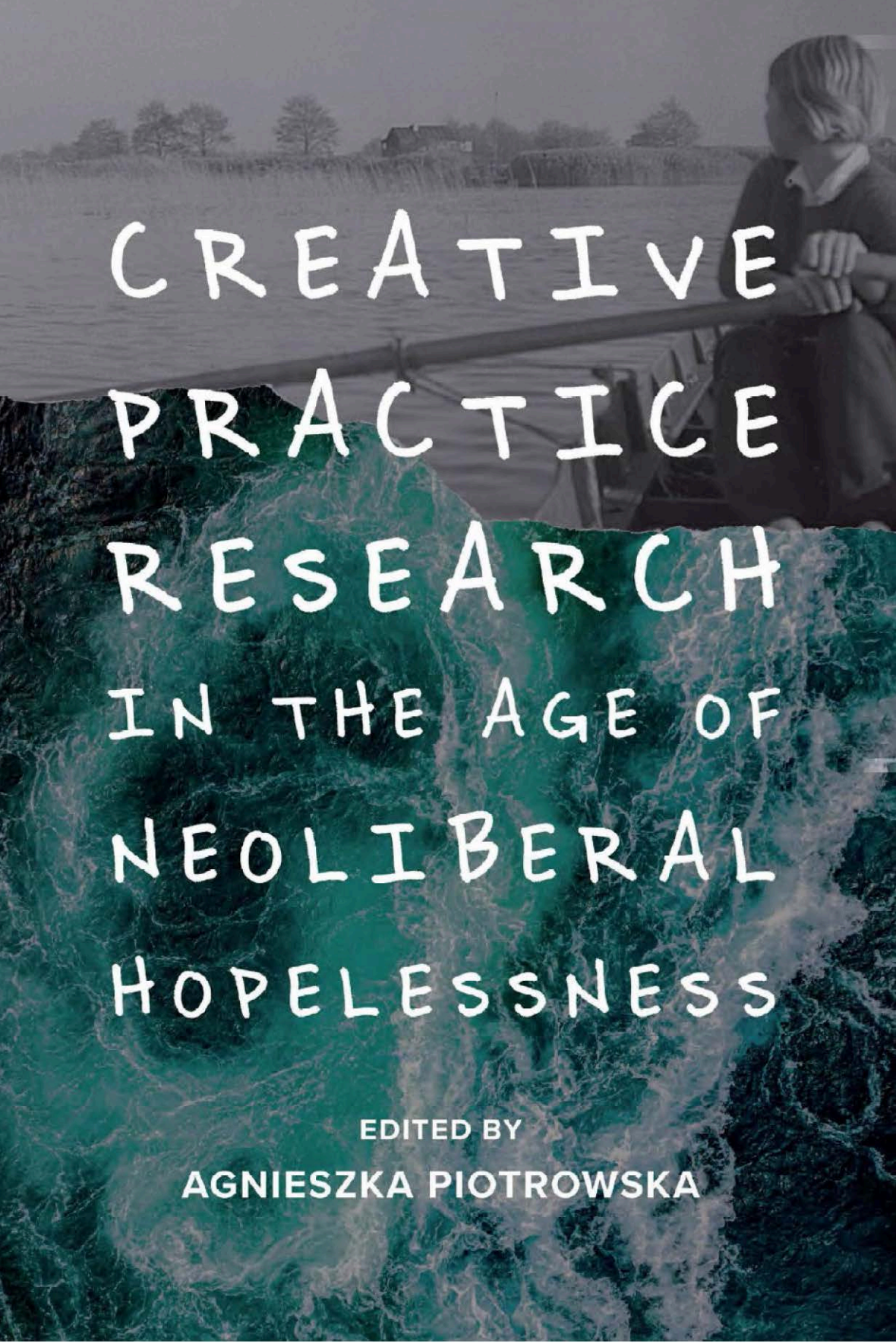
CREATIVE
PRACTICE
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IN THE AGE OF
NEOLIBERAL
HOPELESSNESS
EDITED BY
AGNIESZKA PIOTROWSKA

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Tony Clancy originally studied theatre and now works in photography, video and education. His practice research explores the space between the still and moving lens-based image as well as acoustics, and how they can re-present the familiar. His recent short films include *The Plate Spinner* and *Stone Ghosts*. As an educator he has worked for UCLAN, Falmouth and Gloucestershire universities, setting up, running and teaching courses both in practice and theory in photography and media.

Jill Daniels is an internationally renowned filmmaker and scholar. Over thirty years she has made numerous documentary films, including *Not Reconciled* (2009), *The Border Crossing* (2011), *My Private Life* (2013), *My Private Life II* (2014), *Journey to the South* (2017) and *Breathing Still* (2018). She has

won many international awards including Jury Award for Best Experimental Film at Ann Arbor Experimental Film Festival, USA, in 2017 for *My Private Life II*. She is the author of *Memory, Place & Autobiography: Experiments in Documentary Filmmaking* (2019). She is co-editor of *Truth, Dare or Promise: Art and Documentary Revisited* (2013) and is a member of the editorial board of *Media Practice & Education*. She is Senior Lecturer at the University of East London where she teaches Film Practice and Theory.

Bruce Eadie has made documentaries on challenging subjects often involving state-sanctioned violence, from genocide to forced sterilisation to the death penalty. He won an Emmy for his 1996 film *Nuremberg* on the Nuremberg Trials. With an academic background in History at Cambridge and post-graduate work in Intellectual History at Sussex, he has returned to academia in recent years at Birkbeck, writing an MA thesis on the films of Patrick Keiller and is currently finishing a PhD on fictional films-within-the-film in recent documentaries that explore traumatic events in the life of an individual.

Thomas Elsaesser was an international film scholar and Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Amsterdam and the School of the Arts at Columbia University. His many books include *New German Cinema: A History* (1989), *Fassbinder's Germany: History Identity Subject* (1996), *Weimar Cinema and After* (2000), *Metropolis* (2000; 2nd edn 2012), *Studying Contemporary American Film* (with Warren Buckland, 2002), *Filmgeschichte und Frühes Kino* (2002), *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (2005), *Film Theory: An Introduction through the Senses* (with Malte Hagener, 2010; 2nd edn 2015), *The Persistence of Hollywood* (2012), *German Cinema – Terror and Trauma: Cultural Memory since 1945* (2013), *Film History as Media Archaeology* (2018) and *European Cinema and Continental Philosophy: Film As Thought Experiment* (2018). He also wrote and directed *The Sun Island* (2017), a documentary essay film about his grandfather, the renowned architect Martin Elsaesser.

