

Film as Research/Research as Film

- Trevor Hearing
- Kip Jones

INTERIOR - SMALL FLAT, SOUTH COAST OF ENGLAND - EARLY AUTUMN DAY

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Colleagues Trevor Hearing and Kip Jones meet up for a discussion about using film as a performative research tool and/or a research dissemination medium.

Hearing comes to the conversation with a background in documentary filmmaking for television. Jones is a qualitative researcher who has successfully turned biographic research data into the story for an award-winning short film. Hearing and Jones collaborated on the trailer for that film, as well as documenting its production on video. Over more than 10 years now, they have worked together on several projects and visual presentations. They especially enjoy editing together.

KIP: Although arts-based research seems to be given a wide berth by some academics, the popularity of using tools from the arts in research has grown over the past decade. The two of us seem, to me, to have specific targets and goals in producing our arts-based work. Mine is within the development of Performative Social Science (PSS) [Jones, 2012, 2014, [in press](#)] as a philosophically based method. Your work seems to me to be concentrated in turning a field you know quite well, documentary filmmaking, into something else, something perhaps more in touch with its roots in creativity as part of a wider philosophical shift in production. Can you explain what your documentary filmmaking means to you today in terms of arts-based research?

TREVOR: I suppose for me that filmmaking, documentary filmmaking specifically, means the application of a tool more commonly associated with popular culture because we are aware of it through television and cinema. Perhaps we might say it has been hijacked by popular culture, and I am interested in bringing this tool back into the arena of the academy. So although

documentary filmmaking's origins lie perhaps in science and anthropology, it was adopted by the mass medium of television and adopted as a televisual form at least in the United Kingdom. Although the institutions of television such as the BBC employed documentary film in a public service context in what has been termed by Bill Nichols [2001] as a "discourse of sobriety," that social purpose has in recent years been largely abandoned as we've moved more toward the entertainment agenda of reality television, and the whole filmic documentary impulse has changed in television and popular culture. So I think there's a moment really to reclaim the idea of documentary film as a valid form of acquiring data, a tool for the purposes of academic research.

KIP: That's interesting because I would say that in my work it's almost moving in the opposite direction. I have been taking academic research (using various methods of research) and fictionalizing it and turning it into film. By doing this, I am importing the entertainment value that comes along with producing film that is for general audiences, including television and cinema. I am often playing with what it is that the audience members are expecting, and how I can engage *them*. I mean, the one thing about creating the story for the short film *RUFUS STONE* [Jones & Appignanesi, 2011] is that from the very beginning I was attempting to engage hearts and minds through using film, not just to engage intellectual contemplation, and that has always been the driving force behind it. The whole idea of using documented interview material and turning that into fictional material (or a "fictive reality" [Jones, 2013, p. 12]), as I like to call it), was a whole part of the creative process really, sort of flipping it all for me. So you're flipping it one direction, and I'm flipping it the other, or is that unfair?

TREVOR: It is unfair because I think I wouldn't characterize documentary filmmaking as anything other than fiction. I think that it's unhelpful to constrain the idea of documentary purely to a particular view of reality, a particular ontological perspective. Regarding documentary method as a form of fiction is for me a more sophisticated way of thinking about the constructed character of the communication because you are making creative decisions in the selection of what you are filming, in any subsequent manipulation of the narrative, and in the way in which it's constructed in the edit as well. So I think it's a false dichotomy to say that the way you're working is purely in terms of one direction, moving from the factual data into a fictional output, and the way I'm working is to create a factual output. I don't think I regard documentary and fiction in those narrow terms. They are all constructs. And so, of course, is any text-based report. The challenge, whether it is film or text, is how to problematize the tendency toward transparency, and documentary forms are particularly susceptible to such claims.

KIP: What about the anthropologist, and particularly the visual anthropologist, who is schooled in the old methods of doing visual anthropology of filming certain ethnographic events in a culture and exposing them to an audience through film? That's full of rules, regulations, and dos and don'ts. How can you, or I, or anyone really, say to those people, "There is something new and a new way of approaching this"?

