CONTEXTS OF SHORT ANIMATED DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

By

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Abstract

This research looks at the evolving space of animated documentary production in the UK, with a focus on its community of practice and the related communities of practice that overlap with and within it. In recent years there has been an increase in scholarly attention paid to the history of animated documentary, as well as to the legitimacy of its documentary status. Less research has addressed its diverse production processes or the distribution of power within its production culture. The originality of this research lies in my focus on these areas, and in the synthesis of social research methods with reflection on my own critical practice as an independent animated documentary filmmaker.

I approach animated documentary as a 'conjunctional' practice (Ward, 2003, p.7), taking place at the boundaries of other communities of practice and governed by both the formal systems of the commercial media industries and the informal systems of social interaction and identity. As objects of cultural capital, films carry, through their production histories, the traces of the exchange of other forms of capital – symbolic and economic. By analysing case studies of animated documentaries, I shed light on some of the ways in which power is distributed in the environments from which they emerge.

My methodology synthesizes multiple qualitative methods to observe and analyse production culture, including: semi-structured interviews; textual analysis of documents; field observation of production and exhibition spaces; theoretical and historical research; and reflection on my own practice, as well as analysis of trends in animated documentaries recently programmed in key film festivals. It includes biographical and production-focused case studies. I interpret my findings using perspectives drawn from concepts of 'forms of capital' (Bourdieu, 1986), 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and 'boundary objects' (Star and

Griesemer, 1989). Through these research methods I engage with both academic and production communities, aiming to create new avenues for knowledge sharing between these.

I propose that animated documentary is multivalent and elastic, allowing filmmakers to work across industrial boundaries, to access new skills, audiences and relationships, and to develop rich, interdisciplinary identities. However, the boundary-crossing nature of animated documentary means that it lacks a set of standardised methods and an industrial lexicon. Because of this, animated documentary production can be hampered by communication and production issues. This can lead to inefficiency and wasted creative opportunities, and it is in part responsible for the difficulties that filmmakers encounter when trying to find support for larger scale, longer form animated documentary work.

As part of this thesis, I begin to reify processes through the identification of two broad modes of animated documentary production: a 'linear' process in which animation is commissioned as an illustration to an existing soundtrack, and a 'dialogic' process in which sound, story and image are developed in parallel, each element in dialogue with the others. I contrast these modes, looking at the risks and advantages of each.

I conclude by proposing ways in which animated documentary production can grow in scale and ambition, through establishing systems of knowledge sharing, and developing an industrial lexicon. I suggest that this endeavour is best taken up by academics working in dialogue with industry, with a flow of knowledge passing between these worlds and approaches to production being reified into named systems and techniques. As part of the conclusion, I suggest simple guidelines to support practitioners approaching an animated documentary production, and some words and phrases that could form the beginning of a lexicon of animated documentary production.

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Prologue

The world has changed since I began this PhD in 2015. The UK has left the EU. Donald Trump has come, and gone, as US President. We have faced a global pandemic that has disrupted our personal and professional lives in countless ways. The animated documentary landscape has also changed. Key funders have shifted – the British Film Institute has made positive changes to its funding for animation, just as other funders cease much of their support. Working from home has changed from a choice to a near-universal practice for filmmakers. There has also been an explosion of scholarship in animated documentary. Books have been published containing rich insights from theorists and practitioners. Conferences and events dedicated to the form have become frequent. Animated documentary is moving quickly from a peripheral practice to a generally accepted form.

My life has also changed. Over the period of working on this PhD I have had two children. I have shifted the focus of my studies from a practice-based approach to a theoretical approach with practice-led elements, finding that this allowed me to focus my attention outwards and thus better answer my research question. Most of my research took place between 2015 and the end of 2019, and so at times this thesis may seem slightly out of step with current events. I have tried to weave an awareness of this through the text, and where possible have noted significant developments and added updates.

This thesis maps the UK's short animated documentary landscape during a period that has been very important to the form. I believe that much of what I have explored regarding the exchange of symbolic capital in short form production, the nature of identity and community in independent short filmmaking, and the risks and potentials of work in boundary spaces, can be taken further, and the arguments laid out here will have continued relevance as the form and practice of animated documentary evolve.

Introduction

Ehrlich and Murray describe the 'emergent field of animated documentary' as 'a hybrid audiovisual landscape that is categorised by blurred boundaries and unexplored territories' (Ehrlich and Murray, 2019, p.2). This thesis aims to explore some of these territories, and to map attitudes and activities on and across their boundaries. Nick Fraser notes that 'to write about documentaries one must try to understand the cultural environment in which they were created and, just as importantly, the media landscape from which they sprung' (Fraser, 2019, p.xiv). By observing the contexts from which animated documentary in the UK emerges, and the wider social and cultural landscapes in which these exist, we can begin to see how and why creative decisions are made. Fraser also asserts that 'beneath the story constructed out of observed reality, a [documentary] film is made up of thousands of small decisions. When it is finished, these decisions are forgotten' (ibid., p.72). In this way representations can be seen as inscriptions of their own production process. Star and Griesemer describe representations created at community boundaries:

> When participants in the intersecting worlds create representations together, their different commitments and perceptions are resolved into representations - in the sense that a fuzzy image is resolved by a microscope. This resolution does not mean consensus. Rather, representations, or inscriptions, contain at every stage the traces of multiple viewpoints, translations and incomplete battles […]
>
> (Star and Griesemer, 1989, p.413)

The traces of struggle, conflict and cooperation contained in a finished documentary can function as evidence of its relationship with truth-telling. Vaughan emphasises the practical nature of the quest for authenticity in documentary: 'For those who bewail its absence, honesty is a moral problem. For those who try to achieve it, it is a technical one' (Vaughan,

1999, p.9). Looking at how truth is represented without looking at how the representation is constructed limits our understanding. For this reason, this thesis approaches films as cultural objects and as evidence of social activity, rather than as artworks to be analysed primarily for aesthetic value or emotional effect. Where possible, I place references to a film's creative decisions into the context of the conditions of its production. As Erin Hill notes, 'deciding why [a director] made a certain shot a certain length or cut from one angle to another without taking into account any of the myriad production variables that would have contributed to that decision is, in my mind not terribly useful' (Hill, quoted in Caldwell, 2009, p.221-222).

The study of specific production processes means that this thesis at times embraces the anecdotal. Cubitt (2017, p.306-7) describes anecdotal evidence as 'the main methodological contribution of the humanities to the work of social sciences', making it possible 'to concentrate on the unique instance – ethnographic, situational, experiential, textual – in which the large forces at work in social formations are made concrete'. I use anecdotal evidence to make visible forces and patterns that move the industry, through highlighting responses, experiences and behaviours of the individuals affected by them.

Caldwell describes the 'Para-Industry' which surrounds film production, representing it, commenting on it, analysing it. Boundaries of film production, marketing, criticism and scholarship overlap, and 'scholars who research industries are themselves extensions of industry' (Caldwell, 2013, p.164). I am embedded in the animation industry both as a scholar and a practitioner, and my identity cannot be fully disentangled from the cultures and communities I am looking at. I am a member of multiple communities of practice. My professional background includes work as: a film festival manager and programmer; a production manager and producer of animation and creative projects; a director of short live action and documentary films; an educator; and an independent artist animator. These elements of my identity inform this research, and allow me to approach my question from

multiple angles. However, as a practitioner situated within the world I am researching, I am not starting from a neutral position; I necessarily bring knowledge, insight, and prejudices from my past to the research. I endeavour to include this transparently, using: case studies from my own career; analysis of my own development materials; and anecdotal reflections on my own experiences. I have conducted the research as a participant observer scholar, and have attempted to be an analyst rather than to act as an advocate for any particular form, method, or approach. Furthermore, I believe that my position as a professional with experience across both industry and academia positions me well to conduct research intended to bridge academia and industry, bringing knowledge from academia into functional use in industry, as well as bringing the practical learnings from industry to the research community where they can be analysed, interpreted and shared.

The contribution to knowledge proposed in this thesis is both diagnostic, in its analysis of problems occurring in current animated documentary production, and functional, in its suggestion of actions that can be taken to mitigate the risks of these. Chapters 1 and 2 set out the context for short animated documentary as I am approaching it. In Chapter 1, I show how animated documentary has emerged as a reified, named subgenre over the course of the last twenty years, and look at current trends in the content and context of production. Chapter 2 looks at ways in which animation, documentary and animated documentary have been historically defined, before laying out my own working definition of animated documentary for the purposes of this thesis. In Chapters 3.1- 3.4, I examine the roles of both economic and symbolic capital in short animated documentary production and, in Chapter 3.5, illustrate this through a series of case studies. Chapter 4 presents research on the working environments and processes of a range of animated documentary practitioners including those working in studios, from home, and in educational environments. In Chapter 5, I apply the concept of Communities of Practice to the production landscape, and in

Chapter 6 interrogate this further by looking at ways in which practitioners develop and define their identities, as well as looking at how identity can be influenced by outside forces. In Chapter 7, I look at animated documentary as a boundary practice and analyse how this boundary position creates both challenges and opportunities. In Chapter 8 I look at the use of boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989) in animated documentary production, observing ways in which these can be used to communicate across boundaries. I show that these objects can bridge, highlight, or exacerbate gaps in communication between different communities of practice.

While animated nonfiction has a history spanning over 100 years, it has a particularly important role in our current media climate. Fraser observes that 'With the rise of 'fake news' - lies passing as fact - docs […] remain on their truthful perch, albeit precariously' (Fraser, 2019, p.341). In a media landscape where fact and fiction can often seem to be indistinguishable, there are solemn challenges for all media creators who deal in representations of reality. Animation is increasingly ubiquitous which, in combination with a rising public distrust of both statistics and the ostensibly live action image, presents opportunities for animated documentary to reach new audiences and tell stories in new ways (as explored by Ehrlich, 2021).

With this opportunity comes practical, creative and ethical challenges. This thesis looks at these challenges with the aim of creating knowledge to support makers of animated documentary in planning and delivering successful productions. In doing this, I hope to contribute to the development of a more sustainable field, with capacity for growth in the scale and complexity of work that can be commissioned. I will do this in part by beginning to establish a lexicon of animated documentary practice. The lexicon's intention is that of creating shared language across cultural, industrial, and intellectual fields. I believe this can have useful application for academics, students, documentary animators, and industry professionals such as producers and executive producers.

The focuses of the different chapters in this thesis – capital exchange, production contexts, community, identity, and boundaries, allow me to build a picture of animated documentary production in the UK. They establish the patterns of collaboration and communication that go into the work, but also highlight the communication gaps and cultural differences between the communities that participate in the making of animated documentaries. I propose that the development of a lexicon of animated documentary production can bridge some of these communication gaps, and facilitate better planning in collaborative animated documentary production.

As a foundation for this lexicon, this thesis proposes that the processes of producing an animated documentary, while diverse, fall into two broad modes. I refer to these as 'linear' and 'dialogic' production. In a 'linear' production process, animation is commissioned as an illustration to an existing soundtrack, while in a more 'dialogic' process sound, story and image are developed in parallel, each element in dialogue with the others. The identification of these two modes helps to differentiate production approaches, and they can be included in a lexicon in order to facilitate communication between practitioners, producers and commissioners at production planning stages, as well as in the scholarly analysis of animated documentary filmmaking.

Methodology

Methods

My research methods include:

- **Semi-structured interviews** with professionals from across the animated documentary landscape. Interviewees include directors, producers, animators, students, educators, commissioners, funding executives, consultants, community organisers, company directors, programmers and curators.
- **Textual analysis** of documents including market reports, marketing materials such as websites and brochures, funding briefs, funding and festival criteria, press releases, storyboards, and emails.
- **Field observation** of production and exhibition spaces. This included detailed notetaking while participating in:
    - A placement at Mosaic Films, where I spent ten days across two months in 2016 noting my observations of the studio while supporting with administrative work on the animated documentary project *Shattered Minds*;
    - Volunteer work on the animated documentary programming committee for Cork Film Festival and the Factual Animation Film Festival, and as a juror for London International Animation Festival;
    - Detailed observation of conferences and screening events;
    - Participation in the 2016 Anidox Lab at the Animation Workshop in Viborg and Copenhagen, Denmark; and
    - Observation of the production spaces and cultures of the Royal College of Art's animated documentary pathway, including interviews and focus groups with students.
- **Theoretical and historical research**, including attendance at and participation in festivals, conferences and symposia including: Ecstatic Truth 2016, 2017 and 2019 (Royal College of Art); Society for Animation Studies Annual Conference, 2017; Essay Film Form:

Intersectionality in Motion, 2019 (CAPA London); Documentary Discourse 2017 (University for the Creative Arts); Deptford Animadocs 2019 (Deptford Cinema); Factual Animation Film Fuss 2015 and 2017; Open City Documentary Festival 2016; Encounters Short Film and Animation Festival 2016; Cork Film Festival 2016; CPH:DOX 2017; London International Animation Festival 2016 and 2017; and Norwich Film Festival 2019.

- **Reflection on my own practice**. I have reflected on my work as a filmmaker, including research and development conducted between 2015 and 2017 on the unproduced short film *Black Rain*, an animated documentary about chronic pain. This included: interviews with possible documentary subjects and scientific experts; visual and concept development through sketchbooks and writing; narrative development through the editing of video and audio interviews; and production of a pitch document and a short teaser, intended to support efforts to raise finance for the film.

My research also includes biographical and production focused case studies. I interpret my findings from these using perspectives drawn from the concepts of forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991), communities of practice (Wenger, 1998-), and boundary objects (Star and Griesemer, 1989).

Selection of interviewees and case studies

My initial selection of interviewees and case studies was based on animated documentaries that were culturally successful, reaching large audiences and winning awards. This was complemented by research into animated documentaries that had been developed but failed to go into production, including projects developed and pitched as part of previous years' ANIDOX programmes, failed Kickstarter projects, and projects that I was

already personally aware of. This approach meant that there was a risk that my research would examine only work that was already within my field of vision. So, to ensure a spread of case studies that reflected the industry, I conducted an analysis of short UK animated documentary films programmed in key UK festivals between 2015 and 2020. I analysed these films to identify production trends including funding and finance, theme, animation technique, and filmmaker gender.[1] Once trends had been established, I selected interviewees and case studies from films that reflected common production patterns. I ensured that studio, independent and student work was represented, that I included work supported by public funding bodies, charities, crowdfunding, and broadcasters, and that films dealing with common subjects such as mental health and migration were also included. Case studies were complemented by further interviews with practitioners who had made significant animated documentary, animation or documentary work in the past. These included commissioners Nick Mirsky, Gary Thomas and Clare Kitson, documentary filmmakers Marc Isaacs and Guy King, and directors Tim Webb and Alys Scott-Hawkins.

My interviews were semi-structured. Within each discipline (director, producer, commissioner, etc.) they took broadly the same approach and began with a similar set of questions (see Appendix 2). Due to the diversity of interviewees' roles and responses, the interviews then took different directions. Once interviews were completed, they were transcribed, and key themes were identified with the aid of word clouds and manual categorisation. As interviews were accumulated, recurring themes, experiences and ideas emerged. These helped me to identify directions for the research, and to further decide which films would be useful to act as case studies to illustrate points. Often this then meant going back to filmmakers for additional interviews, as well as interviewing other crew members to get a wider perspective on the production.

[1] See Appendix 1 for a full report of this part of the research and its methodology.

Theoretical and methodological framework

This research has been conducted with an objective of usefulness; my aim is to produce knowledge that can be taken up practically by the animation and documentary industries. My methodology synthesises qualitative methods to observe and analyse production culture. The tools, approaches and concepts that I have adopted have been taken from a range of disciplines. These have been selected with the aim of creating the most useful toolkit for research and analysis of the field. While sometimes diverse, the concepts and methods adopted have been selected and synthesised with care to ensure they are well suited and can support and inform each other.

Wenger (2013, p.1-2) describes good social theory as 'a puzzle of interacting pieces' which allows us 'to experience the familiar in a new way or to articulate our experience in a new way'. He advocates for a 'plug-and-play principle' of theorizing, in which researchers combine theories rather than relying solely on one theory to tell their story. In this way, Wenger argues, researchers are better equipped to describe 'the complexity of human life' (ibid. p.8). While social scientists may not 'stand on each other's shoulders' in the way that natural scientists do, they nevertheless 'don't have to walk on each other's toes' and instead 'can learn to dance' (ibid., p.9). It is this dance between different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches that I am adopting in my research. For example, Wenger draws links between his own work and that of Bourdieu. He explains that while his focus is learning and Bourdieu's is dominance in social-class relations,

> learning in a stratified society will confront stratification, whether to reproduce it or resist it. So a learning theory and a theory of stratification have usefully complementary purposes—they need each other. Because both theories are anchored in a practice-oriented perspective, they are a natural pair.
>
> (ibid. p.7)

Wenger notes that his notions of 'identity' and 'participation' link closely to Bordieu's idea of 'habitus'. He argues that his own ideas of 'learning as becoming through the construction of an identity would add an aspect of agency to habitus, something that Bourdieu's critics often claim is missing' (ibid. p.8).

Theories of both Wenger and Bordieu have been key to my research. In my interviews with practitioners I largely analyse ideas of their personal and professional identities using concepts from Wenger, as well as closely and explicitly related concepts from Brown, Collins and Duguid, and Lave and Wenger. These theories are rooted more in *conscious* processes and positions than Bourdieu's theories of habitus are. As I have been working with information and narratives that practitioners offer based on their own conscious thoughts and feelings, this feels like an honest theoretical system to use. However, in my research into budgets, wages, and other forms of capital exchange and accumulation, Bourdieu's theories of forms of capital offer sharper tools with which to analyse my findings than Wenger's notion of 'competence' or his other related theories.

Wenger notes that complications can arise in a plug-and-play approach to theory when similar ideas are given different names by different theorists, or the same word is used with differing meanings (ibid, p.5). For this reason, I have been careful with my use of language and choice of theories, choosing those that interact with each other but do not confusingly overlap. For example, I chose to use Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer's (1989) concept of boundary objects in my analysis instead of Bruno Latour's related concept of 'immutable mobiles', which Star and Griesemer were inspired by. This was because the concept of boundary objects fits better with the other social theory I use in the thesis. It has been integrated by Wenger into his own models of social learning and has thus been tried and tested in combination with Wenger's ideas (see for example Wenger, 2010;

Wenger-Traynor et al., 2017). Boundary objects therefore offer an appropriate and powerful tool to extend my analysis of communication within and between communities of practice.

As another example of complementary theories, my discussions on categorisation use Eleanor Rosch's (1971) prototype theory to give context to my approach to grouping and classifying types of animated documentary as more central or more peripheral to the form. Rosch's work intersects with, informs, and complements the work of other theorists used in this thesis, notably with Star, who uses prototype theory as part of her wider work on classification (Bowker and Star, 1999). In Chapters 1 and 2 I draw particularly heavily on classification theory, applying this to genre. I look at ways in which audiences are active participants in genre classification, responding to indicators in textual and paratextual material. The concept of warranting (Lipkin, 2002) is helpful here, and examples of visual and audio 'warrants' being employed by filmmakers to increase the verisimilitude of animated documentary are used throughout the thesis.

In addition to the use of a range of theories, I include a range of voices in my research, communicating in a variety of registers. Paul Wells proposes

> the analysis of animated documentary practice […] benefits from the *polyvocal* inclusion of multidisciplinary voices and the *multi-register* inclusion of academics and non-academics whose respective tones and modes of expression may vary, but which necessarily access pertinent core knowledge and information.
>
> (Wells, 2019, p.113, emphasis in original)

Through the analysis and comparison of multiple voices and communicative registers, I follow Caldwell's method of keeping 'individual research modes ''in check'' by placing the discourses and results of any one register […] in critical tension or dialogue with the others' (Caldwell, 2008, p.4).

Lotz (2009, p.35) has shown that in a world of 'niche audience targeting' it is 'difficult to speak meaningfully about [media sectors] as coherent industries', and that broad claims about "the industry" should be replaced by 'assessment of more niche units'. While I look at the "documentary industry" and "animation industry" in this thesis, it is emphasised that these terms are too broad, and the industries they describe too heterogeneous and fragmented, for conclusions to be drawn which account for all components of each industry. My focus is on the niche unit of short form animated documentary. To interrogate this, I do at times have to discuss other areas of production. To talk about short film, it is sometimes necessary to also talk about long form work, and to talk about animation production cultures, it is helpful to also consider live action production cultures.

Errors, omissions and future lines of enquiry

Over the course of this PhD I have learnt much about animated documentary production. Alongside this, there has been an equally rich learning trajectory: that of learning about research itself. If I were to have the chance to begin this PhD again, there are elements of the methodology that I would undertake differently. In the interest of transparency, I will describe these here.

My decision to conduct an analysis of recent festival programming was taken to ensure that I was minimising my personal blind spots, and that the films I was using as examples reflected wider production trends. By conducting the festival analysis, I was able to broaden my vision and select examples of films that reflected trends. However, these were still limited to films that were shown at festivals, so therefore were filtered by both programmer preferences and filmmaker intention. As a result, potential blind spots remained, for example films intended primarily for distribution

on social media or in galleries. I attempted to mitigate this by including films from Short of the Week's online animated documentary channel, but these again reflect a curatorial preference and often overlap with festival selections. As a result, certain areas of production, particularly in client-commissioned animated factual production, may be underrepresented. Productions of this kind – often on the margins of the animated documentary form – are considered in this thesis, but the process through which examples have been selected has been less methodical than those identified through the festival analysis. A future line of enquiry could be to extend the analysis to look at the output of micro, small, medium and large production companies in the UK, and to identify the spread of non-fiction production of different types across these companies, mapping production of factual animation beyond films that use festivals as part of their distribution model. If I were conducting this kind of analysis again, I would also adopt an approach in which filmmakers were asked to self-identify production techniques, as well as other fields such as gender.

I believe that the research I have conducted in this PhD could be extended further. Personal circumstances meant that I was unable to conduct the range of long-term residencies across diverse studios and production environments that I would have liked to. First hand observation will always bring different insights to interviews and analysis of materials, and this research could certainly be enriched by expanded fieldwork. It would also be beneficial to extend this fieldwork beyond animated documentary production to animation production and documentary production more generally. In this way issues unique to, or particularly strongly present in, animated documentary production could be identified as distinct from issues that are present across other forms of animation production or documentary production. Fieldwork would also be valuable in the development, testing and expansion of a shared lexicon of animated documentary, to be used by both documentary and animation communities.

1. CLASSIFICATION

Chapter 1 - Emergence of the 'animated documentary' subgenre

In this chapter I look at the emergence of animated documentary as a subgenre of documentary. Hybridisation of documentary and animation has been used by filmmakers for over a hundred years, but since the 1990s there has been an increase in the production of films classified as 'animated documentary', or less commonly 'documentary animation' (Honess Roe, 2013, p.1). Animated documentary is now 'an accepted subgenre' (Wells and Moore, 2016, p.193) and filmmakers, critics, curators, scholars, bloggers and audiences use the term to describe theatrical feature films, broadcast television shows and short films. In this chapter I will look at *how* the category of animated documentary has emerged. I will explore the strength of the classification, examining the extent to which it is recognised by filmmakers, audiences and the wider industry. In order to better understand the emergence of the category, I will also explore ideas of genre and categorisation more broadly. The chapter concludes with evidence from a study I conducted of 146 recent short animated documentaries, identifying trends in their production contexts and the content of the films themselves.

There is no single definition of genre accepted by all scholars or practitioners (Tudor, 1986, p.3). McKee (1997, p.79) describes genre as diverse systems, devised to 'sort stories into shared elements'. Bordwell (1989, p.147-148) refers to film genre as 'an "open textured" concept' with '"fuzzy" categories' and no fixed boundaries. Animation and documentary have both, traditionally, been particularly problematic to consider as genres; Bordwell acknowledges this when he asks the question 'are animation and documentary film genres or modes?' (ibid., p.187). Insofar as film genre can be seen as a system of categorising moving image work, both animation and

documentary could arguably be considered genres. Indeed, industry and consumer facing reports, publications, and catalogues frequently define both animation and documentary as genres (see: BFI, 2017; Follows, 2019; BFI Screen Online, n.d; IMDB, n.d).

Some scholars and critics refer to documentary as a genre. Nichols, for example, regularly uses the term. Winston describes documentary as 'a particular class of nonfiction film' (Winston, 2011, p.13) and Vaughan considers it a 'mode of response to film material' (Vaughan, 1999, p.59-60). Beattie recognises documentary as simultaneously a genre, a subset of nonfiction and a bundle of subcategories, describing it as 'a genre within the field of nonfictional representation […] composed of multiple, frequently linked representational strands' (Beattie, 2004, p.1). For Ward, the concept of documentary is best addressed using ideas of categorisation (Ward, 2005, p.23). Bowker and Star describe categories as existing within classification systems, systems that are 'layered, tangled, textured' (Bowker and Star, 1999, p.285) and in constant interaction (ibid., p.38). Ward notes that categories are social constructs, only useful if they are agreed upon. In documentary, 'different constituencies' with different understandings of what a documentary is, meet to find a '*negotiated* consensus' (Ward, 2005, p.25, emphasis in original).

The use of animation as a genre label is also divisive. McKee (1997, p.85) counts animation among screenwriting genres, and identifies conventions it leans towards. However, many animators and theorists consider animation as a medium, a set of techniques that can deliver any message, any material, and engage with any genre. But animation is not neutral, it brings distinctive attributes and characteristics to whatever genre it interacts with. Wells describes 'inflections upon generic orthodoxies which render genre films in animation as notable sub-genres in their own right' (Wells, 2002, p.5). For Wells, when animation meets another genre, the principles of animation are

usually privileged over the conventions of whatever genre it engages with; animation becomes the dominant credential (ibid., p.62).

So is animated documentary a subgenre of documentary, or is it "owned" by animation? Although the term 'animated documentary' seems to privilege its documentary credentials ('animated' the adjective, 'documentary' the noun), Honess Roe (2013, p.2) has shown that it receives more attention from animation scholars than from documentary scholars, and that animated documentaries are often made by filmmakers whose first disciplinary 'home' is animation.[2] At the same time there has been interest from the documentary community, as shown in Glynne's 2013 observation that animated documentaries 'seem to be all the craze these days; both the documentary and animation communities seem intent on celebrating this ostensible foray into each other's domains' (Glynne, 2013, p.73).

As animated documentary has emerged as a recognised documentary subgenre, a shift has occurred in traditionally held notions of what documentary is. Nichols (2010, p.15) suggests that this kind of cultural shift in perception of the documentary genre happens through the influence of particular films, as well as through the activities of: filmmakers; institutions that support documentary production and reception; and audiences.

In order to begin to understand how (and to what extent) the animated documentary subgenre has emerged, I will focus on each of these categories. In the case of 'institutions that support documentary production and reception' I will break the section into the subcategories of:
a) gatekeepers (funders and commissioners, distributors, and curators);
b) scholars and critics; c) festivals; and d) higher education.

[2] This position is supported by my own research, as shown throughout this thesis.

1. The influence of films

In the last quarter century, a number of seminal films have been instrumental in raising awareness of the animated documentary form. Well-known titles include the feature film *Waltz With Bashir* (2008) and, within filmmaking circles, Chris Landreth's Academy Award winning short *Ryan* (2004). In recent years features such as *Tower* (2016) have also gained critical recognition.

Films emerge from the conditions and contexts of the film and television industry, and generally what is made is driven by demand. Distributors will buy what they perceive audiences to want, and a film will be financed if it can sell. However, some films are "labours of love" that have been produced against the odds and trends of their industry, and these can change the market. Director Ari Folman struggled to raise finance for *Waltz with Bashir*, as it did not fit into standard finance and development processes for either documentary or animation (Esther and Folman, 2009, p.67). When Folman did eventually finance and produce his film it was a critical and box office success, and it remains the most widely seen and prestigiously awarded theatrical feature-length animated documentary.[3] Bowker and Star (1999, p.48-49) propose that systems of categorisation can be resisted, and therefore changed, by individuals who create objects which defy the system. *Waltz With Bashir* could be seen as resistance of this kind, deviating from what fits into the film industry's standard categories and processes. It is 'deviation' from the norms of documentary that, according to Ward 'keeps the form alive and developing' (Ward, 2005, p.24).

In the UK, seminal animated documentaries include BBC 2 Wonderland's 50-minute *The Trouble With Love and Sex* (2011) directed by Zac Beattie,

[3] Ironically, Folman has expressed regret at labelling the film an animated documentary, as he felt it impeded its production: 'I've been hassled so much about the animated documentary idea […] If I had to do it again, I would never call it a documentary' (Esther and Folman, 2009, p.67).

with Jonathan Hodgson as animation director. Other British films that are often used as examples of animated documentary are frequently short form. Tim Webb's *A is for Autism* (1992), for example, is widely considered a pioneering animated documentary (see: Honess Roe, 2013, p.13; Collington, 2016, p.218-225; Lefevre, 2019, p.26; Stein and Cashman, 2009, p.455; BFI, 2019; RCA, 2018). Webb himself describes *A is for Autism* as part of a trend in nonfiction animation that was prevalent in the 1990s, including work from filmmakers including Jonathan Hodgson (*Nightclub*, 1983; *Feeling My Way*, 1997) and Paul Vester (*Abductees*, 1995) (Webb, 2016). As I will show later I this chapter, work produced in this period has influenced subsequent British animated documentary filmmaking.

2. Filmmakers

Classifications are 'perceived as real' and therefore have a real effect on the worlds they interact with (Bowker and Star, 1999, p.44). Furthermore, as Ward notes, 'how we talk about and categorise things has a meaningful impact on those very things' (Ward, 2005, p.23). As genre systems emerge and evolve, these systems affect the work being made, and the way that it is described by those who make it.

Paul Bush, whose work has been variously defined as art, animation, experimental film and documentary, suggests that in general, practitioners do not like to categorise their own films, and that the work of classification is the jurisdiction of curators (Bush, quoted in Cook and Thomas, 2006, p.44). However, the activity of curators, and others in positions of cultural or financial power, can influence the self-identification of genre by filmmakers, sometimes "after the fact" of production. Speaking at the 2016 Anidox animated documentary lab in Denmark, Bush admitted

> the animated documentary field is very interesting, but I didn't know I was part of it until [the Anidox lab organisers] told me a few years back that they were always showing one of my films in animated documentary programmes, and I hadn't thought of it as a documentary at all. It hadn't been done in any way with that spirit […] it made me think about the whole field of documentary animation, which was growing then, it was getting a lot of interest.
>
> (Bush, 2016)

Introducing a short film he had made, Bush then jokingly explained: 'now knowing that I make animated documentaries, I realise this is an animated documentary' (ibid.). Bush's retrospective adoption of the animated documentary label reflects a trend across auteur animators of his generation. Webb remembers that *A is for Autism* was not referred to as an animated documentary at the time of its commissioning and production. Animated documentary, he suggests, is 'one of those terms that emerged years later' and that originated with theorists (Webb, 2016).

This is also true for Jonathan Hodgson's *Feeling My Way* (1997), another animated short often referred to as a documentary (see: Nichols, 2010, p.120; Renov, 2007, p.19-20; Honess Roe, 2015, p.45). Speaking at Factual Animation Film Fuss (FAFF), Hodgson explained that he was working on 'observational animation' in the 1990s when 'I realised that people were talking about animated documentary, and I thought well maybe I should just put a label on it because then I might get more work' (Hodgson, speaking at Glynne et al., 2015). Although *Feeling My Way* is considered by many to be an animated documentary, the word documentary is not used in the online descriptions of the film presented by Lux or Animate Projects (both organisations supporting artists moving image), or on Hodgson's website. The film seems able to straddle two worlds, or two modes of representation, and Hodgson's non-committal position on its documentary status may be best reflected by his description of it as using a 'vaguely documentary format' (Hodgson, quoted in Cook and Thomas, 2006, p.65).

Like Hodgson, Samantha Moore came to describe her work as animated documentary in response to the contemporaneous cultural language used by those with the power to get films made, adopting the label on the encouragement of producers on the Animate! scheme, to which she was applying for funding (Moore, 2014, p.13).

Terry Wragg describes how the Leeds Animation Workshop actively resisted the label of animated documentary, until the rise in interest in the form encouraged them to reconsider:

> For the first 30 or so years we denied we were making animated documentaries because we thought documentary was something where you had real people talking and recorded them. But then we loosened up a bit, partly in response to work by Bella [Honess Roe] and other people who were starting to talk about it as a genre. We started to think, "ok yeah, we're doing a lot of research on all this stuff that we do and it's definitely about real things […] and we want to tell the truth with it" and so now we accept that we make animated documentaries.
>
> (Wragg, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019)

Even in the current climate, in which films are regularly conceived and produced as animated documentaries, it is possible to make a short film without thinking of it as a documentary until it comes into contact with exhibition and distribution communities. Adara Todd, director of the award-winning student film *Twiddly Things* (2016), remembers: 'When I first started making the film I didn't consciously think about it being documentary at all. In fact, it wasn't until I finished the film and started entering into festivals that I realised the genre of my film was documentary' (Todd, 2019). In Chapter 6, I interrogate in more detail how filmmakers working in animated nonfiction classify themselves and their work, and how they negotiate the classifications that are imposed on them.

Bowker and Star show that once adopted into common use, categories are used in communication even by those who 'do not believe in the categories they are using' (Bowker and Star, 1999, p.4). While I am not suggesting that these filmmakers doubt the legitimacy of the animated documentary label, it is clear that a moment was reached in the 1990s where it started to become advantageous, in some contexts, to describe work as animated documentary. In the cases of Webb, Hodgson and Moore, filmmakers who are widely considered to be pioneers of the UK animated documentary, we see practitioners who allowed their work to be labelled by those from other communities of practice (curators, commissioners, theorists) and who then adopted the label as a part of their professional identity.

The British animated nonfiction of the 1980s-90s influenced subsequent UK animated documentary, establishing what began to look like a canon and inspiring the next generation of filmmakers. As a young animator, Alys Scott-Hawkins was inspired by films such as *A is for Autism*, as well as *War Story* (1989) and *Going Equipped* (1990), early Aardman shorts that use nonfiction, unscripted dialogue as soundtracks. Scott-Hawkins did not recognise these films as documentaries at the time (Scott-Hawkins, quoted in Wells and Moore, 2016, p.193). However, by the time she was studying at the RCA in 2001, the term 'animated documentary' had become familiar, and her own films were labelled as such (Scott-Hawkins, 2018).

As the classification gains momentum, filmmakers continue to retrospectively consider if it could apply to their work. Stuart Hilton's animated short *Six Weeks in June* (1998) uses real-world experience and documentation as its source material. Speaking in 2017, Hilton reflected that when he made the film he 'wasn't aware the idea of animated documentary' and that 'it's only recently since it's been an area of burgeoning interest that I've thought - is it one?' (Hilton, 2017). Tim Webb is also assessing the documentary value of his past work. His student film *Smoke Rings* (1986) was based on research and real "documents", combined with scripted

material. Reflecting on the film, he initially refers to it as his 'first animated documentary', but subsequently muses that 'it wasn't actually a proper documentary, because I was scripting stuff' (Webb, 2016).[4] This uncertainty regarding the appropriate use of the animated documentary label, even from a filmmaker considered to be one of its pioneers, speaks to an ambiguity at the heart of the form.

Tudor describes the 'empiricist's dilemma' faced by critics and scholars who use genre to categorise films. Using the example of the Western genre, he writes

> They are defining a western on the basis of analysing a body of films that cannot possibly be said to be westerns until after the analysis. […] To take a genre such as a western, analyze it, and list its principal characteristics is to beg the question that we must first isolate the body of films that are westerns. But they can only be isolated on the basis of the "principal characteristics," which can only be discovered from the films themselves after they have been isolated. That is, we are caught in a circle that first requires that the films be isolated, for which purposes a criterion is necessary, but the criterion is, in turn, meant to emerge from the empirically established common characteristics of the films.
>
> (Tudor, 1986, p.5)

A way out of this dilemma, Tudor suggests, 'is to lean on a common cultural consensus as to what constitutes a western and then go on to analyse it in detail' (ibid). What we are seeing in terms of the retrospective defining of films as animated documentary may point to a cultural consensus emerging, establishing "principal characteristics" which can be identified not only in new work but also in work that was made *before* these characteristics were attributed to the genre.

[4] Webb's implication that scripting has no place in an 'actual, proper documentary' is not always borne out by live action documentary practice, in which scripting is a common development tool (as described by Fraser, 2019, p.74).

Wittgenstein has addressed the complexity of categorisation in his work on "family resemblances". He observes that a category such as that of 'games' is difficult to describe with a definition that applies to all members:

> if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. […] And we can go through the many, many other groups of games in the same way […] we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities. […] I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than "family resemblances"; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way.
>
> (Wittgenstein and Anscombe, 1953, p.31-32)

Eleanor Rosch built on this idea of family resemblance to show that categories each have an 'internal structure' through which it is possible to identify 'gradients of category membership' (Rosch and Mervis, 1975, p.574). Some members of a category are perceived as better examples of that category, while others are perceived as 'less good' (ibid.) examples. Rosch and Mervis propose that 'members of a category come to be viewed as prototypical of the category as a whole in proportion to the extent to which they bear a family resemblance to (have attributes which overlap those of) other members of the category' (ibid.). So category members can be more 'prototypical' or more 'peripheral' to the category of which they are a member (Rosch Heider, 1971).

Both the idea of 'family resemblance' and Rosch's 'prototype theory' are helpful in looking at the heterogeneity of film genre. While some films can be seen as prototypical of a genre, others are 'peripheral' to the genre. These 'less good' examples may be situated near the fuzzy boundary of a category,

and may have multimembership of two or more genres. These concepts are also useful in the study of hybrid genres, which can be seen as a kind of "interbreeding" between family categories. Animated documentary includes attributes of the documentary genre and those of (what is sometimes called) the animation genre. An animated documentary can be reasonably categorised within either genre. However animated documentaries are not prototypical examples of either an animated film or a documentary. They can also be put into a category of their own – the animated documentary. Later in this chapter, I identify similarities that 'overlap and criss-cross' through films that are categorised as animated documentaries, making it possible to tentatively identify more prototypical – and more peripheral – examples of the form.

3. Institutions

Nichols suggests that documentaries could be defined as 'what the organizations and institutions that produce them make' (Nichols, 2010, p.16). We can see the evolution of animated documentary as part of a wider evolution of documentary which, according to Nichols is 'not a simple matter of progress toward a final form of truth but a struggle of power and authority within the historical arena itself' (Nichols, 1991, p.33). To study animated documentary production it is useful to look at the structures of power behind production, and the organisations and individuals who control what gets made and seen.

A. Gatekeepers

All moving image industries have gatekeepers - individuals or committees who determine which films get made, marketed, distributed and exhibited. In television, these have traditionally been commissioning editors. In cinema these have been distributors, exhibitors, financiers, and funding

bodies. Gallerists, collectors, curators and funders hold power in artists moving image, while online there are now digital versions of editors and curators emerging to take control of what was, until recently, a less defined space. The increasing accessibility of animation production to non-professional makers 'able to bypass the extensive artistic and technological know-how once necessary for animation production' (Ehrlich, 2019, p.58) means that it is possible for anyone with a smartphone to make an animation and upload it to the Internet. But it is still gatekeepers of various kinds who bring only a small percentage of this work to a wide audience.

There has been useful scholarship on the impact that gatekeepers have on the development of genre and form (see for example Ward, 2000, who traces the development of animation conventions from the perspective of the wider evolution of the theatrical film bill and Winston, 1995, who shows the emergence of documentary styles as inexorably linked to funding and political contexts of production). In film and television, gatekeepers often determine not only what gets made but also how the work is presented, imposing 'an institutional way of seeing and speaking, which functions as a set of limits, or conventions, for the filmmaker and audience alike' (Nichols, 2001, p.22). The context that work is *produced* in dictates what is "allowed" in the work, while the context it is *presented* in dictates to a large extent how it will be read and received.

Genre is a central part of the language of film and television marketing, helping distributors and filmmakers to connect with an audience, who will see a film on the basis that it is "their kind of thing". Genre-crossing can give productions a unique selling point to help them stand out in a crowded marketplace. Abercrombie suggests that television programming, under pressure to increase audience figures, has conducted 'a steady dismantling of genre' (1996, p.45), or, as Vaughan describes, 'executives continue shuffling the syllables - docu-soap, info-tainment, fact-ion - in the hope of stumbling upon something that will look good in their corporate mission

statements' (Vaughan, 1999, p.xix). The fuzzy boundaries and combinability of genre is well suited to the Internet age, with its "remix" culture, its economy of attention, and its high-concept "click-bait" titles. Nichols describes how the 'documentary impulse has rippled outward to the Internet […] where mock-, semi-, pseudo and bona-fide documentaries, embracing new forms and tackling fresh topics, proliferate' (Nichols, 2017, p.1). With this in mind, one might ask if BBC 2's *The Trouble With Love and Sex* (2011), billed as the 'first full-length animated documentary made for British television' (BBC, 2011), is an indicator of the genre attaining mainstream recognition, or if it was just another commissioning experiment or marketing gimmick.[5]

Funders and commissioners

Funders, financiers and commissioners largely control what films get made and, consequently, how genres and subgenres emerge and evolve. Funding for animated nonfiction in the UK has seen many shifts over the last century, with notable contributions from the GPO Film Unit (1930s), Arts Council England (from the mid-1990s), UK Film Council (2000-2010), and Wellcome (2007-2018), as well as broadcasters such as Channel 4 and BBC. Charities have also funded and commissioned factual animation, and more recently online editorial outlets are supporting the form.

Much of the auteur animation from the 1990s that laid the ground for the emergence of discourse around animated documentary was made possible by the work of Clare Kitson during her tenure as Channel 4's animation programmer between 1989 and 1999. Kitson and her collaborators launched or boosted the careers of filmmakers including Webb, Hodgson and Moore, and her commissions included *A is for Autism* (1992) as well as Marjut

[5] Ehrlich (2019, p.62) acknowledges the 'shock and/or marketing value' of animated documentary but notes that this is changing as the use of animation becomes 'a journalistic norm' rather than a 'marketing scam or quirky choice' (ibid. p.54).

Rimminen's *Some Protection* (1987), Paul Vester's *Abductees* (1995), and Orly Yadin and Sylvie Bringas's *Silence* (1998). Both Bringas and Webb credit Kitson with triggering a surge of British nonfiction animation and helping to establish animated documentary as form that carries cultural currency (Bringas, 2017; Webb, 2016).

Kitson acknowledges the significance of her animated documentary commissions, but notes that Channel 4's commissioning was largely dependent on submissions, and reflected 'what was in the air at the time' (Kitson, 2011). She remembers being 'surprised to start getting proposals for animated documentaries' as the form was, at that time, unusual (ibid.). Channel 4 brought auteur nonfiction animation into the public eye, and their commissions gained international acclaim, but by the end of the 1990s, the financial landscape had changed and Kitson left her role. Channel 4's funding for auteur animation all but vanished and other broadcasters showed little interest in animated nonfiction.

The subsequent decline in finance dismayed many animators, but producers such as Andy Glynne of Mosaic Films saw the potential to use the animated documentary form to create work with a focus on education - an area where funding could still be found. Mosaic's animated documentaries have been regularly commissioned and funded by organisations including Wellcome, BBC, Channel 4 and others. Similarly ForMed films, led by animator Emma Lazenby, makes 'short, factual animated films […] based on people's real experience, using their voices' (ForMed Films 2019) for clients including the NHS, BBC and a range of other charities and researchers. Chapter 3.2 examines in more detail some key funders of current UK animated documentary, interrogating the impact that these funders' priorities and modes of operating have on the work produced.

Distributors

Distributors and exhibitors are highly influential for theatrical features, and increasingly for online spaces. In the high-budget, profit-driven world of feature film, distributors can both help a film gain finance and bring it to an audience. The role of distributor is not passive, they impose 'standards and conventions on the work they support' (Nichols, 2010, p.18-19). Ristola suggests that 'distributors often offer the strongest overarching interpretive frameworks for films' but shows that filmmakers also play a significant part in framing their film, illustrating that in the cases of both *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) and *Persepolis* (2007), the decision of whether the film was presented as a documentary came from the activity of both the films' distributors and directors (Ristola, 2016).

In short films, genre positioning is less important, and specialist short film exhibitors and distributors often take a filmmaker or curator's paratextual materials (such as synopsis and directors notes) as the lead for the genre framework in which the film is presented. This is largely due to the fact that short films cost less to produce and carry less potential for profit. Short film sales agents may license a film for a range of exhibition contexts, but fees are usually low. As a result, short film has a greater freedom to experiment with genre and form than feature film.

Curators

Gary Thomas, Director of Animate Projects, believes that the 'animated documentary' label emerged as a curatorial category, a way of sorting material for exhibition. He remembers that in the 1990s films now classified as animated documentaries were being referred to as simply 'animation', but 'when you come to curating programmes for particular contexts, that's when you start thinking 'is this a documentary or isn't it?'' Thomas feels that the attribution of a 'documentary' label to purely animated work was made possible in part by changes that were happening in the live action documentary field. Filmmakers such as Clio Barnard and Annie Griffin

were making work that both intersected with and challenged documentary through the use of unreliable witnesses, performance and subjectivity. In this landscape, the idea of animated documentary became one that could usefully contribute to an existing debate (Thomas, 2016).

Short film curators work with galleries and festivals, as well as programming DVD and theatrical compilations, such as Animate Projects' 2016 touring programme of animated documentary shorts *Document Differently*. Curators also have an increasingly important role online, and specialised blogs such as animateddocumentary.com help interested audiences find animated documentaries, while online curators Short of the Week also feature a special collection of animated documentaries.

B. Scholars and critics

Paul Wells and Sybil DelGaudio each published seminal articles on animated documentary in 1997. At this time animation was, for many, synonymous with 'cartoons', and considered unworthy of the serious attention due to documentary (Wells, 2019, p.106). Wells' article addresses animation's representation of reality, proposing modes that animated documentaries operate within. DelGaudio's suggests animated nonfiction further complicates an already impenetrable 'crisis of naming' within documentary. She shows how animation's categorisation as documentary has changed with history, citing the Academy Awards placement of McLaren's *Neighbours* and Bass's *Why Man Creates* in the documentary short category of their awards as well as Walt Disney's alleged description of *Fantasia* as 'a scientific document' (DelGaudio, 1997, p.192-197).[6]

[6] *Neighbours* won the Documentary Short Subject Academy Award in 1952, but the Academy stated in 2005 that the film had been 'incorrectly categorized' when it was nominated in this category (Webwire, 2005), suggesting the documentary label can be retrospectively removed from a film as well as attributed to one.

Subsequent notable scholarship on animated documentary has included contributions from Gunnar Strøm (2003), Michael Renov (2002), Eric Patrick (2004), Paul Ward (2005, 2010), Jonathan Rozenkrantz (2011), and Lawrence Thomas Martinelli (2011, 2015). Animated documentary is discussed by Bill Nichols (2010, p.14, p.33-45, p.110-111, p.204), and in 2011 *Animation: an interdisciplinary journal* published an edition entitled 'Making It (Un)real: Contemporary Theories and Practices in Documentary Animation' featuring articles by Paul Ward, Tess Takahashi, Agnieszka Piotrowska, Laura U Marks and others. Judith Kriger's 2012 book *Animated Realism: A Behind The Scenes Look at the Animated Documentary Genre* presents interviews with animated documentary practitioners. Annabelle Honess Roe's 2013 book *Animated Documentary* offers a historical account of animated documentary and proposes a new taxonomy for categorising the form. The inaugural edition of *The International Journal of Film and Media Arts* (2017) was dedicated to animated documentary, featuring essays from Wells, Honess Roe, and others. The 2019 book *Drawn from Life: Issues and Themes in Animated Documentary Cinema*, edited by Jonathan Murray and Nea Ehrlich, includes insights into production processes from filmmakers including Samantha Moore and Jonathan Hodgson alongside chapters by scholars and theorists. Ehrlich's 2021 book *Animating Truth: Documentary and Visual Culture in the 21st Century* explores animated documentary in the context of the expanded screen, ubiquitous technology, and the rise of interactivity in media culture. Contributions from practitioners have enriched theory; Samantha Moore's practice-based PhD *Out of sight: using animation to document perceptual brain states* (2014) offers a filmmaker's perspective, as does Andy Glynne's chapter in *The Documentary Film Book* (2013). Other recent contributions from practitioners include articles by Alys Scott-Hawkins (2019b) and Alex Widdowson (2019b).

Animated documentary also provides a theme for symposia, conferences and panels. Edinburgh College of Art's Animated Realities conference (2011), was a landmark in recognising animated documentary as something

that is ‘exponentially rising’, reflecting more practitioners and scholars working in the area (Wells, 2011). Samantha Moore felt that the conference signalled ‘something concrete […] emerging from our joint attempt to pin down what it is we are looking at and talking about’ (Moore, 2011). Other recent conferences include University of York’s Non-Fiction Animation: Narrative Imagination and the Translation of Reality conference (2018) and the RCA’s annual symposium, Ecstatic Truth, launched in 2016.

After the Animated Realities conference Moore reflected that ‘there were no documentary theorists there (apart from Paul Ward) and I didn't meet any practitioners or researchers who came originally from a documentary rather than animation background’ (Moore, 2011). This lack of sustained engagement from the documentary community may still be a feature of the field. Honess Roe has noted that there was a passing interest in animated documentary in ‘documentary studies’ circles around the release of *Waltz With Bashir*, but it receded: ‘It feels like documentary studies is not that interested in animated documentary anymore, whereas animation studies remains interested’ (Honess Roe, 2019). At the inaugural Deptford Animadocs event, organiser Victoria Walden supported this view, stating that while the animation community supported the event, the documentary community showed little interest (Walden, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019).

While some scholarship on animated documentary has challenged animation’s claim on a documentary classification (for example Wells, 1998; Rozenkrantz, 2011; Formenti, 2014), the overwhelming position of scholars and critics is to accept the classification of animated documentary (Honess Roe, 2016, p.25). It has also been adopted by some film critics and journalists. It has been used by *Variety*, *Indiewire*, *Wired*, *LA Times*, and others, while in 2005, *Frames Per Second Magazine* ran a cover story on animated documentary. The subgenre is not, however, universally recognised by critics, and they are often out of step with theorists. In 2008, more than ten years after Wells and DelGaudio first published on animated

documentary, sixteen years after Webb's *A is for Autism*, and 90 years after McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, *IndieWire* reviewed the 'revelatory' *Waltz With Bashir* for *IndieWire*, stating that 'it's as though Folman is creating a new form, or at least a new subgenre: the animated documentary' (Wisniewski, 2008). Even more recently the US film *Actor?: A Documentary* (2014), was promoted as 'the first ever "ani-mentary," a feature film documentary almost entirely animated' (*IndieWire*, 2013).

Even where there exists an acceptance of the animated documentary form, there persists a lack of clarity around its definition. Ehrlich and Murray observe that there is an absence of 'a settled creative or critical consensus regarding what exactly constitutes an animated documentary film' (Ehrlich and Murray, 2019, p.1) while Ward suggests that it is now 'uncontroversial to talk about the hybrid category of 'animated documentary' – though there is still considerable debate over what might belong in such a category' (Ward, 2019, p. 69). We know *that* it is, but we do not yet know quite *what* it is. For some scholars, the term is in itself limiting. In 2011, Wells voiced his concern that theorists are 'shoehorning far too much into the term animated documentary' and suggested they 'unpack a broader set of definitions within animated nonfiction' (Wells, 2011). In Chapter 2 I look in more detail at the definitions that have been suggested for animated documentary by scholars and filmmakers.

C. Festivals

Recent years have seen an increase in the presence of animated documentary events across a range of festivals. DOK Leipzig International Festival for Documentary and Animated Film has presented the forms alongside each other since 1955, launching a program of 'Animadocs' in 1997, and an animated documentary award in 2013. Other festivals that have, in recent years, featured animated documentary focused programmes, awards, showcases, or workshops include documentary festivals Nordisk Panorama Film Festival, DOC NYC, CPH:DOX, Open City Documentary

Festival, True/False Film Festival, Sheffield International Documentary Festival and the International Documentary Filmfestival Amsterdam (IDFA). In 2007, IDFA hosted a focus on animated documentary, describing it as 'a unique yet controversial category' (Kees, 2007). While the inclusion of animated documentary in a festival with the industry status of IDFA indicates a level of interest and acceptance, there was significant resistance expressed by festival delegates to the idea of animation as a valid documentary form (Wells, 2019, p.107).

Non-documentary specific festivals that have specifically showcased animated documentary in recent years include London Short Film Festival, Edinburgh International Film Festival, KLIK! Amsterdam Animation Festival, Fantoche International Animation Festival, Encounters Festival, Tricky Women, Open City Documentary Festival, and The International Animated Film and Non Fiction Comics Festival. In 2019 the Anifilm International Festival of Animated Films included an extensive selection of animated documentary work alongside a programme of animated *mockumentaries*. London International Animation Festival (LIAF) also screens an annual animated documentary programme, which has seen steady growth in both audiences and submissions since its launch in 2008 (Vladermersky, 2016).

There are also a handful of festivals focusing exclusively on animated documentary. These include: Rising of Lusitania AnimaDoc Film Festival, launched in Liverpool in 2019; Deptford AnimaDocs, launched in 2019 in London; and the Factual Animation Film Fuss (FAFF), which has been running annually since 2015 in London. The existence of these events points to a UK audience for animated documentary, but not necessarily a large one. FAFF Director Daniel Murtha estimates that around 75% of their audience come to the festival already familiar with the animated documentary form. FAFF comfortably sells out one-to-two days of programming in a 50-60 capacity space, but Murtha believes that this core audience of animated

documentary enthusiasts do not represent a larger community. He observes that the term ‘animated documentary’ is still met with confusion by the general public. This supports anecdotal evidence from both Honess Roe (2013, p.3) and students of the RCA’s animated documentary pathway (RCA focus group, 2018). Murtha also notes that when scouting films from filmmakers who have made nonfiction animation but have not submitted to the festival, many are unaware that animated documentary is a recognised form or that their work could be categorised as such (Murtha, 2018). Like Wells, Murtha prefers to avoid placing too much emphasis on the term ‘animated documentary’, which can lead to an ontological ‘conversation that goes round in circles’ (ibid.). Instead he dedicates the festival to ‘factual animation’, a term he considers ‘incredibly broad […] I can include anything that is animated and features fact. [The term] makes my process, as someone to trying to organise a film festival, easier’ (ibid.).

Over the course of my research I have volunteered on animated documentary programming teams for FAFF and Cork International Film Festival. While viewing shorts for FAFF, I discovered that while all films were submitted as animated documentaries, some had a clearer link to reality than others, and in some cases it was difficult to see where their documentary value might be. Seeking clarification on criteria from Murtha, I received the response that ‘I've never laid down specific criteria […] I just tried writing a list of criteria but kept contradicting myself. The definition is elastic’ (Murtha, 2017). In the case of Cork Film Festival, programmers were asked to identify animated documentaries as they viewed shorts in general submissions, and flag these in a separate column in a shared spreadsheet. These were not films that had been specifically submitted as animated documentaries, so if a film seemed as if it *might be* animated documentary, it became necessary to research further and try to glean, from websites and other paratextual materials, if the film in question was a documentary or not. This required some guesswork. At the 2019 Deptford AnimaDocs event, joint programmers Walden and Honess Roe spoke about

the difficult programming process. Walden refered to the experience as a personal 'ontological crisis', as she found that different people within her team had divergent views about what constituted a documentary film (Walden, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019). Honess Roe also admitted that 'increasingly […] I don't know how to define documentary – it seems to get more woolly all the time' (Honess Roe, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019).

D. Higher education

Another indicator of the growing interest in animated documentary is its presence in higher education. A high proportion of animated documentaries programmed in UK festivals emerge from higher education institutions (see Appendix 1). Animated documentary is more common as a part of course content in animation courses than those specialising in documentary or general filmmaking. Animation courses at institutions including Central St Martins, the University of Westminster, and Norwich University of the Arts offer animated documentary units, and in 2016 the RCA launched an animated documentary pathway, allowing students to specialise in this throughout their two-year Masters Degrees. RCA tutor Tim Webb believes that the fact that people are applying for an 'animated documentary' specific programme reflects the fact that it is now 'a recognised genre' (Webb, 2016). But Murtha argues that the RCA course is leading rather than simply reflecting a growth in the field, observing that 'the RCA crowd are the people consciously doing animated documentary, and so they're the people who I feel are most aware of the genre, are most aware of themselves as animated documentary filmmakers' (Murtha, 2018).[7]

[7] This may not be true of all the RCA's animated documentary pathway students. My research indicates that their self-classification is tentative and nuanced, and many identify as 'animators' or 'filmmakers' with an interest in real-world subject matter, rather than animated documentary filmmakers (RCA focus group, 2018).

4. Audiences

Classification is not a purely top-down activity. While production of genre film responds to audience demand (which, in turn, is generated in part by the work of films, filmmakers and gatekeepers), audiences take an active role in analysing the legitimacy of a film's assigned genre and, sometimes, reclassifying it. It is possible for a film produced and distributed as one genre to end up in a different genre's canon as a result of audience reclassification (for example, drama or horror films that are labelled "so bad they're good" and become cult comedy classics with fan communities).

Bowker and Star show that we use personal forms of 'muddled folk classification' to mentally organise the material we engage with (Bowker and Star, 1999, p.1). This folk classification is used by audiences when watching, thinking about or discussing films and television programs. Bordwell suggests that 'making referential sense of a film requires several acts of "framing" it', and this may mean attributing several modes or genres to a film at the same time (Bordwell, 1989, p.146). As we have seen, *Feeling My Way* can be seen as simultaneously an experimental film, a lyrical or observational animation, an animated documentary, an animated short, and a documentary. *Waltz with Bashir* could be considered an animated documentary, a theatrical feature, and a Foreign Language Film (the category it was nominated for in the Academy Awards and Golden Globes), among other categories. By repeatedly framing and re-framing the films we watch, audiences are able to make sense of what we are seeing and how we should watch it, think about it, and respond to it.

Scott-Hawkins sees the genre-positioning of a film as the work of both filmmaker and audience, asserting that 'of course it matters whether or not the director defines a work as a documentary [but] it's always the responsibility of the audience to examine that and question as they watch' (Scott-Hawkins, quoted in Collington, 2016, p.215). Nonfiction filmmakers employ devices to ensure the audience is aware that they are watching a

representation of reality. In live action, these are often embedded in aesthetic and structural conventions that have been described as 'jargons of authenticity' by Paul Arthur (1993, p.108-134). The jargons of authenticity conventional to live action documentary do not necessarily directly translate into *animated* documentary, but the language of documentary has in some cases been adopted or mimicked by animation (Honess Roe, 2013, p.47-49).

Even where animated documentary does not directly reference live action jargons of authenticity, it can adopt 'warranting strategies' (Lipkin, 2002, p.13) to let audiences know they are watching something rooted in reality. In his studies of docudrama, Lipkin develops his idea of 'warrants', which are narrative or aesthetic devices that 'link data (the evidence upon which an argument is built) with claims (the position the argument advocates)' (ibid.). These can signal to audiences that they are seeing a credible representation of real events, even when what is being watched is also received as a reenactment or dramatization. Formenti has argued that animated documentary is 'the sincerest form of docudrama', as it reconstructs or reinterprets real events (Formenti, 2014, p.103-115), and the concept of warranting is useful in understanding many of the stylistic conventions emerging in animated documentary. These include the use of photographs, historical documents, live action footage, and glimpses of the mechanisms and constructions behind the animation production (for more on warranting devices in animated documentary see MacKinnon, 2019, p.99-123 and Ehrlich, 2021, p.54-55). The warranting device of "indexical" sound[8] is so prevalent in animated documentary that the "animated radio interview" has become a familiar, and much criticised, form (see: Strom, 2005, p.15; Moore, 2019, p.219; Webb, 2016; Ehrlich, 2021, p.55).

[8] Broadly understood as sound either recorded in the temporal and geographic location of the event being represented, or in a real-life interview with a documentary subject or "expert", as opposed to dialogue performed by an actor.