Rosa Fong is a filmmaker and academic. Her films have won awards from the British Film Institute and Arts Council of England. She has directed programmes for both the BBC and Channel 4. Rosa is also a Senior Lecturer in Film and Television Production at Edge Hill University. Her research practice explores transcultural identities and displacement. Her recent research focuses on memory, displacement, identity and performativity. This is explored through her documentary called *Deconstructing Zoe* (2016) about a transgender actor; a multimedia exhibition called *Dragons of the Pool* (2018) on the forced repatriation of Chinese seamen in Liverpool in 1946 and a series of short films called BEAST (2019), which uses verbatim dialogue to explore the lack

of screen representation of East Asians in Britain. She has also worked as an Associate Producer on the feature length films *Cut Sleeve Boys* (2006), *Front Cover* (2015) and *Suk Suk* (2019) nominated for five Golden Horse Awards.

Catherine Grant is Professor of Digital Media and Screen Studies at Birkbeck, University of London, where she teaches and researches audiovisual cultures, audiovisual essay practices and digital forms of analysis and criticism. She is part of the programming group for the annual Essay Film Festival, run jointly with London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, and also Director of Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image. A prolific experimental video-essayist, she runs the 'Film Studies For Free' blog and is a founding co-editor of *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies*.

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Roberta Mock is Professor of Performance Studies and Director of the Doctoral College at the University of Plymouth. She was the founding co-Director of the AHRC-funded 3D3 Centre for Doctoral Training, which supported only practice-led research projects in digital art, design, culture and performance. Her own research focuses on gender, sexuality and bodies in performance, with a specific interest in live art and stand-up comedy by Jewish women. She is the author or editor of five books, including *Jewish Women on Stage, Film and Television* (2007), and is the current Chair of the Theatre & Performance Research Association (TaPRA). Championing and celebrating embodied knowledge at all stages of a research career, Roberta has written and spoken about and has led workshops across the UK, in Canada and Europe on practice-research methodologies.

Agnieszka Piotrowska is an award-winning filmmaker and a theorist. She is best known for her iconic documentary *Married to the Eiffel Tower* (2008). She obtained a PhD in Psychoanalysis and Film from Birkbeck, University of London, under Stephen Frosh and Laura Mulvey. She is a Reader in Film Practice and Theory at the University of Bedfordshire and Course Leader MA/MSc Digital Film. She is also a Visiting Professor in Film at the University of Gdansk, Poland. Her post-doctoral project has focused on (post) colonial trauma in Zimbabwe through the arts and literature. Piotrowska is the author of monographs *Psychoanalysis and Ethics in Documentary Film* (2014), *Black and White: Cinema, Politics and the Arts in Zimbabwe* (2016), and *The Nasty Woman and the Neo-Femme Fatale in Contemporary Cinema* (2019). She has

edited *Embodied Encounters: New Approaches to Cinema and Psychoanalysis* (2015), and co-edited *Psychoanalysis and the Unrepresentable* (2016) and *Psychoanalysis and Femininity* (2019) (both with Ben Tyrer). Piotrowska made a number of collaborative film projects in Zimbabwe including an award-winning documentary *Lovers in Time or how we Didn't get arrested in Harare* (2015), an award-winning feature film *Escape* (2017), and a new experimental film *Repented* (2019), which screened internationally.

Judith Rifeser is a lecturer and audio-visual practitioner in the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths University and a teaching fellow at UCL. A plurilingual scholar in language teaching and learning, as well as cultural studies, she is particularly interested in creative praxis, teaching with and through film, and in women's studies in relation to identity and diversity. She completed her Creative Practice Research PhD at the University of Roehampton where she taught on the cultural studies and film programmes. She was previously a junior lecturer at the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore. Judith's stop-motion animation short *A Letter of Love to You* (UK, 2016) premiered at the London Feminist Film Festival 2016 and was subsequently screened in the run-up to the Leeds Queer Film Festival, and at FiLia 2016. Judith's experimental short, *Care/ss* (UK, 2017), commissioned by Luce Irigaray, premiered at the ICA in 2017. Judith's newest work, the audio-visual essay *A caressing dialogical encounter* (2019), premieres in Oslo in 2020..

Isabelle Starkier is a former Student of the École Normale Supérieure, 'agrégée' of modern letters, associate professor directing doctoral research in theatrical studies at the University of Evry. She is also a director, actress and company director in theatre. She works on the link between theory and practice, bringing together her plays (about forty), her work as a company-in-residence and her research on otherness as well as theatre in the heart of the city. Latest plays include: *Le Bal de Kafka*, *L'homme dans le plafond de Timothy Daly*, *Le bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Un gros grand gras Gargantua* and *Le tango des étoiles errantes*.

Mischa Twitchin is a lecturer in the Theatre and Performance Department at Goldsmiths, University of London. His book, *The Theatre of Death – the Uncanny in Mimesis: Tadeusz Kantor, Aby Warburg and an Iconology of the Actor* is published by Palgrave Macmillan in their Performance Philosophy series; and examples of his performance- and essay-films can be seen on Vimeo: http://vimeo.com/user13124826/videos

Rachel Velody worked for many years at the London College of Fashion as course leader on the part-time Fashion Media degree programme. Her areas of

expertise concern the textual analysis of screen identities, with the fashioning of the gendered, raced body within British and North American television drama being areas of particular interest. Awarded in 2018, a three-year doctoral stipend by the University of Bristol, Rachel is, at present, exploring the fashioning of the female detective in contemporary British television crime drama.

Alexis Weedon holds the UNESCO chair in New Media Forms of the Book at the University of Bedfordshire where she is a research professor in publishing. After a spell at Hobson's Publishing in the 1980s and working with the University of Luton Press in the 1990s, she became fascinated by the potential of digital convergence for the book and in 1995 co-founded *Convergence: The international journal of research into new media technologies* with Julia Knight. She is an authority on historical bibliometrics and published *Victorian Publishing* (2003). More recently she co-authored a study of the popular romantic author *Elinor Glyn* with Vincent L. Barnett (2014). She currently leads a research group exploring digital forms of storytelling and the book.

Kiki Tianqi Yu works on two strands: documentary image and non-fiction film, especially on the social, ethical and aesthetic aspects of first person expression, the essayistic non-fiction in non-Western cinemas, amateur cinema, the political economy of international co-productions. The other strand is cinema and artists moving image in China and East Asia, especially in relation to eastern philosophies and aesthetics, on women's cinema, 'image-writing' practice, and independent cinema culture. Kiki's first monograph *'My' Self on Camera: First Person Documentary Practice in an Individualising China* (Edinburgh University Press, 2019) argues that the Confucian concept of the relational self still largely underpins how individuals understand the self, and analyses how filmmakers make socially and culturally rooted ethical and aesthetic choices. She also co-edited *China's iGeneration: Cinema and Moving Image Culture for 21st Century* (2014) and 'Women's First Person Documentary in East Asia', a special issue of *Studies in Documentary Film* (with Alisa Lebow, 2020). As a filmmaker, her first feature documentary *China's van Goghs* (co-directed with Haibo Yu, 2016) involves art history, labour politics, and globalisation, asking: could the act of copying be a path towards originality?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Any ambitious project of this nature requires a lot of support from very many people. However, in recent times a slightly curious custom has developed of saying 'thank you' to practically everybody we know, in some way devaluing those whose contribution was vital. These thanks therefore will be brief.