TREVOR: I suppose for me it's about developing a more complex view of the world and a more complex view of notions of reality and what is real, a more complex ontology, and a more complex epistemology as well, so that we aren't confined to thinking simply in terms of the factual, the acquisition of facts, or the acquisition of a real world that's out there, in the way that anthropologists might go out to observe a society in a naive way. And I'm sure they don't do that of course, but perhaps for the purposes of this discussion we can think in that way, and increasingly through the 20th century we've come to understand philosophically that there is a need to appreciate uncertainty across the whole range of arts, sciences, and social sciences, and that we need to reflect this in our research methods.

KIP: It's interesting to me that (and perhaps this is just being a fantasist) art and popular culture seem to be retreating to what is known as "midcentury," or the 1950s and 1960s, even the 1970s, particularly in furniture design, architecture, mode, and so forth, through all kinds of nostalgic formulae. It seems a bit strange because it's something that you think, "Haven't we left all that behind?" or "Haven't we regurgitated this before?" Then, suddenly, there's a renewed interest, even a fondness, for brutalism, and all sorts of things from the 1950s and the 1960s. Are we also going to see a return to that sort of scholarship? I mean, the whole idea of creating a kind of nostalgic brutalist scholarship, where we go out and try to prove a grand theory via research on college freshmen [*sic*] *ad infinitum*? Are we going back to proving whatever our thesis is to the world without any sense of culture, community or individual differences?

TREVOR: Or is it the case that we now feel we have a wider palette to paint with, so we can draw on a variety, a wider range, and do so ironically as well. Maybe there is a sense of depth to our understanding of what went before, which is not as naive as in its first iteration. And that we can therefore adopt those styles "knowingly," whether in architecture or in research methods.

KIP: Speaking of ironic—when we look at something historically, that's quite an ironic way to be looking at it in the first place. What I'm working on right now is a script for a film that's set in the 1960s, so I'm doing the same thing! I'm not alone doing that; I watched a film recently where, as part of the background music, they used the song "Chances Are" [Allen & Stillman, 1956], sung by Johnny Mathis. I went, "Oh, shit! That's the music for the opening sequence of my film! You can't use that." What this says is that people are looking back at all those cultural artifacts from that period and thinking about using them again to say something perhaps new, perhaps different. The 1960s and the 1970s are suddenly fresh fodder for all kinds of explorations, including film and even scholarship.

TREVOR: Yes, but hasn't that always been the case? If we take an example such as architecture, again, hasn't it always been the case, for example, with the readoption of Greek and Roman architectural styles in Neoclassicism in the mid-18th century? So it's not necessarily repetition but it's perhaps a reappropriation with a different form of understanding.

KIP: Actually, I'm not a big fan of the term "arts-based research" itself because what the assumption in that phrase can be is that simply making art is the same as doing research. My work is often about using tools from the arts in research and/or dissemination, rather than just substituting art making as a research method. I prefer to call it "Performative Social Science" [PSS], a phrase concocted by Denzin [2001]. My work in PSS is theoretically based in relational aesthetics [Bourriaud, 2002], which I have gone into at length elsewhere [Jones, 2006]. What PSS is *not* about is simply making art and calling it research. It requires a methodology, which means it considers a philosophy, as well as method, to produce that work.

TREVOR: Whereas I am very much about using art, specifically filmmaking, as a form of data gathering.

KIP: Well, that's why we get along so well! I agree that "art" itself can be part of the research process, a "tool," if you like, not an end in itself, but a means to an end. I work with a lot of other people who are using arts in their research process—engaging with photography and filmmaking, using music and dance, employing theatre techniques—and all of those things come into play. I'm sure there are lots of chapters in this book dealing with these endeavors and more. What we want to talk about is film as arts-based research and our experience with it, which, in a way may be quite narrow, but maybe that is good that our focus is a narrow. Mine is, and I think yours is, in the way that you're playing with what documentary is itself and again reinventing it.

