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University of Southampton

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Film Studies

**Not quite an auteur, more than a creative labourer: authorial agency of British
women documentarians**

by

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2019

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Abstract

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Film Studies

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Not quite an auteur, more than a creative labourer: authorial agency of British women documentarians

Anna Maria Ostrowska

This thesis argues that to achieve a nuanced picture of British women documentarians' authorial agency, traditional film-text based approaches to authorship need to be supplemented by the analysis of extra-textual contexts like the filmmakers' background and training; the rules and relationships present in the main production context they work in; the filmmakers' own perceptions of themselves as authors and of their creative process. Building on the research into women's authorship done within feminist film, TV and media studies as well as in documentary studies, presented in Part One of this work, the core of this thesis (Parts Two and Three) comprises thematic analysis of data gathered in twenty-six semi-structured interviews with women documentarians currently active in the UK; my sample and the method of analysis are described in detail in Appendices 1-3. I present my respondents' opinions in the context of existing literature on British documentary, TV production, cultural and creative industries, gendered aspects of labour and documentary desire. I conclude that supplementing traditional text-based approaches to women's documentary authorship with these new areas of research not only demonstrates the importance of gender as analytic category but also deepens the understanding of women documentarians' authorship and enables the revaluation of their authorial position in critical discourse around British documentary.

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List of Accompanying Materials

Dataset related to this project comprising interview transcripts has been deposited in the Institutional Repository as *Authorial agency of British women documentarians: practitioner interviews*.

DOI was not assigned to this dataset.

For ethical reasons (agreement in consent forms), a pseudonymised dataset will only be available for University of Southampton researchers with ethical approval after initial two-year embargo (from August 2021).

Declaration of Authorship

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| | |
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| Title of thesis: | NOT QUITE AN AUTEUR, MORE THAN A CREATIVE LABOURER: AUTHORIAL AGENCY OF BRITISH WOMEN DOCUMENTARIANS |
|------------------|--|

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

| |
|---|
| I confirm that: |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;7. None of this work has been published before submission. |

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Introduction

Until quite recently...feminists' reluctance to move beyond the film text in their explorations of women's authorial agency left many of them ill-equipped to answer convincingly at least one simple question: what exactly were the feminist objectives of studying women's cinema within the conceptual frameworks they inherited? (Grant 2001)

Feminist film scholars have been investigating the authorial agency of women filmmakers, including documentarians, from the inception of the field in the 1970s. In doing so, they rigorously questioned 'the conceptual frameworks they inherited' because, as Yvonne Tasker remarks, 'it's difficult to inscribe women in terms of language and perspective of either traditional auteurism or a contemporary cinema culture, which has been so forcibly shaped by its legacy' (2010: 216). Despite a certain ambivalence about using the old frameworks, asserting women filmmakers' authorial agency based on their films was too important for feminist critics to completely let go of auteurism, and in Chapter One I present the ways in which they stretched its boundaries to theorise the authorial position of women filmmakers.

Similarly to my feminist predecessors, I am suspicious of the validity of the film text based, individualist, total-control model of authorship that still haunts film studies. In the course of my doctoral project I further discovered that gendering of such conceived authorship has not only discursive but also material dimensions which combined together stack the deck against women filmmakers from the beginning of their careers. Therefore in my project I follow Grant's call to 'move beyond the film text' in my explorations. I do not treat the documentary film text as the only, or even most important, source for establishing the filmmaker's authorship.¹ In fact, I do not analyse the film text at all, but rather identify several extra-textual fields of investigation that I argue substantially influence the authorial agency of women documentarians. Crucially, these filmmakers are not theoretical constructs resulting from the analysis of their films but twenty-six women documentarians who currently work in the UK (specifically, England and Scotland) whom I interviewed for my project. A logical next step that follows my rejection of textual analysis is using practitioner interviews as a research tool, which until recently (see

¹ Out of necessity, this approach is also employed by feminist researchers of women film pioneers who often do not have access to the film texts as they did not survive. See Leigh (2015) and WFPP (2019).

Cornea 2008) was perceived as a radical methodological departure from the film studies' paradigm.² Therefore, I do not see myself as an academic rebel or iconoclast but merely as a dutiful feminist daughter of my scholarly forerunners. In the same essay Grant (2001) suggests that bringing back 'sociological methods' to film studies is indeed necessary for a better understanding of women's authorship in film. Introducing some of my aims and methods in Chapter Three, I firmly locate my methodology within the field of feminist 'efforts to produce and justify authoritative knowledge of gendered social life' (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 3). Just as I move beyond the film text, so I also probe what going beyond gender means for the analysis of my interview data. Therefore my methodology is intersectional, as I acknowledge 'the complexity in the world, in people and human experiences' (Collins and Bilge 2016: 2) and consider other categories (most notably social class, ethnicity, pregnancy and motherhood) alongside gender.

Both my extra-textual focus and my ethnographic research method suggest my project's affinity with production studies, and I am indebted to the work done by feminist researchers in that field (Banks 2009, Mayer et al. 2009, Wreyford 2018) whose contributions I detail in Chapter One. However, I refuse to let go of the film studies' approaches to authorship entirely, revisiting them in Part Three through the lens of my respondents' perceptions of their own authoring process. I argue that it is precisely the tension between a text-based auteur of film studies and a creative worker of production studies that provides a productive framework for achieving a more nuanced understanding of women's authorship in documentary, including television documentary which is an especially neglected area in feminist media research. Because all my respondents are active filmmakers, some with rather long documentary careers, my project does not directly consider the women 'missing' from the industry due to discriminatory practices and harmful stereotypes. However, I identify numerous patterns in my respondents' talk about their professional lives which prefigure the barriers women face when trying to become documentary filmmakers in the UK.

This thesis is divided in three parts. Part One establishes the discursive and methodological contexts of my project. My exploration of British women documentarians' authorship through the lens of their creative labour builds on the work done in two major

² Shelley Cobb and Linda Ruth Williams, investigators on Calling the Shots research project which my project is affiliated with (and which I discuss throughout this thesis) also use practitioner interviews as their main research tool.

scholarly fields: feminist film, TV and media studies and documentary studies. Therefore in the first two chapters I present how women documentarians and their work have been positioned in these fields, in each case identifying the strands of research supporting my investigation and the omissions that my project can fill. In Chapter One I discuss research done by feminist scholars in film, TV and media studies into representations of women on screen, women in the audience and women as creative workers. In Chapter Two I discuss the effects of dominant approaches to authorship in documentary studies on the perceptions of women documentarians' films. Acknowledging my debt to past research, I argue that women documentarians' creative agency in the context of production has not been the subject of much scholarly reflection, which makes my thesis a timely and original contribution to those fields. In Chapter Three I introduce my project as locating women documentarians' authorial agency beyond the film text, the objective I fulfil in the remaining parts of the thesis. In Parts Two and Three I present my findings from interviews with practitioners. Using thematic analysis of interview data, described in detail in Appendix 2, I search for recurring themes and patterns across my entire data set, rather than focusing on individual interviews. I anonymised my interview data and therefore my participants' names used in this thesis are pseudonyms; names of other people mentioned by my respondents as well as names of production companies, TV programmes and films have been redacted from direct quotes. Part Two considers two important fields influencing my respondents' authorship which are external to them: Chapter Four focuses on the routes my respondents took to get into documentary filmmaking while Chapters Five and Six spotlight processes and relationships shaping the main context of production in which my respondents work, with the latter emphasising the gendered nature of working environments and the impact of early motherhood on women filmmakers' careers. Part Three considers how my respondents' authoring is shaped by their internal perceptions and motivations, starting with the analysis of what names and titles they use to describe their creative activities in Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight explores my respondents' filmmaking desires and Chapter Nine demonstrates which features of documentary production processes they see as essential to their authoring. In the final sections of that chapter I return to the issue of authorial inscription in the film text, discussed in detail in Chapter Two, probing how its gendering influences women documentarians' creative choices.

In the chapter that follows I begin to describe the research context in which my project is embedded by looking at the ways in which feminist film, TV and media studies

considered women who were represented on screen, engaging with films as viewers and, most importantly, who were calling the shots.

Part I: Theoretical and methodological contexts

Chapter 1: Researching women in front of and behind the camera in feminist film, television and media studies

In this chapter I present research done by feminist scholars in film, TV and media studies. As I argue in the final section of this chapter, explorations of women's documentary authorship in those fields have been limited to a narrow range of films and filmmakers. Therefore, rather than providing a detailed account of feminist approaches to women's authorship in film (which would mostly involve fiction films), this chapter discusses how feminist film and television scholars analysed the presence of women in each of three research areas of contemporary media studies: the film/media text, the reception context and the production context. Stuart Hall's influential model of encoding/decoding in communication allows me to map out these three (sometimes overlapping) research areas instead of navigating a system of discrete academic fields (e. g. 'feminist film studies', 'feminist television studies', 'feminist production studies', 'documentary studies'). In this way I can combine the approaches and methodologies traditionally used within these fields in the vein recommended, although rendered as ideal rather than applicable, by Robin Wood who says it is desirable for film critics 'to be able to draw on the discoveries and particular perceptions of each [film] theory...without committing themselves exclusively to any one' (Wood 1999: 668). Drawing on contributions to several academic fields marks my methodology as feminist, following from B. Ruby Rich's assertion that feminist critical engagement with cinema is 'a field in which filmmaking-exhibition-criticism-distribution-audience have always been considered inextricably connected' (in Erens 1990: 268-69). This fundamental entanglement of feminist theory and practice resonates with the cultural studies' approach embodied in Hall's model of communication in the social context explicated in his essay 'Encoding and Decoding in the

Television Discourse' (1993 [1973]).³ The encoding/decoding model remains influential among feminist scholars (Zoonen 1994; Hill 2007), illuminating research into circulation of different cultural products, including film.⁴ Notably, Christine Gledhill uses it to foreground the concept of 'negotiation' which allows her to rethink 'the relations between media products, ideologies and audiences' (Gledhill 1999: 169). For the model of understanding authorship that I propose, it is crucial to see the documentary text in the wider context of its production and circulation rather than as a detached authorial artefact.

David Morley summarises the gist of Hall's argument as urging us to look 'not for the meaning of a text, but for the conditions of a practice – i. e. to examine the foundations of communication...as social and cultural phenomena' (Morley 1989: 17). Hall challenges the understanding of meaning-making as a hierarchical one-way process, identifying within it two 'determinate moments': of 'encoding', in which the broadcaster (Hall's case study is television) imbues a programme with intended meaning, and of 'decoding', when the viewers make sense of televisual text for their own use. While the media text remains the focus of much scholarship in film and television studies, Hall's model validates two other areas of enquiry. First, it makes possible ethnographic reception studies of the audience. Although his 'decoding positions' are theoretical, they are to be occupied by social subjects ('viewers') rather than by film studies' 'spectators' constructed within the text. In one of the following sections I present feminist scholars' contributions to the development of reception studies. Secondly, it allows the investigation of 'encoding' beyond the creator's intention, considering the production process as complex and multi-layered, involving stakeholders with different interests and agendas.⁵ In my project I focus on one of these actors, the female documentary director, but I analyse how her actions are influenced by a set of interactions in the production context she works in. For example, although the majority of my respondents make

³ Hall was one of the founders and a long-time director of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). The centre, established in 1964, was influenced primarily by work of Gramsci and Althusser and conducted a systematic research into British mass culture. In the 1970s, most studies conducted within CCCS involved both production study (encoding) and audience research (decoding), moving in the 1980s to reception studies only (Brunsdon 2000: 31).

⁴ Hall makes it obvious that cultural products always circulate in the discursive form, 'the form of symbolic vehicles constituted within the rules of "language"' (1993: 91).

