

Irish Production Cultures and Women Filmmakers: Nicky Gogan

Laura Canning

Co-founder of Dublin/New York-based production company Still Films and founder of the Darklight Film Festival, the digital film festival which became a mainstay of the Irish new media calendar during the early millennium, Nicky Gogan is a filmmaker and curator/programmer who has worked across a range of media including features, shorts and animation. She is perhaps best known for feature documentary work such as *Seaview* (Nicky Gogan & Paul Rowley, 2008), *Pyjama Girls* (Maya Derrington, 2010), *Build Something Modern* (Nicky Gogan & Paul Rowley, 2011), and *Lost in France* (Niall McCann, 2017). As such, her tendency both to elide simple categories of production role – saying “I call myself a filmmaker, so I don’t really see the distinction [between director, producer and editor]”¹ – and to work outside of the dominant ‘fictional feature film’ paradigm, may contribute to her relative lack of visibility outside of the industry.

Gogan has been chosen for this study on two grounds. Firstly, her career, spanning a range of roles including producer, director, editor and curator, serves as an exemplar of the kind of ‘portfolio’ career which characterises much employment in the sector, and considering it longitudinally provides a record of the strategies one woman has employed in navigating the Irish media industry – particularly in the context of the ‘systemic barriers’ identified by Susan Liddy here and in other writing.² Secondly, her role as a producer marks her as a member of an under-examined cohort of contributors to film culture, in Ireland and internationally; while lack of academic attention to producers is not an Irish-specific phenomenon, it is significant when we consider the Irish Film Board’s (IFB) acknowledgement that 55% of completed Irish productions during the period 2010-2015 had a female producer attached.³

While film authorship is notoriously difficult to attribute, it has traditionally tended to be identified in the axis of writer and director. Auteurist frameworks centralising the film director may serve in the context of textual analysis, but considering the producer *as* a filmmaker allows us to move away from masculinist-auteurist frameworks, and centre instead, by revealing underlying themes and patterns within the gendered practices of the industry, the unexamined work of women who have built sustainable careers in Irish film. This chapter examines Gogan’s work as per Mayer, Banks and Caldwell, “tak[ing] the lived realities of people involved in media production as the subjects for theorizing production culture”.⁴ Methodologically, foregrounding the idea of the producer as occupying a central creative role also allows us to consider the importance of state funding routes outside of the direct purview of the IFB; in particular Arts Council funding, as well as the ways in which informal networking practices dominate Irish production, the possibility that collectivist approaches may problematise notions of the individualist auteur, and Irish tendencies towards transnational production. It derives in large part from a 2017 interview with her, conducted following several informal conversations in the preceding years, and takes as a methodological basis Mayer’s caution that practitioner interviews “must be put in the context of an ethnographic stance”⁵ if they are to avoid inadvertently replicating promotional discourses.

A graduate of Fine Art (Sculpture) at NCAD where she developed related interests in video and computer technology, Gogan moved to San Francisco in the mid-1990s, where she engaged with the artistic and communicative possibilities of digital culture in its earliest

public incarnations. This link between technology and art informs her approach to both curatorial and production work and was central to her return to Dublin to study Creative Multimedia at the then recently-launched media arts centre Arthouse. It was central, too, to her establishment of the web design and digital media company Sink Digital Media in 1996,⁶ and the founding in 1999 of Darklight. Emphasising both technological innovation and art, exhibiting a combination of experimental and commercial digital work – games, graphics, gallery pieces, CG and 3D animation, drama and documentary alongside symposia, workshops, and multimedia club nights – Darklight occupied a symbolic location in the Irish dotcom era, less about the contentious politics and technology of convergence than a marker of notions of Irish creativity and ‘transcendence’ of an agrarian, ‘underdeveloped’ past.

While Darklight was the project of three enthusiasts, the sometimes labyrinthine connections between state policy of the time, private enterprise, neoliberal currents in international economics, and the development of Ireland’s technological infrastructure underpinned the notion of the ‘digital economy’ as connecting art and technology in ways that made Darklight very much of the *zeitgeist*. It found financial support from quasi-state institutions of culture, such as Arthouse and the Arts Council; the former was linked to Gogan’s employment as an instructor at Arthouse, and her engagement with informal local cultural networks who had an understanding of the potential and scope of digital technology. However, the latter happened more formally and required greater contextual framing for the institution. As Gogan describes it

After the first festival in 1999 we went – I think someone suggested it; “You know, the Arts Council sponsor film festivals” and we were like “Oh, really?” We went to have a chat with them about the Digital Revolution and they didn’t know what we were talking about.