TREVOR: Yes, I think that's absolutely right, and for me it's very helpful to talk this way in this discussion to actually shape those ideas. Coming out of writing about these things in the context of studying for a PhD [Hearing, 2015] and now being able to draw on those, to rethink some of those ideas, and taking forward the concluding thought of my PhD, in which I challenge Errol Morris's determination that as documentary filmmakers we are walking around in the world rather than having the world walk around in us [Meyer, 2008]: for me it's very much that the world is walking around in me, and that's something I want to take on and explore as a documentary filmmaker. It is an acknowledgment, I suppose, of the way in which it is not a case of me looking through a lens or looking through a viewfinder, looking through the lens of a camera outward: It is much more an understanding that something is happening inside me when I'm making a film, and that's perhaps one of the most, for me, the most, significant parts of this new form of inquiry into research methods.

KIP: And then we move toward including technology with the autoethnographic . . .

TREVOR: In autoethnography it's the way in which I am "embodied," that's such a useful word and a very bland word potentially, but it's such a useful word to apply to how I see my role as a researcher and filmmaker. So I haven't really thought it through in the depth that I want to, but it helps now to try and articulate that.

KIP: I tend not to find inspiration in my visual work in specific *auteurs* or visual outputs. If anything, music, rather than visual arts, is a constant influence in my work. For example, Berlioz's concept of the *mélologue*, or a spoken declamation with a musical or soundscape accompaniment, is an idea that recently inspired me to produce 5 minutes of a still image supported by sound effects and narrative [Jones, 2015]. I chose Scene 1 from *Copacetic*, a feature-length film that I am writing. Berlioz was actually talking about doing the same thing, flipping the elements that we have in our arsenal. So if you talk about film, you think "a moving image." If you flip that and make it "not a moving image"—make it everything else instead. That is what I'm doing in this case with narration, sound effects, and a spooky, misty bit of music (and that Johnny Mathis!). In the end, it becomes a soundscape work—kind of like using spoken word and sound together. That is what I'm working on in terms of narrative at the moment. Where do you find the influences in your current productions?

TREVOR: Well, let me turn the discussion back to you for a moment. You are very effective at creating soundscapes in your work that evoke feelings. To be evocative is a very significant part of your method, and I wonder if there can be a place for the gaps between words, spaces for silence and absence, as well as words and music, a place for the imagination to play.

KIP: What I'm also suddenly very obsessed with is Haneke's films [Internet Movie Database (IMDb), 2016], and I'm watching how he uses stillness and what he's using it for. What I can see here is a way of bringing the audience into the work because when you're watching that stillness for that long, two things happen. First, as a viewer, I start imagining things, what it is that I'm looking at, and second, I become distracted and I almost want to walk away from what I'm seeing.

TREVOR: Isn't it significant that this is now invading popular culture as well, so we have some increasingly relevant examples of what's called "slow television," for instance; so on the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC FOUR] we see examples of a trend that has come out of Norway originally, this idea that in popular culture we can also find a stillness that creates a space for us as viewers, in which we can do other things in our heads.

KIP: Well, the Norwegians! They do have a program on television right now where you watch someone knitting for hours!

TREVOR: Absolutely, that's a good example. In this country, to watch a barge journey along a

canal for hours (and for me it's not long enough or slow enough), and I think it is very interesting that there is this moment now where there is a need for an experience like this, and it's finding a place in our marginal if not mainstream media. But going back to your original question, for me, when I first became a researcher in academia and was thinking about ways in which I could use my skills as a filmmaker, a documentary filmmaker, I thought increasingly about silence and stillness and a sense in which a film could be a meditation, the idea of film as a meditation, which by its nature requires an openness of mind, and certainly that sounds very feasible through using still and slow images you can dwell on, and so forth. I explore that in my work to some extent, but also I'm curious now as to how we can think about that through sound. So that leads on to silence and how we can use quietness and silence, which I'm increasingly drawn to.