As the jargons of authenticity used in animated documentary are less familiar than those in live action documentary, filmmakers often also use paratextual materials to guide the audience's reading. An example of this can be seen in Mosaic Films' first animated documentary series, *Animated Minds* (2003). The documentary status of this series is highlighted in a dedicated website, outlining the ethical and collaborative approaches Mosaic uses in working with its contributors (Animated Minds, n.d.). The documentary process is made transparent, made a feature – and perhaps even justified - by the paratextual materials that surround the films.

Animated documentary films are often well received by science, psychology and education communities (Honess Roe, 2013, p.136). Glynne partly measures the success of *Animated Minds* by 'the feedback we got from people with mental health problems, doctors, carers and other professionals - all of whom claimed that the films served as important communication tools' (Glynne, 2013, p.75). References to the positive response of medical professionals and service users have also been made in paratextual materials produced by filmmakers including Samantha Moore, Ellie Land, Susan Young and Alex Widdowson. This evidence can be seen as an argument for the legitimacy of animated documentary as a communicative nonfiction form, and its presence in a film's paratextual materials can be seen as a kind of warranting strategy in itself.

Lakoff writes that

> Most categorization is automatic and unconscious […] This sometimes leads to the impression that we just categorize things as they are, that things come in natural kinds, and that our categories of mind naturally fit the kinds of things there are in the world.
>
> (Lakoff, 1987, p.6)

Bowker and Star also discuss the 'naturalization' of categories by communities of practice, whereby consensus within a community as to what

an object should be categorised as leads to this being viewed as an objective fact of the natural world. Bowker and Star warn that if 'an object becomes naturalized in more than one community of practice, its naturalization gains enormous power to the extent that a basis is formed for dissent to be viewed as madness or heresy' (Bowker and Star, 1999, p.312). Arguably, the genre of documentary could be seen as an object that has become naturalised across multiple production and reception communities, resulting in a strong common-sense perception of what documentary is (and, subsequently, *isn't*). This sense of what makes a *real* documentary is usually based on contemporaneous jargons of authenticity. The strong presence of paratextual material framing the exhibition of animated documentary films, often highlighting the films' documentary credibility and thus acting as a "warrant" for it, indicates that while animated documentary is becoming a recognised subgenre it is not yet fully naturalised outside of its own small community of practice. It still needs to explain itself.

Working with categories

Bowker and Star recommend three actions to be taken in considering categories: a recognition of 'zones of ambiguity' within and between classification systems; a commitment to keeping 'voices of classifiers and constituents present', refusing to let the labour and agendas behind categories become invisible, and for the categories to thus become naturalised; and a sensitivity to 'exclusions', the 'residual categories' often classed as 'other', that can throw into relief the institutional structures of the categories that they *do not fit into*, and thus provide insight into the broader structures and boundaries of the categories we use (Bowker and Star, 1999, p.324-325). It is in this spirit that I will approach the study of animated documentary: as a subjective, evolving and unstable categorisation for a group of films and approaches by diverse filmmakers.

Despite the fuzziness of the category, and while embracing the fluidity of its boundaries, it is also helpful to identify some frequently occurring tendencies in films categorised as animated documentary. In doing so we can begin to see which films may be considered to be good examples of the subgenre, and which are more peripheral, or borderline, cases.

Characteristics of the category

In writing this thesis, I was struck by the heterogeneity of animated documentary production, the diversity of films that can fall under its banner, and the lack of clarity regarding where the category begins and ends. Furthermore I observed that while scholars and filmmakers make observations about the type of stories and styles common to animated documentary, there is little in the way of quantitative research to indicate trends. For this reason I conducted a study of 146 recent short animated documentaries, with the intention of identifying frequently occurring characteristics of content and context. My methodology and results are presented in detail in Appendix 1. In general, my findings support the observations that are often made by scholars and filmmakers regarding trends in animated documentary. These include:

- A high proportion of films with themes of health and mental health;
- A high proportion of films dealing with social and political issues;
- A high proportion of films on subjects that are explicitly personal to the filmmaker, such as autobiographical stories and family histories;
- A high level of support from charities, trusts and foundations;
- A high proportion of filmmakers coming from an animation background in terms of profession or training, compared to a smaller proportion from documentary and/or journalism backgrounds;
- A higher proportion of female than male filmmakers; and
- A high proportion of films made by students.

I also observed frequently occurring attributes including:

- The use of indexical recorded interviews or voiceovers;
- The use of 'warranting strategies' such as the integration of photographic imagery or text-on-screen statistics;
- The use of visual metaphor; and
- A high proportion of 2D digital and mixed media techniques.

Despite these trends, it should be emphasised that the films do not share a single set of characteristics, and the common tendencies that I have identified do not, in themselves, define a category. While it *may* be possible to argue that an animated documentary must have an indexical interview soundtrack, or be mostly animated, it would be absurd to argue that an animated documentary must be directed by a woman in order to be categorised as a genuine animated documentary. Furthermore, there are films included that display very few of the common tendencies, but are nevertheless animated documentaries. We can consider these films to have 'family resemblances', characteristics that loosely connect them within a broad category. In this way, we can accommodate the peripheral members of the category, while acknowledging the non-centrality of these in comparison to other, more 'prototypical' examples.

Moth Studio's *The Last Job on Earth* (2016) features very few of the recognisable features commonly displayed in animated documentaries. It is animated in a 3D computer animation style, with high production values. It has no voiceover or dialogue. It shows a character navigating a futuristic environment, with no explicit reference to our real contemporary or historical world. If this film had not been programmed and presented in an animated documentary context, it would likely be read by an audience as a science fiction film. *The Last Job on Earth* is, arguably, a very peripheral member of the animated documentary category.

Amputee Undefined (2019) and *Music and Clowns* (2018) could both be seen as reasonably prototypical examples of a student animated documentary. Both are made using a digital 2D representational animation technique. Both feature an indexical voiceover, the content of which is directly referenced in the on-screen visuals. Both tell the filmmaker's own personal story, relating to disability. These tendencies are common to the genre: personal stories, health-related subject matter, 2D techniques, indexical soundtracks.

However the films are, in other ways, dissimilar. Running at just over two minutes, *Amputee Undefined* succinctly describes the filmmaker's physical disability and the technologies that she uses to overcome this. The visuals directly and often literally illustrate the voiceover. For example when the narrator describes 'trip hazards', we see walking legs with wires snaking in front of them. *Music and Clowns* is over seven minutes long and its subject is the filmmaker's brother, Jamie, who has Down's Syndrome. While the visuals often mimic the soundtrack (sometimes visually referencing the interview process itself), they also diverge from this, breaking into abstracted sequences that explore Jamie's internal world. The soundtrack includes a voiceover from the filmmaker but also interviews with members of his family, and the narrative has a well-developed arc and asks complex questions related to disability and familial responsibility. While *Amputee Undefined* and *Music and Clowns* could be classed as similar films in genre terms, the experience of watching them is very different.

If this tells us anything it is, perhaps, that my attempts to define the genre of animated documentary using quantitative means are only useful up to a point. While it is helpful to identify themes, techniques, and production contexts that films defined as animated documentaries frequently display, each film carries its own identity and should be considered as its own case.

Throughout this thesis I will be drawing on the films included in this sample, using them as case studies to qualitatively interrogate the cultures behind animated documentary production. I will include case studies of both prototypical and peripheral examples of the animated documentary form, in order to offer a fuller picture of the diverse contexts from which animated documentary emerges.

Conclusion

Recognition of both the animated documentary form and animated documentary as a term has grown over the last 30 years. Animated documentary is a term that can be attributed to films either at the point of production or retrospectively by filmmakers, commissioners, distributors, curators, or audiences, and definitions may vary between these groups. However, despite some growth in awareness of the form, it is still a "niche" area, and the majority of sustained interest comes from animation filmmakers and theorists.

The interdependent relationship between funders, commissioners, filmmakers and audiences complicates the task of mapping the emergence of the genre. Feedback loops between these groups creates an impression of a "cultural zeitgeist". No single community of practice can take responsibility for the emergence of the form, as each community is, in part, responding to the activity of other communities on which they rely.

There remains a lack of consensus as to what 'animated documentary' means, or if it is even the best term for the product in question. For some this ambiguity is positive; scholars and curators advocate for keeping the definition's parameters open to a range of animated nonfiction approaches. The fact that animated documentary is not a naturalised genre also holds disadvantages, including curatorial complications and difficulties finding

sustained and significant funding. This will be explored further later in this thesis, with a particular focus on it in Chapter 3.2.

Now that the label of animated documentary exists in the curatorial realm it is possible to examine the films that are categorised in this way, and to identify trends, in order to begin to pinpoint what this thing being described as animated documentary is. Acknowledgement of these trends can broadly point us toward more prototypical and more peripheral examples of the form. Despite these trends, animated documentary clearly includes diverse approaches, aesthetics and production contexts. Two films taken from the sample used in my research and watched together could appear fundamentally dissimilar. In some cases, it is difficult to believe they are from the same family at all.

This diversity within the form is part of the reason that animated documentaries can prove difficult to plan as productions; as there are so many things that an animated documentary *can* be, there is a relatively small baseline of knowledge or established definition shared across production communities, and the language around the form in terms of production is not developed enough to describe the full spectrum of work encompassed by the genre of animated documentary. In subsequent chapters I will further illustrate this diversity, and the communication and production issues that can arise from it.

Chapter 2 – Defining the short animated documentary

As I have shown, animated documentary is a highly heterogeneous genre, manifesting in many forms and emerging from diverse contexts. Nevertheless, in order to conduct a study on short animated documentary, I must establish a working definition for short animated documentary, to be used for the purposes of the research. While definitions of animated documentary vary between different individuals and sectors, in general these definitions emerge from, and build on, definitions of the separate genres of animation and documentary. In this chapter I will briefly outline how a range of scholars have sought to define documentary, animation, and animated documentary. Following this I will discuss contemporary contexts of short film, before drawing together a working definition of short animated documentary for use in my research.

Defining documentary

Grierson famously described documentary as 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Grierson, 1933, p.8). Elsewhere he describes documentary as 'observing and selecting from life itself' (Grierson, 1932-34, p.21). For Grierson, it is through *selecting* and *creative treatment* that a documentary not only describes, but also reveals: 'You photograph the natural life, but you also, by your juxtaposition of detail, create an interpretation of it' (ibid., p.21-22). Grierson's emphasis on photographing 'the living scene and the living story' (ibid.) suggests his interpretation of documentary may not have embraced the use of animation. Nevertheless, he notes that documentary is an evolving form that encompasses a range of films, and 'in times it will include other kinds […] different in form and intention' (ibid. p.19).

Nichols suggests that the tension between 'creative treatment' and the idea of and expectations an audience has of 'actuality' makes documentary problematic to define (Nichols, 2001, p.24). He proposes that documentaries 'address *the* world in which we live rather than *a* world imagined by the filmmaker' (ibid., 2001, p.xi, emphasis in original). This definition is attractive, but open to interpretation. It would be possible for filmmakers working in films labelled as fictions to argue that their films address '*the* world' through engagement with issues that are rooted in social reality or common experience. Equally, it could be argued that some documentaries, for example those that are scripted, highly constructed and representative of subjective perspectives, represent '*a* world' rather than a consensus reality. Elsewhere Nichols describes documentaries as films 'involving real people (social actors) who present themselves to us as themselves in stories that convey a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed' (Nichols, 2010, p.14). The criteria of the involvement of 'real people' who 'present themselves to us' could exclude animated documentary with non-indexical soundtracks such as Samantha Moore's *The Beloved Ones* (2007), widely exhibited and described as an animated documentary (see British Council, 2007). Indeed, Nichols' definition could be seen to support Formenti's (2014) categorisation of animated nonfiction within the class of 'docudrama' rather than documentary.

In defining documentary, Grierson also began to draw lines around what was *not* documentary. He considered raw footage and nonfiction forms such as 'lecture films' to be non-documentary, and in a lower category of nonfiction than documentary (Ward, 2005, p.9). For Grierson, these forms 'describe' but 'rarely reveal' and have little to offer 'the fuller art of the documentary' (Grierson, 1932-34, p.20). Nichols also addresses nonfiction forms that exist adjacent to most definitions of documentary, listing 'industrial or sponsored films' alongside 'news reports' and 'mere footage' in a space where documentary and non-documentary overlaps (Nichols, 2010, p.146-147). Nichols argues that brand-sponsored films can be

compared to state-funded documentaries, asserting that 'sponsorship is akin to that of governments when they underwrite documentaries: the film promotes a perspective or way of seeing the world' (ibid.).[9]

For Vaughan, documentary resides in a position that the audience take in relation to the footage, that they 'see its meaning as pertinent to the events and objects which passed before the camera: to see it, in a word, as signifying what it appears to record' (Vaughan, 1999, p.84-85). This description appears contradictory to the idea that animation is a valid medium for documentary, but Vaughan also warns against 'anything which restricts the film within a set of institutionalised norms' (ibid. p.88). Nichols notes that theorists' definitions 'are always playing catch-up' as filmmakers 'delight in subverting conventions, challenging viewers, and provoking debate' (Nichols, 2017, p.11).

It is increasingly difficult to define documentary by stylistic or structural conventions. The documentary industry is embracing new media technologies such as web and virtual reality production, and contemporary documentary has interdisciplinarity at its heart. Ward describes documentary as 'a complex set of overlapping discourses and practices' (Ward, 2005, p.3) and suggests that the only characteristic common to all documentary is that it 'makes assertions or truth claims about the real world or people in that world' (ibid., p.8). For Fraser, 'documentary needn't be factually reliable' but should be committed to truth (Fraser, 2019, p.xvi).[10] Wells describes how animation, through 'subverting the authenticity of the image' can be seen to be 'shifting the imperative of the documentary

[9] This echoes Winston's critique of Grierson's documentaries, which he presents as instruments of persuasion, pushing funders' political and social ideologies (Winston, 1995, p.72).

[10] It is notable that Fraser, who has largely produced relatively conventional broadcast documentaries, asserts that documentary *can* be animated, and that animation can be 'wholly truthful' (Fraser, 2019, p.30, and p.369-370).

enterprise from the notion of presenting ‘fact’ to representing ‘truth’’ (Wells, 1997, p.40).

Over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, scholars have argued both in support of and in opposition to the legitimacy of documentary’s claim on presenting truth and reality. These debates are well-documented and beyond the scope of this thesis, but supporters of the legitimacy of animation in documentary storytelling often cite the work of Nichols, Renov and Winston, who argue that documentary is never objective. Renov (1993, p.2-3) shows that documentary uses similar narrative and aesthetic devices as fiction to engage an audience. But Carroll argues that the truth claim of documentary does not lie in stylistic conventions. He suggests that, in theoretical and critical use, the terms ‘documentary’ and ‘nonfiction’ should be replaced by the term ‘Film of Presumptive Assertion’ (Carroll, 2003, p.193). These films require ‘that the structure of sense-bearing be presented with the assertoric authorial intention that we entertain the propositional content of the film as asserted thought’ and ‘could be comprised completely of animation or computer-generated imagery […] It does not require that we regard the images as authentic historic traces’ (ibid. p.212).

Sobchack (1999, p.241) describes documentary as ‘less a thing than an experience’, emphasising the importance of the viewer’s subjective reading. But Carroll shows that viewers are influenced by information including paratextual materials and word of mouth, which explicitly and implicitly communicate if the film is fiction or not. Subsequently, ‘one generally knows that it is what is called a ‘documentary’ ahead of time because the film has been indexed and circulated that way’ (Carroll, 2003, p. 215-216). Thanouli (2018, p.236) suggests that this indexing is more problematic in the subgenre of historical fiction and documentary than in other areas of nonfiction. As suggested by Chapter 1 this could also apply to animated documentary, which can be challenging for funders, programmers, critics and even filmmakers to categorise.

Defining animation

Defining animation is complicated by the fact that it can be regarded both as a genre and a production method. While ontological considerations around a definition of documentary usually focus on how the storytelling engages with the profilmic subject, the ontology of animation is usually discussed in technical terms. Charles Solomon articulates a traditional understanding of animation by specifying that it includes images 'recorded frame-by-frame' and motion that is 'created, rather than recorded' (Solomon, quoted in Furniss, 1998, p.5). These characteristics are reflected in the language that defines some opportunities in the industry; Annecy's submission guidelines, for example, allow 'audiovisual animation, created frame by frame whatever the technique' (Annecy, 2019). However the notion of animation as a frame-by-frame process is increasingly problematic, and the idea of a binary difference between the photographic and animated image is, as noted by Ehrlich (2021, p.13), no longer useful.

The term 'manipulated moving image' both serves as a synonym for, and challenges traditional notions of, animation (Kitson, 2008, p.11; Wells and Hardstaff, 2008, p.85). For Wells, 'manipulated moving image' has problematic implications as it does not distinguish the 'distinctive language of animation set against the conventional nature of 'live action'' and 'it misrepresents the rhetorical specificity of animation by immersing it within the broad parameters of moving image creation' (ibid.). The convergence of live action, animation and technology – especially the reduction of *visibility* of animation in some live action contexts – has implications for documentary, effectively undermining the notion of indexicality that made film, for Bazin, a uniquely faithful mode of representation (see Renov, 1993, p.11; Wells and Hardstaff, 2008, p.101; Takahashi, 2011). The assumed integrity of the photographic image has been further destabilised by technology such as "deepfake" videos, in which convincing AI-created replicas of real people perform actions that never, in reality, took place. While this thesis focuses on films that are *visibly* animated (as opposed to

those that photorealistically simulate live action), it is difficult to draw formal lines here. What is visible to one viewer might be invisible to another, what is clearly animated to someone versed in the relevant technology might look like live action to an untrained eye.

While some scholars are eager to find a precise definition of animation (see for example Brian Wells, 2011, p.12-28) other scholars, curators and practitioners advocate for a broader church (see for example Cook and Thomas, 2006, p.8; Evans and Arnell, 2006, p.103). For Wells and Hardstaff, animation is 'a form destined to be defined ultimately not by formal conditions – frame-by-frame manipulation of materials in the creation of phases of representational motion – but by the artist, context and condition of expression' (Wells and Hardstaff, 2008, p.16). In this way, the definition of animation could be compared to Ward's description of documentary as 'a complex interaction between text, context, producer and spectator' (Ward, 2005, p.11) and Arthur's description of documentary as a 'network' of tendencies. All these descriptions consider not just formal attributes, not just author intention, and not just reception, but also the broader environment around the work – which has shaped the product, provides its context and continues to shape its reception and impact.

Just as a documentary label can be retrospectively attributed to a film that was not necessarily made in that spirit, the same can be done with the categorisation of a film as an animation. In 2005 Angela Kingston curated *The Animators*, an exhibition showcasing the work of animators who also work across other mediums and techniques. Kingston found that for some moving image artists, the categorisation of their work as animation 'can come as a surprise' and that her curatorial work involved 'remembering artists' films that I was already very interested in and recognising them as animations' (Kingston, 2006, p.136).

A cross-disciplinary approach to animation is increasingly common in academia, driven both by creative practices (Bond, quoted in Wells and Hardstaff, 2008, p.122) and commercial interests (Denslow, 1997, p.3). New technologies and disciplines constantly emerge, and the embrace of – and by – different disciplines is part of the tradition of animation. Ward (2003, p.7) has shown that animation is an inherently interdisciplinary form, which does not belong purely to the creative industries, while Wells and Hardstaff (2008, p.21) have shown that various disciplines, from product design to architecture and medicine have 'reimagined' animation, offering diverse roles for it beyond art and entertainment.

Defining animated documentary

The history and ontology of animated documentary has been well described by scholars (see for example: DelGaudio, 1997; Ward , 2005; Honess Roe, 2013; and Lefevre, 2019) and is outside the scope of this thesis. I will instead touch on some key definitions that have been proposed for it.

Guo and Yan (2017, p.128) observe that 'animated documentary is consistently difficult to categorize'. This is in part due to its diverse production techniques and contexts (as noted by Ehrlich and Murray, 2019, p.2). While it is tempting to imagine the form occupying a neat space at the intersection of animation and documentary, in fact it occurs across a spectrum of contexts and intersects with multiple genres and subgenres (roughly visualised in Fig. 1).

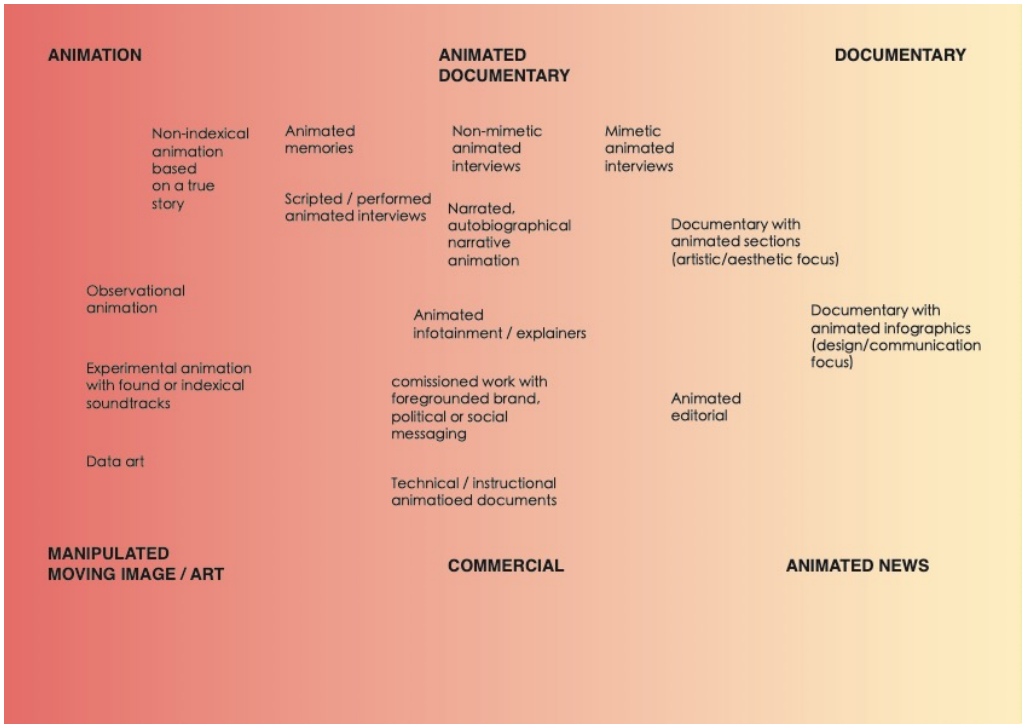


Figure 1. Animated documentary as a complex landscape

Lefevre describes animated documentary as both a 'diverse field with blurred and mutable boundaries' (Lefevre, 2019, p.21) and a 'fluid concept' which defies straightforward definition (ibid. p.16). Despite this, he notes that it is possible to identify trends, and proposes a catch-all definition to be 'animation production techniques used in combination with some prototypical codes, conventions and claims associated with live-action documentary' (ibid. p.21). Sofian offers a broad definition of animated documentary as 'any animated film that deals with non-fiction material' (Sofian, 2005, p.7). Moore, who describes animated documentary as a 'cinematic genre' in its own right (Moore, 2019, p.209), defines it as film that 'uses the form of animation as the framework within which the genre of documentary is investigated' (Moore, 2014, p.68). Strøm's description is 'a documentary in which an extensive part – at least Fifty Percent – is animated' (Strøm, 2003, p.49). However Honess Roe argues that it is not possible to 'put a quantitative requirement on the amount of animation that a film should contain in order for it to be classed an animated documentary' and suggests instead that 'the animation must be integrated to the extent that the meaning of the film would become incoherent were it to somehow be

removed' (Honess Roe, 2013, p.4-5). Indeed, even if a percentage of content were a suitable criteria to measure the "animatedness" of a documentary, it is near-impossible to practically use. Would a live action frame featuring one animated composite be classed as animation or live action, or would it be necessary to measure the percentage of screen space that each inhabit?

Ward describes documentary as a 'range of strategies in a variety of media' that can be 'inflected' by animation (Ward, 2005, p.84-85) and suggests that the term animated documentary should exclude live action documentaries with animated sections. Scott-Hawkins takes a different perspective, defining animated documentary as 'any film based on nonfiction which uses animation techniques' not excluding 'live action documentaries with animated segments' (Scott-Hawkins, quoted in Collington, 2016, p.215).

Drawing on Nichols and Solomon, Honess Roe defines animated documentary as an audiovisual work that '(i) has been recorded or created frame by frame; (ii) is about *the* world rather than *a* world wholly imagined by its creator; and (iii) has been presented as a documentary by its producers and/or received as a documentary by audiences, festivals or critics' (Honess Roe, 2013, p.4). For Honess Roe, this last criteria means the definition excludes advertising, public information films and training videos, 'because they are neither intended, nor received as documentaries' (ibid.). While Honess Roe's definition is useful, it is complicated by diverse curatorial interpretations of animated documentary. Some festivals include work that could be classed as training or public information films in 'animated documentary' screenings (see Appendix 1).[11] These are not considered by Honess Roe to be animated documentary, and yet paradoxically must be if they are received and presented, by a festival, as animated documentary.

[11] Animated explainers, infotainment, training and public information films, which could be seen as examples of Grierson's 'lower forms' of nonfiction, have seen a recent boom as organisations feel increased pressure to create audiovisual content for social media and ubiquitous screen technology (Ehrlich, 2019, p.48).

Contexts of short film

Lefevre notes that 'the majority of animated documentaries […] have comparatively short running times: something like a maximum of sixteen minutes, and frequently well under' (Lefevre, 2019, p.20-21). As this thesis focuses on this short form work, it is worth briefly considering the position that short film has within the contemporary film industry. Charlie Philips, Head of Video at *The Guardian*, defines short film as films of less than 40 minutes, a definition supported by the eligibility criteria for British Academy Film and Television Awards (BAFTA) submission (BAFTA, 2018) as well as most of the UK's key festivals.[12]

In the commercial film industry the value of short films is often perceived to be 'instrumental not intrinsic' (Northern Alliance, 2009, p.24); shorts are seen as a "stepping stone" to feature filmmaking (see for example: Kotlarz, 1999, p.9; Wootton, quoted in Cooper-Charles, 2015; and BFI, 2017, p.22). For many funders and commissioners, 'the provision of content for audiences [is] essentially a by-product of activity dedicated to the discovery, development and showcasing of prospective feature filmmaking talent' (Northern Alliance, 2009, p.12). It has perhaps been useful for public funders to view short film in this way, as it is difficult to justify their production in short-term economic gains. Very few publicly funded short films recoup their budgets (Follows, 2015), so public funding bodies largely justify their spend on short form work in the context of long-term investment in feature film careers.

However short film occupies a richer space than merely being a training ground for more profitable forms of filmmaking; it is an artform in its own right, a space where filmmakers can work outside of the creative pressures that come with the commercial industry, and can produce work that takes

[12] In 2018, all of the UK's 'A-list' BAFTA qualifying festivals specified either 40 or 45 minutes as the maximum duration for short film submissions.

risks. Festival Programmer Philip Ilson believes that short films are a particularly valuable cinematic art as they ‘don’t have a remit beyond the vision of the filmmaker, unlike conventional feature film, where they may be made by committee, or go through re-writes and commercial filters to finally get out there’ (Ilson, 2015). Animation and documentary genres have traditionally been favoured in short form work. Even in feature films, animations and documentaries have the shortest average duration of theatrical genres (Follows, 2014). Kitson notes that although in live-action filmmaking shorts are seen as a path to a feature, in the animation industry shorts are considered a ‘genre in their own right’ (Kitson, 2008, p.18). Short form documentary is also a fast-growing area, partly due to the suitability of short form work for the online space (Fraser, 2019, p.363; Philips, 2018).

Recent years have seen technological and social change disrupt the traditional film industry. Accessible technologies make it easier for non-professionals to make films, while improved bandwidth, new platforms, and new revenue and financing models are challenging traditional exhibition structures. The Internet presents rich opportunities for short film. Work can be uploaded to online video sharing platforms where it can be viewed, shared and embedded by users. Curated sites such as Short of the Week, Vimeo Staff Picks, Shorts TV, Hunger TV and Nowness bring shorts to large audiences. Websites such as Snag Films and YouTube channels such as Omleto show licensed shorts, profiting from advertising revenue and offering a fee or split to filmmakers. Specialist organisations such as Animate Projects are able to showcase their own work and curate online exhibitions. Major platforms such as iTunes have also moved into the short film space. In addition to these, and to traditional festivals, short films can be licensed for broadcast, theatrical compilations and other screenings. Films may also be distributed on DVD compilations, available for purchase. Shorts are also very popular with film societies and community screening organisations (BFI, 2017).

Despite these exhibition opportunities, it remains difficult to make money from short films. Jez Stewart, Animation Curator at the BFI National Archive, notes

> it's tricky because animation is perfectly matched with the short form, and although there's a lot of talk about the digital age and digital consuming of media, and it suits the short form because you can look at something on your phone or whatever, but it still doesn't give you a return, people don't pay for short films.
>
> (Stewart, speaking at Brunsdon et al., 2018)

A 2017 Creative Scotland report also highlights the difficulty in monetizing shorts and describes the particular challenges that this holds for animation production 'where even low budget films command substantial budgets' (McKissack and McLean, 2017, p.12).

Throughout this thesis, I will show that the relatively low profit potential of short film, and its subsequent position on the peripheries of the commercial industry, can paradoxically both restrict and foster innovation in their production.

Conclusion

In Chapter 1 I showed that the form of animated documentary has been widely accepted and the term is in reasonably common use, although the exact nature of the form is unclear. This chapter shows that the fact that the term is not easy to define is partly due to the absence of generally accepted definitions of either animation or documentary. There is no universal definition of documentary, and the distinction between 'documentary' and other forms of nonfiction such as infotainment and advertising remains complex to navigate. Likewise, the discipline of animation has proved difficult to pin down, an issue exacerbated by the ever-evolving cultural and

technological landscape around it. So, as a form that combines the ubiquitous but heterogeneous form of animation with the diverse manifestations of nonfiction representation, animated documentary is in itself highly heterogeneous and problematic to comprehensively define. It is only possible for me to suggest a working definition for use in this research.

Drawing on Honess Roe, Solomon and Ward, I will define the short animated documentary as a moving image production which:

i) has been recorded or created frame by frame;
ii) makes assertions about the real world or people in that world;
iii) has been presented as a documentary by its producers (either filmmakers or funders/commissioners/broadcasters) and/or received as a documentary by critics, audiences, festivals, or critics;
iv) is intended for viewing beginning-to-end in a single screen exhibition context; and
v) is less than 40 minutes in duration.

The third criteria means that this thesis will sometimes discuss films as animated documentaries which could intuitively seem to better fit within a broader nonfiction animation category (such as promotional films). This will reflect the breadth and diversity of interpretations of animated documentary in the curatorial and practitioner community.

2. CAPITAL

Chapter 3.1 - Forms of capital

Bourdieu presents capital as something that exists not just in economic form, as money, but also in symbolic forms of cultural and social capital. These forms of capital can be accumulated and inherited. They are strong forms of capital in that it is possible for them to be "spent" without diminishing, and they are often recognised not as capital but as inherent, desirable personal qualities, which can in themselves attract more capital of all forms. Bourdieu describes how

> Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc), which are the trace or realization of theories of critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because […] it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.
>
> (Bourdieu, 1986, p.47)

Cultural capital can be accumulated by an individual who invests time, effort (and sometimes other forms of capital) into their own 'self improvement' (ibid.). Cultural capital cannot usually be separated from its owner in the way that economic capital can, and 'the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital' with the result that it functions as 'symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognised as capital and recognised as legitimate competence' (ibid., p.49). Cultural capital can also be 'institutionalized', through its formal recognition, often in the form of academic or professional qualifications.

Film funders, financiers and partners are investors, each wanting a return on their investment in a film. That return can come in the form of economic, social or cultural capital, or a combination of these. Those investing in feature film production often hope to recoup or profit in economic terms. But as I have shown, short films rarely make enough money for funders to recoup, much less profit financially. Short films can, however, offer significant rewards in terms of cultural and social capital to their funders and financiers - be those public funding bodies, sponsoring brands or crowdfunding individuals.

This section will explore the ways in which those who invest in the production of short animated documentary films can be motivated by the potential capital rewards. I will consider how these rewards can benefit not only those who contribute financially to a film, but also those who invest their time, their skills and other resources. While the production of long form animation usually requires a large amount of economic capital, it is in some cases possible to make a short animated film with very little money (see, for example, Nåls, 2016, p.37). However, as I will demonstrate, this can only be achieved providing there is a resource of symbolic capital, both cultural and social, on which to draw. I will show how different forms of symbolic capital have been exchanged and generated in the development, production, post-production and exhibition of a range of short films.

This section begins by looking at the ways in which different forms of capital are valued by filmmakers and funders. It then focuses on economic capital in relation to short animated documentary production, interrogating how the changing UK funding landscape over the last two decades has impacted the work that has been produced. Following this I focus on Bourdieu's concept of social capital and how this influences the production of short animated documentary. I explore how talent development schemes, funding initiatives and educational programmes generate social capital for their beneficiaries. I then interrogate the idea of cultural capital in relation to

short film, animation and documentary. I look at how cultural capital is institutionalised through academic qualifications, and touch on how festivals, screenings, awards, funds, commissions and competitions generate cultural and social capital for filmmakers. Finally I map the exchange of symbolic capital through case studies of six short films: *Men Talk About Mother* (2016), *Everyone is Waiting for Something to Happen* (2015), *Art For Lawyers* (2017), *They Call Us Maids: The Domestic Workers Story* (2015) and *A Pistol Against my Head* (2017). All of these films could be described as culturally "successful" in that they have received awards or accolades from cultural institutions and reached a relatively large audience. However, none recouped their budget through direct generation of economic capital. Through these case studies I show that the symbolic capital which is both exploited and generated in the production of independent short films is more significant than the economic capital that is at play.

Much of this chapter presents ideas which can be applied not only to animated documentary but to other areas of independent film production, and cultural production more widely. In the final part of the chapter I show, through the case studies, different ways in which these ideas and systems play out specifically in animated documentary productions. In this way I will lead the research from the general and conceptual, to specific patterns and pressures within the animated documentary arena, and the impact of these.

Short films can generate capital in a number of ways for funders, financiers and filmmakers.[13] Capital returns can include: economic capital in the form of a fee, or through film sales or prize money; institutionalised cultural capital generated by festival selections, awards and critical attention; embodied cultural capital accumulated by the filmmaker as new skills and professional development, which represents potential future economic and symbolic capital for the investing company or national industry; the

[13] In this context, crew roles as well as director and producer roles are included in my use of the word "filmmaker".

objectified cultural capital of a film that is perceived by the investor to be creatively succesful; social capital from extended networks or connections; and social capital generated through being seen to support the arts or a "worthy" cause. For filmmakers, much of the social and cultural capital in the list above can be converted into economic capital in the form of improved career opportunities.

Filmmakers and funders often diverge in the emphasis they place on each type of return (as shown by Northern Alliance, 2009, p.44). Furthermore, different members of the sales, distribution and exhibition sides of the industry prioritise different forms of capital. Pugh (2017, p.7) suggests that curators who put together short form moving image programmes are driven predominantly by 'artistic integrity' (which can be linked to cultural capital), while exhibitors are driven primarily by profit (economic capital). In the subsequent sections and case studies I look at a range of individual funders' and filmmakers' priorities in terms of the capital they invest and recoup from short film projects. I highlight trends but also show that there are diverse values and motivations for investing in the production of short animated documentary.

Chapter 3.2 - Economic capital

It is difficult to make a film without access to economic capital. Even on a no-budget production, a filmmaker must "buy" their own time, often measured by lost income from other work that could have been done in the period. In this section I will look at how economic pressures can prevent animated documentary shorts from scaling up into longer form work, before looking at some of the key funders of short animated documentary.

The ethos, values and worldview of a funder influences the work that is produced. Fraser notes that 'all documentaries require funding, and funders - whether socialist governments, corporations, NGOs or public television stations - have their own views about what they want to see' (Fraser, 2019, p.101). Elsewhere he describes how early documentary filmmakers, frustrated by a lack of funding from the emerging Hollywood industry, 'turned to the other major contemporary source of funding: the twentieth-century state. Here they found ready backers, but they were required to sign up to the ideologies of the time' (Fraser, 2019, p.88-9).

The impact of a funder on a film's message is well illustrated by Winston, in his critique of Grierson and Lorentz. He argues that the seminal documentary filmmakers produced work in which their 'obligation to the [sponsor] and the government conditions the entire film' (Winston, 1995, p.72). Wells notes that this has had an enduring impact on the identity of documentary, as 'sustained institutional patronage cast documentary and public information film works - animated or otherwise - as ideologically charged and politically owned' (Wells, 2019, p.111). Kris Kelly, a director and animator who has worked across live action and animated documentary, observes the way in which a relatively small amount of power-holders can still be felt to promote personal or organisational values through the documentary form. He recalls that at a point in his career he 'started to see how producers and commissioners and broadcasters push content in a certain direction', feeling at times like the filmmaker becomes 'just a voice

for an agenda or a thing that somebody else down the line wants pushed' (Kelly, 2021).

State and broadcast funding were relatively stable sources of finance for UK documentary filmmakers for much of the 20th century, but from the early 2000s these were in decline, replaced by 'patchwork financing from around the world' in which 'charities and foundations became a major target for documentary film finance' (Presence et al., 2020, p.11). These charities and foundations also brought their own agendas, and Fraser notes a link that can be made between Grierson's corporate sponsored films and 'the films of our day that are funded by NGOs or companies' (Fraser, 2019, p.106).

A financier's political and social agenda can be seen both in the subject areas addressed and in the specific stories, perspectives and positions taken in films. Between 2011 and 2019, the Wellcome Trust (now referred to as Wellcome) was an influential force in funding animated documentary. The organisation focuses on health and biomedical science, and their commissioning resulted in a high number of animated documentary films produced in this period dealing with biomedical subject matter (see Appendix 1). Wellcome have been praised by filmmakers for their lack of interference in the production of their funded films (as described by Moore, 2017a, Glynne, 2019, Addison, 2017). The political and thematic control that Wellcome exerted on their commissions largely came before the funding was granted, i.e. at the point that the practitioner was choosing what to make a film about and how to approach the subject matter. Ellie Land observes that in comparison with the less transparent social and political agendas that she has experienced with other funders, Wellcome's 'agenda […] was about the science, and that was really upfront from the start' (Land, 2021). Once funding was granted, the filmmaker was given relative freedom in terms of creative decisions. In this way, a funder's influence can be almost invisible and go unnoticed - despite, in reality, being very strong.

The politics of commissioning can be seen more starkly in Chris Shepherd's *Brexicuted* (2018).[14] Shepherd recalls:

> On the day after the referendum a producer from France phoned me up. Basically I'd done a few films for French TV and he said "oh with the Brexit I don't think we'll be able to make another film again after that, it's all going to be different". […] so I listened to lots of interviews and then I created a bit of a mockumentary I suppose, about the chaos of the Brexit.
>
> (Shepherd, speaking at Armitage et al., 2018)

Shepherd pitched the French producer his idea for a Brexit themed film, in which staged or re-voiced interviews with voters were put into the mouths of grotesquely animated caricatures. The producer liked the idea, and sold it to the French broadcaster Arte. Shepherd found that the commissioners' position on Brexit influenced the content of the film: 'in the original script I had lots of Remainers in there as well, and actually also ripped the shit out of Remainers [as well as Leave voters]. Editorially in France they wanted me to keep it to just the Brexiteers' (ibid.).

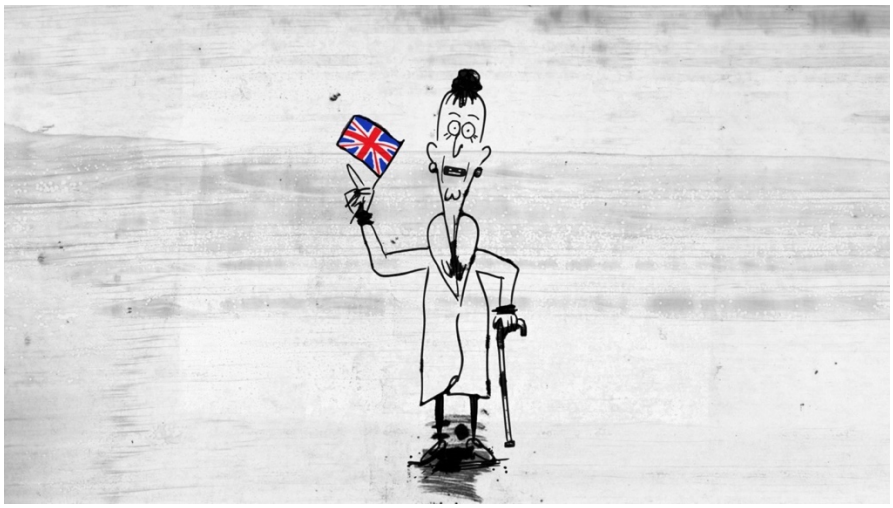


Figure 2: Still from *Brexicuted* (2018)

[14] Although *Brexicuted* was conceived as a mockumentary, it has been widely programmed and received as documentary. Shepherd spoke at the 2018 London International Animation Festival about the blurred line between the two forms.

Scaling up

The recent "boom" in short animated documentary production (as described by Honess Roe, 2013, p.13; and Ehrlich, 2021, p.2) can be attributed to a number of factors including the emergence of new funders and the proliferation of accessible creative media technology. However, while it *is* possible to make animation cheaply in "DIY" ways, animation remains relatively expensive to produce *to a professional standard*, not least because of the time-consuming labour involved. Leslie and McKim observe that 'despite its growing pervasiveness, the production of digital animation remains, for the most part, extremely capital and resource-intensive' (Leslie and McKim, 2017, p.210). Even if a filmmaker has the skills and equipment to produce an animated film alone, opportunity cost and lost income remain a barrier for many. Kris Kelly has noted that, while new technologies are in some ways improving processes, they bring new challenges. His production company used machine learning technology to speed up production on a recent animated documentary, but found that 'as the technology got more complicated, the skillsets required got more complicated as well, so as one thing simplified, something else became more complicated. So it always sort of balanced itself to being a lot of work' (Kelly, 2021).

It is partly due to the time-consuming nature of animation that the hitherto mentioned boom in animated documentary production has not extended to feature or long-form animated documentaries. Lisa Marie Russo, who has commissioned and executive produced several short animated documentaries, suggests that if the animation is 'well controlled, especially on a short film, it can be more economical than live action' but that it is the length of production that makes animation expensive and 'animation always takes longer than you think' (Russo, 2021).

Even if an animator is willing to invest weeks or months of unpaid work in the production of a short, the labour required for a feature is usually prohibitive for individuals. Meanwhile, documentaries are in general a

relatively low-budget form of media (Presence et al., 2020, p.5; Fraser, 2019, p.40). Leslie and McKim argue that our current media landscape is 'partly characterized by democratized access to media production and cheap reality television' and 'feature-length animation represents an expensive, technologically demanding and labour-heavy counterpoint to these trends' (Leslie and McKim, 2017, p.210). This echoes a European Commission report, which finds that

> Animation implies above average production periods and above average investment. To begin with, it is not unusual to spend more than three years in the development stage. In addition, crews are larger and the actual production takes much longer than that of non-animated films. Therefore, it is not surprising that it often takes more than a decade to see the first recoupments.
>
> (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2015, p.6)

Pugh (2017, p.6) notes that the commercial pressures that exhibitors are under mean that it is difficult for them to programme commercially risky work that 'takes up space in the schedule which could otherwise be devoted to a profitable mainstream release […] reducing the cinema's profit margin'. There is currently little evidence that animated documentary can reliably draw large audiences. This makes it a challenging proposition for sales agents, distributors and exhibitors, and without significant interest from these parties, finance is even harder to secure. Because of this, long-form animation is still largely in the domain of children's entertainment – film products that are commercial, have a clear and large audience, and often have the potential for further monetization through merchandise.

There are exceptions, in the form of fully or partly animated UK feature films which have made it through production. Richard Squires' debut feature *Doozy* (2018) is a hybrid animated and live action documentary, produced with support from Wellcome and Arts Council England, as well as academic support from Kingston University. Another recent UK hybrid

feature documentary is *Irene's Ghost* (2018). Produced by Rebecca Mark-Lawson and animated by Ellie Land, the film combines live action, archive and animation to tell the story of director Iain Cunningham's investigation into the identity and mysterious death of his late mother, Irene. The film was made with support from Wellcome and BFI through Creative England, and the funders were, from a creative perspective, supportive of the animation elements (Mark-Lawson, 2016). However, the animation added a layer of difficulty to production. Costs spiralled, and conflicts emerged between the development, production and postproduction workflows of animation and live action documentary. The completed film was successful critically, but the animated content in the final cut was significantly shorter than originally planned.

Sally Pearce is currently in production on a hybrid feature documentary, *Chernobyl Journey*. Pearce has been working on the film for ten years, as both director and producer. Despite receiving development funding from public funding bodies and a private foundation, she has not found a funder or financier to support production of the full film as she wants to make it, and is now working on the project as part of a practice-based PhD. Pearce does not think that the animation elements have been off-putting to producers or funders. On the contrary, she reflects that

> I think it probably makes it more interesting. At one stage, when I seemed to be progressing nicely towards actually having a proper budget, the producer who had approached me had been looking for mixed media projects. I think that came from having had a general directive that broadcast companies were interested in projects with animation. […] But I think that there was an element of gimmick, like somebody who had never had anything to do with animation who said "well I'm more likely to get this through if it's got animation".
>
> (Pearce, 2019)

However, Pearce found that, while the producer offered a potential path to production funding, it would mean working with a traditional documentary budget that did not accommodate for the real costs of animation, while also making creative compromises that would undermine the film's message:

> I was losing control of what the film would say, I was becoming an underpaid animator. If it's not your own project and it's not your passion project, then you need to be properly paid for the animation. And these sorts of budgets, although they were enough to deliver films with good production values, they weren't enough to pay me properly […] so I think that there is a lot of openness to animation [among producers]. What there might not be is an understanding of what animation adds in terms of time and money.
>
> (ibid.)

Sheila Sofian directed and animated the US hybrid feature documentary *Truth Has Fallen* (2013), a production that took more than ten years and was budgeted at around $100,000. Sofian notes that this budget 'doesn't really include my time, that was for free'. She made approximately 20,000 paintings for the film, but 'most of the money went directly to people. You know the main production, the music was very expensive […] the whole film crew, the producer, that's where the costs add up' (Sofian, 2017) .

Chris Shepherd has been pitching and developing adult animated features for over a decade but is yet to have one greenlit. He reflects on the apparent inability of successful adult animation films to make a discernible impact on future commissioning: '*Waltz with Bashir* or *Persepolis* – films come along and you think they'll crack the market open but they never seem to do it somehow […] it comes and goes, it's never enough to really create a market' (Shepherd, 2019).

UK animators still refer to *The Trouble With Love and Sex* (2011), almost ten years after its production, as something which *could have* been a

gamechanger for animated documentary. The show received a positive critical reception (Hodgson, 2019, p.203), and Tim Webb remembers that at that time it was produced, in the wake of the success of *Waltz With Bashir*, there was a sense of optimism among filmmakers for the future of long form animated documentary: 'it seemed like "oh yeah, this is happening now, this is the start of something". And then nothing happened' (Webb, 2016). Nick Mirsky, the BBC Wonderland executive producer who commissioned *The Trouble With Love and Sex*, acknowledges that the project failed to lead to the BBC commissioning subsequent long-form animated documentaries, explaining 'why I think it didn't take off, quite simply, is that it was very expensive and it didn't rate' (Mirsky, 2019). The unusual genre of the film, while being a media talking point, proved challenging for mainstream television audiences, and viewing figures were low. Mirsky reflects that

> a television audience just isn't used to watching animation, an adult audience. And I think sometimes if you're going to do something new, an audience has got to learn how to watch it as well. Even *Gogglebox* took eight or ten episodes, *First Dates* took until series three. And getting people to watch animation is almost more of a step. So […] I think the audience didn't have the habit of watching animation and therefore would take longer to come to it. And at the price it was, no one was going to pay for six in a row, or ten.
>
> (ibid.)

The Trouble With Love and Sex was an expensive experiment, and Mirsky's economic investment in it had an impact on what was available for other Wonderland productions. 'I taxed a couple of years of Wonderlands in order to support it' remembers Mirsky, 'I took money off all the other ones' (ibid.). The return on investment in the symbolic form of critical appreciation and the objectified cultural capital of what Mirsky describes as 'a really good film' (ibid.) was not, without good viewing figures, enough to justify investing further economic capital in the animated documentary form, investment which would have been necessary in order to

acclimatise viewers to the form and build sustainable audiences. The financial discrepancy between conventional documentary and animation budgets is crystallised in the challenge Jonathan Hodgson and his studio, Sherbet, was presented with while planning production for *The Trouble With Love and Sex*: Although, as Mirsky notes, the production budget was much higher than the budgets of his live action Wonderland commissions, Hodgson remembers that it was still 'only two-thirds of Sherbet's normal bottom line. This meant that we needed to employ markedly economical animation production techniques' (Hodgson, 2019, p.202-203).

Financial restrictions, like all constraints, can lead to creative innovation, and in the case of *The Trouble With Love and Sex* Hodgson and Beattie developed a visual and animation style that was creatively successful even within their restricted budget. However, financial constraints can also stymie innovation and reduce the scope that filmmakers have for experimentation and non-traditional processes, particularly when collaboration with participants is involved. Samantha Moore notes that 'working collaboratively potentially opens the director up to a great many opinions, perspectives and directions that may be hard to accommodate into the production schedule for a broadcast production' (Moore, 2019, p.217). For Moore, this means that her collaborative approach may be prevented from scaling up and being adopted by the commercial industry, and instead may remain 'a marginal documentary methodology because of the involved and protracted commitment that it necessitates' (ibid.).

Vaughan proposes that low documentary budgets limit the opportunity to involve participants in the shaping of the final film, and in how their personal truths are represented. He notes that a more collaborative approach could

> take longer than current production schedules allow; and perhaps the attempt […] to reach agreement with conflicting parties on what constituted truthful account of a given event would bear more resemblance to a

> psychiatric encounter session than to a civilised chat between colleagues, and the film would end in ribbons. […] But perhaps our budgets should allow for it. There is something to be said for an art which is grounded, as therapy, in real situations; and since television is a collaborative art, it may well be a collaborative therapy.
>
> (Vaughan, 1999, p.28)

Vaughan is showing that budget restrictions lead to decisions and processes that shape the conventions of documentary. He is also suggesting that in different circumstances and with better resources, another approach would be possible and, maybe, desirable.[15] In the current landscape of factual entertainment, there is a strong argument for new approaches to production. A 2019 report on *Occupational Distress in Factual TV* shows that the pressures created by low budgets and 'compressed shooting schedules' can cause long-term psychological harm to both contributors and crew (Dart Centre Europe, 2019).

Documentary and factual entertainment commissioners, funders and financiers keep budgets low, in part, by reducing and mitigating costs outside of physical production. One of the ways that this is done is through extensive pitching processes, during which an animator or studio may do substantial development work before being awarded the job or paid any money. Sherbet were required to produce unpaid work when Hodgson was approached as a potential animation director on *The Trouble with Love and Sex*, initially producing an animation test that took three weeks to complete. Hodgson notes that this was made possible because Sherbet were 'sufficiently committed to the project to invest enough funds for a small production team to work on the pitch' (Hodgson, 2019, p.192). The pitch was well received but more work was required in order to secure the job. Hodgson remembers that 'although this was the first time I had ever been asked to do two pitches as part of a commissioning process, I felt I had no

[15] The notion of documentary as a psychoanalytic encounter is explored further in Chapter 8.

choice but to say "yes"' (ibid.). Despite having invested weeks of unpaid work in pitching, Hodgson and his studio felt powerless to argue when more was requested. Indeed, the quantity of work already invested may have made it harder to refuse more work – the alternative being accepting that the labour already undertaken would be wasted. Hodgson describes pitching as a 'creatively productive stage in the preproduction of a film [which] encourages you to do your very best work and can help to give shape and direction to a project at a very early stage' (ibid). While this is a positive attitude to pitching, it highlights the intensity of the labour being undertaken. It also shows that this work does more than merely demonstrate a filmmaker's suitability for a project; it is active, specific development that would otherwise need to be undertaken in paid time.

De Jong shows that the documentary industry's reliance on unpaid labor is unbalanced in how it impacts those in different areas of the industry: 'Funding bodies are paid for development – those developing potential films generally not' (De Jong, 2008, p.140-141). A common step that filmmakers are required to take in pitching a long-form documentary is the production of a short audiovisual piece referred to by a variety of names - a teaser, a promo, a trailer, a sizzle, sometimes a pilot. This can demonstrate tone, access to characters, and proposed aesthetics, but also shows that a filmmaker or studio is committed the project, having already invested symbolic and/or economic capital in it. While there are some organisations that will fund documentary development, including teasers (Wellcome, for example, supported *Irene's Ghost* in this development phase), the burden of paying for development often falls with the filmmaker or production company. Documentary director Guy King notes that a pitch often has to be highly developed before it will be fully funded, putting independent filmmakers at a disadvantage to larger companies:

> I've seen a lot of pitch documents that are phenomenally detailed. [Production companies] have got whole budgets set aside for development. It's quite intimidating to see how much work goes into it. It would take an

> individual filmmaker months to prepare what they're able to drum up in their departments. And then the BBC or Channel 4 will release £3k or £5k or maybe £10k to commission a trailer. But what they expect for that - you've made a quarter of the film by the time you've convinced them.
>
> (King, 2017)

For some projects, a teaser can be relatively simple to produce. If the filmmaker has secured access to the film's subject, roughly filmed interviews could suffice. But in the case of pitching an animated documentary, there are often questions around *how it will work*, and a teaser is a helpful way to answer this question by *showing* how the animation and documentary material will work together. This can push costs up, particularly if the pitching filmmaker or company does not have in-house animation skills. In these cases, extensive work can be required to recruit an animator or studio and develop a visual style – all before a frame of animation is even produced. This front-loading of work in means that significant costs are incurred before a film is funded, so in effect the pitch itself needs to be funded by someone.

Mosaic Films raised €40,000 from Creative Europe to make a teaser for their animated documentary feature project *Nothing to Envy*. In order to do this they first had to produce a self-funded pre-teaser to be used as part of the application for funding a teaser. Mosaic were awarded funding and produced their high budget teaser, but have subsequently struggled to move the film forward, due to the disparity between the film's projected €3.5M budget and the perceived small audience available for an animated documentary feature (Glynne, 2016). As their development process has progressed, the pitch has transformed from a foreign language documentary to an English language film 'based on a true story', and eventually to a fiction project (ibid.).[16] Samantha Moore has also experienced pressure to recategorize her work as fiction when trying to scale it up to long form. In

[16] At the time of writing, the film remains in development.

her case, this has come from potential funders who say that they do not understand how a long form animated documentary will work on-screen (Moore, 2019).



Figure 3: Still from *Nothing to Envy* teaser (2015)

When trying to finance *Waltz With Bashir*, Ari Folman, like Mosaic, struggled to find a route that the project could fit into: 'I started with documentary funds. They said it can't be a documentary because it is animated. So I went to animation and fiction funds and they said they couldn't support it because it's a documentary' (Esther and Folman, 2009, p.67). In an industry where finances and markets are organised along conventional genre lines, films that do not fit into standard boxes are a difficult proposition. A look through media market reports show that animation is still largely regarded as a medium for children. Family entertainment products are the subject of the vast majority of industry research on animation, as this is where animation is most profitable. As we can see from Mirsky's analysis of his own foray into animated documentary, this may be a self-fulfilling prophesy: if children's animation is *seen to be* where the money is, it will be where the money continues to go, and new audiences will not be developed.

Key supporters of recent short animated documentaries

While there is insufficient space in this chapter to detail all the organisations that have financed short animated documentary in the UK, I will look briefly at key organisations that have supported recent work in the field.

Public film and art funding

Animated documentary has been supported by public funding initiatives including local council funding, Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England (ACE) and the British Film Institute (BFI). The majority of public funds for the form come from the latter two, BFI and ACE (Appendix 1).

Short film funding by the BFI has undergone changes in the past three decades. In the 1980s it was possible for an organisation such as Leeds Animation Workshop to secure sustained funding for its activities, rather than film-by-film support. Later, regional "screen agencies" distributed short film funding. When these were largely disbanded, Creative England, Creative Scotland and Ffilm Cymru Wales were given responsibility for regional short film funding while Film London continued to distribute funding to Londoners. Several years later, Creative England were relieved of the responsibility and Regional Film Hubs were created, each managed by a different organisation. The tender for short documentary was won by London-based Doc Society.

In a report on artists moving image production, Dan Ward suggests that projects BFI support are 'expected to fit within particular forms or approaches, and comply with 'industry' standard practices that define aesthetic outcomes' (Ward, 2019, p.12). Animated documentary does not fit into the industry's standard production practices, so is at a disadvantage in a climate that favours conventional approaches. When Doc Society put out its first funding opportunity for short documentaries, they explicitly stated that they would like to receive submissions for

animated documentary. In reality though, the fund's three-month production timeline was challenging for those proposing to make an animated documentary using anything but the most direct research and production processes.[17]

In 2019 BFI announced a new Short Form Animation Fund, supporting 'higher-budget' (BFI, 2020) narrative short films. The inaugural funding round awarded nine projects up to £120,000 each for production and six projects up to £10,000 each for development. A number of the funded projects intersect with nonfiction, including those directed by Bexie Bush, Andrew Kotting, Barry Purves and Kris Kelly (BFI, 2020).

Arts Council England (ACE) aims to 'champion, develop and invest in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives' (ACE, 2019). Film London Artists' Moving Image Network (FLAMIN) also receives and distributes ACE Funding, commissioning work by London-based moving image artists. With the BFI's support in recent years steered toward commercial feature film, and diminished opportunities from broadcasters such as Channel 4, many experimental filmmakers have turned to ACE for support (Ward, 2019, p.8). However, there has been confusion over what ACE's remit on film and video extends to. Samantha Moore, for example, was told by an ACE representative in 2015 that they 'don't fund animation' (Moore, 2017a) although ACE had, at this time, supported a number of animated projects (see Appendix 1). In 2018, following a period of consultation with groups including Animation Alliance UK, ACE updated its documentation to specify that they support animation as one of their eight 'principal artforms/disciplines' focusing on 'innovative artistic practice in this area - for example where artists using animation as a

[17] Doc Society did fund production of an animated documentary, *Bathroom Privileges*, as part of this funding round. It was completed, but exceeded the fund's stated timeline and budget (Land, 2021).

medium (either alone or in collaboration) show a commitment to experimentation and creative risk' (ACE, 2019).

ACE has been criticised for failing to support sustainable careers for artist filmmakers. Dan Ward shows a disparity between its recommended artist fees and what is possible on the budgets that it grants, proposing that actual fees taken by artists may be as little as £30-£40 per day (Ward, 2019, p.23-24) and noting that on FLAMIN grants 'participants […] gave up part of their fee in order to appropriately pay crew' (ibid., p.21). He also shows that while traditional gallery contexts can offer film and video artists a sustainable income through the sale of limited editions, those who are working 'within a 'screening' distribution process can only rely upon a distribution fee of a few hundred pounds as recoupment per year via an institution such as LUX' (ibid.). In most cases, narrative animated documentary would be distributed via this latter model rather than a gallery sales model.

Echoing Bowker and Star's work on categorisation, Ward notes that language is vital to what work can be produced, proposing that 'semantic definitions' even those that are 'meaningless', are crucial in determining who gets funding (ibid., p.7). Thomas suggests that applicants applying for funding from ACE should call themselves 'visual artists' rather than 'animators'' (Thomas, 2016). Pugh observes that this forced redefining of practice also impacts moving image programmers and curators:

> The split between 'film' and 'visual arts' and its application by Arts Council England and the various generations of film funding bodies that have come and go [means that] Curators find themselves having to navigate the borders of these agencies with ever more cunning, playing the strengths of each particular project to the strategic priorities of funders.
>
> (Pugh, 2017, p.12)

The way a filmmaker self-describes has an effect on their career outside of the immediate funding opportunity. If a filmmaker is seen as a fine artist working in a fine art context (as a member of the networks and communities of fine art production and distribution) it can alienate them, over time, from the mainstream film and television industries. This can further reduce their chances of being able to scale up and produce long-form narrative work in a commercial context. Put plainly, if a filmmaker's website describes them as an 'artist animator' they may be more likely to get ACE funding, but less likely to convince a financier that they can captivate a mainstream audience and tell a well-structured and compelling story.