Her note that they subsequently became ‘a huge backer of Darklight’ indicates the extent to which state frameworks for cultural support were ‘recalibrating’ their understanding of the contemporary contexts of fine art production.⁷

Gogan sees Darklight as a product of her desire to

run an art collective, do something collaborative. I wanted to be part of a community of some kind, making work. I didn’t know at the time it was going to be filmmaking, I didn’t even really think about that...it was about collaboration, working with people

This engagement with the potentially democratizing possibilities of technology, and her development of networks within film culture – crucially, funding sources like the Arts Council as well as practitioners – contributed to Gogan’s movement into production. Having met Dublin-born visual artist Paul Rowley in San Francisco, Gogan had first collaborated with him on Super 8 film in the mid-1990s. With the addition of Maya Derrington, whose background in television made her the only experienced producer in the group, and composer Dennis McNulty, their production collective Still Films was established initially to produce the feature-length documentary *Seaview* (2008). With Gogan and Rowley credited as co-directors, *Seaview* explores the use of the former Butlin’s camp at Mosney, County Meath, as a long term holding centre for refugees whose asylum applications awaited processing by the Irish state.

While Gogan notes experiencing no specifically gendered barriers to entry, she sees this as a function of what she describes as Still Films' 'outsider-y' status. This she attributes to the collective's tendency to work in 'marginalised' genres such as documentary, experimental film, and animation. However, it may relate to her curatorial work as having constituted a type of accidental 'pre-qualification' for the industry. By saying 'I'd learned a lot about the language of film, and I could talk about filmmaking, and talk about storytelling, and talk about [the] contemporary and pushing boundaries, from Darklight', she describes having developed linguistic and social "mastery" of the informal networking practices that Jones and Pringle outline as characterizing the industry.⁸ These are irrevocably gendered practices, reliant on communicating in particular – perhaps 'masculinized' – ways in order to 'demonstrat[e] that you are "good"'⁹ as if this networking was 'somehow a simple, transparent and objective process, without bias.'¹⁰

The funding of this film – a combination of Arts Council and IFB resources – bears examination, as it illustrates some key points in relation both to Gogan's work, and to Ireland's film production culture. A small grant from the Arts Council facilitated early development of the work, and demonstrates the extent to which Gogan had developed her understanding of the availability of funding, crucially, still outside of the IFB 'regime'. Secondly, it was a chance encounter, considerably later, with an IFB executive which resulted in more formalized access to IFB resources. As she outlines it

We were sitting in [a Dublin restaurant] and [we met Victoria Pope] who worked in the Film Board, and we were chatting and she said "What are you doing?" and we told her, and she goes "Why don't you come into us for some funding?" We were like, "Really? Oh, is that not for... Jim Sheridan? Does this belong to us?" We didn't really – I mean we *knew* [about IFB funding opportunities] but we hadn't put two and two together.

While *Darklight* had screened IFB-funded shorts previously, and indeed launched the Irish Flash programme,¹¹ it is interesting to note the bemusement with which Gogan – a highly experienced film curator and festival runner – greeted the invitation to apply for funding. This is suggestive of the kind of psychological barriers which may inhibit emerging talents, particularly women and minority entrants, from engaging with established structures of support and funding, as evidenced in Susan Liddy's work here.¹² It may replicate

the IFB argument that the issue is not so much that it is hard for applications from women for funding to succeed but rather that it is hard for female creative talent to reach a point where they feel they can credibly apply for such funding in the first place.¹³

However, it also reflects Gogan's perception that the IFB prioritised drama over documentary (particularly the kind of experimental or creative documentary favoured by Still Films). Therefore, genre may constitute a factor in considerations of the relationship between filmmakers and film funders; this inflects the gender question further when one notes the preponderance of female makers in the documentary and experimental fields, nationally and internationally.¹⁴ In fact, the IFB awarded Still Films €83,000, which facilitated the production of *Seaview* over the several years it took to make.

Also noteworthy is the significance of informal female-focused networks. In interview with Gogan, one thread which emerges throughout her account of her work to date

is the importance which female executives have assumed in the establishment and development of her career, outside of her own collaborators and business partners; Gogan cites Aileen McKeogh and Aoibheann Gibbons at Arthouse, Laura Magahy, Eve-Anne Cullinan of MCO (founders of the Digital Hub), Emma Scott, Teresa McGrane and Sarah Dillon at the IFB, Grainne Humphries of the Irish Film Institute and Dublin Film Festival, Grainne Bennett and Helen McMahon of Screen Training Ireland, Eileen Bell from Enterprise Ireland, and Mary Hyland, Jane Dooley, and Fionnuala Sweeney at the Arts Council as having been instrumental to the formation of her professional and creative practice. This suggests a potentially positive – or even transformatively counter-institutional – instance of what Smith et al (2012) describe as ‘homosocial reproduction’¹⁵ in film production contexts, particularly in light of the IFB’s 2015 acknowledgement that women are ‘not fully represented either in terms of accessing funding for film or in public recognition of their talent.’¹⁶

