selves (or at least more current than 1965–1966) and testimony of their former selves. This odd status is emblemized when in preparation for the shooting Congo dies his hair, rejuvenating his appearance in order to achieve more likeness with his former self. If traces capture reality or something very close to it (Currie 1999, 289) whereas testimony is fictional, as is implied when Currie puts docudrama into the fiction category because of its exclusive reliance on reenactment (Currie 1999, 295), then the perpetrators form the nexus of reality and fiction. Fiction and reality are also merged in reverse when the perpetrators state that they were inspired by American gangster films for some of their killing methods.

Ultimately, I will argue, this first type of metalepsis connects to the broader socio-political environment in Indonesia under the New Order (1966–1998) and, to a lesser extent, current Indonesia. Especially in Indonesia under the New Order, representations and reenactments, from docudramas to history books and school plays, were used to legitimise the killings and the New Order’s subsequent grip on power (McGregor 2007). The fictionalization of history, which is so crucial to enabling and preserving the power structures of Indonesia, hence itself constitutes a form of reality. Consequently, the merging of fiction and reality in Oppenheimer’s film betrays this paradoxical reality enabled by merging fact and fiction.

The second type of metalepsis, on the other hand, is more subtle and serves precisely to enable a higher order view on Indonesia’s reality constituted of fictionalised history by creating a distance to the fictionalised realities which the perpetrators inhabit and reenact. Oppenheimer ensures that there is a reality accessible to the implied viewer that is not dragged into the Maelstrom of fictionalisation. In many cases, this reality is located offscreen. For example, when Oppenheimer confronts perpetrator Adi Zulkadry with having committed war crimes, Oppenheimer, although clearly audible, is situated offscreen. Several similar scenes recur throughout *The Act of Killing*, during which Oppenheimer is addressed by perpetrators yet Oppenheimer never appears onscreen. Thus, even though Oppenheimer is



technically part of the diegesis, he systematically resists being represented on the same level with the perpetrators. This creates a spatial separation between the onscreen space of reality (and its problematic relationship with fiction) dominated by the perpetrators and the offscreen reality through which we view the onscreen reality. The presence of an external reality, so to speak, which documents the perpetrators also gives the viewer a vantage point from which to see parts of history that the perpetrators exclude. In a remarkable scene, a victim, who helps perpetrators get ready for their filming, tells the history of the murder of his father, which he hopes to have included in the perpetrators' reenactments. Yet, the perpetrators deny the victim a role in their version of history. The victim's history and the perpetrators' denial, in turn, is captured by Oppenheimer's camera which thereby reveals the fabrication of history by the perpetrators and what it excludes.

In conclusion: the first metalepsis merges reality and fiction in what amounts to a *mise en abyme* of the overall representational power structures in Indonesia. The second metalepsis creates a distance to the first, betraying the fictionalised history of the perpetrators, and asserts the film's own factual stance.

## Neri Marsili (Barcelona), *Testimony and Deception in Films*

Watching films is a common activity, and often a stimulating one. That we can acquire factual knowledge about the world from documentaries is a relatively uncontroversial claim. Arguably, however, also non-fiction films can be a reliable source of knowledge about the world. It is fairly ordinary to claim that watching a fiction film one has learnt something, for instance, about the life of ancient leaders, about Chinese culture, or about the flora of the Amazonian forest. Both in documentaries and fiction films this process of acquisition of knowledge can go wrong: sometimes, instead of learning something, the spectator ends up being deceived. And this can happen regardless of whether the speaker is watching a documentary or a non-fiction film.

Philosophical debate about films often avoids the question of how these works transmit testimonial beliefs, and rarely consider the question of how films can be deceiving. This paper aims to remedy this lack of discussion: it considers different kinds of testimonial beliefs that spectators can acquire, and of the different ways in which these beliefs can fail to be correct.

I begin by offering a tentative taxonomy of the *kinds* of beliefs spectators form about films. Fiction and non-fiction films differ here, as typically only the former induce beliefs about a fictional world. Both may prompt beliefs about the real world, some of which are beliefs about the real world that are only accessible through the film (performance of the actors, etc.).

I will show that there are some important differences in how these beliefs are recovered. Forming testimonial beliefs from a film implies recognising a set of communicative intentions, and spectators rely on shared conventions (like genre conventions) to identify these communicative intentions. The philosophical literature on the conventions underlying the fiction-nonfiction distinction in movies (e.g. Currie 1999, 2000, Carroll 2000, Plantinga 2013) and on learning from fiction (e.g. Friend 2014, Stock 2018) will serve as theoretical background to understand the role of conventions in inviting spectators to believe something. I will argue that non-fiction films carry an *assurance* (in a familiar sense common in epistemology, cf. e.g. Faulkner 2007, McMyler 2011) that what they communicate is true. This assurance is absent in non-fiction films, but I will show this does not necessarily prevent them from being a source of testimonial warrant.

