

VIEWPOINTS FROM THE FIELD

6. Journalism Plus?

The resurgence of creative documentary

Abstract: Over the past two decades, opportunities for ‘creative documentary’ on television may have diminished, but other distribution options for innovative and engaged films have opened up. A resurgence of cinematic documentary is attracting substantial numbers of viewers who, bored or disillusioned by television’s shift to reality programming, are prepared to pay for theatre tickets, while online subscription services such as Netflix and Amazon now stream and fund high-quality documentary. Increasing numbers of filmmakers are self-distributing their works online. A significant percentage of these films, freed from the constraints of broadcast television, take up political challenges because, as Michael Chanan says, documentary has ‘politics in its genes’ (2008, p. 16). In fact, as mainstream news and current affairs becomes increasingly tabloid, it could be argued that documentary is assuming the role of investigative journalism or, to use Laura Poitras’ description, documentary functions as ‘Journalism Plus’. This article, at times drawing on my own film practice, attempts to explore these shifts and developments, locating documentary at a time of institutional transformation.

Keywords: documentary, human rights, journalism, New Zealand, politics, post-documentary

ANNIE GOLDSON

University of Auckland

As a working documentary filmmaker and an academic, I have had the opportunity to step back and critically analyse my own practice in a detached manner, approaching my own film as I would any other text (Goldson, 2014; 2012; 2002). These occasional writings do contribute, I hope, to debates that are alive and well in documentary and journalism studies. At times, my approach has tended to exceed just an analysis of the text but engages, in an anthropological manner, with production processes. Research and scripting in the pre-production phase are often intense but once production commences, ‘reality’ in its most immediate guise often speaks back. Opportunities arise or are lost, new subjects emerge or chosen ones refuse to participate. Constant flux can present a documentary filmmaker with the challenge of on-the-hop decision making, of negotiating the power flows that mark the director-subject relations and avoiding the dangers that may have presented themselves to you, the maker, and vitally your sources, subjects and crew.

But it can be useful to think about documentary in the context of external developments that impact on one's practice and on documentary as a whole. Documentary studies scholar Bill Nichols approaches defining the documentary by articulating four different angles that continuously shape documentary (Nichols, 2001). First, there is an institutional framework: 'Documentaries are what the organisations and institutions that produce them make' (2001, p. 26). Circular as this definition may seem, a film becomes labeled as a documentary prior to the work of the viewer or critic. Then there is the community of practitioners, the makers of films who, like the institutions that support them, hold certain assumptions about what they/we do. At times, our views clash with those of the institutions, producing a tension between 'established expectations and individual innovation' that can prove a frequent source of change (2001, p. 25). Third up is the 'corpus of texts', the films themselves, that share certain emphases allowing us to discuss them as members of a genre 'characterised by norms and conventions such as an organising logic, evidentiary editing and a prominent role for speech directed at the viewer' (2001, p. 34): a genre that in turn divides into different movements, periods and modes. And fourth and finally, there is the constituency of viewers, the 'mind of the beholder' that defines a film as a documentary, most fundamentally, as including 'sounds and images that have their origin in the historical world we share' (2001, p. 35).

What Nichols does not reflect upon is how these four angles are themselves each blown about by the prevailing political, economic, technological and social winds. To give just one example, whereas institutions within a social democratic society may emphasise public media and embrace documentary's role as an educational genre, neo-liberal systems will favour high-rating, lower budget Reality TV and popular factual programming. While following Nichols' model in the following pages, I will attempt to reflect on how these deeper currents shape the institutions and individuals involved in documentary culture.

Writing at the new millennia, which saw an explosion of Reality and popular factual genres, John Corner (2000) claimed it was possible we were entering the era of 'post-documentary'. He rightly pointed out that traditional documentary on television had been progressively watered down and abandoned. Michael Renov grieves this diminution less, arguing that broadcast television has always been a conservative influence on the documentary genre (2001). From the beginning of documentary's appearance on television, signs of political dissidence, experimentation or critique were, for the most part, evacuated from its programming. There are some exceptions to this rule: public broadcasters, such as the BBC or CBC, have continued to support innovative documentary strands, engaging and collaborating with opportunities that have arisen in the digital era. But overall, as traditional broadcast television suffers financially, the appetite for any kind of risk-taking, never great at the best of times, is declining.

