

<b>Institution:</b> Bath Spa University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 34 - Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Multi-Media Histories: Reimagining Contested Cultural Heritage Across Multiple Media		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2016 - 2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Matthew Freeman Dr Richard White	Reader in Multiplatform Media Senior Lecturer in Media Practice	1/8/2015 - present 5/9/2016 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016 - 2019		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>In Colombia, where new ways of inspiring peace are needed, and in the South West of England, where the cultural heritage of slave-ownership still remains hidden, Freeman and White's research into transmedia storytelling and walking arts has created new multi-media methods with which to reinterpret these contested histories. Combining social media, apps, video letters, notebooks and other materials, these multi-media methods have underpinned (i) educational resources reaching 10 schools and 600 students in Colombia and (ii) a new walking arts practice embedded in key heritage sites in Bath and reaching more than 350 walkers. Reimagining how the histories of Colombia's armed conflict, Bath's slave-ownership and memories of the Holocaust are understood, our use of interconnected, co-created media platforms has proved to inspire both awareness of past injustices and acceptance for others.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>Freeman and White's research (since 2016) examines what they term 'multi-media histories', emerging from the mission of the Centre for Media Research to creatively rethink media as socially engaged tools through bringing together researchers working on the development of community-targeted multiplatform and game-centric media strategies, such as games for social change. The research team's multi-media histories research explores how the interconnected use of co-created media platforms can improve public understanding of the contested histories behind both Colombia's armed conflict and Bath's slave-ownership and its memories of the Holocaust.</p> <p>Freeman and White's research examines and develops new ways of sharing perspectives across media by combining social media, animations, notebooks and other materials to form multi-media methods for deepening understanding and empathy in these particular contested histories. Contested histories speak of the struggles about how a given history is remembered, and the ways in which a society's understanding of its past can affect choices and beliefs in the present. Although it deals with different cultural contexts and histories, the research into both transmedia storytelling and walking arts practice shows how the use of interconnected and co-created media platforms can have powerful effects on how audiences reinterpret politically-charged, culturally-fractured and emotionally-traumatic pasts. The distinctive natures of transmedia storytelling and walking arts as creative practices mean that, when applied to different historical contexts, different research insights emerge.</p>		
<b>Transmedia storytelling</b>		
<p>As a leading figure in transmedia studies, Freeman has been instrumental in pushing forward transmedia storytelling beyond its initial theoretical conception as a product of contemporary entertainment-based media industries (Jenkins, 2006). 'Transmediality' describes the 'popular industrial practice of using multiple media technologies to present information [...] through a range of textual forms' (Evans, 2011: 1), such as the way that Hollywood franchises are spun-off</p>		

into video games and comic books. However, Freeman's research has pushed this concept towards cultural history contexts. In 2016, he was the first to offer a full-scale theorisation of the industrial history of transmedia storytelling, rethinking this seemingly contemporary phenomenon as a way of understanding relationships between media production, consumer culture and political regulation in the twentieth century (R1).

From there, Freeman developed a leading position on national workings of transmediality, exploring how different cultures around the world are applying transmedia practices to cultural, political and heritage projects. It was this research that established a cultural specificity approach to studying transmedia projects, analysing how national media agendas, structures and policies inform cultural models and practices of transmedia storytelling (R2).

Having developed a new field theory for transmediality based on examining the different configurations that this storytelling practice might take in the service of different goals (R3), in 2017-18 Freeman applied these insights to the cultural history of Colombia's armed conflict. He was invited to join a team of researchers in Colombia, where he advised on the transmedia design of a new set of educational resources for *Desarmados [Disarmed]*, an international project led by EAFIT University, Colombia, and supported by Bath Spa University, UK. *Desarmados* aims to reconstruct the cultural memory of the Colombian armed conflict, exploring how transmedia storytelling can be used as a pedagogic tool in schools to create new ways of experiencing and remembering the history of this conflict. Telling the personal histories of those involved in the conflict across animations, workbooks, social media, blog and an app, these educational resources chronicle a conversation about new peace-building processes (R4). Co-funded by the Colombian Ministry of Culture (a Colombian government affiliate) and a Santander Pioneer Award, *Desarmados* was nominated for Colombia's Kids' Choice Awards in 2017. A key insight emerging from the project was that transmedia stories – with their innate power to engage audiences across interconnected and co-created media platforms – can offer diverse, more democratic understandings of history, inspiring acceptance for others (R4).