I am grateful to the Research Institute of Media and Performance Research at the University of Bedfordshire without whose support the initial conference would not have taken place and the book's idea would not have been born. My co-organiser Pryianka Verma deserves heartfelt thanks here. The institutional support of the Director of the Institute Professor Alexis Weedon and my Head of School Dr Jane Carr were crucial. The Dean, Professor Jan Domin, gave us permission to experiment with the format and the agenda of the conference, trusting we might arrive at something generative – and we did.

I am grateful to our publisher at Edinburgh University Press, Gillian Leslie, whose faith in the project made us push forward through dark times.

I need to recognise the help and friendship of Dr Warren Buckland, whose editorial support has been invaluable. This is a work of complexity and without his clarity and wisdom, and his experienced input on many levels, this volume would have faltered. All mistakes are of course my own.

Without my writers, without their strength and endless support and humour, without their desire to see this work published, I would have given up on the way, going off to make another film or a video essay instead. Thank you dear friends.

Last but not least, I need to acknowledge Professor Thomas Elsaesser's input

into the conference and the book. Without his unswerving belief in the project, in my own work and in the concept of creating this alternative research space as a way of resisting political and institutional control through creative activity, the project would have been hard to get off the ground. He did more than encourage it; he insisted it was an important thing to do. Further, I appreciate greatly Professor Thomas Elsaesser's serene attitude to the controversies his film and his keynote evoked. Not only did he decide to stick with this volume despite having his film work and some of his ideas critiqued and even criticised, but instead he was excited that his work engendered so much discussion. It was humbling to see his generous acceptance of more junior colleagues' arguments, including my own. It is a lesson in an incredible openness and scholarly confidence. In the end, Thomas Elsaesser's ideas, as always, have opened a space for a real conversation about creative practice and knowledge, about difficult times and our response to those. Now that he is no more, we need to hold onto his example of this exceptional intellectual curiosity and courage.

This volume is dedicated to Thomas Elsaesser's memory.

Agnieszka Piotrowska

PREFACE: LIFE IN THE POST PANDEMIC AGE

The production process of any book takes a long time. During the final stages of the work on this volume the global pandemic began to rage around the world changing our lives in ways that seemed utterly unexpected, tragic and surreal. As I am writing these words, we are still right in the middle of it, without any knowledge of what might be the final outcome of this crisis. What we do know is that at least hundreds of thousands of people globally will die as a result of it; we know that we are all traumatised by the events linked to it and we don't quite know what the future holds. Still, some reflections are already clear. First, it appears, whatever the real reason for the outbreak of the deadly virus, that it was connected to the mankind's disrespect for our environment in its broad sense. As the conspiracy theories are flying on social media, the real reason remains the same: our species' attitudes to other forms of life and this planet are problematic. We will need to change the way we are and the way we think. Second, it is also clear that some of the countries appear to have been better prepared for this crisis than others. The lack of preparedness of the UK and the USA has been linked to the extreme neoliberal policies over the years, which, to put it bluntly, prioritised profit over care. Now that we know what the result of such attitudes is we must fight even more resolutely for the different policies to ensue.

This book has always aimed to offer some ideas as how to resist neoliberalism. Now this need is more urgent. Will we embrace kindness and generosity over dominance and our unconscious individual desire for power, which psychoanalysis more than a 100 years ago identified as catastrophic for humanity?

Will we be able to offer through our creativity an alternative to the thinking that only activities that bring about immediate and measurable results are significant? Can we hold on to our rage to help bring about a different future?

Pandemics have, historically, produced a rupture and a change – not always for the better. We can begin working towards a more positive future through a re-definition of what success is and what must be valued in any society and culture. Whatever our utopian dreams are today, we do know that as species we are very flawed if very talented. We must be constantly vigilant, not just towards the governments and politicians, but also towards our own private responses, our public work and actions as however small they might appear, they do matter.

Agnieszka Piotrowska, April 2020

'In times of affective capitalism, information overkill and the neo-liberal university *Creative Practice Research in the Age of Neoliberal Hopelessness*, in exquisite and challenging ways, makes visible to which extent artistic research as system-critical craft and politics can help us to produce deep knowledge and resist the growing co-option and institutionalisation of creativity itself.'

Brenda Hollweg, University of Leeds

'The book's focus is on film and video practice as research and the ways such creative work may both produce new knowledge and create new ways in which actuality is represented as knowable and as knowledge. Many of the authors are themselves documentary filmmakers and they explore in their essay both their practice itself and their thinking about the films they have made in highly original ways. The essays offer illuminating insights and new theoretical perspectives, making the book a very important contribution to film studies and practice within the academy.'

Professor Emeritus Elizabeth Cowie, University of Kent

'This trailblazing book finally brings together two areas often and unfairly seen as discrete: practice and research. Passionately arguing for film as conveyor of scholarly knowledge and, more daringly, for the author's subjective inscription in creative work, editor Agnieszka Piotrowska launches a generative forum, where notable creators-cum-theorists engage in self-revealing, sometimes dissonant, but always inspiring dialogue. A feat to be celebrated.'

Lúcia Nagib, Professor of Film, University of Reading

'*Creative Practice Research in the Age of Neoliberal Hopelessness* offers a unique investigation of the different ways in which creative filmmaking offers its own distinctive forms of research and relates to theoretical insights. The emphasis on auto-ethnographic work, personal reflections on creative practice and the subjective dimensions of knowledge give surprising and candid cutting edge insights that are uncommon in academic texts. With variegated contributions from all corners of the world, this book provide a wealth of perspectives and practices to teach and think about in the growing field of creative audiovisual practice, research and theory.'

Patricia Pisters, University of Amsterdam

1. INTRODUCTION: COMPLEXITIES, COMPROMISES AND COMPLICITIES

Agnieszka Piotrowska

I am delighted to present you with this unruly collection, featuring essays by practitioners and theorists who have reflected on how practice research can offer different ways of producing knowledge or 'knowledges'– or perhaps just different ways of producing work which has artistic ambitions as well as academic ones.

The book is a collection of essays inspired by, but in no way limited to, the Symposium on Creative Practice Research I organised at the University of Bedfordshire in May 2018 supported by my inimitable PhD student Priyanka Verma. The event was an enormous success coming as it did in the midst of discussions about the position of practice research in the British university system and its preparations for the Research Excellence Framework of 2021. I venture that its taking place at a 'new' (meaning not Russell Group) university contributed to the sense of us doing something dangerous and on the peripheries of the restrictive academic environment. There were international participants too and we were keen to compare the different approaches globally. We were very keen to have a record of our discussions and proceedings and the book in some way is just that, although a number of people who were very important voices during the conference, including my students, for a number of reasons are not part of this collection. The reasons are many, but one has to say clearly, and perhaps brutally, that not all creative film or theatre practitioners enjoy writing, and academic writing in particular. Therein lies one of the REF problems, although of course the REF managers would dispute it.