I want to argue, however, that long-form creative documentary has re-emerged on the cinema screen, and of course, online.¹ Filmmakers are able to take more political and formal risks than television traditionally permitted, breaking from notions of balance

and objectivity. *Roger and Me* (1984) produced and directed by controversial filmmaker Michael Moore and a film both critically and commercially successful, broke new ground. The filmmaker is seen on a journey to find Roger Smith, CEO of GM Motors, to ask him why several auto-plants in Flint, Michigan, had been closed down. The trope (of course Roger was not to be found) allowed audiences to witness how the loss of 30,000 jobs impacted on the town. Although not without controversy about certain timelines and assumptions, no one could deny the film had politics: thus *Roger and Me* established a trend that was to continue. Many of the subsequent documentaries that reached the big screen continue to be engaged politically, their cameras always pointing directly at the social and political spaces where ‘the life-world is dominated, shaped and controlled by power and authority’ (Chanan, 2008, p. 16). Documentary, Chanan goes on to claim, is always ready to take up political challenges, speaking to the viewer ‘as a citizen, as a member of the social collective, as putative participant in the public sphere’ (2008, p. 16).

Nichols’s four angles, described above, have come together in something of a perfect storm. Technological developments and the move towards digitalisation are reconfiguring the institutions that support documentary with the added bonus of reducing costs for the filmmaker. These newer distribution platforms are tending to release filmmakers from institutional constraints. Audiences, or at least significant numbers of people, are seeking out creative documentaries because they are offering forms of knowledge that are increasingly hard to source within the mainstream media. Investors, such as state agencies and even private equity firms, are noticing that there is a substantial audience for creative documentary and therefore are more often prepared to take risks, recognising that they could potentially make profits, or at least not suffer embarrassing losses as can be the case with dramatic features (which demand greater original investment). Creative documentaries, too, tend to have a long life in the expanded digital environment. And new streaming services, such as Netflix and Amazon, are not only carrying high-quality documentary, but also funding them. Netflix, for example, supported the production of the critically-acclaimed *Virunga* (2014), which explores the conservation work of rangers within the National Park of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who are tasked with protecting mountain gorillas against war, poaching, and the threat of oil exploration. HBO is becoming another player in the documentary field, recently releasing *The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst* (2015), an investigative documentary series that explores the contradictions within both the life of Durst, who comes from a family of affluent New York property developers, and the bizarre and grisly murders he allegedly committed.

These are high-priced international productions, with commercial heft behind them, funded by the considerable box-office returns and subscription costs that wealthier, larger countries can support. As is often the case, practices that emerge from these affluent developed countries can spread rapidly; nonetheless, it is important not to idealise the new distribution environment. The documentary filmmaking path for most of us is

still not an easy one. Funding is still scarce, even scarcer given the decline of broadcast documentary, and although the costs of production may have decreased, other expenses, such as the clearing of archives (a staple for many documentaries) have become increasingly unaffordable. Self-distribution, although ‘free’, can be a daunting amount of work, as much as making the film itself. But opportunities are arising even in the Asia-Pacific region, which has fewer resources but plenty of stories and issues to explore. For example, the documentary *Under the Dome* (2015), a self-financed documentary on the pollution problem in China reached 150 million people through social media in the three days before it was censored. Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Act of Killing* (2012), a groundbreaking film on the anti-Communist purges of Indonesia between 1965-66, which focuses on the perpetrators of the violence, received multiple awards internationally.² In Indonesia itself, where the film was viewed largely through ‘piracy’ and file-sharing sites, a long-repressed discussion has finally begun.