KIP: It's interesting because the medium will still be rolling and that's the crucial thing because you can say, "I want silence and no movement." It's like the composer Max Richter who has just written a piece called *Sleep* [Richter, 2015]. It's 8 hours long and he invites audiences to experience it overnight in a hall. Perhaps this is just going back to our earlier point about the 1960s. Richter may be channeling Andy Warhol, who made a film of someone sleeping for 5 hours and 20 minutes [Warhol, 1963]. It's not something so new to think about—when we stretch that space and that time—Haneke does it in shorter segments, but still the same stretching of space and time, making us think about a lot of things. In *Caché* [Haneke, 2005], what Haneke is doing by showing you some of the supposed video footage that was shot by a voyeur, is saying, "I'm showing you what it's like to look, now look." Then he is insisting, by not moving on quickly, "No! Look longer, you're going to see more." In the final credits, where he does this one last time (which is absolute brilliance!), he brings two of the characters together on those crowded steps in front of the school. The first time through the film I did not see the actors and I had to read about it. I said, "Holy fuck! Where are they?" And then I went back to the film and saw them. It's a bit like seeing Jesus in a piece of toast! You know once you see Him, you really see Him, and that's all you see. I thought, of course, the way that he set it up was perfect. The older character comes in the front of the frame from right to left and moves up the stairs in a diagonal way to the younger character. Then they move forward and stay and talk with each other. In the end, it's so obvious that this is what the scene is about. Or is it? It was so cleverly played that you might not see it at first, and then when you do see it, you realize what his message is. His message is, you're looking at stillness, but you're not, you're seeing a whole lot going on at the same time. It's a bit like watching a hill of ants through a magnifying glass. If you watch too long, you may destroy them.

Then I tried watching another Haneke film, *Funny Games* [1997], but I had to stop watching it because it was too painful, and I realized that it was reminding me of *A Clockwork Orange* [Kubrick, 1971]. When I first saw *A Clockwork Orange*, it didn't upset or distress me like it was supposed to, but *Funny Games* did, and I had to literally stop watching it. I eventually went back and I watched it to the end, but. . . . So I don't know why Haneke was being so violent in that film, but it was completely violent, and I wondered if *A Clockwork Orange* was a big influence in that. At any rate, these are the kinds of things that are influencing my thinking, or at least forming the background to my visual arsenal. I sometimes wonder though, should we recognize that perhaps we are always just what we are no matter how we are changing things or what we are using as our tools? We are what we are—an educator if one is an educator, a filmmaker if one is a filmmaker, a researcher if one is a researcher?

TREVOR: Well, I think that's wrong. I think you're assuming that if you're a researcher, you're a writer, and I'd say if you're a researcher, you can be a songwriter or a filmmaker or other type of communicator. So I don't think that's the case—that a researcher is simply a researcher.

KIP: I'm not saying you have to be one or another of these things. I'm saying that we all bring all these of things to whatever it is we are doing, and by simply denying one or another part of what we're doing, we are still are performing that function, or maybe "role" is a more performative term.

TREVOR: But isn't the difference between the filmmakers you've just quoted and what we do that we have first and foremost a research question, that to identify us as researchers we should have a clearly stated research question. It maybe that we discover the question through the process as well, but isn't the point that our mission is different because we need to state a research question at some point in the process, which artists don't need to articulate necessarily? We were talking about the empty space, we were talking about whether that empty space is a still image or whether it's the longer use of an image, whether it's the use of silence. What we're doing is really framing the space in which the question is posed. Isn't it that we are creating the space in which, if we adopt the terms of Performative Social Science's methodology, we are creating the space for the reader, the audience, the viewer, or user to bring their own meditation to the work, their own thinking to the research question? There has to be that research question for us to have a purpose as researchers, and we frame the space in which that question is posed and we invite, more than in any other methodology, the response from viewers and make it clear that their response is as valid as anything we are able to offer. Artists and filmmakers may do this: I've recently seen the Antonioni [1962] film *L'Eclisse*, which directs viewers' attention toward a meditation on contemporary life. It is a fine line between that form of art and what we might be proposing as a research method, but the difference is that our purpose is underpinned by a scholarly method. It was set in a suburb of Rome around 1960 and creates a narrative in which there are people, and then there are not people. There is emptiness toward the end of the film, which is very sobering in a nuclear context. Is it there or is it not? What am I really seeing? Partly it is the story of two lovers being together, and at the end they aren't there in the street where they were before, and there is an emptiness. It's very thoughtful but it uses an emotional impact to describe the human condition, and isn't that what art can contribute through a performative social science method: the feeling of being human in a way that other methodologies do not do? Maybe we need to think, talk, and write more about that as well. But the other thing I wanted to say was that I draw a lot from the ideas of Alexander Mackendrick [Mackendrick & Cronin, 2006]: He wrote about what it means to direct a film, and his contention is that it is not the actors or the cameras that you are directing but the viewers' attention, and I would ask, isn't that really what we are doing as researchers as well? So those are the things I want to say.