⁵ See D'Acci (1987) for an exemplary feminist production study.

broadcast documentaries, early-career directors need to closely follow broadcasters' rules while more experienced filmmakers have a certain degree of creative freedom; in Chapter Five I discuss how some of my respondents negotiate their creative vision with commissioning editors.

Feminist researchers have intervened in all areas of arts and culture to prove the existence of feminine agency by retrieving the historical contributions of women as agents 'who made history, wrote books, and painted pictures' (Brunsdon 2000: 27). Despite its proclaimed focus on women's work, this practice is in fact always already oppositional, mounting a critical reinterpretation of the masculinist canon accumulated for centuries in each of the fields of cultural activity, from literature to visual arts. The paradox of feminist criticism lies in the fact that the authors who strive to make manifest the uniquely feminine modes of expression in their field must at the same time acknowledge that every woman who creates cultural artefacts does so within the parameters laid out and controlled by men, both on the level of discourse and (normally) material resources.

Consolidating as a discrete academic field in the 1970s, feminist film studies initially focused on the patriarchal control over the images of women circulated on a mass scale, challenging media and onscreen representations of women. The task of retrieving past women filmmakers also prioritised the film text, being conducted mostly within the auteur theory framework. The next prominent area of enquiry was the reception context, in which critics ascribed agency to female audience members decoding media messages. Feminist production studies analysed women's creative labour in the moment of encoding, mainly in the context of big media organisations, and highlighted discrimination of women in the industry as well as the experiences of below-the-line⁶ women workers. In this chapter I present those contributions to these three areas of enquiry which pertain to or ignore the field of documentary filmmaking.

⁶ This term is derived from the early days of studio production, when a line was drawn on a sheet of paper to divide the production budget in two. While 'above-the-line' jobs signify main creatives like director, screenwriter, producer, actors and similar, 'below-the-line' roles are all other members of production and postproduction teams, including a cameraperson and editor.

Women in the media text: representation and psychoanalysis

Early feminist encounters with cinema were a messy affair, characterised by 'the intrinsic connection between theory and practice...not found in other areas of film activity' (Rich 1978: 11). Feminist film critics in the 1970s were often at the same time filmmakers and activists and, without realising it, feminist film theorists in the making. However, the early days of Women's Liberation Movement are mostly remembered today for their 'hostile engagement with the images of conventional femininity' (Brunsdon 2000: 20) as feminist film critics put lots of energy into challenging sexist representations of women seen on film and television. After an activist start, feminist film studies started using more sophisticated critical tools like psychoanalysis to analyse the film text, calling out the subtler misogyny of these representations. Feminist battles against the complicity of Hollywood cinema in maintaining the patriarchal status quo did not leave much room for scrutinising works from the documentary canon, already seen as 'a marginalized cinema' (Waldman and Walker 1999: 6). However, just like in the mainstream fiction film industry, very few women were making documentaries, often described as men's adventure involving filming in exotic locations (Barnouw 1993: 33-51). Mirroring mainstream film studies, the field of documentary studies in the 1970s mostly ignored both contributions of women documentarians and 'the representation of women in the classics of the documentary tradition' (Waldman and Walker 1999: 4). Representations of women in the acclaimed documentary features was rather problematic, especially of non-white women native to the remote parts of the world, including two young Inuk women cast as 'Nyla the smiling one' and 'Cunayoo' in Robert J. Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) hailed as the first documentary. By the 1990s, feminist critique of ethnographic representations of 'the other' steeped in the racist colonial politics of the day (Rony 1996) proved that the documentary classic would have done with some of the feminist attention reserved for Hollywood blockbusters. Feminist historians like McGrath (2006) argue that Flaherty's film can be seen as an iconic case study in how crucial it is for feminist analysis to go beyond the film text, scrutinising both the production context and the power relations between the filmmaker and their subjects. The fact—unsurprisingly not much advertised around the time of the film's original screenings—that both Inuk women were Flaherty's common-law wives (Rony 1996: 123) influences how their onscreen representations

should be read. As screenwriter and critic Brigit McCone writes in her piece on *Nanook* for the Bitch Flicks website:

Maggie Nujarluktu [Inuk woman who plays Nyla] smiles self-consciously and playfully flirts with the camera, because the camera is being operated by her husband, but that husband disowns her smiles and essentializes them as a permanent characteristic of "Nyla the smiling one" (2016).

The issue of correspondence between onscreen representations of women and their real-life referents contributed to a split within the English language feminist film criticism, the schism which influenced how realist documentaries have been perceived by the majority of feminist film scholars. Rich broadly labels the two approaches 'American' and 'British', based on where they originated, although she admits those 'pure' geographical designations were subsequently muddled by intellectual exchanges across the ocean (Rich 1978: 11). Some of the first feminist film reviews published in American magazine *Women and Film*, established in 1972, were examples of sociological or subjective criticism, 'a speaking out in one's own voice' (*ibid.*). Engaging with extra-textual reality, the authors assumed a straightforward connection between women on screen and in the audience, resulting in identification. The feminist task was to replace sexist representations with new ones, of stronger, more independent women. Crucially for subsequent feminist critiques of talking-heads documentaries, which I discuss later, the desired images were to be 'realistic and relevant to women's real-life experience' (Mulvey 2009: 119). Film scholar Laura Mulvey, one of the founders of analytical 'British' feminist film criticism (Rich 1978: 11), hails this research as the necessary groundwork which didn't, however, go far enough. Scrutinising manifest layer of the film text only, it left intact traditional cinematic codes, most prominently the illusion of unmediated reality. In her path-breaking essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975), Mulvey calls for a feminist revolution in the cinematic language by means of women's counter-cinema⁷ which does not merely offer new representations but transforms the cinematic text itself. This revolutionary call is based on a psychoanalytic deep reading of film structure, which renders a positive identification for a female spectator of the classical Hollywood cinema impossible, identifying the only available subject position constructed in the film text as

⁷ Claire Johnston introduced this concept in her 1973 essay 'Women's cinema as Counter-Cinema' Mulvey (2009).

male (a proposition later challenged by feminist reception studies which I discuss subsequently).

For feminist critics practising this kind of theoretical analysis, even activist documentaries made by women filmmakers did not protect their viewers from the danger of misidentification with women onscreen. These critics are the opposite of 'feminist writers' for *Women and Film* whose emphasis was 'less on formal questions of cinematic language and expression than on the relations of film to reality, of ideology to material conditions' (Nichols 1976: 177). While Nichols offers this description in good faith, theory-orientated feminist authors harshly dismissed their 'sociological' peers as not professional enough in the latter's enthusiastic reception of feminist activist documentaries that burst on the scene in the 1970s. As the Women's Liberation Movement in the US and the UK was gaining momentum, first examples of new women's cinema were not experimental counter-cinema pieces but documentaries, in the beginning mainly in the *vérité* tradition.⁸ Turning their backs on the mainstream film industry, women used new affordable cameras, sound recording and editing equipment (Mulvey 2009: 121) to produce new, empowering images of women against Hollywood's misogynistic fantasy representations. These early documentaries often depicted feminist activists or communities fighting for their rights, and Mulvey rightly calls them 'a mixture of consciousness raising and propaganda' (Mulvey 2009: 121). American feminist critics who had previously ignored the established male-dominated documentary canon paid attention to those documentaries and their initial response was generally enthusiastic. The following excerpt from Susan Rice's review of Kate Millet's *Three Lives* is often quoted as typical of the genre: '[The film] captures the tone and quality of relationships and significant conversation between women.⁹ If the film were to fail on every other level, this would stand as a note-worthy achievement' (Rice 1972). 'Happily, *Three Lives* has other virtues,' continues Rice, but this part of her review is not quoted by the authors

⁸ For example, Midge MacKenzie's *Women Talking* (1970); Kate Millet's *Three Lives* (1972); *Self-Health* (1974); *The Woman's Film* (1971) by Women's Caucus San Francisco Newsreel: Louise Alaimo, Judy Smith, Ellen Sorin.

⁹ When enthusiastic feminist critic from the 1970s praises the film because of its focus on a group of women who have a meaningful dialogue on camera, it is sad to realise that still so few films in the 2000s pass The Bechdel Test, a humorous-turned-serious questionnaire which checks whether a film has more than one speaking role for a woman and whether those women talk to each other about something else than a man.

who aim to dismiss her text as too emotionally engaged to be treated as 'serious' film criticism. Critics who advocated challenging cinematic codes of Hollywood cinema discredited the early documentaries as a potential tool of feminist revolution because of their observational realism. Any work prioritising and naturalising identification, of which *vérité* documentaries featuring women were the prime example, was considered ideologically suspect, 'subservient both to pre-existing cinematic formal traditions redolent of sexual exploitation and to the cinema of male domination' (Mulvey 2009: 122). Claire Johnston's counter-cinema manifesto built its argument to a large extent on explicitly rejecting those documentaries, powerfully asserting that 'the "truth" of our oppression cannot be "captured" on celluloid with the "innocence" of the camera: it has to be constructed/manufactured' (Johnston 1973: 214). As a result, the makers of observational films were accused of both promoting passivity in their audience (identification with the subjects was so easy that it didn't require any work of them) and of being passive themselves for not actively subverting cinematic codes.

After the dust had settled over the clash of unbridled enthusiasm for early feminist documentaries with bitter rejection of them as ideologically suspect, feminist criticism of documentaries became more balanced.¹⁰ Sociologically orientated critics took issue with certain talking-heads documentaries, for example Waldman and Walker quote articles by Siew-Hwa Beh (one of the *Women and Film* co-editors) on *The Woman's Film*¹¹ and by Ruth McCormick ('Women's Liberation Cinema')¹² in which both authors criticise the films' shortcomings, especially their 'liberal-reformist politics' (Waldman and Walker 1999: 29, n25). The issue 5-6 of *Women and Film* (1974) in its 'Independent Women's Cinema: reviews' section considers numerous documentaries, including English films *Women Against the (Industrial) Bill* and *Women of Rhondda*, and not all of them are reviewed favourably. For example, Beh criticises Joan Churchill's *Sylvia, Fran and Joy* (1973 PBS special), saying that although the film is 'competently directed', 'it lacks the

¹⁰ However, Juhasz (1994) notes that physical copies of many of those early documentaries were irretrievably lost because of the anti-realist backlash against them. Similarly, Martin (2003: 30) remembers how, when curating a festival strand on pioneer women documentarians in 1995, she couldn't get hold of prints of documentaries made by the London Women's Film Group in the 1970s.

¹¹ In *Film Quarterly* 25:1, Fall 1971, also reprinted in Nichols' *Movies and Methods* (Nichols 1976).

¹² Reprinted in Jacobs' *The Documentary Tradition* (1971).

critical perspective of a dialectical connection between cultural determinations and the roles' of its protagonists (Beh 1974).

In her 1978 lecture on 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde' Laura Mulvey locates the early documentaries' weakness in 'the limitations of cinema-vérité tradition' (Mulvey 2009: 122), the tradition later challenged by feminist documentarians themselves.¹³ McGarry historicises *cinéma vérité* as a fairly new trend in the history of documentary film and confirms that in the mid-1970s women filmmakers went back to 'older, less realistic and more propagandistic styles of non-fiction film' (1975: 56) in which they could subvert the operations of cinematic machine just like in experimental works. Indeed, since the 1970s very different films were named as worthy examples of 'feminist counter-cinema', from Mulvey's experimental films co-directed with Peter Wollen like *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1977) to non-fiction work. Annette Kuhn praises Sara Gómez's vérité-fiction hybrid *One Way or Another* (1974)¹⁴ and London Women's Film Group's pro-choice documentary *Whose Choice?* (1976) as films deconstructing cinematic form itself (Kuhn 1982: 164-66). Although the focus remains on the film text, calling a documentary 'deconstructive' implies the hand of a deconstructor and the agency of a woman documentarian which lies at the heart of my project.