This book is proud to include voices from different cultural and ethnic

Figure 1.1 The team organising the conference. Left to right: Pryianka Verma, the co-organiser; Dr Agnieszka Piotrowska; Charmaine Dambuza, another PhD student who offered some support during the organisation of the event.

backgrounds and some of the writers address issues of post-colonialism head on. This is my fourth edited collection (including two co-edited with Ben Tyrer) since I completed my doctoral work a few years ago, after a career in the television industry. My edited collections are 'unruly' because these volumes attempt to create a space which is not readily regimented. That is not to say that there is not one overarching ambition in this particular collection. The idea guiding this book is the notion of reclaiming the subjective, and at times the deeply personal, as the legitimate site of knowledge, particularly in creative practice research in which a personal undertaking, reflection and commitment to work carried out defines the knowledge it produces.

The collection is therefore a bold attempt to argue against mainstream academic thinking, proposing instead that knowledge produced by creative practice research is as valuable, if not more, than the work setting out to be 'objective'. It is important to note here that the patriarchal notion of knowledge having to be 'objective' can be seen as spilling itself into the discussions of methodologies in creative practice research. The recent articles and special editions of journals try to apply the tested scientific methods of gathering data and commenting on it to be applied to artistic research[1] – this attempt no

doubt has value but it is not an attempt which this book advances: our task is to be rigorous but also unashamedly personal and through this personal lens we want to be engaged and politically committed.

The notion of dissecting our experience of making work and calling it knowledge is a centuries-honoured tradition and yet, in the neo-liberal academy it is often questioned and doubted, despite the statements and meetings to the contrary: the shadow of the men of science insisting that only that which is 'objective' has any epistemological value throws a long shadow over the proceedings still. There can be many reasons for this but one certainly is the difficulty of 'measuring' the subjective. In this book, authors speak in the first person, attempt to be reflective, fail at times, but they insist on positioning themselves at the centre of the conversation. They are the research.

There are two exceptions to this rule in the book – two theoretical essays written by academics who are not artists. These are the chapters by Warren Buckland and Alexis Weedon, who offer different ways of thinking about practice and as such are extremely valuable. Buckland examines the practitioner's type of knowledge (*technê*) as embedded in film form and as stated explicitly in filmmaking manuals, and Weedon, speaking from her unique position of being an actual 'REF' manager at the same time as a transdisciplinary storytelling scholar, reflects on the craft and the politics of storytelling and storytellers – as knowledge. The third more 'objective' essay is that of the notable video-essayist Catherine Grant, although it has personal elements in it.

In the other chapters, including my own, the writers give account of their own experience and how it relates both to the theories they have used in their research and their practice, and the knowledge that this reflection has produced. This alone in the current climate amounts, still (or perhaps more now than before), to a radical political gesture: we are doing something personal which, we insist, can, and does, produce knowledge. This of course immediately evokes a whole plethora of questions and I list here but a few. Can this knowledge be somehow measured, recognised and valued? This is a separate question and one that in some way speaks to the notion of 'hopelessness' in the title of this book. Can one measure identity and emotion as a contribution to knowledge if it comes through as a tangible piece of work – or is it but a fantasy of those of us who dream of a more respectful world? The added complication of the current position is that creative practice research and its embodied relationship to knowledge is by necessity individualistic – and yet, almost all contributors in this book would see themselves as radical thinkers, probably left of centre, advocating solidarity with others, and mostly those less privileged and fortunate than us, not through patronising sympathy but through real actions of inclusivity and subversion of the vertical power structures. Nonetheless, art with all its radical ambitions is indeed individualistic and one has to recognise this too.

During the conference, we discussed the difference between our creative desires and inspirations, and the reality of having to produce work which has artistic ambitions but in some way is also a contribution to knowledge that can be measured easily against governmental standards, rules and regulations. There is no problem with this notion in principle, and yet we felt that our work – which we often see as 'art' and therefore touching our very identities – is sullied through somehow becoming products that can be packaged and sold. For me, coming from the industry before doing my theoretical PhD, the tension between one's creativity and the needs of the capitalist client, in my experience as a broadcaster, were palpable for years before I decided to move to the academy. In my experience the neoliberal university, with all its issues, is still a less brutal place than broadcast television despite recent efforts to make it more like a service industry and less a haven for general liberal education and creativity. Within this tough framework, we still try to do work that we find interesting and would attempt to do in any circumstances.

This book therefore hopes to address the very notion of what creative practice research is, and challenges the portrayal of creative practitioners as either artists *manqué* or as academics bored with rigorous scholarship. We discuss our experiences and our contribution to knowledge, and examine our attempts at holding on to our creativity and our integrity during times of relentless political and economic battles in higher education, which amount to an ability to measure and quantify everything, including creative work. Do creative practitioners compromise their creativity by working within the higher education system, trading in a possible poverty of an uncompromising but potentially unemployed artist and an uncertain status of a freelance for an academic title complete with regular salaries? In other words, is the role of the academic creative practitioner a gesture of 'tactical compliance' – a phrase coined by one of our keynote speakers at the conference to which I will come back later in this introduction. If we all simply have to engage with 'tactical compliance', does it actually matter? I think it does matter and therefore the next question is obvious: How far do we acquiesce to be a part of the neoliberal project and how can we offer any resistance at all?

The title of this collection is therefore ironic but it also captures a moment in time and that moment appears to have become tougher and more problematic as time has gone on. In addition, there is no homogeneity whatever within the 'practice research' community. The book offers a space for reflection for a group of practitioners and theorists. I hope that for the readers it presents a much-needed intervention, which will certainly be of interest to all academics engaged with creative practice as research, but also, hopefully, to funding bodies and research councils involved in funding the arts.

'Practice theory', 'practice-led research' or 'practice-based theory': these terms name a field that has become one of the most hotly debated topics in

university education in recent years. In the humanities generally, but especially in the arts and creative industries, such an apparent synthesis of theory and practice recognises creative work as a legitimate form of research; but, at the same time, it marks a trend to make higher education more vocational and more directly relevant to society, which can often simply mean a way to generate profit within the neoliberal university.

Can creative practice research – the term chosen for the present collection – be both empowering and perfectly fit into neoliberal flexibilisation and the bio-political labour precariat? How do these alternatives change – become exacerbated or dissolved – in light of the fact that many artists as well as academics see their work as political: activist, engaged, and promoting a socially progressive agenda?

The chapters in this book privilege the experiences of film practitioners and researchers, although it also sets out to give voice to sister disciplines, such as writing and performing. It includes reflective essays that explore the 'bold', the 'artistic' and the 'epistemological', written by notable academics who have become practitioners for a particular reason, or who see their scholarly writing and critical thinking also as a creative practice, legitimated by a willingness to take risks, and an openness to practices and experiments that challenge the boundaries of educational wisdom.