### **Walking Arts**

Much like Freeman's, White's research looks at the potential for interconnected and co-created media platforms to reimagine contested cultural histories – this time focused on walking arts practice and questions of social justice. Co-funded by Arts Council England and commissioned for Bath Festival Fringe in 2017, White's practice-as-research established a new methodology for how to reinterpret contested histories – in this case, those of Bath's slave-ownership and its memories of the Holocaust. White's work blends a 'walking-with' strategy (Sundberg, 2014) with multiple forms of media, forming a walking arts practice designed to bring past injustices into present consciousness and to create contemporary resonances for those taking part in the walks. Developed across his *Sweet Waters* (2016-17) and *Honouring Esther* (2016-17) projects (R5), White's practice is a shared physical experience on foot, one based on a rigorous participatory process for revealing the kinds of reluctant heritage that is layered through commemorative public spaces, places and texts.

Combining readings, audio testimony, social media, notebooks and photographs, the first project, *Sweet Waters*, was based on 8 participatory performative walks along the River Avon between Bath and Bristol and aimed to 'sense' the legacies of slave-ownership in these cities. Walkers visited the former residencies of anti-slavery campaigners as well as those who most benefitted from the city's wealth. The physical, sensory and emotional experience of media-augmented walking revealed hidden stories from the past, about those dispossessed of their homes due to political change, for example. *Sweet Waters* reveals that while slave-ownership may be a difficult subject to discuss publicly – dealing as it does with issues of human rights – walking offers non-confrontational, collaborative, creative and reflective ways of generating more empathetic resonances to this subject's legacy (R5).

*Honouring Esther* transposed the route of a Nazi Death March to England and returned it to Germany (R5). The intersections between the walked route in England and the line on a map of Germany being followed formed stopping points for walkers – the 'stations' of the walk. These stations were places for listening to audio testimony, readings, viewing photographs, reflecting, and sharing. Walkers were encouraged to share on social media, and the walk was webcast live.

A key insight emerging from both projects was that – through the co-creativity of walking arts – people rediscover their stakeholderhood in past injustices, including war, finding traces of their lives in the heritage and memories of places (R5; R6).

### 3. References to the research

**R1** Freeman, M (2016) [Historicising transmedia storytelling: early twentieth-century transmedia story worlds](#). Routledge, London

**R2** Freeman, M and Proctor, W, eds. (2018) [Global convergence cultures: transmedia earth](#). Routledge, London

**R3** Freeman, M and Gambarato, R.R, eds. (2018) [The Routledge companion to transmedia studies](#). Routledge, London.

**R4** Freeman, M (2019) ['Transmedia historiography as educational practice: narrativising Colombian cultural memory.'](#) *The International Journal of Creative Media Research*, 1.

**R5** White, R (2017) [\(Dis\)enchanted walking: walking/multimedia arts practice as interdisciplinary research \(2015-2017\) \[research portfolio\]](#).

**R6** Reid-Maroney, N, Bell, A, Brooks, N, Otele, O and White, R (2019) ['From 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' to "Countering Colston": slavery and memory in a transatlantic undergraduate research project.'](#) *International Public History*, 2 (1).

#### Funding:

- Freeman (PI), *Desarmados* (2017), Santander, GP5,000
- Freeman (PI), *Transmedia Earth* (2017), Newton Fund, GBP1,000.
- White (Artist), *Sweet Waters* (2017), Arts Council England (in collaboration with Bath Festival Fringe), GBP2,000.

### 4. Details of the impact

The new educational resources and walking arts practice emerging from Freeman and White's research have directly informed the ways in which the contested histories and heritage of Colombia's armed conflict and Bath's slave-ownership and its memory of the Holocaust are now interpreted and understood. These histories are not only culturally contested, but have led to substantial injustices for those most affected, including displacement from homes, inequality of wealth, and loss of loved ones. By engaging audiences in the histories of these subjects across interconnected and co-created media platforms, Freeman and White's research has heightened empathy for those forever lost in the past and raise hope for the future. More than that, it has inspired awareness of past injustices and an acceptance for others.