¹³ As Diane Waldman and Janet Walker say in their introduction to *Feminist and Documentary* anthology, feminist critics should try to find 'a way of conserving the baby of vocalized struggle while draining out the bathwater of pseudotransparency' (1999: 13).

¹⁴ Also reviewed by E. Ann Kaplan in *Women and film: both sides of the camera* (Kaplan 1983: 189-94).

Women in the audience: reception studies, gendering of film and TV genres

Despite their internal differences, sociological and theoretical approaches to feminist film criticism had one thing in common: they both made assumptions about the viewers, the women in the audience. Sociologically orientated critics wanted to change their mindset by giving them feminist role models; psychoanalytically inclined scholars were interested in the ‘spectator’, a subject position constructed in the film text. Mulvey’s original proposition about the impossibility of cinematic identification for a female viewer and the latter’s alleged passivity when confronted with the film text was challenged by numerous authors (Rich 1978; hooks 1996; Kuhn 1997; Gledhill 1999) and modified by Mulvey herself (1981). Gaines notes that ‘[t]he equation between mainstream cinema and male privilege set up by “Visual Pleasure...” may have diverted the attention of feminist scholars, but it seems also to have provided an “out” for them—by introducing interest in the gendered spectator into contemporary film theory’ (1990: 84). Indeed, feminist critics researching ‘women’s genres’ like melodrama (Gledhill 1987) or romantic comedy (Abbott and Jermyn 2009) argue convincingly in favour of a feminine spectator. While discussions in film studies around what makes a genre a ‘women’s genre’ can be complex, at least the starting point of inquiry for scholars analysing TV genres is easier simply because ‘no media product is made without a specific idea of the target audience, that is, who is going to watch it’ (Womack 2002: 59) Therefore considering programmes targeting female audiences, like soap opera, was both an obvious starting point for feminist TV studies and a springboard for its constitution as a fully-fledged academic field.¹⁵ Soap opera viewers were first theorised as in-text spectators (Modleski 1979) but they were soon imbued with substantial agency in the process of decoding the media text, which led to an ideological shift in feminist scholarship. Soap operas were full of gender stereotypes that the original feminist criticism of mass media representations had aggressively attacked, urging women to reject them rather than enjoy them. To find out what female viewers really think, a new generation of feminist researchers left behind theoretically

¹⁵ British television scholar Charlotte Brunsdon goes so far as to argue that the speaking position of a feminist intellectual *par excellence* emerges from within the writing on soap opera. She suggests that many of the genre’s features ‘can be seen as epitomizing much of what is specific to television: seriality, intimacy, domesticity, repetition, and the mundane’ (Brunsdon 2000:25).

informed perspectives and embraced structured reception studies, using ethnographic methods which became a popular research tool in media studies in the mid-1980s.¹⁶ One of the first and most influential soap opera audience studies, The Tübingen Soap Opera Project (Seiter et al. 1989) confronted 'the subject positions' identified by Modleski in the text with how twenty six women in western Oregon, USA, interacted with both daytime and prime-time soaps (Brunsdon 1989: 122). The researchers found that women viewers rejected certain 'obvious' identifications (for example, with mothers) while embracing more unlikely ones (for example, with soap villainesses) (Seiter et al. 1989), proving that 'viewers' readings cannot be deducted from textual exegesis' (Brunsdon 2000: 61).

The proliferation of audience studies analysing women's interaction with soap opera (Brunsdon 1981; Hobson 1982; Ang 1985) endowed the female TV audience with agency and contributed to a better understanding of the genre's social function. However, gendering of televisual genres is a complex process also involving broadcaster's profit-driven decisions about programming and marketing and it is often shaped by ideology rather than by comprehensive audience research.¹⁷ Factual TV programmes, including documentaries, tend to be gendered 'masculine' with no empirical proof. The myth of a housewife switching between her daily chores and soap opera episodes might have contributed to the fact that no extensive studies were conducted of women's consumption of televisual factual programmes. To understand what female viewers made of TV documentaries in the UK, I rely on a few reception studies from the 1980s by Dorothy Hobson who tried to map out women's viewing patterns rather than track their engagement with one particular genre. Hobson's respondents spontaneously distinguished between 'the two forms of television' they were consuming: one they liked and watched (drama series of any kind, plays, films, soap operas, quiz shows) and the other one they didn't engage with, like news, current affairs and documentaries (Hobson quoted in Brunsdon 2000: 119). Brunsdon, who interviewed Hobson years after that original research was conducted, notes that although Hobson herself stopped short of 'claiming her place as one of the very early investigators of what we might now call the gendering of genre' (Brunsdon 2000: 119), her discovery was picked up by other

¹⁶ See Morley (1980).

¹⁷ See Michele Hilmes (Hilmes [2014]) *Only Connect: a cultural history of broadcasting in the United States*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning: Boston, MA.

researchers and became significant to subsequent TV audience studies. Importantly for my project, some of Hobson's respondents admitted to watching the documentaries which 'had a topic which was of specific interest to them' (*ibid.*), which is mirrored by women's responses in Hobson's other study (1989). In the latter case, a group of women in the office eagerly discussed TV documentaries both when the topic was new and intriguing (then it had educational value) and when someone had prior experience of it (they shared their knowledge with their colleagues). Unlike in consciousness-raising activist feminist documentaries criticised for this very reason, in the case of TV documentaries an obvious identification is not always part of the viewing experience. Rather, it can be suggested that documentary audiences are guided by the desire to know, the issue I return to in Chapter Eight. Hobson also discloses one of the reasons why her interviewees might have not wanted to watch factual content:

Like they didn't watch the news, they didn't watch documentaries, they didn't watch war films, but it was not through apathy or not interested [sic], it was because they felt an absolute sense that nothing changed, which of course you could say now. The news just reports it, and gets off on its own interest in that, but they found that so shocking that they had to reject it and they watched... But they recognized that was very important, and they said 'I know I should watch it, but I just can't bear to see what's reported', so they liked more popular programmes (2013: 4).

In the context of Hobson's research it becomes clear that gender alone is not a sufficient category for distinguishing between different segments of television audience in the UK. Social class is a crucial category of sociological analysis of cultural life in the UK and in Chapter Four I demonstrate it is also indispensable in understanding the experiences of my respondents. Hobson's respondents in the first study, interviewed in the late 1970s, were a homogenous group of young married working-class women living on one of Birmingham's estates and their engagement with TV was mediated as much by their gender as their class. Her later 1988 study features a group of women working at the telephone sales centre of a pharmaceutical company, more diverse both in terms of age (17-56) and class/educational background (Hobson 1989: 62). In that workplace it becomes clear that documentaries, including TV documentaries, are associated with middle- and upper-class audience; one of the women is Mary who 'looked down on those members of the office who watched a lot of television, particularly soap operas. She

professed to prefer documentaries' (Hobson 1989: 66). Because of the changes to British television including the rise of reality TV, currently British UK channels not only cater to different tastes, programming 'high-brow', 'middle-brow' and 'low-brow' documentary programmes, but also arguably contemporary types of factual programmes try to appeal to the viewers of all class backgrounds who can interact with them differently, including raising 'entertainment to something verging on high-brow' (Womack 2002: 73). The diversity of documentaries shown on British TV blurs the boundary not only between rigorously defined segments of television audiences but also between TV and other types of audiences, including ones consuming culturally elitist products in galleries or arthouse cinemas.

In contemporary audience research, theoretical modelling of target audiences and questionnaires are used alongside technologically advanced methods measuring how many viewers watch any given programme and what income bracket they fall into. Factual TV genres are dynamically changing and viewers do not experience them 'in isolation but as part of a chaotic mix of factuality' (Hill 2007: 2), which makes TV researchers analyse how the audiences engage with segments of factual content, 'what we might loosely group as news, documentary and reality modes of engagement' (Hill 2007: 110). Hill's rigorous quantitative analysis of factual television audiences (Hill 2005, 2007) seems to confirm that the idea of gendering of TV genres has become obsolete as other categories become more prominent. In her multi-method comparative study of representative samples of British and Swedish audiences of factual TV, she finds that age, rather than gender or class, 'is by far 'the dominant differential in viewing preferences' (Hill 2007: 68). Additionally, a gender breakdown of preferred factual genres shows that women watch more documentaries than men: 22% women viewers in Britain and 12% in Sweden, compared to 16% and 9% of men viewers, respectively (Hill 2007: 66). A potentially promising research project would track the influence of gender on both encoding and decoding, in investigating whether the high proportion of women watching documentaries is related to the relatively high number of women making documentaries for British television. While I am not able to take it up in my thesis, I hope it will be tackled by another feminist media scholar. In subsequent chapters of this work I quote some of my respondents who mention the importance of being exposed to TV

documentaries at a young age for their choice of career.

The enthusiastic embrace of reception studies by feminist researchers resulted in endowing women viewers with some agency. However, the engagement with the groups of viewers seen as marginalised by the programme-makers has its limits. Hall distinguishes between 'polysemy' and 'pluralism' in the process of decoding, suggesting that 'a dominant cultural order' imposed by any society renders the multiple readings of cultural texts unequal (Hall 1993: 103). bell hooks agrees that 'oppositional readings' do not have the power to change the status quo:

While audiences are clearly not passive and are able to pick and choose, it is simultaneously true that there are certain 'received' messages that are rarely mediated by the will of the audience. Concurrently, if an individual watches a film with a profoundly politically reactionary message but is somehow able to impose on the visual narrative an interpretation that is progressive, this act of mediation does not change the terms of the film (hooks 1996: 3).

Hall's 'dominant cultural order' influencing hook's 'terms of the film' is a result of both material and discursive conditions and it is not clear how quickly, if at all, progressive cultural products can change it. While film studies, as I present later in this chapter, emphasises the control over the final product exercised by the film's director, TV and production studies recognise media production as a complex process with many players which significantly dilutes the notion of individual authoring. In the following section I present the main approaches feminist scholars use in their analyses of production process from a gendered perspective.

Women in the encoding process: feminist media and production studies

In television and production studies, authorship is always seen as influenced by the structure and internal rules of broadcasting institutions, 'the apparatuses, relations and practices of production' (Hall 1993: 91). While film studies relies primarily on textual analysis of films supported by a wide range of theoretical approaches, production studies uses methods like ethnographic reception studies and practitioner interviews, quantitative and qualitative analysis of statistical data and textual analysis of production files. A comprehensive production study of a TV programme analyses the actions of media workers with different decision-making powers in the context of the organisation's culture and sometimes also relevant reception studies. In this framework, positing 'women's media making' as the ideal model does not signify merely a woman director at the helm of the project (as is often the understanding of the phrase 'women's cinema') but rather a women-run collective or a production company, making programmes outside mainstream media, often including activist (feminist or social justice) content. While the majority of existing studies of media production prioritise news programmes and are not informed by gender analysis (Zoonen 1994: 46), there are notable exceptions like the iconic study of American TV cop show *Cagney & Lacey* (D'Acci 1987), with two women leads and two women writers. In British feminist media criticism, the anthology *Television and Women's Culture*, introduced by its editor as a collection of 'feminist culturalist television criticism' (Brown 1990: 12), includes both textual studies of different TV genres and reports of audience studies. Besides the expected articles on soap opera and *Cagney & Lacey*, it also features essays on quiz shows, music videos and sports programmes. Another anthology, *Boxed in: Women and Television* (Baehr and Dyer 1987), includes a section on 'Women and Communication Technology' (17-70) with numerous production studies, including one on Broadside, Channel 4's short-lived current affairs programme produced by all-women feminist collective (Baehr and Spindler-Brown 1987). Deborah Jermyn also offers a brilliant production study of Sue Bourne's Channel 4 documentary *Fabulous Fashionistas* in the context of media representations of ageing women (Jermyn 2015).