Gogan notes that her work with *Darklight* meant that

I already had a bit of cred[ibility] before I went into [the IFB]...Paul, as well, had a lot of credibility. He had a career as a very successful visual artist...so the two of us together [were] coming into that kind of film space from our art space and our technology space

The significance emerges both of local networks to production culture in Ireland, and ideas of ‘credibility’ in permitting access to these cultures. Caves’ work on the creative industries discusses the industrial ‘gatekeeper’ within each creative realm, describing the ‘set of intermediaries who select artists...many are excluded at the gate, although they would gladly sign the contract that the gatekeeper offers to those who pass.’¹⁷ The cultivation of local networks of gatekeepers, while clearly open to accusations of nepotism, facilitates the development of the kind of reputational capital which allows any aspiring filmmaker ‘to pass’. As Conor, Gill and Taylor note, in cultural labour markets characterized by informal working environments and equally informal hiring practices, ‘reputation becomes a key commodity, and networking and maintaining contacts a key activity for nurturing it.’¹⁸ The idea of female filmmakers mobilising female networks of administrative power therefore – while not without its own ethical issues – offers at least the possibility of a kind of corrective to the notional ‘old boys network’.

While *Seaview* was critically well-received following its premiere at the Berlin Film Festival (Forum), screening at festivals internationally and earning an IFTA nomination, for Gogan the experience had been emotionally complex.

The people who ran Mosney at the time...were quite upset about it. I guess it showed a side...they might have been in denial, that there were people that were so unhappy there, because they really felt that they were doing a good job. And they were doing a good job, we say it in the film a few times, and at the end...they felt that the representation of Mosney was unfair...We were very upset about that.

The film’s title – originally *Mosney* – was changed to *Seaview* in order to deflect their response, but the Mosney staff’s reaction to the film affected Gogan deeply, and at the time she did not believe she would direct again. This may link to Dióg O’Connell’s point that surmounting barriers to entry for debut filmmakers does not necessarily imply further engagement with the Irish industry, as ‘relatively few progressed to a second or third feature,

thus limiting the potential for nurturing and developing talent.’¹⁹ However, O’Connell argues that this issue ‘was addressed in 2002 through policy changes and the introduction of the low-budget fund, the “Micro Budget Scheme”’ (ibid.), itself the resource which supported *Seaview*’s production. This suggests that there can be many reasons why a debutante director might not progress further. However, the experience of many women in film production, as per Jones and Pringle’s assessment of a 2008 UK Skillset report on women in film, implicates a punitive culture of ingrained sexism, long hours and family-unfriendly working practices. Problematically, these are often framed as reflective of ‘individual qualities and choices...whereby women are the problem, and they must change their own characteristics to solve it’.²⁰

In this context, I argue that it is the nature of Still Films’ specifically *collective* approach that facilitated Gogan’s retention in the industry. Where Gogan and Rowley had co-directed and co-edited *Seaview*, and shared producing credit with Maya Derrington, Gogan confirms that Derrington ‘got involved with the company with a view to directing...It was kind of her turn, you know?’ Therefore, Gogan was able to take a step back – whilst still remaining engaged with the business and the wider industry – by confining her role on their next documentary feature, centring on the friendship of two working class Dublin teenagers, *Pyjama Girls* (2010) to that of producer, with Derrington as director and Rowley as editor. The collective nature of the Still Films model thereby enables its members to immerse themselves in creative film work as their interests, desires and other responsibilities dictate, or to provide support which facilitates the work of their partners. This approach may assist in mitigating a problem clearly identified by several studies: that the creative and cultural industries are “better at recruiting women than at keeping them”²¹

Gogan and Rowley took directing and editing roles with *Build Something Modern* in 2011. Funded through the Arts Council “Reel Arts” initiative, a project administered by the Dublin Film Festival and (recently defunct) Filmbase,²² the scheme was designed ‘to provide film artists with a unique opportunity to make highly creative, imaginative and experimental documentaries on an artistic theme.’²³ This emphasis on the “artistic” approach materializes the tensions inherent in the Irish film industry; as O’Connell notes, ‘aspirations towards a small, radical, auteurist, artisanal cinema inevitably clash with the economic imperative to produce films fitting a model of multiplex distribution modes: a tension facing most small indigenous cinemas’.²⁴ Arts Council funding, while small in scale, positions itself to ‘complement, rather than replicate, the documentary and other funding programmes provided by the Arts Council, broadcasters and funding agencies in Ireland.’²⁵ As such it can provide a valuable alternative to IFB funding for emerging filmmakers – provided that their creative intentions dovetail with the specific criteria outlined for such funds.