Given I have been making documentary for some decades now, I am able to reflect on how my work has been impacted by the four angles Nichols mentions; how I have negotiated shifts in institutional preferences, audience appetites, and drawn inspiration from the films and communities that I participate within. I have noted, in my own films, something of a change of direction, a move from producing a trilogy of ‘human rights’ documentaries, all three narratives of the past, to two more recent works, one completed and one in progress, that engage more directly with journalistic practice and the politics of the day. Why this has occurred exactly is difficult for me to articulate but I have noted this tendency amongst other filmmakers. It seems increasingly that it is independent documentary, rather than mainstream journalism (with its shift towards sensationalism and tepidity), that is holding the powerful to account. Chanan (2007, p. 9) quotes *Guardian* journalist Charlotte Raven who argues that the account of events provided by the news is constrained by ‘its own agendas and clichés’. The only group of media workers with the patience and inclination to give us a real idea of what is happening, she argues, are the documentary makers who continue to fulfill an educative and sociopolitical role of speaking about issues that matter.³

Three of my better-known titles, *Punitive Damage*, *An Island Calling* and *Brother Number One* are frequently labeled as ‘human rights documentaries’ and are seen as constituting a trilogy, albeit one that was unplanned (Smaill, 2014; Wright, 2005; Lawson, 2015). *Punitive Damage* (1999) follows Helen Todd, a Kiwi woman who sued an Indonesian general in a Boston court for ‘punitive damages’ after her 20-year-old son Kamal Bamadhaj, a young activist, was shot and killed in the Dili massacre in East Timor in 1991. Helen, Kamal and East Timor’s stories are interwoven into the narrative of the film. The small nation had been suffering under Indonesian occupation since 1975: an occupation that unraveled in 1999, the very year I released the film.⁴ *An Island Calling* (2008) traces the context of the murder of a gay couple in Suva, Fiji. John Scott, the head of the Fiji Red Cross, and his Kiwi partner Greg Scrivener were killed with a machete by a young

Fijian man Apete Kaisau who had, reputedly, been the men's lover. Apete killed them in the name of God in a country that has imported an increasingly fundamentalist brand of Christianity, and is also marked by a history of instability, coups and complex racially charged politics. The third film *Brother Number One* (2011) followed Kiwi rower Rob Hamill to Cambodia where he spoke at the ECCC, the war tribunal set up to try former Khmer Rouge leaders responsible for the deaths of over two million Cambodians in the years 1975-79. Rob's brother Kerry Hamill, a yachting enthusiast seized from his boat in 1978, was one of a handful of Westerners tortured and killed by the Khmer Rouge.

All three films follow what Belinda Smaill (2014) has called a Western 'sojourner' who has gotten caught up in events in East Timor, Fiji, and Cambodia respectively. Although these films explored incidents that occurred elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region, they were shot partially in New Zealand and involved New Zealand characters, thus fulfilling the requirements of the funding agencies and receiving support from the New Zealand Film Commission, New Zealand on Air and the broadcasters. They followed a similar distribution pattern: premiering in the New Zealand International Film Festival, having a short theatrical 'art cinema' run, before showing on broadcast television here. They were also marketed overseas, and showed at a range of festivals prior to their being sold, through distributors, to international broadcasters. Given my background and the content of the films, I have also emphasised educational distribution, in several instances, writing and co-writing study guides that accompanied the films' DVD and online distribution.⁵

By the 1980s, 'human rights' became one of the only political visions remaining. The 'human rights documentary', an umbrella term able to shelter progressive filmmaking practices, superseded an earlier label, the 'committed documentary' explored in the edited collection by Thomas Waugh, *Show Us Life* (1984, 2011).⁶ Waugh proposed such a text should involve a 'specific ideological undertaking' – paraphrasing Marx, he argued the committed filmmaker is 'not content only to interpret the world but is also engaged in changing it' (1984, p. 6). But the end of the Cold War stripped away the certainties that had framed international relations, and journalistic and documentary practices, whatever their slant, for over four decades. The revelations of Left totalitarianism, the events of Berlin, the fragmentation that occurred through identity politics, and the rise of global, rather than national, concerns, a growing awareness of climate change and environmental disasters, the AIDs and SARs epidemics, and importantly a series of genocides propelled by ethnic divisions in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, were harder to understand through the prism of superpower conflicts. NGOs, the Red Cross, and UN organisations proliferated, adhering to the politically neutral line demanded of them. The notion of the committed documentary, or Left-wing practice in general, transmuted into differing categories able to be explored under the human rights umbrella: explorations of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, environmental issues and various ethnic conflicts that had resulted in brutality, torture and war.