Broadcasters and editorial houses

Animated documentaries are sometimes commissioned and exhibited by UK television broadcasters; international news networks such as CNN and Al Jazeera also commission factual animation, sometimes working with UK filmmakers. Additionally, online editorial houses such as *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* have become significant commissioners of short animated nonfiction. Educational organisations such as TED.com and School of Life have also commissioned short animated films to illustrate and explain ideas from science, technology, politics and philosophy. Budgets for these made-for-web short films can range from very low (£1000 or less) to more generous (around £20000)[18], but are rarely able to compete with commercial advertising budgets. The European Commission has noted that a recent 'decrease of investment in animation by European broadcasters has forced producers to explore new sources of financing. Licensing and internet services have become more and more fundamental for the industry' (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2015, p.6). Online streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon have in recent years come to threaten the

[18] Andy Glynne has advised that for small studios, editorial content is usually priced between £15000-£20000 (Glynne, 2016). Lower fees are also common. In 2014, for example, I was invited to pitch for a commission to design and animate a two-minute factual animation for an established editorial house for a fee of £800.

market position of traditional broadcasters while also supporting them through buying their content. There is scope for increased animated documentary commissioning and acquisition here, as the model used by platforms such as Netflix and MUBI pays more mind to niche audiences than mainstream traditional broadcasters.

In the UK, much of the broadcast funding for short animated documentary has come from the BBC and Channel 4. Although BBC has not commissioned a fully animated long form documentary since *The Trouble with Love and Sex*, it has been quite prolific in commissioning short nonfiction animation. Most of this has been produced for its subdivisions such as e-Learning, which commission many of Mosaic Films' short animated documentaries, or iPlayer, which hosted the animated version of BBC Radio 4's *Life Inside Islamic State* (2016). BBC Ideas commissions short nonfiction animation and live action, although their average budgets of £1,000 per minute make it challenging for professional animators to produce anything beyond basic visual content. Slots such as CBBC Newsround also commission animated documentary content, such as *Living With Alcohol* (2011) which won a BAFTA for Best Children's Factual Program. BBC4 has commissioned short animated documentaries on new talent schemes in partnership with the BFI. These include *That Yorkshire Sound* (2017), *Childhood Memories* (2018) and my own short film *O Hunter Heart* (2018). BBC4 has also broadcast other animated documentary content including *Children of the Holocaust*, which was originally commissioned for the BBC's e-Learning platform but migrated to television for Holocaust Memorial Day.

As outlined in Chapter 1, Channel 4's history of commissioning short animated documentary work throughout the 1990s is significant; many of the films which are now in the canon of British animated documentary were produced in this context. While it is no longer a pioneering advocate of animated documentary, Channel 4 still occasionally supports the form, for

example through their Random Acts short film commissions and acquisitions. Random Acts is Channel 4's 'short film strand dedicated to the arts, founded in 2011 to escape the conventions of arts broadcasting and to expand its possibilities' (Channel 4, n.d.) and it has partnered with organisations including ACE, filmmakers network Shooting People and design blog *It's Nice That*. They 'have not specifically looked for short docs' (ibid) but have commissioned animated documentaries including *Private Parts* (2015), *A Memory of Christmas* (2015) and *The Law of the Sea* (2016). Random Acts allows auteur independent filmmakers to develop their work and reach an audience but, as with the BBC, this commissioning sits outside of the channel's main production and programming.

Trusts, charities, foundations, brands

Many films that are presented and received as animated documentary are funded by organisations that are not specifically geared towards arts funding, but for whom film commissioning offers the opportunity to communicate their messages or to meet their priorities. These include trusts, charities and foundations, governmental and non-governmental organisations and brands. Films for these funders (or clients, as they are sometimes positioned) can be made as informative or "explainer" films, such as those made by ForMed Films and Infocandy, whose work lies on the borders of documentary. They can also be commissioned as more conventional animated documentaries in which the film's messaging is encoded in creative, less overtly informative formats (as seen in examples such as Mosaic's Wellcome-funded *Shattered Minds* (2016) films or Rory Waudby-Tolley's *Art for Lawyers* (2017). Between these two forms are films such as Emily Downe's *My Dream My Taste* (2020), a creative visual interpretation of audio from an existing podcast by a Christian think tank.

Leeds Animation Workshop found that when funding from the BFI 'dried up' in the 1980s to 1990s, accessing non-film finance was both practical and appropriate to its practice:

> we found sources of funding that weren't necessarily designed for films. Because we knew we wanted to make films about something meaningful, we were looking for funds that would fund the kind of meaningful things we wanted to make, even if they weren't looking for films.
>
> (Wragg, 2019)

However charitable funds became increasingly difficult to access over time, with less money, and more competition from organisations working directly with social problems:

> austerity was coming in […] the only people who were left who were funding the sort of projects we were doing at the level of funding that we needed were the Big Lottery Fund […] we were applying for a film […] and we had loads of supporters in place in all levels of that field. But it wasn't front line working. The people that were getting the projects were the people who were actually on the streets.
>
> (ibid.)

Wellcome's support of animated documentaries by independent filmmakers was most prevalent between 2007 and 2018. The majority of these commissions came through Wellcome's Arts Awards, which launched in 2007 with an open call for submissions and a focus on 'experimentation, artistic quality […] collaborative practice [and] interdisciplinary work' (Candy, 2016). This initiative funded or part-funded short animated documentaries including Samantha Moore's *An Eyeful of Sound* (2010), Ellie Land's *Centrefold* (2012), Animate Projects' anthologies *Navigations* (2013) and *Silent Signal* (2016), and my own short animated documentary *Devil In The Room* (2013). Other projects were funded through Wellcome's Public Engagement strand, including Mosaic Films' *Shattered Minds* (2016) series on post-natal depression and military PTSD. Lisa Jamison, head of Wellcome's Engaging Science from 2013-2016, emphasises that Wellcome's definition of engagement focuses on the *process* of production, rather than engagement being something that happens when the film reaches

an audience: ‘We don’t fund art to enhance engagement; the art is the engagement. Our Arts Awards seek to support projects with a strong artistic vision and a genuine collaboration between the artist and researchers’ (Jamison, quoted in Caines, 2014). The value that Wellcome derives from funded projects may not require the project to generate social or cultural capital beyond that which is inherent in the processes of the production itself: if the collaborative activity between an artist and a scientist is strong, this can be outcome enough in itself.

In 2018 Wellcome announced that it would no longer be operating an open, rolling funding call for arts projects. This came as bad news to the many practitioners whose careers had been at least partially shaped by repeated Wellcome funding, and those who were developing projects for which they had intended to seek Wellcome funding. The distinctive type of films that the Trust commissioned – collaborative in method, creative in tone, and scientific in subject matter - would struggle to find a place in other current UK funding schemes.

Academic Funding

Academic funding can be accessed by researchers and used to produce animated documentary work, either in the context of practice-based PhD research (such as that currently being produced by researchers including Alex Widdowson, Susan Young, Xue Han and Sally Pearce) or as free-standing, often collaborative, research projects. Short films that have been financed or part financed in this way include Emma Calder’s *Everyone is Waiting for Something to Happen* (2015), and Osbert Parker’s *Life on the Move* (2019). Academic funding can also be accessed by university staff, as in the case of Sue Subury’s *Hunger by the Sea* (2017), funded by Bournemouth University’s Student Research Assistant scheme. In some cases, internal funding can be used in partnership with other funding pots, for example in the case of Chris Shepherd’s *Yours Faithfully, Edna Welthorpe (Mrs)* (2017), funded by the University of Leicester and ACE.

Chapter 3.3 - Social capital

"It's not what you know it's who you know" is a well-worn cliché across the creative industries but one which is still thought by many to be founded in truth. In the UK animation industry, 'word of mouth' is the most common recruitment method, with 'using existing contacts' also common (Animation UK, 2018, p.8). Social links broker introductions that lead to work opportunities, and one job will often lead to another. Across the media industries, crews often work together across multiple projects. In an industry driven by freelance working, or as Caldwell (2008, p.113-114) describes it 'labour nomadism', communities that are bonded by exchanges of social capital define who gets work, as well as defining the narratives and culture of the workplace. Caldwell describes how

> On any given set, the employment origins of the current collection of workers can be "archeologically" traced back to a diverse set of tributaries that flow, overlap, and intersect before their confluence into a production team […] [nomadism] also provides forms of experiential and cultural capital formed from hard learned insights and interpersonal creative influence between workers.
>
> (ibid.)

Social capital is a powerful force in animated documentary production, and word-of-mouth recommendations are common (see, for example: Hodgson, 2019, p.192; Senior, 2019). The case studies explored later in this chapter present examples of social networks producing professional opportunities and creative collaborations. Samantha Moore describes the animation industry as 'a really friendly place to work, but only when you know everybody' (Moore, 2019). While established practitioners benefit from the goodwill and support of friends and associates in the industry, it can be a struggle to initially build this social capital. Moore recalls this struggle at the beginning of her career:

> I remember being on the outside of it and just thinking I will never crack this, especially because I was living outside of London and just feeling like "I don't know these people, it seems so far away. And I don't really understand how to get in with them if I don't go to the London Animation Club every week, and hang out, and make mates and things like that."
>
> (Moore, 2019)

For animator Jennifer Zheng, a permanent job at Moth Studio came as a result of networking, as well as the investment of time and low paid labour in the form of an internship, and the objectified cultural capital of her graduation film, the animated documentary *Tough* (2016). She remembers:

> I did a short two-week internship at Moth, so I got to know the directors David, Marie-Margaux and Daniel. When Margaux spoke at my university, I asked her if they were looking for an intern […] I kept in touch and sent them my graduation film, which they responded to with a very cryptic email asking to meet for coffee and offered me a job.
>
> (Zheng, quoted in Snoad, 2017)

Speaking at Sheffield Doc/Fest, documentary director Rupert Russell described how his series of animated documentary shorts *How The World Went Mad* (2018) were commissioned:

> I just so happened to be working with Nick Fraser on *Freedom for the Wolf* which he had come on to help, and we'd nearly finished it. He said "can you make me five short films? I have a very small amount of money but you can do whatever you like". And I said "I've got these essays I've been writing on madness, why don't we bring them to life?" and he said "sure, that sounds fun".
>
> (Russell, speaking at Arora et al., 2018)

Russell was already working with Fraser, and so was in regular contact with him. Because of this he did not have to go through the gatekeepers and stages that formal commissioning often entails; the opportunity was brought

to him. Describing how he came to work with the animation studio Double Dare, who have collaborated on a number of his documentaries, Russell describes the processes by which social capital steers much hiring in the film industry:

> When you work in indie film, you're always searching for people to work with. You're always looking, whether it's a sound designer, a composer, a motion graphics artist, a cinematographer. Often, you're thinking "who can I afford?" […] often you find a student or someone who is really passionate about the project, you start working with them, you end up having a rapport, and then when you actually do have more money you want to hire that person because that's a person you've been working with. They know what you like. And that's what's happened [with Double Dare studio]. I started working with them on a very small commission, and their work was so great, and they understood me and were very good at doing visual representations of abstract ideas. We just kind of kept on working together […] Your relationships, as a filmmaker, is your business and you just start off with who you can afford but as you both go up the ladder you take those people with you and you learn together.
>
> (Russell, speaking at Arora et al., 2018)

Many high profile talent development schemes, training initiatives and mentoring programmes promise to generate social, as well as cultural, capital for participants (see for example: Women In Animation, 2019; Guiding Lights, 2019). Talent schemes and short film commissioning initiatives often include the provision of networking events, designed to promote the talent on the scheme and to strengthen their connections with each other and with the wider industry.[19] In a 2009 independent report on UK Film Council funding programmes, filmmakers consulted about access and diversity 'cited networking as one of the most powerful additional benefits of public support' (Northern Alliance, 2009, p.36).

[19] For example London Calling and Animation2018 both included formal networking events as part of their programme.

Chapter 3.4 - Cultural capital

It has been suggested that animation traditionally carries lower cultural capital than some other creative forms (see for example Leslie and McKim, 2017, p.209). However documentary animation lies on the fringes of traditional animation, and often challenges the perception of animation as a form of lowbrow entertainment. Aardman's short nonfiction films *Conversation Pieces* (1982-3), for example, have been described as falling 'more into the category of art than entertainment' (Lane and Aardman, 2003, p.12). Jonathan Hodgson has found that documentary allows him to present his animation as serious artistic practice:

> I always wanted to make serious arty films. I never wanted to make cartoon, narrative things or funny films. I think that's where a lot of animated documentary may have developed from – slightly in opposition to the mainstream approach. Trying to do something serious. A lot of people said "you do cartoons" and I said "no actually animation is a serious artform", and I think somehow saying it's animated documentary legitimizes it, people can understand what it is, as opposed to if you just say you're making "animation art".
>
> (Hodgson, speaking at Glynne et al. 2015)

While animated documentary carries greater cultural capital than traditional animation, live action documentary may carry more cultural capital, in some circles, than animated documentary. When Hodgson was introduced to *The Trouble With Love and Sex*, he remembers:

> Zac was interested in making a film about relationship therapy, but the only other things he could confirm at that stage was that the film was going to be about 50 minutes long and would be fully animated. […] I felt bemused by how easily a non-animator had secured a commission to make a long-form animation, while experienced animators such as me struggled to fund even a short.
>
> (Hodgson, 2019, p.192)

When the project had been picked up by Nick Mirsky, Zac Beattie did not even have a subject for the film, beyond knowing that he wanted to make an animated documentary (Mirsky, 2019). In the broadcast documentary landscape, Beattie had accumulated enough cultural and social capital to get the idea taken seriously, developed, and eventually commissioned.

Documentary itself is not universally regarded as high in cultural capital. Fraser observes that there has traditionally been a 'cultural snobbery' surrounding documentary films, which have been regarded as 'filler' or 'agitprop' (Fraser, 2019, p.40). However he suggests that their lack of 'real cultural recognition' has given them a freedom to represent the world in a distinctive and important way: 'They inhabit, creatively, a nowhereness, always somewhere between other things; but that's a very good place from which to observe the contradictions and horrors of our times' (ibid. p.46).

As I have shown, short film can be seen to carry less cultural capital than longer form work. Gary Thomas describes short film as something that 'has a cultural value in its own right' but acknowledges that this opinion is one that is not shared by most in the industry (Thomas, 2016). He notes that in order to increase the cultural value of a short film it is sometimes necessary to promote it as part of a larger project. When Animate Projects collaborated with Channel 4 Random Acts in 2014, Thomas felt that 'it was important to theme the commissions, so that we didn't just end up with five individual films, so that we could make more of a fuss of something' (ibid.). Having a themed series of films to promote rather than 'just' individual shorts allowed the films to compete with longer form work in terms of visibility. Animate Projects followed a similar strategy when they produced the *Silent Signal* series of films, collaborations between animators and scientists. Thomas estimates that *Silent Signal* received project funding of around £140,000, which meant that six commissions could be awarded with fees of £15,000 each, which he describes as 'substantial enough and as an overall project big enough to get some kind of profile' (ibid.). The benefits of

promoting an anthology of connected short films, as opposed to single, unrelated films, were also harnessed by the *Happiness Machine* project (2019), an international set of short film commissions which included pieces by both Samantha Moore and Elizabeth Hobbs.

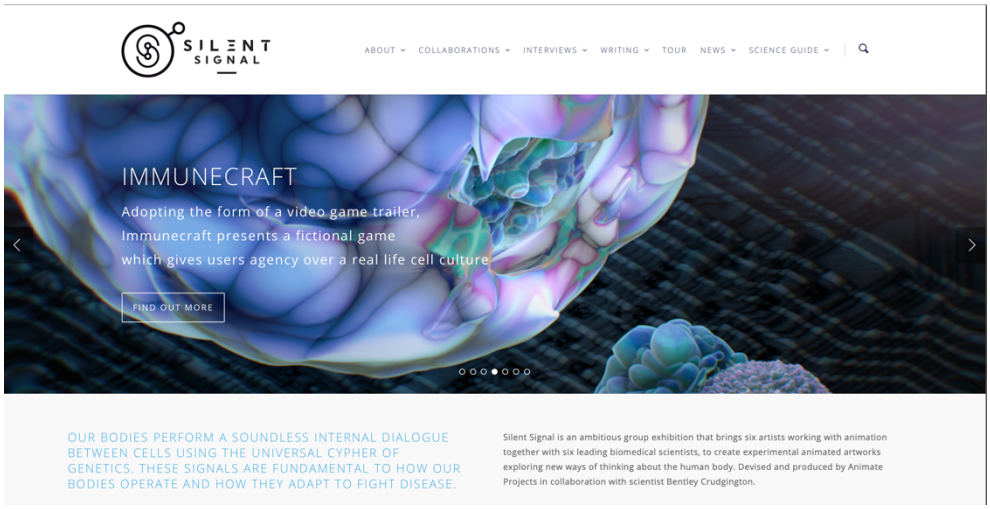


Figure 4; *Silent Signal* project website

Objectified cultural capital

A film can function as an objectified piece of cultural capital benefiting those who worked on it and those who commissioned it or contributed to it. Helen Brunsdon, director of Animation UK, notes that traditionally in the UK, animated shorts were often made with economic support from a financier (such as Channel 4) *and* in-kind support from a studio.

> Somebody like Nexus studio would have said "ok well with your grant that you've got from Channel 4 you can make it in the studio but you'll be one of our new directors". So they give them the studio backing and resources […] more often than not directors were then used for advertising campaigns, so if they had a new take on a technique or a new style, then that was what the studios or companies would showcase.
>
> (Brunsdon, 2019)

Brunsdon disagrees with those that dismiss shorts as non-commercial, arguing that they generate eventual economic capital in order to create profit for the studio that facilitates the production.

> They're not cash cows in the sense of their return on their investment in terms of monetary sales. But if you then put it through the infrastructure of a company then that new technique, or that new take, or that new director's voice definitely can give more cash back to that company in different ways. So they've gone on the roster for new directors to the studio, that might have attracted more work to the studio, which would have hit their bottom line at some stage.
>
> (ibid.)

Marie-Margaux Tsakiri-Scanatovits increased the cultural capital of Moth Studio through investing resource into the production of the short animated documentary *A Kiss, Deferred* (2015). The film was commissioned by the *New York Times*, but it was Tsakiri-Scanatovits who approached them with her desire to work on a project.

> *The New York* Times have a column called *Modern Love* […] quarterly they do animations for it. And I just really wanted to make one, so I just emailed them one day and said "can I please make one?" And they came back and said "hey, yes, great, maybe you can do the one for July. You've got four weeks to do it, and $2000". And I was like '"my god!". But what was great was that they gave me a fantastic voiceover. The series producer […] he said take it and do what you want.
>
> (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, speaking at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016)

Although Moth Studio were paid just $2000 for the film, they spent around £15,000 of their own money in employing animators to help make the film to the tight deadline (ibid.). Moth were already a successful and busy studio, but the decision to take on a "loss leader" such as this allowed them to

showcase their skills in a different context and to new audiences. The film was shared widely online and was successful at festivals. Tsakiri-Scanatovits notes that the risk she took 'paid off because it got us a lot of awards […] and that got us more clients' (ibid.). Tsakiri-Scanatovits reflects that, in deciding if a low budget job is worth taking on, she needs to see 'a balance. So, there's no budget, but it's a huge client, and I've got to have some creative freedom' (ibid.). Here we see an example of a practitioner weighing up different types of capital – economic, cultural, and potentially social capital - when choosing work.

Caldwell notes that part of the value in doing a creative job comes from the recognition generated by having a credit on the production. This is jeopardised in a climate where studios frequently do not credit all of the team who worked on the production, especially in animation and VFX departments. Caldwell (2008, p.20) shows how a showreel (or 'demo reel') is a tool that has been employed in part to compensate for the lack of power that many practitioners have over their credit. Permission for an animator to include material they have worked on in a personal showreel can take the place of a traditional end-reel credit, and can on occasion also supplement or even replace a fee.

In production cultures surrounding animated documentary, the work that different crew members have been responsible for is not always fully understood by audiences, critics or commentators. In *The Telegraph*'s positive review of *The Trouble with Love and Sex*, critic John Preston describes the film: 'people had agreed to be recorded while they were going to Relate, the relationship counsellors. These recordings had then been animated by the director Zac Beattie' (Preston, 2011). The animation production has here been misattributed to Beattie, as opposed to the animation director Jonathan Hodgson, the animation producer, Jonathan Bairstow, or their studio, Sherbet. In the context of a broadcast

documentary, the animation team, although credited, seems to be invisible to mainstream media.

Moth Studio found that they were denied valuable cultural capital in the form of credits by a US editorial house for whom they were making a short animated documentary as a loss-leader. The budget that the commissioners offered Moth was $9000 and Moth spent a total of around £25,000 on the film, including money spent on bringing in freelancers. This economic capital was invested with the expectation of a return in cultural capital. Moth conceptualised, designed, and storyboarded the film, as well as editing the voice recording that the client provided. However the client did not credit them as directors of the film, but only as animators. Tsakiri-Scanatovits remembers that

> they had so many demands and we had to battle with them a lot and say "look, you can't expect all this amount of work for no money and to also have a say". So that collaboration was not very successful. We worked really hard [and] we did a film we were hardly credited for.
>
> (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2019)

Caldwell's observations can also be applied to the small and micro studios and independent productions made by short filmmakers in the UK. As a producer of short films and animations I have incentivised crew to work on films for reduced rates by offering Head of Department credits to junior practitioners who would benefit from the credit and the showreel material, and I have accepted low paid roles on the same basis. Social capital and the promise of cultural capital can function as a substitute for economic capital, often because it is seen as an investment that may be rewarded by economic capital in the future through the exploitation of new skills, connections and prestige gained as a result of contributing to the project.

The capital associated with working for a respected studio can prove valuable for newcomers. Tsakiri-Scanatovits remembers that her internship

at the animation studio Nexus 'led to more work with Nexus for much longer periods of time. Once I had their name under my belt, other bigger studios started trusting me and offering me work' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, quoted in Snoad, 2017). Jennifer Zheng was an intern at Moth before they offered her a permanent position, and she acquired embodied cultural capital in the form of new skills and knowledge: 'they taught me about production pipelines and ways to be more economical with the way I animated that really helped me get faster' (Zheng, quoted in Snoad, 2017). However in some cases a newcomer's desire for cultural capital can be unfairly exploited, as I illustrate in more detail in Chapter 5.

Both emerging and established filmmakers can be presented with jobs that offer social and cultural capital in place of a workable budget. Samantha Moore remembers a documentary commission she was asked to apply for by the Imagine Science Film Festival, an organisation who had been 'enormously supportive' of her work. However when they approached her to ask her to create a section for an anthology feature, she was surprised to discover that the budget was $5000, the requested duration was ten minutes and the timeline was six months, a brief which she considered unrealistic (Moore, 2017a).[20] In 2016 Moore was introduced by another festival - Tricky Women – to an organisation who commissioned her to make a short documentary film for the anthology *Happiness Machine*. Moore's film for the anthology, *Bloomers* (2018), is an ambitious animated documentary running at almost ten minutes. Moore notes that Tricky Women, as an animation-specific festival, has a good understanding of the requirements of animation, so were able to get behind a more appropriate production proposal: 'because they know animation, they know that two years is a good time to give you to make ten minutes' (ibid.).

[20] The film, *Chimera* (2017) went into production and did ultimately feature an animated section by artist filmmaker Rachel Mayeri.

Embodied cultural capital

Embodied cultural capital, the 'long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.47) that signal status, are pervasive in the media industries. These industries are made up of communities or "tribes" of practitioners working in different areas, each operating with specific sets of behaviours, skills, ethics, even styles of speech and dress. Wearing an expensive suit may command cultural capital in one environment, while in another cultural capital may be signalled through wearing the right trainers. The same can apply to language: the nuanced understanding of and appropriate use of words and phrases that make up an industrial lexicon and are used in the cultural environment that work is produced in.

Networking events are used by practitioners to develop social capital, but they also have an important function with regard to embodied cultural capital. Newcomers to the media industries need to learn to "speak the language", both literally and in terms of adopting behavioural and attitudinal norms. This is learnt by observing and interacting with those situated more centrally in the industry – "old-timers", as Lave and Wenger call them.[21] For example, before setting up Moth, Tsakiri-Scanatovits worked as a freelancer for studios including Studio AKA, Nexus, Golden Wolf and The Electric Theatre Collective. During this time, she remembers, 'I observed how people ran their studios, how producers talked to freelancers and clients and how they picked up the phone. All that observation and learning I took with me' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, quoted in Snoad, 2017). Newcomers mimic more established professionals, and in doing so they take on the acceptable modes of behaviour, speech, and sometimes even the politics of their chosen profession. The importance of

[21] The term "old-timers" is used extensively by Lave and Wenger and throughout Wenger's subsequent work on communities of practice. The term could be seen as poorly chosen, even discriminatory, but as it is the term used by the original theorists presenting the theories I use, I will be adopting its use in this thesis.

this embodied capital can go unacknowledged and its development can therefore be under-supported (as shown by Dart Europe, 2019, p.8).

The demonstration of embodied cultural capital can be crucial to independent filmmakers competing for economic capital. Most funding or finance opportunities involve meetings, pitches or interviews in which it is important to demonstrate that you are an appropriate candidate for investment. Filling out grant applications also requires specific skills and modes of communication. These skills are learned and developed over time, usually through exposure to those already using the language.

In the field of animated documentary, where many practitioners work alone or remotely, behavioural codes, belief systems, and language can be shared and calibrated in online spaces as well as at professional events such as conferences and networking events. In Chapters 5 and 6, I look in more depth at these spaces in which the animated documentary community convenes and negotiates a shared repertoire.

Institutionalised cultural capital

For Bourdieu,

> The objectification of cultural capital in the form of academic qualifications is one way of neutralizing some of the properties it derives from the fact that, being embodied, it has the same biological limits as its bearer. This objectification is what makes the difference between the capital of the autodidact, which may be called into question at any time […] and the cultural capital academically sanctioned by legally guaranteed qualifications, formally independent of the person of their bearer.
>
> (Bourdieu, 1986, p.49)

Many of the UK's leading filmmakers working in short animated documentary work in or around education and academia. Samantha Moore is Senior Lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton with a PhD in animation. Jonathan Hodgson is BA Animation Course Leader at Middlesex University. Alys Scott-Hawkins was, until recently, a senior lecturer at Arts University Bournemouth. Ellie Land is Programme Leader at Northumbria University. Katerina Athanasopoulou, Xue Han, Susan Young and Alex Widdowson are undertaking PhDs related to their practice. Bunny Schendler is a lecturer at Anglia Ruskin University and Elizabeth Hobbs is a part-time lecturer at London College of Communication. There is evidently an interplay or exchange of cultural capital between academia and independent animated documentary production.

Bourdieu asserts that holders of economic capital can set holders of cultural capital against each other, and that holders of cultural capital are 'inclined to competition by the very conditions in which they are selected and trained, in particular by the logic of scholastic and recruitment competitions' (ibid., p.49). Media industries are competitive, and competition is built into the foundations of academic courses and qualifications. On some courses, competitive modules are built into the programme, and students are encouraged to compete for bursaries and awards.

Labs, funds and schemes also pit filmmakers against each other in an (often public) competitive process. On the Viborg Animation Workshop's Anidox programme, applicants submit their initial CV application along with an idea for an animated documentary. Selected participants develop these ideas into more complete pitches over the course of three modules, creating a two-minute promo video or teaser. At the close of the programme, a selection of the teasers are chosen to take part in a showcase at a documentary film festival or market. In Chapter 6 I outline Alex Widdowson's experience with the acquisition of different forms of capital during and after his participation on the Anidox programme.

Formal competitions, where a film is completed to a brief and submitted as a competition entry, also offer the opportunity for filmmakers to accumulate cultural capital. In her blog, Samantha Moore notes the difficulty in balancing the potential capital that competitions offer against the temporal investment:

> As a freelancer entering competitions can be a tricky balance - you get to direct a short film (yay), but you don't get paid (boo). You could win a prize, or at least get some attention and an audience (yay) but also give up a big chunk of valuable time that could be spent generating or making paid work (boo).
>
> (Moore, 2009a)

Even if your entry is unsuccessful, she writes, you gain the objectified cultural capital of a 'a short film that you can send to festivals/stick online/add to your reel and hopefully gain some valuable exposure' (ibid.).

Funds

High profile funding initiatives bestow cultural capital alongside economic capital. A filmmaker's "value" is increased through the prestige of being awarded funding and through the publicity generated by the funder's marketing activities (which can cost more in staff costs, event costs and overheads than the amount actually awarded in funding). The cultural capital that the filmmaker gains can be "spent" on delivering their funded project often on very low budgets, through bringing in other workers and resources at a low rate. The prestige associated with funders such as the BFI makes it easier to convince crew to work for below commercial rates; it is not unusual for crew on short films to be working for National Minimum Wage, a rate recommended by some of the BFI's funding distributors. Funding also makes it easier for filmmakers to secure services such as equipment and post-production for free or at reduced rates.

A useful feature of cultural capital is that it is not a finite resource; it can be shared without being diminished. If a director is awarded £5000 in funding and pays a sound designer £1000, the director is left with only £4000. But the sound designer can benefit from the cultural capital associated with the funding and with any subsequent screenings and awards, without compromising the director's share. Furthermore there is no "recoupment waterfall" whereby a contributor must wait for the investment of someone higher up the "food chain" to be returned before they see any capital. Everyone involved in a film can benefit from the cultural capital that the film generates at the same time, though not necessarily to the same degree.

While association with high profile funders can add to the cultural capital of a filmmaker, the filmmakers commissioned, and films produced, can also add to the cultural capital of a funder. Funders are able to claim a film's achievement as their own, enhancing their brand. In the heyday of Channel 4's animation commissioning, the cultural capital associated with getting a Channel 4 commission was high. But Channel 4 also benefitted from the cultural capital generated by its films. In 1993, all five nominations for the prestigious, pan-European Cartoon d'Or award were British. Channel 4 had commissioned four of these nominees, a fact recognised by the organisers who awarded a special Cartoon D'Or to Channel 4 for 'outstanding contribution to high quality animation in Europe' (Kitson, 2008, p.11).

Sally Pearce, who is working on an independent animated documentary feature, notes that while an independent filmmaker can begin production on a film without a funder attached, it is difficult to complete one, and even more difficult to reach an audience. For Pearce, 'without funding it is difficult to find a platform' while if you have funding from a recognisable source, audiences will lend you their attention as 'people know the stable it comes from' (Pearce, 2019). Pearce proposes that 'an unfunded and completely independent feature film might be invisible to festival programmers, because acceptance by funders and production companies, the

whole process of having gone through the system, are essential for validation' (Pearce, 2021).

The cultural capital offered by funds can be substantial, both in terms of the institutional "seal of approval" and the objectified capital of the film-product itself. For many filmmakers, the opportunity to work on a film that is truly authored by them is rare and valuable. Samantha Moore admits that 'I have worked for very little and I know lots of other animators who have done the same, when they have a passion project' (Moore, 2017a). It is not uncommon for filmmakers to waive their fee completely, and even to "top-up" funding from small grants with their own money. When Marcus Armitage pitched his short animated documentary *That Yorkshire Sound* (2017) to the BFI and BBC4, who were offering grants of £2000, he committed to contributing £1000 of his own money to the project if necessary to guarantee it could be completed (Armitage, 2018). I have also contributed money to the production of several of my funded shorts. In some cases, I recouped my economic investment through sales, in others I did not. I do not consider it wasted money; the symbolic career capital that the films have generated has, over the years, converted into economic capital in the form of improved career opportunities.

Selections, screenings and awards

Other forms of cultural capital institutionalised within the area of independent film are the endorsements of festivals, screenings, awards, and curated collections. These are often listed on a filmmaker's CV and biography in the same way as educational and professional qualifications.

Awards bestow cultural capital on their winner, and when the winning film is of a distinctive genre they can also elevate and transform the perceived cultural capital of the genre. When Chris Landreth's *Ryan* won the 2004 Academy Award for Best Short Film, Landreth's cultural capital was increased. However, it could also be argued that the success of *Ryan*

increased the cultural capital associated with the animated documentary genre more widely, and in doing so boosted the cultural capital held by other practitioners working in the genre.

Wells has shown how the form of animation has been culturally legitimised in part by a rise in animation-focused festivals (Wells, 1998, p.3). Sheila Sofian suggests that it is only relatively recently that animated documentary has gained equal cultural status at festivals to other forms of animation:

> there were a couple of other people that worked in nonfiction animation and we always felt kind of like second class citizens in the animation festivals because they were more interested in, you know, the craft of animation […] and whether it looked beautiful, whereas we were concerned about content. So my films were actually performing better in regular film festivals and not in animation festivals specifically. But then over time that's changed, there's been more specific categories for animated documentary, and it's been elevated a little bit more in status.
>
> (Sofian, 2017)

Abigail Addison also credits festival programmers with spearheading changes in how animated documentary is culturally perceived. She notes that when high profile festivals such as IDFA include animated documentary strands, it 'legitimises' the form (Addison, 2017).

Festivals have traditionally been where short films generate cultural capital to repay the investment of filmmakers and funders. This can lead to complications in the funding of short-form work. Visual artists working in gallery contexts can partner with a gallery on a funding application, guaranteeing that a funded artwork will reach an audience (and in doing so, guaranteeing a return in the form of the cultural capital associated with an exhibition). But the relationship that festivals have with filmmakers is different from that which galleries have with artists. Festivals programme films after looking at complete or almost-complete "screeners". A

filmmaker cannot generally obtain guarantees from festivals that a short film *which has not yet been made* will be screened. Instead, a filmmaker can build a case for funding by listing screenings and awards achieved by their previous films (indicators of their cultural capital), implying that their proposed project will meet or better their past success.

There are exceptions to this. For example, Samantha Moore raised £15,000 from Arts Council England for her short film *Bloomers* (2019), in addition to €20,000 raised by the commissioners Klangforum Wein from public and private funds in Austria and Germany. *Bloomers* was part of a short film Anthology – *Happiness Machine* – and Moore's application to ACE included letters of support from Encounters Short Film and Animation Festival, Manchester Animation Festival, Flatpack Festival and the London International Animation Festival. These festivals committed in writing to screen the finished film as part of the anthology, in special events with Q&As, if it were funded. Moreover, they costed-up and stated the 'in-kind' funding that they would contribute through the provision of items such as marketing and box office. These sums were between £3,000 and £5,000 each. In this way Moore's social and cultural capital with the film festivals that had screened her work throughout her career was leveraged to generate economic capital from a new partner.

Cultural capital accumulated through festival and awards success has been key to Moore's career since its early stages. It has led to commissioning, and helped shape her definition of her practice as animated documentary. Remembering her 2003 short animated documentary *Success With Sweetpeas,* Moore reflects that the film

> got nominated for a BAA and went to festivals and got seen and that was exciting. People started describing it as a documentary […] so then I went to Channel 4 and said "yes, I can make animated documentaries."
>
> (Moore, speaking at Glynne et al., 2015)

While festival selection could superficially appear to be a creative meritocracy, in reality social and economic factors strongly impact what succeeds. In my experience as a festival producer I witnessed programmers tracking the work of filmmakers they had previously screened, and continuing to offer particular support to these filmmakers. Indeed, while festivals can generate cultural capital for filmmakers, filmmakers can also generate cultural capital for festivals; even in the area of short film, there is prestige for programmers in securing world premieres of work by established talent. If a programmer has helped to "launch" a successful filmmaker's career, it is in their interest to continue supporting the filmmaker, whose career success will reflect well on them, vindicating their taste and gaining them a reputation as someone who can spot new talent. In this way social and cultural capital can weave together in mutually beneficial relationships between talent and gatekeepers, but can also exclude those on the outside of these relationships.

The cultural business of festivals, in some cases, exists in parallel with a commercial business, in which economic capital is negotiated at a market, taking place during or adjacent to the festival period. Animation-focused events such as Annecy in France and 3D Wire in Spain include both a festival and market. In the UK, Sheffield International Documentary Festival is the largest market festival, but, as Creative Scotland reports,

> the animation sector has no such flagship event featuring both screenings and a market. Even London International Animation Festival does not present that opportunity. The Children's Media Conference in Sheffield has potential to fill that slot in business development terms, but not as an international celebration of animated films and programming.
>
> (McKissack and McLean, 2017, p.25)

This highlights the importance of the dual function of market festivals to facilitate the direct generation of both cultural and economic capital.

There is an economic price paid by filmmakers in pursuit of festival success. Most festivals and awards charge a submission fee, which can range from a few pounds into the hundreds. For important industry and market festivals such as Sundance, Cannes and Berlin, submission fees are usually between £40 and £80, a significant expenditure for an independent filmmaker promoting a low-budget production.[22] Some filmmakers decide, often for financial reasons, to disregard festivals completely, and instead to showcase their work online in its entirety soon after it is complete.

The Internet offers opportunities to documentary filmmakers, but it is also a space where work can get lost. In a world where 'anyone can view a doc with one or two clicks […] Some are carried to the right shoreline and get noticed; others just float around until they reach the most obscure beach' (Fraser, 2019, p.81). However the Internet also has mechanisms for success; cultural capital can be generated through gathering "likes" and "shares" on platforms such as Vimeo, on social media, and through inclusion in online showcases and selections, for example Vimeo Staff Picks.

Founded in 2004, Vimeo has grown into a significant force in the independent film landscape, and prides itself on its 'supportive community of creators' (Vimeo 2019). In a chat group for filmmakers commissioned by the BFI/BBC Animation2018 funding strand, filmmakers compared thoughts on a contract offered by a sales agent who wanted exclusive rights to distribute the films. One filmmaker posted:

[22] Alongside legitimate festivals, online submission platforms can allow fraudulent events to charge fees to filmmakers, offering cultural and social capital in the form of audiences and laurels, as well as networking opportunities, which in some cases never materialise (see Kilkenny and Ritman, 2019).

> Our main concern with the contract is that they don't want it on Vimeo […] you can't attempt to get a Vimeo staff pick or anything like that which would be a shame. […] Short films are not really made to make money and are more aimed to get you more work commissioned. If there are limits on being able to put it on sites like Vimeo that seems like an issue worth being wary of.
>
> (Animation 2018, 2018)

The filmmaker asserts here that short films are aimed to 'get you more work commissioned' (through increasing a filmmaker's cultural capital), rather than to generate economic capital in and of themselves through sales. It is notable that the 'attempt to get a Vimeo staff pick' is included as a part of the filmmaker's exhibition strategy. Films which receive the accolade of Vimeo Staff Pick are likely to get an increased number of views because of the cultural capital it carries. Another filmmaker in the chat group responded, asserting that 'there definitely is money to be made from short animation' and suggesting that it is still possible to use the film to generate work 'if your film does well at festivals (plus a trailer on Vimeo, plus being commissioned by this scheme) [it] should be enough for anybody interested in commissioning you to contact you directly and ask for a link to see the film?' (ibid.). The suggestion here is that the cumulative cultural capital of festival screenings and prestigious commissioning, alongside a "taster" of the work itself, should be strong enough to attract commissioners, even if accessibility to the full version of the film is limited.

Cultural capital can benefit filmmakers in ways that exceed its potential conversion into economic capital. The respect that comes with cultural capital can afford practitioners better working conditions, including more choice over the way in which they produce work. Elizabeth Hobbs favours an unconventional production process, animating freely and usually "straight-ahead", and then cutting the animated footage together in an editing process more akin to traditional live action editing than the more controlled conventions of animation editing. The fact that she is not able to

present a script or timeline showing what a film will ultimately be until late in production could be problematic for many funders or financiers, and so these methods would be difficult for a less established animator with less accumulated cultural capital to use. Hobb admits that 'it wouldn't be very easy to get funding for, if you at an early stage of your career, so it's not really ideal, but it works because I've made a few films' (Hobbs, 2018).

Media coverage and critical acclaim

Filmmakers love positive reviews. Fraser comments that 'for film-makers and executives alike [reviews are] the way films are remembered' (Fraser, 2019, p.80). Critics can be responsible giving films canonical or pioneering status by enshrining them in lists or eulogising their importance within a particular genre or field. Murray notes that while reception of the animation element of *Waltz With Bashir* was mixed, the film made a critical impact, which continues to echo in animated documentary criticism. It is 'widely seen as a pioneering and potentially paradigmatic reference point within ongoing attempts to establish animated documentary cinema's potential and aesthetic, conceptual and ethical parameters' (Murray, 2019, p.172).

In Chapter 1 I showed that *The Trouble With Love and Sex* was promoted by the BBC as UK television's first animated documentary. At the time of making the film, Jonathan Hodgson and Zac Beattie were aware that they were breaking new ground creatively. Hodgson remembers that they felt the film was 'venturing into a new territory, not just within our own respective bodies of work, but also in the genre of documentary animation. It therefore made complete sense to consider every aspect of the project in fine detail and from multiple angles' (Hodgson, 2019, p.196). The film received a very good critical reception (ibid. p.203). *The Telegraph*'s glowing review describes it as 'a real curiosity' (Preston, 2011), *The Guardian* observes that the animation 'transformed what could have made for excruciating listening into something eminently watchable' (Dowling, 2011), and *The Times*

Literary Supplement notes that ‘any suspicion that the drawings would trivialise people's problems by turning them into a cartoon was quickly dispelled. If anything, they added dignity and pathos’ (Day, G, 2011). The cultural capital generated by positive reviews contributes to the fact that the film has been remembered in largely positive terms, as an innovative and important work.

While in some cases, animated documentary’s position as something novel, working outside of conventional genre lines, works to its advantage, it has also been suggested that its ambiguous positioning in terms of genre can inhibit its ability to generate cultural capital. Writing about Marjut Rimminen and Paivi Takala’s *Learned by Heart* (2007), Paul Wells notes that the film 'falls between disciplinary stools in a way that dictates only a partial recognition of its achievements’ (Wells, 2019, p.116). This sense of being unwelcome in any single disciplinary arena can also be felt by filmmakers. For example, when considering how to exhibit her short animated documentary *Everyone is Waiting for Something to Happen* (2015), Emma Calder failed to send it out widely to festivals, because she ‘didn’t think it would fit in most animation festivals, and documentary festivals seemed inappropriate too’ (Calder, 2019).

Chapter 3.5 – Case studies in capital

Men Talk About Mother (2014)

This case study has been drawn together from: interviews with Bunny Schendler, Sheena Joughin, Josic Cadoret, Tom Senior (by email) and Melissa Herman (by email); observation of Film London's London Calling funding scheme in my capacity as a participant in 2015; and textual analysis of the Kickstarter crowdfunding website.

Men Talk About Mother began as a series of recorded interviews conducted by writer Sheena Joughin, as research for a novel. As she accumulated material, Joughin began to feel that the interviews would be better presented through animation than prose. She had no animation experience, but was a long-time friend of animator Bunny Schendler, and asked if she would be interested in collaborating. Schendler listened to the recordings and agreed to develop the project into an animated documentary with Joughin.

As a seasoned filmmaker Schendler was aware of the costs and time involved in making an animated short. She suggested applying for Film London's London Calling short film funding strand, the deadline for which was twelve months away. In the year that followed, Schendler and Joughin edited the interviews into a script for the film they wanted to make. Seven hours of interviews were cut down to ten minutes of structured audio.

Josic Cadoret, Talent Executive at Film London (now FilmHub London) who was managing the London Calling scheme when the project was being made, has clear ideas on what to expect from an animated documentary production. Cadoret explains that if a scheme such as London Calling is supporting a documentary, they would usually expect to see 'source material' at the pitching stage. In the case of an animated documentary, this would most likely be audio: 'you'd be presented with what's sort of like a

little mini radio play' (Cadoret, 2018). This audio would then form the backbone of the film, replacing the traditional role of an animatic:

> Then you kind of work on that [audio] as an edit in the same way as with a conventional animation you use an animatic and drape the film onto the animatic. With an animated documentary you'd usually be working with a soundscape as the structure, and then the animation comes on top of that.
>
> (ibid)

While there may not be a full script at the point of commissioning, Cadoret proposes that an applicant should show strong source material. He suggests

> if you're an artist, then gathering that material is part of your practice, so when it comes to the commissioning process or application process, you've already been gathering materials there, in order to create your proposal. And so part of the application process is finding your materials and moulding them into a proposal that's convincing […]
>
> (ibid)

Here an artist's practice seems to be taken for granted as something which continues with or without financial recompense. The London Calling Scheme demands that crews and actors be paid, but fees can be waived for roles such as writer, director and producer. The expectation is that those in these key roles will also be prepared to invest significant time in a project before it is funded, in order to win the commission.

The development work that Schendler and Joughin conducted meant that by the time they made their application they had sufficient audio material, alongside sketches that illustrated the visual direction, to convince the funders that they would make a good film. Schendler remembers the cultural capital that came with the funding; Film London told awardees that projects had been selected from hundreds of applicants. For Schendler, it felt 'like winning a prize' (Schendler, 2019).

The London Calling scheme required films to be made over a period of around six months, for budgets of usually £4,000 (with higher sums available for filmmakers from BAME backgrounds). Schendler was happy to have raised money for the project, but recalls that 'the money was not enough to comfortably make the film. This caused stress and conflict in my mind, i.e. Aren't we lucky! versus Are we lucky..?' (Schendler, 2019). The low budget also made it difficult to find a producer. Schendler approached experienced producers but 'nobody would touch it, because of the money and commitment' (Schendler, 2019). Schendler then approached Melissa Herman, a producer with less experience, who therefore had more to gain from the role. Herman remembers 'the appeal of possibly being part of a film funded by Film London, and of being able to learn through the scheme which included a series of workshops' (Herman, 2019). Here she acknowledges both the cultural capital inherent in being selected for a high-profile funding scheme and the potential symbolic capital gains in terms of skills development.

Although Herman appreciated that being involved in the film would bring benefits, she was surprised that Film London did not expect producers to be paid. 'There was no room in the budget or expectation that we would be paid' she remembers, describing this as 'frustrating given that so many people are excluded from entering the arts' (ibid.). Here Herman touches on a problem with the "microbudget" model of filmmaking. In a culture in which directors, writers and producers are expected to work for free, it is easier for those with capital to create work than those without. Returning to Cadoret's assertion that an artist's practice includes a constant process of 'gathering materials', the question remains of how this ongoing practice is to be funded.[23]

[23] Barriers to entry for the creative industries for those from lower economic backgrounds have been acknowledged by leading arts organisations (see for example ACE, 2019, p.11; Carey, H et al., 2021).

Schendler recruited an animator, Tom Senior, who was recommended by Schendler's partner, Jonathan Hodgson. Senior explains that recommendation is a common way for him to find work

> In the six or seven years prior to *Men Talk About Mother* I had worked on a handful of projects with Bunny's partner Jonathan Hodgson. I don't have a social media following and rarely update my website so it is unusual for clients to find me out of the blue. There is often a connection to previous work.
>
> (Senior, 2019)

The project appealed to Senior for a number of reasons: He 'thought that it would be fun', he needed the income, and he felt the project could help him to improve his own work (ibid.). He also liked Schendler and her creative vision. His range of motivations include social, cultural and economic concerns. While social and cultural factors were central to his attraction to the job, economic recompense was also necessary. But after initially agreeing to work on the film Senior began to have second thoughts, as the small fee offered was not appropriate to the time investment the project demanded. In order to keep Senior, Schendler and Herman launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise additional funds, using the online crowdfunding platform Kickstarter.

Typically, crowdfunding campaigns offer rewards in the form of exclusive items and experiences. Rewards for supporting *Men Talk About Mother* included artwork from the film, signed DVDs and invites to a private screening. By offering rewards that are exclusive, unique and linked to the production, crowdfunding campaigns exchange the economic capital of donations for the embodied cultural capital of items that symbolise a meaningful engagement with the project. Backers become "part of the project", linking them to the cultural capital associated with the film and its makers. To be successful in crowdfunding it is useful if the fundraiser is rich in both cultural and

social capital. Social capital is important because a project's success can depend on how widely it is shared through networks. A filmmaker's cultural capital can serve as a kind of quality guarantee, suggesting the project will be realised to a high standard. *Men Talk About Mother*'s Kickstarter page emphasises the team's prior achievements, and the fact that the film is funded by Film London (Kickstarter, 2016). The cultural capital associated with the filmmakers and commissioners is directly referenced in order to generate economic capital.

Herman managed the Kickstarter campaign, which she describes as 'a lot of work' (Herman, 2019). The campaign was successful, with £3,355 raised (exceeding a target of £3,250), from 45 backers. The majority of these were acquaintances of Schendler, Joughin or Herman, although the largest single donation came from a stranger. For Schendler, the success of the campaign meant more than an increased budget; it represented the fact that 'people believed in the project' (Schendler, 2019). The fact that other people were willing to invest economic capital gave her a renewed sense of purpose. Despite the campaign's success, Herman admits that she would find it difficult to run another fundraiser, because 'going back to the same family and friends for more cash would feel uncomfortable' (Herman, 2019). This observation demonstrates that in some circumstances social capital is a finite resource that can vanish if it is too aggressively exploited.

Schendler had agreed to create an animatic which would need to be signed off by Film London before production could begin. Joughin was surprised at the level of input that Film London expected to be given over creative decisions. 'They didn't seem to get it' she remembers, adding that, considering the relatively small amount of economic capital that Film London were providing, 'it was outrageous that they thought they had any creative control' (Joughin, 2019).

Of the fifteen to twenty films that are funded by London Calling, a smaller group are selected to screen at the BFI London Film Festival (LFF). This selection is made by Film London staff and LFF programmers, and it takes place at the point of submission of a final picture cut of the film, before full postproduction is complete. Schendler recognised that the value of the cultural capital that London Calling offered far outweighed the economic value of the funding. She was aware not only of the time that she was spending on the film, but also of the opportunity cost and lost income that this time represented. For Schendler, the success of this significant symbolic investment was contingent on the film being selected for LFF, and she was willing to compromise on the film's aesthetic, adopting a less dynamic animation style than she would normally use, in order to hit the deadline:

> I decided to have this quite static style. I was just focusing on getting it in for the deadline of the film festival, because I thought if I don't have that real focus it could just straggle on, get late, miss the deadline. And I had to turn down other work during that time so I thought: 'I've got to get it done' […] I really wanted to give it the chance to be in London Film Festival.
>
> (Schendler, 2019)

The film was selected for the LFF programme, increasing the cultural capital associated with the filmmakers and creating the conditions for the accumulation of social capital through networking at a prestigious festival.

Schendler did not attempt to sell the film through a sales agent and the only income that the film has generated is €50 from being included on a compilation of animated documentary attached to a festival in Germany. However she recognizes the value that the film brought in terms of career capital: 'By being able to promote the film and show it at festivals, people know that you're working and that helps with your reputation as a director […] The 'evidence' that you've done it before makes it more possible that you could do it again' (ibid.). Schendler also attributes her current

employment as a lecturer in part to the confidence, skills and reputation gained through making *Men Talk About Mother*.

For Joughin, the film sits 'outside of' her career as a prose writer and therefore offers limited career capital (Joughin, 2019). However, she acknowledges that what she learned from the process 'feeds into' her writing work; it informs how she edits stories, and has 'sharpened' her use of dialogue. She has increased her cultural capital by enriching the personal skillset that she can bring to future projects (ibid.). For Senior, working on the film added to his own cultural capital not only from his association with the film itself but also from his improved range of animation skills. The photoshop-based handdrawn animation technique he developed for the film has proved useful for subsequent projects (Senior, 2019). For Herman, one of the best outcomes was the opportunity to attend screenings of the film. Theatrical screenings can feel like a pay day for the cultural capital of making a film; the filmmaking team get to observe an audience enjoying their work on a big screen, often accompanied by congratulations and professional recognition. Herman also increased her career capital through gaining experience and skills, particularly through Film London's seminars (Herman, 2019).

The production *of Men Talk About Mother* was complicated by a budget and timeline that did not suit the requirements of animated documentary production. Through the investment of economic and symbolic capital, it was possible for the film to get made despite these challenges. The difficulties of making the film informed Schendler's approach to subsequent projects. She now seeks opportunities that offer more economic support. As part of this she is 'reframing the context' of her practice, looking at environments that may be more hospitable to the requirements of this kind of production than the traditional film industry, and exploring the adoption of a 'fine art outlook, or residency/gallery-based outlook' as a method of finding funding and support (Schendler, 2016).

Everyone is Waiting for Something to Happen (2015)

This case study has been drawn together from interviews with Emma Calder and Richard Wright and textual analysis of the University of Birmingham's funding application guidelines and Calder's funding application.

Everyone is Waiting for Something to Happen emerged from an idea that Emma Calder had when she saw an opportunity advertised – the University of Birmingham was seeking to commission six filmmakers to make a short film each as part of a research project. The funders did not stipulate what discipline the filmmakers should work in, only that the films should be based entirely on the social media data of an individual of their choice. The brief stated:

> We are inviting 6 creative media professionals to compete for funding (£5,000 each), which will be used to create a story from someone's digital data […] This will help us to see how experts in the field can creatively enhance existing digital data into film-like biographical documentaries.
>
> (University of Birmingham, 2014)

The brief also stipulated that the production process would be observed by the university's researchers, through observational analysis and recorded interviews which would 'be considered for academic purposes alongside the final edited film' (ibid.). The brief anticipated that the final film would be made available 'in both educational and commercial film environments, such as academic conferences and film festivals' (ibid.). For the researchers behind this project, the primary capital that they hoped to gain from the commissioning was in the form of knowledge that could be used within their research areas. The acquisition of this knowledge could itself be seen as the accumulation of a form of cultural capital that could be used to enhance their own career capital. The brief gives the impression that while the prestige and visibility offered by film

festival selections is significant to the success of the project, it is secondary to recognition from academia. For academic researchers, the capital accumulated within the academic world could be more directly relevant to their career, and therefore more beneficial for them personally, as well as potentially to their own academic funders and the institution for which they work.

Calder wanted to make a film about a man she knew, an animator called Richard Wright. 'He was just my friend on Facebook and someone I'd met at a couple of different events' she explains, but she had found his Facebook narrative compelling and thought it could be made into a strong short film (Calder, 2019). Calder called the funders and discussed her idea, then spent 'about half an hour' writing the application (ibid.). Her application included a biography and CV, outlining the cultural capital that Calder has already accumulated in her career in the form of educational qualifications, broadcast screenings, jury memberships, commissions, publications, and awards. Calder also mentions in her application that 'I would promote [the film] via Social Media and after its completion I would enter it into festivals' (Calder, 2014), reassuring the potential funders that the project would be widely seen and thereby generate cultural capital. Calder acknowledges that the £5,000 budget 'wasn't very good', but she was excited enough by her idea that she felt 'it would just be good to do it' (Calder, 2019). Calder acknowledges that it can be difficult to finance the kind of work she wants to make, and the objectified cultural capital of a finished film meant that it was, for her, worth applying: 'For me as a filmmaker it just gave me an opportunity to make another film, because there are so few opportunities around that are slightly alternative' (ibid.).

Calder spent three months making her film, doing the majority of production herself. Following production of the films, the commissioners organised two screening events, both in higher education establishments. Beyond this though, Calder found that the commissioners did not widely

promote the films: ‘They didn’t do much with it […] they just stuck it somewhere hidden on YouTube’ (ibid.). While the funders may have exploited the cultural value of the film in their own academic environment, this is of less value to Calder than it is to them, and she is unlikely to directly benefit from these events in terms of increased career opportunities.

The film’s commissioners continue to hold non-exclusive rights to exhibit the film on their website, allowing them to profit from the project’s cultural value, but do not hold rights that would allow them to recoup or profit financially from the film; any economic capital generated by the film would belong to Calder. Calder has not yet received any direct economic capital from the film’s exploitation, but she values the cultural capital generated through its inclusion in festivals, some of which have invited Calder to speak on panels and Q&As. Profile-raising events such as this, as well as the prestige associated with making a film in itself, have indirectly helped Calder to generate income through increased career capital. Calder observes that, although making a short film may not be an immediately profitable activity, ‘it just helps with getting work in general when you have completed a new film. Even if it’s mainly teaching and lectures’ (ibid.).

Art For Lawyers (2017)

This case study has been drawn together from: interviews with Rory Waudby-Tolley and Maggie O'Regan; analysis of online materials released by Waudby-Tolley and InSitu; and analysis of the film itself.

Shortly after Rory Waudby-Tolley released his Royal College of Art graduation film *Mr Madila or The Colour of Nothing* (2015), he received an invitation to pitch to create an artwork as part of a residency at law firm Pinsent Masons:

> I got a voicemail message from Maggie O'Regan, of InSitu, their art consultant, who had seen Mr Madila at the RCA show, and asked if I was up for trying something out. They have an art collection and a programme which includes a sculpture changeover scheme, but the purpose of the residency is to try to engage their employees with the art itself.
>
> (Waudby Tolley, 2017)

InSitu is an organisation connecting businesses to art and artists. Their aim is to 'enhance workplaces and spaces with art, facilitate creative exchange and […] develop cultural activities that inspire and motivate organisations' (InSitu, 2019). Waudby-Tolley was offered a fee of £10,000 for the residency, which would include engagement activities with employees as well as the production of an artwork.

The purchase of a programme designed to engage employees in art relates to capital differently from the purchase of a piece of art. By buying or commissioning artwork, a business can increase its economic capital - investing in a product with clear monetary value. Employees may also benefit from the presence of the artwork, which is often chosen for its aesthetic value. But through investing in the process of actively engaging employees with the making of art, it is investing in increasing the embodied cultural capital of its employees.

Waudby-Tolley's film explores this process in a light-hearted way. As an animator, he felt his own cultural value to be different from that of a traditional artist, and a comic exploration of his attempts to find his identity as "an artist" are central to the film's narrative. For Waudby-Tolley, 'it was interesting to be asked to do something which was a residency, or fine art, because I liked the idea of this perception of art as something that is expensive, and how that is very different to cartoons' (Waudby-Tolley, 2019). It is significant that Waudby-Tolley uses the word "cartoons" rather than "animation". Cartoons are traditionally associated with children's television entertainment. Wauby-Tolley had just graduated from a prestigious animation programme at a world-class art school, with a film that was winning awards at international film festivals. By classifying his work as "cartoons", Waudby-Tolley seems to be drawing attention to how animation is perceived, in comparison to other artforms, by those outside the animation industry. It is also striking that he describes art as 'something that is expensive' and different from 'cartoons'. Waudby-Tolley is a seasoned enough animator to know that animation is an expensive process, but his observation seems to highlight the differences between something which is expensive in direct correlation with the manpower involved in creating it, and something that is expensive because it has a high cultural value bestowed on it.

Waudby-Tolley's work throughout the residency was executed in an intentionally naive tone. To involve participants in the project he ran a workshop in the office building: 'I set up a table at lunchtime in the canteen with loads of felt tip pens and made it feel quite childish' (ibid.). At first very few employees took part in the workshop, but when Waudby-Tolley received help from one of the firm's Partners, who was also on their Arts Committee, he found it easier to enlist participants. He remembers that 'she was kind of roping people in' (ibid.). This gave Waudby-Tolley an insight into the social capital at play at Pinsent Masons. Employees were on their

lunch break and under no formal pressure to take part in his workshop. Nevertheless, given a social invite from a higher status employee, many agreed to participate. As a representative of the Arts Committee who had commissioned the residency, the Partner may have felt personally invested in seeing the project succeed, and was willing to leverage her social capital in order to encourage the lower order employees into participation.