In the last part of the paper, I will consider the issue of deception about films. Two important kinds of intentional deception will be considered: deception about what is true in the fictional world (as in *Fight Club*) and deception about what is true in the real world (as in *Nanook of the North*). I will focus on the second kind of deception, showing how it can be used to test the model developed in the rest of the paper: what kind of beliefs film induce, how they are formed, and the kind and strength of testimonial warrant that they putatively engender.

**Gracia Ramirez (UAL), *An Elusive Divide? Actual Footage, Staging and Reconstruction in The March of Time***

This paper examines the position of the documentary news series *The March of Time* in relation to the fiction-nonfiction divide. Appearing in 1935, *The March of Time* mixed actual footage with staged and reconstructed sequences and innovated in dealing with current affairs in more depth than contemporary newsfilms. By underlining values typically associated with literary fiction such as conflict, character and psychological motivation, the producers claimed to be getting closer to the “emotional authenticity” of events (Fielding, 1978). Lasting until 1951 and adapted to different audiences across America, Europe and Australia, this series’ influence can be traced on later nonfiction formats, such as film and TV newsmagazines, dramatized documentaries and docudramas (Hoffer and Nelson, 1999).

Paul Sellors (2014) notes that analysing the distinctive aesthetic and representational practices of nonfiction films, including those they share with fiction film, helps in evaluating as well understanding the wider philosophical, historical and cultural significance of the form. Sellors further argues that the difference between fiction and nonfiction lies on the type of assertions the film makes about the actual world. Following these and Renov’s (1993) insights on the role of fictive elements in nonfiction films, I explore *The March of Time* as a newsfilm and argue that the introduction of fictive elements and lyricism did not turn the news series into a fictional work. Particularly, I analyse some episodes issued between 1935 and 1938 dealing with the League of Nations where the complications of the period’s international politics come into relief. I concentrate on the use of what Bill Nichols (2010) defines as the explanatory mode of documentary, where the voice-over narration commands meaning over images, while I also pay attention to the function of intertwining actual footage, re-enactments and dramatisations, and the tension between their indexical and iconic value. This demonstrates how the documentary series used different forms of representation and aesthetics to make specific claims about the actual world. The images and the narratives in which they were inserted were meant to provide a perspective on current world affairs. The series’ emphasis on emotions, morality, visual spectacle, musicality and hope for better times are also typical of melodrama (Brooks, 1976). They aimed to render the world morally legible, unveiling the economies of mediated affect that sought to mobilise public opinion at this key point of documentary film history.

**Natascha Drubek (Freie Universität Berlin), *How to do Things with Moving Images. On Documentaries, Truth, and the War***

We assume that documentary films make „assertions about reality“. This usually means that a nonfiction film is defined by its truthful relation to reality, whereas a fiction film is not. However, in most historical documentary films I recently have studied, this divide breaks down and renders the term “documentary” meaningless. The documentaries I am talking about have abused the genre description intentionally, inserting it into the title of films about which we today say that they distort the truth. Therefore, I was wondering whether the cinematic genre system could provide a place for a third type of non-fiction film which is in between: Although it is not fiction, it cannot be classified according to true/not-true, either. Another question arises: Do we think that the message of a documentary film can be an intentional ‘lie’?

According to John Austin in language there are utterances which are not truth-evaluable. Performative sentences such as “Hereby we declare a war” or invoking Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union are neither true nor false, but have a considerable effect, such as committing a country’s forces to armed conflict or a plunge of the British pound. What happens if Austin’s concept of performativity – “How to do things with words” – were to be applied to film?

If the truthfulness of the reality depicted is waived in favour of direct effects on an audience we can observe that under these circumstances the usual fiction/non-fiction divide is blurred. This indeed applies to cinematic propaganda which forms a core, if not the most formative genre of documentaries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

My suggestion is the following: If a documentary moving image does not qualify as referring to a reality, and therefore cannot be seen as a verifiable utterance, it might belong to the same category as a performative utterance. It does not inform, instead it performs. A film can – just as a performative utterance – have the effect of an act, or it can make viewers act.