Sonia Tascón (2015) traces the rise of human rights film festivals that arose in the 1980s, sites of visual activism that, in using human rights as their organising discourse, inject demands not present in other political modes of spectatorship. One of those, she argues is a ‘universalising impulse’ that produces a more internationalist perspective. As she elaborates, the claim there is such a thing as a universal humanity is intuitively appealing: ‘It enables us to recognise all peoples across the globe as ‘human’, whether they be racially, geographically or culturally distant’ (2015, p. 19). However, the concept, despite its claims to universality, remains located within the Western tradition. The discursive mandate of human rights documentary is an idealised ‘looking out’ beyond our own borders of belonging. But contingent upon the degree to which a viewer, or filmmaker, is embedded within his or her own pre-existing set of viewing traditions, this manifestation of a ‘looking out’ may end up being a ‘looking in’ instead (2015, p. 6).

Do such generalising, humanising themes, fundamentally anchored in the Western concept of human rights, resonate in the countries within which they are made? Asia and the Pacific offer up tremendous stories and opportunities for the human rights documentary but, at times, and I include myself here, I see a band of well-meaning but ambitious filmmakers ‘looking out’—combing the region for its stories which are then pitched at international festivals, producing films that ‘look in’; films that reach Western audiences, but rarely those residing in the countries depicted. Collaborations occur, at least in credit sequences, and indeed these can be vital, as the filmmaker is often wholly reliant on local assistants for translation and cultural understanding. But the production sector in the Pacific and Asia remains woefully underfunded and offers up few training opportunities. I would like to imagine continuing to work in the human rights arena, but while I wrestle with some of the questions posed above, I find myself drawn to producing more journalistic-based films as evidenced by my last completed film and my current project.

An extensive and valuable report, *Dangerous Documentaries: Reducing Risks when telling Truth to Power* (Center for Media & Social Impact, School of Communication, American University) addresses the increasing risks that many documentary makers face, in particular those who ‘produce work that challenges the terms of the status quo, whether through investigative reporting, revealing an underrepresented viewpoint, or signaling an overlooked trend’ (CMSI, 2014). The recognition of journalistic practices can have real advantages for the documentary film and, in fact, are increasingly seen as vital, as the risks of doing such work are well-established in the investigative journalism community but not always well known by documentary filmmakers. Prior to providing a framework to minimise risk taking, the researchers behind the study took a step back, which is useful for my purposes here. They began by comparing the motives and ethics of documentarians and journalists, discovering: ‘We could not find any difference in their core missions to explore a subject of public interest honestly and compellingly’ (CMSI, 2014). The title of the report itself links documentary practice with the journalistic tradition of ‘telling truth to power’.

DOCUMENTARY PRACTICE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

As suggested above, many creative documentaries produced in the last several decades have involved high-stakes investigative journalism. Academy-award winning documentary *The Inside Job* (2010) explored the corruption behind the financial collapse of 2008 in brilliant and incisive detail; *The Act of Killing* (2012) and *Virunga* (2014) have already been cited; while another Academy award winner, *Citizen Four* (2014), documents the journey of whistle-blower Edward Snowden. Laura Poitras, director of the last film, calls her practice ‘Journalism Plus’, believing herself a visual journalist whose practice is ‘fact finding plus storytelling that reveals something more about the human condition’.⁷ Alex Gibney, also a well-known and prolific documentary filmmaker, whose most recent title is *Going Clear: Scientology and the Prison of Belief* (2015), calls himself a ‘filmmaker with journalist baggage’.⁸ Others disagree with the elision of documentary and journalism, emphasising their distinction. IDFA, the influential Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival states:

IDFA chooses films that have been painstakingly designed and that express the personal vision of the maker. The documentary-maker is therefore an artist —not a journalist. Where the journalist attempts with his or her reports to present reality as objectively as possible, the artist follows his or her own idea.⁹