Waudby-Tolley paid his sound designer £1,000 and spent around £500 more on an exhibition of the film and workshop drawings at Pinsent Masons. He did his own work on the project for less than his commercial rates and admits that 'I could have done a lot less work really. But I thought it's not often you get to make a film' (ibid.). The sound designer was also paid below his commercial rates. Waudby-Tolley explains that the designer 'likes working with animation, and understands it's very rare there's any money in it' (ibid.). While the film may have provided an exciting opportunity to Waudby-Tolley's collaborators, his social capital also played a role in securing them. Tom Rosenthal, an established singer-songwriter, contributed to the film's soundtrack. Waudby-Tolley was able to approach Rosenthal to sing on the film because he had previously made a music video for the singer. He remembers '[Tom] said if I ever needed music et cetera, give him a shout. So I took him up on his offer' (ibid.). By reinvesting social capital "earned" in past projects, Waudby-Tolley was able to bring value to this low-budget film.

They Call Us Maids: The Domestic Workers Story (2015)

This case study has been drawn together from: interviews with Terry Wragg; analysis of Leeds Animation Workshop's crowdfunding page, as well as websites and social media posts surrounding the project; Terry Wragg's talk at the 2018 Ecstatic Truth symposium; and Jo Dunn and Terry Wragg's contribution to the roundtable at Deptford Animadocs 2019.

They Call Us Maids: the Domestic Workers' Story emerged from an initiative by visual arts organisation Pavilion, which commissioned Leeds Animation Workshop (LAW) to conduct animation workshops with multinational migrant domestic workers based in Leeds. The workshops were part of a wider commissioning project by Pavilion, in which they helped the national organisation Justice 4 Domestic Workers to establish a branch in Leeds. Over the course of weekly workshops, LAW got to know the domestic workers, heard their stories, and became their friends. The domestic workers suggested to LAW that, rather than animate a film themselves, it made more sense for LAW to make a film about them in order to share their stories.

LAW received initial funding for the film from Pavilion, who raised the money largely from local funds. The amount raised was lower than the budgets LAW had previously worked with, and Wragg remembers:

> Pavilion raised a bit of funding but honestly it was tiny. All the years we've been going, we'd been union members and all of that, and I used to write applications for funding for international partnership projects where we'd raise like £100k to make a film with international partners and translation rights and everything. And we'd got about £4K for this project. And so I said "ok well, it's not really enough to make the kind of film we made before but it's a start, we can start and maybe try and get a bit more". And so I signed up for this crowdfunding thing and we started work.
>
> (Wragg, 2019)

LAW crowdfunded through the site Localgiving, a charity whose 'mission is to strengthen UK communities by safeguarding the sustainability of the local voluntary sector […] by supporting local charitable organisations to diversify their income through online fundraising (Localgiving, n.d.). Their focus seems to be on community in a traditional, geographic sense, as opposed to Kickstarter's brand which presents "community" as a hip, creative club that one can gain access to by using the platform. The crowdfunding page for the *They Call Us Maids* begins by explaining what the Justice 4 Domestic Workers organisation is, before stating that

> [Justice 4 Domestic Workers] asked us to make a short animated film that will raise awareness and help their campaign to end modern-day slavery […] To help prevent others suffering as they did, women who previously survived terrible experiences have donated their time, shared their stories, provided voice-overs. The project provides work for local artists and will be used for education, locally & elsewhere […] Their campaign and our film will make a difference to thousands of women's lives.
>
> (Localgiving, 2015)

This crowdfunding campaign focuses on the subject matter and the social impact of the proposed film. It emphasises the social capital that the project has access to through Justice 4 Domestic Workers and presents the film primarily as an awareness-raising tool to be used by that organisation, which will have real-world social impact. In this fundraising drive, the film's social value is prioritised above its intrinsic cultural value.

Wragg estimates that it took a year of research to script the film, and the process involved 'talking to lots of different people in lots of different situations and realising what the common factors were' (Wragg, 2019). Once these factors had been identified the script was created, combining many stories into one narrative tracking the journey from a woman leaving

her home, through the experience of and escape from slavery.

Throughout LAW's history as a women's collective, spanning over 40 years, it has been a priority to ensure that employees and core team members are paid properly. This position comes not only from economic necessity but also from political principles:

> we were pretty strict about not having any voluntary workers because it's against our union principles and also because we wanted to be taken seriously as workers. Because it was so unusual to have women directing films […] there was always this assumption that we weren't doing it as a proper job, that it was just, you know, a thing that girls did in their spare time. So as part of being taken seriously we wouldn't do it for nothing.
>
> (Wragg, 2019)

In the case of *They Call Us Maids*, it was clear that the kind of budget that LAW had previously worked with would not be possible to raise. Nevertheless, they wanted to make the film:

> because the domestic workers were our friends by now, we just sort of wanted to do it anyway. And I was getting my pension so I thought "well I don't really need to get paid as well". I mean it's only a state pension and it was a bit ironic that we made this film about modern slavery basically for nothing.
>
> (ibid.)

Here we see that the accumulation of social capital while building a relationship with a documentary subject is not always a one-way process in which the filmmaker gains the trust of the subject. In this case, the social capital that the domestic workers had accumulated with the group meant that LAW was incentivized to tell their story - it was a project that they felt personally attached to, strongly enough to invest their time and skills without economic recompense.

Other crew members also worked for little or nothing. The animation and artwork was paid on a freelance rate of £12 per hour, which Wragg acknowledges 'isn't a really a skilled worker's rate' (ibid.). In addition, only the hours spent actually animating were paid, not the preparation time, attending meetings or screenings. The film's composer initially worked pro bono, but when the money was raised through crowdfunding, some of this went towards giving him a sum that Wragg calculates as around a tenth of the fee he would have been paid on LAW's previous, better funded projects. The women who provided voiceovers for the film worked for free, and 'one or two' volunteers were involved in some practical elements of production (ibid.). The postproduction consultant who helped with transcoding files and formats worked for hours in lieu through Leeds Creative Timebank, an initiative that allows artists to swap labour in-kind with each other, in hourly units. By measuring value in temporal units rather than measuring by the perceived cultural value of a member, or the potential economic capital that their hour's work could generate, Creative Timebank values members equally, whether they be invigilating an exhibition, working on a film's postproduction or providing specialist expertise.

Due to the project's lack of significant economic capital, LAW was only able to enter *They Call Us Maids: the Domestic Workers' Story* into festivals that did not charge a submission fee, or where that fee could be waived. While this limited the film's reach, it nevertheless played at respected festivals including Tricky Women, Cineffable and London Feminist Film Festival. The film also generated some economic capital. It won the Unchosen Award for Best UK Short Film on Modern Slavery in 2017, which brought the economic capital of £500 and the symbolic, cultural capital of a trophy. The film raised 'up to another £1000' through screening fees and the sale of 'one or two hundred copies', of the film, but Wragg notes that 'we still haven't covered the costs of making the film' (ibid.). The income that has been generated has gone towards the costs of running the LAW premises, such as water, electricity and insurance.



Figure 5: tweet by LAW, 2018

Wragg finds the current exhibition climate inhospitable to the kind of work that LAW produces. She feels that in the past it was easier to reach networks of women and share a film in real-world social environments. Gatherings were organised through coordinated networking, using print media or a ‘telephone tree’, a system in which ‘the person organizing would have five people to ring to tell them of changes in the start time or whatever. Then those five people would have five people to ring. If I was organizing, I could make five phone calls and that would cascade to reach five hundred people’ (Wragg, quoted in Tasker, 2016, p.129). For Wragg, harnessing social capital through online platforms is a poor substitute:

> On Twitter people will share a clip but it’s difficult getting the whole film out. Because a lot of our films are quite dense and intensively researched and designed to provoke specific questions and they really work best if they’re in a group where people are around to talk about things and sometimes that’s not as easy as it used to be.
>
> (Wragg, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019)

A Pistol Against My Head (2016)

This case study has been drawn together from: direct observation of and participation in the pre-production of the film as part of a short placement in Mosaic Films' Studio in 2016, as recorded in a diary and documentation of the work undertaken; interviews with Andy Glynne and the directing partnership Luca Schenato and Sinem Vardarli; analysis of Mosaic's successful application to Wellcome for funding, and the subsequent materials they produced to try to generate further funding from a range of sources; and analysis of the Mosaic Films website.

In 2015, Mosaic Films secured £40,000 in funding from Wellcome for *Shattered Minds*, a set of short films dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder in military veterans. In early 2016 I spent ten days in Mosaic Films' East London studio, observing their work while also volunteering help on some elements of development and pre-production for the *Shattered Minds* project.

As well as securing the Wellcome funding, Mosaic had forged partnerships with a range of organisations including the charity Combat Stress, and a number of military veteran networks and online forums. These partnerships had brought evidence of symbolic capital to the funding application, helping to build a robust case for funding. In practical terms they also proved valuable in supporting with research and helping source contributors for the film. By putting calls for contributors out to their communities of veterans, the organisations were effectively endorsing the project and lending it their own social capital. In the fairly closed culture of war veterans, especially those who have experienced PTSD, this social capital was valuable. Other partners gave the project a degree of cultural capital purely through their name being attached. Museums such as the Science Museum London, Florence Nightingale Museum, National Maritime Museum and Freud Museum London expressed an interest in showcasing the finished films and a number of universities and NHS trusts also lent their name to the project.

Despite this wealth of social and cultural capital, the Wellcome funding was barely enough to deliver the project. To raise the standard of what they could produce, Mosaic sought additional funding, using the prestige associated with the organisations already involved and their own track record as a creative studio (cultural capital) as well as the access that they were getting to contributors (social capital) as currency to try to attract new finance. The "deck" that they sent out (a designed pdf outlining the project, designed to aid in raising finance) namechecks their partners but also includes a section about Mosaic, including references to the awards it has won and a written testimony by actor and presenter Stephen Fry.

My role in the development of the project included researching funders, financiers, and charitable organisations who could potentially be approached to financially support the project. I found that the project fell awkwardly between categories in terms of funding. It was too conventional and narrative for fine art funding, but the direct social impact was not clear enough for many charities. There were numerous opportunities to apply for feature and broadcast length documentary funding, but very limited funding available for short films at the budget level that Mosaic were looking at. The majority of opportunities seemed geared towards projects that were live action, character-based, and usually long-form.

In the Mosaic Studio, one way that producers recruited freelance animators was through a process of conducting Vimeo searches and, having identified animators with suitable skillsets, contacting them for a chat and fee negotiation. Laurie Harris, the project's producer, wanted to use a gaming style of 3D animation for one of the films, but noted that this technique is expensive to produce in comparison with 2D digital techniques. There was also a sense that archive material would be important to the films, and significant time was spent on trying to secure access to archive material for free. Ultimately Mosaic were unsuccessful in raising additional finance for

the project, but with the Wellcome funding they were still able to complete two films, including *A Pistol Against My Head* (2017).

A Pistol Against My Head is a fairly prototypical example of the "illustrated interview" style of animated documentary, in which figurative animation provides a visual to a narrative-leading soundtrack which is predominantly the voice of the subject describing their experience, in this case the voice of a veteran describing his experience of PTSD and the events that led up to his diagnosis. Luca Schenato and Sinem Vardarli were Directors of Animation and Design for the film and entered the project at a point where the script was locked and recorded. They were brought in in part to bring their own 'vision' to the project, and both the subject matter and creative freedom offered appealed to them (Schenato and Vardarli, 2019). They did much of their work remotely but also came into the Mosaic studio to brief and check the work of three 'students/interns' who were helping to create assets (ibid.). Schenato and Vardarli remember that 'the production deadline was too short for the team we had. But we managed to finish it in time' (ibid.). Here again we see a team driven by creative motivations (cultural, rather than economic capital), achieving something that, by their own admission, should not have been possible in normal commercial conditions.

A Pistol Against my Head was exhibited through the project's partners, played at festivals, and was shortlisted for a British Animation Award. At the time of writing the film can be viewed online on the Mosaic website and Schenato and Vardarli's Vimeo page. The directors also list the film's festival selections on their website, laying claim to the cultural capital generated by these. The films themselves did not generate any direct income and when asked what Mosaic gained from the project as a company, Glynne admits 'not a lot!', as the project lacked the resources to distribute the films widely (Glynne, 2019). The lack of sufficient economic capital also inhibited Mosaic's ability to gauge the cultural capital generated or the social impact created by the project, as they 'didn't really have the resources to track a lot of the outcomes' (ibid.).

Conclusion

Documentaries reflect the values of those who provide the economic capital to realise them. This manifests in *who* is commissioned, *what* is commissioned, and *how* the subject is treated. The content and approach of the UK's animated documentary films reflect the contemporaneous funders of the form, and this landscape is constantly shifting.

In the heyday of Channel 4 animation commissioning, it was possible to sustain careers making short animated documentary films with reasonable budgets. In recent years, animated documentary has struggled to fit into standard short film commissioning strands, whose schedules, deliverables, and other requirements are often incompatible with the form. Budget levels are particularly problematic. In short film funding there is often a mismatch between a funder's financial contribution and their expectation in terms of scale and quality of the product. When the time-consuming process of animation is involved, this imbalance between economic capital and labour required is exacerbated.

In the absence of funding from broadcasters or film bodies, makers of animated documentary have turned to other sources, including brand sponsorship, arts funding, and support from trusts and foundations. Now, following the recent loss of Wellcome's Arts Awards, we are likely to see fewer films that centre on physical and mental health while other, potentially more diverse, stories will emerge from new financing routes. The BFI's Short Form Animation Fund now offers an opportunity to produce well-funded animated documentary shorts in the UK, but the limited number of awards can only support a tiny proportion of the UK's animated documentary filmmakers.

Although conventional short film commissioning is not usually well suited to animated documentary, the flexible nature of the form means that it *can* exist in a range of commercial or non-commercial exhibition and

commissioning environments. These include those specialising in animation, nonfiction and fiction. Animated documentaries are often funded in a bespoke way, specific to the content and themes of the film, and filmmakers frequently piece together capital from multiple sources, and rely on high levels of symbolic capital investment. This can lead to complex productions in which there are multiple stakeholders, investing different forms of capital, sometimes with conflicting interests.

The investment of a filmmaker's own social and cultural capital into filmmaking in lieu of economic capital brings advantages and disadvantages. It can allow a filmmaker to work outside the commercial industry, offering creative freedom. However, there is always a cost. Microbudget production is often exploitative and contributes to an unhealthy production culture. The practice of topping up insufficient economic capital from funder with a filmmaker's own economic or symbolic capital also means that those with limited access to personal economic, social, and cultural capital are disadvantaged in developing their careers. Furthermore, the films that *do* succeed in getting made on low budgets usually also have low budgets for marketing, exhibition and distribution. This can lead to films failing to reach their potential audiences, limiting the capital they are able to generate, as well as their social impact.

In Chapter 1 I showed that while animated documentary is becoming a recognised form, it remains peripheral to the mainstream, longer form, documentary industry. In this chapter I have explored the reasons for this, showing that nonfiction is traditionally a relatively low-budget form of production, with a culture of cost-cutting, and that this makes it difficult for animated documentary to establish itself within the commercial documentary space. Often, opportunities to integrate animation into longer form documentary fail to offer appropriate budgets for animation production; commissioners and producers can be unaware of the process and requirements of animation, and the cost implications of these.

Documentary development and pitching phases can be particularly problematic for animated documentary, especially if the project is originating with a production company that lacks experience in animation.

This absence of a clear path for scaling up short animated documentary to longer form work means that practitioners working on short animated documentary can find themselves trapped in a restrictive budget range for their whole career, subsidising their income through work in other fields. The common occurrence of animated documentary filmmakers subsiding their income through second careers will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Attitudes, behaviours and skills are 'embodied cultural capital' and those wishing to advance in production cultures must learn the professional and social conventions of their chosen field. These can be practiced in environments including production spaces, online discussion spaces, conferences, panels, festival screenings, and networking events. As well as skills and behaviours, embodied cultural capital can be seen in the fluent use of a shared cultural (or industrial) language; the words and phrases used to communicate, and the ways in which these are used. In later chapters I will further explore the roles of community and identity in the development of embodied cultural capital, and show that the heterogeneous and interdisciplinary nature of animated documentary production means that it has a less established lexicon than many other forms of production.

Through looking in subsequent chapters at the communities and contexts that animated documentaries emerge from, I will further explore the forces behind - and the impact of – patterns of capital exchange. This will extend our understanding of the activity behind animated documentary production, through which we can begin to develop a language to communicate its production processes.

3. CONTEXTS

Chapter 4 - Production places, methods and means

Animated documentaries are produced in professional studios, in shared artists' spaces, or in journalistic offices. They are made at cafes, in classrooms, on kitchen tables, or in bed. They are made by an individual who controls every aspect of production from a single desk, or by a team of dozens, spread across the world. They are produced in strictly hierarchical environments to prescriptive, inflexible workplans, or they emerge from an organic process of experimentation. The contexts of animated documentary production are, in short, highly heterogeneous.

This chapter will begin by looking at three broad contexts of animated documentary production: studio-based company work, home-based work, and educational institutions. I will give examples of the environments and processes of three organisations working as companies or collectives: Moth Studio, Mosaic Films and Leeds Animation Workshop.[24] These examples have been selected as they represent three very different approaches to production. Moth is a commercial animation studio, established in 2015 as an evolution of the work of a collective of friends. Mosaic is a documentary and animation production company, that evolved from the television documentary production company Mosaic Pictures Limited (originally founded in 1989) and began to produce animated documentary alongside live action in 2003. Leeds Animation Workshop is a collective, founded in 1978 and funded largely through grants and crowdfunding, driven by a desire to create positive social change.

[24] This research was completed in 2018-19, therefore does not account for changes to the organisations' processes due to COVID-19.

After looking at studios I will briefly look at "working from home". exploring the workspaces and practices of a range of homeworkers, including those working from home studios and those who work on the move, for example while travelling or in cafes or libraries. Looking at education, I will describe different educational contexts of production.

I will interrogate ways in which the context of a film's production influences the content of the film, giving examples of instances in which a filmmaker's physicality has impacted a film's style as well as touching on how budget and environmental factors drive content. I will then explore the importance of the editing process in all documentary forms and interrogate what editing means in animated documentary, across a variety of practices. Here I will also reflect on my own development process, using the development journal from my unproduced animated documentary *Black Rain* as an example. I will look at animated documentary makers who use performed dialogue and how this complicates the idea of animated documentary. Using Marcus Armitage's film *That Yorkshire Sound* (2017) as a case study, I will show production as a creative dialogue between the director and the 'real-world' material, supporting this with examples from other filmmakers including Elizabeth Hobbs, Jessica Ashman, and Kris Kelly, as well as my own practice.

Places of production: studios

It would be a misrepresentation to refer to "animation studios" as one homogenised context of practice, as if every studio had similar processes and cultures. Studio production can be contrasted with the equally deceptive concept of "independent" production. In the commercial Hollywood film industry, for example, the major studios are traditionally known as the "Big

Six"[25] with anyone working outside this system considered an "independent". At the other end of the scale, studios can refer to a single room or shared space used by an animator, or even a creative workspace in a university. The word can also be used to describe any regular workspace that an artist or animator is practising in.

Arguably the most common connotation of the word "studio" in the UK animation industry is of a commercial animation enterprise, usually with premises where employees work – Studio AKA, Nexus Studios, Beakus, and Brown Bag Films are examples of leading UK and Irish animation studios, while Mosaic Films and Moth Studio are particularly well known for their short animated documentary output. The term studio may also describe a company that subcontracts work to production companies and freelancers as well as its own employees, usually branding the output with its own identity. In the UK animation industry, the line in definition between a studio and a production company can be blurred, with companies that often ostensibly operate in much the same way making the choice as to whether to brand themselves as a studio or as a production company.

Moth Studio

Moth Studio began as a friendship between three RCA students: Marie-Margaux Tsakiri-Scanatovits, Daniel Chester and Dave Prosser. When they graduated they decided to form a collective 'as a platform to do projects that we were interested in, passionate about, and that interested us creatively' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2019). They maintained the collective alongside separate freelance animation careers, and several years on 'when we were getting work, we were getting recognised, we had won awards' (ibid.) they decided to work at Moth Collective full time. A year later, exhausted from

[25] 20th Century Fox, Warner Bros., Paramount Pictures, Columbia Pictures, Universal Pictures and Walt Disney Pictures.

‘doing a lot of work, alone, for little money’ (ibid.), Moth signed to the US Agency Hornet, who brought them a steady stream of high-profile clients. Moth Collective became Moth Studio and, at the time of writing, they have seven full-time team members, supported by freelancers. Often these freelancers will be based in other countries and work remotely. Tsakiri-Scanatovits estimates that 90% of Moth’s commercial work is commissioned by US clients, noting that ‘the reason we survive as a studio is because of the US. There’s not that many UK jobs that come our way at all. Or when they come their budgets are very hard to work with’ (ibid.).

Moth have a standardised process which they work to. Each time a job comes in a schedule is made and shared with the client, agreeing a specific number of feedback points for development and production materials. Moth use their commercial work to subsidise ‘passion, exception projects – maybe two per year – where we will take them, we will have low money […] but we’ll do it because we’re interested in the subject or the theme of this, and we’ll throw some money in ourselves to make it’ (ibid.). These passion projects are usually nonfiction and often successful at festivals and online. A variety of methods are used to realise these low budget projects. In some cases, Moth are able to negotiate a long or flexible timeline that removes the pressure of deadlines. In the case of a short documentary piece that they made for a major US news broadcaster, Moth agreed to produce the work on a reduced budget as long as it could be done in the studio’s ‘own time’. Tsakiri-Scanatovits remembers that ‘we’d work on it in our downtime, or if we had freelancers in and they had nothing to do that day we’d say “can you jump on this project actually and help us out?” (ibid.).

In cases where the budget is low but the timeline is inflexible, Moth sometimes work with less experienced, less expensive, freelancers. For their short science documentary *Better Humans* (2018), they ‘decided to bring junior people in, recent graduates. They were happy to help for a lower rate’ (ibid.). In addition to their fee, these freelancers benefit from the symbolic

capital of working for a respected studio and the objectified cultural capital of the film itself, which can be used as a showreel piece. These benefits are enhanced by Moth's policy of crediting their freelance workers on Vimeo and social media channels. The Moth Studio core team are not credited individually; full-time employees are credited only as 'Moth Studio'. However, paratextual materials that accompany the films do highlight the work of individual employees. Tsakiri-Scanatovits explains that 'we are very transparent about who does things. Like on our Instagram […] we'll post work and say "Jen Zheng has just directed this for us" et cetera. But when it comes to credits on Vimeo we say "produced, directed and designed by Moth Studio" (ibid.).

Moth describe their hours as 10am-7pm but acknowledge that before their regular commercial work took off, work was so intense that team members sometimes slept in the office. Despite the growth and professionalisation of Moth, the public narrative of the studio emphasises a sense of informality, fun and friendship. In a 2017 interview for a trade website, Tsakiri-Scanatovits describes the culture of the studio: 'Employee benefits include Negronis […] and in terms of lunch, we make killer salads as a whole team' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits quoted in Snoad, 2017).

Mosaic Films

Mosaic Films is a documentary and animation production company based in East London. It has won numerous awards including three BAFTAs and multiple Royal Television Society (RTS) Awards. Mosaic is headed up by producer and director Andy Glynne. Glynne originally trained as a clinical psychologist before moving into live action documentary. In 2003, prompted by a suggestion from Channel 4 Deputy Commissioning Editor for Documentaries Katie Speight, Glynne began to integrate animation into Mosaic's work, developing the *Animated Minds* series of animated documentaries. Subsequently Mosaic became known for their animated documentary work (Glynne, speaking at Glynne et al., 2015). In 2016 Glynne estimated that 30% of Mosaic Productions' output was animated

documentary (Glynne, 2016) with other work including production of live action documentary and branded content.

The studio bring a standardised production process to their short animated documentaries. Initially there is a casting phase in which they speak to possible interviewees, by phone and later in person. In the case of the BBC Bitesize series of commissions *I Can't Go To School Today* (2016), around eighty children were interviewed, and whittled down to just a few who were brought to a sound studio for recorded interviews (Glynne, 2016). A central consideration for Mosaic in selecting contributors is 'can they articulate their experience in a meaningful way and can they talk in a way that lends itself to visual metaphor' (Glynne, quoted in Hamilton, 2012). Mosaic's interviews are structured as 'a chat' (ibid.) and are recorded in audio only, not filmed. There is no scripting, but an interview recording of approximately seventy minutes is edited down to a soundtrack of just a few minutes. After the interviews, contributors may be cut from the project if the material is not suitable.

The edited audio is then given to the contributor to ensure they are comfortable with their representation. Occasionally the contributor is also consulted during other production phases, such as the storyboarding stage. Glynne has described storyboarding animated documentary as an 'onerous responsibility ethically' (Glynne, quoted in Hamilton, 2012). He advocates for filmmakers spending time with participants and researching the context of the story, and notes that characters can go through many design iterations before their look is fixed (ibid.).

Like Moth, Mosaic have a small group of core permanent staff who are supported by freelancers, working on a job-by-job basis. These freelancers are recruited by producers and directors and work both in Mosaic's London studio and remotely, occasionally from abroad. During a placement at Mosaic's studio in 2016, I observed a fluidity in the way work was conducted geographically and temporally. There were two main rooms. One of these housed mostly producers and researchers, and also included a large table for team and client meetings. The other room was largely animators, interns and new recruits working under the guidance of directors. Directors

would work between these two rooms, leaving the animators in order to have meetings with producers, and then returning. The studio also included an edit suite.

Multiple productions were taking place in the studio at the same time, with producers working on different projects side by side – some documentary, some commercial. This proximity meant that they were able to informally ask each other for help, ideas, or advice on their respective projects, or simply chat when they needed a break. Some employees kept set desks while others – often freelancers - worked between different desks. While some employees kept traditional office hours, others – often senior staff and freelance directors - came and went throughout the day. Glynne's time and attention was highly valued: invariably, the producers had issues they needed to discuss with him, and in some cases a backlog of work that could not be actioned until discussions – often relating to budgets – had taken place. Thus, despite the relatively casual and informal atmosphere of the office, clear hierarchies and established systems could be observed.

Leeds Animation Workshop (LAW)

LAW grew out of the Leeds Nursery Film Group, founded by a group of women with limited or no animation experience. During production of their film *Who Needs Nurseries? We Do!* (1978) Terry Wragg joined the group. She is still making LAW films more than 40 years later. For Wragg and her colleagues, animation was a means to an end – a better world. She remembers: 'It wasn't particularly about animation, it wasn't particularly about documentary, it was about getting a message across. Animation was a tool we could use. We didn't have cameras, we had paper, pencils and paint' (Wragg, 2019).

Resourcefulness and community have been at the centre of their work for four decades and have shaped not only *what* they do and *how* they do it, but also *where*. LAW's short animated documentary *Pretend You'll Survive* (1981), an anti-nuclear campaign film, was programmed at the London Film

Festival. Capitalising on this success, LAW applied to the BFI for a "Housing the Cinema Grant', which they used to buy a £7000 house in Leeds. As their team expanded and they needed more space, they bought the derelict house next door for just £5000 with a grant from West Yorkshire County Council. LAW knocked the two houses together to make a six-room studio. Years later, when the funding landscape changed and 'the money ran out' (ibid.), the houses were sold. Wragg remembers that 'the idea was, because we didn't have any workplace pension or anything, that between the five of us who'd all been there for a long time, we'd use that as our kind of redundancy money' (ibid.). Wragg, however, was not ready to let go of LAW's workspace. She combined her share from the sale of the houses with her 'life savings' and bought back the original house.

This studio is the base for LAW's work, providing a central production space for the filmmakers, who now include interns and volunteers – in 2018 LAW had two interns working 'completely full time for three or four months' (ibid.). At the end of the 1990s, funding was forcing LAW into a project-by-project approach, and they began to 'streamline' their process, with each member taking on more specific responsibilities. Everyone had a creative job, and an admin job, and a cleaning job. Now, Wragg explains that 'we still have collective meetings to talk about what we're going to do next and how we're going to do things, and when we do get another project – which we will – it will be made collectively' (ibid.).

At the time of writing LAW is not working on a funded production and Wragg explains 'there's two of us going in quite a few days and a couple of other people going in one-and-a-bit days. But that varies according to what's going on'. Wragg adds that LAW 'is just about managing to pay gas and electric bills, we haven't got any hot water because we can't afford to repair the boiler which broke 15 years ago. But it's really handy to have a base' (ibid.).

Places of production: working at home and on the move

The global events of 2020 made working from home a commonplace activity. But even before this, the practice was increasingly widespread, following the rise in domestic Internet connection at the beginning of the 21st Century. This has created new opportunities for collaboration across geographical boundaries, as seen in Moth Studio's use of online tools to communicate with freelancers around the world: 'people we work with are in Paris or New York or Sydney and we just set up a group on Slack and we chat with them' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2019). In a culture where so much work is geographically distributed, even those who are based in conventional studios can find themselves chatting to others in the same room using digital tools such as Slack or Messenger, in order to include those working remotely in the discussion (or, sometimes, to exclude others in the same room from the discussion).

Remote working can hold advantages for employers, including reduced overheads and access to a wider pool of talent. Tsakiri-Scanatovits admits that while Moth prefer employees and freelancers to work at the studio, 'it can work in your favour' to have people working remotely. She gives the example of their Japan-based sound designer. The international time difference means that 'when we wake up he has sent us some work' which is useful on tight schedules (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2019). Independent filmmakers can also benefit from the skills of freelancers based elsewhere. Moore collaborated with Toronto-based composer Adam Goddard on *An Eyeful of Sound*, working remotely through e-mails, skype, and phone calls. Goddard came to the UK for the final sound mix which was executed on Moore's kitchen table (Moore, 2009b).

For many producers and directors of independent and short films (including but not limited to animated documentary) there is little choice but to collaborate with people who work from home, as the producers and

directors themselves may be working from home or from a single desk. Elizabeth Hobbs worked alone on *I'm OK*, meeting with her producer Abigail Addison 'maybe eight or nine times during the whole of a year-long production' (Hobbs, 2018). Schendler and Joughin did most of the development work for *Men Talk About Mother* in the café of John Lewis, listening to interview audio on a laptop, with one earphone bud each. During the production of the film, Schendler worked between her home and a rented desk in a shared space (Schendler, 2019). Although she worked closely with Tom Senior on the animation, the process involved 'sending stuff back and forth remotely' rather than working face-to-face (ibid.).

Working from home can enable production to take place alongside other professional or domestic activities. Jewson describes how

> The linear, sequential pattern of going to a place called 'work' to undertake paid tasks, and then at the conclusion of 'working hours' leaving occupational duties behind, is increasingly redundant. For some this trend opens up new personal choices about how, when and where to work. For others it opens up new possibilities of work intensification. For many, it entails both.
>
> (Jewson, 2007, p.161).

Mary Martins, a lone parent, made the BFI and BBC animated documentary commission *Childhood Memories* (2018) while managing childcare and a day job. She remembers struggling to make the film, which was 'like a full-time job in itself' (Martins, 2019). I completed my own short animated documentary *O Hunter Heart* (2018) while juggling work with childcare. Much of the production took place late at night, nursing my newborn daughter while setting renders, editing interviews, tweaking visuals and writing emails. Both Samantha Moore and Emma Calder also made independent short films while caring for babies and young children. Now their children are in their late teens, and Moore and Calder have studio spaces which are separate from - but very close to - their family homes.

Calder told me ‘I’ve got my own small studio now which is in a garage a couple of hundred yards away from my house’ (Calder, 2019).



Figure 6: Emma Calder’s workspace

Moore’s studio is in a separate building in her back garden, and was built using the money she earned from the Wellcome-funded animated documentary *An Eyeful of Sound*, which had a budget of £40,000. She refers to building the studio as ‘the best thing I ever did, because it’s a separate space, it has a lockable door’ (Moore, 2019). Not only does this mean that she has privacy and peace away from the hubbub of family life, but she also finds it easier to turn off her work at the end of the day and return to the house, creating a separation between work and family life.

For animators who do not have a workspace separate from their domestic environment, drawing the line between domestic and professional lives can be complex. Jewson shows that those who work from home often develop highly individualised ‘technologies of the self’ which ‘are often gendered, with the familiar pattern of ‘juggling’ diverse tasks in fragmented times and spaces more commonly associated with women than men’ (Jewson, 2007, p.164-165). As I have shown, a high proportion of animated documentaries in the UK are directed by women. Many of the female independent directors and animators working in the form, with whom I have had contact over the

course of my research, have caring responsibilities.[26] When I interviewed Elizabeth Hobbs, who uses a studio created in a bathroom at her home, she was fitting our conversation into a window of time between a day's animation and her children's school pick-up. My first interview with Ellie Land took place by phone as she was pushing her baby in a buggy, my second was a Zoom call during which she carried her laptop around her house talking to me while preparing food and finding swimming kits for her children. When I first met Alys Scott-Hawkins, she told me that the only creative work she was getting done between her lecturing work and childcare was sketches of strangers on the bus. In a 2019 autoethnographic paper on her practice, Scott-Hawkins describes her sketchbook:

> drawings and notes come together, jostling for space,
> side-by-side,
> Drawings of my children and my husband in stolen moments,
> Snatched during my commute to work or while the kids are sleeping
> Alongside my notes and thoughts about my work
> And my frustrations and anxieties
> Exorcised through a mixture of drawing and text.
>
> (Scott-Hawkins, 2019b, p.105)

In 2017 Moore presented her research on the workspaces of female animators at the Society for Animation Studies (SAS) conference. She shared images that female practitioners had uploaded to a Facebook group, showing their studio spaces, and contextualised these with quotes from the women. Ellie Land describes her workspace as

> studio/ nursery/ spare room/ laundry dump […] just a temporary space until child no. 2 needs it then I'll have to find somewhere else. In the past 5 years I have had 6

[26] Issues of isolation and of competing responsibilities are not exclusively linked to animated documentary production; they are prevalent in many situations in which working outside of formal work environments is required. Nor are they solely the domain of women; many men also work outside of traditional teams or environments and feel the impact of this on their mental health.

> studio spaces as well as working from 4 offices at 2 different Universities. I often work on the go, in cafes etc with my laptop and Wacom tablet.
>
> (Land, quoted in Moore, 2017b)

Jewson shows that, alongside more work being done from home, the 21st century has seen an increase in work conducted outside of formal work environments or the home, for example in cafes, on trains and on aeroplanes (Jewson, 2007, p.162). Working "on the move" requires certain technologies and multitasking abilities. It is telling that when Moth Studio producer Ifor Ashton was asked about what tools he uses most for his work, he lists 'a phone for emailing from the pub' as among the most important (Ashton, quoted in Snoad, 2017).

Places of production: educational environments

The majority of animated documentary work that comes from educational institutions emerges from animation programmes. However, within this bracket there are many different cultures and environments. At the Royal College of Art (RCA), for example, directors will usually also produce, research, design and animate their graduation films, and will often also work on their own sound design or music. Where other names appear in the credits, these are often names of the RCA's permanent or visiting tutors.[27] By contrast, at the National Film and Television School (NFTS), animation directors are encouraged to work with collaborators from across the other MA programmes and their credited roles adhere more closely with industry standards. For example, the acclaimed NFTS short animated documentary *Abuelas* (2011) credits crew members including writer, producer, composer, cinematographer, editor, production designer, costume, make-up,

[27] There are exceptions to this. For example, my 2013 RCA graduation film *Devil in the Room* was produced with a fairly large team of collaborators, made possible by additional funding from Wellcome.

production management, art department, sound department, VFX, camera and electrical department, and animation department.

Some courses, including Central Saint Martins' Character Animation MA, London College of Communication Animation MA, and the RCA Documentary Animation pathway, offer the students a "live brief" in which they work with client or partner to produce nonfiction work. The RCA brief, in partnership with Wellcome, has produced shorts that have achieved festival success including Alex Widdowson's *Critical Living* (2017) and Emily Downe's *The Redness of Red* (2017), the latter premiering at Annecy.

Educational environments can also allow staff to make films under a "research" banner. Documentary director and Bournemouth University lecturer Dr Sue Sudbury had never worked with animation when she applied for Bournemouth University's Student Research Assistant scheme to make the animated documentary short *Hunger by the Sea* (2017). The scheme pays students to carry out research and work alongside academics. Sudbury adopted animation as a method of telling her documentary story after she found that her subjects did not want to be shown on film:

> after my Bournemouth University student researcher, Charlie Mott, spent several weeks volunteering in three local food banks it became clear that people are ashamed to admit they resort to food banks […] they did not want to be visible. So I re-defined the project as an animation in which people could speak anonymously and took on another co-researcher, Xue Han, a Bournemouth University animation student.
>
> (Sudbury, 2019)

Han had never before worked with documentary. She was given an audio edit of the interviews which she produced storyboards for and, in consultation with Sudbury, she designed and animated the film. This process was unusual for Sudbury. As a director she was 'not used to sharing the picture […] it was [Han's] field I very much handed over to her

[because] I didn't know what was practically feasible to do in the timescale' (Sudbury, 2019). The film was produced over five months, with Han involved for three. Han was paid for 120 hours of work, though Sudbury acknowledges that she does not know much about animation speeds and, as Han was working remotely, it might have taken longer. Sudbury was happy with the result, and would consider working with animation again in short form, though she considers the economic challenges of financing a feature animated documentary too great to take on (ibid.).

Since working on the film, Han has continued into a practice-based PhD, focusing on animated documentary production. PhDs are another way that animated documentaries can be completed in an academic context, and some filmmakers see this as a way to develop their practice and create work outside the pressures of commercial production.[28]

Context as a shaping force

Vaughan argues that the conditions and constraints of documentary-making have led to its aesthetic tropes, through necessitating a particular set of filmmaking processes (Vaughan, 1999, p.62-3). While animated documentary diverges from the traditional aesthetic expectations of documentary, its content and style are nevertheless often defined by the context and the resources available. An animator with no access to studio space may be able to produce computer-based animation but will struggle to make a complex stop-motion film with puppets. The 2D digital style favoured by many nonfiction "content" films such as campaign films is driven by financial and time constraints as much as a desire for clarity of communication. Hodgson observes that 'budgets are so low now. So low. But at the same time, technology is faster and everyone is making these

[28] Practice-based PhDs can bring their own structural restrictions, as described Sally Pearce (2021b).

infographic documentaries which are so quick to make' (Hodgson, speaking at Glynne et al., 2015). Independent filmmakers also use timesaving techniques to mitigate issues associated with low short film budgets, and these bring about specific aesthetic styles. The relatively static style of Schendler's *Men Talk About Mother* was a creative decision driven by a lack of time (Schendler, 2019). The style of Russell's *How the World Went Mad* - a combination of motion graphics, sketchy 2D, boils, and reworked stock footage - was driven predominantly by a limited budget (Russell, speaking at Arora et al., 2018).



Figure 7: Still from *How the World Went Mad* (2018)

A filmmaker's physical, embodied conditions can also dictate what is made - both the skills that they may or may not have and the capacity they have to execute their skills, which may be impeded by illness or injury. In making *The Betrayal* (2018), Susan Young adopted photographic techniques and a live-action type editing process, as well as the repurposing of existing documents (Fig. 9). This was driven not only by the theme of her film but also by her physical capabilities. Having suffered injury, Young was unable to animate using her traditional, hand-drawn style, and needed to find a less physically demanding alternative.

Greet Kallikorm experienced similar challenges in making *What I Saw, What I Heard* (2013), a personal animation inspired by her own memories and her great-grandmother's stories. The film's paper cut-out style , with 2D characters interacting within 3D sets, is visually striking. The reason why Kallikorm chose this style over her previously favoured hand-drawn process was largely because, at the time, she was suffering from repetitive strain injury and was unable to practice animation using her usual technique.



Figure 8: Still from *What I Saw, What I Heard* (2013)

The importance of the edit

Live action documentaries traditionally favour a process in which much of the narrative and creative decision-making takes place in post-production. Fraser describes his work with documentary directors who are 'perfectionists, never happy to abandon the process of tinkering with a narrative' (ibid., p.74). It is often in the edit that a film's themes and narrative arc emerge. Fraser even refers to a film's "truth" being produced at this stage: 'An editing suite is full of files showing different constructed realities. If one of the realities works, it becomes the truth in the film' (ibid. p.265). The importance of post-production in documentary has led to

documentary being labelled ‘an editor’s medium’ (Vaughan, 1999, p13). Fraser describes how documentary editors

> work in the shadows, behind grandstanding directors. Sometimes they merely do what these directors want, but more often they shape the films […] the process of editing docs is the opposite of the one adopted in fictions. With a fiction, you have a script and material that illustrates the script. In a documentary there is no script, so you have to create one.
>
> (Fraser, 2019, p.72)

If fiction, with its script and planned footage, can be seen in opposition to documentary, then animation takes this opposition to a greater extreme. In commercial animation, planning is paramount. The animation process is so time consuming and production costs are subsequently so high, that relatively little material that is created gets discarded in the edit. When it does, it is usually in the form of takes that have failed technically, rather than shots or scenes that are deemed superfluous to the story being told. Jennifer Zheng notes that there is a ‘front-ended heavy work’ approach in animation, in which a designer or director must usually complete storyboarding, animatics, character design and style frames for each scene, before animation can begin (Zheng quoted in Snoad, 2017). In Chapter 8 I go into more detail regarding the processes and artefacts that are used in animation production to minimise the risk of wasted work.

In many animated documentary productions – those that follow what I am calling the “linear” mode of production - visual work does not begin until a soundtrack is locked. Most animated documentary work that follows the prototypical “animated interview” form ensures that the interview audio is recorded and edited before the animation begins. This is especially common in studio work, where production is distributed across multiple practitioners, whose communication may be mediated by a producer or director. The locking of audio (and subsequently narrative) at an early stage reduces the

risk of costs spiralling out of control, but it arguably impoverishes the post-production process, by robbing it of its agency to change the action. While the original audio might go through an extensive and rigorous process of editing in order to find the best story, the way that this information is received will be in large part contingent on the content of the visuals – what an audience *see* as well as what they hear. If these cannot be created until the audio is locked, their success cannot be assessed by the filmmakers or by test audiences until the film is very close to completion. Fraser notes that he has worked with documentary filmmakers who 'make radical decisions about films long after they have actually been finished – indeed, after they have been screened at festivals' (ibid., p79). This kind of late stage tinkering is much more difficult with an animated documentary than with live action. With live action, it may mean another week in the edit, another sound mix, another colour grade and conform. Where animation is involved it could add months and tens of thousands of pounds to the schedule and budget, which is difficult to justify, especially if the changes are speculative.

Editing interview audio is a different creative process to editing interview video, and it brings benefits and challenges. It is easier to cut words and reassemble phrases when there is no need to worry about the continuity of the video image, but this can lead to an arguably overzealous approach. In the development journal for my unproduced short film *Black Rain* (Appendix 3) I document the process of editing an interview in which a neurologist explains what scientists mean when they talk about parts of the brain "lighting up" when stimulated. I note that my editing process

> included cutting a bit he said was "really important", about comparative experiments. Because it diverted from the main point. In conversation we can follow multiple points and parallel/interweaving avenues - in film I think clarity of one point made at a time is important. This may be down to the expectations an audience brings to film - that it will tell them things clearly, that someone has already done much of the work

> for them, that while they can't necessarily switch off, they certainly don't need to be hypervigilant.
>
> (ibid.)

I noted in the journal that as part of the editing process I was

> cutting lots of detail and material to get to the basic simplest message […] Also cutting the ums and ers. Would like to keep them, as character is a part of documentary, but in this case clarity of message is primary focus. Also a point like this needs to be made succinctly - it can't go on too long or will lose focus, lose attention, lose people. […] His London underground map analogy for the connectome is very good. Biscuit tin analogy is also good when talking about reading scales of microstructures. And then he returns to the London Underground map - if you cut it up you'd be able to reassemble it for continuity… a jigsaw. Visual analogies = good for animation of course.
>
> (ibid.)

This editing process sees me simplifying the interviewee's meaning, while cherry-picking and moving around phrases that use clear visual metaphors and therefore are suited to animated illustration. I have multiple considerations while editing: the clarity of the message, the engagement and entertainment of the audience and the nature of the visuals that I might create to accompany the audio. Later in the journal I find an entry from a day on which I was using an audio editing programme to "tidy up" an interview with another specialist, Mike Osborn.

> cutting out ums and ahs, caveats, complexities - taking a lot of nuance out of the message but that is necessary for communication, especially about something so complicated. Very aware too that if I actually animate this - e.g. rotoscope - every second lost for ums ahs etc will make a huge difference to production time
>
> (ibid.)

An example of Osborn's dialogue being "tidied" is transcribed:

This:

> "yeah I think there is, there's a problem about discussion, the discussion about pain and the disclosure of pain within the social and cultural setting. Talking about pain - to be honest talking about all serious illness - is not something we do. And as a consequence the, um, folk beliefs about pain and serious illness are all slightly off the mark."

Becomes this:

> "~~yeah I think there is,~~ there's a problem about discussion~~, the discussion~~ about pain ~~and the disclosure of pain~~ within the social and cultural setting. Talking about pain ~~- to be honest talking about all serious illness -~~ is not something we do. And as a consequence ~~the, um,~~ folk beliefs about pain ~~and serious illness~~ are all slightly off the mark."

In the journal I note that this edit 'feels so minimal it barely feels like a content edit', but reflecting on the difference between the edited and unedited versions it is possible to see that the meaning of Osborn's words have subtly changed. In particular, the omission of his reference to 'serious illness', something which did not fit my research theme so neatly, changes the focus and tone of his words.

Glynne describes the animated documentary audio editing process as one of 'swapping stuff around, selectively abstracting' before giving the contributor an opportunity to listen to the final cut and challenge or approve it. 'Nine times out of ten, everyone's happy' he says (Glynne, 2016). Jo Dunn, a filmmaker at Leeds Animation Workshop, suggests that animation is a good medium for documentary in part because the ability to edit audio freely means 'you can get rid of all the rubbish, the extraneous information you don't need' (Dunn, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019). The selectivity of the animation process also appeals to Wragg, who explains 'you cut out the

crap and put on the screen the particular things that need putting on the screen with no distractions' (Wragg, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019).

Documentary director Daniel Wyss observes that animation is particularly useful when working with interviewees whose speech is slow or broken. He found this to be the case on a project in which he worked with elderly interviewees. One of the interviewees

> would make very long pauses between his phrases, 16 seconds, 12 seconds. In radio you can cut it out and it works, but if you do a video film with that then you see the guy jumping all across the frame which isn't good.
>
> (Wyss, 2016)

Animation allowed Wyss to edit the interviews down to a tight narrative without the edits being visible, and therefore distracting, to an audience.

For Alex Widdowson, context is vital to how much freedom a director should have in editing interviews. When editing interviews with his father for *Music and Clowns* (2017), Widdowson found at one point that he was manipulating his father's words in order to clarify what he perceived as the meaning:

> I was literally cutting individual words to make new sentences. Just to be clearer, because I knew exactly what he was trying to say. He was just being a bit waffly. And then I went back to him and said "can you just re-record this and say it in a way that's clear?" And I was getting into performed dialogue basically. So it definitely breached conventions of interview, but in the spirit of - because I knew my subject so clearly - the idea of asking for clarity, repetition, asking for it in a certain way, felt natural.
>
> (Widdowson, 2019a)

Performed dialogue can often go unrecognised by audiences in animated documentary. Tim Webb reflects that when making *A is for Autism*, one of his autistic subjects didn't want his voice to feature in the film, so Webb found someone else to voice his words. Schendler also used repeated, performed dialogue when editing sound for *Men Talk About Mother*. She was not happy with the sound quality on one of the interviews, so she approached the contributor to record it again using a transcript of the original interview as a guide. Doc Society Film Fund Executive Lisa Marie Russo believes that animated documentary projects she has worked on have benefitted from 'the ease of gathering the audio only interviews' which meant it was possible 'to go back for additional material' in a way that can be difficult in live action (Russo, 2021).

Samantha Moore has also worked with performed dialogue in *The Beloved Ones* (2008). Her original interviews, recorded using an in-built camera microphone in windy conditions in Uganda, resulted in almost inaudible dialogue. As she did not have access to her original interviewees, Moore made the decision to re-record the dialogue using actors, who read a transcript of the original, edited interviews. Moore defends this decision, asserting that

> I fundamentally disagree with those who say that animated documentary's claim to documentary status rests entirely on its link to a truncated version of the indexical through sound. The choice between using original but partially inaudible sound or authentic but revoiced sound is not aided by an argument about which is more genuine - they both carry the indexical trace of the words - it is aided by a discussion about which will connect an audience to the material better.
>
> (Moore, 2014, p.278)

Moore does not feel that an animated documentary needs the "warranting" presence of indexical sound in order to be authentic and *The Beloved Ones* does not pretend that the audio is indexical. It sounds as if it has been

recorded by actors, and the actors are credited in the final credit roll. However, in the cases of Widdowson and Schendler, where the dialogue has been "performed" by the original interviewee, the performative aspect is less transparent. The dialogue is still, arguably, "indexical", and an audience is unlikely to deduce that it is not spontaneous. While animated documentary can be praised for foregrounding its own construction in visual terms, it can obscure its construction when using edited interview audio. However, it should be remembered that live action documentary also manipulates, and sometimes deceives. While many documentary filmmakers see the pursuit of authenticity as paramount, other priorities can also dominate. Guy King reflects on his experience of live action television documentary production, that 'everything you present is so edited for emotion and entertainment' and 'the first priority […] is to have something that is engaging and compelling, ahead of authentic' (King, 2017).

Process case study: *That Yorkshire Sound* (2017)

Marcus Armitage's short film *That Yorkshire Sound* was commissioned by the BFI and BBC4 as part of their *Listen to Britain* commissioning strand. Armitage had pitched a poetic portrait of his native Yorkshire, told through edited fragments of sound captured on location and illustrated with hand-drawn oil pastel animation. The timeline for production was tight; Armitage was working the project around commercial jobs, leaving him with just 'a few months' worth of evenings' to make the film. He remembers:

> Mine was the only animation in that programme and everything [else] was live action so all the editing happened at the end of the process, whereas my editing happens in the first couple of weeks. So basically, the film is a week's worth of me thinking about what I'm going to do and then the rest of the time doing whatever I've thought about in that week.
>
> (Armitage, 2018a)

One of the issues that Armitage encountered was that neither the funders nor Wingspan Films, the production company managing the commissioned films, specialised in animation. Furthermore, the way that the commissions were structured was based on a live action documentary model, rendering many of the feedback points redundant for Armitage. Identifying this issue early, Armitage ensured that the commissioners were aware that they would need to sign off on his film at a much earlier stage than the other commissioned projects: 'I had to just tell them that "I'm doing this [animatic] in the first week and you need to get back to me as soon as possible if I'm going to be able to make it" (ibid.). The restrictions on timeline and the resulting requirement to create an animatic in the first week of production meant that Armitage was forced to compromise some of the documentary elements of the project. He was not able to work with the strictly observational methods that he would have liked to adopt:

> It would have been more of a documentary proper […] I would have done every sound and every drawing from going around and visiting the places, except that I had to have an animatic together within, like, the first week of making it and then I had to start production on the thing just to be able to meet the deadline so it was one of those things where if I'd have had the time to do it I'd have done maybe a more authentic job.
>
> (ibid.)

Armitage notes that this process also meant that he was effectively stuck with decisions he'd made early on and that 'by the end I wished I'd never done some of those things' (ibid.).

Armitage needed to work quickly to complete the film in the challenging timeline. He went on location with recording equipment and gathered sound, while sketching from life. He then returned to his studio and edited the audio to give an impression of chronology, a loose structure moving from day to night. He continued drawing, letting his drawings be led by the

sound, and the sound editing and rhythm be influenced by the drawings in a cyclical creative process. He began to draw frames for the film:

> I like to use oil pastels when I'm making films because I can get the colours down really quickly and everything's on one piece of paper there's no layers and things like that and you just end up with a big pile, thousands of drawings […] it was very quick so I was trying to keep it as simple as possible.
>
> (Armitage, speaking at Armitage et al., 2018)

Armitage notes that the loose aesthetic style that his quick, fluid process creates also accommodates flexibility in production, admitting that his process 'changes depending on how much time I've got left', with the size of drawings often getting smaller as a deadline approaches.

Dialogical processes

Armitage's cyclical, or dialogic, creative process, in which elements of the captured or "real-world" material influence a visual response, which in turn influences the structure and rhythm of the film, is echoed in the processes of other independent animators. Elizabeth Hobbs, who uses real-world subject matter such as historical events as the basis for her experimental films, describes her process as 'a little dialogue between me and the material that I've made. And the material is a dialogue between my artwork and the person' (Hobbs, 2018). Hobbs describes her process of making *I'm OK* (2018), a film about the artist Oskar Kokoschka:

> I was thinking about his drawings a lot and then having a go at drawing like them, and then trying to incorporate a bit of the autobiographical material. And then trying to cut it together to see what I'd actually made of it.
>
> (ibid.)

Jessica Ashman's *Hold Tight* (2018) looks at UK carnivals in relation to diaspora and mixed-race identities. Ashman began by filming interviews at carnivals, and then conducted further interviews about carnivals. She then used visual and audio elements of this footage in an intuitive animation process, and new elements began to emerge:

> I took all that footage and tried to process a film […] I was using some of the stuff I shot on my phone under a multiplane, which is the main way I work, combining that with my hand drawn animation. This idea of the layers of the multiplane, the many layers of the stories I was hearing were narratives to do with people's connections to carnival - how I could dissect that, physically on this plane. And I mixed the collage elements with hand drawn loops as well […] and another character started to sort of come out, this anonymous black woman getting ready for carnival […] and she became the vessel to how that story was being told.
>
> (Ashman, 2019)

Processes change with time. Emma Calder observes that there has been a rise, for independent animators, in this dialogic, organic filmmaking approach where image is cut to sound in an experimental trial-and-error fashion rather than planned meticulously in advance. This can be attributed in part to changing technologies. Calder notes that the use of bar sheets[29] have become largely redundant as it became 'easy to just kind of […] chop things together in After Effects and Premiere' (Calder, speaking from the floor at Brunsdon et al., 2018).

While making her student animated documentary *The Redness of Red* (2018) Emily Downe 'was working from the beginning with visuals, script and sound and developed them over time' (Downe, 2019). The film edits an interview with a professor together with a 'poetic AI voice', and the script

[29] A document which breaks down the sound and music planned for animation on a frame-by-frame basis.

of the latter came ‘from various sources and writings on consciousness, as well as my own poetic expression of these ideas’ and was evolving throughout production. In Downe’s subsequent short, *Better* (2019) she wanted to ‘push the ideas about documentary that I explored in *The Redness of Red* further’. She approached this by

> starting with research and putting sketches, animation tests and sounds on a timeline from the beginning as I found this process really exciting and intuitive. I also started writing from the beginning and recording my own voice […]
>
> (ibid.)

Kris Kelly, who often works on collaborative, commercial animated documentary productions, proposes that a dialogical approach can be employed in larger scale commercial work as well as independent productions, and that this approach is his preference, evolving a visual language in response to the developing documentary material. ‘I don’t think I’m as interested in the idea of being given a documentary and putting animation on after’ he explains, seeing that mode of production ‘more as graphics, almost like the way you put on a title sequence at the end’ (Kelly, 2021). For Kelly, the animation

> has its own voice and visual language and must be considered at the start of the production […] the animation itself has to start informing the other mediums that sit beside it, or it becomes a kind of sub-category. In order for animation to be on a level playing field, if you bring it in at the start of a production, you have to be a good producer and you have to be a good director and you have to be a good team to have that kind of multilingual conversation.
>
> (Kelly, 2021)

Later in this thesis I explore language barriers between production communities in animated documentary, and consider how a multilingual approach could be cultivated.

Conclusion

There is not a hard line between processes of independent solo filmmakers and those of studios. For both, remote working and collaboration is often a necessary part of production; for both, animated documentary films are often supported by innovative strategies, either using resource from other projects, banking social capital, or subsidising them with, or working them around, more commercial work. Efficiency can be improved through the adoption of a standard production process that can be rolled out across multiple projects. This approach is particularly prevalent in studios and production companies, whose overheads are high in comparison with independent practitioners.

Unlike traditional live action documentary, whereby story can be constructed in the video edit, in animated documentary a standardised production process often means a front-loaded approach to creative decision-making, in which the script is fixed before the visual representations are created. This is the production mode that I refer to in this thesis as "linear"; the process follows a straight line from research and development, through audio capture and edit, into animation-as-illustration.

Other independent practitioners take a "dialogic" approach to filmmaking, allowing image, sound and research to inform each other as a film intuitively emerges. This kind of process is well suited to work in which one individual takes multiple Head of Department roles, and the need for locked materials at early stages can be negated. Dialogic production can be split into two broad categories: dialogic auteur production and dialogic collaborative production. In dialogic auteur production a practitioner takes on a number of key roles which can include director, designer, researcher and animator. This form of animated documentary is often subjective, interpretive, experimental, or poetic. It can fit into multiple categories both at the point of commissioning and at the point of exhibition. It is generally less tied to documentary tropes, drawing instead on fiction genres, fine art

and experimental styles. There may be collaboration involved, for example with a composer, a sound designer, or a producer, but the methods through which communication takes place and production materials are shared can be highly individualised and do not necessarily follow a standardised form. In dialogic collaborative production, a documentary filmmaker working with an animator can also have a dialogic process. In this kind of process, the practitioners work in parallel, exchanging ideas, edits and designs as they build the story and design as a collaborative, joined-up process.

Both linear and dialogic production modes bring advantages and disadvantages, risks and opportunities. In the linear mode, it is possible to budget and schedule the post-production phase with some precision. This reduces the risk of animation labour (and subsequent budget) being wasted. If well managed, conventional tools such as briefs, storyboards and animatics can be utilised effectively as part of a standardised production process, to ensure healthy communication and collaboration, and to minimise risk (the use of these kind of "boundary objects" in production will be further explored in Chapter 8). These factors also mean that the linear mode allows employees and collaborators to work remotely with reduced risk. Studios and filmmakers can benefit from "economies of scale" when working across multiple projects using the same standardised linear processes. The precise planning involved in linear production also means that it is possible to explain the final product to crew members, funders and documentary subjects earlier in production, so they can imagine with some precision what the final film will look and feel like.

However, there are also disadvantages to this kind of work. The linear process privileges documentary creativity over animation creativity; it largely treats animation as a form of illustration or reenactment and therefore is unable to benefit from the vast creative scope of animation. Linear production is more likely to give rise to the widely-criticised "animated interview" or "illustrated podcast" style of storytelling. This style

is already perceived by many filmmakers, critics and researchers as an ossified form, and can prevent animated documentary from being regarded as an important creative field. Another risk in linear production is that animators and designers who have not been involved in the process of finding and crafting the story can feel alienated from the themes and characters presented, leading to negative outcomes in terms of quality of work and ethics of representation.

Dialogic production brings advantages. It often affords more freedom for filmmakers to realise their creative vision with autonomy, and the exchange of ideas and materials between different modes, languages and disciplines can foster creativity. Through processes of juxtaposition and experimentation, different narratives and tones can be played with, allowing new ideas to emerge and develop, and giving a wide canvas for creative choice. It is difficult for a filmmaker to demonstrate what the end film will look and feel like, as much of this emerges from the process. In the absence of this, and if the process is fully explained by the filmmaker, collaborators and subjects are less likely to build false expectations regarding representation, and can bring their own ideas and approaches. This kind of process can encourage meaningful collaboration, break down hierarchies, and offer windows and pathways into other practices. Dialogic projects are often scalable and can adapt well to changing circumstances, both internal and external. The freeform nature of this work increases the opportunity for animated documentary to realise its potential as a genuinely innovative new artform or set of artforms.

However, dialogic filmmaking processes can be difficult to effectively schedule (and therefore budget). Organic processes do not generally fit into most film funding and commissioning models, so additional guarantees or assurances (such as the attachment of an experienced producer or a letter of intent from an exhibitor) can be needed in order to raise finance. Collaborators and commissioners may feel alienated from the process,

especially if elements go over budget or over schedule. The individualised nature of the process also makes it difficult to roll out as a model, while its frequent failure to guarantee results in a cost-effective manner makes it difficult to scale up to larger productions with bigger budgets. Additionally, the dialogic process does not guarantee success. Without a tried-and-tested plan and process, a practitioner can lose their way and risk failing to complete the project.