Cinematic performativity can be found in many propaganda films which have shifted the ethics and alleged truth goals of documentary invisibly but powerfully. This is the case with wartime propaganda films which per definition are not obliged to tell a universal truth (differently from human right films, for example) but rather have to help winning the war. Many non-fiction milestones of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are a mixture of (dis)information and propaganda since in times of war every documentary film has to serve the war effort. And film performs its duty, sometimes telling the truth, sometimes telling lies. However, what is truth in the war? There is not one Truth but as many as there are fighting parties. Therefore a documentary film in these times has a wholly different status from times of peace and we cannot judge it the same way. A war documentary appeals, motivates, instigates, and becomes a frightful weapon on its own when it serves as documentation of war crimes with legal consequences. This is the moment when the moving image steps out of its merely representational function and becomes an actor itself. The activity of documenting on film has this specific ability to perform, often without even reaching a court room. Not so different from the triggering of article 50 which did not – as of July 2019 – have the “intended” effect, that is, that Great Britain left the EU which was supposed to happen in March, but many others.

We can see that production of performative moving images thrives not only during military conflicts but also in hybrid wars. Today there is a tendency among critics of this hybrid genre to subsume disinformation campaigns which use the means of film, under “fake news”, stressing the fact that we should return to forms of communication that are built on truth-evaluation, and not performativity.

**Elizabeth Watkins (Leeds), *Fiction/Nonfiction: the Colourisation, Authenticity and Spectatorship of Documentary Film***

The digital manipulation and circulation of still and moving images has become prevalent, yet, the colourisation of photographs held in archives and museums has remained a contentious issue. Interest in the colourisation of documentary photographs, such as those in Marina Amaral and Dan Jones' *The Colour of Time, a New History of the World 1850-1960* (2018) has emerged in a discourse of technical innovation, the authenticity of news images – deepfakes - and the archive. Similar techniques persist in the online community Reddit, which hosts sub-groups dedicated to r/ColorizedHistory and r/Colorization with a combined membership of over 1million subscribers. Colourisation describes the retrospective digital encoding and processing of images that were initially made and circulated in a black and white format (Grainge 1999; Gendler 2013), offers a case study for examining the fractious relationship between the legal rights of ownership, copyright, ethics and the moral rights of authorship and artistic expression (Cooper 1991).

This presentation examines the editing and colourisation of first world war film footage held in the Imperial War Museum [IWM] archive in Peter Jackson's *They Shall Not Grow Old* (2018). The work of the War Office Cinematograph Committee, used in Jackson's project, sits in a category of 'utility films' which Meunier and Hediger suggest hold little interest for a spectator other than a specialist, researcher or historian (Meunier 1969; Hediger 2018). Jackson utilises techniques familiar to fiction film inflect the 'holistic unity' across the fragments of film and still-images that form *They Shall Not Grow Old*. The imbrication of fiction and nonfiction signals a series of vital questions around the ethics and ideologies of colourisation, historiography and concepts of authenticity of materials and spectator experience: what is at stake in the colourisation of nonfiction film?

*They Shall Not Grow Old* formed one of 220 projects produced under the 14-18NOW WWI Centenary Art Commission alongside John Akomfrah's 2018 multi-screen installation *Mimesis: African Soldier*. Akomfrah's work reminds us of the potential of documentary film and archives to demand critical reflection on the marginalisation of communities and social classes in existing historiographies of conflict. However, popular reviews of Jackson's film predominantly focus on the techniques and affective aesthetics of colourisation. The use of editing and colouring techniques in *They Shall Note Grow Old* is more familiar to fiction film and configures a historiography of the first world war that prioritises select geographical tracts to the frontline, whilst eliding others. Jackson's appropriation of past temporalities - the sublimation of flecks of detritus that mark the film as a material record, the flicker and variable speed of a hand-cranked camera - refigures the presentational forms of silent film and early 1900s photography (Napper 2018). From the aesthetics of Autochromes and Paget Plates to the two-tone graphic designs of British propaganda posters that are used as mattes to form a border for sections of black-and-white film footage, Jackson's approach to colour forms part of a recidivist politics of nostalgia aligning the idea of authenticity, not with materials or the indexicality of the photographic (Bazin; Rosen 2001) but 'a more immersive effect' (Jackson 2018) – the experience - of a spectatorship contemporary to the centenary of the First World War.