#### Inspiring awareness of past injustices

In Colombia, new ways of inspiring peace are needed. The country's armed conflict began in the mid-1960s and centres around a war between the Colombian government, parliamentary groups, and guerrillas such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). According to Colombia's National Centre for Historical Memory, over 220,000 people died in the conflict and over 5,000,000 civilians were forced from their homes between 1985 and 2012, forming the world's second largest population of internally displaced persons. As a creative response, the interconnected co-creativity of transmedia storytelling emerges as an innovative multi-media method for "creating processes of memory, recognition and solidarity for the Colombian armed conflict victims" (Gómez and Velásquez, E10, p141).

Freeman's research into the potential for transmedia storytelling to offer diverse and democratic understandings of history in socio-political projects now manifests as a set of new educational resources for the *Desarmados* project, directly informing how the contested history of Colombia's armed conflict is taught in schools since 2018. To date, the *Desarmados* resources have been integrated into 10 public schools in Medellín and 1 in La Ceja, including: UPB school; San Ignacio de Loyola; Pedro Justo Berrío; Don Bosco City Educational Institution; Aures Educational Institution; Jesús Amigo Educational and Cultural Institution; Salesiano Santo Domingo Savio; and Salesiano El Sufragio. Within these 10 schools, the materials have been

utilised by 22 teachers and reached circa 600 students. All of the students are secondary school level, in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade (12-15 years old).

Medellin is famously the home of Pablo Escobar; targeting the young people of this city was vital to, in the words of a student, “recover[ing] humanity and start[ing] a new era of peace in our streets”, ensuring “that these events will never happen again” (E2). Reshaping teaching and learning practices in the 10 schools by directly harnessing the interconnectivity and co-creativity innate to transmedia storytelling, the *Desarmados* resources have, according to a Colombian School Peace Mediator, enabled “young people to become protagonists, to understand and express, in a very experiential way, what it has been like for [Colombia] throughout the conflict” (E1).

More locally and focusing on the reluctant cultural heritage of slave-ownership in Bath and Bristol – the kind of heritage that remains largely unknown to many – White’s walking arts practice has similarly enhanced awareness of past injustices. The legacy of slave-ownership is still with us today, despite the UK government abolishing slavery in the 1800s. *Sweet Waters* has shaped the way in which key heritage sites in the south west of England – including Beckford’s Tower, the Holburne Museum, and Bath Preservation Trust – now engage their visitors, particularly in terms of how the heritage of Bath’s slave-ownership is presented to and discussed with the public. For example, these walks culminated at Salford Brass Mill, located on the River Avon. Because of White’s research, Salford Brass Mill has since developed its displays to tell the story of slave-ownership in Bath, according to the Chair of the Salford Brass Mill Project. He comments that “There is still a nervousness about how you present the slave trade. But Richard’s work brought other people into the Mill and has been a real stimulus [...] People have become more interested in what happened” (E3).

In terms of engagement with audiences, White’s research has also helped to bring further visitors to the Bath Preservation Trust, a charity that safeguards the historic character and amenities of Bath for the public benefit. According to a Senior Curator at this Bath-based charity: “In our experience, and those of the groups that Richard has brought to us, that active, participatory approach is a way of engaging people much more empathetically and deeply, because they are thinking and talking about the issues around the facts” (E4).

Across both *Sweet Waters* and *Honouring Esther*, White’s walks have engaged over 350 people to date. 67% of those surveyed (based on a sample of 60) expressed an increased awareness of the interconnectivity of cultural relics, stories and memories, becoming more mindful of past injustices in the south west of England (E5). 74% indicated that the walk’s multi-media elements – photographs, audio testimony, social media and notebooks – had “enhanced the experience”, “allow[ing] one to immerse more fully in the terrain and in the narrative” (E5). 67% said that these multi-media elements encouraged reflection, most notably about one’s role in shaping heritage: “It made me reflect more deeply on the discussions that we had” (E5). The most emphatic response (94%) was that White’s walking arts practice had heightened empathy for the past injustices being examined, creating powerful interpretations of these pasts: “It made the story seem more real, as though you could imagine yourself there ... It really helped to put into perspective just how much worse it would have been for those walking during the war” and that:

“It somehow felt like we were conscientious objectors walking an alternative guided tour of Bath. Learning about the lives of men, women and children that are seldom talked about or known. For a few hours their stories intertwined with ours” (E5).