Because of the complexity of media production processes, van Zoonen finds 'serious theoretical fallacies' (1994: 65) in the argument championed by some feminist scholars that the increased number of women media producers will have a swift and positive effect on the encoding of gender messages in the media. Firstly, not all women producers and directors, including some of my respondents, want to make programmes about women, featuring positive representations of women or toeing some imaginary 'feminist' line. Secondly, even if they did, they work within an established framework of institutional rules where even women executives do not always have the power to challenge or recommend the produced content. On the other hand, research into big-budget fiction film production by Martha M. Lauzen's Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film at the University of San Diego (CSWTF) shows the correlation between women in key production roles and women on screen. The report on the portrayals of female characters in the top grossing 100 US films of 2016 finds that in films with at least one woman director and/or writer, women comprised 57% of protagonists, 38% of major characters and 38% of all speaking characters, as compared to 18%, 30% and 29% respectively in films with exclusively male directors and/or writers (Lauzen 2017). However, this quantitative data does not give information on what types of women characters they are and in what kinds of stories they are embedded. In my research I do not focus primarily on the link between my respondents' gender and the content of their work but when considering the authorial agency of my respondents throughout this thesis, I always keep in mind that 'a key issue for any study of media production is to find out which decision criteria are individual and which are determined by the communicator's environment' (Zoonen 1994: 47). I see the production of documentary texts as being created at the intersection of individual actions and decisions of my respondents and the industry framework (see Zoellner 2009: 508).

Even if there is no direct link between the numbers of women employed in media organizations and gender-progressive media content, Zoonen concedes that the demand for an increased number of women communicators is 'perfectly legitimated' as part of a feminist struggle for equal employment opportunities (Zoonen 1994: 65). This approach is markedly different from film studies scholars searching for 'women's cinema', as discussed in the following section. Women are underrepresented both in media

organisations and in national film industries and feminist researchers, mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, have been tracking patterns of this discrimination and formulating plans for change. The aforementioned CSWTF has been publishing its reports on women's employment and representation in film and television for eighteen years. Already in 1975, British trade union ACTT (The Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians) commissioned a special report, *Patterns of discrimination against women in the film & television industries* (Benton 1975). Raising Films is a contemporary British independent organisation gathering qualitative data on discrimination of parents and carers in British film and TV and campaigning for change of the status quo. Feminist scholars who research inequalities in cultural and creative industries (CCI) explore 'the significance of gender for an understanding of creative labour in the neoliberal economy' (Conor, Gill, and Taylor 2015). They tend to focus not only on the low number of women employed in film and media industries but also on a horizontal segregation within them, recognising that women constitute the higher percentage of employees in below-the-line jobs, especially ones traditionally coded 'feminine' like costume designers, make-up artists, wardrobe managers, etc. Jones and Pringle (2015) present a study based on sixteen life-history interviews with below-the-line workers in the New Zealand film industry and Banks calls her study of women costume designers 'behind the scenes scholarship', investigating how tensions behind the scenes influence the final media product (2009: 89). Speaking of women in 'the major documentary movements of the twentieth century', Schilt also says that they worked in 'less visible and less valorized' below-the-line roles like 'research, sound recording, and postproduction' (Schilt 2006: 392). I want to acknowledge these findings in my project which I see as part of feminist scholarship but which focuses on female documentary directors. Jones and Pringle note how 'the presence of some high-profile female creatives in the last two decades has given the false impression of strong progress for women, if not complete equality' (Jones and Pringle 2015: 41), a remark that resonates in the UK, too. In Chapter Three, detailing my study's design and methodology, I explain the ways in which I avoid giving that 'false impression' throughout my thesis.

Women filmmakers' authorship

While feminist production studies approaches women media makers from a practical perspective of everyday labour, perceiving media authorship as diffused, feminist film scholars through the textual analysis of films made by women insist on giving them significant authorial agency, detectable in the film text. This section discusses their efforts to identify the traces of authorship in the film text and therefore 'work' of women filmmakers is understood here as 'a body of work' rather than 'labour'. From the early 1970s, 'painstaking research' (Mulvey 2009: 117) into the work of past women filmmakers has been developing concurrently with feminist criticism of women's representations and psychoanalytical readings of mainstream cinemas discussed previously. Feminist scholars were retrieving achievements of few women directors in classical Hollywood, most notably Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino (Johnston 1973, 1975; Mayne 1994; Kuhn 1995), but also writing about the new films made by the growing number of women directors all over the world whose work was also being shown at the women's film festivals being established in the 1970s. Mulvey admits that these scholars hoped that 'once rediscovered, films made by women would reveal a coherent aesthetics' (Mulvey 2009: 118) which could be ascribed to the newly minted category of 'women's cinema'. While it soon became obvious that, 'except on the superficial level of women as content' (*ibid.*), such shared style did not exist, it is difficult to blame feminist critics for this line of enquiry. Making a strong case for the existence of the link between gender of women filmmakers and the style of their work would help in adding female directors to the pantheon of cinematic *auteurs* created as a result of the influential trend in film criticism in the 1970s, which was predominantly male.

The auteur theory evolved in the 1950s in French film journal *Cahiers du Cinéma* and was introduced to Anglo-Saxon film criticism by Andrew Sarris' *The American cinema: directors and directions, 1929-1968* (1968). It grew out of a context-specific project to re-evaluate films made by selected male directors within the commercial Hollywood studio system by giving them the status of works of art. As such, it deliberately ignored the collaborative nature of filmmaking process, most notably the fact that the auteurs were technically directors for hire, working with other people's scripts and within the

restrictions placed on them by the studio system. Positioning the director as the chief creative agent controlling all audiovisual aspects of the film is the opposite of production studies' approach to film production discussed previously. The auteur theory harks back to the Romantic myth of artist-genius who experiences almost divine inspiration and works alone, as the entire production context becomes an obstacle he needs to overcome to realise his unique creative vision. Contemporary applications of this theory tend to incorporate elements of 'a new industrial history of film', re-imagining the director 'as a crafter of techniques rather than as a purveyor of deep concepts and a mystical intuitive creator' (Polan 2001). This brings film studies closer to production studies for which media producers have always been 'particular kinds of workers in modern, mediated societies' relying on informal networks and structured professional associations to form 'communities of shared practices, languages and cultural understandings of the world' (Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell 2009: 2). In this paradigm, directors too are creative labourers, constantly negotiating their ideas within a network of institutions and people enabling or interrupting their work.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the auteur theory was challenged by the poststructuralist 'death of the author' arguments which helped move the emphasis to the audiences' reception of film texts and triggered large-scale systematic reception studies discussed previously. But feminist critics who wanted to call female directors 'auteurs' needed to answer the basic question haunting various feminist methodologies, whether the master's tools can ever dismantle the master's house. First, feminist scholars criticised the Romantic myth of creativity underlying the auteurist system as inextricably linked to white heterosexual masculinity (Mayne 1990). It was not clear if a woman could ever be called that name as Sarris' iconic anthology includes only two entries about women directors. Mae West, discussed in the section titled 'Make way for the clowns!', is utterly objectified: 'she was one of the few stars of leg-conscious thirties with more impressive measurements from east to west than from north to south', offers Sarris (1968: 249). Ida Lupino's entry opens with a short patronising statement that the films she directed 'express much of the feeling if little of the skill which she has projected so admirably as an actress' (216), after which Sarris has nothing else to say about her work, offering instead a list of women directors (including Dorothy Arzner and Lois Weber) he describes as 'little

more than a ladies' auxiliary' (*ibid.*). Although he generously grants Leni Riefenstahl and Yuliya Solntseva place in 'special footnotes' to the auteur theory, he refers to the latter as 'the widow of Alexander Dovjenko', omitting her name. In Sarris' canon, 'the jury is still out' on Věra Chytilová, Shirley Clarke and Agnès Varda (*ibid.*), all subsequently celebrated for their unique authorial voices by feminist film scholars. Jaikumar mentions 'socially and theoretically exclusionary forms of erudition and obsession that characterized early auteurists' (Jaikumar 2017: 205) but it seems that even today it is mostly men who write about *auteurs*: in Barry Keith Grant's anthology *Auteurs and Authorship* (2008), which includes texts both on classic auteur theory and its contemporary applications, out of thirty-two essays only five (16%) are written by women, and three of those are specifically about women directors. This may explain why Arzner was not considered an auteur 'at the heyday of auteurist criticism' (Mayne 1990: 98) and needed to be reclaimed as such by feminist critics like Pam Cook and Claire Johnston (both in Johnston 1975). Mayne notes there was 'little of the flourish of mise-en-scene' in Arzner's work (1990: 98) and her preoccupations, although visible throughout her work, did not 'reflect the life-and-death, civilization-versus-the-wilderness struggles' more readily associated with 'proper' male auteurs (99). In the absence of these indicators, feminist critics insisted on Arzner's disturbing the conventions of Hollywood narrative, which was going somewhat against the studio system's rules.

At the time when feminist movement #MeToo insists on scrutinising the instances of male directors' abusive behaviour towards women actors and collaborators on and off the set, some critics wonder what happens to the auteur theory when the auteurs themselves 'turn out to be a liability' (Gilbey 2018). However, as White reminds her readers in recent overview of international women's cinema, 'authorship has been of critical importance to feminist film studies, in large part because women's access to the means of production has been historically restricted' (White 2015: 2). Although the original auteurist framework was narrow in its scope and biased, even if unconsciously, towards a male creator, feminist film scholars have been employing various approaches centring the individual woman author. Gerstner and Staiger assert that 'coming to terms with our own ambivalence about the name of the author and the author-function is worthwhile' and that the production of knowledge about the reformed author matters

both for practitioners and academics (Gerstner and Staiger 2003: xi). In the spirit of critical re-engagement with auteurism Polan suggests that practising new 'revamped auteurism' in which women, people of colour or queer people are considered auteurs can deconstruct some of the auteurist origin myths 'from within' (2001: 4). Mayer pushes the boundaries of feminist reworking of the auteur theory, framing her book on Sally Potter's *oeuvre* as 'an investigation of what it means to be identified as an auteur by the system, but to be committed to collaboration and conversation' (Mayer 2009: 12). Elevating women to the status of authors (and auteurs) can be seen as a feminist move, redressing the imbalance resulting from the male-biased canon, even if it is practiced with certain ambivalence (Cobb 2015).

However, other feminist scholars try to break with this tradition. Some see authorship as diffused by acknowledging the work of other contributors. Calling the Shots, a major AHRC-funded research project (2014-2018) of which this PhD is a part, considers women in six key production roles of director, writer, producer, executive producer, cinematographer and editor. A renewed interest in discovering more women pioneers of the silent era, not only in Hollywood but also in national film industries, resulted in the Women Film Pioneers Project whose website as of January 2019 features 277 profiles of women in roles both above- and below-the-line (WFPP 2019). As discussed previously, feminist production studies mostly investigate not the key creative but below-the-line roles which tend to be disproportionately feminised. Among feminist filmmaking collectives active in the 1970s in the UK (see Clayton and Mulvey 2017) and USA, various models of collective authorship have been a popular way of challenging the mainstream glorification of a (normally male) director who reaps the benefits of many people's labour. Members of these groups rotated in key production roles and often the entire group was credited as a collective author. However, writing about 'grassroots authors' of community videos, not credited individually and performing multiple roles, Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong suggests that such 'diffuse and concealed authorship' can also mean lack of proper recognition for those who work hardest and therefore can be counterproductive for the building of a healthy, coherent community (in Gerstner and Staiger 2003: 213-31). Filmmaking collectives and cooperatives are not currently prominent part of filmmaking

landscape in the UK although several of my respondents have experience of the 1970s collective filmmaking.