The chapters address and explore the following questions and issues: What is the relationship between traditional academic knowledge and artistic research/professional practice? Can a practitioner generate theoretical knowledge? Can practice research move beyond a narrow discussion of filmmaking practices into discussions of philosophy, ethics and gender? To what extent can creative practice research tap into areas of experience unavailable to traditional scholarship? For example, do first-person narratives contain theoretical knowledge even though they are deeply subjective? Is creative practice a tool of political resistance and, if so, how is it achieved? Can creative practice be subjected to theoretical analysis? (What is involved in the theoretical understanding of film practice?) Why do academics decide to include practice in their work? And: What is the relationship between 'high' theory and collaborative or workshop practice?

Scholarly, 'Objective', Personal?

The feminist philosopher and thinker Donna Haraway has been attempting to re-formulate the concept of knowledge for decades. She acknowledges the privileged position of patriarchal knowledge in contemporary culture and has instead been working at presenting the notion of 'situated knowledges' (1988: 581), meaning embodied knowledge originating from a particular scientist or scholar. Haraway recalls the centuries-long demand of the men of science to

be as invisible as possible when reporting their findings – in order for it to be more 'objective' (Haraway 1997: 25–30). This she deems a fundamentally ill-conceived notion. Throughout the academy, including the humanities and the arts, the notion of arriving at the objective knowledge expressed in an objective language still appears to be a project that prevails and any attempt to make that knowledge something one can question, discuss and take issue with speaking in the first person, appears still to be a contested area. This is very relevant to creative practice research in which 'knowledges' produced through it have to be subjective, personal, embodied and therefore in some way feminine. I would suggest therein lies the problem of treating creative practice research seriously, for REF (Research Excellence Framework) as well as other areas. In this book, many writers describe their experiences connected to documentary, which, in particular, is also a problematic area.

Most of the contributions to this book deal with the creation of some kind of documentary by those who write about it. This itself is not uncomplicated. The documentary film project was arguably the tool of science to begin with; the expectation regarding a documentary has been similar, harking back to the famous dictum by Nichols (1991) that documentary film is a 'discourse of sobriety' similar to science. He himself has since disputed this, but it has been so influential in film studies, precisely because it links to the general idea of what knowledge might be. The essays in this volume are often deeply personal, auto-ethnographic and even autobiographical. As a documentary filmmaker who worked in the industry for almost twenty years, I have always struggled with the notion that the documentary film ought to be seen as somehow 'objective' and I have written about it extensively elsewhere (2012, 2014, 2017, 2019).

In the history of documentary film studies, the tragic misunderstanding of the nature of a documentary account has led to such classic and dramatic misrecognitions in the history of documentary film as identifying Flaherty's fictional film *Nanook of the North* (1922) as a scientific/anthropological text – which we now know that it was not.

Clearly ethnography/anthropology's difficulties with its own 'identity' have spilled over to the continuing uncertainties regarding expectations of the documentary genre too, probably until Geertz's forceful positioning of anthropologists as 'authors'.[2] It was also Geertz who said famously and controversially that he would prefer to position anthropology on 'the side of literary rather than scientific discourses' (Geertz 1988: 6). In other words, he was emphatically against an attempt to hide the author/researcher of the text as 'the author' (the researcher, filmmaker, scholar) will affect the result – 'the result' such as it is depends on the 'the author'. Instead of the insistence on 'the objective', Geertz advocated transparency in the proceedings married with a respectful stance vis-à-vis the participants of any ethnographic study.

The 'invisibility' of the author vis-à-vis the notion that he or she ought to be acknowledged and recognised is a debate which continues, both in the academy and certainly in documentary film. In my own theoretical work (2014, 2015, 2017, 2019), I have questioned over and over again the stance of expecting the documentary to be somehow 'objective': it is always a subjective text and it always carries the traces of a relationship between the filmmaker and her subject, the person about whom she (or he of course) makes a film. This book creates another contribution to this debate and privileges the first-person relationship to the work. Contemporary documentary film studies scholarship issues of subjectivity, objectivity and ethics have been discussed extensively and it is beyond the scope of this introduction to give it justice here. Pratap Rughani (2013) in his chapter on ethics and the question of whether a documentary filmmaker is an artist (and has the right to be) gives the notorious but very clear example of the German female filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl who is undoubtedly a brilliant artist but whose work remains deeply unethical for its allegiance to Hitler.

One of the most important documentary film scholars, Michael Renov, introduced the idea that non-fiction contains a number of 'fictive' elements, that is 'moments at which a presumably objective representation of the world encounters the necessity of creative intervention' (Renov 1993: 2). Elizabeth Cowie, known for her work on gender and psychoanalysis in cinema, introduced a crack into film studies scholarship, suggesting both that the 'desire' in documentary is a complex notion and the notion of 'transference' (Cowie 2011: 100) which I developed further in my work – and here too in the chapter on *Married to the Eiffel Tower*. It is quite extraordinary that such a long time after these statements we are still engaged in the problematic nature of the 'I' in scholarship. 'Autoethnography' and 'reflexivity' are but labels, then, attempting to make something fundamentally fluid, deeply subjective and even emotional at times, more 'scientific', 'objective' or at least 'scholarly'. Tessa Muncey in the preface to her book *Creating Autoethnographies* (2010) states boldly the aim of using autoethnography alongside other more established and more obviously scholarly research method which is 'to contribute to or *subvert the dominant discourses* that underpin much of our research, strategies and techniques need to be found for portraying experiences that don't rely on the affinity of shared assumptions' (Muncey 2010: xi, my emphasis). It is here that creative practice research has a major contribution to make. Muncey's descriptions go beyond 'documentaries', also insisting indeed that creative and fictional work can contribute to 'knowledge' – the knowledge about the world and not merely about how to put a film together, for example. She goes on to identify the reader for her book: 'there may be those who want to include a personal story in their study or paper and want to find a theoretical justification to do so' (ibid.: xii). A little further into her book, she defines it:

> Autoethnography is a research approach that privileges the individual. It is an artistically constructed piece of prose, poetry, music or piece of art work that attempts to portray an individual experience in a way that evokes the imagination of the reader, viewer or listener. (ibid.: 2)

For Muncey, and others who will be evoked henceforth, 'autoethnography' is any account, which uses the first-person narrative of the author, relying on the latter's memory, photographs, letters and, importantly, feelings. She argues for using 'the highly personal' alongside 'the highly scholarly' – in the interests of furthering 'knowledge' and indeed scholarship itself. It is of course very telling that she mentions creative and artistic outputs as examples of just an autoethnography.