KIP: Well, that's my next question, actually, and it is one about the research question. Saying research usually starts with the research question and using film to ask that question, as well as the medium, to begin to uncover answers to it, how does this proceed differently to other research methods? We incorporate the research question, but because we've shifted somewhat, how are we going to do this?

TREVOR: Well this is the thing about film, that it draws on so many forms of creativity, so many tools: Film draws on performance, it draws on writing, music, photography, and so forth, and isn't that the wonderful thing about film whether it has to do with research or not? It's that it is a fusion of those particular skills, techniques, and abilities to use emotion, and that, for me, is what film is about.

KIP: To me it almost is a breath of fresh air, and that last moment, when you realize when you see it successfully used as a performative way of producing research, you see that the end result is often an "aha" moment. This makes much more sense to me.

TREVOR: Yes, it makes sense, but I'd go back to this thing of emotion: Do we skirt around quite a lot the place of emotion in research, and isn't that something we need to tackle a bit more? Not just in terms of film, but in terms of any arts-based research, and film perhaps highlights this more than most. I feel that's something I haven't explored sufficiently, or maybe the academy hasn't acknowledged the place of emotion fully in understanding knowledge, and this is something we can offer through performative methodology.

KIP: I think that in the way people in research often say something is "emotive," but I think that's a cop out in a certain sense—a way to say I'm not going to talk about the emotionalism involved in what it is I'm producing. I mean you know, in the film *RUFUS STONE* [Appignanasi & Jones, 2011] I worked with the film's director to use this. We were really pulling at the heartstrings of the audiences, and we really wanted them to have an emotional reaction.

TREVOR: Because that is recreating or representing the research.

KIP: It's representing; specifically, where we were using it, it's representing what we felt the message of the research was. The message has to reach people—it may not reach them intellectually, but it can reach them emotionally, and that was the point in using it that way. Take someone who is adamantly for or against something, and you say, "No, I'm going to convince you otherwise." I think you could argue until the cows come home and they're not going to change their minds. But if you can find a way to emotionally connect with them around that subject—then you have a chance to reach them on a different level.

TREVOR: I think some researchers will recoil from the idea of using emotion, or emotional manipulation as it may be characterized, to communicate their research.

KIP: I would say they are probably quantitative researchers; they're not very interested in the qualitative aspects of the subject area that they're investigating, or more importantly, the "subjects" themselves. They are interested in counting how many, how long, how far; that's about all they're interested in, and accumulating massive numbers so that they can prove their point by them.

TREVOR: So we shouldn't be afraid of emotion in our research.

KIP: Speaking truthfully, it's interesting that (going back to autoethnography if I may), there are things I'm willing to write about that happened in my own life that I probably wouldn't have been able to consider even 20 years ago. There's a certain point in your life where you just say nothing much more interesting is going to happen anyway, so you might as well write about what you have experienced already. You're finally not so worried or fearful about that kind of exposure. It's a bit like getting a tattoo. People say, "Are you sure you want a tattoo? You'll have it the rest of your life." Well, at a certain point, it really isn't that long anyway, so you might as well get it, if that's what you want. So I feel the same way about autoethnography. I'm sure that the autoethnographers who appear in this very volume are just completely befuddled by what I've just said about their method, but that's my own personal take on it. You do reach a point where your emotive, personal viewpoint has great validity actually because you realize that you've tried everything else, and this is the one thing that will work for this specific occasion. That is why I'm willing to use it.