Both dialogic and liner production processes can be adopted by individuals or studios, although in most cases studios find that it makes better business sense to adopt linear processes that can be rolled out across multiple projects. It is not necessarily possible to identify what process a film has used by looking at the film itself; a production may use a dialogic process on a film that appears very conventional in its style. Conversely, it is possible for linear processes to produce innovative and even creatively ground-breaking results if there is a strong directorial voice, especially if the film has been well planned and resourced. Both linear and dialogic processes allow for collaboration between workers operating remotely from each other.

Whether an independent artist engaging in a personal project or a studio freelancer working from home, working outside of a formal professional environment can create a sense of isolation, and a blurring of professional and domestic identities. The cultivation of formal and informal communities of practice can mitigate the negative impact of this, allowing practitioners to build support networks and professional alliances.

Chapter 5 - Communities of practice

This chapter further interrogates the communities involved in animated documentary production, relating this to Lave and Wenger's 1991 work on legitimate peripheral participation and Wenger's subsequent work on communities of practice. I first give an overview of the concepts of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral participation. I then consider the animation production community of practice, looking at structures and networks that exist to support this. Following this, I touch on the UK's documentary production community and its networks. I then consider animated documentary as its own community of practice, looking at where and how it convenes and some of its characteristics. I also look at the intersecting, overlapping community of practice of animated documentary scholarship. I present a case study of Bunny Schendler's trajectory in animated documentary from newcomer to established animator and director. I discuss professional precarity and conflict in animation, documentary and animated documentary communities. Finally I look at community multimembership.

Lave and Wenger's concept of communities of practice is partly drawn from Brown, Collins and Duguid's (1989) work on Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning. Brown, Collins and Duguid propose that practitioners working in the same field 'are connected by more than their ostensible tasks. They are bound by intricate, socially constructed webs of belief, which are essential to understanding what they do' (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989, p.33). This idea has been taken further by Wenger, who proposes that communities of practitioners, individuals linked by their common practice and interests, have a 'joint enterprise', a 'shared repertoire' and a 'mutual engagement' (Wenger, 1998, p.73). He also proposes that communities of practice have local, 'improvisational' logic to them, and exist as 'part of broader systems that involve other communities' (Wenger, 2010, p.1-3).

Wenger identifies two important ways in which members of communities of practice operate:

> On the one hand, we engage directly in activities, conversations, reflections, and other forms of personal *participation* in social life. On the other hand, we produce physical and conceptual artefacts - words, tools, concepts, methods, stories, documents, links to resources, and other forms of *reification* that reflect our shared experience […]
>
> (Wenger, 2010a, p.1, emphasis in original)

Elsewhere Wenger describes this process of reification in more detail as

> making, designing, representing, naming, encoding and describing as well as perceiving, interpreting using, reusing, decoding and recasting […] aspects of human experience and practice are congealed into fixed forms and given the status of object.
>
> (Wenger, 1998, p.59).[30]

Drawing on Orr (1990), Brown and Duguid (1991, p.44) advise that communities of practice can be studied by looking at the overlapping categories of 'narration', 'collaboration' and 'social construction'. Narration is 'the ability to create, to trade, and to understand highly elliptical, highly referential, and to the initiated, highly informative war stories' (ibid., p.45). Collaboration refers to casual socialising of community members. Social construction is the process by which community members build a shared model of the work, the world, and their own identities. Narration and social construction can be strongly linked to Wenger's concept of reification. Both these processes can involve the reification of experience into stories,

[30] Tusting notes that the process of a community 'naming something is one of the significant ways in which that thing becomes reified' (2005, p.40). As we saw in Chapter 1 the term 'animated documentary' is now fairly widely used, demonstrating that the form of animated documentary has at least partially emerged as a reification of wider production culture.

references and methods, as well as into words and phrases that become part of a shared lexicon.

Brown and Duguid define communities of practice as organic rather than created, stating that ‘communities are emergent. That is to say their shape and membership emerges in the process of activity, as opposed to being created to carry out a task’ (Brown and Duguid, 1991, p.49). However Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002, p.24-27) favour a more inclusive definition, suggesting that communities can vary in how organic or institutional they are, as well as in size and scale, in how long or short a time they exist for, in how geographically condensed or distributed they are, in how spontaneous or designed they are, and in how heterogeneous their members are. They note that ‘some have a name, some don’t. Some we recognize, some remain largely invisible. We are core members of some and occasional participants in others’ (ibid., p.5).

Wenger (2010a, p.12-13) describes two types of governance processes that exist in communities of practice: Stewarding governance and Emergent governance. Stewarding governance ‘derives from a concentrated effort to move a social system in a given direction’ while Emergent governance describes a more organic system which ‘bubbles up from a distributed system of interactions involving local decisions’ (ibid., p.13). Wenger also describes power as manifesting along two axes of accountability: Vertical accountability is ‘associated with traditional hierarchies, decisional authority, the management of resources, bureaucracies’ while Horizontal accountability is ‘associated with engagement in joint activities, negotiation of mutual relevance, standards of practice, peer recognition, identity and reputation, and commitment to collective learning’ (ibid.). Wenger notes that emergent communities of practice often give rise to horizontal accountability structures.

Individuals can instigate and develop communities of practice. They can act as 'conveners', those who are 'in a unique position to see the need for a community with the legitimacy to call it into being' (Wenger, 2010a, p14), and/or as 'brokers' (ibid.), who foster links between communities, often as a result of their own multimembership. Lave and Wenger show that communities of practice are defined not only by experienced practitioners ("old-timers", as they call them) but also by newcomers, participating on the edges of the practice and gradually moving into a more central position - a process of 'legitimate peripheral participation'. They describe how tailors' apprentices are introduced to their practice by hemming seams and sewing buttons before learning core specialist skills, a process in which 'production steps are reversed, as apprentices begin by learning the finishing stages of producing a garment, go on to learn how to sew it, and only later learn to cut it out' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.72).[31]

In order to look at the animated documentary community of practice, it is first necessary to consider some of the community structures within both animation and documentary production, and to explore the physical and digital spaces in which these communities meet and interact.

Animation production: a community of practice?

In some cases communities of practice can group geographically. In other instances, their "locality" is reflected not by geographical location but by their enterprise, skillset, values, and modes of communication. The animation industry is a global industry, and in the UK it has a wider geographical spread than other media areas such as feature film production (Animation UK, 2018, p.17-18). Those involved in this animation community of practice also divide and subdivide in countless ways. Directors, producers, writers, animators,

[31] This can be compared to a junior animator, first employed to do clean-up, colour and in-betweens before being trusted with increasingly skilled animation work.

designers, compositors, motion graphics artists, background artists, production managers and coordinators, editors, storyboard artists, distributors, sound designers, composers, and interns are just a few of the roles in animation production, and each of these roles may have their own community of practice around them which they may identify as strongly, or more strongly with, than a "global community" of animation production. Even for a specific role such as that of an animator, the sense of belonging to one "global community" of animators may be limited. An animator involved in the production of 3D digital children's TV or commercial VFX might find little to identify with in an animator working in abstract, experimental, hand-drawn animation.

The sense of belonging to a community can also relate to a practitioner's non-professional identity. Factors such as gender, ethnicity and education can impact the sense of community membership felt by a practitioner, or can impede this sense of membership. This is explored by Jessica Ashman's short animated documentary *I Don't Protest, I Just Dance In My Shadow* (2017), which reflects her experience of being a woman of colour in the world of animation. Ashman interviewed eight other women of colour artists and used extracts of these interviews alongside abstract animation to explore their – and her own – experience. Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002, p.20) propose that communities of practice 'provide a welcome "home for identity" where practitioners can connect across organizational and geographic boundaries'. Ashman's work explores the sense of alienation that she has experienced within the animation and arts community – as an artist and animator she belongs, but as a woman of colour in a space where this is underrepresented, she does not feel comfortable in her community of practice. By reaching out to other women of colour from across the art world, and from around the geographic world, Ashman creates a sub-community, albeit perhaps an ephemeral one, in which these women can engage in a process of narration and social construction, vocalising and sharing their experiences.

Ashman's personal experience and identity inspires much of her work. She explains:

> I'm always looking to talk about hidden stories and marginalised people especially drawing on my heritage and how that intersects with my gender and class. […] working with these communities which I'm part of, as well as doing animation workshops which is part of this community of practice I have. It all feeds into each other.
>
> (Ashman, 2019)

Within the wider landscape of animation production, formal networks exist, often serving (and, in a sense, reifying) groups of individuals that particularly identify with each other. Some of these groups are longstanding, others short term. Some are formal and institutionalised, others emergent and organic. Examples include: membership organisation Woman in Animation (WiA) which supports and promotes female animators; network She Drew That, also for female animators; and the event organiser and Facebook group Festivus, which primarily serves commercial animators looking for work opportunities. Festivus was founded in 2001 by animation producer Robert Doherty, who remembers:

> It began because more animation was being farmed overseas in the late 90's early 00's and the days of bigger UK studios allowing for networking and socialising with colleagues, in a pub, after work, were dying. A friend and I decided to host a one off night and it turned out to be a big success which we decided to repeat.
>
> (Doherty, 2019)

Festivus now has a Facebook group membership of almost 5,000 and holds regular events in London and Manchester. There is no formal membership policy, and events are largely unstructured. The success of Festivus prompted Doherty to start a recruitment website, but it 'became a financial and time burden' (ibid.) and Doherty sold it to the larger recruitment website Productionbase to recoup his investment. Failing to become

profitable, it was closed in 2019. It is striking that while the formal system of vertical accountability failed, the informal horizontal system of Festivus's online group and networking events flourished; this system of accumulation and exchange of social and cultural capital failed to directly convert into economic capital through productization.

In addition to formal and semi-formal organisations, there are casual networks with loose labels attached within the wider production community. These exist online and offline, and practitioners forge communities through regular participation in them, be it attendance at an event or discussion on an online forum. The RCA Alumni Facebook group, described in more detail later in this chapter, could be seen as one of these. Another example is the London Animation Club, which describes itself as 'a monthly soiree for animators and people interested in animation and their friends. It is totally informal, has no entrance fee and everyone is welcome' (London Animation Club, 2019). Primarily a screening and networking event, it also has a website and Facebook group with, at the time of writing, over 3,500 members.[32]

Communities are also established or encouraged alongside training or production initiatives. These may adopt online tools such as Facebook or WhatsApp groups, or Slack Channels.[33] However in many cases, these groups exist ephemerally, and interaction often ceases when the initiative draws to a close. When the vertical accountability and stewarding governance of an organising body is no longer in place, the artificially created community often does not have the momentum or cohesion to self-organise in an emergent, horizontal manner. Schendler, for example,

[32] I have focused on Facebook as an online networking tool in this chapter, but it should be noted that some of these organisations also have active Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Slack accounts.

[33] Schemes I have participated in as a filmmaker that encourage community building through specific social channels include Edinburgh International Film Festival's Animation Lab, Viborg Animation Workshop's Anidox Programme, BFI/BBC's Animation 2018, and Film London's London Calling.

remembers that the filmmaker networking activities that Film London organised around the London Calling commissioning created a sense of community only 'for a very short time. It was quite nice, there was a few parties […] there was a nice community for a bit, but we didn't really stay in touch' (Schendler, 2019). This community thrived when it was actively brought together for events, but failed to survive when it was required to organise itself. Jewson notes that even communities based in virtual communication benefit from physical meetings, suggesting 'the more virtual a community of practice becomes the more important it is that members meet in person' (Jewson, 2007, p.160). In the examples of the RCA Facebook Group, Women in Animation, She Drew That, Festivus and The London Animation Club, online communication is complemented by real-world events in which members can meet face-to-face.

As shown in Chapter 3.3, word-of-mouth recommendations and the use of existing contacts is prevalent in the animation industry, with recruitment through social media also very common (Animation UK, 2018, p.8). Social media connections and groups can therefore be important to a filmmaker's chances of finding work.

Case study: The RCA Animation Alumni Facebook group

The RCA Animation Facebook Group group emerged from casual drinks between friends which, over time, became a semi-regular monthly event, attended by alumni from across several years of the RCA animation programme. Events pages were set up on Facebook for the drinks, so the initial, small network of alumni could in turn invite their own networks. Drinks took place in pubs in Soho or East London, with anything from three to thirty people. Attendees would present narrations of their professional identities and absorb the narrations of others, engaging in the social construction of an image of their shared industry. In practical

terms, this meant: meeting new people; catching up on industry news and gossip; finding out about other social and industry events; learning who was recruiting; sharing stories of difficult clients or complex jobs; and giving and receiving technical and creative advice. As a participant, I never considered the drinks a networking event, but they became central to my building a mental model of what was happening in areas of the industry that I was not involved in, such as studio animation for commercials or children's television. A closed Facebook group was established in October 2013, which became a kind of community noticeboard for alumni. By establishing and naming the group, the network was reified. At the time of writing the group has 243 members, and postings include notices about conferences and events; filmmakers seeking collaborators; job opportunities that have not been advertised publicly; members seeking rooms to rent or new housemates; and advice sought on intellectual property issues, to name a few.

By transforming a regular, social drink into a semi-formal online network, individual students acted as conveners. But it would not have been possible without the participation of the alumni who joined and contributed to the group. The character of the discussion is controlled by members, without explicit guidelines. It is thus a system of emergent governance and horizontal accountability.

Documentary production: a community of practice?

Speaking at the 2016 Anidox lab, Andy Glynne emphasised the importance of 'developing relationships' in the documentary industry through participation in festivals and markets (Glynne, 2016). He also proposed guidelines for networking at these, including what is considered acceptable when, for example, approaching a commissioner in a cinema bar. Pointers like this are useful to newcomers, schooling them in the industry's

repertoires, the unwritten and usually unspoken language of actions used in its formal and informal environments. These skills, which could be seen as embodied cultural capital, are not generally taught formally to newcomers. Rather, they are picked up through a process of enculturation.

As with animation, documentary production is, as well as being a community of practice in and of itself, made up of overlapping and interacting sub-communities, and groups exist to support networking for these communities. Groups such as the International Documentary Association (IDA), The D-Word, and The European Documentary Network (EDN) offer development programmes, pitching opportunities, networking, and resources to members. Locally in the UK The London Documentary Network (LDN) organise filmmaking challenges and meetups, while Doc Heads membership, at £35 per year, gives access to screening and networking events, festival discounts and funding opportunities. Doc Heads describe their events as designed to 'stimulate thought and debate' (Doc Heads, 2019), where you can 'talk to people you don't already know […] and you go away inspired and most likely a little drunk' (ibid.). This sounds similar to Fraser's mental picture of the documentary community: 'I see makers of docs at a party where the booze is free and not always very good, shouting at each other over the din' (ibid. p.7).

However, the image of the documentary industry as inclusive, relaxed and social does not tell the whole story of nonfiction communities. A recent report by Dart Europe observes that factual television can be home to restrictive and bullying cultures:

> On the surface, TV culture appears to be an egalitarian, dressed-down world in which the idea of autonomy and the right of the individual to have an independent voice is fully respected. But that is true only in part […] our respondents also described a world that is markedly hierarchal, even quasi-military in structure.
>
> (Dart Europe, 2019, p.17)

Furthermore, 'powerful people are afforded rights to certain kinds of behaviour that would never be extended to subordinates' (ibid., p.18). Within any industrial community of practice there are those with more and less power, and power can be used to coerce and control others, particularly newcomers.[34]

Animated Documentary: a community of practice?

Animated documentary communities of practice gather in a range of spaces, online and offline. In Chapter 1 I noted the growing number of events, screenings, panels, symposia and conferences dedicated to animated documentary in the UK. Attendance at a number of events labelled as "animated documentary" – including festival screenings, panels, workshops, conferences and symposia - soon reveals many of the same attendees, participating regularly. As well as makers of animated documentaries, researchers specialising in theorising animated documentary are among this community. Indeed, it is arguably easier to identify a clear community of practice around animated documentary *research* than animated documentary production. This can be illustrated by considering Wenger's assertion that

> In all fields, there is a required baseline of knowledge. One of the primary tasks of a community of practice is to establish this common baseline and standardize what is well understood so that people can focus their creative energies on the more advanced issues.
>
> (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p.10-11)

Where animated documentary filmmakers meet, for example at an animated documentary short film programme screening at a film festival, it can be

[34] Negative behaviour including harassment, gendered bullying and bullying of minority groups is a problem across all the screen industries (CAMEo, 2018, p.33).

difficult to identify a clear baseline of knowledge unique to this community. As I have shown, animated documentary emerges from many different contexts, and those who make them come from a variety of backgrounds and work in highly heterogeneous ways. It is possible to identify "tribes" within animated documentary production, for example the art college graduates working on artistic animated documentaries, or employees of micro-studios producing didactic 2D digital factual content designed primarily for online sharing. Each of these types of practitioners are part of a community or communities that share their own baselines of knowledge, but it is difficult to extrapolate this to a "global" community of UK animated documentary makers. The essential knowledge for an animating director making hand-drawn experimental short films relying on public funding and supplementing their income with teaching may be quite different from, for example, a producer pitching for documentary commissions from broadcasters, and both of these require different baseline knowledge from an animator with a full-time job at a studio that produces nonfiction animated content.

For scholars and researchers in animated documentary, however, there is a much clearer shared baseline of knowledge. Scholars are largely working within similar professional structures, and answering to similar authorities (e.g. peer reviewed publication, academic funding, the REF). They have learned and developed a shared lexicon. It is common, for example, to hear presenters or audience members at an animated documentary conference using the term "indexicality" with confidence that their audience will understand its nuance in reference to animated documentary. Stylistic tropes are also reified through naming, such as the prototypical and often-criticised "illustrated interview" or "animated radio interview" approach. As animated documentary is a relatively new area of scholarship, this baseline is built on a relatively small resource of shared references. Moore noted of the 2011 Animated Realities conference that

> One issue about the papers given was that the pool of reference materials available to draw upon was pretty limited and by necessity there was plenty of over-lap. Bella Honess Roe's unpublished dissertation emerged as a key text for citation and the Pauls (Wells and Ward) were also central to the academic material referenced.
>
> (Moore, 2011)

This indicates that in 2011 there *was* a baseline of knowledge, but a very limited one. Now at animated documentary conferences and symposia, rooms of researchers often agree that they would like to avoid tired discussions about indexicality and whether animation can be a valid documentary form.[35] The shared desire to move beyond these well-covered arguments implies that they are understood by all, they have been taken as far as they can be taken, that they form a baseline of knowledge that has been established and should now be built on. This demonstrates an advanced process of shared narration and social construction.

While it is difficult to identify the same distinctive baseline of knowledge in practitioners, many do feel themselves to be members of an informal community of practice. Ellie Land identifies as part of a community of practice of filmmakers working in animated documentary, which overlaps with but also exists distinctly from, the academic community. 'There is a community of practice of animated documentary' she asserts, 'but whether we call ourselves that? I wonder if we just gravitate towards each other' (Land, 2021). Land emphasises that the community of practice extends beyond her own social group, including people who she does not know personally. But she does not feel that everyone who makes animated documentaries is part of her animated documentary community, noting that some more 'commercial' practitioners seem to her to be 'on the periphery almost, it doesn't feel like the same community' (ibid.).

[35] This was, for example, a general consensus that emerged from the 2016 Ecstatic Truth conference.

Events dedicated to animated documentary attract animated documentary practitioners and those with a long-standing commitment to animated documentary. But each meeting space or event also includes members of other communities of practice who have attended out of a novel interest in the form. These attendees often reflect the context of the event. For example, the 2016 animated documentary panel at the journalistic establishment the Frontline Club included journalists and reporters in the audience; 2016 and 2019 panels at Open City Documentary Festival and the 2018 panel at Sheffield Doc/Fest included traditional live action documentary makers; while events such as the RCA's Ecstatic Truth conferences commonly attract experimental and independent animators, interested in exploring the possibilities of nonfiction. As well as those who fit into Lave and Wenger's model of 'newcomers', working towards a more central position in such a community, there are others who are not seeking membership of an animated documentary community of practice. These could be seen more as practitioner-tourists, crossing a boundary from their own community of practice, for an excursion into a related area of interest.

For practitioners, the animated documentary community offers a space for sharing professional narrations and benefitting from those of others. A seeking out of baselines can be found in the way that practitioners describe the experience of attending animated documentary events. Blogging about the 2016 FAFF event, Hobbs observed that 'the really valuable part of the evening was the discussion' which 'creates a small chance to take the pulse of Animated Documentary and see where it's at' (Hobbs, 2016). For Land, festivals offer a chance to connect with the 'worldwide' community of animated documentary makers, and she feels able to approach animated documentary practitioners she does not already know 'just because I feel we've got this common ground' (Land, 2021). Scott-Hawkins has also strengthened her sense of identification with an international community of animated documentary as a result of 'meeting people at festivals and conferences and maintaining connections with them, and maybe having

conversations with them now on social media' (Scott-Hawkins, 2019a). My own experience of an animated documentary community is explored in my diary and analysis of my participation in the 2019 Deptford Animadocs event (Appendix 4). Notable points from this include my observation of the fluidity of boundaries between formal and informal modes of communication and spaces of communication, with discussions from industry panels seamlessly blending into social conversations in the bar or over lunch. In the more informal spaces, the trade narratives shared became more specific and less obviously managed. Where a discussion in the formal exhibition environment might touch on difficulties in finding funding, war stories over lunch included specific complaints about named commissioners, accompanied by an entertainingly recounted anecdote relating to the person in question. There were also soft boundaries between the identification of professional contacts, friends, and connections-of-connections. My interaction with those I already knew led to interactions with their contacts, who over the course of the day became new connections for me, a process made natural by our shared baseline of knowledge.

Scott-Hawkins describes the animated documentary community as made up of 'directors, academics, programmers, film festival organisers, and students, who could go on to be any of those four things.' She experiences the community as 'supportive', adding

> I've got friendships, relationships, connections with a lot of other animated documentary directors, but there's not a sense of competition between us. There's more of a sense of brotherhood, or sisterhood. Generally speaking, there's quite a lot of generosity, quite a lot of openness, willingness to connect.
>
> (Scott-Hawkins, 2019a)

Scott-Hawkins notes that the directors who are members of this community are heterogeneous in their practices, and are at different points in their career. However, this diversity does not impede positive exchange:

> There are certainly some people who are more experienced and others who are less experienced. As a rule, I wouldn't say those who are more experienced are therefore inaccessible to those who are less experienced. I would say that in general there is an accessibility.
>
> (ibid.).

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002, p.13) propose that an organic, non-designed community of practice will 'tend to organize along friendship lines or within local geographical or organizational contexts'. Scott-Hawkins' experience of the animated documentary community supports this, and also suggests the importance of social capital in the community, as she notes that 'the relationships I've got within the animated documentary community have tended to come from introductions or recommendations' (ibid.).

Communities of practice forming along friendship lines can have pitfalls as well as advantages, especially when those communities cross over from peer support into professional collaboration. Moth Studio's senior staff are largely long-standing friends which helps them to nurture a studio environment that feels like a 'home' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2019). However producer Ifor Ashton notes that there is also a 'challenge' involved in working with friends, where 'the boundaries of our relationships blur when you have to be business people while at the same time best pals' (Ashton quoted in Snoad, 2017).

Lave and Wenger describe how the peripheral participation of newcomers in a community of practice can be easily exploited: 'The commoditization of labour can transform apprentices into a cheap source of unskilled labour, put to work in areas that deny them access to activities in the arenas of mature practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 76). As I showed in Chapter 3.4, the use of unpaid or poorly paid interns and assistants is rife in the animation industry, as it is across the wider media industries. Economic capital is often subsidised by the promise of cultural capital in the form of exposure, experience, new contacts and new skills, and often this is successful (as

shown in examples in Chapter 3.4). However alongside legitimate and useful internships and placements, it is not uncommon for newcomers to be marginalised and made invisible, used solely for their existing skills and uncredited in the final work. Most of the formal job sites that media freelancers use stipulate against advertising for unpaid work, and producers often approach filmmakers directly, or attempt to recruit students.[36]

Newcomer to "old-timer" case study: Bunny Schendler

Bunny Schendler's introduction to animation practice came as a result of working in proximity to animators while studying sculpture at Liverpool College of Art. She remembers

> there was a group of people who had been at Liverpool who then went to the Royal College, like Stuart Hilton, Sarah Cox […] then a few people in my year started getting into the idea of doing animation, people doing sculpture and stuff. […] I saw this group of films that did have an impact on me, because I remember thinking "God this is like nothing I've ever seen".
>
> (Schendler, 2019)

In Schendler's description we can see how the practice of peers can impact a practitioner's development. The culture of Liverpool College of Art was, for a short time, partly defined by a small group of animators who, through the strength and perceived success of their work, inspired a wider group of practitioners to try out their discipline. Alongside Sarah Cox and Stuart Hilton, Liverpool College of Art saw Susan Young, Chris Shepherd and Jonathan Hodgson pass through its doors (the latter would much later become Schendler's partner and collaborator).

For Schendler, the animation she saw had an impact on her because it was 'contemporary and observational' in contrast to the animation she was

[36] I have personally seen many emails from producers trying to recruit students for unpaid projects. Some of these were shared with me by my university lecturers when I was a student myself, others have been sent to me in my lecturer capacity and I have been asked to share them with my own students.

familiar with, which was ‘cartoons and Eastern European animation’. She was struck by the fact that, ‘unlike most highly finished commercial cartoons, it was unpolished, you could see that it was moving drawings which allowed me to connect my own practice-experience of drawing with what I was seeing’ (ibid.). Inspired by the work being produced at the college, Schendler bought a pad and paper and made a tentative effort to start her own animation, but soon gave up on it. The process of animation felt unfathomable. A year later though, after she had graduated and returned to her native London, Schendler began attending events at the London Filmmaker’s Co-op, and her thoughts returned to animation.

> I got another pad of paper, and I was like “oh right I’ve got an idea now, I’m just going to draw somebody walking up and down at a bus stop waiting for a bus”. I know what waiting for a bus is like and I quite like the idea of doing something, even if it’s small, that I’ve experienced, rather than just like have an out-there idea. More just trying to put my own physical experience of something that people can relate to into a drawing. I think I just did one drawing, I didn’t look it up or anything, I just thought I’ll do one drawing of her there and then another drawing of what happens a few seconds later and that’s how I started […] And then coincidentally I happened to meet someone, or know someone through someone else, who was an animator […] he was doing commercial animation and he said “I’ve got access to this studio”. He brought me into the studio and filmed the whole thing for me.
>
> (ibid)

The studio that Schendler had been given access to was Three Peach Studio, where Jonathan Hodgson worked with animator Joan Ashworth. At the studio Schendler met Ashworth’s partner, Martin Greaves, who suggested that Schendler apply to the RCA. Schendler remembers

> I hadn’t really thought of that, but I was like “oh, ok”. So that’s what I did. I went and got my stuff together, prints that I’d done. It was a bit of a shock getting in there, thinking “how can you just get in with this ridiculous thing that you’ve just done on the kitchen table?” – and suddenly you were in this world.
>
> (ibid)

Through being accepted as a newcomer engaging in legitimate peripheral participation, Schendler was shown a path to a more central position in the animation community. However, animated *documentary* was not yet something that had been reified in her world. Schendler remembers that when she was working on short student films at the Royal College of Art she was interested in using 'recorded voices' and observation, but

> I didn't really have the concept of animated documentary in my head, I just thought 'I like recording voices' and I don't remember anyone there at the time encouraging that. […] I remember thinking: "I've got to write a story". So I did that. And I thought: "I've got to record actors to do the voices" and I did that. It just didn't sound right so I didn't use any voices in the end.
>
> (ibid)

After graduating, Schendler worked commercially and directed short films including the BAFTA-nominated *The World of Interiors* (2002) which, while being fiction, emerged from Schendler's interest in the animation of everyday lived experience. Reflecting on *Men Talk About Mother* (2015), and its relationship to her wider practice, she observes that it is

> the only animated documentary I've done really, although [animated documentary] is something I've always been interested in right from when I discovered animation […] Right from the start I wanted to record real people and do interesting things with the things that they said, basically, - illustrate it, animate it, make stories out of it. And it's taken me all this time just to do one film.
>
> (ibid.)

With this career capital behind her, one might assume that Schendler would feel secure in her professional and creative identity. It is perhaps surprising that she refers to the completion of *Men Talk About Mother* as 'affirmation of my own identity as a filmmaker' which left her feeling that she had 'the right to call myself a filmmaker' (ibid.).

Strategies for survival

The fragility of Schendler's sense of professional identity shows that Lave and Wenger's proposed trajectory of newcomer to "old-timer" is perhaps simplistic. As I have shown in previous chapters, within independent animation, and particularly within animated documentary production, there is no clear path for scaling up to "professional" (feature or broadcast length) work. Animated documentary alone rarely provides a stable and sustainable income. Financial support for animated documentary is piecemeal, and its recognition and appreciation is still fairly specialist. Even if a filmmaker has made a number of short animated documentaries that have received critical success, there is no clear career progression *within* animated documentary.

Ellie Land, who has been working freelance in animated documentary shorts and other independent animation projects for over a decade, uses teaching and commercial work to subsidise her income around independent commissions. She observes that the objectified cultural capital of a short film can be limited in its translation to sustainable income from further short films: 'you can make the independent film and that's great because it's a calling card and stuff, but how do you really support yourself?' (Land, 2021). Speaking to Moore, Land admits that her desire to invest in a better workspace than her current home set up is tempered by anxiety: 'what if my work dried up? By the time I get my perfect space I might not get any commissions' (Land, quoted in Moore, 2017b).

Kris Kelly notes that 'all my animation depicts real events' but that the production contexts of this vary greatly, from 'work with visual artists who [exhibit in galleries] right through to […] TV production'. For Kelly, this flexibility of context is something that is necessary 'to survive' as a maker of nonfiction animation, 'because the industry is in that sense so small in how animation is perceived if it's not kids entertainment. You really have to spread yourself thin' (Kelly, 2021).

The difficulty in maintaining a sustainable career working solely in the production of animated documentary means that practitioners often adopt other professional identities in addition to independent animation. These can include commercial production, research, teaching or curatorial jobs. As a result, practitioners often experience a sense of multimembership in their communities of practice. Most professions and workplaces involve some degree of multimembership, with professionals identifying with a number of different sub-communities. In animated documentary, the experience of multimembership through second jobs can lead to the formation of smaller tribes within the animated documentary community.[37] Personal circumstances also contribute to the experience of community membership, and these can be a way to find common ground. For Land, the boundaries of work contact and social contact is blurred. Her professional identity is closely bound with her identity as a working mother, whose work 'is scaffolded with life as well' (Land, 2021). She finds herself

> drawn towards woman directors who are also looking after kids […] Sometimes I feel like I can talk to my animated documentary friends more naturally than I can my normal friends, because my normal friends don't know what my work life is like.
>
> (Land, 2021)

In addition to the precarity of media careers even for seasoned professionals, "old-timers" can find themselves struggling to adapt to fast-changing industries. James argues that 'far from achieving a fixed, stable and secure position, old-timers may experience on-going processes of change in their learning trajectories' (James, 2007, p.141). The landscapes of the media industries are constantly shifting, and the requirements of workers shift with them. Vaughan complains that the documentary industry is 'full of people who have come from the universities via research or

[37] Society For Animation Studies' Animation Practice as Research Special Interest Group is an example of a formalised community for those with multimembership including animation practice and animation scholarship.

journalism, who talk in terms of “noddies” and “pretties” and “drearies” and have no understanding of the past struggles of the documentary movement' (Vaughan, 1999, p.88). While he resents the ignorance of the newcomers, Vaughan seems to accept that they are not making their way cautiously from the peripheries of the documentary community and learning as they go, as Lave and Wenger might suggest they should. They are the new status quo, and the community itself has changed. It continues to change. Reflecting on his experience of working in broadcast documentaries since 2010, Guy King observes the changing language used by producers and commissioners reflects changing tastes: ‘things come and go […] you hear phrases develop over the years like “robust narrative”, “muscular narrative”, your stories have to be “ramped up”, your story has to “start running” […] “whimsy” is becoming a bad word’ (King, 2016). While newcomers strive to learn the language of the industry the language evolves, and “old-timers” may fall out of favour if they fail to keep up.

James (2007, p.141) notes that apprentices can bring skills that established professionals do not possess. Within the discipline of animation, the stability of “old-timers” is at particular risk from constant fluctuations not only in the funding and finance landscape but also in production and exhibition technologies. Tarantini (2011, p.250) describes how cost-effective software had a disruptive effect on the social hierarchy of animation studios in the 1990s. Young recruits brought new software skills, ‘blurring the traditional line between ‘newcomer’ (junior artists) and ‘old-timers’ (senior artists)’ (ibid.). The resultant shifting of power structures led to ‘resentment from seasoned old-timers’ which made some teams less effective (ibid., p.255).

While conflict between “old-timers” and newcomers can be a feature of any community of practice, my research into animated documentary production cultures has not suggested that there is significant resentment from more established professionals towards newcomers. This may be in part due to the fact that there are currently no permanent UK funds dedicated to animated

documentary production. If there were, a more competitive culture might emerge, as practitioners would become direct competitors for a specific, limited pot. It may also reflect the relative youth of the reified subgenre. As I have shown, many "old-timers" in the animated documentary field have found the label attributed to their work in retrospect. The adoption of the animated documentary label *at the point of development, commissioning or production* is a relatively new phenomenon. Those established in the field, while having set certain standards for the approach and aesthetic of animated documentary, may have a less proprietorial attitude to it than those in other fields. The lack of resentment may also reflect the fact that most animated documentary "old-timers" identify in other professional terms as well as (in some cases) identifying as animated documentary makers.

Conclusion

Animation and documentary are conjunctional and interdisciplinary practices, and animated documentary emerges from a myriad of different contexts, each of which have their own communities. A sense of community can be encouraged or inhibited by social factors including gender, ethnicity, class, and familial status. This can happen informally, but can also be articulated, reflected or responded to in more formal reifications.

Conflict is as much a feature of professional communities as is cooperation. While media communities can be supportive and nurturing, they can also be restrictive, hierarchal and rife with bullying. The factual television industry, in particular, has come under fire in recent years for exploitation of both crews and contributors. This industry, like many media production sub-industries, has a highly structured approach to production and relies strongly on standardised methods in terms of practices and crew hierarchies. While this can help with efficiency and productivity, the hierarchical structure can also encourage bullying, it can

prioritise the production of entertaining content over contributors' mental health, and it can stifle voices that challenge the powerful.

While animated documentary production lacks such well-established production structures, it is nevertheless possible to recognise patterns and communities among those that make it. A self-identifying animated documentary community exists in the UK, and internationally. This organises itself along friendship lines, and those who have secondary communities in common (for example lecturers or students) will often form sub-groups within the wider community. However, this self-identifying animated documentary community is fairly small. Many people who produce animated nonfiction work would not consider themselves a part of it, nor necessarily know of its existence (just as, as shown in Chapter 1, they may not consider the work they produce to be animated documentary). The heterogeneity of the animated documentary production landscape works against the formation of a homogenised community with standardised methods or a baseline of knowledge.

In the animated documentary research community there is stronger sense of a community of practice operating with a baseline of knowledge. With a baseline of knowledge comes a shared language; concepts that have been reified into words and phrases. The animated documentary research community has the beginnings of an informal lexicon which is understood and used by community members as a shorthand for more complex ideas and categories.

Chapter 6 - Identity

Membership of a community of practice is strongly linked to personal identity. Wenger describes how 'participation in social systems is not a context or an abstraction, but the constitutive texture of an experience of the self' (Wenger, 2010a, p.6). Elsewhere he describes the process of learning as 'not just acquiring skills and information; it is becoming a certain person' (ibid. p.2). In this chapter I will look more closely at aspects of personal identity within the animated documentary landscape.

I will use Wenger's idea of the development of identity as both an 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' process, also looking at his modes of identification and aspects of identity. I will interrogate how practitioners create and disseminate trade narratives around their identity, and how these can be seen as ways to accumulate power. I will then look at how animated documentary practitioners classify themselves, and how this self-classification reflects both an inside-out and outside-in identity. I will explore perceptions of "typical" character types of animators and documentary filmmakers, showing that while there is evidence to support these stereotypes there are also examples that refute them. I will look at how a practitioner's processes can become a core part of their trade narrative and professional identity, using Samantha Moore's "collaborative frame" methodology as an example. I will then present two case studies exploring the development and maintenance of identity in two animated documentary practitioners: Alys Scott-Hawkins and Alex Widdowson. Finally, I will look at how animated documentary can be used as an affirmation of identity for those who have been oppressed or silenced by hegemonic power structures and traditional media representations. Using Susan Young's 2018 short film *The Betrayal* as a case study I will show that identity can be reclaimed and reframed by the oppressed, through the use of animated documentary.

Etienne Wenger's modes of identification

For Wenger, identity is 'both collective and individual. It is shaped both inside-out and outside-in. Identification is both something we are actively engaged in negotiating and something other [sic] do to us' (Wenger, 2010a, p.6). Wenger identifies three modes of identification that practitioners undergo when becoming part of a community. These are Engagement, Imagination and Alignment.

Engagement refers to a practitioner engaging in activities related to the practice and the community. This usually refers to 'doing things' and may involve 'producing artefacts' (such as films) (Wenger, 2010a, p.4). *Imagination* allows the practitioner to create a mental image of the positioning of players in the community, also seeing how they themselves could fit into this. Wenger explains that 'We use such images of the world to locate and orient ourselves, to see ourselves from a different perspective, to reflect on our situation, and to explore new possibilities' (ibid., p.5). The construction of this imaginative image of the world is aided by 'tools of the imagination' (ibid.) including language, stories, and role models. *Alignment* refers to the process of aligning the practitioner's practice with the conventions of the community. This is not a passive process of submission to the status quo, but a 'two-way process of coordinating perspectives, interpretations, actions, and contexts' (ibid.). It ensures that the practitioner shares a language and behaviours with the rest of the community.

Wenger also describes how identity can be viewed as: *A trajectory*, in which a practitioner's identity changes over time, their present identity incorporating past and projected future experiences; *A nexus of multimembership*, in which practitioners belong to multiple communities at any one time; (ibid.); and *Multi-scale*, whereby a practitioner can identify with communities on all scales, which can be seen broadly in "local" and "global" terms.

Trade narratives

A practitioner's public-facing identity is, consciously or unconsciously, managed to encourage industry, public, and peers to see the image that the practitioner wishes to present. Mayer, Banks and Caldwell note that much of what we know about media producers comes from the media they produce, and when we look further to the individual behind the work we are often presented with another layer of construction in the form of managed narratives about the making of the work (Mayer et al, 2009, p.1-2). These narratives can be presented by the practitioner in various forms including personal websites, interviews, paratextual materials, CVs, and talks and Q&As at festivals and events. Mayer, Banks and Caldwell note that these "trade narratives" often take conventional narrative arcs in which talent and hard work triumph over adversity: 'conflict and chaos frequently precede teamwork and collaboration, leading ultimately to creativity and commercial success in recitations of how production occurs' (ibid.). These neat narrative arcs are salient and satisfying, but can gloss over the messier realities of production. Animator Scott Benson reflects in his blog that

> There is a tendency, especially in an environment as mercenary and unstable as freelance animation, to overstate how well things are going. We're all doing fine, we're all busy […] And so I find myself hesitant to say things like "Things could be better on the financial front". I worry that I will sound self-pitying, that some ridiculous ass will say "First World Problems!", that I'll come across as somehow asking for a handout, that I'll be opening myself to looking (for lack of a better term) *weak* in the face of a very difficult business.
>
> (Benson, 2012)

Samantha Moore also notes in her production blog that she is hesitant of writing about the negative aspects of filmmaking:

> I always feel a bit guilty writing about the rubbish bits of film making, or how everything's going wrong, or looking awful, or how I can't animate and am quite crap. For one, it seems churlish (given that I have funding to

> make a film! how amazing is that?!), but there's also a less attractive element of pretending that I find this stuff easier than I do.
>
> (Moore, 2009c)

The creation and dissemination of successful trade narratives is a skill in itself and one that is learned by media practitioners alongside other practical skills. Mayer describes how professionals learn to repackage experiences of failure and alienation into new narratives. In this way, failure can be survived and even exploited. Learning 'to justify the failure, create an alternative narrative of the event, and move on' (Mayer, 2009, p.23) is part of the work that a filmmaker's job involves. This can complicate research into media production, and obstruct the flow of knowledge and learning that can be taken from one production into another. In a culture where failures are repackaged as successes, it is difficult for anyone to learn from anyone else's mistakes.

Orr (1996, p.2) shows that the sharing of stories, or 'narratives', is a key component of community participation. Jewson builds on the idea of narratives, describing how the ability to create successful narratives demonstrates power within a community, or network:

> those who dominate networks are in a position to develop mythologies, narratives and stories that characterize and justify their actions. To exercise power is to be in a position to generate and disseminate stories that prevail at the expense of the accounts of others […]
>
> (Jewson, 2007, p.78)

Whoever has control over what narratives are shared controls the dominant narratives within the community. Thus, power can be demonstrated and accumulated through a process of reification - the setting of narratives into artefacts such as media representations, books, videos, websites and talks.

Funders are powerful members of the media industries. Their narratives are shared through artefacts such as strategy documents, funding guidelines, contracts and creative notes as well as meet-the-funders events and panel discussions. As I have shown, funders' narratives are also disseminated through their beneficiaries, who may be filmmakers, festivals or other cultural producers (for example through values presented in commissioned films and themed programmes). Festivals can also be powerful, sharing narratives not only through the films and events they programme but also through their physical and online brochures, marketing materials, PR, documentation, appearances on panels, and other promotional activities. Through programming films and speakers, and through vehicles such as director Q&As, festivals pass power onto filmmakers, allowing them to share their own narratives and to accumulate power in the form of cultural capital. Power can therefore be seen to be bestowed by funders (and those controlling the funders, such as boards and governments), through festivals and other beneficiaries, to filmmakers. With this power, come narratives and ideologies, that can define not only the stories that are told by filmmakers but also the stories that they tell about themselves.

Self-classification (inside-out and outside-in)

The approaches, ideas, and techniques that individual filmmakers bring to their work could be seen as an inside-out shaping of both their own identity and the wider identity of their community of practice. At the same time, 'outside-in' influence on a practitioner's identity can be exerted by forces such as: the tastes and objectives of funders and commissioners; the labels assigned by programmers, distributers and academics; and the conventions and availability of means of production. The interplay between the inside-out and outside-in is evident in many of the narratives in the animated documentary community. Scott-Hawkins observes that each of the animated

documentary directors she knows has their own unique 'realm', working in a particular style or subject area that has been established as their practice develops. She notes that there is a kind of reinforcement of existing direction by commissioners, whereby 'you do one thing and people are drawn to you to commission you to do something similar' (Scott-Hawkins, 2019a). Scott-Hawkins's observation seems to describe a system whereby an inside-out practice is met by an outside-in response, reinforcing its individual direction, but potentially impeding creative growth in new directions. Tim Webb notes of his own career development that his student production of the borderline animated documentary *Smoke Rings* (1986) linked directly to his subsequent Channel 4 commission. He reflects 'I wouldn't have got *A is for Autism* commissioned if I hadn't made that film about tobacco, because [Clare Kitson] liked that film. So making that film did have an effect on my life' (Webb, 2016).

A filmmaker's trajectory of identity can be seen by the labels that they apply to themselves. Hodgson observes 'I started out as an illustrator, became an animator […] along the way I've got a little bit more formalised and labelled myself as a documentary animator' (Hodgson, speaking at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016). For some animators, animated documentary is a bracket that they are open to being categorised within, even if they themselves do not consider it their primary creative identity - for example Hobbs confirms that she is 'interested in being considered in the [animated documentary] genre' (Hobbs, 2018). Katerina Athanasopoulou describes herself as an 'independent artist filmmaker and a visiting lecturer' but adds 'I'm fascinated by animated documentary and I've made a few' (Athanasopoulou speaking at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016).

However, Athanasopoulou also points out that the outside-in labelling of film, often done in response to what the film "appears" to be in a tropological or stylistic sense, can overwhelm the director's inside-out labelling. She uses the example of her short 'science film' *Branches of Life*

(2016), a collaboration with a composer funded by Wellcome. As part of the film's development, both Athanasopoulou and the composer were given the opportunity to observe live lung surgery. Athanasopoulou reflects that the film 'is trying to give the patient a voice and show what it is like to fall under anaesthesia' but that it was widely received as a music video. She emphasises that 'it was not meant to be a music video, it was meant to be an animation interpreting a commissioned music piece, but of course because the music came first and it's a song - ta da - it's a music video' (Athanasopoulou speaking at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016). Because the film combines animation and original music, the documentary elements of the production are subsumed into the more obvious genre of 'music video' when the film is indexed.

Marcus Armitage finds the process of classifying his work complicated, relating it to documentary but not in a straightforward way. He reflects that 'it's observational and I don't know where that fits. In that weird in-between space of documentary, I guess' (Armitage, 2018). Susan Young considers much of her work to be animated documentary, but sees her films as 'straddling several different categories' (Young, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019). Her short film *The Betrayal* (2018) premiered at leading animation festival Annecy, but has also screened at psychiatry conferences, animation conferences, autoethnography symposia and horror film festivals. Leeds Animation Workshop's Jo Dunn asserts that 'I don't consider myself to be a documentary maker because I come to it as an animator and as an artist' (Dunn, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019). However as shown in Chapter 1, Leeds Animation Workshop *do* refer to their films as animated documentaries in some contexts, particularly if the label improves the funding, visibility and distribution potential of the film.

Just as professional diversification and community multimembership creates a greater range of opportunities for filmmakers working in animated documentary, so films themselves can benefit from multiple classifications.

An animated documentary film may struggle to fit into funding structures, but in terms of exhibition it can be programmed as an animation, a documentary, an animated documentary, or simply a film. It can also reach audiences through being programmed for its subject matter, for example at scientific or environmental focused screenings, or at specialist conferences. I became aware of the powerful multivalence of the animated documentary product in 2013 when I released *Devil In The Room*, my short animated documentary about the science and experience of sleep paralysis. The film screened at more than thirty events in the three years after it was made. These included: general film festivals; animation festivals; science focused film festivals; specialist science, animation or documentary programmes at general festivals; scientific conferences and symposia; and other events such as science-focused public engagement events and institutional screenings. As well as festivals to which I submitted the film (reflecting my *inside-out* classification of the film's identity), there were screenings that the film was invited to be a part of, sometimes changing or expanding the film's identity through an *outside-in* classification (see Fig. 21). Perhaps the most personally significant consequence of outside-in classification on this project came as a result of invitations to present the film at science and psychology events, including academic conferences. This was my first experience of presenting at conferences and seeing my practice in this context. Through this, I was able to *imagine* myself as a full-time member of an academic community of practice, and as a direct result I pursued a career in this area, beginning a PhD in 2015.

Film festivals	Animation festivals	Specialist documentary / science screenings at festivals	Science focused festivals	Conferences	Other
Leeds International Film Festival (UK) Encounters Festival (UK) Cork Film Festival (Ireland) East End Film Festival (UK) Branchage Festival (Jersey, UK) Underwire Festival (UK) Imagine: Amsterdam Fantastic Film Festival (Netherlands) Interfilm Berlin (Germany) InHouse Film Festival (UK) Greenhorn Short Film Festival (UK) Uppsala International Film Festival (Sweden)	Klik! Animation Festival (Netherlands)	London International Animation Festival (UK) Shuffle Festival (UK) Flatpack Film Festival (UK) London Short Film Festival (UK)	State experience Science Film Festival (Germany) Cineglobe Film Festival (Switzerland) Imagine Science Film Festival (USA)	Narcolepcy UK Annual Conference (UK) European Sceptics Conference (UK) Nine Worlds Geek Fest (UK) GV Art and Science Symposium, UK Animation Therapy symposium, Encounters (UK) 2016 Sleep Summit (UK)	Cast, crew, friends and family screening event (UK) RCA graduation screening and exhibition (UK) Strange Bedfellows (USA) Greenwich Sceptics in the Pub (UK) Sheffield Sceptics in the Pub (UK) Guerilla Science (UK)
	Key: Black text = events submitted to Grey text = events that requested to screen the film				

Figure 9: *Devil in the Room* screenings, 2013-2015

A similar diversity can be found in the exhibition history of Samantha Moore's *An Eyeful of Sound* (2010), which is about synaesthesia. The film was screened at film and animation festivals, science festivals, galleries and scientific conferences (Fig. 22). Moore says 'The screenings it's had have surprised me […] in that it's had a much longer festival / active life than I expected, because of the subject matter […] The cross disciplinary nature of the work means that it increases the scope' (Moore, 2019). Moore notes that

this also applied to her short animated documentary about multiple birth *Doubled Up* (2004) (ibid.).

Film festivals	Animation festivals	Specialist documentary / science screenings at festivals	Science focused festivals	Conferences and symposia	Other
London Short Film Festival (UK) Athens Short Film + Video festival (USA) Tricky Women film festival (Austria) Magma Short Film Festival (Italy) Flatpack Festival (UK) In The Palace Film Festival (Bulgaria) Palm Springs International Shortsfest (US) Branchage Festival (UK) Dam Short Film Festival (USA) Candid Arts Trust Angels Moving Image Festival (UK)	Animated Exeter Film Festival (UK) Anima Mundi Animation festival (Brazil) London International Animation Festival (UK) Stoke Your Fires Animation festival (UK) Flip Animation Festival (Netherlands)	East End Film Festival (UK) Fantoche International Animation Film Festival (Switzerland) Forum des Images (France)	Scinema Science Film Festival (Australia) Imagine Science Film Festival (USA) Edinburgh Science Festival Late Lab (UK) 360' Contemporary Science Film Festival	American Synesthesia Association Conference (USA) UK Synesthesia Association Conference (UK) International Association of Synaesthetes, Artists, and Scientists. Conference (Russia) Used in various presentations by Prof Julia Simna and Prof *Jamie Ward* (University of Sussex) Society for Animation Studies Annual Conference (UK) (?)	Science Gallery Dublin *Biorhythm* exhibition (Ireland) Public Art Gallery, *A is for Animation* exhibition. (UK) Whirlygig Cinema, A Voyage Through Animation (UK) Brighton Animators Network (UK) Talent Campus, Berlin International film Festival (Germany) The Journal of Short Film, volume 22 Nature Journal Scientific Merit Award Edinburgh Television Festival (UK)

Figure 10: *An Eyeful of Sound* screenings

In her PhD thesis Moore describes how the process of working on *An Eyeful of Sound* changed her practice, and her sense of identity as a practitioner:

> During and after the making of *An Eyeful of Sound* my role began to circumvolve from film maker to researcher. This was a way of exploring broader concerns about the document, indexicality, and methodology than could be addressed through the film making process itself. The research has arisen from an organic expansion of academic engagement about the synaesthesia work via conferences about synaesthesia, documentary film, data visualisation and animation studies. Each different disciplinary area explored a different aspect of the work, but none of the areas addressed my analysis of the way in which animation can be used to document, and so my interest in a multi faceted examination led to the development of this PhD study. For the purposes of this research I site myself as 'a researcher' rather than 'a film maker', working with documents not documentaries.
>
> (Moore, 2014, p.18)

An Eyeful of Sound was made through a development and production process that Moore devised, using a collaborative creative cycle with her subjects, allowing them to lead the aesthetic through a process of feeding back on her sketches of their descriptions of personal experiences. Much of Moore's personal trade narrative and public professional identity now centres around this 'collaborative frame' methodology.

Live-action filmmakers have historically explored the idea of handing over authorial control to documentary subjects through methods including giving subjects access to cameras, recording equipment, and editorial decisions (Fraser, 2019, p.363). The clearly mediated and visibly authored nature of animated documentary complicates the idea of allowing a subject to take control of their representation. Nevertheless, the possibility has been explored by filmmakers including Tim Webb, Paul Vester, and Emma Calder, who have included drawings or animation by their subjects in their films. The work of Samantha Moore takes the idea of subject-led authorship significantly further. For Moore, the process 'involves a shifting of the roles of 'subject' and 'director' to 'collaborative consultant' and 'facilitator' respectively' (Moore, 2014, p.6). This only serves to strengthen Moore's

professional narrative; in stepping back from an authorial or directorial presence, she is paradoxically creating a bold directorial statement.

Moore's methodology exerts an *inside-out* influence on the wider community of animated documentary through her teaching, talks, conference papers and publications, as well as her films. Her work and methodology can also be seen to *outside-in*, shaped by external forces. These include repeated funding from Wellcome, whose requirement for scientific subject matter and collaboration created the conditions for this methodology, well suited to visualising scientific and psychological subject matter, to be developed. The methodology was further developed in line with the requirements of practice-as-research, in her PhD.

Surviving in the media industries requires a range of skills, and as an independent animator finds success, they are required to diversify these skills. Schendler observes that as she has taken on more complex projects, her independent mode of working has meant that 'I learnt a lot about negotiation, liaising and dealing with tricky situations that involve keeping lots of people - funders, animators, writers, happy' (Schendler, 2019). Tsakiri-Scanatovits experienced her personal identity transforming as Moth grew from 'three art students getting together and figuring things out on the way' to a commercial studio working on large-scale international jobs for huge clients. She reflects that 'it's not just the drawing or designing skills that you need; it's directing, producing and communication, time management, business strategy, financial management and much more' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2017).

The "typical" practitioner

In my experience both as an animator and scholar, I have observed certain characteristics that are frequently attributed to animators: they are considered to be obsessive, hard-working, sometimes introverted, and patient. These stereotypes are often reinforced by animators' own trade narratives. Gambrell notes that there is a long-standing fascination with the process behind stop-motion animation, supported by the insights presented by animators themselves, which often emphasise the 'physical as well as mental pain involved in stop-motion production' (Gambrell, 2011, p.117). The quality of stamina in production is alluded to by animators working in all techniques. War stories of long hours and unworkable timelines abound, for example in Scott Coelho's description of making the animated documentary *Life Inside Islamic State* (2017): 'I had to remove normal sleeping patterns to get this done, so I would work for 6 hours, have an hour nap/break, another 6 hours, another hour nap and so on until the project was finished' (Coello, 2017).

Alongside hard work, a desire for control is often highlighted by animators speaking about their practice. For animator Karen Watson, 'the most important thing about animation […] is that it offers total control' (Pilling, 1992, p.97). Miwa Matreyek asserts that 'animators are control freaks. We can control every frame, every pixel' (Matreyek, quoted in Denny, 2010). The obsession with control can be combined with the laboriousness of animation into a narrative that presents animation as a self-sacrificing, even heroic, struggle, in which animators are subsumed into their work:

> Animators have only one thing in common. We are all control freaks. And what is more controllable than the inanimate? You can control every frame, but at a cost. The cost is the chunks of your life the time-consuming process devours. It is as if the objects suck your time and energy away to feed their own lives.
>
> (Pummell, 1996. p.119)

Even in Samantha Moore's strongly collaborative work, there is an underlying sense of control: tight control of the process and methodology. Reflecting on why she is more interested in making an animated short documentary than a hybrid longform one, she concludes that the attraction is that 'it can be entirely animated, and I'll have complete control over it' (Moore, 2017a). Sheila Sofian, who has made long form hybrid documentaries as well as short fully animated documentaries reflects that 'animators are controlling, we like to control the whole world that we're working in, you can play god and you don't have to worry about anything else in the frame, you can make all those decisions yourself, but with live action there are things out of your control' (Sofian, 2017).

A different set of stereotypical qualities are attributed to documentary filmmakers. Generalising broadly about the industry in which he has spent his career, Fraser describes documentary makers as 'by and large, a disorderly bunch, raucous and united in their passions, and above all, not affluent (Fraser, 2019, p.7). The picture of documentary filmmakers as a low-income group was reinforced by the striking way that an audience member introduced herself to a panel of animated documentary filmmakers at a discussion event: 'I'm not a documentary maker. Documentary makers are very, very poor, just like yourselves. I've never met a rich one. No, I make factual television' (audience member at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016). It seems that even within the world of nonfiction, the term documentary implies a lack of focus on financial success. Glynne also notes that there are 'less precarious ways to earn a living' than documentary filmmaking, but that documentary filmmakers are 'driven by an amazing drive to tell a specific story and impart a message' (Glynne, 2013).

Film London's Josic Cadoret suggests that there are essential differences between animation and documentary practitioners:

> Animators have different personality types to documentary filmmakers. I'm thinking about *Going Equipped* and the guy who invented *Wallace and Gromit*, and those documentaries where you see people pore over these models for hours and hours, or like Louise Wilde did when animating *My Friend Marjorie*. She was like a mole, she'd come up every month. You just feel sorry for these people who spend all this time labouring. […] That's not the same kind of person that would […] be there in the edit trying to get to the heart of the story or the nuance.
>
> (Cadoret, 2018)

Bunny Schendler (2019) has also noticed this difference in identity between live action and animation filmmakers, observing 'live action people sometimes feel like a different breed, or maybe they see themselves as a different breed'.

Alex Widdowson believes that animators are strongly focused on the production process of their work. For him, this partially explains animated documentary's tendency towards personal, inward-looking stories:

> animators are - animators. They're a bit obsessed with that process. You look at the sort of films that are made in documentary animation, and they're highly personal. What [animation] does is to represent subjectivity, and in order to do that authentically you need to have good access to an individual […] And that is just not the sort of films that get made in short documentary animation.
>
> (Widdowson, 2019a)

Like Cadoret, Widdowson seems to be suggesting that animators are less suited to actively going out into the world to hunt down stories. Their priority is the animation itself, and for material they are more comfortable reflecting on what they already have good access to - their own lives, and the lives of those close to them. Kris Kelly, however, argues that animators are well suited to representing other people's stories. He feels that the level of labour involved in animation production can mean that the animator

experiences a heightened sense of engagement with, and responsibility toward, the subject being represented (Kelly, 2021).

Generalisations about typical personality types attracted to disciplines are often too simplistic to be useful. In reality, a broad spectrum of characteristics can be found in practitioners in both the animation and documentary fields; the industries they work within accommodate a range of personalities, behaviours and ambitions. King has observed heterogeneity in the aims of documentary filmmakers he has worked with, ranging from a broadcast producer who 'wants to talk directly to the person in the supermarket queue who he wants to stop him and say, "that programme you did last night was just brilliant"' to an acclaimed documentary director, who 'wants to be tapped on the shoulder by a Polish film school graduate and told "your films have changed my life" (King, 2016). While it is easy to find obsessive, isolated animators and intrepid, dynamic live action documentary directors, there are always examples that subvert and expose these clichés. Zheng notes that in professional environments animation is 'very much a team sport', so social and collaborative skills are in fact an important part of the job (Zheng, quoted in Snoad, 2017). Jonathan Hodgson remembers that, in production on *The Trouble with Love and Sex* (2011), it was live action director Zac Beattie who was obsessed with details (a characteristic more commonly associated with animators), while Hodgson's own directorial approach 'tends to be more spontaneous and impulsive, allowing a certain degree of randomness and unpredictability to enter the production process and embracing happy accidents' (Hodgson, 2019, p.203).

Role models

As shown in Chapter 5, Schendler found her way into nonfiction animation through the work of filmmakers working contemporaneously to her as she developed her practice. Tsakiri-Scanatovits cites Jonathan Hodgson as 'one of the reasons I do what I do' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, speaking at

Athanasopoulou et al., 2016). Sarah Cox remembers the 'inspirational women' who were working as directors at the time she was entering the industry, particularly mentioning Susan Young (Cox, quoted in Moore, 2017b). Samantha Moore also took inspiration from the women directing independent animation as she began her career:

> When I got into animation in the '90s, when I aspired to be an animator, I could see loads of women directing in front of me, […] it seemed like there had been a golden age in animation, and Channel 4, and there was loads of short films being commissioned and Petra Freeman and Candy Guard, amazing filmmakers, and I thought "I want to be like them" […] and maybe that's part of it in animated documentary, you see "oh look, there are women doing interesting stuff, maybe I could belong there" […]
>
> (Moore, 2019)

Role models can help newcomers to *imagine* their own role in the industry, steering how they then undertake their *alignment* process. Role models can be viewed as positive creative influences, lighting a pathway for future generations. However, another perspective is that they can exert a restrictive influence, impeding an individual's personal creative development and originality in favour of following too closely what came before. Moore is aware of the power that influence can exert on the creative culture of an institution and admits that she was initially reluctant to discuss animated documentary with her students, for fear of exerting too great an influence, and mindful 'not to develop a house style or influence them too much [because] it's all about finding your voice' (ibid.).