Women documentarians in feminist film studies

I have so far demonstrated that feminist critics were not invested in researching representations of women in classic documentaries made by men and that they rejected representations of women in early feminist documentaries as naïve, which resulted in snubbing both the films and their makers as subjects worthy of research. On the other hand, the retrieval of past women documentarians has been slowly happening and the aforementioned Women Film Pioneers Project database as of October 2018 includes profiles of twelve women 'documentary makers', which makes only 4% of the total number of profiles on the website. Historiography is always political; the power of contemporary scholars to shape the canon is obvious in the fact that German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl (1902-2003), who has become a household name for reasons of notoriety, is not part of the database. When I enquired about it to one of the site's administrators, they explained that the project relies on contributions of national teams and German scholars chose to omit Riefenstahl's name from their list. One of the filmmakers featured is Scottish cinematographer and documentarian Jenny Gilbertson (1902-1990) but rigorous research into past British women documentarians has only just begun, with a three-year-long AHRC-funded research project at the University of Sussex to explore in detail work of documentary director Jill Craigie (1911-1999). The researchers are organising a symposium in April 2019 to explore the work of other British women documentary filmmakers active 1930-1955. This work will add to Carl Rollyson's 2005 biography of Craigie and scattered short essays, including one by Tay in which she remarks that Craigie was confronted with 'the overt sexism of the documentary fraternity that descended from the Griersonian tradition' (Tay 2009: 43).

Although documentary is often presented as the filmmaking mode in which women are more readily recognised as creators than in fiction, Zimmermann identifies 'a patriarchal fantasy of origins, birthrights, territorialization, disciplinary procedures, materialized images as the ultimate experience' at the heart of Western documentary filmmaking (Zimmermann 1999: 64), resonating with masculinist myths of creativity fuelling auteurism. Her answer to overcoming this legacy is 'a truly feminist historiography' which moves beyond the retrieval of individual women documentarians

of the past and towards the analysis of ‘the institutions that created spaces where cinema could be imagined both outside and as infiltrating the commodity exchange system of Hollywood and American nationalism’ (1999: 65). She offers a case study of the Robert Flaherty Film Seminar, started in 1955 by Flaherty’s widow Frances in Vermont, USA, which has ‘provided an innovative space for screening and discussion of documentary films’ (Schilt 2006: 392), including feminist works. In the UK there are numerous documentary festivals, including international Sheffield Doc/Fest, the London-based Open City Docs and the touring Doc’n’roll festival, as well as a dedicated documentary screen in Bertha Doc/House in London, which all exhibit a wide range of documentaries made by filmmakers from different backgrounds despite being commercial industry events. In 2016 in London I witnessed an interesting curatorial initiative Women On Docs which throughout the year organised free monthly screenings of documentaries made by British women directors, each followed by a panel with a filmmaker and other women creatives in different stages of their careers. The screenings created a temporary community of practitioners, with people watching films, asking questions, sharing their experiences and networking. Interest generated during the screening of Daisy-May Hudson’s debut documentary feature *Half Way* in May 2016 resulted in funding for the film’s limited cinematic release in February 2017. A welcome feature of Women on Docs events was diversity of both the audience and the panellists, a proof that there are British women of colour who are media executives, poets, artists and filmmakers and that they can be invited as pundits. In the current climate, where the number of single documentary slots on British TV is diminishing, it seems more accurate to see events like Women on Docs screenings not as alternative exhibition spaces outside the mainstream, but rather as ones complementing the presence of documentaries in British homes via the medium of television. In a similar vein, indie production company Dartmouth Films has been organising an annual programme of screenings called Unorthodocs, showcasing ‘award winning, internationally screened documentaries that haven’t been selected for broadcast on British television’, in a way doing the public service broadcasters’ job for them.

The focus on institutions and spaces enabling exhibition of documentaries and community-building discussions may divert attention from individual authorship but

much work on women documentarians has an auteurist flavour, including monographs on individual filmmakers (Lewis 2006; Bénézet 2014). As the construction of the new documentary canon in English-language feminist scholarship criticism was happening in the aftermath of the aforementioned backlash against *vérité* documentaries, it was ruled by ‘the urgency and allure of theorising new conceptually sophisticated paradigms’ (Smaill 2012). This ‘resulted in the canonisation of largely North American non-fiction works’ by experimental filmmakers with artistic background like Yvonne Rainer, Michelle Citron, Su Friedrich, Barbara Hammer or Sadie Benning (*ibid.*), who sometimes extensively reflect on their own practice (Hammer 2010; Citron 1998). This line-up prioritises films in which the authorial signature is strong and easily detectable in the film text and as such excludes most observational filmmakers, seen as ‘passive’, directors of feminist realist documentaries and most broadcast documentaries. In Chapter Two I show how this way of understanding documentary authorship, indebted to auteurism, is typical for mainstream documentaries studies as well. On the other hand, there have always been voices calling for re-assessment of realist feminist documentaries, from Lesage (1978) to Juhasz (1994), Mayer and Oroz (2011) and Smaill (2012). Reclaiming of political feminist documentary as a worthy object of feminist film studies is not the objective of my thesis. However, by insisting on locating authorship beyond the film text, my project offers a way of rethinking the current feminist documentary canon.

Women documentarians’ authorship is rarely analysed in depth in auteurist monographs, as critical work about them consists primarily of short essays in edited collections, mixing textual analysis with broader socio-political contextualisation of their work and its reception (Kaplan 1983; Tay 2009). Interviews with women documentarians tend to be published without commentary, from those in *Women and Film* magazine (1972-1975), to more recent collections of interviews in a book form (Goldsmith 2003; Quinn 2015, 2012).¹⁸ Cunningham offers more context in her book *The art of the documentary* (Cunningham 2005) which includes informative introductory sections to interviews. There is not a single monograph dedicated to a living British woman documentarian, despite some remarkable careers, like observational filmmaker Kim

¹⁸ Conversely, in the production studies classic *The Producer’s Medium. Conversations with Creators of American TV* (Newcomb and Alley 1983), each of the eight interviews (all with men) is prefaced by a critical introduction to the producers’ work.

Longinotto's, spanning forty years and including many internationally recognised films and a host of awards. In Chapter Two I discuss the nuances of calling Longinotto a 'feminist auteur' in the light of her observational practice. In her recent book about British women film directors, Hockenhull notes that women are more prolific in documentary than in 'any other genre' (Hockenhull 2017: 59) and discusses work of ten women who make documentaries in the UK, from life-time documentarians like Longinotto to women moving between documentary and fiction like Penny Woolcock as well as Carol Morley and Beeban Kidron (both better known for their fiction films). Because of the small volume of research into British women documentarians, auteurist studies of their work are sorely needed. However, my project insists on the need to move beyond this framework, analysing filmmakers' professional trajectories and the production context rather than their films and employing research methods borrowed from social sciences, as I discuss in Chapter Three.

Conclusion

The selective overview of research approaches to women in three areas of circulation of media products employed in the fields of feminist film, media and TV studies serves to establish my work as an intervention into that diverse body of feminist scholarship. I hoped to show that my relationship to this legacy is ambiguous and while on one hand I feel I am, as an early-career woman academic, standing on the shoulders of giants, on the other I have identified substantial gaps in that body of knowledge, especially when it comes to women's authorship in documentary which is the subject of my project.

From my perspective of a researcher into women documentary filmmakers, the most disappointing result of surveying years of feminist film and media studies is the scholars' general indifference to documentary texts, filmmakers and audiences or an outright rejection of some documentary modes. I hoped to show, however, that these negative approaches to documentary often resulted from the specific historical moments characterised by their own politics and discursive formations. Remembering that critical feminist practice tends to be oppositional and reacting to the misogynist status quo both in the realm of representations and employment helps me to be less critical of past feminist critics. Stepping out of my documentary bubble, which itself is enabled by the large volume of scholarship I am critical of, I understand that for feminist scholars of the yesteryear it seemed more worthwhile to focus on mainstream Hollywood's representations of women rather than Flaherty's documentaries; more urgent to interview below-the-line makeup professionals than established TV documentary directors; more fruitful to talk to large number of women who watched soap operas than a handful of office snobs who 'professed to prefer documentaries'. Admittedly, I find it more difficult to let the purveyors of hegemonic trends in feminist scholarship off the hook in the case of numerous feminist realist documentaries disappearing forever due to lack of critical attention and audience's interest.

At the same time, I am indebted to numerous insights of feminist film and media research, and especially to the way interrogations of production and reception contexts lay the groundwork for the possibility of analysis of extra-textual factors in documentary

filmmaking. Although I do not focus on documentary audiences, feminist investment in reception studies aided my thinking about gendering of the genres, both in television and within documentary filmmaking itself, which is inextricably bound with the ways documentary authorship is conceptualised and as such is crucial for my project. Some audience studies I mention alongside the descriptions of factual programming on British TV highlight the importance of social class for intersectional analysis of the experiences of my respondents and indeed, as I make obvious especially in Chapter Four, social class becomes a prominent category of analysis for my sample. The review of feminist research in production studies makes me aware of how privileged and atypical my sample is and gives me the tools necessary to safeguard my analysis of my respondents' accounts from giving a false impression that any female filmmaker can achieve what they have.

Finally, while the fact that the construction of feminist documentary canon remained within the auteurist framework, emphasising artistic expression and the author's mark left on the film text, might be most disappointing of these developments, the Romantic myth of artist-genius returns in Chapters Eight and Nine in my respondents' own perceptions of their creative process. As a scholar and critic I may refuse to be an auteurist, seeking for recurring motifs in my respondents' films or positing them as fighting against their producers, but I need to acknowledge the instances when they choose to describe their practice in those terms. In my strategy, considering various areas contributing to what documentary authorship is, these accounts are only part of the picture.

In the following chapter I offer another element crucial for understanding theoretical contexts for women's authorship in documentary: prevailing approaches to authoring in mainstream (rather than feminist) documentary studies.

Chapter 2: Gendered authorship in documentary

Although approaches to authorship were not the main focus of the previous chapter, I discussed two frameworks in which women's authorship in film and media has been analysed: the auteur theory, focusing on the film text and insisting on the director's ultimate control over all audiovisual aspects of the final cut, and production studies which understands authorship as diffused and negotiated within a media organisation. In this chapter I present dominant ways of approaching authorship in documentary studies, paying special attention to how its gendering affects the perceptions of women's contributions to the field. Every documentary director makes choices about how to represent reality in their work. However, in this chapter I argue that certain ways of authorial inscription are prioritised in the discourse around documentary authorship. I introduce John Corner's distinction between 'thick' and 'thin' text documentaries, but further argue that 'thinness' of the film text is not the only factor influencing how individual authorship in documentary is perceived. For broadcast documentaries, the viewers' expectations and opinions are strongly affected both by the association of TV factual programmes with journalism and by the channel's identity imposed on all its output. In the final section of this chapter I present how documentary approaches to authoring are gendered, making it easier for male filmmakers to be recognised as the indisputable authors of their works.

Documentary modes and degrees of authorship

Documentary filmmaking is ‘the art of record’ (Corner 1996) in that every documentary text is both an artefact, crafted by its maker, and the record of reality. As a consequence, study of documentary oscillates between ‘the discursive-aesthetic and sociological poles’ (Corner 2015: 148). Despite the lingering common-sense belief that documentaries are ‘real’ (and definitely more ‘real’ than fiction films), showing us ‘life itself’, documentary critics and scholars tend to treat them as subjective statements on reality. In the early days of cinema, Lumière brothers screened *actualités* (actuality films), short pieces showing what the camera recorded in front of it: ostensibly, the reality was unstructured and unedited. But the lineage of documentary film is tracked back not to those cinematic études but rather to Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922), a film made almost thirty years later and including numerous staged scenes and re-enactments. While Flaherty’s approach subsequently got challenged for different reasons, including anticolonial feminist critiques discussed in the previous chapter, *Nanook* is still referred to as one of the first ‘documentaries’. This serves as a reminder that it is the authorization of the film by the filmmaker, and subsequently its distributor/broadcaster and the audience, that makes it ‘fiction’ or ‘nonfiction’, rather than the film text itself (Cowie 2011: 25). Grierson’s definition of documentary as ‘creative treatment of reality’, most often quoted in the context of the ethics of the use of poetic license in nonfiction, also draws attention to the author who decides precisely what kind of treatment reality gets. A series of creative choices made by the filmmaker influences whether their film circulates in a critical discourse more as a crafted artefact or an unembellished record of the slice of reality, reminiscent of the Lumières’ *actualités*.