TREVOR: For me, that comes back to embodiment: embodiment of a researcher and the need to acknowledge the embodiment of the researcher, and certainly for me embodiment through documentary filmmaking.

KIP: I think that what we are proposing is allowing creativity to be a component of academic pursuits. A PhD student wrote a five-line title for a thesis. I suggested coming up with something shorter. I often propose using the concept of strap lines or tags to come up with short

sentences full of meaning or log lines for things like titles and tweets. In terms of writing them, I always remember the advice of Sister Corita Kent, a nun from the 1960s who was famous for huge colorful murals with quotes or sayings. She advised, make 100 versions, then one more. It's the last one that you will use.

When you and I were making the trailer for *RUFUS STONE* [Hearing, Hillard, & Jones 2012], getting it ready for a film festival, at the time, I turned to an old friend in California who happens to work for a company that produces trailers for big Hollywood films. She gave us fantastic advice and actually came up with the tag for our film: "Sometimes a lifetime . . . isn't enough distance." This resonated so well with how I eventually conceived the film, not as simply *RUFUS STONE*, but *The Return of Rufus Stone*. Actually, if I could change the title now, I would! It was collaboration which, again, made the difference in producing the best possible outcome.

So whether it's coming up with a title for a thesis, a film, or creating a trailer, or writing a script or even an academic article, creative techniques can come into play and enrich the process. It's not about sitting down and wrinkling your forehead until an idea or script or article magically appears, it's about picking up tools, getting to work, and producing. If there is one single thing that creative people can teach us, it is that.

TREVOR: And it's work, it's hard work.

KIP: Ah yes, people often say to me, you've done all this and it's wonderful, but how did you do it? I reply that you have to do twice as much work. To produce the film, I had to do all the traditional academic research, then the film and all that goes with doing that. Your PhD experience is a perfect example that can be now built upon, Trevor. There's the fact that you've used film as one solid chapter in your thesis. A few others have used photography in theirs and a few other performative methods. All have passed, so that means precedent is in place in terms of arts-based PhDs. Others will come along and be able to produce work even beyond these initial efforts and not have so much of the extra labor of convincing examiners that arts-based work is justified. It was great that you said, "I'm not going to write that chapter, I'm going to make it a film." That was a very, very brave move.

TREVOR: Not as brave as I wanted to be. I wanted the whole PhD thesis to be like this.

KIP: Of course, didn't we both! And then we will have it! I've seen some who try and have failed miserably, so it takes what you were talking about earlier. It's that balance or difference between the artist and that creative process and an academic using creativity in his or her process. We need to be very conscious of what that difference is, I believe.

TREVOR: I think that's right. I've come across a lot of artists who think of themselves as experimenters, as people who undertake research. They will say, "I'm exploring or finding out, I am researching," yet they characterize themselves as artists, and so what is the difference then between what goes on in an academy in a scholarly context and those artists, perhaps most artists, who see research, finding out, as a core part of their identity?

KIP: Who pays you? How do you get paid for doing what you do? I can see someone who started as an academic making an incredibly wonderful film that's based on research and it unexpectedly becomes a worldwide success and suddenly they're a commercial filmmaker because of that work they've done. This shift in attention (and who is paying for what) allows a shift in identity as well.

TREVOR: So these are institutional terms really, aren't they: to be a scholar is an institutional designation?