Here the act of colourisation is in keeping with predominant teleological models of film historiography that, as Elsaesser (2004; 2016) writes, privilege technical and authorial innovations through the retrospective positioning of the images and techniques that preceded them in terms of lack. In reviews of Jackson's film, the suggest that the addition of colour brings 'the past to life' 'tangibly closer to us' (2018), linking colour to life, are prevalent. However, Barthes critiques the association of colour and

life as ‘a purely ideological notion’ (Barthes, *Camera Lucida*). Drawing from Amaral’s 2018 colourisation of a photograph of Lewis Payne/ Powell - an image that forms the focus of Barthes’ distaste for applied colour (tints, tones and perhaps the addition of digitally painted colour) - as ‘a coating applied *later on* to the original truth of the black-and-white photograph’ (*Camera Lucida*), this presentation examines the ideologies and ethics of colourisation as an intersection of fiction and nonfiction in relation to spectatorship and the interpretation and exhibition of photographic and film documents.

## Zed Adams (The New School for Social Research), *The Archivist's Point of View*

Thom Andersen's 2004 film essay *Los Angeles Plays Itself* opens with a striking claim: "If we can appreciate documentaries for their dramatic qualities, perhaps we can appreciate fiction films for their documentary revelations." Andersen goes on to discuss clips from over two hundred films in which the city of Los Angeles plays a role, either as background, character, or subject. Andersen's success at revealing the documentary significance of these clips represents a serious challenge to those who hold that there is an exclusive contrast between fictional and non-fictional films.

Two other challengers are Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* (1983) and Wim Wenders's *Tokyo-Ga* (1985). Like *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, *Sans Soleil* explores the documentary significance of the filming locations of fictional films, by visiting the locations depicted in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). *Tokyo-Ga* similarly uses the fictional films of Yasujiro Ozu as a starting point for investigating changes in Japan since the time when Ozu's films were filmed. Taken together, *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, *Sans Soleil*, and *Tokyo-Ga* raise a difficult question: what allows fictional films to take on a non-fictional significance? In particular, is it something about the mechanical nature of the process by which these fictional films were first produced?

In this paper, I critically engage with the work of André Bazin and Kendal Walton on the mechanical nature of the photographic process as a starting point for thinking through the question of how to make sense of the documentary possibilities of fictional films. I argue that Bazin's and Walton's claims about the photographic process are best understood as articulating a distinctive point of view that we sometimes adopt as an audience—what I call *the archivist's point of view*—and that *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, *Sans Soleil*, and *Tokyo-Ga* all aim to inculcate this point of view in their audience. Moreover, all three films do this by invoking past images as surrogates for past memories, as a way of drawing attention to role memories play in shaping our experience of the present. As Andersen puts this point: "In reality, we live in the past. That is, the world that surrounds us is not new. The things in it—our houses, the places we work, even our clothes and our cars—aren't created anew every day. ... Any particular period is an amalgam of earlier times."

In sum, through offering a series of close readings of *Los Angeles Plays Itself*, *Sans Soleil*, and *Tokyo-Ga*, I argue that just as archive-based films are amalgams of earlier films, our experience of the present is an amalgam of our memories of the past.

## Eric Studt (St. Andrews), *Virtual-Reality Documentaries and the Illusion of Presence*

This presentation is divided into two sections. Firstly, I explore how virtual-reality (VR) films, even ones that represent real-world content, require imagination in order to count as VR. Secondly, I illustrate this point by exploring two VR films that attempt to immerse the VR user into the plight of migrants.

In the first part I offer a definition of VR and show why VR documentaries challenge traditional conceptions of this genre of filmmaking. Firstly, following VR researcher Jonathan Steuer I offer a definition of VR in terms of the user's subjective experience of feeling present in a simulated environment (Steuer 1992). Secondly, I employ the research of cognitive neuroscientist Anil Seth and colleagues to explain presence in terms of the user's interpretation of interoceptive signals (Seth, Suzuki and Critchley 2012) and show how VR technology encourages the feeling of presence by allowing the user to situate herself spatially in a simulated environment (Cummings and Bailenson 2016). Thirdly, I consider the implications of current VR research for the fiction/nonfiction debate in documentary filmmaking. VR presents a unique case study for two reasons. 1) Presence, as experienced in VR, is a perceptual illusion. VR users seem to genuinely feel as though they are present in a simulated environment even without believing that they are in fact present (Shin 2018). Kendall Walton's analysis of the role of imagination in fiction (Walton 1990) comes in handy here: VR users imagine that they are present in a fictional environment, although they do not believe themselves to be present in the simulated environment. 2) The illusory perception of presence in VR encourages the user to engage with objects and events in the simulated environment as she would with objects events in the real world to a greater extent than if she were watching a traditional film (Shin and Biocca 2018). This phenomenon is most apparent in the users' emotional responses to VR films, which seem to mirror real-life responses. We can see that VR documentaries add a new layer of complexity to the discussion of the fiction/nonfiction debate in documentary filmmaking. This complexity arises from the fact that the VR user's imaginative engagement with the film encourages her to have a more realistic experience of the content of the documentary.