Build Something Modern is in one sense the product of a deliberate search for an idea to fit the funding available. On the other, it is rooted in Gogan’s allied interests in documenting the processes and (often collaborative) practices of creativity, and in technology. Conceived with design historian Dr Lisa Godson, it explores the work of mid-twentieth-century Irish modernist architects and missionaries in designing churches in Africa – often churches they never saw in person. Central to the film’s narrative and structure are animations of slides and architectural drawings, which both produce a distinctively stylised underpinning to the film’s more documentarian approaches, and place it squarely in Reel Arts’ remit of prioritising projects that offer ‘visually engaging, creative and experimental approaches.’²⁶ A collaborative project in that ‘me and Paul [Rowley] directed it and shot it,

and then we cut it together’, Gogan describes this film as vital to her learning process, particularly in terms of developing editing skills. She also emphasises the importance of cooperative enterprises like The Factory.²⁷ This is particularly the case in relation to the way in which, following the completion of *Build Something Modern*, Gogan began actively driving to ‘expand the collective’ as she puts it, with Rowley in New York and Derrington on a family-based career break.

Over the next several years Gogan produced experimental, documentary, and animated shorts and features, and her involvement as co-producer on an experimental animated feature documentary, *Last Hijack* (Tommy Pallotta & Femke Wolting, 2014) introduced her to international co-production. It also provided an opportunity to build on her interest in animation technology, and desire to harness technological innovation in order to make ‘directing animation more creative, more intuitive’. The project’s origins demonstrate the industrial significance of the international festival circuit, as well as of informal network building and reputational credibility, in sustaining a career in the Irish film industry. As Gogan describes it, she was at the 2012 Sheffield DocFest screening *Build Something Modern*, and pitching a film project at its Meetmarket event. At the same event, Alan Maher, the IFB’s representative, received a pitch from a Dutch company, headed by Femke Wolting and Tommy Pallotta.²⁸

And basically they were like, “We want to do this animated documentary” and he said “Well I know one producer in Dublin, in Ireland, who’s produced a lot of animation, and also documentary, and is also interested in technology...I had had a standing invitation to Tommy Pallotta to Darklight for over ten years... I didn’t meet them in Sheffield but they went back to Amsterdam and...were chatting about it and he was going “I know that name” and he looked at my resume and was like “Ah, I know Darklight”.

Gogan also brought the services of Dublin-based commercial content production, animation and visual effects studio, Piranha Bar, on to the project, signalling the increasing importance of animation to the Irish production environment.

This episode also highlights the fact that in the contemporary Irish film industry, many productions are not strictly dependent on national state funding structures – they are increasingly part of the circuitry of Irish cinema as a *transnational* phenomenon which is the result of the globalised circulation of capital: a possible ‘third wave’ of Irish cinema as Tracy and Flynn term it²⁹, or as per Higbee and Hwee Lim: as “a subtler means of understanding cinema’s relationship to the cultural and economic formations that are rarely contained within national boundaries”.³⁰ For Gogan, this meant working with Section 481 funding for the first time, raising a proportion (€400,000) of the film’s overall €1.2 million budget in Ireland, with the remainder coming from sources in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium. This experience, and that of learning about the mechanics of leveraging international pre-sales, which provide potential avenues for filmmakers to capitalise on alternative sources of funding such as the MEDIA programme, was one which Gogan says she found extremely valuable. It also illustrates the extent to which IFB funding has become merely one source among many others for filmmakers; the IFB slate for the last decade shows that many productions now take a ‘patchwork’ approach to financing which combines private capital with state support. This tendency – which complicates the nature and purpose of state funding – may in theory provide opportunities for women filmmakers to step outside of the strictures of the IFB’s organizational culture. However, it may also simply reinforce the kinds of occupational segregation and discrimination identified by studies in the field.³¹

2017's *Lost in France* (Niall McCann), illustrates Gogan's increasing use of complex international funding arrangements, financed as it was by the IFB and Creative Scotland, using Section 481 funding as well as UK tax credits, funding from Curzon Artificial Eye and private investment. It picks up familiar threads for Gogan; here, the creativity focused on is that of the Glasgow music scene of the 1990s, with labelmates from cult indie label Chemical Underground reunited on a trip to the location of a 1997 gig in Brittany. As much about the decline of the welfare state – and the vital lifeline that dole money gave to those engaged in creative practice – as about memories of post-industrial Scotland, Gogan immediately knew, on meeting McCann as a co-panelist at the Cork Film Festival, that she wanted to work with him.