KIP: There's one thing I've always said, and it comes from this wonderful photographer, Freya Najade [2016], who takes pictures in different parts of the world. She did a whole series of

older people in Florida and another fabulous series of a Ukrainian water park, a summer place where Ukrainians go to swim and sunbathe. It is very stylistic architecture and very strange but wonderful in a way. We invited her to a conference to present her photographs from Florida. The first question from an audience of academics was “Well, yeah, how do you prepare first? How do you decide about participants, ethics, and so forth? When do you finally begin to take the photographs?” She replied, “I just pick up the camera and start shooting.” I thought aha! That’s the answer, and it really is. That’s the difference between an artist and a researcher who will have a gazillion meetings beforehand, go through all kinds of ethical approval, all kinds of committees, all kinds of back and forth before even picking up the camera.

TREVOR: And the documentation of that academic process.

KIP: Artists do a lot of that process through doing it and not just talking about it, so what they’re doing is they’re picking up whatever tools they have and what can they use that’s available. While they’re doing all of that, their minds are working, planning, considering the possibilities.

TREVOR: So you’re saying that’s intuitive in a way, an intuitive approach, and so is that the key word of differentiation between an artist and a scholar: that the artist works by intuition?

KIP: Well, I hope scholars are learning to work by intuition more. I think it’s just a case of giving permission for a lot of this. The exercises I sometimes do with people are about just giving permission. I did a workshop, “Creative Writing for Academics.” I gave everybody a choice of photographs with people in them and said, “Write the story in these photographs, ones you’ve never seen before. Tell me what the story is as you imagine it.” I also asked them to write a poem about what they dreamt about the night before, to write spontaneously rather than sitting back thinking, thinking, thinking. Another exercise: Write 25 tag lines about a standard academic article. Through all of those kinds of challenges, they were able to produce the kind of immediacy that an artist uses to get their engines rolling.

TREVOR: I’m in exactly that situation at the moment, where I’m writing, or trying to write, a novel which is based on an experience and research I have undertaken, what I am calling a research novel, but I’m trying to let go of the literal description of the experience and finding it very hard to bring more of an imaginative approach to the work: It’s a struggle to bring the imagination to the documentary journal.

KIP: Read Michael Kimball [2016], the author who most influences my writing because he knows how to reduce everything to simple, gorgeous sentences. Blog writing was really important to me. I began to think, “Pretend I’m writing this for a magazine or a newspaper. How I will write so this can be read and understood by a wider audience?”

TREVOR: But isn’t there a sense of guilt? Do you not feel a sense of guilt in letting go of the facts, of letting your imagination go beyond the ostensive known data?

KIP: No, because I love facts, and I love putting facts in; I love tangential facts.

TREVOR: Yes, the facts have to be there, but then you go beyond the written history, or whatever, to find another level of understanding.

KIP: You don’t want to say to the reader, “Look how smart I am!” You want to say to the reader, “Look how smart you are!” So you get them to go find out want them to. You want them to say, “I want to learn more about that.”

TREVOR: Again, it comes back to this idea of creating a space for the reader.

KIP: Returning to a good example of that idea of space, silence, stillness, and so forth. At the end of Haneke’s *Caché* [2005], the credits were rolling and I certainly didn’t see any major action going on behind the credits. I am a visual person, but it was right in front of me and quite

big—yet the action completely escaped me. It made me want to go and find out, so I looked it up. When I watched it again and saw what was really going on, I thought, “Damn, you’re brilliant!” So we are having the conversation, the filmmaker and me, at the end.

TREVOR: Anything else you want to ask?

KIP: How do we invite the audience to participate in our films, in the making of them? I’m talking about the researcher as an academic filmmaker. In research, more and more, it’s very important to involve the people whom you are researching—the participants in the process, their reactions to the research, and all that. And even in the more performative kind of work, often the research participants take part in the output at the end, so they become quite involved in the whole process.

TREVOR: There is nothing new in that. In a way, it’s something I’ve been aware of having done myself a lot in the past, so before labeling myself as an academic documentary filmmaker, I was very aware of a tradition of filmmaking. I could cite some examples, for instance, looking back to the early days of Channel 4 and the initial setup of filmmaking cooperatives and workshops such as Amber Films in Newcastle upon Tyne: Their way of creating fiction films was absolutely to engage with the community they were making a film about and draw narratives out of it, and create a film with that community: writing improvising and acting, entirely contributing to the film. There are many other examples, and we see much less of them now than we used to. It’s a very valid form that we ought to perhaps think about picking up again as a method.