In the second part of the presentation, I will illustrate the analysis of the first section using one example of a VR documentary and one example of a quasi-documentary. The first film, *Clouds over Sidra* (2015), consists of an interview with a twelve-year-old refugee, Sidra, who introduces the user to various aspects of her life in a Jordanian refugee camp. Although the VR technology this documentary employs is primitive, the user has a full field of view, allowing her look around environment as she would in the real world. Participants in a study who viewed this film in VR tended to feel present and to exhibit stronger emotional responses to the film than people who watched the same film in a traditional format—i.e., on a flat screen (Schutte and Stilinović 2017). The second film, *Carne y Arena* (2017), straddles the fiction/nonfiction divide more closely. This film uses sophisticated VR technology to immerse the user in the experience of Central American immigrants crossing the Mexico-U.S. border. *Carne y Arena* is not a straightforward example of a documentary, which makes it a particularly interesting case for the purposes of this conference. The film is fiction in the sense that the storyline is essentially a reproduction, to borrow a term from Bill Nichols (Nichols 2017), and the protagonists are played by actors that do not represent their own stories. On the other hand, the film is based on interviews with migrants, border patrol agents, etc. and each of the characters in the film represents the real-life experience of an actual migrant. In other words, the film condenses several non-fictional narratives into a single plot. The most interesting aspect of *Carne y Arena*, however, is that the VR technology allows the user to identify with the perspective of the migrants in certain qualified



respects. Film critic Peter Bradshaw puts it well: “[The film] does tell you one real thing: what it feels like to have a gun pointed at you. For the first time, I had an inkling of what it must be like. You become lowered, lessened – you become subhuman, without even a criminal’s civilian rights” (Bradshaw 2017). While the events in the film do not exactly line up with actual events, after having experienced the film, viewers often report a deep emotional identification with some aspects of the plight of migrants in the real world.

In conclusion, the ability of VR documentaries to encourage the user to imagine herself present in the film is a potent narrative tool for the purpose of nonfictional storytelling.

**Inge Ejbye Sørensen (Glasgow), *Reality Checks? The Regulation of VR and Mixed Reality Documentary and Factual Content in the UK***

This paper explores the differences between the production and distribution contexts of 'traditional' and Virtual Reality (VR) documentary, which, following Nash (2018: 97), is here understood as encompassing multiple immersive forms e.g. VR, AR, 360, and computer-generated environments (from now 'VR documentaries'). It focuses on the implications these new and differing production and distribution regimes have for the ability to regulate, monitor and 'fact check' these new VR documentary and non-fiction forms in the UK.

Until recently, documentary content in the UK has been regulated by internal and external policies and regulatory frameworks. Documentary 'truth' and journalistic integrity are safeguarded internally within PSM institutions like the BBC and Channel 4 by editorial guidelines, journalistic standards and compliance procedures, and regulated externally by Ofcom's Broadcasting Code (2018). These frameworks protect the integrity of the documentary text itself as well as, in a wider context, the 'bardic' and democratic role that non-fiction texts perform in society (Plantinga 1996, p 191)

PSM legacy institutions like BBC and Channel 4 fund, produce and distribute VR documentaries within this regulatory framework, as do news outlets like the Guardian. However, increasingly, factual VR content is also used in a multiplicity of contexts outwith PSM and Ofcom's regulatory remit and reach, e.g. in gaming, porn, prototyping, advertising and training. As such it is produced by corporate and commercial companies, NGOs and political parties, for whom journalistic integrity, editorial standards and responsibilities, or general adherence to documentary 'truth' have little or no professional consequence, relevance or meaning. Yet, these VR experiences are arguably essentially factual and documentary content.

Further, VR documentaries are predominantly distributed online on online platforms, or through app and games stores, that are delimited by the self-declaring, age certification PEGI system. Thus VR non-fiction content, although often self-identifying as documentary, falls between different regulatory frameworks, on the one hand one with a strong editorial remit and recourse, e.g. Ofcom and PSM compliance procedures; and on the other, one without, i.e. PEGI ratings. This paper asks what consequences this regulatory 'blind spot' has for immersive and traditional documentary content today, how we should consequently understand documentary texts?