Chris Shepherd, who worked as Production Coordinator on Paul Vester's *Abductees* (1995) believes that working with Vester impacted the future professional identities of both himself and Jonathan Hodgson. Vester's artistic approach tapped into the values and attitudes that had been instilled in Shepherd through his art college education. However, Shepherd

acknowledges that this approach may have been partly responsible for his work not, so far, successfully scaling up to a funded feature film:

> I think he had an impact on all of us, Paul. I think Jonathan would probably say it as well. I think about *Dad's Dead* or stuff I did, I think maybe I just took it that that was the way – that that could exist somehow. Whereas if you come at it now, you probably wouldn't ever do something that was so terribly different. I suppose that's the thing too with the feature film things - when you try to do things, they want it to be like everything else. But I went to art college, and I was always told to do something that's different. And I think Paul was like that. And people like Jonathan Hodgson are like that. That's like being in art college.
>
> (Shepherd, 2019)

Case study: Alys Scott-Hawkins

Alys Scott-Hawkins describes her identity as 'multiple things at different points', with a 'constant tugging between things'. She reflects that 'my identity on a day-to-day basis seems to be constantly shifting from one role to another, from parent and domestic realm, to work, to artist, to supporting other artists, to teaching' (Scott-Hawkins, 2019a). Scott-Hawkins relates her professional identity to the explicit labels she uses to refer to her practice, and notes that these have changed over the course of her career, informed by her environment and formal professional role but also by 'my perception of what I'm doing and my confidence in what I'm doing' (ibid.). In her first year of study at the RCA, Scott-Hawkins identified firmly as a 'designer' rather than an 'artist':

> I was like: "I'm a designer, I'm definitely not an artist - I'm a filmmaker, I'm about working to a brief, delivering something that fits the time. An artist is something different". […] I was very informed by the BA course that I'd done where animation was one strand within a broader film production course. The thing was being a filmmaker, and that was what I put on my business card

> when I graduated, and then bit by bit I started to call myself a director. […] Then I stared calling myself an animation director because that was clearly what I was doing on a freelance basis and it was also, you plop out of education and think "what am I actually qualified to do here" and that was what I could categorically say, coming out of the RCA, that was what I had learnt there and practiced and was qualified to do was be an animation director. And in more recent years I have called myself an artist and animation director and since I stopped working freelance directing animation, at the time I started [working as a lecturer] when that was no longer feasible with young kids – I now call myself an artist and researcher.
>
> (ibid.).

Scott-Hawkins's trajectory of identification has seen her refine and reimagine her identity through engagement and alignment, in response to her changing environment and evolving skillset. In an autoethnographic paper interrogating her process of making the short experimental animated documentary *Hysteria* (2001), she asks:

> Who was I when I made this film?
> A postgrad student in my mid 20s.
> […]
> I was a feminist, though perhaps not entirely certain what people thought of me when I said so.
> A socialist: wanting, believing in making the world a better place.
> A fledgling film maker, who had come from a practical film production degree, with a good chunk of theory, where animation was a specialism within the broader spectrum of filmmaking.
>
> (Scott-Hawkins, 2019b, p.100)

This is Scott-Hawkins' experience of multimembership contemporaneous to making the film. Some of the categories she identifies as seem more secure, others seem more tentative, but these are not necessarily in conflict. She is a filmmaker at the same time as being a student, a feminist and a socialist.

Scott-Hawkins still has a practice that reflects a sense of multimembership. She identifies three primary communities of practice that she feels a sense of membership of: a national and international community of animated documentary filmmakers, an international research community, and a local community of artists in her home city of Southampton. Scott-Hawkins refers to herself as a 'director of animated documentaries' in biographies and reflects 'I can't imagine myself making anything in animation in the future that isn't a documentary or doesn't have a very strong relationship with nonfiction' (ibid.). She feels part of 'the animated documentary community' in the UK and internationally.

Scott-Hawkins also identifies as being a part of a 'research community', which 'overlaps' with 'the animated documentary community'. Although the research community has a 'formal structure' for coming together in conferences and symposia, while the animated documentary community is 'more freeform', Scott-Hawkins sees both these communities as made up of 'individuals working in different parts of the world, in different ways, but really wanting to connect with each other, to share ideas, to give and receive feedback, give and receive moral support' (ibid.). Her face-to-face contact with other community members is limited by geography, because 'to connect with the animated documentary community or the research community means either physically travelling to London or further afield, or connecting with people online' (ibid.).

Scott-Hawkins acted as a convener when she started the animateddocumentary.com blog, alongside Elle Land, with the intention of creating 'a meeting place for people who are interested in [animated documentary] and a place that community can come together' (ibid.). Despite this, she does not identify as a 'community builder'. Instead she sees herself as 'somebody who wants to be part of a community, so [starting the blog] was my way of trying to make that community exist' (ibid.).

Case study: Alex Widdowson

Alex Widdowson first tried out animation on an art foundation course before beginning a BA in Fine Art, on which he engaged with a range of creative practices. His practice was driven by themes he wanted to explore, centring on his own experience of mental health problems. He began to use animation as a way of presenting traumatic memories. He remembers:

> I started off with these naked fighting figures – all meant to be me, struggling. Then I moved onto graphic scenes of having an injection forced on you. […] I found I could slowly reveal this secret horror that had happened to me, and it was a way of self-administering art therapy. […] by the 3rd year I had made an explicit film about my experiences in a psychiatric ward.
>
> (Widdowson, 2017)

Widdowson did not have any knowledge of the existence of animated documentary as a practice until his tutor, Christin Bolewski, asked him 'have you heard of animated documentary?' and sent him Landreth's *Ryan*. It was at this point that Widdowson 'realised what the potential would be for using animation to cover this real topic' (ibid.). Widdowson left his BA in 2012 'with lots of enthusiasm' and threw himself into entering the world of independent film. He volunteered at Encounters Short Film and Animation Festival, where he met Ellie Land at a workshop about animation and therapy. He took Land's details and contacted her as he hoped that her animateddocumentary.com blog would promote his work.

> We emailed back and forth about various things because I wanted to get my film on their website and she ended up asking me to write for them […] I did a lot of writing about animated documentary and discovered this emerging market almost, a very small space where I could suddenly have a valid voice, because no one else was doing it.
>
> (ibid.)

Widdowson felt that animated documentary was like 'a niche […] a sort of awkward corner of animation' (ibid.). Another tutor, Paul Wells, had suggested that Widdowson should apply for a Masters at the RCA. Widdowson applied in 2013, and remembers that 'in the interview Joan Ashworth really responded to my enthusiasm about animated documentary and said something along the lines of "you should stick around and wait until we start the new course" (ibid.).

Widdowson was put on a waiting list for a place at the RCA but was not accepted that year, which left him 'heartbroken' (ibid.). He began working in graphic design, feeling that he 'didn't seem to have any contacts or any way forward in animation' (ibid.). He continued blogging and attending festivals, and at the ANIMA festival in Brussels he saw a talk about animated documentary by Lawrence Thomas Martinelli, and the filmmaker and tutor on the Anidox programme, Uri Kranot.

> Uri Kranot was presenting the Anidox lab and what they did. So I basically chatted Uri up afterwards and pitched him this idea I came up with in the back of the theatre that day, and he was quite excited about it. So I applied […] and it was really exciting getting in. And it really sparked my confidence as an animator.
>
> (ibid.)

The idea that he brought to the Anidox Lab was based on an anecdote that he had heard from two teenage boys, but as he researched the piece further, he began to doubt the truth of what the boys had said. Furthermore, the boys were unwilling to give Widdowson permission to use their story. This lack of access to his subjects proved to be an issue on the Anidox programme. 'It seemed like a failure not to secure the rights with the kids' Widdowson remembers. 'Ultimately every commissioner outside of the workshop thought it was a waste of time to work with something if you're not even sure if it's true. So it didn't go anywhere' (ibid.). Widdowson was left feeling frustrated 'by not doing very well on the course, and commissioners turning the project down, and it not being put on the [Anidox] website when

I submitted at the end' (ibid.). Widdowson learned a great deal on the lab, going through 'steep learning curves on visual storytelling' (ibid.), but it did not deliver on his hopes in terms of the short-term return of cultural or financial capital, and the acceptance within the animation community that would come with it.

When the RCA launched its animated documentary pathway in 2015, Widdowson applied, 'aware that it would be tactically easier to get into the documentary course on the first year' (ibid.). He was accepted, and found that as a student on the programme he developed his own work but also supported other students with theirs. For Widdowson this was a way to develop the skills that he might need if he chose an academic career:

> I remember starting at RCA and just deciding to pretend I was a tutor, and sit down with people who wanted advice and learn how to give them advice and guidance. So I did that a lot, and I feel like the RCA is a bit like that anyway. […] There is this sort of momentum that is: you want to be a tutor in an art school you go through RCA. Lots of [RCA students] consider it as a job they might want to do, and I certainly was no exception. A lot of us were sort of practising what it would be like.
>
> (Widdowson, 2019a)

During his study, Widdowson's role models, who he was imagining his career progressing in a similar direction to, were 'people like Paul Bush and Samantha Moore, basically people who teach to provide stable income, and on the side get small projects commissioned' (Widdowson, 2017). He admits that there are dual reasons for his interest in teaching: 'I think it's the sort of person that I am I like to teach, that's been clear since I was an undergraduate. But also it's scary, the idea of trying to make a living off this [animated documentary] stuff' (ibid.). Widdowson's work experience included spells at commercial studios, including Passion Pictures and Mosaic Studios, and he expressed some interest in 'the Andy Glynne route' as a career direction, although he felt 'not that confident when it comes to running a business, that's quite intimidating to me. Probably I just don't

have the confidence right now when I'm a student, maybe that'll be easier when I graduate and do a little bit of it, but right now that's hard to imagine' (Widdowson, 2017). Widdowson also developed long-term ambitions to direct a fully animated documentary feature, possibly moving to a country with a stronger animation funding landscape (ibid.).

Making a well-received graduation film is important to RCA animation students; it is what the programme is structured towards and what its narratives of success revolve around. Widdowson remembers how, through a process of engagement with his peers, he hit on the idea for making a graduation film about his brother Jamie, who has Down's Syndrome. He was with a group of students, 'spit-balling ideas' for possible films when 'I just mentioned my brother […] and everyone in the room just sort of switched on and was suddenly interested in what I was saying. And I thought: I've got a project here, this is good' (Widdowson, 2019a).

Widdowson describes the resulting film, *Music and Clowns* (2018), as 'the easiest film I ever made' due to the 'dream access' he had in his subject matter being his family (ibid.). He notes that '30 years of first-hand experiences of my subjects facilitated unlimited access and provided an enormous advantage' (Widdowson, 2019b, p.63). Widdowson drew methodological inspiration from filmmakers including Samantha Moore and Tim Webb in making the film, as well as from the animated documentary theory he was learning on the course (ibid.).

The film has been successful in festivals and won prestigious awards, including two student RTS awards. While his film was touring festivals, Widdowson began working as Studio Manager for a commercial animation studio. Here his newly formed, confident identity as an RCA animated documentary graduate was challenged, as he saw animation production taking place with a more complex and standardised process than that he had learned at the RCA.

> My studio colleagues do like [*Music and Clowns*], but they wouldn't hire me as an animator. I asked them if I could do some clean up and they said 'you'd really struggle'. And I realised I'd been missing out several stages of traditional animation […] it just wasn't a thing at RCA.
>
> (ibid.)

Widdowson's commercial colleagues were dismissive of UK animation training, believing it better to be trained in Europe or 'in industry'. For Widdowson, it became 'hard to maintain this idea that I want to go off and get a PhD and be in a university, teaching students to animate, when actually I've been intimidated by the animation industry' (ibid.). Added to this, Widdowson encountered scepticism about the animated documentary form from his colleagues. This challenged the narratives and repertoires that he was accustomed to from his participation in the animated documentary community of practice and the animated documentary research community. Widdowson resigned from this job in 2019, having successfully applied for a practice-based PhD at Queen Mary University, funded by Wellcome. He has published academic papers and spoken at a number of conferences.

Looking at Widdowson's career progression through Wenger's modes of identification, it is possible to identify phases:

Engagement

Widdowson's engagement with the animated documentary community took a number of forms. As well as entering the community as a filmmaker, he engaged with it as a blogger and festival volunteer. In these roles, it could be argued, Widdowson had more power, as he was aligning himself with the "gatekeepers" who control how visible a filmmaker's work is. These roles allowed Widdowson access to communities that subsequently benefitted his trajectory as a filmmaker (e.g. the Anidox Lab).

Imagination

Through the influence of tutors, and the observations he was making at festivals and through blogging, Widdowson built a picture of the animated documentary production community, and of an appropriate trajectory for his own career within it. For Widdowson, this involved postgraduate study at the RCA, so when he was rejected from the course he was 'heartbroken'; his image of where he fitted into the community was shattered. His subsequent, strategic re-application to the animated documentary pathway demonstrates a re-imagining of his role, with sharpened focus.

Studying the industry, Widdowson was able to get a sense of how it was possible to make work, and where his particular work would fit within this. Identifying Moore and Bush as role models, he set himself on a trajectory to a career that mirrored theirs. He also considered alternative role models, for example Andy Glynne, but using his imagination to compare Glynne's professional life against his own skills and experience he found it difficult to picture himself in this role ('right now that's hard to imagine'). Widdowson's desire to make an animated documentary feature, possibly moving to a country with a more hospitable finance environment, demonstrates his imagining a future, balancing his desires against what he knows to be possible.

Alignment

Widdowson's experience on the Anidox Lab taught him a hard lesson about the expectations of the animated documentary (and wider documentary) community, particularly with regards to access. Having experienced the 'failure' of losing access to his subjects, and, as he perceived it, losing the faith of the community's "old-timers", Widdowson prioritised strong and secure access for his graduation film, aligning himself with the needs of the community he was learning to be a part of.[38]

[38] Widdowson has since returned to Anidox Lab as a guest lecturer, demonstrating his progression on the trajectory from newcomer towards "old-timer".

Widdowson's current PhD practice can also be seen as a form of alignment. Through engagement and imagination, Widdowson has constructed a plan for how he can realistically build a career. His role models Moore and Bush both have PhDs, so it makes sense that he would also take this path. And a PhD is a widely recognised qualification and a conventional path to a career in teaching, something that Widdowson wants to pursue.

Power, gender, and identity

Honess Roe writes that:

> The nature of animation's production process, the relative affordability of tools and materials, means that those working outside the mainstream have often adopted it as a means of expression […] Filmmaking practices, and animation in particular, have the potential to offer ways of challenging hegemonic power relations, particularly those regarding gender.
>
> (Honess Roe, 2013, p.144-145)

Animation can be a particularly useful tool for subversion and resistance, and is sometimes referred to as a "Trojan Horse" because of its potential to communicate serious messages through seemingly innocent media. For example animation has been used to circumvent the editorial restrictions of oppressive regimes, as it has 'managed as, supposedly, children's entertainment, to avoid most of the censorship to which other art forms were subject' (Kitson, 2008, p.14).

Animated documentary has been used by UK based filmmakers to explore and represent personal identities and to challenge oppression. Notable examples include: N'jendo Muukii's *Yellow Fever* (2012), which looks at how media representations of beauty perpetuate damaging colonial ideals; Jessica Ashman's *I Don't Protest, I Just Dance in My Shadow* (2017),

which explores the experiences of black female animators; Mary Martins' *The Divide* (2016), a poetic portrait of her experience as a lone parent; Susan Young's *The Betrayal* (2018), which tells her own story of traumatic personal events; and the work of the Leeds Animation Workshop (LAW). As the longest standing member of LAW, Terry Wragg's sense of identity as a filmmaker is strongly politically defined, and she distances herself from some communities of practice, while acknowledging membership of others. Wragg remembers how LAW members self-identified in the 1970s-1980s:

> We were dialectical materialists […] We didn't want to be middle-class dilettantes. It was great to be doing creative artistic activity, but we felt quite distant from, say, the London Film-Makers' Co-op, which we saw as making art-for-art's-sake stuff that didn't mean anything to most of the population. We were making something with a message, and we wanted it to be accessible.
>
> (Wragg, quoted in Tasker, 2016, p.128)

Wragg's strong sense of political and social identity, and her dis-identification with what she sees as meaningless, middle-class production, reflects her own trajectory. A filmmaker with no formal training, Wragg grew up in a working-class environment where the idea of being an artist was considered unrealistic.

> When I was growing up, I did occasionally try and say "I want to be an artist" or "I want to be a writer" and growing up in Yorkshire in the '50s and '60s, people just laughed at you. They said "don't be ridiculous, no one makes a living at that, who do you think you are? Be a teacher like everybody else."
>
> (Wragg, 2019)

There are also examples of men using animated documentary to challenge hegemonic power, and of men from backgrounds that offer limited access to the creative industries using animation as a means to tell stories. Chris Shepherd describes how, as a young man from a low-income Northern

background, animation offered a more accessible way to express himself than live action filmmaking. His interest in live action and social realism has impacted his animation work, giving it a strong link to the representation of reality:

> I used to watch the telly when I was a kid. My mum wouldn't let me out of the house much, so I used to watch Dennis Potter or watch *Play for Today* or stuff like that. And I really was inspired by stuff like that. I love live action really, I love films, Kubrick, Lindsay Anderson. Kitchen sink dramas as well because I'm Northern and I'm that generation, we were all inspired by Tony Richardson and all that. But then I started doing animation because I wanted to express myself. I didn't have a camera, didn't have any actors, so I did that in a way. But I wasn't somebody who was born and knew they wanted to be an animator. I've never been like that. I've always been somebody who wants to tell a story and started using animation. So, my aesthetic all the time comes back to people and places, and real life.
>
> (Shepherd, 2019)

While there are significant examples of men from disadvantaged backgrounds using animated nonfiction as a tool of political comment or resistance, there is a clear skew towards work by female filmmakers in this area, and indeed across animated documentary more generally (as shown in Appendix 1). Wells (1998, p.199) proposes that 'the documentary tendency' is evident in much work created by female animators, while Moore notes that animated documentary 'has clearly been taken on board by female directors, disproportionate to the number of female directors in animation' (Moore, 2019), adding that her students who take an interest in animated documentary are usually female. For Moore, this is because animated documentary is 'a new space, somewhere to explore different things' (ibid.). Elizabeth Hobbs also recognises animated documentary as a form well suited to telling women's stories, and challenging power through representing history in an unconventional ways. She describes animated documentary as 'emerging […] still quite new' and states that 'it's

especially important to hear women's voices and women's opinions about what history was and what history is' (Hobbs, 2018).

The prevalence of female directors in animated documentary does not reflect the wider commercial animation industry. Kennedy notes that 'there is a distinctive lack of women animation directors in Britain today compared to the late eighties and early nineties even though there are equal numbers of men and women on most animation courses' (ibid). This is supported by research which indicates that only 3% of animated feature film directors and 13% of animated television directors have been women. Of these directors, only four came from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds (Smith et al. 2019, p.1-2). Kennedy shows that female animators have experienced prejudice, harassment and alienation based on gender, and that animation can have a 'blokey' culture that can exclude women (Kennedy, 2010, p.5-6), and Candy Guard notes that the tendency in animation to recruit through existing contacts can mean that women do not have access to some opportunities (ibid).[39] Gender bias also persists in the way that women are represented on-screen in mainstream entertainment (as shown by seejane.org, 2019). Documentary filmmaking has also traditionally been a male dominated industry (Fraser, 2019, p.165) and while women are better represented as directors and crew in documentary films than in fiction films, they still account for a minority of these roles (Lauzen, 2015, p.1).

In the past, funders such as the BFI have been accused of not showing tangible commitment to fostering diversity in the film industry (see for example Northern Alliance, 2009, p.6). In recent years though, partly in response to the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements and from lobbying organisations, many organisations have pledged a greater commitment to

[39] This can, however, work both ways. Guard 'realises that the glut of new female run TV companies in the eighties was actually beneficial to her' (Kennedy, 2010, p.5-6).

and investment in diversity (see for example BFI, 2019). Speaking about the recruitment for the Animation18 short film commissions, BFI consultant Helen Brunsdon noted that female directors were well represented in the commissions, making up more than half of the films that received funding (Brunsdon, 2018).

Mary Martins applied for the Animation18 scheme with an idea for an animated documentary that explored her childhood memories. She was invited to interview and found that the interview panel was made up of five women. Martins felt that the gender make-up of the panel worked to her advantage: 'it was an all-female panel, which is great. They know I'm a lone parent, and they didn't think "she's not going to be able to do this, she's a lone parent". It's really important that they didn't make their decision based on that' (Martins, 2019).

While diverse filmmakers can bring alternative narratives, it should also be noted that concerns over diversity and the privileging of hegemony-challenging content can itself become a remit that wields power over production. It is not uncommon for women or minorities to feel that they are being *told* what they should care about, what stories they should tell. For example Pilling says of her time at the BFI in the 1970s that 'it was tough luck if you were a woman filmmaker who didn't happen to want to do a film about feminist issues' (Pilling, quoted in Kitson, 2008, p.18).

Animated documentary also offers opportunities to redress the balance of power through its visual representation of characters and their experiences. Honess Roe (2013) has written about animation's use as 'non-mimetic substitution', whereby a character or event is represented by something that does not visually resemble it (such as birds in the place of children). In this way, characters can be released from implicit cultural associations linked to their appearance, including gender and race. Honess Roe's 'evocative' mode of animation also allows for stories and experiences to be represented in ways that are not bound to a character's physicality, sidestepping prejudice

and offering the potential for greater audience identification. At the Frontline Club's panel and screening on animated documentary in 2016, an audience member from a live-action factual television background, who was new to animated documentary, observed with astonishment that through animation, a director 'can give an equal power to a girl of eight as a very strong man of 50', also stating 'I'm blown away by what I've seen today' (audience member at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016).

Case study: power and identity in *The Betrayal* (2018)

This case study is drawn together from: informal conversations with Susan Young; her presentations at events including Deptford Animadocs 2019 and The Essay Film Form and Animation: Intersectionality in Motion 2019; and online materials relating to her research.

Susan Young studied at Liverpool Polytechnic as a contemporary of Jonathan Hodgson, graduating in 1981. She remembers how both she and Hodgson were inspired by their lecturer Ray Fields, who

> encouraged us to do non-narrative documentary, so to go out and observe things in the street or equally observe your own internal state or your internal response to something that was happening, and everything was equally valid so we would create these kind of observational documentary films that gave equal weight to what we were observing objectively but also what we were thinking subjectively.
>
> (Young, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019)

This dual view of the external and internal can be found in Young's film *The Betrayal* (2018), a powerful exposition of a traumatic incident from her past. Following physical and emotional domestic abuse, Young found herself in the care of a psychiatrist. *The Betrayal* recounts how this psychiatrist abused his position and her trust, manipulating her and making

her dependent on him and the medication he was prescribing, ultimately leading Young to attempt to take her own life.

Young decided to represent this experience in a film as part of a process of autoethnography in a practice-based PhD. She wanted to avoid traditional character-based animated reenactments or expositional interview voice-over. Instead, her process involved using the actual medical and legal records that related to the period of her life in question. These documents were then used as materials to tell the story of Young's traumatic experience, re-worked into a visceral montage that presents the experience *from her own perspective*. By 'playing around with the idea of what documents do we use in a documentary, so the documents themselves become the characters' (ibid.). Young's film asks questions about power and voice, and who gets to decide what is the truth. The question of voice and voicelessness was of central importance to her:

> I had gone through this experience of being someone who had a voice, an animation director, et cetera, and then ending up with a mental health label and suddenly becoming voiceless. And that was totally shocking. So I wanted to explore that, to actually explore what it meant to me, how it felt to be voiceless. Which is why I used the medical records, to subvert them and take control of that narrative.
>
> (ibid.)

Young's process of revisiting her medical and legal records was traumatic in itself. She found herself able to cope with this by devising a process that involved breaking down the written material into fragments, 'sort of haiku sentences' (ibid.), from which she constructed the film. Most of the words in the film are seen as flashes of typed text, shot with a macro lens, so close up that the texture of paper and ink is visible, illuminated by sudden flashes of light. A voiceover vocalises some of the text, as well as fragments of disturbing things that Young remembers her doctor saying to her. The voice is deeply unsettling – low and stern, with a strange quality as if constructed

from many voices. The dialogue was voiced by Young herself, and this audio was then processed heavily to create a dark simulacrum of a man's voice. This literal use of her own voice exemplifies Young's intention: 'for me it was really, really important to find my own voice again through playing with the voice of this individual who I'd created through his medical records he wrote about me, and also legal records' (ibid.). Young literally took the words that were spoken and written about her by her abuser, as well as by others that deemed her mentally ill, and voiced them herself, taking control over how they were represented and the story they told. In doing so she re-represented the traumatic event from her own perspective, taking ownership of her own story and identity. By working with the materials created to oppress, label, and control her, she was able to subvert their narrative, 'stealing the power from psychiatry and the law by repurposing the text […] and taking back control' (ibid.).

The film has proved to have a diverse audience. It premiered at the animation festival Annecy but has since screened at events including horror film festivals and psychiatry conferences. Young finds it 'really rewarding' screening the film for psychiatrists, who respond to it as a point of reflection on their professional practice. For Young, 'it's great having that calling to show people the film and have them actively listen and take on board some of the things the film is dealing with' (ibid.) As someone who is now playing her representation of events to prominent psychiatrists and having them listen and respect her story, even learn from it, Young has flipped the power balance. She has become the authoritative voice. By presenting an image of their own practice back to them, through her eyes, she is able to challenge and engage them on equal terms. To return to Jewson, this is an example of power exercised by one 'in a position to generate and disseminate stories that prevail at the expense of the accounts of others, within and outside the network' (Jewson, 2007, p.78).

Young also acknowledges that her own living identity can change or enhance the reading of the film, admitting 'my existence, alongside the film, they work quite nicely as two things' (Young, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019). Young's very existence contextualises the autobiographical story in the film, transforming a grim tale of coercion and exploitation into one of triumph-over-adversity. At the close of Young's film, we see evidence of her having taken an overdose and being taken to hospital, a heart monitor beeping. The final sound effect is a single, flat beep, indicating that her heart has stopped. It is a chilling ending, and without further information, a fair audience assumption would be that the protagonist had died. Young's presence in reality as someone who is not only alive, but is thriving - working on a PhD and exhibiting her film to wide acclaim - subverts the effect of this ending. The version of Susan Young who we see represented in the film - a victim, manipulated, exploited and driven to suicide - is dead. From her ashes has risen Susan Young the autoethnographer: a strong, critical, creative artist recovering control of her story and her identity. As trade narratives go, it is a powerful one.

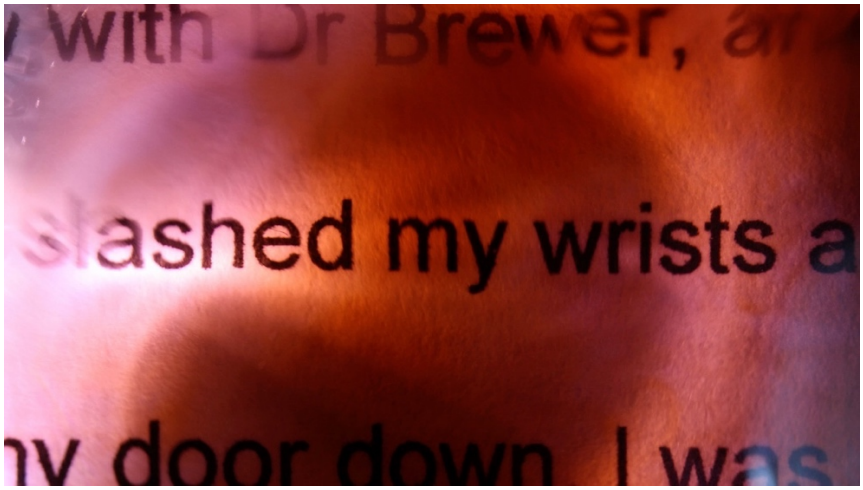


Figure 11: Still from *The Betrayal* (2014)

Conclusion

The labels that filmmakers apply to themselves change over time. For many makers of animated documentary, the animated documentary making label is not their primary mode of self-identification but is one of a number of overlapping identities. In some cases, it is an externally applied label that they are, to varying degrees, content to accept.

Every creative field contains practitioners with differing characters, motivations, and approaches. In this complex landscape, the identification of role models is a key part of the trajectory of identity for emerging practitioners. Role models serve as aspirational figures, guiding the imagination and alignment of newcomers. However, the benefits of role models can be complicated by the trade narratives that these practitioners may employ, which can obscure the more problematic aspects of their practice and career. For a role model to serve their purpose most effectively, a high level of transparency and honesty is required. This can come from role model practitioners themselves, but their community of practice must also be willing to hear, engage with, and share complex and messy narratives as well as simple and satisfying ones, if newcomers are to learn from them.

Methodology, technique, aesthetic style, genre, tone, and theme can both influence and reflect a practitioner's sense of identity. These are developed in each practitioner through an interplay between outside-in and inside-out activity. Filmmakers each develop their own "realm" of practice which is then, if successful, reinforced by the repeated commissioning of similar or related work. In some cases, this development of a realm of practice can lead to processes that are reified with names, such as Samantha Moore's "collaborative frame" methodology. This can be useful, as it creates a toolkit that can be shared and used by other practitioners. A reified process can potentially be used across boundaries, benefitting other fields of production and communities of practice.

Professional identity is linked with, and contextualised by, personal and political identity. Animated documentary's capacity to challenge hegemonic power structures, combined with its relative youth as a genre, may account for the high proportion of women in the field. It may also account for the high proportion of films explicitly about the filmmaker's own identity and personal experience, for example: as a woman of colour; as a lone parent; as an artist; as a member of a diaspora; as a survivor of mental illness; as a survivor of abuse. These particular affordances of the animated documentary form to tell underrepresented stories and redress balances of power make it a powerful social tool. Given the current ethical crisis in factual entertainment, these qualities of animated documentary could be beneficial in the development of the wider nonfiction industry.

Animated documentary films can fit into a wide range of programming and commissioning categories. This multivalence offers opportunities for films to reach diverse audiences, but also for the filmmaker to be introduced to, and influenced by, new communities, and to develop unexpected new identities. In this way, animated documentary production has the potential to broaden the horizons of a filmmaker's trajectory of identity, opening up opportunities to traverse different communities.

4. COMMUNICATION

Chapter 7 - Boundaries

In this Chapter I look at both animation and documentary as boundary-crossing practices. I also consider animated documentary as a boundary practice, existing at the boundaries of both animation and documentary as well as other communities. I look at the risks and benefits of this boundary position of animated documentary practice, using examples drawn from a range of interviews with practitioners to illustrate these. I look at the idea of academia, particularly animated documentary academia, as a boundary space, and finally I return to ideas of community multimembership, showing how practitioners can benefit from a trajectory that has traversed multiple community lines.

Animation challenges common beliefs about filmmaking as an inherently collaborative form. Wells proposes that animation 'may be viewed as the most auteurist of film practices' because it is possible for an animator to work almost entirely alone (Wells, 2002, p.73). However just because something is possible, it does not mean that it is advisable, easy, or desirable, and for the vast majority of independent animators, filmmaking does involve collaboration. This may be with documentary subjects, voice actors, a producer, assistant animators, a composer or any number of other crew roles. Even a relationship with a funder could be seen as a collaboration.

These other people involved in a production may be members of an animation production community of practice, or they may come predominantly from a different community of practice. A crew member such as a composer or colourist may belong primarily to communities of practice associated with their trade rather than with a specific area or genre

of production (such as animation, documentary, drama or commercials). Each of these types of practitioner have different skillsets and, while they may have a very good idea of what those in other areas of the production do, this usually has its limits. Even after many years of producing documentaries, for example, Fraser writes of the mystery that is still held for him in the editing process: 'I can see how a film is constructed second by second by looking at the diagrammatic patterns of the software programs editors use. The actual process of compiling a film, from bits and pieces to a finished artefact, is still opaque to me' (Fraser, 2019, p.72-3).

There are boundaries between practitioners in any collaborative work. However, these are not always detrimental. In conventional modes of film production, each crew member works within their expertise, and knows the parameters of their responsibilities. They work to an understood system, to 'standardized methods' (Star and Griesemer, 1989). They know what they know, but they also know what they don't know. However, as I will demonstrate, the situation becomes more complicated when working outside of standardised systems.

Animated documentary as a boundary practice

As I have shown, it is reductive to talk about "the animation industry" as if it were one homogenised body. There is a world of difference between, for example, digital 2D children's television, paint-on-glass artist animation and CG graphics for games. Animation also crosses disciplinary and industrial boundaries, emerging from and working with a range of fields. Leslie and McKim (2017, p.209) observe that 'animation is now employed in such diverse disciplines as life-sciences, engineering and law', building on Ward's description of it as a 'conjunctional' discipline, defined by its 'relationships with other knowledge' (Ward, 2003, p.7). Ward proposes that animation has the potential to bridge the knowledge areas it crosses, for

example games, film studies and sport science, to ‘usefully collapse some of the boundaries that still exist between broadly Arts and Science orientations’, encouraging a 'critical dialogue’ between them (Ward, 2006, p.233). In this sense animation could be seen as a ‘broker’, participating in in multiple communities.

There are also many different ways of making a documentary: in terms of style, process, and platform. From web storytelling and virtual reality, to the grey areas where it meets campaigning and advertising, to the poetic and nonnarrative, the documentary field is hugely varied. Piotrowska describes documentary as having ‘fallen between, or stretched across […] a whole number of scholarly sites, including anthropology and ethnography, history, science and art’ (Piotrowska, 2013, p.62). Fraser notes the diverse paths that bring filmmakers to documentary ‘through tabloid journalism or philosophy, out of a desire to change the world, or merely because there is a story you wish to tell’ (Fraser, 2019, p.46). And Nåls shows that all documentary production exists at community boundaries, as it ‘always entails a dialogue between a filmmaker and a subject that exists in the world outside of the narrative – a person, a community or a culture’ (2016, p.30).

Since both animation and documentary are heterogeneous and inherently interdisciplinary, already existing across community boundaries, it follows that animated documentary takes place across many boundaries and intersects with many communities. Animated documentary can be described as what Wenger terms a “boundary practice” – a practice that evolves due to sustained work at the boundaries of other communities of practice. Wenger proposes that, when work is consistently done at the boundary of two or more communities of practice, ‘sometimes, a new practice in its own right does develop at these boundaries, which is worth paying attention to in its own terms’ (Wenger, 2010b, p.129).

At its simplest, animated documentary can be seen to exist at the boundary of “animation practice” and “documentary practice”. The meeting of these

communities of practice within the boundary practice of animated documentary can manifest in a number of ways. It can be fairly literal – for example in cases such as *Children of the Holocaust* (2014), in which a documentary filmmaking team recorded and edited interviews which were then given visual treatment by an animator and production designer, with a producer working with both the research/editing and design/animation processes. In cases such as this the producer may not be facilitating any communication or sharing between the communities beyond the exchange of artefacts (or "boundary objects"). In other cases, the boundary is more conceptual, for example in the work of Moore who uses traditional documentary methods, such as recorded interviews, and then applies animation production methods to realise this material into moving image works - drawing modes of practice from both communities and therefore working across the boundaries of each.

Boundary work can have both negative and positive dimensions.

Negative dimensions of boundary work

Boundaries are 'places of potential misunderstanding arising from different enterprises, commitments, values, repertoires, and perspectives […] even common words and objects are not guaranteed to have continuity of meaning across a boundary' (Wenger 2010, p.4). De Jong has shown through an analysis of the production of *Deep Water* (2006) that even within live action documentary, problems can arise as a result of boundary working between theatrical and broadcast documentary production communities (De Jong, 2008, p.150). The differences between animation and documentary practice are greater, and the practices themselves more at odds with each other, than between feature and broadcast documentary, so friction at boundaries would, it would follow, be more intense.

In this thesis I have already touched on issues that arise in animated documentary production as a result of underfunding and inappropriate schedules. These can usually be attributed to the problems of boundary working, as animated documentary production is forced into spaces that are designed either for: documentary (with its low budgets and focus on building narrative in post-production); live action (with shorter production times and different audience expectations than animation); or fictional animation (which does not usually require the same research, development and production processes as documentary). Boundary issues can arise throughout all stages of development, pre-production, production, postproduction and distribution. These can include: conflicting visions and objectives; divergent expectations; a lack of clarity around roles and hierarchies; inconsonant languages and temperament; inappropriate budgeting and scheduling; and prejudice. In my research I have observed certain production problems that appear to arise frequently in animated documentary, all of which emerge from its boundary position.

'I didn't know what to ask for'

Rebecca Manley describes the animation process and production hierarchy as 'shrouded in mystery' to those working in live action (Manley, 2015), while Zheng notes that the animation industry is 'really unclear until you're inside it' (Zheng, quoted in Snoad, 2017). This mystification of the animation process can mean that non-animators struggle to know where to begin when planning to include animation in their work. Dan Vernon, a live-action documentary maker who has integrated animation into his films, told me that at his first meeting with an animation lead, he found that he was stuck as he simply 'didn't know what to ask for' (Vernon, 2018).

Inappropriate notes

Ignorance, or a disinclination to engage with the realities of animation production, can lead to funders and clients making unreasonable or impossible requests. Often these come in the form of requests for changes at

late stages of production. Schendler remembers receiving a note from one of her commissioners several months into the six-month production of *Men Talk About Mother*, suggesting that the opening section of the film should be changed. She recalls: 'We couldn't believe it, because she'd been there in our interview, it was part of what we talked about in our interview, so it wasn't something we just added later. But she just suddenly decided that she didn't like it' (Schendler, 2019). During a placement at Mosaic Films, I observed that despite strict sign-off processes that were in place to prevent late-stage changes, sometimes these seemed inevitable. Clients were not always responsive to requests for formal sign off on development materials, and requests for late-stage changes that required significant additional work were not unknown.

The front-loaded aspect of decision-making in conventional animation development can also mean that animation filmmakers lose out on the opportunity to benefit from useful notes. Armitage remembers that on his production of *This Yorkshire Sound*, at the point where other (live action) filmmakers received feedback that could potentially improve their edit, he was unable to action any changes, so the feedback was redundant:

> The thing is [the commissioners] didn't really know much about how you make animation […] everybody else was doing live action and all of their feedback was in the last few weeks when, you know, everyone's editing at the end and they do the edit and then they watch it and they re-edit it, and for me to have a feedback session at the end of the project is entirely pointless.
>
> (Armitage, 2018)

Prejudice

Some practitioners are unable to work effectively across boundaries of practice; others are unwilling. While audiences may be becoming more accustomed to animation as a tool of documentary, some in the documentary industry remain unconvinced. Rebecca Mark-Lawson initially

struggled to find an editor with the right level of experience for her hybrid feature project *Irene's Ghost* (2018). She found that several of the respected documentary editors she spoke to were resistant to working with animation - or as one of them put it, "cartoons" (Mark-Lawson, 2016).

Animator Tony Comely has also found that documentary filmmakers he has collaborated with are anxious about the seriousness (or lack of seriousness) of animation as a form. He reflects that 'all of them have at some point said to me: "I don't want this to be a cartoon" (Comley, 2017). Comley finds that this anxiety makes it difficult for him to break away from a rotoscoped animation style that live action filmmakers usually want to work with. 'They seem to keep equating live action with reality' he observes, so rotoscoping, with its clear visual link to live action, is something they are more comfortable with (ibid.). Comley considers this absurd, especially as the rotoscoping that he does is traced over reenactments filmed with performers, who often have minimal information about the real context of the scene that is being represented (ibid.). Comley admires Alex Widdowson's student production *Critical Living* (2017), which uses distressed 3D objects to represent humans with fragile mental health. He notes that in productions such as Widdowson's, 'the visual style is as much an evocation of the subject matter as the actual content of what you're depicting' but that 'that's the issue that I've always had with my documentaries, is that they don't - the visual style actually doesn't have a very satisfying relationship with the subject matter' (ibid.). However, as the party with less power in the production, Comley has been largely unable to convince documentary filmmakers to consider the potential of a more open engagement with animation. 'I haven't yet worked out how to push my ideas through' he admits (ibid.).

Kelly observes that, in longform documentary, 'when animation takes a certain percentage of a programme, it starts to become problematic for commissioners' (Kelly, 2021). He has experienced commissioners taking

issue with 'how [animation] was representing certain parts of story'. Like Comley, Kelly believes that this arises because live action representation is perceived to offer a verisimilitude that animation does not, observing that in documentary 'what people want is something presented as fact, even if it's not something that can be proven or even should be considered a fact' (ibid.).[40] Daniel Wyss has also experienced resistance from commissioners with regard to the inclusion of significant amounts of animation, due in part to a perception of animation as a form of 'expensive re-enactment' and in part to a concern that animation may stand in the way of empathy with the characters, and inhibit emotional responses from the audience.

Production and post-production complications

Animation director Christian Schlaeffer was frustrated by the experience of creating animated sequences for a hybrid feature documentary. The editing process favoured by the producers, who came from a live-action documentary background, was very different from his own filmmaking methods. Schlaeffer explains that when he is making an animated film 'There are no versions of edits […] there's just dropping the shots into the timeline in the order you planned' (Schlaeffer, 2016). The documentary approach that the producers were taking, by contrast, involved 'recombining days of footage, trying out different orders of sequences […] actually re-arranging the sequences in a timeline and rendering it out and showing it to people and talking about it' (ibid.). The inherent uncertainty of the process was unfamiliar, inconvenient and uncomfortable for Schlaeffer, but he engaged with it because he believed the film would be strong and original. Ultimately Schlaeffer was disappointed with the final edit because he felt that even after the long editing process and many different versions, the producers settled on a conventional, functional structure:

[40] Significantly, Kelly has not experienced these issues in short form animated documentary, which he perceives as freer and more accepting of animation. He acknowledges that this may be simply because short form work is 'less of a priority' in the industry (Kelly, 2021).

> Every shot in their film has a very specific function and there's no breathing space. Which is a stark contrast to what I made for them. So, their very concrete way of storytelling in the live action is clashing with my looser approach in the animation. You'd expect it the other way round, given the working methods.
>
> (ibid.)

Schlaeffer had agreed to work on the film for a fraction of his commercial rates and had produced time-consuming animation, some of which was cut from the final film. The fact that the finished film was more conventional than the film that he *thought* he was contributing to left him regretting the scale of his investment.

Rebecca Mark-Lawson ran into difficulties while managing the live action edit and animation production of *Irene's Ghost* in tandem. It was difficult to lock the animation briefs without first locking the live action, but she was reluctant to pause animation production as she had a good team of student animators willing to work for low rates. There was no guarantee they would be available at a later date. While this production process was inefficient, it also brought benefits, allowing for a rich collaboration between the film's director Iain Cunningham and animation director Ellie Land, in which the animation could inform the story development, rather than get tacked on as illustration at the end. For Land, the process was creatively rewarding but also frustrating. Cunningham was working and re-working the narrative and Land 'wanted to have that dialogue, that process' with him, and respond to changes with new material. But this was complicated by the team of animators that Land was managing. She remembers 'I had at one point eight animators working with me and that's a bit of a nightmare, when they're waiting for stuff from you all the time but then Iain might say "I think I might change this slightly here" and "let's have a look at this" (Land, 2021). Despite the frustrations, Land found the process exciting, and felt that they were 'disrupting hierarchies in production' though failing to fit in with standardised documentary or animation methods (ibid.).

Land wanted to follow a similar dialogic approach with director Rupert Williams on *Bathroom Privileges*, letting the research influence the visuals and vice versa. However, much of the hoped for experimentation 'didn't make the cut' as the commissioners, unhappy with the iterative edits they were being shown, cut their own version of the audio. Land reflects that 'maybe that messiness [of the process] just didn't suit their timeframes and their budgets, and they just felt that they had to get some control over it'. Once they had locked the audio, Land was given it to animate, describing the subsequent process as 'a bit like animation by numbers' (ibid.). While Land is proud of the finished film, she acknowledges 'there wasn't really […] space to be experimental' (ibid.).

While working on *Bloomers* (2019), which was commissioned by Klangforum Wein for their *Happiness Machine* anthology, director Samantha Moore initially felt that 'Klangforum Wien seemed to prioritize the composers, the musicians and the performative elements [over the animation]. The animators would have benefited from having a dedicated animation production company/producer work with them on the budgets and schedules rather than the situation they found themselves in of having outsourced production management to a predominantly live action production company' (Addison and Moore, 2021). Animation producer Abigail Addison was invited onto the project by the filmmakers, to ensure that the animation directors' 'perspectives were represented […] by someone who had experience in working on animation projects' (ibid.). Addison's presence helped to bridge the gap between the production structure and the specific requirements of animation production. Addison emphases that despite difficulties, the relationship with Klangforum was positive, offering access to funding and talent that the filmmakers would not have otherwise had access to, and allowing them to make an ambitious and successful film (ibid.).

Positive dimensions of boundary work

Wenger argues that despite the risks, boundaries remain a valuable space for learning and innovating, because 'competence is not well defined' at boundaries (Wenger, 2010, p.4). ACE recognises the value in work that takes place at boundaries of practice, asserting that 'collaboration across backgrounds, organisations, disciplines and perspectives […] can spark a dynamic that changes our perceptions of what great art and culture is, who it is for, and what it can do' (ACE, 2013, p.27). Animated documentaries are often critically applauded for challenging assumptions about the documentary form, revealing complexities in the idea of representing truth and problematising notions of objectivity (see for example Honess Roe, 2013, p.171; Patrick, 2004, p.38). These characteristics could be seen as typical for a boundary practice. By working at the boundary of documentary and another practice, beliefs which have been naturalised within the documentary language are made strange, forcing a re-evaluation. Animation can also bring new approaches and perspectives to documentary in terms of *how* subject matter is presented, and *what* subject matter is presented. As shown in Chapter 6, animation offers a tool to represent events and perspectives outside of traditional historical and social power structures while animation's 'evocative' capabilities also allow it to present the "unfilmable" (Honess Roe, 2013).

Boundary work can also broaden horizons of practitioners. Animation practice can be reframed and revitalised by its application to the documentary form. Comely found himself challenged when he was required by a documentary producer to animate a scene depicting a real-life historical murder, in which a woman was beaten to death by her husband.

> It was a case where a husband thought his wife was cheating so he kicked her to death. And they wanted me to animate this, so I really agonised over that scene because, as you know, animation is almost inherently playful. Even when it's not being a cartoon, even when it's not Mickey Mouse, it's – there's delight in the

> rendering of each frame, you know, you're taking care over each crease in the trousers or each in between motion or the sort of – you know, in this case, the arc of a leg as it sort of heads towards a torso. So it's a really interesting and sort of sobering thing as a person animating that to kind of try and reconcile this tension between pride in your craft and enjoyment of the minutae of what you're doing, with what you're actually depicting. Because I was very, very anxious that it wouldn't come across as a piece of indulgence. […] ethically it's really strange, it's a really interesting thing – how to animate something that's very solemn. […] Because even though it happened 200 years ago, it was illustrating a thing that – I mean first of all it did happen to a person 200 years ago, that's horrible – but it happens still. So it's a really solemn thing.
>
> (Comely, 2017)

The awareness of the reality of the violence depicted instilled a sense of responsibility in Comely, preventing him from treating the scene as he might if depicting fictional "cartoon violence". Comely worked hard to create a visceral scene which was ugly without being gratuitous, and the finished sequence is the one he is most proud of in all his work.

For Kelly, animation is 'a really respectful medium' in documentary representation, and he believes the ethical dimensions of representing truth challenge and sharpen an animator's skills. He describes his work on his current production *Wind and the Shadow* as 'incredibly difficult, because it's so incredibly sensitive […] I look at certain images, certain depictions of things and I think 'no that's not right, that doesn't align with what that person has told me about how they feel' (Kelly, 2021).

Hodgson also found his animation practice challenged by the requirements of long form documentary, with its central priorities of drawing an audience in and keeping them watching and its inherent issues with the ethics of representation. He reflects on his work with Zac Beattie on *The Trouble with Love and Sex*:

> I learnt a lot from working with him because my tendency is to be a little bit irreverent with the subject – playful and sometimes rude. And you can't be like that when you're working with people who are going to relationship counselling. They're put a lot on the line to be involved in the documentary and you've just got to be very respectful to that. And the last thing you can do is ridicule them or make fun of them. You have to take something that's quite an ugly story and actually make the audience care about those people and want them to kind of sort their problems out. Otherwise – well this is what Zac would say to me – "we can't lose the audience, we've got 48 minutes, if they think these people are horrible, they're going to switch over".
>
> (Hodgson, speaking at Glynne et al., 2015)

Working with this new context, Hodgson developed an engaging, attractive and ethical style. His characters contained enough humanity for an audience to follow and empathise with them, and the more ugly or inelegant parts of their characters were downplayed by the visual rather than emphasised.

For Terry Wragg and the Leeds Animation Workshop, animation was a useful tool to communicate their messages, but they found some of the stylistic conventions of animation problematic. Wragg remembers

> we used one of the very few female animators to help train us up in animation, basically. And because she'd been working in the industry, she'd been drawing women like the animation manuals told people to draw women, bosoms swinging round, and she said, "well this is animation, this is classic traditional animation" and we said, "yeah but we can change things now". And we had a lot of debates about it. It ended up that she did the key drawings, we did the in-betweens and we just changed it to be more like what we thought it should be like, what we thought was a positive image of a woman.
>
> (Wragg, speaking at Dunn et al., 2019)

Aiming to anchor their work in the real world, Leeds Animation Workshop rejected the male gaze of traditional animation and created their own style,

more suited to telling real women's stories. New, critical approaches to representation such as this are of value to animation practice, and to society.

Working with documentary benefits Moth Studio by broadening their personal perspectives, as well as the audience that engage with their work:

> It was really interesting for us to start becoming more aware about political things […] usually comments on Vimeo would be from animators, but this time we had very political comments and we thought, "that's actually interesting […]"
>
> (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, speaking at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016)

This point is echoed by Nag Vladermersky, director of London International Animation Festival, who has observed that animated documentary screenings bring new audiences to the festival, who may not otherwise have come to an animation event. He also notes that these events often have good post-screening discussions and Q&As (Vladermersky, 2016).

Jonathan Hodgson points out that working across community boundaries can also harness new social and cultural capital, for example through the involvement of celebrities

> When you're working with journalists, they know famous people. And they can pull them in to do voiceovers for nothing, because it's for a good cause. […] we got the voice of Dr Who on the Guantanamo film and David Morrisey, and they both did it for nothing. And that's one of the fantastic things about working with those kind of people, you will get some people who can afford to contribute to your film for nothing and it'll really help the film, help to promote it.
>
> (Hodgson, speaking at Athanasopoulou et al., 2016)

Even some of the apparently negative dimensions of boundary working could be argued to have advantages. Kelly proposes that the gaps in

language that documentary commissioners and producers experience in relation to animation allow animators to circumvent some of the more restrictive structures and conventions in documentary representation. Through disrupting the flow of their language, animation can destabilise those who have traditionally held the decision-making power, and through this it becomes possible to create fresh and authentic approaches to representation. For Kelly, this is 'another facet to why animation is a really powerful, honest, considerate and genuine artform and medium' when applied to documentary' (Kelly, 2021).

Academia as a boundary space

I have shown that animated documentary scholarship is a community of practice in itself, with its own baseline of knowledge, repertoires and reifications. It is also a relatively new field, made up of scholars who come from other, diverse, fields or specialisms. Wenger suggests that if a boundary practice develops its own boundaries, its effectiveness as a broker between the communities it is working at the boundaries of diminishes (Wenger, 2010b, p.129). Bringas believes that animated documentary has already become an 'ossified practice […] with essentialist discourses' (Bringas, 2017), while Moore in 2011 voiced concerns that animated documentary would become 'a self-defined area without enough fresh air blown in from other arguments and perspectives' (Moore, 2011).[41]

Guo and Yan propose that animated documentary scholarship 'has the ability to connect multiple fields together' (Guo and Yan, 2017, p.120), and Ehrlich and Murray advocate for a broader, more connected position for animated documentary scholarship:

[41] These concerns are echoed by Paul Wells' keynote at the Animated Realities conference, also in 2011.

> animation studies has traditionally been seen as a sub-set of film studies [but] animated documentary images, and the ideas we build about and in response to them, need to be situated within a much more expansive, multidisciplinary set of theoretical and visual cultural contexts.
>
> (Ehrlich and Murray, 2019, p.4)

Arguably, this opportunity for interdisciplinary brokerage could be lost if the animated documentary research community continues to strengthen and specify its identity and, therefore, harden its boundaries.

Multimembership and boundary-crossing

I showed in Chapter 5 that animated documentary practitioners often experience community multimembership. Filmmakers have often come to animated documentary production from other disciplines and other communities of practice, and the experience gained through this can have a positive impact on their current practice. Andy Glynne's background in clinical psychology 'helps in terms of people's trust and faith' (Glynne, speaking at Glynne et al., 2015) and influences his work (see for example: Animated Minds, 2019; Glynne, quoted in Creative Europe, 2017). Ellie Land suggests that *Bathroom Privileges* director Rupert Williams' background in social work allowed him to conduct interviews in a way that 'opened up their conversations' through 'breaking down hierarchies' (Land, 2021). Ifor Ashton believes that his background as a VFX compositor offered 'experience and knowledge of a creative and commercial artist's role [which] helps me be a better producer' (Ashton, quoted in Snoad, 2017). Before becoming an animator, Chris Landreth completed a degree in Theoretical and Applied Mechanics and worked in software development, including contributing to the development of Maya 1.1; this work drove his innovative use of pioneering animation techniques on films such as *Ryan*.

A trajectory of multimembership can also be beneficial to filmmakers working in the more commercial arena of the commissioned "industrial" film or "explainers". For example Econfilms, who make commissioned short live action and animated nonfiction films about economics, politics, finance, business, and science, state on their website that 'what sets us apart is that our team understand both worlds: film and video production as well as the subject matter and audiences of our clients' (Econfilms, 2017). The biographies of the team on their website focus as heavily on their training in economics and politics as on their filmmaking accolades.

Identifying as part of a community of artists can benefit practice, even outside of the conventional art industry. Throughout this thesis I have shown that the highly creative approaches learnt in art college have been beneficial to the work of Sue Young, Jonathan Hodgson, Chris Shepherd, Alex Widdowson, Alys Scott-Hawkins and Bunny Schendler. Engagement with academic communities can also be beneficial to creative practitioners, as can be seen in the careers of animated documentary filmmakers including Samantha Moore, Suzi Hanna, Alys Scott-Hawkins, Sally Pearce, Mary Martins, Susan Young, Agnieszka Piotrowska, and Alex Widdowson. The latter has been engaging with animated documentary theory for almost as long as he has been practising filmmaking, and acknowledges the influence of theoretical research on his practical work (Widdowson, 2019b, p.56-76).

Conclusion

Filmmaking is a collaborative enterprise, and collaborators coming from diverse, intersecting communities of practice may not fully understand each other's processes, languages, and values. In most production cultures, the risk of problems resulting from these knowledge gaps is reduced through the use of standardised production methods.

In the previous chapter I showed that animated documentary can be a powerful representational tool, which could be used more beneficially by other production cultures, such as broadcast television, than it currently is. In this chapter I have shown that documentary can also bring rich insights and opportunities for growth to animators and the wider form of animation. The meeting of animation and documentary holds potential for enrichment and a broadening of horizons for both fields - practically, aesthetically, and ethically.

However the benefits that animation and documentary draw from engagement with the other are reduced because of issues arising from the process of working across boundaries. These include conflicting production processes and priorities. In many cases the issues, at their root, are problems or failures of communication. Unlike other forms of filmmaking, and as a result of the diverse contexts in which animated documentary is commissioned, produced and exhibited, the field lacks a consistent, standardised production process. This increases its risk as a boundary-crossing practice.

Practitioners whose trajectory has traversed other communities can bring valuable skills from these communities into animated documentary production. Academia is also a boundary space in which researchers bring their own multiple identities to a group. The animated documentary research community exists at the boundary of many other research and practice communities, and can potentially bridge these communities, as well as existing as a bounded community in itself. I have suggested that the animated documentary research community has a stronger sense of identity and baseline of knowledge than the animated documentary production community. This baseline of knowledge could, I would argue, be useful in developing a language to bridge communication and knowledge gaps in animated documentary production.

Chapter 8 - Boundary objects

In this chapter I briefly outline Star and Griesemer's concept of boundary objects, linking it to Wenger's idea of reification. I then look at a range of boundary objects that are used in animated documentary, using examples to show how these can be both useful and problematic. I discuss ways in which words can be boundary objects, as well as looking at development materials including briefs, storyboards, animatics and scripts. I also explore the idea of films themselves, and of the documents that make them up, as boundary objects. I show how boundary objects can be used to expose and highlight gaps in knowledge and, using the case study of development of a sequence in my short animated documentary *Devil in the Room* (2013), I examine an exchange of boundary objects in the form of emails, development materials and production tools.

Star and Griesemer developed the concept of boundary objects while studying how communication and collaboration takes place in scientific museum environments, specifically at the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California. 'Scientific work is heterogeneous' they write, but it also 'requires cooperation - to create common understandings, to ensure reliability across domains and to gather information which retains its integrity across time, space and local contingencies' (Star and Griesemer, 1989, p.387).[42] Star and Griesemer observed that in a heterogeneous professional landscape, communication problems can arise between communities with different technical and cultural languages and interpretations (ibid.). Studying how museums meet these challenges, Star and Griesemer attribute success to '*methods standardization* and the development of *boundary objects*' (ibid. p.392). Boundary objects can

[42] As I have shown, animated documentary is also heterogeneous and requires cooperation and considered communication across community boundaries.

include documents, images, words and concepts. Star and Griesemer describe them as

> objects which both inhabit several intersecting social worlds […] *and* satisfy the informational requirements of each of them. Boundary objects are objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. […] These objects may be abstract or concrete. They have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation.
>
> (ibid, p.393).

Examples of boundary objects cited by Star and Griesemer as used in scientific and museum contexts include specimens, field notes, and maps. These objects 'act as anchors or bridges' between social worlds and practices (ibid. p.143). But Star and Griesemer also acknowledge that boundary objects can create conflict:

> In conducting collective work, people coming together from different social worlds frequently have the experience of addressing an object that has a different meaning for each of them. Each social world has partial jurisdiction over the resources represented by the object, and mismatches caused by the overlap become problems for negotiation.
>
> (Star and Griesemer, 1989, p.412)

Wenger makes a similar point in his work on reifications, which he explains can be subject to 'divergent interpretations'. He suggests that reifications must contain some ambiguity if they are to 'accommodate different viewpoints', but this risks 'possible misunderstandings and incompatible assumptions that can remain undetected' (Wenger, 1998, p.111). A poorly designed or misunderstood boundary object can be worse than no boundary object at all, as it can give the illusion of positive collaboration while

obscuring dangerous gaps in communication. Wenger suggests that reifications functioning as boundary objects can function better if they come accompanied by a person, who can assist with facilitating understanding: 'Accompanied artefacts stand a better chance of bridging practices. A document can give a less partial view of a topic, and a person can help interpret the document and negotiate its relevance' (ibid.).

As a boundary practice bridging different social worlds, animated documentary production uses a number of boundary objects. These can facilitate communication between practitioners from different communities. It should be remembered that Star and Griesemer consider boundary objects to be useful only when used in conjunction with standardised methods; offering a shared structure through which to understand not only the object itself, but also the way that one is *expected* to interact with it, and how this fits into the bigger picture of the undertaken activity. As we will see, if there is a weak level of methods standardisation on a film production, it weakens the usefulness of boundary objects, increasing the potential for divergent interpretations.