‘Documentary’ is sometimes classified as one of cinematic genres but documentary scholars approach it also as a ‘genre-family’ (Waugh 1984: xxvii) including different kinds of documentaries defined on the basis of mode of production or visual features (or both). One of the most influential in the field is Nichols’ classification of six documentary ‘modes’: poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive and performative, each associated with a set of filmmaking techniques and formal tools (Nichols 2001; Nichols

2010).¹⁹ According to Nichols, the filmmaker is driven by their desire to persuade the viewer to adopt their unique take on the world. However, their choice of one of documentary 'modes' results in films that look differently. Documentary critics consider the film's aesthetic qualities, just like in fiction film analysis, as well as the obvious in-text authorial references like voiceover to capture 'the author inside the text'. As Silverman notes in her discussion of women's authorship in literary and cinematic fiction, this in-text authorial persona is not the same as 'the author outside the text', the real person bringing into work their motivations and desires (Silverman 1988: 212-18). While the psychoanalytic discourse of the unconscious is a popular analytical tool applied to fiction cinema, especially to theorising spectatorship, 'desire' is seldom discussed in documentary studies, whether on part of the filmmaker or the audience. I return to the issue of documentary desire in Chapter Eight which includes my respondents' perceptions of themselves as filmmakers and as authors. As they talk about their motivations and desires, I get closer to mapping out what the author 'outside the text' can mean. In this chapter I present the dominant trend in documentary studies' approaches to authorship which, similarly to the auteur theory discussed in the previous chapter, relies on the film text. My argument is specific to documentary as I show how the authorial traces detectable in different types of documentary texts affect the degree of authorship ascribed to their authors.

¹⁹ Nichols emphasises differences between the modes to differentiate among them but also admits they often overlap within one film.

Authorial signature in the documentary text

Nichols argues for locating the authorial signature in onscreen results of all filmmaking tools used by documentarians; what he calls the filmmaker's 'voice' 'issues from the entirety of the film's audio-visual presence' (2010:4). The techniques at the director's disposal include 'the selection of shots, the framing of subjects, the juxtaposition of scenes, the mixing of sounds, the use of titles and inter-titles' (*ibid.*). In the contemporary circulation of very different types of documentaries, some filmmakers use all of these techniques while others choose to control only camerawork and edit. As reality appears less mediated in the work of the latter, their authorial 'voice' does not resonate in the film text as loudly as that of the former. Building on his aforementioned artefact-record binary, Corner calls these different types of films 'thick' and 'thin' text documentaries, respectively. 'Thick text' documentary is 'creatively dense': like in fiction filmmaking, the director uses a plethora of cinematic techniques, including narrative design, symbolic suggestiveness and dramatization (Corner 2015: 148). Nichols adds to this list some features in the audio-visual layer: the use of 'compelling' non-diegetic music, 'inclusion of animation sequences or making wholly animated documentaries' (2010: 6). In the critical discourse, 'thick text' documentary has the status of an authorial artefact and therefore the filmmaker's subjective take on the world, their 'voice', is considered as more important than their 'intervention in a specific field of knowledge or debate' (2015: 148). On the other hand, 'thin text' documentaries employ 'a more directly reportorial and observational discourse' (Corner 2015: 147), which makes them a referential record more than an artefact. Before moving to the 'thin text' category, I will now outline how authorship is identified in 'thick text' documentaries, whose analysis is akin to that of fiction films and whose directors can aspire the status of 'documentary auteurs'.

Thick text documentaries: voiceover and on-screen appearances

Following Nichols' generous approach, documentary authorship can be located, for example, in a careful selection and assembling of archive material in compilation documentaries, popular on British TV. However, TV compilation documentary is probably not what comes to mind when 'thick text' category is mentioned. It seems that a better fit for it are high-budget cinematic documentary features, growing in number in the last

twenty years, whose directors get praised for breathtaking cinematography including drone aerial shots, or rich sound design, sometimes with a soundtrack un-synced with images for a greater dramatic effect. Other documentaries that tend to be readily identified as 'authored' are ones in which the director's immaterial 'voice' materialises in their own sonoric or bodily presence in the film text.

Historically, voiceover fulfilled a practical function of recounting events that were not shown on screen, which made documentary form more flexible, 'freeing it from the problem of intertitles' (Ellis 2012: 15). However, when used frequently in documentaries that purported to be informative or educational, it was later dubbed the 'voice of God' and associated with the omniscient authority, objectivity and 'discourse of sobriety'. As the preference for subjectivity and reflexivity replaced the quest for scientific objectivity of earlier documentaries, the authoritative 'voice from nowhere' was derided and abandoned in favour of the voice of a filmmaker themselves, 'speaking directly and personally of what he or she has experienced or learned' (Nichols 2010: 4). Bruzzi provides a compelling argument that documentarians have used voiceover in very different ways, from 'traditional' through 'ironic' to 'destabilising' (Bruzzi 2006: 47-72). What matters for my study is the fact that 'the authoring presence of the filmmaker is represented by the commentary' (Nichols 1991: 37): whether authoritative or personal, voiceover is from my perspective primarily the author's non-diegetic statement discernible in the film text.

Authorial inscription can also be literally embodied in the documentary text as filmmakers appear in front of the camera, interacting with their subjects. Bruzzi, criticising Nichols' aforementioned typology as too neat, extends and deepens his 'performative' mode, seeing the filmmaker's actions in front of the camera as key to any documentary project. All 'documentaries are a negotiation between filmmaker and reality and, at heart, a performance' (Bruzzi 2006: 186) and, especially in the examples she uses, 'truth is enacted for and by the filmmakers' encounters with their subjects for the benefit of the camera' (Bruzzi 2006: 154).²⁰ British filmmaker Nick Broomfield and American

²⁰ There is a tension in Bruzzi's argument between arguing for performativity as the defining feature of all documentaries and carefully selecting examples of films that best illustrate her theory.

Michael Moore are widely recognised examples of this type of filmmaking, as their idiosyncratic and at times clumsy interactions with their subjects define their films.

Thin text: Observational mode

Unlike in 'thick text' documentaries, where the authorial inscription is easily identified in the film text and can in itself be the subject of a long essay, the analysis of 'thin text' ones tends to venture outside the film text, cross-checking the thinly covered 'truths' presented in the film with their real-world referents (Corner 2015: 147). As such, it is similar to the way we think about the news, says Corner, adding that without an extended discussion of those films' socio-political context, it wouldn't be possible to say much about them (*ibid.*). While the maker of 'thick text' films is like an auteur of film studies, the maker of 'thin text' documentaries resembles a creative labourer of hands-on production studies, whose authorship can get easily overwhelmed by the presence of the 'real world' summoned by the recourse to the broader social context or by the identity of media organisation they make their 'thin text' documentaries for, which I discuss in the further part of this chapter.

Documentaries made in observational mode seem a natural candidate for 'thin text' category. As the 'truth function of the image' is paramount in them (Ellis 2012: 10), in-text authorship can be difficult to detect in the absence of 'overt means of demonstrating the filmmakers' presence' (Bruzzi 2006:121). In the previous chapter I discussed the critiques formulated by psychoanalytically-orientated feminist critics of the 1960s and 1970s feminist 'talking heads' and similar *vérité* documentaries, which accused both the directors and viewers of being passive (Johnston 1973). Similarly Bruzzi, building her case for 'performative' documentaries in which engaged filmmakers interact with their subjects, talks about 'classic observational transparency and passivity' and 'the absenting of an authorial voice' (Bruzzi 2006:121) in observational mode.

I argue that to posit lack of the authorial voice in 'observational cinema' it is necessary to contextualise it as a category because 'a wide range of different

documentary approaches have, at various times and places, become associated with the term' (Henley 2007: 139). There is a purist ways of understanding observational practice, like in ethnographic films of the 1960s and 1970s, where the majority of events shown in the film 'would have occurred even without the presence of film crew and equipment' (Hockings 2007: 5-6).²¹ In the following chapters I quote my respondents who subscribe to this understanding of documentary filmmaking and others who oppose it. The term later became associated with French *cinéma vérité* and American direct cinema. The former evolved towards seeing the interaction of a filmmaker with their subjects as a driving force of the film (similarly to what Bruzzi champions), while many films made as part of the latter focus on thrilling or eccentric characters whose lives provide endless dramatic 'plot' twists. I argue that even if 'thin text' documentaries often employ observational mode, not all observational documentaries are 'thin text'; in the following section I show how 'TV documentaries' came to be called 'observational', which complicates the picture even further. More importantly, I reject the description of observational filmmakers as 'passive'. Each observational film starts with its creator's decision to employ filmmaking techniques coded as realist, including hand-held camerawork, close-ups and long uninterrupted takes. Because the distinction between documentary and its 'big other', fiction, is arbitrary and originating 'in the authorization that is provided for the text' (Cowie 2011:25), filmmakers can use these techniques to very different ends. For example, in a total reversal of *vérité*, directors of mockumentaries actively try to trick us with grainy hand-held footage and 'reliable' characters into thinking that we are watching a straightforward record of naturally unfolding events.

The body of work of Frederick Wiseman, award-winning documentarian who has been documenting American public institutions from hospitals to libraries for fifty years, is normally mentioned as a prime example of observational cinema. Yet Wiseman himself says that 'the shooting is highly manipulative' (Aftab and Weltz 2000); although he does not manipulate or 'direct' the people in front of the camera, he decides what he shoots and in what way, just like a cinematographer of a 'thick text' documentary or a fiction film. Other filmmakers working in observational tradition also give accounts of their work as

²¹ This is not quite the same as the 'fly-on-the-wall' argument which suggests that the filmmaker's presence is not noticed by the subjects.

active. Susan Froemke, who has worked with the Maysles brothers in their iconic Maysles Films production company since the 1970s, says that even during filming of music events on commission (straightforward ‘documenting’ of a pre-planned event), very early in the process she starts looking for a ‘story’ and thinking how raw footage can be transformed into a film (in Bernard 2007: 302). Confirming the circulating opinion that observational filmmakers exercise their agency prominently in the edit, Wiseman says that any filmmaker’s aim ‘is to be selective about your observations and organise them into a dramatic structure’ so ‘the final film resembles fiction’ (Aftab and Weltz 2000). Despite the maximum non-intervention in the shooting process, Hockings describes classic ethnographic films as ‘heavily and carefully edited in order to create an ethnographically meaningful text’ (Hockings 2007: 6). In a move that breaks with rooting of documentary authorship in onscreen presence of a filmmaker or obviously manipulative non-diegetic devices, Aftab and Weltz call Wiseman ‘the silent auteur’ (2000).²² Interestingly, the accounts of *vérité* practitioners like D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus (in Cunningham 2005) or Ellen Hovde (Rosenthal 1978) prove that a bigger challenge to the individual authorship in those films is the inherent collaborative nature of observational filmmaking. As the authoring in observational documentaries happens at other stages of the process than in performative or first-person narration documentaries, it is less easily detectable in the film text. However, if the ‘authorial voice’ in documentary is understood in its entirety, like Nichols suggests, many observational documentaries should be seen as authored, too.