KIP: It’s interesting because I think it’s already going on in research quite frankly, and particularly in the United States, there’s a lot of this happening in the last 10–15 years, which is really great. I often advise that it’s good to collaborate with a filmmaker, an artist, and so on, and what you get is an outsider on a different level professionally. Maybe it’s time to encourage more of that activity between artists and researchers instead of the researcher bravely going forward and producing a play using his or her participants, for example. I know sometimes researchers have tried and ended up head butting with artists. This often happens because they aren’t willing to let go of the control; it’s their baby. From my own experience, I can say you really need to work through that process and decide early on what you’re willing to let go of. Are you willing to work with artists, and are you willing to let them change the story if that becomes necessary to tell a better story? There’s a lot involved in engaging in creative outputs and I think, sometimes, people who have done this have had their fingers burnt. I remember a story several years back now where a dance troupe was involved. Research was handed over to them to come up with a performance that interpreted the research. Nonetheless, the researcher still wanted to stay in control of it, insisting on how it should be interpreted. Of course, when you say “interpret” to a creative person, that’s what he or she is going to do naturally; he or she doesn’t wonder whether it’s appropriate to do or not.

TREVOR: I think it comes down to confidence. I think it requires a very particular sort of confidence on the part of the researcher to be able to do that and let go, knowing that he or she will have an output at the end, but there is so much dependent on there being an output, the metrics are increasingly important, and so it does require a leap of faith and an act of confidence on the part of the researcher to do that.

KIP: Well, I keep going back to *RUFUS STONE*, and truthfully, I chose the director well before the research was even begun. Quite early on I invited Appignanesi to come and do a seminar and then a 2-day master class, “Turning Research into Film,” at Bournemouth University. These were opportunities for me to learn how he works and whether he would work well with what I wanted him to do with our eventual film. When it came time to say, “Here you go! It’s yours.

Write me a script based on what I've given you," it was still scary, but I wasn't giving it to someone whom I had no idea what might be done with it. I had seen a short film he had done—*Ex Memoria* [Appignanesi, 2006]—and that was very similar to what I had been considering in terms of a fictional representation of research. It wasn't just, "Oh, I'll just go and look in the Yellow Pages and find a director." Nonetheless, because of the rules and regulations of the University, when it came time to hire a director/production company, I still had to "go to the Yellow Pages" and put the production out to tender. A lot of very eager filmmakers responded: "Oh! Here's a pile of money to make a film! We're very interested in coming and applying for this!" But that would have been handing the project over to a complete stranger. Even though three production companies were eventually shortlisted, in the end, Appignanesi got the job. The other candidates were all very competent and came up with some very interesting ideas for the film, but they weren't as clear on what I wanted to do as I had outlined in the treatment for the all of the candidates.

TREVOR: So, this has been a lengthy conversation but a useful one, and sometimes we don't realize the value in just talking aloud about our thought balloons, rather than internalizing them and hammering them out on the keyboard. Perhaps if there was one idea to take away from this scene [SMALL FLAT, SOUTH COAST OF ENGLAND, EARLY AUTUMN DAY], mine would be that we are at a moment when the changes in communication technology, the media economy, and the academy present us with an opportunity to reinvent the purpose of filmmaking, and specifically, for me, documentary filmmaking, as a tool to create spaces in which to think and feel, and know and understand the world in a different way that can be just as valid as the written word.

KIP: For me, I think in the end the medium is (still) the message. Here it's in the title of this chapter: "Film as Research/Research as Film." It is possible to work on one or both sides of that oblique stroke, so that in the end, it is not really a separation anyway. I see it more as two sets of performative promise with the potential to work singularly or in concert. These possibilities are in the tools available to us as researchers if we are only brave enough to work with them. Film is one great performative social science tool.

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