### **Inspiring acceptance for others**

In Colombia, the *Desarmados* resources had a strikingly similar impact on the way that students articulated understanding of the history of Colombia’s armed conflict. 485 participants were involved in the assessment of the effectiveness of the resources (the evaluation here is based on a sample of 25%, E2). 96% of participants stated that the transmedial format of the materials enhanced their understanding of the conflict, specifically in terms of how intertwined personal stories about the conflict and its history inspired an acceptance for others: “When this project came to our school we thought we knew everything about this subject through what we had seen on television, but *Desarmados* helped me in my education both as a student and as a person, since it helped me to really understand the people around us who suffer from war every day”

(E2). Going further, 75% of those students surveyed for *Desarmados* indicated that the transmedial format of the materials created a more democratic learning environment: “We learn more about the conflict through testimonies, comics and videos, showing what led to the conflict and how hard it has been for the victims”. 49% implied that, through this more democratic learning environment, *Desarmados* had inspired genuine hope for the future of Colombia: “It teaches us to forgive and to move forward, seeking peace amongst all” (E2).

This kind of response is similar to the impact of *Sweet Waters* on tour-guide practices at Cleveland Pools Trust. This is an historic leisure destination for Bath visitors which White engaged with for his research. Providing “an enlightened way of looking at heritage and social history” (Head of Talks & Tours for Cleveland Pools Trust, E6), White’s research has encouraged the Trust to be “more tactful to visitors as to how we might impart certain aspects of knowledge when it comes to race, colour and creed” (E6).

By 2020, *Desarmados* had become an online multi-media journalistic platform, called *The War of the Nameless People* (E7). This element of the project was again supported through EAFIT University and Bath Spa University, and this time used video letters to weave a larger conversation between 15 to 18-year-olds and 200 ex-combatants of the FARC. The aim was to create a public platform for reconciliation between those who were involved in the conflict and young civilians – a meeting space for mutual recognition. Evaluation of *Desarmados* demonstrated that while many Colombian teenagers’ perceptions of the FARC are blurred, the process of sharing and responding to personal stories through the multi-media form of video letters led to an increased sense of recognition and solidarity (E2).

The impact of Freeman and White’s multi-media histories research goes beyond direct participants. *Desarmados* has featured in over 12 Colombian news outlets, including the National Center of Historical Memory, a Colombian government agency (E8). Meanwhile, White’s *Sweet Waters* informed an episode of the BBC’s landmark television series *Civilisations*, a documentary broadcast on BBC One in 2018, that recounts the history of the slave trade in the South West. As a researcher at the production company One Tribe TV explains: “Richard [White] helped at every stage of this investigation. Without the information Richard has been able to provide, the documentary would not be as complete, locations would not have been revealed and the experts would not be as compelling” (E9). Spanning the education and heritage sectors, across two continents, this work points to the capacity of creative media to transform not just perceptions of past injustices, but to implement directions for a better tomorrow. 100% of the participants sampled for *Desarmados* believed it to be a good tool to educate about peace and non-violence (E2). An ex-combatant of the FARC interviewed as part of *Desarmados* also noted that “more work like this is needed, that [fosters] recognition in the other, in the neighbour, and not [as] an enemy to overcome” (E7).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

**E1** Letters from selected teachers in Colombia: *Desarmados*

**E2** Analysis of student surveys, letters and drawings: *Desarmados*

**E3** Testimonial: Chair, Saltford Brass Mill Project

**E4** Testimonial: Senior Curator, Bath Preservation Trust

**E5** Analysis of participant surveys: (Dis)enchanted Walking

**E6** Testimonial: Head of Talks & Tours, Cleveland Pools Trust

**E7** The War of the Nameless People website: <https://lanarractiva.com/caqueta/>

**E8** Sample of online news articles: *Desarmados*

**E9** Testimonial: Researcher, One Tribe TV

**E10** Freeman, M and Proctor, W, eds. (2018) [\*Global convergence cultures: transmedia earth\*](#). Routledge, London