²² ‘His films are marked by an absence of commentary or music and there are no direct interviews to camera’, say Aftab and Weltz.

TV and documentary authorship

After establishing that the authorial agency of observational filmmakers can be undermined by lack of the overt in-text authorial inscriptions, in this section I focus on challenges experienced by TV documentary directors in claiming their authorship. I start by unpacking the category of 'TV documentary', sketching its evolution and its link to observational mode. Many critics and practitioners, including some of my respondents, use this term as an unequivocal description, readily understood by British interlocutors and readers. I argue, however, that such usage is imprecise as the category is historically contingent as well as channel-specific. Documentaries broadcast on four BBC channels differ in style among each other and at the same time as a group they distinguish themselves as 'BBC documentaries' from those broadcast on Channel 4 or ITV. Moreover, the audience's associations with a 'Channel 4 documentary' today (for example, 'sensationalist', 'exploitative') are very different from those in the late 1980s ('political', 'experimental'). Furthermore, when used without qualification, the term 'TV documentary' can signify both any documentary broadcast on TV, no matter how it was produced, and only documentaries commissioned by TV channels. This difference may not be obvious to the viewers, especially if they experience television as a 'flow' rather than selecting specific programmes they want to watch. An average audience member may not be aware that a few (arguably, not enough) documentary strands on British TV, most prominently the BBC's Storyville, broadcast single feature-length documentaries from all over the world, some acquired after cinematic release or success on the festival circuit. I have touched upon this issue in the previous chapter, describing TV factual programming as targeting different segments of the TV audience.

'TV documentary' is an unstable genre, constantly changing with the medium of television. If on a basic level 'documentary' is a film that is not 'fiction', in the broadcasting context documentaries further need to distinguish themselves from all other TV genres. To prove they are not TV drama, they may need to avoid dramatisations and similar 'fictionalising' techniques. However, to differentiate themselves from the news, they need to contain an element of 'unpredictability and novelty' (Ellis 2012:10). John Reith, first Director General of the BBC, asserted that the corporation's mission was

to inform, educate, and entertain; documentaries traditionally fulfilled the educational function (Kilborn and Izod 1997: 21), employing the scientific 'discourse of sobriety' and authoritatively presented facts. The BBC's requirement of 'due impartiality' which manifested in presenting a balanced view on any issue presented in the film, which might have given the viewers 'both side of the story' but was detrimental to establishing the filmmaker's unique 'voice'. On the other hand, since its beginnings Channel 4 has commissioned one-sided, sometimes controversial documentaries with strong authorial voices. If 'TV documentary' is to signify 'balanced and educational', maybe it makes sense to include only certain BBC documentaries in this category?

The diversity of documentaries broadcast on British TV channels makes it difficult to decide what exactly should be called a 'TV documentary' today. Running time up to sixty minutes used to be the hard rule but it gets broken often enough for both commissioned and acquired documentaries. Corner associates 'television documentaries' with 'more directly reportorial and observational discourse' (2015: 147), the claim historicised by Ellis who calls 'the period from the development of TV²³ until the middle of the 1990s' 'a phase of observational forms, in which the truth function of the image was paramount' (2012:10). This assertion, however, becomes problematic on a closer inspection. I would argue that, if anything, the pinnacle of 'pure' observational discourse is a fairly recent sub-genre of fixed-rig documentaries, in which multiple remotely controlled cameras are installed in British institutions, from hospitals to kindergartens. However, the term 'observational documentary' used in the context of British television in the past thirty years is very loosely related to the purist observational roots discussed in the previous section. It has become an industry term that can signify 'almost any documentary that is not entirely based on either dramatic reconstruction or self-conscious performance', with barely 'a few hand-held sequences here and there' (Henley 2007: 140). While documentaries made for the BBC surely benefitted from possibilities opened in the 1960s by technologies like sync sound and lighter cameras, some of my respondents who worked for the corporation in the late 1980s and early 1990s share their memories of the impossibility of getting traditional observational documentaries commissioned because of

²³ First BBC TV broadcast was on 2 November 1936 and most of the country was covered by the mid-1950s.

time and budget constraints. Unlike documentarians pitching to Channel 4, the BBC documentary directors always worked with professional DPs whose time was expensive, so the films have normally been storyboarded and structured around the series of key staged interviews; both techniques ‘regarded as anathema by the early observational fundamentalists’ (Henley 2007: 140). Documentaries with ‘a few hand-held sequences here and there’ interspersed with seated, pre-agreed interviews and held together by a voiceover seem to fit the contemporary definition of a generic ‘television documentary’ quite well but calling them ‘observational’ is a far cry from the more established uses of the term (although many contemporary broadcast directors use it this way, including many of my respondents).

The structure of many documentaries broadcast on TV has been influenced not only by material conditions of their production but also by the origins of documentary as a TV genre. Corner says that British documentary started changing around the time when cinematic documentaries, made predominantly by the members of the British Documentary Movement (1926-46) led by John Grierson, were gradually outnumbered by documentaries appearing on TV which started broadcasting in 1936. Corner calls the former ‘cinematic essays’²⁴ while the latter ‘a major extension of journalism’ (Corner 1996: 15) or an ‘extended reportage’. Complementing the aforementioned synchronic claim about the need of documentary to *distinguish itself from* all other contemporaneous TV genres (for example drama, news and reality TV), in this diachronic view documentary *becomes like* another TV genre, a reportage. Therefore TV documentaries are ‘thin text’ for different reasons than traditional observational works discussed in the previous section. While the directors of the latter are accused of passivity, TV directors’ authorship is not erased because of the lack of authorial traces in the text; their voice resonates loud, often too loud in the didactic ‘voice of god’ commentary, a feature often singled out by critics. While the author of cinematic documentary is seen as an artist, their TV counterpart is deemed a respected journalist at best. This is confirmed by the critical consensus that early TV documentaries ‘often demonstrated less impressive formal qualities’ than their film counterparts (Russell and Taylor 2010: 7).

²⁴ They were also arguably propaganda pieces, but considering their connection to the state ideology or commercial interests of their sponsors is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Although the majority of documentaries broadcast on TV today have rather uniform look and feel, the genre definitely leaves room for authored interventions, which I will discuss subsequently.

TV directors' authorship may get unacknowledged as they are being treated as TV journalists, reporting on political and social issues whose urgency trumps the style of the presentation but it is not the only way it can disappear. Johnson argues that 'for public service broadcasters it is important for their continued existence that they are attributed as the author of the viewing experiences provided through their channels' (Johnson 2013: 289). The authoring function of the channel, which remains 'a central paratext for television as a medium' (275), is fulfilled in complementing creative efforts of programme-makers (including directors) through augmenting, embellishing and enriching the received content (*ibid.*). When the broader category of 'TV documentary' gets narrowed down to signify a 'BBC documentary' or 'Channel 4 documentary', there is the tacit assumption that all documentaries broadcast on a given channel share a set of qualities corresponding to its PR image. Some TV documentary directors can see their position diminished from an individual *auteur* to *metteur-en-scène*, easily replaceable 'creative labourer' whose 'authorship' is reduced to filling in the contours defined by the channel's brand and the particular strand's identity. In this context it is crucial whose name appears as the very last of closing credits. In formatted factual series, dominating TV schedules today, the name of the episode's director is shown before that of the series producer, acknowledging the latter's overall control over the series' look and feel. Additionally, many popular TV documentary series are narrated by celebrity presenters who are often assumed by the audience to be the authors of the script they deliver, which is often not the case.

Authored documentaries on TV

To complicate the definition of a 'TV documentary' further, some documentaries broadcast on and commissioned by British TV channels in the last thirty years have been as daring or creatively accomplished as independent films meant for cinematic exhibition. They are commonly referred to as 'authored' documentaries or 'singles' (shortcut for 'single documentaries', to distinguish them from the episodes of formatted series) and

they are defined as 'traditional films with a strong authorial voice' (Archer 2005) originating with the director's idea subsequently commissioned by a channel's executive. However, like other TV genres, 'authored documentary' may mean different things in different times and on different channels. I have shown that dominating approaches to documentary authorship favour the obvious instances of authorial inscription like the filmmaker's voiceover or their appearance in front of the camera. Several of my respondents complain about being advised by commissioning editors to add voiceover to their films or make the story obviously 'personal' in an attempt to emphasise the 'authored' nature of the work. Most notable strands for authored documentaries on British network channels include BBC Two's *Forty Minutes* (1981-1994) and *Modern Times* (1995-2001, reactivated in 2014) and Channel 4's *Cutting Edge* (1990-present) and *Alt-TV*, later *First Cut* (2007-2009). In 2002 BBC 4 launched *Storyville*, a strand specialising in broadcasting international feature documentaries, a mixture of acquisitions and co-commissions. These strands have featured numerous documentaries which, although with strong authorial voice, also fit the typical for broadcast work structure of master interviews mixed with observational sequences. Other examples of authored documentaries broadcast mostly on Channel 4 have included experimental films and works by National Film and Television School graduates like observational works of Kim Longinotto, and performative films by Nick Broomfield and Molly Dineen. They break the rule of 'due impartiality' and some are more than sixty minutes long. The majority of my respondents who have done broadcast work make authored documentaries, although their names are not as famous. In Chapter Five I describe how this unique position allows them to negotiate with commissioning editors the limits of the channel's authoring function, allowing some directors to escape main creative restrictions associated with broadcast work. I also report on how the degree of creative freedom allowed to directors making films for TV depends on their educational background and experience.

Women as documentary authors

In the previous chapter I demonstrated the historical lack of interest in women's documentary authorship both on part of mainstream documentary studies and of feminist film scholars, with the latter subsequently championing only the authors of 'conceptually sophisticated' non-fiction films, eschewing documentaries coded as realist, including observational and talking-heads films (Smaill 2012). On the other hand, the challenges to individual documentary authorship presented in this chapter ostensibly originate in documentary form itself or in the rules of broadcasting environment. And yet, although in certain categories (I discuss the statistics below) women direct a relatively big number of films, just like in fiction, documentary directors recognized and praised by the critics and audiences as authors of their work are mostly men like Americans Michael Moore and Morgan Spurlock and Britons Nick Broomfield, Mark Cousins and Kevin Macdonald. While some feminist critics suggest Belgian-born French director Agnès Varda as 'one possible candidate for feminist documentary foremother' (Schilt 2006: 392) it is telling that Varda, an auteur moving between documentary and fiction, has always remained in the shadow of her French New Wave peers like Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut or her husband Jacques Demy. Therefore I argue for the need to explore the intersection of these two sets of challenges to authorship, demonstrating how different modes of authorial inscription in the documentary text are gendered. This analysis identifies both the areas of gender-based discrimination in documentary practice and those constituting the most fruitful spaces for investigation of women's authorship.

Cinematic documentaries and box-office success

Cinematic documentary features are a high-end example of 'thick text' documentaries. Employing the techniques similar to fiction films, they need big crews and big budgets, distinct from the original DIY ethos of documentary filmmaking where one person with a camera and microphone could make a film. Just like in fiction filmmaking, it seems that the bigger the production money, the fewer women directors; in the top twenty of Box Office Mojo ranking of highest grossing documentaries at the US box office since 1982 (2019) there are two films by women directors: Toni Myers' *Beautiful Planet* (2016) and Jane Lipsitz's *Katy Perry: part of me* (2012) on which she shares directing credit with a

man (Dan Cutforth). Some male documentary directors enjoy the status of feted celebrities, for example Michael Moore (who has three films in that top twenty) and Errol Morris, each having created a unique filmmaking style. Even if you find Moore slightly annoying, it is impossible not to recognise his dishevelled persona on screen within seconds. Morris' authorial signature is subtler but also easily detected by a committed fan, with slow-motion reconstructions and unsettling intensity of Interrotron interviews.²⁵ UK budgets and the scale of celebrity do not match American ones but there is Nick Broomfield, who can be seen as Michael Moore's stand-in, asking probing questions in situations where he is not wanted, and Kevin Macdonald who made a name for himself with maverick docudrama including actors and re-enactments, *Touching the Void* (2003). Directors of non-English language feature documentaries are celebrated on the festival circuit, like Chilean documentarian Patricio Guzmán who in *Nostalgia for the Light* (2010) and *The Pearl Button* (2015) skilfully combines historical investigation with poetic narration and striking images.