The film unfolded before my eyes as he told it to me for the first time, you know that way? It doesn't happen very often, where you're suddenly just...you can see it.

McCann was not a first-time filmmaker, having written and directed the Luke Haines documentary *Art Will Save The World* in 2012. However, Gogan's relationship with him foregrounds the role of the producer as mentor, one which can be obscured by the work of the producer as organisational and funding manager. For Gogan, despite McCann's status 'outside' of the collective, the film remains identifiably part of the Still Films body of work.

We thought *Lost in France* was going to be much more mainstream than it was until we made it, and then it turned into a Still Films film...Maya and Paul had lots to say about *Lost in France* when we were making it...As collaborators we do kind of all like to stick our beaks into everything we produce, and that's not for everybody, obviously.

Gogan sees McCann as fitting into the existing dynamic of collective filmmaking, describing a 'kind of even-handedness [in] collaboration between us three, and I feel Niall was able to flow into that...I think it's about choosing the people that you work with as well, that can fit into that.' She describes him as 'not a particularly egotistical man, he's very sweet and sound' in a manner which suggests that auteurist power dynamics – arguably themselves gendered – within the producer/director relationship can be mediated by a collective approach. The mediation of tension between problematic rival myths of the director as (masculine) creative controller and the producer as (feminine) bureaucrat does not, in a collective approach, have to be negotiated with each new producer/director pairing. A caveat is that this possibility is qualified or 'bounded' by the personalities involved, and determinedly self-perceived auteurs will likely sidestep production approaches which privilege collective working practices.

Gogan corrects herself slightly when describing how she has (in her role as producer) worked repeatedly with first-time and second-time directors, 'that's what Still Films says our mission is, to encourage new talent...I've definitely had, I think, a thing as a producer, kinda taking...directors under my wing, or not under my wing, but...it's an excitement to help people kind of achieve their dreams.' That idea of having a director 'under one's wing' suggests a kind of maternal – or at least protective – approach which may also, in its expression if not in its performance, be gendered, and which may reinforce existing gender-

based norms in the industry or challenge them, but cannot necessarily be regarded as 'neutral'.

When pressed on whether she has experienced gender discrimination or overt sexism in the industry she indicates not, apart from noting a tendency for men in meetings to speak over her. She says

we joke about it...men, they don't do it on purpose, they don't mean to do it...it's just the way that society has, that culture has, brought them up...once you establish yourself on an equal footing in terms of the volume at which you speak [laughs] or what you're talking about, your intellectual input or your creative input into the conversation..., then it's fine, it's never a problem.

Gendered emotional and social labour aside, however, she does have experience of what she describes as 'antagonism' or 'disdain' for producers. While the role of the producer has, historically, been under-theorised at an academic level, Gogan's experience of 'producer bias' offers some useful points for us to consider. She says that producers

have a bad reputation, similar to agents or something...As a producer, in a way you're trying to give something, but the person you're giving it to often feels like you're taking something away from them. It's a very unusual dynamic.

This is an observed phenomenon as well as an experienced one, and she describes in detail her experiences of seeing the work of producers discursively minimized by other creatives – specifically writers and directors – including their own collaborative partners.

Gogan's sense is that while 'the US is very producer-led...the ideas are generated by the...producers and writers, and the directors are somebody that gets attached afterwards', the Irish model of production and funding tends to privilege a more auteuristic framework of self-perception on the part of creatives. As she says, 'I think what it is again is the auteur thing, that people who write feel they have to direct their own work in order to get the film made, and in order to get paid for it'.

She identifies some historical inconsistencies in of script draft funding which may bear further investigation, but primarily sees it as an issue of structural power and film workers' self-positioning. This is, firstly, in the privileging of the writer/director as the creative 'owner' of a project; as she says, 'all the writers are directing their stuff because that's how it's set up here, it's the auteur model, and I think that feeds into the suspicion of producers'. It is, secondly, in terms of the relative lack of power of writers (as opposed to writer/directors) within that model. She sees this as an issue which has a significant impact on the wider industry.

There's great writers and there's great directors but the two are not necessarily the same, they're not the same discipline. I think if writers had more...power in the system here, as they do in America, there's great writers here...There are potentially writers who maybe should be writing more and not directing at all, just focusing on their writing. But if there was some [better] financial framework for them to do that, it would be really good. We're not in that situation yet, though there's a real drive with the Film Board to encourage writing more.