It is true that ‘objectivity’ is the sticking point for most documentarians, even those who claim identification with journalism. On close analysis, as the CMSI report reveals, common characteristics of codes of ethics for journalists appear largely shared by filmmakers. Key points such as public good and accountability, source protection, a commitment to truth telling, rigorous fact checking, transparency of process and a lack of fabrication are seen as unexceptional, or even embraced by most in the documentary community. But the journalistic mainstays of daily newsgathering, ‘objectivity’ or ‘balance’ pose problems for the documentary filmmaker. At least in principle, if not in practice, the convention of daily newsgathering emphasises the need to seek out and present all sides of the story, allowing the viewer to make an informed decision. Documentary makers certainly believe in fairness and accuracy, but our work is so often shaped as an essay, revealing a personal perspective, either our own, or that of our characters. Filmmakers often feel that our job is to tell a story from a particular point of view, and to capture the richness of that experience, not to report an issue from different sides.

Another departure from journalist codes and practices is evident in documentary’s use of creative techniques. These often draw on arcs that deploy ancient forms of story telling: using reenactment, narrative flow, turning points, and deploying the many strategies available to the filmmaker such as the use of character, narrative, music, computer graphics, and animation. Journalism at best has clarity but often has little nuance and is formally repetitive. Documentary makers have the time and the impulse to go deeper and are released from well-established formal conventions, immediate ratings pressures and competition that underpin news journalism.



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Figure 1: *He Toki Huna*: SAS Quick Reaction Force in Kabul post a suicide bombing in February 2010.

My most recently completed film *He Toki Huna: New Zealand in Afghanistan* (2013), exploring New Zealand's military involvement in Afghanistan, falls into the category of 'journalism plus'. While we adhered to most of the journalistic codes cited above, such as rigorous research and a commitment to truth-telling, the film has a point of view, criticising the authorised version of New Zealand's military engagement in Afghanistan. I produced and directed the film with Māori filmmaker Kay Ellmers: her strong track record with Māori Television no doubt making it easier for us to gain a licence fee from the service, which in turn allowed us to apply for New Zealand On Air funding. Through the process of development, I assumed the mainstream broadcasters would fail to bite, as they seemed less and less interested in 'one-off' documentaries, especially those works that might not appeal to their core audience or might be too 'current-affairsy'. The documentary did contain a 'scoop', which caused some government consternation on its release, but we did not see ourselves as operating in the milieu of 'breaking news' or current affairs.¹⁰ Our intent was, in part, to explore the process of newsgathering itself, and the failure of most of our media outlets to inform the New Zealand public about what was our longest-ever military engagement, longer than World War I and II combined.

He Toki Huna travels to Afghanistan with Jon Stephenson, the only New Zealand journalist to independently report on our military involvement there. We use Stephenson's reportage on the ground as a visual journey, intercutting his meetings and discussions with a series of segments on a range of issues: from Afghan history, through a debate around embedded and

non-embedded journalism, to arguments about media representation of the conflict.

He Toki Huna asks three deceptively simple questions: why did we go to Afghanistan; what did we do there, and why did the New Zealand public find out so little about it? Asking these questions is a provocative act as the answers are complex, challenging, and expose the mixed motives of our government and military. But within the film, we canvas the reasons: Some commentators argue that our involvement was to assuage an American government still smarting over our anti-nuclear stand: others suggest that George Bush's claim 'You are with us, or with the terrorists' was too difficult to circumvent; while more believe, with the Trade Towers still smouldering, there was sufficient moral imperative for our engagement. Afghan commentator and journalist Ali Safi gave a further reason, suggesting that given the length of time elapsed since New Zealand was in combat, the military leadership was keen to sharpen up its troops on a real battleground.¹¹