An American-Korean Professor of anthropological education, Heewon Chang, describes autoethnography as a 'research method that utilizes the researchers' autobiographical data to analyze and interpret their cultural assumptions' (Chang 2008: 9). Chang lists a number of scholars who have already attempted to combine more traditional methods with a desire to deploy one's life's experience in a scholarly discourse. These include anthropologists, social scientists and humanities' scholars, such as Anderson (2006), the hugely influential writers Ellis and Bochner (2000), Nash (2004) or Reed-Danahay (1997). Chang is careful to observe the innovative and controversial nature of the personal in the academy:

> They have already plowed through the wilderness to make a path, and many have followed them. Yet, I still smell fresh-cut grass along the trail and have felt an urge to show my students and interested others one more way of utilizing personal stories for scholarly purposes. (Chang 2008: 10)

The above sentence alone marks the necessary shift of register in terms of the language employed in moving from a 'straight' academic discourse to autoethnography. It is interesting that Chang's style evokes risk-taking and almost danger, with her using the metaphor of 'plowing through the wilderness' and an awareness that there will be pitfalls on the way. Why would it be worth it then? Because including one's personal experience in a highly scholarly discourse is sometimes the only way in which to include the vital 'missing story' in the otherwise more traditional academic presentation (Muncey 2010: 6). At the heart of autoethnography lies a conviction that every individual's personal experience has something unique to contribute.

Chang describes this therefore as a tug of war, 'objectivity vs. subjectivity' (Chang 2008: 45) in particular. Muncey (2010: 98), too, focuses on the 'objective/subjective divide', which in her view can also be defined as the divide between the sciences and arts. Muncey strongly advocates crossing boundaries

Figure 1.2 Thomas Elsaesser giving his talk during the conference. The organiser Agnieszka Piotrowska in the background. Photo credit: Babar Dogar Hussein.

and 'mixing art and science, illusions and reality' and states that that desire goes back to the Renaissance, but claims that John Locke, the English philosopher of Enlightenment, put a lasting halt to it – a move which she regrets (Muncey 2010: 99).

A number of other scholars, too, in their defence of autoethnography have refuted the accusation of self-indulgence, pointing to the difficulties of exposing one's vulnerabilities in disclosures which might come at a personal cost to the author – and which are necessary if the work is to be of value to others (see, for example, Mykhalovskiy 1996: 131).

For autoethnography to really work as a source of an epistemological resource it has to be truly revelationary and analytical, or at least attempt to be. The demand for disclosures, analyses, interpretations and self-interpretations is very hard, arguably harder than the traditional scholarship. It is the issue, as Haraway would put it, of taking off a mask and becoming the subject of one's research, which can be quite scary.

In this volume there are a few such attempts whilst others perhaps still stay on the safe side of the boundary, and that, I would venture, includes the contribution, both written and the actual film, of our very esteemed keynote, Thomas Elsaesser, to which I will return.

Knowledge is Gendered – Female and Feminine Autobiography as a Gesture of Subversion

The philosopher Jacques Derrida suggested that to be able to be self-analytical one has to become feminine.[3] This unexpected assertion connects his recognition of the same century-old problem of the expectation of all knowledge to be produced by white men in white coats in a laboratory as 'objective' as possible. Derrida believed passionately that one's personal experience constitutes knowledge. There is arguably a certain lack of academic training in how to be self-analytical. In my work I often draw from psychoanalysis but also from women writers. It is quite extraordinary how in supervising my PhD students I still have to fight for them to be allowed to use the first person and to establish the position from which they speak, and are allowed to speak. The psychoanalyst, writer and philosopher Shoshana Felman in her now classic book about women and literature, *What Does a Woman Want?* (1993), refers to the difficulty of a feminine desire wanting to combine autobiographical experience with scholarly theory amidst fears and hesitations regarding a certain (patriarchal) expectation of the mode of discourse. She gives a few examples of the dilemma including the famous poet Adrienne Rich when she ponders the nature of her disclosure: 'I have hesitated to do what I am going to do now, which is to use myself as an illustration' (Rich in Felman 1993: 134). Felman gives further examples of Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, as well as herself and she points out: 'In the case of Rich, theory (the theory of "Writing as Re-Vision") hesitates to become autobiography (the personal example). In the case of de Beauvoir, autobiography (her own female destiny) hesitates to become theory (*The Second Sex*)' (Felman 1993: 134). Felman then quotes from Rich's New Introduction to her book *Of Woman Born*: *Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1986): '*Of Woman Born* was both praised and attacked for what was sometimes seen as an odd-fangled approach: *personal testimony mingled with research, and theory which derived from both* … What still seems odd is the absentee author, the writer who lays down speculation, theories, facts and fantasies without any personal grounding' (Rich in Felman 1993: 135).

Nancy K. Miller (2002) both insists on the importance of the autobiographical voice in scholarship and states a difficulty that it brings as it invites the criticism of being too egotistic on the part of the writer. She reflects on needing to be like the Reader but also different enough so that the account is of interest:

> I write, Reader, because I'm just like you; I write Reader, because there's no one like me … On the border between the ego and the other is the potential for identification or repudiation, sympathy or revulsion, love or violence. (Miller 2002: 112)

In more recent scholarship Mary Harrod (2018), building on the work of the importance of female autobiography, details how the acknowledgement of the female embodied encounter with the world can translate itself into a particular creativity (in her essay, this is about Lena Dunham but clearly it is relevant to female creativity as a whole). I am always fond of quoting Kaja Silverman (1988) who suggested more than thirty years ago that the issues of male and female subjectivity in cinema and elsewhere are deeply linked to the voice with which they speak – figuratively and literally. She notes that 'male subjectivity is most fully realized … when it is least visible … – female subjectivity is most fully achieved … when it is visible' (Silverman 1988: 164). She also adds: 'the crucial project with respect to the female voice is to find a place from which it can speak and be heard, not to strip it of discursive rights' (ibid.: 192).

It is of course telling that even in this introduction I feel the need to refer to established, not to say famous, scholarly voices in order to give our undertaking and our writing an academic credence. This volume takes risks and invites the reader to take the risks with it and to think about creative practice, and indeed any knowledge, as an invitation to be challenged and to be challenging.

Adopting a feminine way of discussing the work might be difficult for some male scholars despite our stated desire for fluidity. I will offer below only the briefest of introductions to the essays, simply hoping that these will whet your appetites to read the whole volume. In this volume both Will Brown and Nariman Massoumi give incredible examples of how the true autoethnographic and therefore feminine mode is not only the domain of biological women. Brown introduces us to his teaching of guerrilla filmmaking conceived as a gesture of resistance. Massoumi's essay, about autoethnographic documentary work involving his family, is one of the most moving in this collection. It is interesting to me that five female contributors have chosen to work collectively and produced two very different but very important essays using the first-person autoethnographic mode alongside highly original theoretical discussions. These are the conversations between Jill Daniels, Rachel Velody and Eylem Atakav about their experiences of being creative researchers and filmmakers. There is an extraordinary and radical 'two voices' chapter on Rosa Fong's documentary film *Deconstructing Zoe*, about a transgender Asian performer, with theoretical and personal reflections from both writers: Rosa Fong, the maker, who positions her own difference vis-à-vis that of the subject of her documentary; and her colleague Jenny Barrett, who both embraces and questions the notions of postcolonial state of mind and theories.