This perhaps speaks to Liddy's discussion on 'the unchallenged continuity of the "male genius" myth'³² which may account for a tendency for male writers to believe that they have a 'right' to direct their work, and vice versa. The historical Irish tendency to privilege literary culture over screen culture – and therefore to regard writing for screen as a 'second-best' form – may also play a role. The extent to which the systematic application of a collective approach may insulate Still Films from problems of cultural capital, of auteurism, or indeed of producer bias, is not quantifiable, but it seems reasonable to suggest that it is their collective approach which allows Gogan to identify them *as* problems.

The trajectory of Gogan's career is emblematic of the shifting conditions of the Irish media environment, as the movement towards increasingly technologized and globalized production continues. Darklight, having shifted from an annual to a biannual event a few years prior, ran for the last time in 2014. In part this is due to the increasing demands of filmmaking work on Gogan's time.³³ But, while Gogan sees some future potential for Darklight outside of a strictly 'festival' context, she also sees contemporary technology as 'on a plateau now...in 2014 we did a big VR thing, but to be honest VR is still the "next big thing"...unless there's another big shift.' Darklight's current hiatus is also indicative of the extent to which digital technology and the digital world no longer represent innovation, having been 'mainstreamed' as part of our daily life and cultural practices. Where at the beginning of the dotcom boom, festivals like Darklight were a unique opportunity to experience works exemplifying the emergence of a distinctive technological-artistic intersection, these now constitute the fabric of our everyday digital existence.

Interestingly, none of Gogan's more recent or forthcoming work directly engages with female writers or directors; she has executive produced several productions which fit clearly within the Still Films profile, such as Niall McCann's most recent film *The Science of Ghosts* (2018) – another idiosyncratic music documentary, about Dublin musician Adrian Crowley, funded under the Reel Art programme – and *Kevin Roche: The Quiet Architect* (Mark Noonan, 2017), with its clear conceptual link to *Build Something Modern*. She is also in the planning phase of some potential projects which would reunite herself and Paul Rowley more directly as a producing/directing/editing team. This perhaps indicates that, in the absence of a deliberate focus on 'bringing through' female screenwriters and directors, once a producer has become embedded within the film industry, it has a tendency to hermetically 'self-seal' and reproduce existing gender dynamics. Where Gogan does appear to have taken on a 'mentor' role is in the introduction of Karla Healion to the Still Films collective; perhaps best known as founder of the Dublin Feminist Film Festival, Healion has since worked as on *Lost in France*, and produced Paul Rowley's 2017 short *The Red Tree*. This dual curatorial/production role is reminiscent of Gogan's own trajectory. Taken together, these points suggest that while collectivist production approaches may offer opportunities for entry, 'pipeline' theories of diversity cannot alone counter the industry's tendency towards homosocial self-replication – therefore, the presence of women producers in the Irish industry may result in the emergence of more women producers, but not necessarily more women writers or directors.

However, Gogan is temporarily focused on a different role, with Still Films temporarily taking a backseat. Having initially taken on contracts and financing work for them, she is now Head of Development with Gavin Kelly and Dave Burke's Piranha Bar, a position which emerged – somewhat circuitously – from their experience of working together on *Last Hijack*. It is this which most clearly points to Gogan's position somewhere between 'outsider' experimental documentary maker and explicitly mainstream corporate producer.

As Piranha Bar have moved to expand out of commercial advertising, visual effects and postproduction services, they have made a distinction between ‘branded content’ and ‘original content’. This linguistic transition – indicating a movement from form- and platform-based distinctions such as ‘film’ and ‘television’ to ones which privilege the commercial, creative, and functional contexts of a particular text – speaks to the central issues of contemporary production: those of shattering the boundaries between media, and the erosion of traditional patterns of screen viewing.

This role continues Gogan’s interest in the intersection of visual arts and technology, negotiating the boundaries between and across film, television, animation, gaming, and online delivery, such as in a link with Epic Games designed to transform production pipelines for animation through ‘creating really high-end, high production values for lower budgets, because we’re using the [Epic Games ‘Unreal Engine’] game technology to make the work’. It also exemplifies the transition to transnational coproduction described by Tracy and Flynn (2017), linking Piranha Bar with state and commercial partners in Spain and Canada, and with current works in progress budgeted at figures ranging from €3 million to €7.5 million. In Gogan’s opinion, the globalised industry leaves few options to practitioners who wish to scale up their operations

We’re a small island, if we want to have ambitions past anything that costs about a million or so euros, really, we have to [go outside Irish funding opportunities], we have no choice. We need to go to a coproduction model for that.