The film exposes the gap between what we, in New Zealand, were told our troops were doing—and what they actually did. Our Special Air Service (SAS) in Kabul were merged into the British SAS, ostensibly to train Afghan police forces, but according to Stephenson's reports, which were based on eyewitness accounts, they were often involved in front-line fighting. As most on-the-ground in the urban conflict zone knew, training is inseparable from combat, and the complex tribal politics of Afghanistan make it almost impossible to ascertain whether a threat is real or not. Outside of Stephenson's coverage, which appeared intermittently in the mainstream media outlets, primarily on National Radio, there was a virtual blackout within the New Zealand media: it took news coming to New Zealand via international agencies to remind us that our SAS were at war. Referring to the famous photo of Willie Apiata, Mike McRoberts recalls in interview: 'It was almost embarrassing for the Defence Force and the government—they were talking about mentoring and some foreign journalist had already posted photos on Twitter of the SAS coming out of a building with their guns still smoking'.¹² After a second SAS soldier, Leon Smith, was killed, Defence Minister Wayne Mapp finally acknowledged that the SAS were involved in a 'substantial combat role'.¹³

He Toki Huna also explored the presence of Kiwi troops in Bamiyan, where they operated as a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). Given that repeated polls have indicated most New Zealanders do not want to engage in actual combat, the government and Defence Force had represented the PRT primarily as a peacekeeping body. In fact, the PRT functioned largely as a patrol force, combing the outer reaches of the province in battle dress, riding in armed military vehicles. McRoberts argues again in the film that our troops, immediately identifiable as foreign forces, may have drawn insurgents into Bamiyan rather than keeping them at bay. This would be a terrible irony, given that with its towering mountains and isolation, the province had been one of the most peaceful since the US invasion of 2001. It took a series of New Zealand deaths again, this time by an IED explosion in the far reaches of the province, many kilometres from Bamiyan township, before the truth of our engagement was acknowledged by the government.

By this time, too, the local people of Bamiyan, still suffering through freezing winters with no electricity, were frustrated at the lack of progress, voicing their frustration to Stephenson who has always taken steps no other New Zealand journalists have—actually asking everyday Afghan people what they thought of New Zealand’s involvement in their country and the conflict.

This reflection on the lack of government transparency led to the third question *He Toki Huna* posed: why did the New Zealand public hear so little about our deployment? In a reflexive gesture, the film comments on the failure of our mainstream media to adequately cover the conflict. This is not necessarily the fault of individual journalists, although many were surprisingly accepting of the government’s position on our engagement. Their employers, our media institutions and companies, could not afford, or chose not to afford, to send journalists to the theatre of our longest war. One could also question why so few ‘home office’ journalists, those in the Parliamentary press gallery, or tasked with investigating and explaining our military engagements had done little to interrogate our leadership about the conflict in Afghanistan and the role of our troops. This disinterest continues to be the case today: despite our having troops in Iraq, again in a ‘training capacity’, we hear little about them and their role in the battle against ISIS. One unchallenged justification for sending our troops to Iraq is that our engagement in Afghanistan was so successful.

Although the film’s three ‘simple’ questions pose political challenges to the government, military and mainstream media, we did include a range of voices: military personnel, journalists, commentators and members of the Afghan community. It was also a film made for domestic consumption as we guessed it would be unlikely to have a strong international festival run, nor sell widely overseas, as most countries have their own ‘Afghanistan’ stories. As well as airing a broadcast version on Māori Television, we recut the film as a feature, screening it at the New Zealand International Film Festival. Finally, we received a grant from PADET (Peace and Disarmament Educational Trust) to give every secondary school a DVD of the film, which was accompanied by a study guide designed for the History and English/Media curriculum. Our motive for doing so was articulated by Stephenson towards the beginning of the film:

There really can’t be any more important matter of public interest than when a government sends its young men and women to a foreign country to fight, possibly to be killed, and to kill other people: Why are they going? Is it in our national interest? Is the cause just? Is [the war] being fought in a just manner? I think those are questions that New Zealanders definitely need answers to. (Jon Stephenson, *He Toki Huna*)