Roberta Mock's profound and funny account of her work on the performance of the legendary Jewish comic Pearl Williams is both a thrilling narrative of her comedic prowess and researcher talents. It is also a telling testimony to the pain of resurrecting something so rooted in a particular historical time. Roberta's piece is particularly significant as it also touches upon issues of her

personal history and how it relates to the history of Jewish storytelling and performance. How do you become a subversive Jewish performer when at the same time you are an important professor and manager at a British University? How do you relate to your vulnerability and how do you turn it into knowledge? Roberta Mock's piece is an example of a creative writing attempt and I hope the reader will be inspired by its courage and breadth of vision. Isabelle Starkier's piece is a different take on being a theatre practitioner and her voice brings a different tone to the conversation as she is French and works in Paris and the regions. Catherine Grant's essay is not autoethnographic but its courage lies in Grant's now historical boldness in putting the video-essayistic interrogation as a legitimate way of examining cinema. This essay, both the actual essay and the written account of it, examines Ingmar Bergman's notable film *Wild Strawberries* (1957). It is an exemplary text of using 'high' theory, namely (on this occasion) psychoanalysis, with more contemporary thinkers and writers, as well as analysing her decisions regarding the practicalities of creating the video essay. Kiki Yu reflects on documentary practices in China and her own practice as a part of it. Her article is thought-provoking and informative without losing anything of its autoethnographic strength. Tony Clancy analyses his photography and documentary filmmaking vis-à-vis some theoretical models. Tunde Alabi-Hundeyin in his fascinating essay shares his photographic practice and experiences and examines some of the ethical issues which are always in place when working with real people in a photography or documentary mode, here particularly painful as the work related to Boko Haram. Bruce Eadie offers a fascinating essay on reflectivity and psychoanalysis in documentary film, and Mischa Twitchin offers a bold chapter on his own film essay and how he combines practice and 'high' theory and in particular Adorno's ethics and philosophy. Judith Rifeser reflects on her experience of producing highly personal and rigorous work which combines the tactical and the notion of Irigaray's 'caress' in artistic practice, in particular using her own moving image practice as an example. My own chapters are about *Married to the Eiffel Tower* (2008) and my memories of that production. I also reflect on my more recent work in Zimbabwe, focusing on the film *Repented* (2019) created in a collaboration with the award-winning writer Stanley Makuwe. I interrogate the notion of translation in collaborative work across cultures.

Tactical Compliance?

The final section of this Introduction turns to the key concept of the conference and an important theme in this book, namely the notion of 'tactical compliance' proposed at the conference by Professor Thomas Elsaesser, the notable film historian and theorist, who was also a first-time filmmaker at the age of 75. This project was important and reminiscent of Roland Barthes's notion

of the importance of 'late work' (2011 [1980]). In a discussion of his own desire to do something new late in life, he talked about 'a Complete Break' (2011: 214), a phrase that refers to an older accomplished thinker (or writer or artist) trying something totally new, 'a Beginning, a Vita Nova: a rebirth'. Barthes explains that such a project relates to one's desire: 'to be immortal is to be completely reborn; the work to be written is the mediator of this second kind of immortality' (ibid.: 214–15). That is to say, an immortality in which in your work will develop and change with the creator, continuously learning and creating something that will be different, innovative and generally fabulous.[4] Barthes gives examples of such moves by some writers (Mallarmé, Michelet, Proust) and of course his own planned novel was to be such a Complete Break. I wondered if Thomas Elsaesser's film project might have been designed to be that too.

It is in this context that I wanted to hear about Elsaesser's long-fulfilled ambition and what knowledge he might have felt he produced during its making. We discussed the project at length and were excited at the new challenge. It is hard to critique a work of such a notable scholar, and even more so now that he is gone, but his essay, fascinating though it is, focuses less on the knowledge or knowledges but more about what creativity might mean in general and about the practicalities of the making of his first film. Here there was the necessity of a particular moment in time (involving a German Bank taking over a building his grandfather designed), his grandfather's legacy and an uneasy relationship with his German producer. Elsaesser's essay describes his decision to proceed to work with the professional producer and editor in order to get his film made despite having profound professional and personal issues with them. Despite a multitude of reservations, he decides to work with these professionals in the spirit of 'tactical compliance'. Here the phrase simply means an opportunistic but necessary decision to use those who had professional experience of putting things together, despite conceptual and professional difficulties. At the time of the conference, his keynote phrase was a basis for heated discussion, some of which is reproduced in this volume. Here I am interested in broader issues which present themselves henceforth.

The film is based on Elsaesser's family's home movies, shot by his father before the Second World War and during it. Home movies from any historical period have a certain charm about them and this is no exception. The core of the film is the story featuring his grandfather a notable architect Martin Elsaesser and his wife Liesel, Thomas Elsaesser's grandmother. In the documentary we discover that his grandmother had a stormy and passionate love affair with her husband's colleague, a garden designer called Leberecht Migge. It was Migge's dream to create a self-sustaining paradise of a garden which would offer both nourishment and beauty. He and Elsaesser's grandmother

did set up such a paradise island outside Berlin which they called The Sun Island and which is also the title of the film.

Will Brown in his thoughtful essay in this volume 'Tactical Compliance and the Persistence of Elsaesser' critiques the film and Thomas Elsaesser's stance in both the movie and his chapter. Brown juxtaposes Elsaesser's exemplary scholarly work as an academic with his film, which Brown sees as a promotional piece for Thomas's grandfather and also, therefore, for Elsaesser himself. In essence, Brown expects more from Elsaesser as a human being and a famous film scholar. My objections are both similar and, at the same time, very different.

In the spirit of the autoethnographic introspection, I need to disclose a further aspect to this. I was first aware of the film when it was at an assembly stage in May 2016. I met Thomas Elsaesser for the first time at the SCMS conference in Montreal in 2015. He became a mentor to me, as he was to so many other junior colleagues. He was very interested in my work and in particular in the whole project of combining the theoretical and the creative practice. He encouraged me to develop that strand of my work further. Kindly and generously, he introduced my experimental documentary *Lovers in Time* at an essay film event in Reading in 2015, and many others, and has written a complimentary review of it. In due course we co-authored a chapter about an essay film (2019). In May 2016 Thomas asked me, in my guise as an experienced documentary filmmaker who has made many films for broadcast television, to look at his first edit of *The Sun Island* and suggest changes/improvements. At that time Thomas Elsaesser was already infuriated by his producer Reihart's ideas regarding a possible inclusion of some general archival footage from the Second World War in the film – as a visual and contextual juxtaposition to the home movies Elsaesser presented. I saw a three-hour long assembly in Amsterdam. It was a very difficult session and I wrote long emails to Elsaesser after the event which I will not be reproducing here. Suffice to say, I suggested dramatic cuts, writing a strong narrative and working closely with the television professionals as the film needed a firm and experienced hand. Given that there were already people involved, I felt it would not have been right for me to be involved beyond that advice as that might have confused matters further. I despaired over the difficulties but suggested it might have been to the film's benefit to stay with the producers. Maybe I was in part the engineer of his 'tactical compliance' as regards the producers.