Examining the role producers play in the Irish film industry, given their comparative invisibility and yet relative power, can assist us in identifying some of the wider – spoken and unspoken – conditions of production, and in illustrating the importance of non-IFB resources to the emergence of new women filmmakers as well as in wider film culture, as curators and production workers. Where the IFB has, historically, marginalized women, bodies like the Arts Council have been crucial to supporting them, albeit within specific formal and thematic boundaries. It is also vital to understand the role that (formal and informal) women’s networking plays in the network of Irish film, both in negotiating gatekeepers, and in mobilising reputational capital. At the same time, the myths both of the gender-free ‘meritocracy’, and the auteur continue to dominate approaches to Irish film. The flexibility and support that a collective model like Still Films offers may provides a stable ground from which to operate – and has, notably, allowed its members to pursue careers across different media and genres. This does not mean that they are removed from the circuitry of inequality’s reproduction, but that collective approaches may mitigate its impact on women excluded by a masculine-individualist mainstream industry.

Notes and References

¹ All quotations from Ms. Gogan are taken from an interview conducted with her on December 5th 2017.

² REFERENCE TO ‘CONCLUSION’ FOR ‘WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?’, CITATION TBC

³ Statement by Irish Film Board (2015) ‘Statement from the IFB on gender equality: six point plan.’ [online]. Available at: <https://www.irishfilmboard.ie/about/gender> [accessed March 22 2018]

⁴ Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John Thornton Caldwell (eds.) *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), p.4.

⁵ Vicki Mayer, ‘Studying Up and F**cking Up: Ethnographic Interviewing in Production Studies’, *Cinema Journal* vol. 47 (2), Winter 2008, pp.146.

⁶ Along with Chantal Doody and Sue Patterson; Patterson continues to run Sink Digital Media.

- 7 Both the IFB and Screen Training Ireland also became significant funders of Darklight as the festival established itself.
- 8 Deborah Jones and Judith K. Pringle. 'Unmanageable Inequalities: Sexism in the Film Industry', *The Sociological Review*, 63 (S1) 37-49, pp. 37-49.
- 9 *ibid.* p.39.
- 10 *ibid.*
- 11 This later became the Short Shorts initiative.
- 12 REFERENCE TO 'CONFIDENCE' SECTION FOR 'WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?', CITATION TBC
- 13 Roddy Flynn and Tony Tracy. 'Waking the Film Makers: Diversity and Dynamism in Irish Screen Industries 2017 (Introduction)' Irish Film and Television – 2017 The Year In Review (Roddy Flynn and Tony Tracy eds) in *Estudios Irlandeses*, Issue 13, 2018, p.240.
- 14 And perhaps Erigha's note that women filmmakers may be concentrated 'in areas of work that were less lucrative and profitable relative to men's areas of work...At film festivals, women had greater presence in the documentary film genre than working on narrative feature films. Narrative films have a greater likelihood of wide theatrical releases than do documentary films' (Erigha, 2015, p.85).
- 15 P. Smith, P. Caputi and N. Crittenden, 'A Maze of Metaphors around Glass Ceilings', *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, vol 27 (7), 2012, pp.436-448.
- 16 From an IFB statement, as reported by Donald Clarke, 'Irish Film Board issues statement on gender equality', *Irish Times*, 12 November 2015. Available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/screenwriter/2015/11/12/irish-film-board-issues-statement-on-gender-equality/> (Accessed 14 November 2016).
- 17 Richard E. Caves, *Creative Industries: Contracts Between Art & Commerce* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.21.
- 18 Bridget Conor, Rosalind Gill and Stephanie Taylor, 'Gender and Creative Labour' *Sociological Review* vol 63, 2015, p.10
- 19 Diog O'Connell, *New Irish Storytellers: Narrative Strategies in Film* (London: Intellect Books, 2010), p.28.
- 20 From Jones and Pringle's analysis of the 2008 Skillsset report, *Why Her? Factors that Have Influenced the Careers of Successful Women in Film & Television*, AFTV & Alliance Sector Skills Councils, UK, available at: <http://publications.skillset.org/admin/data/why%20her/why%20her%202009.pdf>
- 21 Bridget Conor, Rosalind Gill and Stephanie Taylor, 'Gender and Creative Labour' *Sociological Review* vol 63, 2015, p.12.
- 22 The Arts Council have confirmed in correspondence with the author that no decision has yet been taken on the future of the Reel Art programme following Filmbase's closure in March 2018.
- 23 From a Reel Art scheme funding application document. [online] Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.ie/Funds/Reel-Art-scheme/> [accessed March 22 2018].
- 24 Diog O'Connell, *New Irish Storytellers: Narrative Strategies in Film* (London: Intellect Books, 2010), p.36.
- 25 From Reel Art funding documentation available on the Arts Council website, 2018.
- 26 *ibid.*
- 27 The centre for filmmakers established in 2009 by filmmakers John Carney, Kirsten Sheridan and Lance Daly and casting director Maureen Hughes in a semi-derelict building in Dublin's Barrow Street.
- 28 American film director and producer Pallotta is perhaps best known for his work on the production and animation of Richard Linklater's *Waking Life* (2001) and *A Scanner Darkly* (2006).
- 29 Tony Tracy and Roddy Flynn, 'Contemporary Irish Film: From the National to the Transnational', *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 52 (1&2) 2017, pp.169-197.
- 30 Will Higbee & Song Hwee Lim, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies', *Transnational Cinemas*, vol. 1 (1), 2014, p.9.
- 31 Such as the variety of studies cited by Jones and Pringle (2015), or Liddy (2018).
- 32 REFERENCE TO 'MYTH OF THE MALE GENIUS' SECTION FOR 'WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?'
- 33 Although she had stepped back to a certain extent prior to this, with writer and filmmaker Derek O'Connor acting as Director of the festival.