Words as boundary objects

Words can be seen as reifications of concepts. By naming something we are, as a community, acknowledging that it is indeed *a thing*, and assigning an apparently consensus meaning to it. Tusting (2005, p. 41) emphasises the importance of language in communities of practice, noting that 'almost all mutual engagement involves language, to a greater or lesser extent'. Words are also boundary objects, shared between communities and used to communicate, but often interpreted differently by different communities. A word as simple, and central, as "animation" can be the cause of confusion. To an animator, "animation" will often be interpreted as the process, or quality, of *constructed movement in time*. To a non-animator, it is more

likely to be used as a generalised noun. Thus, a client note that says that "the animation" in a project is not working may, to the animator, seem to be a specific criticism relating to movement, while the actual intention may relate more to the graphical style or even narrative content of an animated section. Words with more than one meaning such as "document", "mask", "trailer", "promo", "pixilation/pixelation", and "rotoscope" can provoke similar misunderstandings.

Job titles and the roles that they signify can also differ between sub-industries and even between productions. Land describes how the job title "animation director" can bring a set of expectations from a live-action producer which do not align with the expectations of an animation director who is accustomed to working within the animation industry. In 2018 when Doc Society brought her on as animation director on the short animated documentary *Bathroom Privileges*, Land negotiated for her credit to change to co-director, which better reflected her work. Schlaeffer believes that the term animation director 'implies that there are animators to direct, that there is a team, or a studio' (Schlaeffer, 2017). Manley notes that misunderstandings can stem from the confusion between the role of an animation director and that of an animator. She writes: 'I am approached on a regular basis by clients saying that they are in need of an animator, when in fact they are in need of firstly a director and then secondly an animator' (Manley, 2015). As a result 'the client's expectations are often quite far removed from what is achievable within a certain budget or time frame and with regard to an individual's skill base' (ibid.).

It can also be problematic when an individual's skill base outweighs their credit. In Chapter 3.4 I recount work that Moth Studio conducted for a major editorial house, in which they did the bulk of direction including concept development, design, storyboards and animation but were only credited as animators. Tsakiri-Scanatovits recalls that 'we directed this film essentially, we just got the voice recording. So to me that is direction, to

them it's not. To them, they are the directors' (Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2019). When it is possible for a job to be understood in multiple ways, those with the most power get to decide how each contributor is credited.

The heterogeneous nature of the actual work done under the banner of the same job title is evident across animation production. The divergent industries and communities that animation interacts with and that animated work emerges from means that there is limited methods standardisation across the whole industry. Roles within documentary production can also lack a commonly shared interpretation across the industry; those with the same job title may engage in very different actual practices. Nick Fraser notes, for example, that 'many people these days are known as commissioning editors, but depending which part of the media vineyard they labour in, they perform very different tasks' (Fraser, 2019, p.56). The lack of methods standardisation in the field of animated documentary limits the usefulness of – and increases the chances of misunderstandings around – technical terms, job titles and other boundary objects.

Development materials as boundary objects

Development materials such as teasers, storyboards, animatics, scripts, briefs, tests and work-in-progress (WIP) versions can all function as boundary objects. These are used to reify and share iterations of ideas to create points of progress between an original concept and a finished film - stepping stones leading to the final outcome and ensuring that all relevant contributors are aligned. They cross boundaries - for example a script may be read by a producer, a production designer, a voice actor and an animator, each interpreting it differently, extracting different information from it.

As noted above, the exchange of development materials across a boundary of practice carries risks. While in production on *Bloomers*, Moore became

frustrated when she felt that the producer working for Klangforum Wein was not responding in the expected way to the development materials she was sending, such as WIP clips. Moore eventually realised that some of the problem lay in a knowledge gap regarding the context of the materials she was sending.

> I made a mistake early on in that I thought he would understand what it was we were sending through, and then it dawned on me slowly that he didn't always completely understand what it was […] because he's not an animator and there's such a massive difference [but] as far as Klangforum are concerned it's all the same, it's moving image.
>
> (Moore, 2019)

This is an example of a project lacking sufficient methods standardisation. Moore was following her own process of animation filmmaking, which the Klangforum producer was not fully aligned with. As a result, boundary objects were not doing their job of bridging the practitioners, because they were losing their meaning as they travelled.

As I show in Chapter 4, many animated documentary makers working in the dialogic mode do not follow formal animation processes and are much more driven by research, often research that involves highly speculative work. Filmmakers who work independently and largely alone, on low budgets and often short form work, are not bound to the same requirements for detailed treatments and trailers as those who work in broadcast or theatrical documentary.

Jessica Ashman began her project *Hold Tight* (2018) with a single 'pitch image' that she sent to Abigail Addison, who would become the film's producer. She remembers

> I didn't really plan it out I didn't have a story in mind I just – there was a thread of narratives I wanted to tell based around the kind of emotional and mental

> connection to carnival celebrations across the UK. […] my first port of call was to go out and film at Notting Hill carnival and Hackney Carnival […]
>
> (Ashman, 2019)

Ashman interviewed and filmed carnival goers and used the material that she got as a starting point for a project in which she explored the experience and significance of carnival for diaspora communities. The project emerged organically from the process of filming, experiencing, interviewing, editing and responding visually to the material and research. While Ashman's process was not aligned to an industry standard of production, Addison's experience of producing experimental animation, artists moving image and animated documentary meant that she was able to interpret and support Ashman's process. While they may not have shared a precise set of standardised methods, they shared a context and an understanding of approach that allowed for flexibility.

While animated documentary lacks the methods standardization of other modes of production, there are certain processes and tools that are commonly used across the field. I will now consider several types of boundary objects that are frequently (though by no means universally) used in the production of animated documentary films. These are: briefs; storyboards and animatics; and scripts and transcripts.

Briefs

A brief refers to a text, usually written, though sometimes delivered verbally or even visually, which instructs the person responding to the brief (in this case a filmmaker) as to what is required. It may contain information on areas including subject matter, audience, theme, aesthetic, output format, timeline, budget, and technique. Briefs can be long or short, vague or highly detailed, open or restrictive.

For Marcus Armitage, the idea for *That Yorkshire Sound* emerged directly in response to the brief from the BFI and BBC's *Listen to Britain* funding call. He remembers that 'the brief was interesting and gave me an idea straight away. I wouldn't have come on this idea if it wasn't for that brief. It was just that brief came along and then I thought about it, and that came out of it' (Armitage, 2018). The BFI and BBC brief was for short documentary film ideas inspired by Humphrey Jennings' and Stuart McAllister's 1942 film *Listen to Britain*. It asked for

> bold, diverse and original ideas, reflecting your personal take on what Britain looks and sounds like today […] Your film could be about a single aspect of the UK, an essay on national character, an exercise in observation, or a creative exploration of the use of sound on film.
>
> (BFI Network, 2017)

It also noted that the film 'can be any style, for example, talking heads, animated, mixed media' (ibid.). The brief combined openness and specificity, indicating sound, place and genre were important but style was flexible, and animation was welcome. This allowed Armitage to respond with his personal idea of collecting sounds from his native Yorkshire and weaving them into an audiovisual journey illustrated by fragments of observational animation.

As described in Chapter 3.5, a competition brief which combined specificity of theme with openness of style was also the driving force behind the development of Emma Calder's idea for the short film *Everyone is Waiting for Something to Happen*. It is worth noting that Armitage and Calder both had experience of working for commercial clients before making these short films. Thomas observes that for many animators, commercial experience has given them the skills to respond to briefs, and bring their own voice to them: 'the thing about animators is that they're used to working to a brief even when they are being creative themselves' (Thomas, 2016). In the case of these briefs there is some helpful standardisation between the animators'

experiences of commercial production and artistic production. These animators are familiar with how to interpret and respond to a brief, so the boundary objects do their job of communicating the funders' objectives and inspiring the potential grant-holders to produce appropriate responses.

Storyboards and animatics

On large scale projects, storyboards are a vital phase of production and a communication tool. Animation is a labour-intensive process and locking down creative decisions before beginning animating minimises wasted work. Storyboarding is also a highly creative process. Hodgson (2019, p.201) observes that, in animation, storyboard artists 'often influence a finished film's eventual shape more than the work's director'.

Blatter observes that storyboards 'not only carry meaning *explicitly*, insofar as they depict the content of the future film, but also *tacitly*, indicating which resources (materials and individuals) will be needed to realize it' (Blatter, 2007, p.5). Blatter identifies three ways in which a narrative animation storyboard must be able to be read: as an intended film (filmic); in a hypothetical world (fictive); and as a future activity (directive). A storyboard is reviewed by different people, and used for planning ahead of production, 'in the early, pre-visualization stage, before major costs are involved'. The three domains form the spaces in which the reviewers 'structure their knowledge' and a storyboard is only useful insofar as it serves these domains (ibid. p.8). However, regardless of how well a storyboard is executed, it will fail as a boundary object if its audience is not versed in how to read and understand the filmic, fictive and directive information it contains.

Working as a production manager in a small creative studio in 2011, part of my job was to liaise between the technical and creative teams, and clients. We were working on a commercial job for a consumer technology brand, and the client wanted to see work in progress, so we sent a link to an

animatic by email. This was met with dismay; the client was very unhappy with the rudimentary design and the rough animation. It took some time for me to realise that the client *did not really know what an animatic was*. They looked at the images moving on a screen and thought it was an "almost-finished" version of the animation, rather than something closer to a timed storyboard. My experience is echoed in that of other practitioners I have spoken to. The managing director of a studio that produces animated nonfiction content for clients including charities, researchers and political groups, told me "off record" that

> We tend to design a few slides for clients to sign off on the 'look and feel' in advance and then send them a rough cut of the first version. Quite honestly, I try to avoid having them involved in the storyboards or animatics as many clients don't really know about how these things work and dealing with silly feedback is a waste of time. Also try to avoid sending them anything which is too rough, as it can make them freak!

Director and animator Shaun Clark has a policy of sending an animatic to a client only after ensuring they are fully aware of what an animatic is, what it shows, and how it is used. In the past, he found that animatics sent without context had alienated or confused clients who did not have sufficient knowledge to interpret them (Clark, 2017). Christian Schlaeffer also experienced a client becoming distressed when presented with an animatic for a factual animation. After some discussion, it emerged that the client had not worked with animation before, and thought that the animatic was the final film. If he is asked to produce an animatic by a producer, Schlaeffer now ensures he knows who is the primary audience for the animatic. He will approach an animatic intended for a client differently from one intended for a director, producer, or composer. In this way, Schlaeffer anticipates which domains will be most important to each and balances his output accordingly (for example, a client will be reading the animatic in terms of the filmic and fictive, but probably not the directive).

When Marcus Armitage realised that *That Yorkshire Sound* was the only animated film of the 2017 *Listen to Britain* commissions, he suggested to the commissioners that he would need to produce an animatic in his first week of production, which would need to be signed off very quickly in order for him to finish the film to their deadline. 'They didn't really know what [an animatic] was' he remembers, 'but they understood it once I'd explained it' (Armitage, 2018). Armitage recognised that the reified boundary object of the animatic needed to be accompanied and explained by him, in order for it to serve its purpose.

For the small studios Mosaic and Infocandy, both producing short factual animations and animated documentaries, processes are in place that use boundary objects such as storyboards and animatics to mitigate the risk of commissioners and clients asking for changes at a later date. These are required to be signed off at key points, committing commissioners to the content. Anna Humphries, Director of Infocandy, explains

> Most people have no idea how it's made, and I don't think they want to know, they just want us to do it. But it does take a very long time, so to make sure that they are getting what they want to get and so we don't have to make lots of changes we often do mood boards and storyboards and animatics, which are kind of moving storyboards, so the client knows exactly what they are going to end up with. There are a lot of people who come to us and say "yeah, just do whatever's in your head you crazy arty guys", and then they're like "I don't like it". […] So we're very strict with that now: you *will* get a mood board and you *will* get a storyboard and it has to be signed off before it goes into the animation process.
>
> (Humphries, speaking at Arora et al., 2018)

As noted in Chapter 4, Moth Studio agree a schedule at the beginning of every project with a client, with specific feedback and sign off points for development and production materials such as storyboards, animatics and style frames. Tsakiri-Scanatovits admits that the system is not perfect: 'with some clients it works really well, with some other ones it doesn't' (Tsakiri-

Scanatovits, 2019), adding that in some cases clients exploit feedback points to make excessive and unreasonable demands. These demands require additional labour on the part of the filmmaker, be it in meeting them, negotiating them, or resisting them. When Film London requested changes to the opening of *Men Talk About Mother* several months into production, Schendler 'spent hours constructing crafted emails' arguing their case, which would then be edited by Joughin before sending to the funders (Schendler, 2019). These emails are boundary objects in themselves, containing the traces of time-consuming labour, although the effort that went into their construction may have gone unrecognised by the recipients.

Luca Schenato and Sinem Vardarli, directors and animators of *A Pistol Against My Head*, worked strictly to an animatic that had been agreed with their producers at Mosaic. This enabled them to keep to the challenging production schedule. The animatic was also locked down to an edited voiceover so it would have been difficult to make changes, as it would have meant also changing the film's soundtrack, which was edited in a separate process from their visual work (Schenato and Vardarli, 2019). Working to strictly signed off materials was especially important in this production, as they were doing most of their work remotely. Diverging from the agreed creative vision could have led to problems, as the producers were not constantly monitoring the film's production. Although Schenato and Vardarli were working remotely, they came into the studio regularly to brief three 'students/interns' who were helping to create assets, and also to check the work that these assistants had done (ibid.). Here, they demonstrate awareness that boundary objects (such as briefs and feedback notes) are, as Wenger suggests, best accompanied by people – in this case themselves.

While the processes of storyboarding and creating animatics is practical and common among studios and those working commercially, it is striking how many of the independent animators working in documentary, especially those working in the dialogic mode, do not use traditional storyboards or animatics. Elizabeth Hobbs, for example, opts for a process more aligned to

a traditional documentary process than a traditional animation one. ‘I don’t know what I’ve got until I’m cutting it’ she explains. ‘I don’t do storyboards or treatments – well treatments maybe, but not scripts, and then I kind of just animate until I run out of steam or feel like it’s a disaster, you know, until something interesting occurs, and then I cut what I’ve got together’ (Hobbs, 2018). There is a price to pay for this organic, intuitive process in which decisions are made late. In editing her animated material together, Hobbs estimates that around one sixth of the animations she has completed are cut from the film.

Emma Calder tried to use storyboards when making *Everyone Is Waiting for Something to Happen*, but found that the process did not work for the project, and that it suited a ‘more live-actiony’ method of creating shots and then editing them (Calder, 2019). In this way she built the narrative in post-production, much like Hobbs. As a student working on the award-winning *Twiddly Things* (2016), Adara Todd attempted to follow the animation production protocols she had been taught but struggled. She remembers

> I tried storyboarding but it felt like such an impossible task. I am a stop-motion animator and I think very much in 3D, so trying to put my jumbled and confused thoughts down onto a 2D piece of paper was impossible for me. I made a very loose animatic which ended up changing whilst I was filming anyway. I made the decisions as I animated as this was the only way I could envision how I wanted to tell [the subject’s] story. I needed the sets and the lighting and the puppet in my hand to really know what it should be doing in each moment.
>
> (Todd, 2019)

When working on her student film *The Redness of Red* (2018), Emily Downe used script, storyboards and animatics ‘in a very broad and non-traditional sense’, placing development visuals alongside an evolving script and soundtrack (Downe, 2019).

> I worked on a timeline from very early on in the film-making process, which could be considered an animatic since I was placing sketches and animation tests with sound. However, because the film was more abstract and working with a lot of straight ahead animation, it was less about timing out movement for me and more about pacing, rhythm and atmosphere.
>
> (ibid.)

Samantha Moore does not usually use animatics as part of her process, preferring to work more organically. She explains that 'I often change the visuals, I like that process of being fluid with the visuals as you have more talks with the people you're making the film with, and change your understanding of what it is they're saying to you' (Moore, 2017a). Abigail Addison, the Animate Projects producer who produced Hobbs' *I'm OK* as well as Jessica Ashman's *Hold Tight* and Samantha Moore's *Bloomers*, explains that Animate Projects' work is usually on a fairly small scale and therefore suitable to more individualised practices.

> On the kind of budgets we're generally working on it's not really feasible to have a lot of people working on them, and also with animators like Lizzy Hobbs, she has this very fluid, intuitive way of working under the camera which means she can't just hand over a storyboard to someone else and say "here, make my film".
>
> (Addison, 2017)

In the cases of Hobbs, Moore, Calder, Todd, and Ashman, the director is also often the principal animator, researcher, and editor. While storyboards can still be useful for these practitioners, the need to use them as boundary objects for communication with other crew members is reduced.

However, in some cases animators and directors working dialogically are required to produce development documents to function as boundary objects, despite their desire to follow a different process. When Klangforum Wein reminded Samantha Moore that her funding for *Bloomers* was contingent on the provision of agreed materials including an animatic, she acquiesced and made one. The animatic – a reification of the film Moore had already sketched in her mind – proved to be a surprisingly useful tool. When she laid out the planned film on a timeline and reviewed it paying attention to the filmic and directive domains, she came to realise that the five-minute film she thought she was making would in fact have a duration of ten minutes. Armed with this knowledge, she was able to plan for the longer production. This anecdote illustrates an often-overlooked advantage of boundary objects such as storyboards and animatics: as well as communicating information to other parties, they can be useful tools for clarifying one's own thinking, and show up gaps that may be glossed over in a project that exists only in the mind of its creator.

Scripts and transcripts

Scripts and interview transcripts are used in many different ways by animated documentary makers, from Leeds Animation Workshop's researched scripting which borders on a fiction screenwriting process, to Jessica Ashman's use of fragmented interview and ambient audio alongside cut out animation created from the literal transcripts of her interviews.

During development of *Men Talk About Mother*, Schendler and Joughin created documents collaboratively, bringing together their creative visions and ideas for the project. These could be seen as living, dynamic boundary objects, an inscription of a conversation between minds:

> to begin with we did a lot of spider diagrams and things, [we would] do circles and write things in, and do diagrams coming off, and write lists, and talk about which bits we felt worked or didn't work. And [Sheena]

> was very much trying to make an arc, she was very good at the story structure.
>
> (Schendler, 2019)

This close collaborative working built a rapport and a sense of trust. As the project progressed to script stage, they regularly exchanged audio and text documents, working independently on iterations of their script. Schendler was editing audio of the interviews on a timeline while Joughin was creating written scripts from these audio edits:

> Sheena started making scripts out of my edits […] then she'd show me the script and I'd cut something to the script, and then I'd make another edit and send her that and then she'd make another script. So we very much worked back and forth
>
> (ibid.)

Each worked to their creative and technical strengths, and through this exchange of boundary objects in the form of written scripts and audio edits, the women were able to collaboratively script their story.

Boundary-bridging images, boundary-bridging sounds, boundary-bridging films

A film itself can be seen as a boundary object: between filmmaker and audience; between subject and audience; between filmmaker and subject. It is also a mediated artefact, authored or illustrated by a filmmaker and, in the case of animated documentary, an animator.

Even the images within a film, down to individual frames of animation or live action, could be seen as boundary objects in their own right. When I asked Marcus Armitage why he thinks that his fictional film *My Dad* (2014) is frequently programmed as documentary, he noted that the film's story was inspired by the real world and contemporary political events, and that a

documentary still photograph emerges from the animated footage at the end of the film. Armitage reflects that 'I think it's just that picture at the end contextualises it, in a way people might think it was some kind of documentary' (Armitage, 2018). He also notes that much of his audio is taken from recordings of real events:

> I go on YouTube and get random recordings of events and stuff and just take little bits of that sound […] usually the quality is really bad but it somehow makes it feel more real […] it adds an interesting effect you'd never get otherwise, you'd never get it if someone spoke it because you'd never think of adding all of that extra stuff, it does it for you.
>
> (ibid.)

By using sound which an audience can intuitively identify as being an indexical document (of *something*), as well as unexpected photographic imagery, Armitage is using a warranting strategy that gives the film a sense of authenticity and an impression (or illusion) of documentary integrity. A still documentary image, or a YouTube video, is a boundary object in itself - appropriated and recontextualised by Armitage as a new boundary object, a film that is a vehicle for meaning but that is also (mis)interpreted by an audience as a documentary.



Figure 12: Still from *My Dad* (2014)

Samantha Moore's 'collaborative frame' process could be seen as an almost literal physical manifestation of the concept of a boundary object. Moore's drawings seek to represent precisely the subjective experiences that her subjects describe. The subjects then offer feedback on how accurate her representation is and, responding to their notes, she amends and improves it, bringing it ever closer to their experience. When interviewing scientists at Imperial College London using this process as part of her development of Wellcome-funded animated documentary *Loop* (2016), it became clear that Moore's work had a function beyond the production of a fascinating film. The interviews that Moore was conducting related to the way in which scientists visualised a process that they were studying – a process that no one had ever, visually, seen. She conducted the interviews with each lab worker individually, asking them to draw what they were explaining at the same time as verbally explaining it.

> I was very specific about the fact that they all did it separately because Serge [the Principal Investigator], like all lab leaders, is an incredibly charismatic person who drags everybody together, and everyone is there because of him so he would really heavily influence them […] so the fact that I saw them separately alone, and they had to draw on their own resources, meant that when Serge, particularly, saw [Moore's illustrations of the interviews] he was like "oh my god, I never dreamed that they saw it that way. That seems like a really peculiar way of seeing it, but isn't that interesting?" With some of them it became clear that people have gaps in their knowledge for example. Or when people were just copying what they'd heard but they couldn't really conceptualise it visually very well because they didn't really understand it.
>
> (Moore, 2017a)

Moore took the drawings and descriptions offered by her interviewees and, from them, created animations describing each scientist's mental image of how the scientific process they are studying actually "looks". In this case, the images produced by Moore and her subjects using the collaborative

frame methodology helped to bridge language gaps not only *between* but also *within* communities of practice. Through visual language, it exposed divergent visions, misunderstandings and misinterpretation that may have otherwise gone unnoticed. Serge Mostowy, the Principal Investigator of the lab that Moore was working with, agreed that the process of making the film showed up gaps and inconsistencies in his team's knowledge:

> At my lab we don't all see things the same way and that became very clear during this animation process. Some lab members are younger than others, and might actually be scientifically wrong, based on things we've seen […]
>
> (Mostowy, interviewed in Animate Projects, 2015)

The "document" that was created collaboratively by Moore and her documentary subject communicates a message (the subject's perception of the scientific process) but this message is read differently by different parties. For Moore, the way that the subjects describe the process reveals striking things about their personalities. For example she observed that one of her interviewees, Maria 'was romantic about it, it had a whole rich inner life for her that she hadn't expressed, and she felt embarrassed about telling me, but it became clear she saw it like that' (Moore, 2017a). For Mostowy, the images and descriptions produced by Moore and her interviewees are read and analysed for scientific accuracy and used to identify potentially problematic knowledge gaps. For the film's audience at film festivals and online, the accuracy (or inaccuracy) of the descriptions is less important. In the context of the final film, the message becomes a more general one about the creativity and imagination inherent in the scientific process. The images and descriptions, therefore, are read for their aesthetic value, and are interesting more because of their rich diversity than their specific content.

Agnieszka Piotrowska's *Running for Freedom* (2003/4), produced for National Geographic, documents traumatic experiences of refugees, using animation and scripted, performed accounts created faithfully from close

work with her subjects. Piotrowska found that a traditional interview process failed to produce usable material, due to both

> linguistic difficulties stemming from the fact that English was not their first language [and] their difficulty in speaking at all about their pasts; the refugees' speech would crumble and disintegrate they would cry and stumble, and were unable to offer any narrative at all, never mind a coherent one of their suffering.
>
> (Piotrowska, 2011, p.340)

Piotrowska found that collaborative image-making could be used to draw out and develop coherent narratives with the subjects. In one case an image of a wedding dress 'became almost more than a metaphor, it was indeed Lacanian 'metonymy', standing for [the subject's] broken dreams and idealized memories' (ibid. p.342). Piotrowska notes that the subject

> appeared to almost enjoy the work on the images: as if the animated sequences and the slightly fictionalized story offered a distance which made it possible to represent her deep trauma and, therefore, in some way, the experience became therapeutic.
>
> (ibid. p.348)

In this process, Piotrowska is taking the fragile boundary object of a broken, fractured, testimony and transforming or translating it into a more concrete boundary object of an image, which in turn facilitates the production of a more robust and coherent boundary object of a scripted narrative. The involvement of the documentary subject in every stage of the transformation preserves the documentary integrity of each boundary object produced. Piotrowska suggests that this method of documentary production has psychoanalytical value. She refers to Dori Laub's argument that giving testimony can 'have transformational qualities' through which a person can repossess their own experience. Piotrowska argues that 'creating animated sequences, quite simply, can sometimes make that 'repossession' possible', and that in *Running For Freedom*, the filmmakers 'were not

psychotherapists and [the subjects] were not patients but some of these mechanisms clearly did take place' (Piotrowska, 2011, p.349). Through the process of translation of testimony to representation, it may be possible for animated documentary to approach Vaughan's vision of documentary as a potential form of 'collaborative therapy' (Vaughan, 1999, p.28).

The therapeutic potential in the creation of boundary objects for animation can also be harnessed by filmmakers working alone. Tim Mercier's *Model Childhood* (2018) documents the filmmaker's process, as an adult, of confronting and expressing memories of being sexually assaulted as a child. Mercier notes that 'as the only witness to overwhelmingly traumatic events that remained secret for decades [survivors] lack confidence in our memories' (Mercier, 2018). Mercier scripted a narrative animation scene which included himself as 'the animator' speaking to his plasticene puppets, who themselves were both manifestations of his past (in the characters of himself as a boy and his abuser) and performers of this. All the characters were voiced by Mercier and he found that 'being able to speak with several voices simultaneously but as one person too, feels authentically representative of my 'post traumatic' CSA experience' (ibid.). He also notes that this scripting technique 'makes the telling of this dirty, dense and distressing event more bearable for an audience (through the humour that emerges) but without diluting its power' (ibid.). In this film, Mercier was able to use the boundary object of a script to give voice to conflicting aspects of his experience. Like Susan Young, he used his own voice to speak the words of his abuser, repossessing the experience, while also creating a bridge that can allow an audience to understand something of the nature of this experience.[43]

[43] For a more in-depth analysis of Mercier's approach in making Model Childhood see MacKinnon, 2019.



Figure 13: Still from *Model Childhood* (2018)

In researching *I Don't Protest, I Just Dance in My Shadow*, Jessica Ashman found that the interviews she was conducting with women of colour artists were in themselves bringing about a personally transformative experience:

> I unwittingly created several types of safe spaces I guess, and what started off as quite dry questioning ended up leading to a whole other world of how our race and our gender and our work intersect. And I didn't know these women at all, but in a way some sort of solidarity started to form. […] it was a revelation for me and it emboldened me to create my film, and to channel the voices I had from the interview, through myself.
>
> (Ashman, 2018)

Ashman's process involved cutting up the paper transcripts of the interviews and animating these on a multiplane, allowing other motifs to emerge from and interplay with them, through the intuitive and experimental creation of visual tests and loops. This literal engagement with the boundary objects of her interviews acts as a warranting device, anchoring the often abstract visuals in a recognisable, journalistic research process. It also reflects Ashman's journey as she navigates the women's experiences and perspectives, and in doing so also communicates her own. Ashman describes the process of making the film as 'incredibly liberating' (ibid).

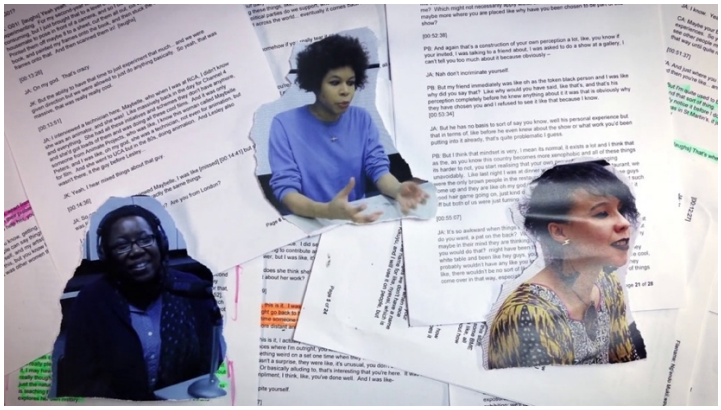


Figure 14: Still from *I Don't Protest I Just Dance in my Shadow* (2017)

Case study: Devil in the Room

In 2013 I produced and directed the seven-minute, Wellcome-funded, animated documentary *Devil In The Room*, my RCA graduation project, which explored the subject of sleep paralysis. *Devil In The Room* combined some live action shots with stop-motion puppet animation and CG-animated projection-mapped environments. The variety of techniques was intended to communicate the unsettling sensation of moving between different perceptions of reality and materiality over the course of a sleep paralysis experience. The film was produced using two actors and with support from crew members including: fabricators; hair, make-up and prosthetics artists; a director of photography; a composer; a director of marketing and distribution; as well as several assistants and interns. The projection mapped visuals were created by a small team at a creative technology studio called Seeper. I also worked with three scientific consultants and interviewed around thirty sleep paralysis sufferers. I worked from my flat in North London or from my desk at the Royal College of Art, while my collaborators were based in their own homes and studios. Communication was largely by email and phone, with me making visits to their workspaces to check progress in person. From initial development to the film's first screening the project took ten months.

A number of boundary objects were used throughout development, pre-production, production and distribution. Production-related development items included: emails; funding applications; treatments; job listings; contracts; contributor release forms; budgets; schedules; insurance documents; to-do lists; minutes from meetings; licensing agreements; and a final report for funders and partners. Creative development and creative products included: free writing; a dream diary; written accounts sent to me from sufferers; interview transcripts; a mood reel; sketches; rough scripts; visual development boards; a private blog site with creative references and ideas for Heads of Departments; briefs for Heads of Departments; scripted and recorded voice overs; storyboards; tests; edits of interviews; rough cuts; the side-project art film *Squeezed by Shadows* (2012); the final film *Devil In The Room* (2013); and a subsequent video installation exhibited at Wellcome Collection. Paratextual materials included: scientific texts about sleep paralysis written by scientific partners; a website; social media pages; publicity copy for the film and related events; video documentation of events; and production stills.

Analysis of all the project's boundary objects would take more space than I have in this chapter, so as a case study I will focus on the boundary objects that were exchanged between myself and Seeper, in development for a specific sequence of the film: the transforming room.

The Transforming Room

Between 2010 and 2012 I worked as a production and studio manager at the creative technology studio Seeper. I left the job in 2012 to begin an animation masters at the RCA, continuing through my first year of study to work part time for the studio. When writing a funding application to Wellcome for my graduation film, I felt that my cultural capital as a filmmaker was too low to build a strong argument for the funder's investment. To increase the application's strength and to improve the potential quality of my film I contacted my previous employer at Seeper, Evan Grant, to ask if the studio would consider collaborating with me on the

project. I offered them a fee of £4,000 - a large proportion of my planned budget, but much less than the studio would usually consider taking on a job for. Grant agreed, the application went in, and it was successful. At this point I sent Seeper the seven-page treatment that I had sent to Wellcome. I planned to have an initial meeting with the team at Seeper, but it proved difficult to find a time when their creative team would be available, so I suggested that I send 'a more detailed proposal for what I'd ideally want', as a jumping off point for discussion.

The language that I use in these early emails is provisional, with use of words such as 'ideally', 'potentially', 'possible', 'may' and 'desirable'. This language prevents creative or resource demands from being pinned down with any certainty. I was treading carefully, reluctant to request anything solid enough to become grounds for rejection. At the same time this openness demonstrated my desire to give them space to bring their own creative ideas to the work. Blatter refers to the 'incomplete, frequently ambiguous' nature of rough storyboard and design sketches. She notes that this 'permits development because its style invites discussion and discovery of deep conceptual problems, encouraging cognitive flexibility and open investigation'. Using Goel's (1995) terminology, she describes roughs as 'low commitment' artefacts (Blatter, 2007, p.13). While the documents and communications I was sending at this point were not traditional storyboards or sketches, they were created with the intentional ambiguity and openness that Blatter describes. The 'initial proposal' that I sent Seeper was a two-page pdf (Fig.15). It began with a short overview of the work:

> Micro mapping small set with changing textures
> Set may include scale model of sleeping person which can also be mapped

It then suggested visual beats for the scene, accompanied by visual references. The second page of the brief included a paragraph about the process I intended to use for production:

> The micro-set will be a scale model of a larger location where some live action sequences will have taken place. Elements including a stop-motion puppet will be integrated into the set and animated frame by frame – so playback of mapped content must be able to be knocked forward frame by frame. Camera will be rigged for some movement.

It also listed the deliverables I would provide to Seeper: a 3d model of the set, detailed storyboards, reference imagery and a script for the full film, to establish the scene's 'wider context' (ibid.).

From Seeper, I specified that I would need to know: how many seconds of content they could produce to the brief within the budget, what type of digital file they would need for the 3D model, and how they wanted to be credited. I also requested they feed back on my storyboards, provide and install necessary projectors for the shoot and consult on technical issues arising from the introduction of puppets and lighting into a projection mapping environment. I proposed a timeline for key elements of the project, including a deadline for my own storyboards.

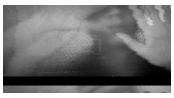
Seeper initial brief for sleep paralysis project

Micro mapping small set with changing textures
Set may include scale model of sleeping person which can also be mapped

Possible visual effects include:

1. Textures of walls, wallpaper and furniture to change, changing the room into what seems to be a series of different rooms / realities.

2. Wall to dissolve into static

3. Wall to become semi translucent and reveal shapes behind




4. Shadows to deepen and move in the room (eg. as if a naked lightbulb is swinging. Ref: https://vimeo.com/20751628, 00:33-00:38).

5. Shadows to morph and change shape





6. Subtle changes in lighting effects.

Process:

The micro-set will be a scale model of a larger location where some live action sequences will have taken place.
Elements including a stop-motion puppet will be integrated into the set and animated frame by frame – so playback of mapped content must be able to be knocked forward frame by frame.
Camera will be rigged for some movement.

Carla to:

- Provide 3d model of the set.
- Provide detailed storyboards.
- Provide script and reference imagery for full film where possible so you can see how it fits in to wider context.
- Work with seeper (as appropriate) during production.

Seeper to:

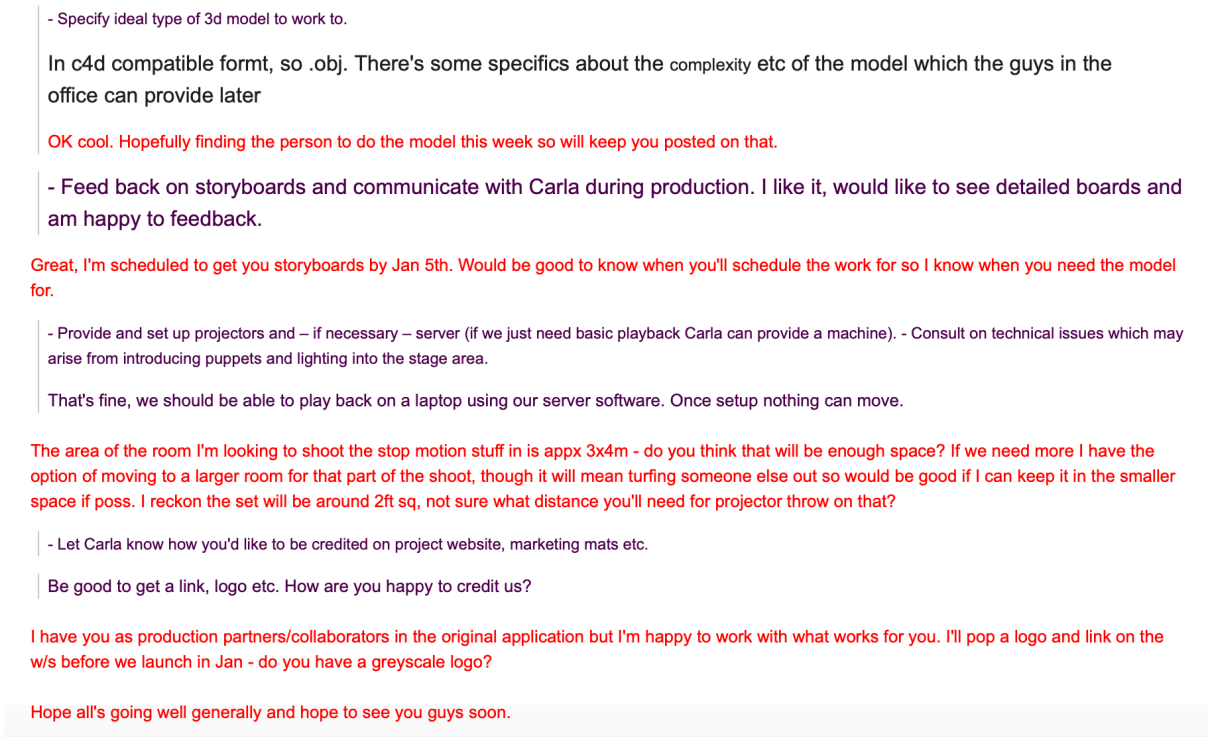
- Tell Carla appx how many seconds of content could be expected from you section (I know this will depend on the exact nature of content, but if a ballpark is possible).
- Specify ideal type of 3d model to work to.
- Feed back on storyboards and communicate with Carla during production.
- Provide and set up projectors and – if necessary – server (if we just need basic playback Carla can provide a machine).
- Consult on technical issues which may arise from introducing puppets and lighting into the stage area.
- Let Carla know how you'd like to be credited on project website, marketing mats etc.

Suggested schedule (TBC):

05/01/13 - Carla to provide final storyboard for discussion and sign off.
15/01 – 10/02 - Production (however fits best with your timings in this period).
18/02 – 25/02 (possibly longer if possible depending on availability of space and equipment) – shoot (ideally seeper should only need to be there for set up, first day and take down though will need to discuss this closer to the time).

Figure 15: Initial brief

Grant responded to the brief, with single line responses to the points and questions, in-line in an email. I then responded in-line to this email, using a different colour text. The ‘conversation’ in these emails moves between discussion of marketing, to creative storyboards and technical requirements (Fig. 16). I did not sign a formal contract with Seeper for the job at this stage, but the brief and the emails that accompanied it served as an informal agreement of intent.



> - Specify ideal type of 3d model to work to.
>
> In c4d compatible formt, so .obj. There's some specifics about the complexity etc of the model which the guys in the office can provide later
>
> OK cool. Hopefully finding the person to do the model this week so will keep you posted on that.
>
> - Feed back on storyboards and communicate with Carla during production. I like it, would like to see detailed boards and am happy to feedback.

Great, I'm scheduled to get you storyboards by Jan 5th. Would be good to know when you'll schedule the work for so I know when you need the model for.

> - Provide and set up projectors and – if necessary – server (if we just need basic playback Carla can provide a machine). - Consult on technical issues which may arise from introducing puppets and lighting into the stage area.
>
> That's fine, we should be able to play back on a laptop using our server software. Once setup nothing can move.

The area of the room I'm looking to shoot the stop motion stuff in is appx 3x4m - do you think that will be enough space? If we need more I have the option of moving to a larger room for that part of the shoot, though it will mean turfing someone else out so would be good if I can keep it in the smaller space if poss. I reckon the set will be around 2ft sq, not sure what distance you'll need for projector throw on that?

> - Let Carla know how you'd like to be credited on project website, marketing mats etc.
>
> Be good to get a link, logo etc. How are you happy to credit us?

I have you as production partners/collaborators in the original application but I'm happy to work with what works for you. I'll pop a logo and link on the w/s before we launch in Jan - do you have a greyscale logo?

Hope all's going well generally and hope to see you guys soon.

Figure 16: email exchange with Evan Grant

Emails are significant boundary objects in productions. They can serve as a central point where creative concerns are discussed alongside, and in synthesis with, practical and contractual concerns. Emails also record and reify verbal communications, ensuring that key agreements are put in writing, albeit often in informal terms. This reduces the risk of misunderstandings and divergent interpretations of conversations, thereby also reducing the risk of mistakes, and of conflict arising later in the process. On this project, which did not adhere to traditional standardised

working methods, the initial email conversations served to establish a working method and responsibilities.

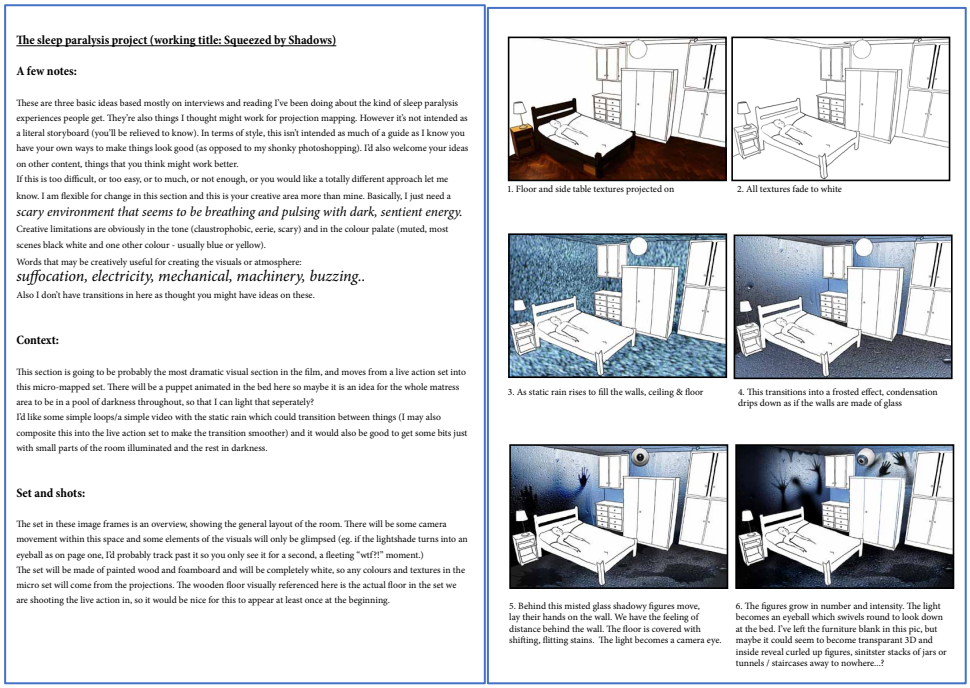
Following the email exchange with Evan Grant, my next step was to create storyboards. Working out the best way to present storyboards for this scene took some thought. When I worked for Seeper, I had produced storyboards for their live, large-scale architectural projection mapping jobs, but these had simply involved drawing the progression of the graphics onto frames shaped like the building that would be used as a screen. My film would be different; I planned to use camera tracking, and to cut between different camera angles within the scene. After some thought I decided that I would need two storyboards: one for Seeper that showed the full projected image on a wide angle of the whole room, and another set of storyboards that I would use for my own part of the shoot and the edit.

The initial storyboards that I made for Seeper were sent as a five-page pdf (fig. 17). The first page contained information that I wanted their team to understand before looking in depth at the boards themselves. This included:

1. Emphasis on the fact that the visual content was developed from research, including original interviews, into sleep paralysis. By highlighting this I was establishing the authority, or documentary value, of the proposal.
2. I reiterated that the storyboards were not intended to be literal, that they are subject to change and open to creative suggestions.
3. I explained that the atmosphere and tone were more important than specific images.
4. I offered an overview of how I planned to shoot the scene and how it would be positioned in the final film, including information on the surrounding scenes and the puppet that would be used for the shoot.
5. I also described how the storyboards themselves related to the scene I imagined shooting:

> The set in these image frames is an overview, showing the general layout of the room. There will be some camera movement within this space and some elements of the visuals will only be glimpsed […] The set will be made of painted wood and foamboard and will be completely white, so any colours and textures in the micro set will come from the projections.

I sent the storyboards, requesting them to reply with their 'creative response' and any questions'.



The sleep paralysis project (working title: Squeezed by Shadows)

A few notes:

These are three basic ideas based mostly on interviews and reading I've been doing about the kind of sleep paralysis experiences people get. They're also things I thought might work for projection mapping. However it's not intended as a literal storyboard (you'll be relieved to know). In terms of style, this isn't intended as much of a guide as I know you have your own ways to make things look good (as opposed to my shonky photoshopping). I'd also welcome your ideas on other content, things that you think might work better.
If this is too difficult, or too easy, or to much, or not enough, or you would like a totally different approach let me know. I am flexible for change in this section and this is your creative area more than mine. Basically, I just need a *scary environment that seems to be breathing and pulsing with dark, sentient energy.*
Creative limitations are obviously in the tone (claustrophobic, eerie, scary) and in the colour palate (muted, most scenes black white and one other colour - usually blue or yellow).
Words that may be creatively useful for creating the visuals or atmosphere:
suffocation, electricity, mechanical, machinery, buzzing..
Also I don't have transitions in here as thought you might have ideas on these.

Context:

This section is going to be probably the most dramatic visual section in the film, and moves from a live action set into this micro-mapped set. There will be a puppet animated in the bed here so maybe it is an idea for the whole matress area to be in a pool of darkness throughout, so that I can light that seperately?
I'd like some simple loops/a simple video with the static rain which could transition between things (I may also composite this into the live action set to make the transition smoother) and it would also be good to get some bits just with small parts of the room illuminated and the rest in darkness.

Set and shots:

The set in these image frames is an overview, showing the general layout of the room. There will be some camera movement within this space and some elements of the visuals will only be glimpsed (eg. if the lightshade turns into an eyeball as on page one, I'd probably track past it so you only see it for a second, a fleeting "wtf?!" moment.)
The set will be made of painted wood and foamboard and will be completely white, so any colours and textures in the micro set will come from the projections. The wooden floor visually referenced here is the actual floor in the set we are shooting the live action in, so it would be nice for this to appear at least once at the beginning.

1. Floor and side table textures projected on

2. All textures fade to white

3. As static rain rises to fill the walls, ceiling & floor

4. This transitions into a frosted effect, condensation drips down as if the walls are made of glass

5. Behind this misted glass shadowy figures move, lay their hands on the wall. We have the feeling of distance behind the wall. The floor is covered with shifting, flitting stains. The light becomes a camera eye.

6. The figures grow in number and intensity. The light becomes an eyeball which swivels round to look down at the bed. I've left the furniture blank in this pic, but maybe it could seem to become transparant 3D and inside reveal curled up figures, sinitster stacks of jars or tunnels / staircases away to nowhere...?

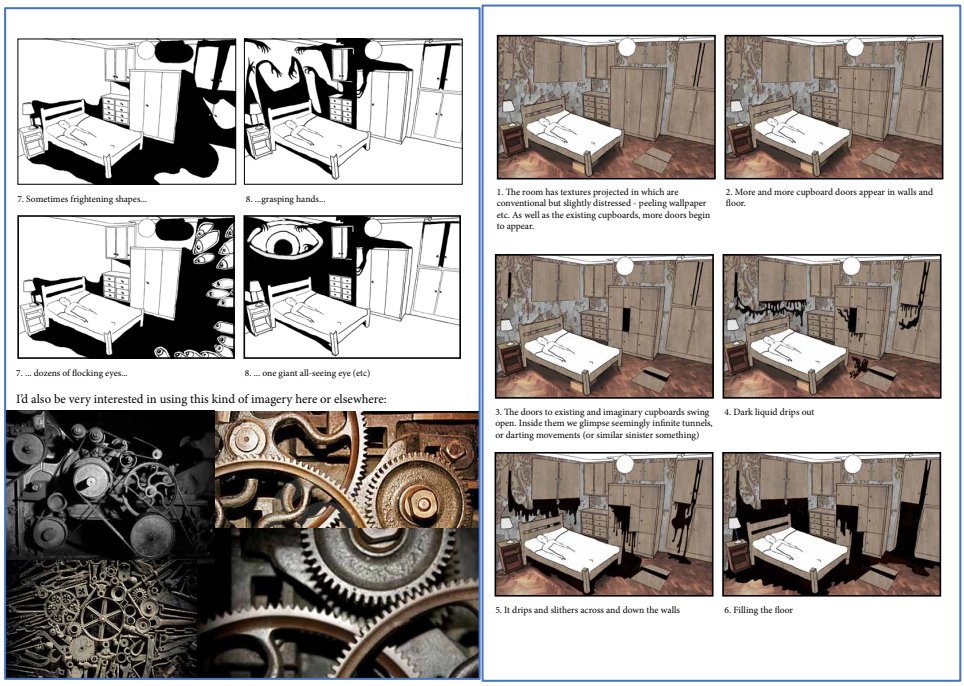


Figure 17: Second boards (extract)

I included the page of notes contextualising the boards as part of the storyboard pdf rather than including the information in an email or a separate document because I had experience of how that particular studio worked. Even if an email were forwarded to the creative team along with the storyboards, there was no guarantee they would read it. Copy actually *embedded* in the storyboard document meant that there was less chance of the information getting separated and lost in communication chains.

The following week I met with the Seeper team at their studio. Together we talked through the storyboards, page by page. Some imagery I had suggested was deemed too complex for the budget and I agreed to let it go. Seeper also enquired about how I would shoot the scene and when I explained that I would include cutaways to the sleeper's face and hands, they asked me to include this in the next iteration of the boards to give them more context of how their work would ultimately be presented in the film.

Blatter notes that ‘while artistic control is generally given to the director of the animation […] this authority could be limited by the producer and distributor controlling financial or other aspects of production’. At storyboard stage, scenes can be removed ‘because of production time constraints, in spite of the impact it had on weakening the filmic continuity or fictive coherence’ (Blatter, 2007, p.12). In a sense Seeper took some of the role of a producer, making decisions that would alter the fictive domain based largely on the impact that the creative requirements would have on resources. While I was the director and producer of the film, the power balance at this storyboard review was weighted toward Seeper. The outcome of the meeting was that I would update the storyboards, including the changes we agreed in the meeting as well as approximate timings and likely cutaways for each section.

I completed the detailed boards (fig.18) and sent them to Seeper. These included detailed timings, detailed descriptions of shots, and cutaways to the puppet (with a note on these frames that they were ‘not a Seeper job’). The storyboards and the language used around them were now more specific and more confident. These objects were intended for actual use rather than review; they were no longer “low-commitment” documents.

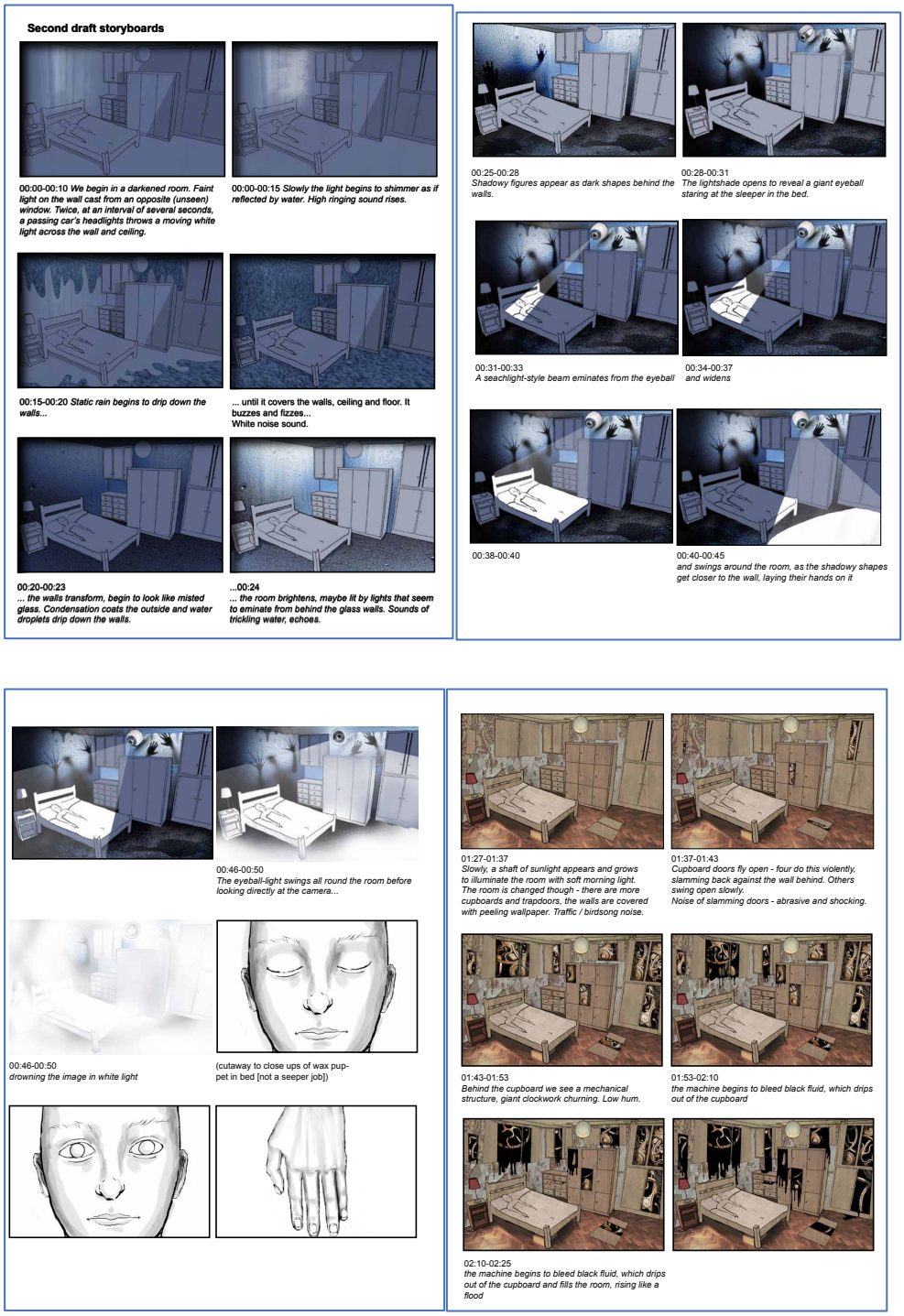


Figure 18: Third boards (extract)

The transforming room sequence was an unusual scene made using an experimental process. The combination of projection mapped sets and stop-motion puppetry, recorded in-camera (rather than composited together in post) was uncommon, especially in a low-budget production. There was, to my knowledge,

no tried-and-tested process for this, and certainly no well-known industrial standardised system. A non-traditional production such as this requires a bespoke production system, and a bespoke framework of boundary object exchange. My prior understanding of the standardised methods that Seeper usually adopted allowed me to adapt these processes to the project, creating a successful framework for production.

Conclusion

A range of objects are exchanged during animated documentary production. In the early stages of a production, low-commitment artefacts are useful. These are open, designed to invite creative input and foster collaboration. They can lead to the production and exchange of subsequent high-commitment artefacts, designed to bring certainty to the process. Boundary objects such as briefs, proposals, storyboards, animatics, soundtracks, scripts, emails, contracts, and notes can communicate ideas and support healthy collaboration, especially when used in conjunction with agreed feedback points and structured communication systems. They can open opportunities for creative input from different parties and reduce the risk of sustained misunderstandings or late-stage requests for changes. They can also allow a practitioner to see their project from new angles and to become aware of gaps or weaknesses. However, boundary objects bring risks, particularly when the object is not, in some way, “accompanied by a person”. Some animators mitigate this risk by including explanations of boundary objects in their communications with non-animation specialists. These could be seen almost like “instructions for use” of the boundary object in question.

Practitioners working in the dialogic mode often reject traditional animation processes such as storyboards and animatics. In the dialogic mode, traditional boundaries between development, pre-production, production and post-production are often blurred. Boundary objects used by these

filmmakers are more personal and bespoke, and less standardised. Low commitment artefacts are often favoured by these practitioners, leaving the potential for changes to be made until a late stage of production.

Words can be boundary objects, and divergent interpretations of words lead to problems on productions. This can be a particular issue when communities use jargon, slang or euphemisms that are not shared with another community with which it is collaborating. Job titles can also create problematic boundary objects when parties have divergent expectations of the associated roles and responsibilities. This indicates that it may not be enough simply to name processes in the development of a lexicon; ensuring the meaning of words are well defined and accessible is also important.

Boundary objects created in a documentary's development can help a film's documentary participants to better understand elements of their own lives or work, as was the case with the collaboratively produced "documents" that Moore created for *Loop*, which revealed gaps in her interviewees' professional knowledge that might otherwise have gone unrecognised. The creation of new boundary objects such as images in response to documentary interviews can also support a quasi-therapeutic process for documentary subjects, particularly those who have experienced trauma. Through being involved in a process of translation from words to image, a documentary subject can express what was previously beyond expression. These observations strengthen the argument that animated documentary has a great deal to offer other areas of factual production, as well as having potentially valuable application in wider fields such as psychotherapy, education, and professional development.

Conclusion

Animated documentary is, in a sense, an outsider. It could be seen as a newcomer genre, working its way from a peripheral to a central position. But its peripheral position is a strength. It is not bound to traditional animation *or* documentary generic conventions either in terms of aesthetic style or in terms of process. Furthermore, it is not really *for* any single audience. It is flexible and dynamic. Even a finished film can adapt to different environments, changing its meaning and realising unexpected new potentials in diverse exhibition contexts. Animated documentary is multivalent and elastic**.** It can fit into unlikely spaces, and get into unlikely places. It can smuggle challenging ideas across boundaries. It can travel, it can translate and it can bridge.

Animated documentary's boundary-crossing nature means that it is accessible and inclusive, and it offers a space that can foster innovation. It destabilises traditional structures of both animation and documentary production, and in doing this it opens up avenues for new voices to emerge. The polyvocality of the animated documentary form can be seen in the literal and imaginative use of voices, in the diversity of aesthetic styles and techniques, and, perhaps most importantly, in the sense that this is a space in which groups underrepresented in and by other media industries can make their voice heard.

The processes used by animated documentary filmmakers are diverse and innovative. Through collaborative methods of representation, off-camera interview processes and the communicative power of design and materiality, animated documentary can offer new approaches to factual storytelling. By using innovative, surprising, thoughtful and compassionate processes, it can create work that is innovative, surprising, thoughtful and compassionate.

Ethical issues in contemporary factual television production negatively impact both its workers and documentary subjects. Increased use of animation, and the attitudes, perspectives and processes that it offers, could exert a positive influence on this culture. However, the very boundary conditions that give rise to the innovation and diversity of animated documentary also make it difficult to define standard practices or to scale up production to higher-budget work for broadcast or theatrical contexts. Commercial production is controlled by money, and it would take a financial investment to create the conditions for animated documentary to meaningfully become a part of this. As Mirsky notes, audiences need time to adjust to new formats, so it is likely there would be a period where the capital spent would outweigh what was recouped, as mainstream audiences acclimatise to the form.

Increased interaction with mainstream commissioning would also benefit animated documentary makers. Current funding options for animated documentary are limited and unstable, and as a result careers are insecure and often need to be supported by second lines of work. Increased opportunities within commercial media industries such as factual television could provide much-needed professional security, allowing animated documentary practitioners to continue developing their practice and pushing the boundaries of the wider field of animated documentary.

Animated documentary would be perceived as less of a high-risk form, and therefore as a stronger candidate for commercial investment, if it could consistently deliver high quality films on time and on budget. I believe this could be achieved through the establishment of a stronger lexicon of production, systems for communication within productions, and a culture of knowledge-sharing. This is where I see the main contribution to knowledge offered by this thesis.

Contribution to knowledge

In the early to middle stages of this PhD, when some of the production issues and risks of animated documentary began to emerge from my research, I planned to end up with a "toolkit" or a suggested workflow for animated documentary production. This would most likely have looked like the "linear" production mode, in which boundary objects such as scripts, audio edits, storyboards, character designs and animatics would be exchanged in a structured, standardised system, beginning with research and with animation being created in a relatively late stage of production. However, as my research has progressed, I have increasingly felt that suggesting any single system for making this kind of work would exclude or marginalise the highly personalised approaches that make the field so rich. This would risk making animated documentary a more bounded practice, thereby reducing its potential for innovation.