My current film, *Caught in the Web*, which is being produced by German-born filmmaker Alex Behse, engages in similar ‘journalistic territory’, although it has a stronger biographical thread and, most likely, greater international reach. The film is structured

around the life and times of Kim Dotcom, a topic that, on the surface at least, would not appear to be highly political. However, the battle between the tech entrepreneur and the American government and entertainment industry, being fought in New Zealand, is one that goes to the heart of ownership, privacy and piracy in the digital age. It is these issues that give the film its currency and engagement. As journalist David Fisher suggests, the Dotcom case involves a global battle: 'Even if Dotcom is not front and centre of our minds, the issues raised by the case could set the way we use the internet for the next 20, 50 or 100 years' (David Fisher in interview with Annie Goldson for *Caught in the Web*). It is too early to elaborate about the ultimate shape of the documentary, but one dilemma facing us, relevant to my discussion here, is our distribution plan: how in fact should filmmakers distribute a film that in large part is about distribution in the digital age?

In the above essay, I have argued that while the presence of documentary on broadcast television has been eclipsed by the explosion of Reality-based programming, creative documentary has reemerged on alternative platforms: in cinemas and online. These works, independent, and at times fiercely so, are relieved from the constraints of television, which is effectively a conservative medium. Although the reduction of television on the broadcast airwaves may lead to a diminishing of the all-important public sphere, key audiences are seeking out creative documentaries, bored or disillusioned by Hollywood, Reality programming and the tabloidisation of news and current affairs. Many of these works can be categorised as investigative journalism, supplanting the increasingly tepid offerings in the mainstream news outlets. Few, however, adhere to the journalistic codes of objectivity and balance; rather, they express strong opinions, either those of the filmmaker or the documentary subjects. Thus, there is some cause for optimism as these works continue to explore the processes of power and authority that control our life-world, 'holding truth to power'.

Notes

1. The term 'creative documentary' is used by IDFA in Amsterdam, the largest international film festival dedicated to documentary.
2. See Alex Edney-Browne's article in this volume for a detailed discussion of *The Act of Killing*.
3. Charlotte Raven, 'Known nothing about Afghanistan?' *The Guardian*, 20 October 2001.
4. See Max Stahl's contribution to this volume. His documentation of the Dili massacre, which I use in *Punitive Damage*, was to change the political direction of East Timor.
5. See op.co.nz for information about the films, study guides and online distribution platform.
6. Waugh's 2011 book reprints his essay from 1984.
7. Poitras was speaking on a panel 'Bringing Truths to Light' at the Sundance Film Festival, 2015. www.cmsimpact.org/blog/media-impact/sundance-2015-documentary-or-journalism
8. Gibney was speaking at the same panel as Poitras, cited above.
9. www.idfa.nl/industry/missionstatement.aspx
10. Without having seen the film, Defence Minister Jonathan Coleman labeled it a slur against the soldiers. www.3news.co.nz/nznews/coleman-slams-doco-as-a-slur-2013080208#axzz3kGnYfHYr
11. Dr Ali Safi, in interview with Kay Ellmers, *He Toki Huna* (2013).

12. SAS soldier Willie Apiata was snapped by photographer Philip Poupin as he emerged from a building after a Taliban attack, which left three insurgents dead.
13. www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10755405

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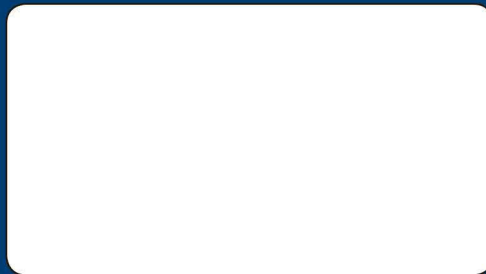
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Annie Goldson is a professor at the University of Auckland. She is a documentary filmmaker whose major titles Punitive Damage, Georgie Girl, Sheilas, Pacific Solution, Elgar's Enigma, An Island Calling, Brother Number One and He Toki Huna: New Zealand in Afghanistan have screened widely at film festivals and on television worldwide. She is currently directing a new feature documentary, Caught in the Web. Annie is also an academic, who publishes widely in books and journals and through her teaching, has mentored many younger filmmakers. She holds the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for services to film and was recently nominated for membership of the Royal Society of New Zealand.
a.goldson@auckland.ac.nz



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