Filmography

- Seaview* (Nicky Gogan & Paul Rowley, 2008)
- Pyjama Girls* (Maya Derrington, 2010)
- Build Something Modern* (Nicky Gogan & Paul Rowley, 2011)
- Art Will Save The World* (Niall McCann, 2012)
- Last Hijack* (Tommy Pallotta & Femke Wolting, 2014)

Lost in France (Niall McCann, 2017)
The Red Tree (Paul Rowley, 2017)
Kevin Roche: The Quiet Architect (Mark Noonan, 2017)
The Science of Ghosts (Niall McCann, 2018)

Bibliography

Darrin Bayliss, 'Ireland's Creative Development: Local Authority Strategies for Culture-Led Development', *Regional Studies*, vol. 38 (7), 2004, pp.817-831

Richard E. Caves, *Creative Industries: Contracts Between Art & Commerce* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000)

Donald Clarke, 'Irish Film Board issues statement on gender equality', *Irish Times*, 12 November 2015. Available at: <http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/screenwriter/2015/11/12/irish-film-board-issues-statement-on-gender-equality/> (Accessed 14 November 2016).

Bridget Conor, Rosalind Gill and Stephanie Taylor, 'Gender and Creative Labour' *Sociological Review* vol 63, 2015, pp.1-22

Maryann Erigha, 'Race, Gender, Hollywood: Representation in Cultural Production and Digital Media's Potential for Change', *Sociology Compass*, vol. 9/1, pp.78-89

Roddy Flynn and Tony Tracy. 'Waking the Film Makers: Diversity and Dynamism in Irish Screen Industries 2017 (Introduction)' *Irish Film and Television – 2017 The Year In Review* (Roddy Flynn and Tony Tracy eds) in *Estudios Irlandeses*, Issue 13, 2018, pp. 238-268

Nicky Gogan. Personal interview. December 5th 2017

Will Higbee & Song Hwee Lim, 'Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies', *Transnational Cinemas*, vol. 1 (1), 2014, pp.7-21

Deborah Jones and Judith K. Pringle. 'Unmanageable Inequalities: Sexism in the Film Industry', *The Sociological Review*, 63 (S1) 37-49, pp. 37-49.

Vicki Mayer, 'Studying Up and F**cking Up: Ethnographic Interviewing in Production Studies', *Cinema Journal* vol. 47 (2), Winter 2008, pp.141-147.

Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John Thornton Caldwell (eds.) *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (London & New York: Routledge, 2009)

Díog O'Connell, *New Irish Storytellers: Narrative Strategies in Film* (London: Intellect Books, 2010)

Ragan Rhyne, 'Film Festival Circuits and Stakeholders' in Dina Iordanova and Ragan Rhyne (eds), *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies with College Gate Press, 2009) pp.9-22

Skillset, (2008), *Why Her? Factors that Have Influenced the Careers of Successful Women in Film & Television*, AFTV & Alliance Sector Skills Councils, UK, available at: <http://publications.skillset.org/admin/data/why%20her/why%20her%202009.pdf> [accessed May 29 2018]

P. Smith, P. Caputi and N. Crittenden, 'A Maze of Metaphors around Glass Ceilings', *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, vol 27 (7), 2012, pp.436-448

Tony Tracy and Roddy Flynn, 'Contemporary Irish Film: From the National to the Transnational', *Éire-Ireland*, vol. 52 (1&2) 2017, pp.169-197

Reel Art scheme funding application document. [online] Available at: <http://www.artscouncil.ie/Funds/Reel-Art-scheme/> [accessed March 22 2018]

Statement by Irish Film Board (2015) 'Statement from the IFB on gender equality: six point plan.' [online]. Available at: <https://www.irishfilmboard.ie/about/gender> [accessed March 22 2018]