My response has been to focus instead on highlighting the specific risks of animated documentary, and developing suggestions of practical responses including recommendations for filmmakers, producers and commissioners to consider when embarking on an animated documentary production.

Thus, I consider the main contributions to knowledge of this thesis to be:

- An improved knowledge of the forces influencing animated documentary production, and the challenges that prevent it from being more widely seen in long-form production. By identifying these issues, I challenge the notion that animated documentary is an inherently "non-commercial" form that cannot sustainably command a large audience. Instead, I have shown that the growth and development of the form is hampered by the structures of the industries it exists within, and by an absence of consistent knowledge-sharing and communication among those that produce it.

- Identification of the need for a shared language in animated documentary production. A well-defined lexicon that describes both production styles and methods *and* aesthetic approaches can be used to facilitate communication within and between animated documentary teams. My identification and reification of the 'linear' and 'dialogic' modes of production are a significant contribution to the beginnings of this lexicon. In Appendix 6 I suggest further words and phrases that could be included in this lexicon, drawing in part on the language used in animated documentary scholarship to describe and analyse finished films.

- In addition to this, I would like to suggest, based on my research, recommendations for producers and production teams to consider when approaching an animated documentary production. These are designed to improve communication and transparency early in production, helping teams to avoid common pitfalls and problems that have been identified by my research.

Recommendations for approaching a collaborative animated documentary across boundaries

I believe that when approaching a collaborative animated documentary production, certain guidelines would be beneficial to consider:

1. Language

As a polyvocal form animated documentary would benefit from a "multilingual" production culture. Practitioners can bring this about by learning the language of their collaborators. A producer with little animation experience should take the time to learn some of the language and engage with the process of animation. The animator also has a responsibility to learn some of the language and process of documentary, if she wants to

have a stronger creative voice in the production. This will require an investment of time, and can be supported by access to definitions of key jargon and terminology (see Appendix 5 for examples of these).

Animators are often relatively low-power partners in film crews, and on larger documentary productions the potential creative innovation they can bring to a project is not always appreciated. While it is common practice for animators or animation directors to provide producers with some examples of different possible styles, it is rare that they are engaged in a more in-depth critical discussion. This is in part due to the lack of a shared language of production. It would be beneficial for animators, directors and producers – together – to explore the emerging lexicon of animated documentary, which has largely been developed and adopted by the academic community around animated documentary. I propose that mindful use of these concepts and phrases in communication will open the production to approaches that are not embedded in either documentary or animation culture, offering a new territory for collaborators to explore together on an equal footing – moving towards the establishment of a baseline of knowledge necessary for a wider community of practice to form. Used in conjunction with film references, this will also support collaborators in articulating and explaining methods and techniques they are proposing. The lexicon I have suggested in Appendix 6 is proposed as a beginning, but this is a living, developing vocabulary and would benefit from being regularly updated as new trends and concepts emerge.

2. Collaboration

Whether it is a funder awarding a grant or a producer or director asking an animator to illustrate an existing soundtrack, it is beneficial to frame relationships in terms of collaboration. This means working to achieve a shared language (as suggested above) but also structuring a project so that there are points of creative discussion and two-way feedback. If all note-giving comes one way, huge potential for learning and innovation goes

unrealised. Aesthetic decisions should be taken in discussion with the animation director, designer or animator. Visual and movement references should be shared, and when an animation lead shares a visual reference, they should offer clear and transparent information as to how the effect in the example can be achieved, how long it would take to achieve, and cost implications. Producers and directors should strive to create a production environment where asking questions is encouraged, processes are shared, and the challenging of creative decisions is permitted. If working remotely, face-to-face meetings should also be built into the structure of the project.

3. Representation

The animator and designer will be creating the visual representations of real characters and events, so should be included in discussion of the ethics of these representations. This will help to ensure they understand their responsibilities of making the representation, and will open a dialogue which could allow for valuable input from the animator and/or designer.

Animated documentary also offers great potential for engaging participants, or documentary subjects, in innovative ways. This can range from discursive recorded group interview sessions, to involving participants in their own visual representation through collaborative drawing. As part of the development process a production team should consider if the use of animation can offer the project opportunities in this area.

4. Clarity

Credits and scopes of work should be agreed before production begins. This is as true of student and independent films as it is of studio productions. Ideally a producer would work together with, for example, an animation director, to reify in writing a shared understanding of what each role represents, and what expectations and limitations it entails. This conversation could take place alongside the sharing of language and references. This will help to mitigate any inconsistencies in the

interpretation of job titles or expectations between practitioners coming from different production communities.

I have shown that boundary objects such as storyboards and animatics can create problems if they are not contextualised by information on how they should be "read". All these artefacts should be framed by this information, either in person or in an accompanying note. This should ensure comprehensive understanding of whether the objects are "low-commitment" or "high-commitment", and what response is required. The exchange of boundary objects should also be recognised as an opportunity to identify knowledge gaps, and to ask questions.

5. Feedback

At the end of a project it is important to debrief as a team, noting which processes worked and which did not, and any points at which communication failed, as well as any creative, technical or process-related knowledge or innovations, no matter how small, that could be preserved. Funders should also request debrief sessions with grant-holders, in which grant-holders are permitted to talk freely about the realities of production. This knowledge should be shared with the wider research community, who in turn can collate and synthesise it, drawing conclusions and recommendations to share back to industry. In this way, newcomers to the practice can be guided by role models who will in turn benefit from the knowledge that the newcomers go on to acquire and share as part of their own practice.

Through the process of feeding back on knowledge gained through projects, case studies can be produced and shared with industry. These case studies can offer detailed and diverse methods for producing animated documentary. In this way, filmmakers can assemble their own bespoke production plan, best suited to their project, based on the knowledge and experiences of other filmmakers. This can be done collaboratively, and case studies, alongside the development of a shared lexicon can help producers, executive producers, commissioners, directors, animators, designers, and documentary participants to communicate effectively and to work together towards a shared vision.

Dissemination and application of the research

This thesis is a first step in what I hope will be a wider journey of increasing knowledge, and knowledge sharing, around animated documentary production. Through academic publication, I will share outcomes of my research with the academic community. These publications will include detailed case studies of production processes, alongside a suggestion that the production community could benefit from other practitioner-scholars sharing case studies of their own production processes in detail, thus contributing to a rich well of knowledge.

I will also publish elements of my recommendations, case studies, and developing lexicon in public-access, practitioner-facing forms. I will actively seek collaborations with existing filmmaker networks and communities (including those focusing on animated documentary, animation, documentary, and arts production) in order to reach a wide readership. I will take opportunities presented by conferences, symposia, and festivals to share knowledge, but also to encourage and engage practitioners in contributing, participating and convening their own activities. In this way I will encourage the horizontal, emergent growth of the animated documentary community.

In addition to what this thesis can contribute to animated documentary production, I believe that as a model it can have a wider application within the study of independent production. For example, the use of Bourdieu's forms of capital to analyse the production of short film case studies, through interviews with all crew members, could offer useful insights to funding bodies as to what their economic and cultural capital means to its beneficiaries, and how this flow of capital could be improved. Moreover, the thesis's approach to identifying challenges and risks of production across boundaries, and the development of tools, objects, and language to address these, need not be limited to animated documentary; it can be applied to other existing and emerging subgenres. The contemporary media landscape is one of hybridisation and boundary-crossing innovation. Methods for reducing risk and encouraging effective communication benefit many areas of production; it is my belief that I have contributed something of value to these methods.

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Appendix 1

Analysis of short animated documentary films programmed in key UK festivals, 2016-2020

To investigate the current production contexts of animated documentary, I have conducted research to identify short animated documentary films that have been programmed in key UK festivals between 2016 and 2020. After identifying and collating 146 films I analysed each, identifying trends in production contexts and narrative content. My findings should not be seen as a perfectly accurate or complete representation of the 'prototypical' forms of animated documentary, but rather as a broad indication of trends and tendencies in current production and exhibition.

METHOD

I worked through the programmes of key UK festivals for each of their five most recent editions. Key festivals were selected as those identified by BAFTA on their 'A-list' of eligibility (BAFTA, 2018). These were: Edinburgh International Film Festival; Leeds international Film Festival; Foyle Film Festival; BFI London Film Festival; BFI Flare; London International Documentary Festival; Raindance Film Festival; Open City Documentary Festival, and Sheffield Doc/Fest. To give a voice to online curators I also included all the films on the Short of the Week website's Animated Documentary channel. From these programmes I identified and listed UK produced or co-produced short animated documentaries. To increase the size of the sample, I added programmes from two respected, specialised animated documentary events: the Factual Animation Film Fuss and the short films programmed in London International Animation Festival's Animated Documentary screenings.

OMISSIONS

1 - Fiction films

I omitted from the sample any films that did not fit my definition of animated documentary as stated in Chapter 2, for example films which were programmed as an animated documentary but which I know from my other research are complete fictions which do not *make assertions or truth claims about the real world or people in that world*.

2 - Films produced more than five years prior to the festival

In some cases, films were screened which had been produced significantly before the screening date. These films were usually screened as part of a historical or retrospective programme and, as they do not represent the current production landscape, I have omitted them from the sample.

Films included

2.3 x 2.6 x 3.2 (Jiaqi Wang, 2019)
A Close Call (Wing Chiu, 2017)
A Different Category (Linnéa Haviland, 2018)
A Kiss, Deferred (Moth Collective, 2015)
A Pistol Against My Head (Luca Schenato and Sinem Vardarli, 2016)
A Scribbled Memory (Bhulla Beghal, 2018)
All of a Sudden, Something Popped (Daksha Patel, 2016)
Amputee Undefined (Sophie Kamlish, 2019)
Animation Is My Alter-Ego (Natalie Priest, 2017)
Arlene (Farouq Suleiman, 2015)
Art For Lawyers (Rory Waudby-Tolley, 2017)
Bathroom Privileges (Rupert Williams and Ellie Land, 2020)
Bathtub Armada (Sofia Castello y Tickell, 2018)
Better Humans (Moth Studio, 2018)
Blood, Rats and Anticoagulants: The story of Warfarin (Ed Prosser, 2018)
Bloomers (Samantha Moore, 2019)
Blue Light (Harriet Croucher, 2017)
Border Line (Meg Earls, 2019)
Brexicuted (Chris Shepherd, 2018)
Chalk trace (Ester Johnson, 2013)
Chin Up (Joanne Salmon, 2018)
Colorscope Black (Matt Abiss, 2017)
Colorscope Green (Jorge R Canedo E. and Rafael Mayani, 2017)
Colorscope White (Jocie Juritz, 2017)
Colorscope Yellow (Sebastian Baptista, 2017)

Conan O'Brien discusses "We're Going to be Friends" by the White Stripes (Moth Studio, 2017)
Conception – Why I Won't Teach My Son Black Codes (Jocie Juritz, 2019)
Conception: Catie and Jen (Moth Studio, 2018)
Critical Living (Alex Widdowson, 2017)
Dear England (Marta Lemos, 2018)
Desire Line (Ruini Shi, 2018)
Devil In The Room (Carla MacKinnon, 2013)
Do I See What You See? (Simon Ball, 2018)
Double Portrait (Ian Bruce, 2018)
Dusk (Di Wu, 2016)
Entrevista/Interview (Lottie Kingslake, 2016)
Escape (Natalia Tegos, 2017)
Escape From Syria - Faiza's Story (Jack Whilding Newman, 2017)
Escapology: The Art of Addiction (Alex Widdowson, 2017)
Everyone is Waiting for Something to Happen (Emma Calder, 2015)
Februarium!! (John Summerson, 2020)
Fifteen-two (John Summerson, 2019)
First Kiss (Ali Aschman, 2018)
Flying While Fat (Stacy Bias, 2016)
Forgotten Voices of D-day (Peter Roch and Jason Davidson, 2019)
Freedom (Kathrin Steinbacher, 2017)
Fruitcake (Harriet Croucher, 2016)
G-AAAH (Elizabeth Hobbs, 2016)
Getting Something Out (Kirsty O'Rourke, 2018)
Go Outside (Zehong Zhu, 2017)
Guantanamo Bay: The Hunger Strikes (Jonathan Hodgson, 2013)
Hair (Zainab Sanyang, 2020)
Heavy Load (Laura Franchito, 2017)
Helplessness (Chenyao Zhang, 2017)
Hit and Run (Hannah Brewerton, 2020)
Home (Anita Bruvere, 2019)
Hunger by the Sea (Sue Sudbury, 2017)
I Am Here (Sorrel Milne, 2019)
I AM VADER (Lachezar Dimitrov, 2016)
I am Worthless (Haemin Ko, 2018)
I Don't Protest, I Just Dance In My Shadow (Jessica Ashman, 2017)
I Don't Want to Call it Home (Léa Luiz de Oliveira and Nisan Yetkin, 2019)
Isabella (Ross Hogg and Duncan Cowles, 2015)
Kensho (Aaron Paradox, 2015)
Life Inside 'Islamic State' (Scott Coello, 2016)
Little Elephant (Kate Jessop, 2015)
Living on the City Fringe (Vera Reshto, 2018)
Loop (Samantha Moore, 2016)
Lost For Words (Sanjana Chandrasekhar, 2018)
Make do and Mend (Bexie Bush, 2014)
Marfa (The Brothers McLeod, 2017)
Margot (Sara Spånghagen, 2019)

Material World (Anna Ginsburg, 2017)
Men Talk About Mother (Bunny Schendler, 2016)
Mm-hmm (Hannah McNally and Martha Halliday, 2017)
Music and Clowns (Alex Widdowson, 2018)
Music Unites: Herbie Hancock & Kamasi Washington in Conversation (Wednesday Studio, 2020)
My Dad's Name was Huw. He was an Alcoholic Poet (Freddie Griffiths, 2019)
My Dream, My Taste (Emily Downe, 2020)
My Friend Nearly Killed Patti Smith (Richard O'Connor, 2016)
My Mother's Coat (Marie-Margaux Tsakiri-Scanatovits, 2010)
My Stammering Tap (Peter Snelling, 2017)
My Troubled Mind – Jack (Salvador Maldonado, 2019)
Nadirah, Coal Woman (Negar Elodie Behzadi and Kate Jessop, 2019)
Newport Gun Girls (Lauren Orme, 2017)
Nicolas (Jade Evans and Catherine Prowse, 2017)
No Body (Haemin Ko, 2019)
No Stigma (Siobhan Smith, 2017)
Not for Money, Not for Love, Not for Nothing (John Robert Lee, 2020)
O Hunter Heart (Carla MacKinnon, 2018)
Own Skin (Geena Gasser & Saksia Tomlinson, 2018)
Preloved (Jude Marcella, 2017)
Private Parts (Anna Ginsburg, 2016)
Queer Heroes (Kate Jessop, 2016)
Quilted (Cat Baskerville, 2020)
Right Now, I Am (Ciara Kerr, 2020)
Right to Say No (Ines Delicioso, 2017)
Rug (Jonathan Hodgson, 2015)
Sent Away (Rosa Fisher, 2019)
Seven Seven (Georgina Ferguson, 2016)
Shaun Ryder and the Salford Sioux (Glenn Kitson, 2020)
Sleepless (Ellie Land, 2016)
Solos (Gabriella Marsh, 2019)
Sophie's Story (Alex Hatjoullis & Christos Hatjoulis, 2016)
Speak Out (Elizabeth Hobbs, 2018)
Spinning Record (Emily Downe, 2017)
Stems (Ainslie Henderson, 2015)
Technology for Talking (Jemima Hughes, 2019)
Tha thu air Aigeann m' Inntinn (you are at the bottom of my mind) (Catriona Black, 2018)
That Yorkshire Sound (Marcus Armitage, 2017)
The Act of Lunacy (Freddie Griffiths, 2018)
The Amazing Life Cycle of the European Eel (Sofia Castello y Tickell & Chris Doble, 2015)
The Camp (Madeline Swift, 2016)
The Feather (Anna Honorato Marciniak, 2017)
The Great War (Shelly Wain & John Harmer, 2018)
The Last Job On Earth (Moth Studio, 2016)

The Man Inside Mickey (Daniela Sherer, 2013)
The Mind of an artist: William Kentridge (Rosa Beiroa, 2018)
The Mystical Journey of Jimmy Page's '59 Telecaster (Smith & Foulkes, 2019)
The Peacock in the Room (Sanjana Chandrasekhar, 2020)
The Petard Pinch (Michael Brookes, 2015)
The Redness of Red (Emily Downe, 2018)
The UN Treaty Bodies (Nicolai Troshinsky, 2018)
The Unforgiven Moment (Laurie Harris and Salvador Maldonado, 2016)
The Woman who Turned into a Castle (Kathrin Steinbacher, 2018)
There's Something in the Water (Rory Waudby Tolley, 2018)
They Call Us Maids: The Domestic Workers' Story (Leeds Animation Workshop, 2015)
Think like a Rainforest (Scriberia and Angie Phillips, 2017)
Together | Fragmented (Flora Martyr, 2020)
Tough (Jennifer Zheng, 2016)
Trump Dreams (Ruth Lingford, 2017)
Twiddly Things (Adara Todd, 2016)
Under My Skin (Tina Rashidi, 2017)
Weight (Cheuk Kwan Lai, 2017)
West Question East Answer (Dal Park, 2018)
What Comes After Religion (Jonathan Hodgson, 2015)
What Is Consciousness? (Diana Gradinaru, 2019)
What It Feels Like (Steven Fraser, 2018)
When (Deanna Crisbacher, 2018)
When I Was Settled (Sacha Beeley, 2017)
When I Was Young (Katy Milner, 2018)
When I Worry About Things – Annabel's Story (Andy Glynne and Liam O'Connor, 2017)
Where Are You (Si Jang, 2017)
Women and Power (Meg Earls, 2018)
Yours Faithfully, Edna Welthorpe (Mrs) (Chris Shepherd and Emma Parker, 2017)
أيام- Days (Sofia El Khyari, 2017)

Analysing the films

After the omissions I had a total of 146 films, some of which had been programmed across multiple festivals. For each film I posed six questions relating to its production:

1) Production context: is it made by students or non-students?

2) How the film was supported, primarily financially.

This was usually either through:

- public arts funding (e.g. BFI, ACE, Creative Scotland);
- grants or commissions from charities, trusts or foundations;
- academic funding;
- crowdfunding;
- brand sponsorship or commissioning;
- finance from a broadcaster such as Channel 4 or the BBC;
- finance from an online publication; or
- no funding, which also applied to unsupported student productions.

Funders and sponsors usually have a logo or listing in a film's credits and crowdfunded projects' fundraising pages remain online after the funding is complete, so it is usually possible to ascertain broadly how a film was funded. Projects completed as student films, which do not list any other funder or collaborating body, can usually be classed as supported by the student and university (and categorised as unfunded in my classification system). In the case of films that had been produced in student contexts but commissioned by or made in formal collaborations between universities and charities, trusts or foundations, I categorised the films as "Trust/charity" supported.

3) Common themes and structures.

I noted down the themes and structures of each film and, as trends began to emerge, these crystallised into fourteen categories:

- **Migration**
- **Social and political issues:** Films with a social message, including themes such as homelessness and domestic violence; films with a

political agenda, such those that are explicitly anti-Brexit or anti-Trump.

- **History:** Historical stories that are in the public domain (excluding local, family or personal histories).
- **Local history / place:** Stories that explore the history or nature of a specific geographical place, often with a psycho-geographical or socio-historical approach.
- **Conflict:** Stories relating to war and global conflict.
- **Filmmakers' stories:** Personal stories belonging to the filmmaker, including family histories.
- **Health:** Films on subjects related to physical health and mental health, including trauma.
- **Culture**: Films that explore art, music, dance or other areas of the creative industries.
- **Environment**: Films relating to nature, wildlife, climate or sustainability;
- **Science (other)** / **Technology:** Films primarily about science and technology and/or its impact on the world.

Some films fell into multiple categories, for example *A Pistol Against My Head* (2016), a film about military PTSD, can be placed in the categories of both conflict and health (mental health), while *Tough* (2016) can be categorised within migration, conflict, history and family history.

4) The disciplinary "home" of the director or creative lead.

I categorised this as either:

- Animation
- Documentary/journalism; or
- Other

In most cases the film's creative lead was the director. However in some instances the film's producer was given the most prominent credit, and rather than a director there would be an animator, animation director or art director given a key credit alongside the producer. In these cases, I would list both as creative leads. In some cases, a film's credits would not fit into conventional film roles. *The Amazing Life Cycle of the European Eel*, which screened at FAFF in 2016, does not credit a director, producer or animator but simply has a single "created by" credit, so in this case I used the names listed there.

5) The apparent animation technique used to make the film.

I initially placed films in the categories of: Mixed Media, Processed footage, Hand-drawn (traditional), Stop-motion, Motion graphics, Live action elements, 3D digital, 2D digital, Paper cut-out, and Oil-on-glass. Following the initial categorisation process, I grouped the films into fewer groups with broader definitions. For example there were very few films that had been produced using oil pastel or oil on glass, so I included these in a broader category of 'traditional'. The final categories were:

- 2D digital (including what appeared to be 2D hand-drawn work of the type that is produced using software such as TV Paint and Adobe Animate, as well as 2D puppet and graphical animation which would likely be produced using software such as Adobe After Effects).
- 3D digital (films with a clear 3D animation style, of the kind that is produced by software such as Autodesk Maya or Maxon Cinema 4D.
- Traditional (including: drawing with pencil, pastel, and charcoal; paint on glass).
- Stop-motion.
- Mixed media (including: work that combines animation with photographic or live action elements; collage and paper cut-out; and

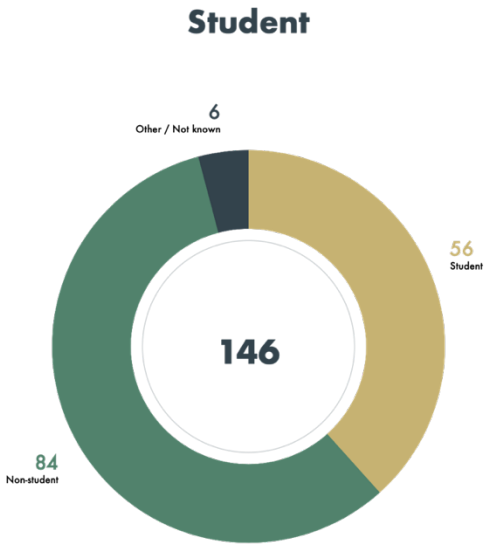
films that combine multiple animation styles such as stop-motion and 2D digital).

The division of animated films into groups based on the primary animation technique illuminated some of the issues around definition in animation; in some cases, categorisation was problematic. Occasionally I would find a film that was defined by the filmmaker within a certain category (such as mixed media) while the visible style appeared to be something different. In other cases, it was very difficult to know what technique/s had been used and I made my own assessment based on what was visible. There are no final definitions of animation processes, and often the ways that practitioners define them differ significantly. The decisions I made as to how to categorise the films were led by the overall aesthetic style of the film rather than a rigorous investigation into the precise production process of each film.

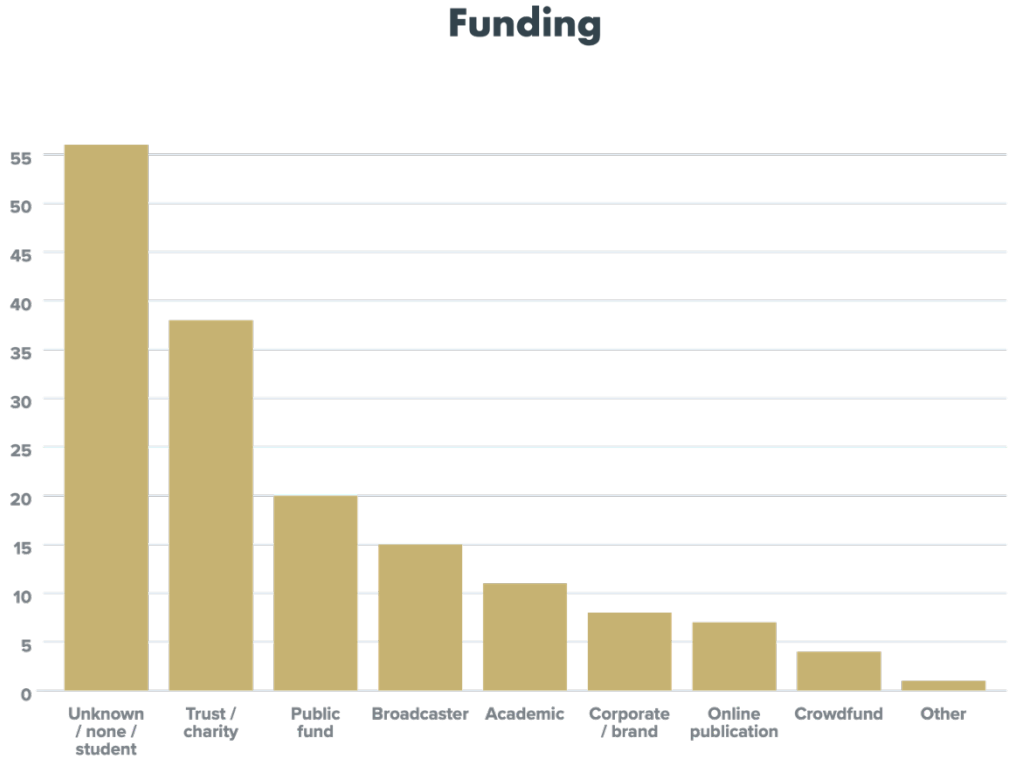
6) The sex of the director or creative lead.

As with some other categories, this proved problematic to identify with certainty without contacting individual filmmakers. If I were to take this research further, I would contact all filmmakers and ask them to self-identify for a 'gender' field, in order to improve the accuracy of my findings. In many cases my classification was drawn from paratextual materials, such as interviews with the filmmaker in which they are referred to as 'she' or 'he'.

FINDINGS



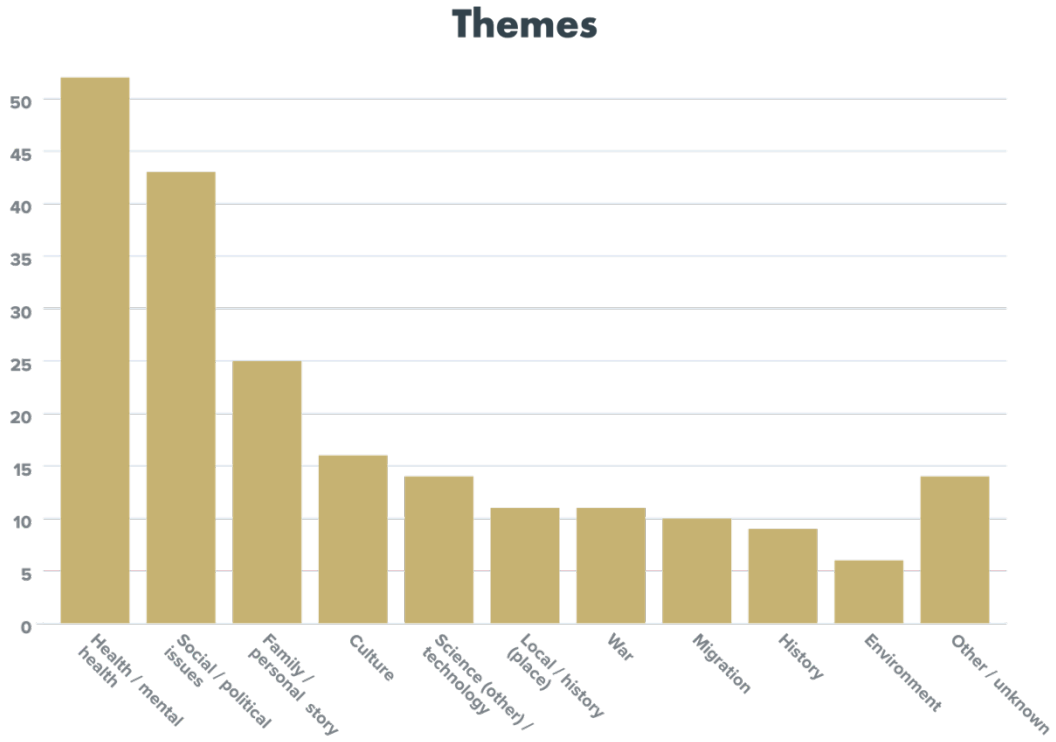
The breakdown of student to non-student production contexts.



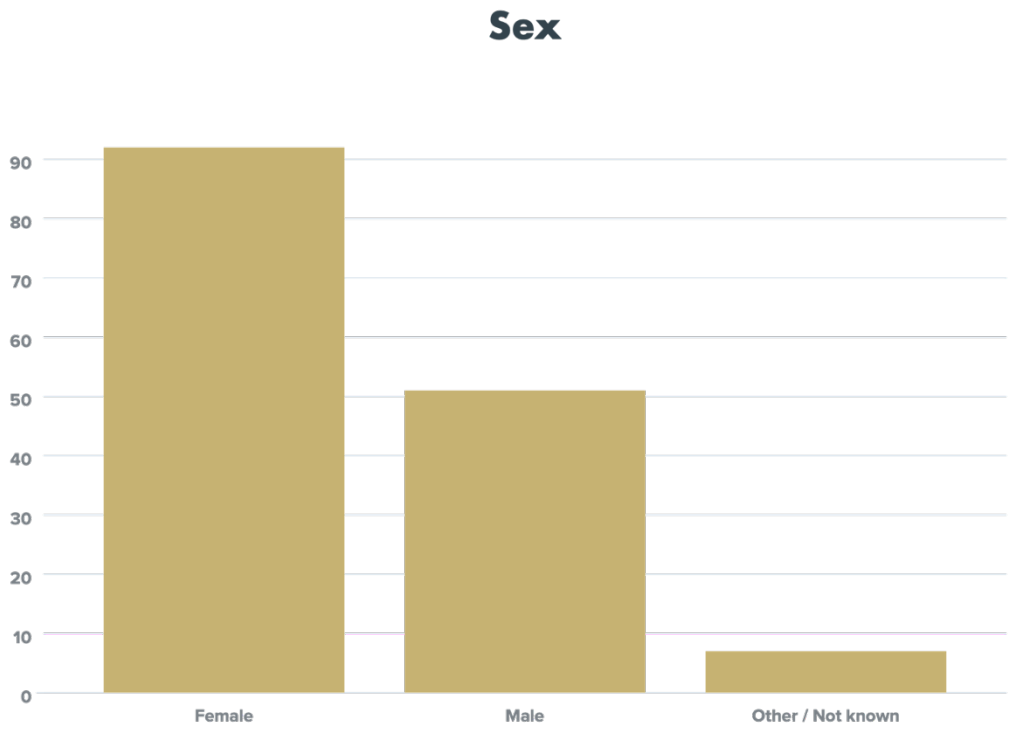
This chart shows how the films were funded and supported. Unfunded work (including student films but excluding student/charity collaborations) makes

up the largest percentage. This is closely followed by work supported by a trust or charity - including work produced by students as part of a formal collaboration between a charity and a university. If these collaborative films had instead been classified as unfunded/student/unknown, student films would take an even greater percentage, but trust/charity funding would remain the next largest group.

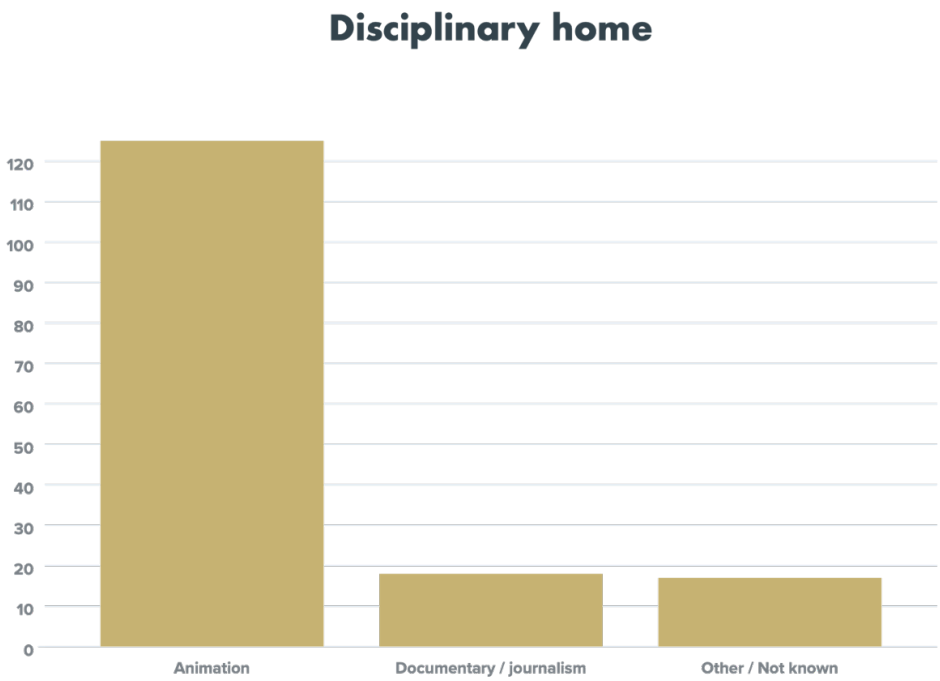
Following Trust/charity funded work, the next largest group is publicly funded work. Arts Council England and BFI (through their various distributors) are the most common funders. Several projects were financed through higher education, usually as commissions to communicate academic research. Brand support, broadcasters and online publications were also present. It should be noted that the relatively low levels of online and broadcast films could be partly due to this data being drawn from film festivals. Work produced for broadcast or online distribution already has a mass online audience in mind at the point of commissioning, while Arts Council or BFI funded work, as well as student, unsupported independent work, and artists commissions, rely on festivals to reach an audience so more time and money is likely to be spent on festival submissions. It may also reflect a programming bias in festivals, some of which are reluctant to programme work that has been made with an explicit commercial or social agenda. Several projects were crowdfunded: all of these used crowdfunding as supplementary fundraising in addition to another funding source.



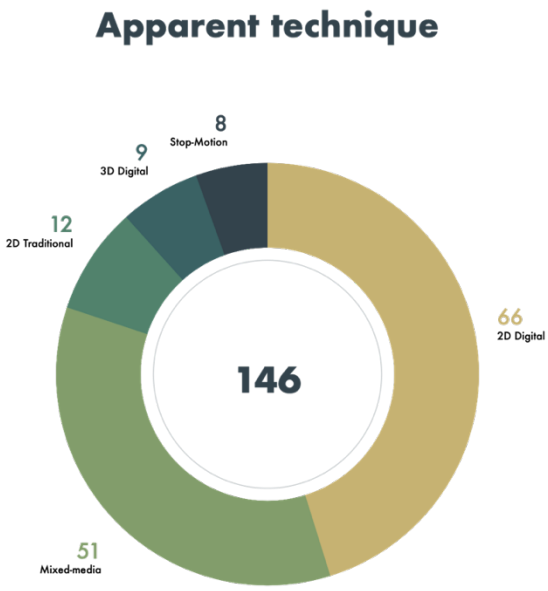
Common themes that were present in the films. Health or mental health stories occurred very frequently. There were also high occurrences of films that dealt with social and political issues. Personal stories and family histories were also well-represented.



There is a significant female skew.



Perhaps the most striking finding is the disciplinary "home" of the projects' directors, which is strongly skewed toward animation.



This chart shows the spread of technical aesthetics in the films. Digital 2D and mixed media styles are the most popular for telling these animated documentary stories. Mixed media films often combine animation with live action or photographic elements.

Appendix 2

Sample of guide questions used in interviews. These were designed for directors and producers of short animated documentary films, and were adapted for use with other interviewees such as commissioners, assistant animators, festival programmers, community organisers, and live action directors and producers.

Talking to filmmakers about specific films

Would you define the film as an animated documentary?

Did you work with traditional processes such as storyboards and animatics?

How was the film financed? Was it pitched as an animated documentary?

What was the relationship with the commissioners/funders/financiers?

How did you select your technical and stylistic approach?

Can you talk me through the process of making it, stage by stage?

Where did production take place?

What were the main challenges you faced?

What collaborative work was involved?

How was the budget spent?

How has the film been exhibited and received?

How has it benefitted you?

Will you continue to work in animated documentary?

Would you do anything differently next time?

Talking to filmmakers about their practice more generally

What is your professional background?

What was it that made you interested in animated documentary?

How would you describe the industry/market of animated documentary?

Have you had any experience of working with producers or on teams on animated documentaries?

Would you identify yourself as an animated documentary maker?

Do you feel like you are part of a community of animated documentary filmmakers?

Do you see your animated documentary work scaling up to longer form films?

What are your current projects and future plans?

Appendix 3

Extract from Black Rain development journal

21st June 2017

The process of researching this film is a bit like the process of the academic research. I'll gather information from talking to people – for me the way in is always direct through people. Then go away and read around, try out avenues, ideas, approaches. Read books, papers. Talk to others. Interview non-specialists. And then come back to the original material, contextualized. What is it *really*? Now I understand a little more and can separate the useful from the noise, I can begin to weave a creative narrative, make decisions of what should be included and what should be left out, or what the shape of the story is, this story which is information filtered through a lens of me.

Going back to my original CUBRIC interviews I find my reading of what I was hearing has changed. Phrases that were almost discounted by me as unusable, indecipherable jargon now conveying fascinating and important information. So how to try and make sure that these do not read only as jargon and indecipherable for my general audience, my young-ish audience.

And who is the audience? If I keep the focus to pain – to some abnormal functioning – the niche is clear. But the more general theme makes a more general and therefore probably smaller audience. *Which is another reason why the more focused, human story is preferable.*

Listening back:

I wonder how their art exhibition is going… maybe I can go and film that… I wonder if I could get them to do a transcranial magnetic stimulation demo on me…

Cutting the ‘lighting up section’

Included cutting a bit he said was ‘really important’, about comparative experiments. Because it diverted from the main point. In conversation we can follow multiple points and parallel/interweaving avenues – in film I think clarity of one point made at a time is important. This may be down to the expectations an audience brings to film – that it will tell them things clearly, that someone has already done much of the work for them, that while they can’t necessarily switch off, they certainly don’t need to be hypervigilant. Certainly this is my state of mind when settling to watch a documentary. Documentaries can be emotionally challenging but usually are not seriously intellectually (cerebrally?) challenging.

Cutting lots of detail and material to get to the basic simplest message of what they mean by ‘lighting up’.

Also cutting the ums and ers. Would like to keep them as character is a part of documentary, but in this case clarity of message is primary focus.

Also a point like this needs to be made succinctly – it can’t go on too long or will lose focus, lose attention, lose people.

He’s talking about key early cases as anecdotes but his character presentation isn’t too good. Could/should I rewrite these and get a narrator to do them? They could be presented like the opening to Magnolia – compelling, drawing you in.

And what follows could be better expressed.

They thought localized areas were responsible for localized functions. In fact it is networks – orchestras responsible for functions - connected by white matter.

His London underground map analogy for the *connectome* is very good.

Biscuit tin analogy is also good when talking about reading scales of microstructures. And then he returns to the London Underground map – if you cut it up you'd be able to reassemble it from continuity… a jigsaw. Visual analogies = good for animation of course.

CUBRIC is bringing together information from different scales and different domains…
What I am also trying to do with my research!

Anyway, the voices from CUBRIC are all interesting but the subjects are so diffuse, while also being so specific, and one voice does not cover them all. So, in fact, the interdisciplinarity, the different domains, the breadth alongside the complexity… this is the stuff that makes it difficult to communicate [...]

Appendix 4

Case study: An experience of community at Deptford Animadocs 2019

Deptford Animadocs was advertised as 'an exploration and celebration of Twenty-First Century animated documentary', featuring a screening of films, alongside introductions and discussion from filmmakers and academics working in animation studies. My short film *O Hunter Heart* (2018) had been selected for screening and I had also been invited to speak as part of a roundtable discussion at the end of the day.

I arrived at the Deptford Cinema at 11:40am. The venue was in a converted shop, plastered with film posters. In the bar a small group were gathered in advance of the screening - I recognised Susan Young, Terry Wragg and Bunny Schendler as well as Annabelle Honess Roe. Wragg introduced me to her colleague Jo Dunn and I noticed several of other people in the bar who I did not know by name but recognised from similar past events. Most people in the space seemed to know each other, though Schendler had not met Dunn and Wragg before. People chatted together, talking about current projects, expectations of the day, recent symposia and conferences, and sharing news from their personal lives. At noon, the event organiser Victoria Walden invited us into the cinema. We descended a staircase into a 40-seater screening room in the cellar. People trickled into the room, still chatting, until it was about half full. Walden introduced the event, explaining that Deptford Cinema was a volunteer-run community space. She introduced Annabelle Honess Roe, who was also involved in programming the day. Walden stated her aim for the day - to bring filmmakers together with animated documentary audiences as well as those who don't know much about the form but want to know more, to 'ask questions about the form, or the genre - or if it is a form or a genre'. Honess-Roe then took microphone and presented a more academic introduction, outlining key points from her book *Animated Documentary*.

After the first programme of short films, the audience was released for an hour-and-a-half lunch break. Everyone piled out and a group casually fell together and wandered towards the market. The group was all female and included: me, Young, Schendler and Honess-Roe, Addison and Kate Anderson, an animator who graduated from the RCA in 2002 and who has worked in animated documentary, but who I'd met for the first time that day. We queued for a cashpoint, locked in a slightly awkward dynamic in which each of us was obliged to talk to the person next to us, for the exact amount of time it took to queue, and then end or pause the conversation in the interest of discretion as the other person entered their pin number and got their cash. I was standing with Addison and discussed the progress of my PhD research, as well as talking about the reception to my recent short film *O Hunter Heart* and what it had taught me. Addison told me that she was developing lots of different projects and that she needed to do that because she did not know which would go forward, dependent on funding. She mentioned the Doc Society's Made of Truth short documentary fund, which had closed for entries the previous week, and noted that the three-month turnaround of the fund would make it very difficult for any animated documentaries to realistically be made as part of the initiative.

Honess Roe and Young left in search of Vietnamese food while the rest of us settled in an Indian restaurant, and were soon joined by the animator, director and lecturer Kim Noce, who had been texting with Addison to discover our location. We sat at a table outside the restaurant that spilled into the commotion of Deptford Market, in the sunshine. We talked about the films we had seen that morning, which we all agreed had been an intense and affecting programme. We discussed the content of the films, but also the techniques used in the execution and how these achieved or failed to achieve emotional effects. We shared inside knowledge about budgets or production contexts for some, speculated about others. We also talked about our own work, projects, research, children, partners, homes and holidays. We complained broadly about the unrealistic expectations of funders; there

were some anecdotes shared which were explicitly off-record, particularly those that repeated outrageous or absurd notes that members of the group had been given by funders or clients who did not - or would not - understand the requirements of the animation process. We discussed our working methods and production experiences on recent projects. We also talked about what to expect from the afternoon's films.

Back in the cinema Walden gave a short introduction to the second set of shorts, which included Young's short film *The Betrayal* (2015). After the screening of these there was another break. I stepped outside and stood next to Young, and we briefly discussed the programme before getting into a conversation about London, and the benefits of leaving, or staying in, the city. When the 20-minute break drew to a close we returned to the cinema to watch the animated documentary feature film *Another Planet* (2017). The audience was slightly smaller than it had been for the earlier screenings. Following the film Walden led a lively and in-depth discussion about it. Elements of the story and characters were analysed, and the discussion also ventured into more general social and ethical questions, as well as mentions of related work. The reception to the film was very positive although it had unsettled some audience members. Following the formal discussion was another short break, during which I went outside and continued talking about the film with Honess-Roe, Addison and Walden. We returned to the cinema where Honess-Roe introduced the final shorts programme. At the end of the screening, Deptford Cinema played a short video about their work, linking to their crowdfunding appeal to raise money to improve facilities and access. After the screening was a ten-minute break, during which I spoke to Tony Comely, who I noticed was in attendance and who I had previously interviewed for my PhD research.

After the break myself, Wragg, Dunn, Young and Honess-Roe were invited to speak at a roundtable. The cinema was just under half-full. We shared our narratives and the audience asked questions and contributed to the

discussion. The conversation was engaging but not surprising - it built on standard themes and repertoires that I recognised from other animated documentary events, and neither the panellists nor the audience presented any controversial or confrontational questions or ideas. At the end of the panel, the audience and speakers went back up to the bar. Everyone had been given drinks vouchers and most people stayed and chatted, breaking into informal groups. I thanked Walden for the day, then spoke to Comely again briefly. Some people started to leave one by one, saying their goodbyes as they did, but the small bar remained full, with a lively buzz. I had an in-depth conversation with Young about my film and her film, the processes we each went through in making them. We talked about our respective PhDs, our difficulties and what we had learned so far, and compared information on methodologies. We also talked about personal and family affairs. Young promised to send me a recording of her recent autoethnography symposium which I had been unable to attend. After 40 minutes I had to leave to get a train back to my home in Norwich, so I said goodbye to those who remained in the bar.

On the train home, and the following day, I followed up on the event using online tools and networks in the following ways: I 'liked' Facebook posts from Kim Noce and Sally Pearce which mentioned the event; I sent a Facebook friendship request to Walden which was accepted; I publicly tweeted a thank you to Deptford Cinema for the event; I drafted a blog post about the day for the Animated Documentary website; I wrote follow up emails to Schendler and Young; and I responded to a question Noce had posted on Facebook asking for recommendations of charities that could provide 'briefs' for an student animation project - I suggested collaborating with Deptford Cinema. I also contributed to the Deptford Cinema Kickstarter campaign, created an audience survey which Walden agreed to send out to the event's ticketholders, and approached Walden herself for an interview for my PhD research.

Analysis of the experience

I attended the Deptford Animadocs event alone but expected to see people I knew at the event; I had seen that Honess-Roe was involved with programming and I was aware that I'd be speaking at the end of the day on a roundtable with Young and Wragg, both of whom I had recently interviewed for my research. It was nevertheless striking how many people I knew at the event, and how many knew each other. The fact that such a high percentage of the audience at Deptford Animadocs seemed to recognise each other and fell into conversation so easily gave the clear impression of a community around the form of animated documentary. The event had the atmosphere of a social event, as much as a screening or educational one; the process of engaging in collaboration, narration and social construction began before the event had even formally started. This was strengthened by the programming of the day. The 90-minute lunch break encouraged meaningful interaction between audience members, as did the time set aside for drinks at the end of the day. The provision of drinks tokens, as well as snacks, for all ticket-holders also demonstrated that the social side of the event was valued by its organisers.

There was an organic blurring of lines between the formal discussion that took place in the cinema space and the informal discussion that took place during breaks. In the breaks, many conversations about the films screened and the form of animated documentary were continued and extended. Conversely, discussion that took place in the informal spaces of the event were on occasion referenced in the formal discussion. An example of this was a moment in Honess-Roe's opening presentation in which she said 'I was talking to Carla just now, and we were saying, wow, a whole day of animated documentary, it seems like a real treat'. The casual mention of me by my first name in front of a formal audience implies an assumption of familiarity among much of the audience.

The activities that I engaged in following the event - email writing, posting to social media, blogging and contributing to a Kickstarter campaign - were not undertaken in a planned manner. Nor were they a cynical seizing of the opportunity to increase my social and cultural capital. Nevertheless, this labour (which felt natural and organic) served to strengthen social connections and form bonds that have the potential to be useful to my career. By "liking" the Facebook posts of Noce and Pearce - both of whom had tagged me in their posts - I was showing my appreciation to them for acknowledging my contribution to the event. By suggesting that Noce's students collaborated with Deptford Cinema I was attempting to play the role of a conduit, joining the dots to bring value to two separate entities. By "friending" Walden on Facebook, I was taking advantage of the opportunity to deepen my new connection with her and extend my professional network. By "tweeting" thanks to the cinema I was building social capital with the venue and its programmers while also potentially increasing my own cultural capital through being seen to be a part of an interesting event. Similarly, by blogging about the event I was reifying my own experience of it. By doing this I was likely to generate social capital with the event organisers and filmmakers whom I was writing about, while building cultural capital by getting my name on content that may be fairly widely seen by those with a specific interest in animated documentary. By sending follow up emails to Schendler and Young, I was capitalising on the face-to-face contact we had had to further strengthen my connection with these well-established filmmakers. By donating to the Deptford Cinema Kickstarter campaign I was making an investment that could potentially generate social capital now and in the future. All of these capital-generating actions could be seen as attempts to secure and extend my position as a well-connected scholar-practitioner *on the inside* of the animated documentary community, and even the power that I am perceived to hold within it.

When I began my PhD research in 2015, I felt like a newcomer in animated documentary environments – I did not know the language, the scholars, many of the films in the canon or the important funds, programmers and events. Much of the culture seemed unfathomable to me, for example the tremendous amount of work that scholars seemed happy to do - writing chapters and reviews, preparing and presenting papers, organising symposia - for little or no financial recompense. Over several years I have participated in many events, panels, labs and workshops and published online and in print on animated documentary. I have come to understand the value and importance of the work involved in community membership, even if it is not directly or well paid. Through the sustained labour of networking, promoting, covering, contributing to and connecting animated documentary communities, I have established a more central position in some of these communities. At points during the Deptford Animadocs event I found myself feeling a strong sense of identification with the (admittedly very small) community of independent animated documentary makers that was represented there.

Appendix 5

Animation terminology

2D animation

Animation produced on a two-dimensional plane. Usually refer to digitally produced animation but can also be used to refer to "traditional" techniques.

3D animation

Animation produced on a computer in a 3D software such as Maya, Cinema 4D, 3ds Max or Blender.

Acting

The performance of a character as "acted" by a puppet, drawing or computer generated character, controlled by the animator.

Animatic

A video in which static, rough frames are presented in timed sequence, often with sound. Sometimes referred to as a "timed storyboard", though this may feature less movement.

Animation director

Usually refers to the person in charge of the creative elements of an animation, often (but not always) supervising other animators to ensure the quality and consistency of their work.

Art director

Leads on the visual style of a film or animation. Sometimes this role converges with that of the animation director.

Boil

The technique of looping several near-identical frames to create an effect of a subtly quivering image.

Claymation

Stop-motion animation produced using modelling clay. Often incorporates morphing and may have an intentionally handmade quality.

Clean up

Creating final drawings from rough ones.

Colour script

A development document in animation that maps the changing moods and aesthetic of a film or sequence through colour.

Compositing

Bringing together diverse images into one single image in post-production.

Cut-out animation

Commonly refers to stop-motion animation made using flat images cut from materials such as paper, photographs, text or fabric. Can also refer to 2D digital animation using scanned real world materials collaged together, or 2D digital animation using "puppets" made from several different digital elements.

In-betweens

Frames that fill in between two keyposes.

Key art

Drawings, illustrations or rendered images of key scenes or important moments, often used as a development or pitching tool.

Keyframe

Frames defining the start and end points of a smooth transition.

Line Test

process used to check the movement on rough frames of hand drawn animation, either by scanning the frames and running them together in software such as Adobe After Effects, or by photographing them and capturing them in a stop-motion software such as Dragonframe.

Model Sheet

visual document that presents a character, often including poses, colour swatches and turnaround (views of the character from multiple angles).

Motion Graphiccs / MGFX / MoGraph

Animated graphic design, often incorporating text and usually produced using primarily digital techniques.

Ones and Twos

Animation shot on ones will feature a different drawing for every frame, and animation shot on twos will feature a new drawing every two frames (e.g. twelve different drawings

in a film shot on 24fps, each captured twice). Much animation combines ones and twos - ones are often used for fast movements.

Onion Skin

Using transparencies to view several frames of an animation simultaneously, in order to see the flow of movement. This can be done using a lightbox in traditional animation or using software settings.

Photogrammetry

process that can be used to create 3D digital models from multiple 2D photographs of an object, environment or character.

Pixilation

An animation technique in which the movements of real people are captured using a frame-by-frame animation approach, often combined with other animated elements.

Puppet animation

Can refer to stop-motion animation using puppets as “actors”, or to digital rigged figures animated in software such as Adobe After Effects.

References

Especially important in the diverse field of animation, references can include mood boards and links to other work, to give a sense of different art styles and techniques.

Squash and Stretch

Making an object change shape when in movement.

Straight-ahead animation

Animating without keyframes. An animator starts at the beginning of a movement and works forward frame by frame.

Style Frame

A design frame showing what the final look of the film will be (may not be precise).

Test shot

A shot provided to a client to test a style or technique.

Thumbnails

Very rough sequential drawings to test ideas. Often comes before storyboards.

Tie-down

Reworking rough drawings to get consistent lines and volumes. May come before clean up in 2D animation.

Documentary terminology

This list has been compiled in collaboration with documentary director Guy King and drawing on the Viva Documentary Glossary (Viva Documentary, n.d)

ADR

Re-recording dialogue in the studio, synchronised to picture.

Aerials

Shots taken from above, often filmed with a drone.

Agreed contributor viewings for factual accuracy and fairness

Before or during filming a producer may agree in writing with a contributor that prior to broadcast they can watch the film, not to have any editorial control, but to check for accuracy and fairness.

AP

Assistant Producer.

Archive (or stock footage)

Footage that has not been produced specifically for this production. Archive often refers to historical material, and 'stock' may refer to material which is less specifically historical, but the terms 'archive' and 'stock' can also be used interchangeably. A piece of stock footage can also be referred to as a 'library shot'.

Assembly

The first viewable edit of a film in which material has been roughly assembled in a timeline in order to tell the story, with little concern over pace and mood.

B-roll / GV (general views)

Footage shot outside of the main footage. This may include details of location or character, and is often used in cutaways and montages.

Casting

The process through which contributors/participants/subjects are selected for the film.

Commissioner

Often refers to the individual at the broadcaster who was responsible for the commission.

Compliance forms

The broadcaster requests detailed information before broadcast about consent, issues raised in the film that may cause offence etc., and the production company ensures that the film complies with the broadcaster's editorial guidelines and policy.

Cross-cutting

Cutting between sequences, each sequence playing out with its own continuous narrative.

Cutaway

The interruption of a continuously filmed action by editing in another shot, usually followed by cutting back to the initial shot. This can hide content edits (such as cuts to interview audio).

Delivery Schedule

A schedule of prep, filming, edit, post-production and delivery. This is often drawn up by a production company to meet the deadline requirements of a broadcaster. Often a production company will be paid in instalments at agreed sign off points – rough cut, final cut, delivery, etc.

Diegetic sound

Sound which can be directly linked to objects or actions visible or alluded to in the world of the film.

Editorial policy

A broadcaster's best ethics and policy kept in detailed information available to the public.

EDL (edit decision list)

compilation of all post-production edits to be executed, usually in the form of a digital file containing shot data and timecodes.

Establishing shot

A shot at the beginning of a scene that establishes the context of the scene, often showing information such as location or time of day.

Exec Producer

Often the broadcaster and production company will each have at least one of these on the project.

Exec note

Notes from executive producers on the cuts being sent to them.

Eye Ball Cut

The final version of the film that the post house sends to the producers for them to officially sign off before the film goes to the broadcaster.

Footage

refers to recorded visual material, including unedited rushes.

Fine Cut

Late stage edit of the film, suitable for screening to executives and test audiences.

GFX

Graphics / Graphic effects.

Location

Location usually refers to filming in the story or character's real environment, e.g. not in a studio.

Locked Picture / picture lock

Final picture cut of the film – there should be no more changes to timings or edits after this. Music, sound, titles and visual effects can all take place after picture lock, as can animation.

Montage

The juxtaposition of shots filmed in different times and (usually) different places, to create effects such as condensing the time of a sequence of events, building character, showing the passing of time, or providing a wider context for the story.

Noddies

Reaction shots usually showing an interviewer in recorded interviews. These can be edited into footage to cover up where material has been edited out.

Non-Diegetic sound

Sound which cannot be directly linked to objects or actions visible or alluded to in the world of the film.

Nonsynchronous sound

Audio without precisely matching visuals, including atmospheric sound, sound effects, or non-diegetic music.

Observational (or fly-on-the-wall / Obs Doc)

Documentary that records the subject with minimal intrusion, often filming the everyday life of participants.

Offline edit

A preliminary edit with fixed timings but using assets that are not full quality.

Ongoing consent

The practice of ensuring that your contributors are giving informed consent throughout the filming process and afterwards. This can be particularly important with vulnerable adults and children and can involve a process that includes social workers or psychologists.

Online edit

An edit in which full quality image and sound files are used. This happens after the picture lock.

Paper Edit

Transcripts of interview and dialogue edited on the page rather than footage edited on a timeline, to test different ways of organising the filmed material. If a paper edit is done it is usually at an early stage in post-production.

Pick-ups

Shots captured after the main shoot of a film, often to fill gaps or solve problems that have emerged in the edit.

Researcher

Researchers find the people, places, and stories that make up a documentary. They may also handle logistical work.

Rough cut

Edit of footage in the approximate sequence, length and content of a finished program; subject to change, there may be multiple rough cuts over the course of a production.

Rushes

Individual takes of footage recorded on a shoot, before being edited into a sequence.

Scratch track

Temporary sound used in an edit to give a rough sense of timing, narrative or tone.

Series Producer

Responsible for an entire series of programmes. Separate producers may work on individual episodes.

Sync pull

Before an assembly in the edit, selected clips from an interview pulled onto a timeline.

Talking head

A mid shot or medium close up of a presenter or interviewee talking directly to the audience, with only the upper body or head visible.

Voice-over / narration

Non-diegetic audio commentary, often from the filmmaker or presenter, to convey information, give context, persuade, or build tone.

Vox-pop

A member of the public interviewed, usually answering a question.

Wallpaper visuals

Footage or images that appears connected to accompanying voiceover narration but do not actually show what is being discussed or described.

SFX (Sound effects)

Sound (excluding voice and music) that was not in the original footage.

Subjects

Another term sometimes used for participants/contributors.

Appendix 6

Suggestions for an emerging lexicon of animated documentary

Animated radio interview / illustrated podcast – a mode of animated documentary production in which abstract or figurative animation functions as an illustration to a narrative voiceover or interview.

Collaborative representation – involving a participant in their own representation. This could be through asking them to contribute to development materials such as drawings, or adopting a process of feedback such as that used by Samantha Moore's 'collaborative frame methodology'.

Collaborative Frame Methodology – developed by Samantha Moore (2011) this methodology involves an artist creating visual responses to an interviewee's experiences, asking the interviewee for feedback on this and then responding to the feedback in a cyclical process aimed to create an authentic representation of a subjective experience or perception.

Dialogic production – a mode of production in which the documentary research, production and post production takes place in the same timeframe as animation development and production, the two processes and the materials produced in each working in dialogue with each other.

Evocation – Honess Roe's (2013) classification of the use of animation to show concepts, emotions, feelings and states of mind that are traditionally difficult to express using representational live action.

Foregrounding construction – the practice of showing how a film was made. In animation this may include showing the process of animation itself in the finished film, including participants' drawings or warranting devices that show the difference between the constructed image and the real subject, or mimicking documentary conventions in animated imagery, such as showing a microphone in the frame.

Indexical audio – audio that features the voice of the subject telling their own story, or authentic recordings of the real subject being depicted.

Linear production – a mode of production in which a documentary soundtrack and structure is locked before production begins on animated visuals.

Mimetic substitution – Honess Roe's (2013) classification of the use of animation to mimic a missing live action image, such as an animated reconstruction of a historical event.

Non-Mimetic substitution - Honess Roe's (2013) classification of the use of animation to replace a missing live action image with another image that substitutes for it, adding a layer of meaning – such as the use of an animal instead of a human form.

Psychorealism – Originally coined by Chris Landreth to describe his technique of using surreal CG imagery to explore human psychology, this term is now broadly used to describe how animation can authentically capture and communicate subjective internal states.

Participants – often the preferred term for documentary subjects/contributors.

Profilmic event/space - the actual event or space that is, in live action, documented by a camera.

Warranting device – Based on Lipkin (2002), a device that reenforces the 'documentary guarantee' or the verisimilitude of the work. This can include the use of photography or live action footage, indexical audio, and title cards.