In my emails there was something else though, something far more important, and this line I will quote here: 'I can understand Reihart trying to create something against the background of the actual historical events – it is not idiotic, it's an attempt to make it all clearer. This was not but a love story. The war was raging in Europe'. For me then, and now, the bracketing of the atrocities of the Second World War is a conceptual and ethical flaw in the film,

and possibly has made it into a questionable ethical gesture. There is a disquiet about focusing only on the idyllic life on the island and the romantic affairs of its inhabitants without any engagement whatever with the storms of the war of Europe at the very same time and his family's involvement in it – including the male relatives being in the German army at the time, and wearing Nazi swastikas, a fact that is mentioned in passing. On the other hand, his mother was in fact Jewish, and hiding at the time and then continuing to hide, in peace times in Germany, a very common trait and also one that I am familiar with in my own family.

Regarding Thomas Elsaesser's piece of work, I am indeed amongst many people who get 'special thanks' at the end of the film. I am certainly in good company there as Michael Renov gets a credit too and indeed many others. Some of my suggestions of writing a strong narrative and cutting the film dramatically were implemented – but not the crucial one. The film as is disavows the simple fact that in some way Elsaesser's family, as so many others in Germany at the time, was indeed complicit with the Nazi regime. The words 'compliant' and 'complicit' have the same etymological root and in some way mean a similar thing: to be acquiescent with a certain course of action. The failure to acknowledge more clearly at least in visual terms, never mind in some kind of deeper reflection, the atrocities of the Nazi regime which the Elsaesser family were in some way involved in, can be viewed as ethically problematic. Perhaps it is indeed the difficulty at getting at the feminine autoethnographic statement here but perhaps also there is a desire to hide from the demands of a painful recognition of one's own historical legacy, which in Thomas Elsaesser's case is in fact twofold: Nazi and Jewish.

In the now classic work on post-war trauma, *The Inability to Mourn* (1967), the German psychologists Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich make a point that the Germans quickly identified with new post-war regimes without dealing with their long commitment to Hitler, creating systems of denial and forgetting. It was as if the Germans chose not to deal with the past. As a result, the authors claimed more than fifty years ago, the German psyche may have never freed itself from Hitler because it did not go through the rituals that true mourning demanded. What is quite extraordinary here is that Thomas Elsaesser used the work above in his own work quite extensively, in his own discussion of New German Cinema in his volume of 1989. Discussing Mitscherlich, Elsaesser confirms: 'Instead of discussing this past, Germans prefer to bury it' (1989: 242) and yet, somehow, when it came to making his own film these concerns are put aside.

Elsaesser's silence is palpable not only in the film but also in his keynote and in the chapter in this book. In some ways, therefore, it misses an opportunity for a more profound production of knowledge relating to his personal legacy of the Second World War that the making of such a deeply subjective film may

have offered. As friends and colleagues, Thomas and I discussed the matter at length after the conference and after many screenings of his film, including some in Poland and in Amsterdam which I introduced. We discussed the matter last time in later November 2019 and agreed that the book should go to print the way it is and that there might be a time for 'a further deeper reflection' in due course. Unfortunately, and shockingly, Thomas died unexpectedly in China on 4 December 2019 at the beginning of his lecture tour. As it happens, he showed his film to Chinese students at Peking University and this is what he wrote to me in an email of 3 December at midnight his time, clearly one of his last: 'So far have found very appreciative but also very smart and critically astute audiences. Tonight's screening of my film was a special event, with Chinese subtitles and very good discussion after. Peking University is the top in the country and the quality of the students shows it. Am very lucky.' It appears that he died a few hours later.

We were scheduled to discuss the illustrations for his chapter the following day but this was not to be. What remains is a trace of our discussions and 'the deeper reflection' that Elsaesser was preparing to write will now not happen. *The Sun Island* is a very special and moving film but it is also an example of how very hard it is to produce knowledge out of autoethnographic material and how potentially ethically problematic such a project might be when the subject of the interrogation is our own life or that of our family.

The 'tactical compliance' can quite easily and imperceptibly become instead *a tactical complicity* or worse, a tactical omission and silence which gets close to the unethical. In his reflection on the process of creation (and writing in particular), Barthes sets out 'three trials' (2011: 173): the first one is to decide to embark upon 'the Work' at all, choosing 'the object', the second one is the 'step-by-step management of' the work and the third one is 'the moral trial' including a decision of how the work 'fits in with the social (historical social)' (ibid.: 173). Elsewhere in the book he talks about the ethical always trumping the aesthetic and that it is a hard call. Barthes calls one's commitment to the Work potentially 'heroic' – 'an uncompromising attachment to a Practice' (ibid.: 281), which clearly is in direct opposition to any form of tactical compliance. One has to say that Roland Barthes did of course write many very influential works – but *not* the very final one he wanted to write. Many reasons could have been behind that but undoubtedly any 'uncompromising Practice' is excruciatingly hard, a lot harder than many people realise. Whatever anybody's views on Thomas Elsaesser's film might be, it is very clear that his whole life and work is a testimony to his heroic and indeed uncompromising attachment to his practice, which of course foremost includes his academic work. He took risks and never stopped exploring and expanding his intellectual horizons. He was also prepared for younger generations to be discussing and critiquing his work, teaching us all how to open spaces for

generative intellectual engagement. There is no doubt at all that his work and his spirit will continue to be a guiding light for us all.

As creative practice researchers, we need to keep questioning the rules, the law, the attitudes, the systems. We need to cross boundaries in order to stay faithful to our internal campus and question that too. Whilst aware of the pressures coming from institutional demands and goals, notably those that define research as any pursuit which is 'a process of investigation leading to new insights, effectively shared', the book therefore aims to open a space for a generative dialogue about the importance of creative practices as a site of critique and resistance through a profound personal reflection vis-à-vis the work one creates.

Notes

1. For example, *Alphaville*, Issue 17: Researching Creative Practice, published July 2018, edited by Ciara Chambers https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.17.00>. *Media Practice and Education* has published a number of articles on methodology, including 'Using film as both embodied research and explication in a creative practice PhD' by Catherine Gough-Brady (published online: 10 October 2019): <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2019.1675407>.
2. Geertz cracks a joke referring to Barthes (without naming him) that the author might be dead in other disciplines but not in anthropology (Geertz 1988: 6). Incidentally, Barthes in his last work takes back that assertion (i.e. the author is not dead).
3. 'I asked my questioner: "Are you asking me an autobiographical question? Well, yes, I would like to write, which is not to say that I will write, but that I would like to write in a woman's hand"' (Derrida 1988: 79).
4. One could argue that one of Barthes's attempted 'Complete Breaks' was the acknowledgement of the return of the author which he, too, was so involved in demolishing in his previous work.

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