Admittedly, women directors of big screen documentaries are faring better than in fiction. While Kathryn Bigelow remains the only woman in the Academy Awards' ninety-years history to win the Best Director Oscar for *Hurt Locker* in 2010, eighteen documentaries directed or co-directed by women won the Oscar for Best Documentary Feature since Nancy Hamilton's award in 1955 (Wikipedia 2019). Still, on twelve of these films women share their directing credit with at least one man. Laura Poitras (co-directing with Mathilde Bonnefoy and Dirk Wilutzky) won for *Citizenfour* in 2014 and the spotlight fell also on her accomplished cinematographer Kirsten Johnson, who herself directed documentary feature *Cameraperson* in 2016. There are other formally innovative documentaries made by women that achieve some commercial success, like Sarah Polley's *Stories We Tell* (2012), snubbed for an Oscar nomination, but very few women directors have been able to consistently shoot cinematic features and build a substantial body of work required of an auteur. A notable exception is American director Barbara Kopple who won two Oscars (1976 and 2000) and made around fourteen feature

²⁵ Interrotron is Morris' ingenious camera rig that allows him to film his subjects and make eye contact with them from the same angle. His interviewees look straight into the camera, having continuous eye contact with the director and by extension with the audience, which makes interviews very intimate to watch.

documentaries since 1976. British women filmmakers successful in making big budget feature documentaries include Lucy Walker, who has made six features since 2002, earning two Oscar nominations (2009 and 2011) and who currently lives in the US; Sophie Fiennes, who has made five documentary features since 2002; and Louise Osmond, who after switching from broadcast work has made three documentary features since 2006. Kim Longinotto has made more than twenty documentaries since the late 1970s, the majority of them commissioned by and broadcast on British TV channels.

Strong authorial voice of women

Although women rarely make big-budget cinematic features, an important feature of 'thick text' documentaries is their directors' subjective vision of the world, which can be realised without large crews or costly access. Historically, the strong authorial 'voice' of American women documentarians (understood beyond the authorial voiceover) was acknowledged, even if sometimes criticised for expressing a bias towards certain social groups. King (1981)—reviewing Kopple's *Harlan County, U. S. A.* (1976) and Jim Klein and Julia Reichert's *Union Maids* (1976)—and Michel (1990)—writing about *Union Maids*, Lorraine Gray's *With Babies and Banners* (1978) and Connie Field's *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980)—both point out that the filmmakers are rather selective in their choice of facts and testimonies.²⁶ Because of my focus on filmmaker's agency and its recognition, I do not engage with the core of King's and Michel's critique, which in fact questions artistic credentials of 'political' documentary, but I welcome the acknowledgement of the director's bias, an antinomy to 'passivity'. McGarry (1975) also recognises that the director's voice, detectable in diverse formal devices used to either confirm or oppose the dominant ideology, shapes the record of reality presented to her audience.

While hostility towards early feminist *vérité* documentaries marred the approach of feminist criticism to documentary realism, as discussed in the previous chapter, women filmmakers never stopped making realist documentaries 'that confront the ontological, cultural and institutional problematic of sexism' (Smaill 2012). Seldom shown

²⁶ In the UK, a similar film is *Women of the Rhondda* (1973) by London Women's Film Group.

in cinemas or discussed by documentary scholars, feminist realist documentary remains 'a robust form' (*ibid.*) in which women documentarians assertively present their take on the world and argue for change. Currently in the UK there are numerous women documentarians making predominantly observational films in the tradition of feminist documentary, which have been featured among others at the annual London Feminist Film Festival (running since 2012) as well as broadcast on TV. These films are a testament to the fact that some documentary filmmakers are driven predominantly by a desire to persuade the audience to accept their worldview and to propose the change, the drive that will be discussed in Chapter Eight. The possibility of locating authorship in the 'activist' impulse is crucial for considering women's documentary authorship, as much as the impulse itself is by no means exclusive to feminist or even women filmmakers (see Waugh 1984).

Besides feminist and other activist documentaries, women's authorial voice resonates clearly in the less obviously political²⁷ subgenre of 'first person documentaries' in which the filmmaker 'readily acknowledges her subjective position' (Lebow 2012: 1), normally by sonoric or visual presence in the film text. Renov (1999) calls those films 'self-enactments' which heralded an era of 'new subjectivities' in the 1970s, with the explosion of films by those previously denied the possibility of expression (women, people of colour, gay and lesbian filmmakers). Many first-person films and videos are autobiographical (Waldman and Walker 1999: 267-338) although Lebow draws our attention to 'first person plural', arguing that they are often not self-portraits but portraits of the others who always 'informs the filmmaker's sense of him or herself' (2012: 1). Feminist academics and critics have celebrated women authors of these documentaries, although the aforementioned bias towards experimental (rather than realist) non-fiction translates into championing 'innovative' autobiographies like Michelle Citron's *Daughter Rite* (1980). Contemporary women documentarians use their own voice both to narrate their stories directly to the camera and to interact with their contributors in 'performative' documentaries. Given the masculine tradition behind the authoritative 'voice of god'

²⁷ Perhaps better described as embodying the feminist 'personal is political' motto.

narration,²⁸ Bruzzi is less optimistic than Renov about the transgressive potential of the personal voice gendered feminine:

This more personal, individual woman's voice is now frequently to be found in documentaries in which a female director can be heard from behind the camera, narrating and asking questions. It is intriguing that filmmakers such as Molly Dineen, Jane Treays or Lucy Blakstad, who all interject their own voices into their films, have very similar voices and styles of delivery: wispy, middle-class and rather self-consciously unauthoritative. Whereas women narrators in mainstream film and television conform more readily to the masculine voice-over model, the director–narrators fall more into the category of woman's voice as other (2006: 65-66).

Remaining an obvious instance of the authorial signature, the woman's voiceover 'is not the voice of universality but of specificity' (*ibid.*), therefore producing in the viewer the effect opposite to that of traditional masculine voiceover. While the subjective, personalised challenge to the omniscient 'voice of god' tends to be viewed by as a positive development, it is hard to imagine a reference to Michael Moore's voice as 'wispy' and 'self-consciously unauthoritative'. Further, it is no coincidence that Bruzzi uses 'middle-class' to describe the voice of women TV documentarians: as I demonstrate in Chapter Four, British TV channels are dominated by middle-class and upper middle-class creatives, with working-class women facing numerous obstacles trying to break into the industry. The consideration of challenges to women's authorship in the British context should always incorporate the intersection of gender and class.

Women in traditional observational documentary

I discussed in the previous section that despite the lack of filmmaker's overt presence in the film, American male directors working in observational mode are recognised as *auteurs* today, especially Frederic Wiseman and the Maysles brothers (Albert and David). Their long-time women collaborators tend to get much less attention, like Susan Froemke, quoted previously, who worked in Maysles Films as producer for years, including on the iconic *Grey Gardens* (1975) and later became a director in her own right, nominated for an Oscar in 2002 for *Lalee's Kin*, co-directed with Deborah Dickson and Albert Maysles.

²⁸ Scottish multimedia artist Rachel Maclean challenges this legacy in her first fiction feature *Make Me Up* (2018), in which she plays a domineering female-presenting Figurehead who 'delivers' the voiceover by art historian Kenneth Clark from his TV documentary series *Civilization* (1969-1970).

Two women, Ellen Hovde and Muffie Meyer, are credited as co-directors (with the Maysles) and co-editors of *Grey Gardens*. Confirming the power of editor in this mode, Hovde says in an interview: 'Muffie and I structured the film' (Rosenthal 1978: 12) although she admits the Maysles had final say on the cut. D. A. Pennebaker, who directed such classics of American direct cinema as *Primary* (1960) and *Don't Look Back* (1967), since 1977 has co-directed all his films with Chris Hegedus, who started in 1971 as his editor and whom he married in 1982. They co-own Pennebaker Hegedus Films production company, unique as it 'actively produces feature-length documentaries each year, many of which are distributed theatrically' (Cunningham 2005: 79). Although Hegedus is twenty-seven years younger than Pennebaker, in the joint interview by Cunningham they both reflect on their process and their creative partnership, which is a pleasure to read (Cunningham 2005: 75-107). Longinotto is an outstanding example of observational filmmaker with ethnographic film background who remains as unobtrusive as possible during the filmmaking process. She never appears in her films nor does she ask any questions of her subjects on camera. Despite her prolific career and critical acclaim evidenced in numerous accolades, her profile as a director is nowhere as high as Wiseman's or Broomfield's, maybe also because she tends to credit her women collaborators as 'co-directors', in a move that Smaill suggests 'almost eschews the masculinised doco-auteur label' (Smaill 2012). Nevertheless, feminist critics champion her as 'a documentary auteur' (White 2006: 124), finding in her work 'the observational impulse [which] might contribute towards constructing a feminist ethic in public debates' (Tay 2009: 44). White further insists on Longinotto's authorial agency, saying that the latter 'has successfully adapted *cinema verité* filmmaking as transnational feminist practice' (White 2006: 124). I mentioned that Wiseman was also called 'a silent auteur' but, significantly, both Tay and White place their claims of Longinotto as auteur outside the film text, in 'public debates' and 'transnational feminist practice'. The film text still matters, but not as much in its sonoric or visual layer where Longinotto's 'style' cannot be detected, but rather in the thematic layer of what and whom she chooses to film. Longinotto's position as a feminist auteur is based on her motivations as author-outside-the-text and her choices before, during and after filming. In Chapter Eight I present motivations and desires expressed by my respondents.

Women directors in TV

Soon after embarking on this project I realised that creative agency of women documentarians working in the UK is substantially shaped by TV channels because of the major role they play in both exhibition and production of documentaries. Many people in the industry, including many of my interviewees, say that there are so many women making documentaries for TV that there is nothing to complain about and that they may even be the majority of TV directors. In British-qualifying cinematic feature documentaries the percentage of women is higher than in fiction, with around 26% of documentaries intended for cinematic release directed by women as compared to 13% of fiction films (Cobb, Williams, and Wreyford 2016).²⁹ However, television is not doing much better, especially when single documentaries (the type made by the majority of my interviewees) are separated from the broader domain of 'factual programmes'. The percentage of single documentaries directed by at least one woman hovers around 26% of total number of such programmes, pretty much the same as with cinematic feature documentaries, and it dropped from 29.4% of episodes broadcast in 2013 to 23.9% shown in 2016 (Directors UK 2018).³⁰ The percentage of women directing TV episodes across all genres (including drama) is again higher than in feature films (where it's 13%) but it's not stunning, and just like with documentaries it dropped from 27% to 24% between 2013 and 2016. Of course when it comes to the actual number of women who direct documentaries, 26% of TV directors translates into many more women than the same percentage of documentary feature directors, which can be as small as six per year. The reason many of my respondents give for staying in TV, as I discuss in detail in Chapter Six, is because TV commissions mean relative stability, even if short-term, which makes it easier to work around children or other family commitments. It becomes clear that my call for revaluation of television documentary as an object worthy of critical attention of both feminist and mainstream documentary critics is inextricably bound with my research into work of women directors.

²⁹ A twofold difference between 13% directors in fiction features and 26% in documentary features tends to be explained by relatively smaller size of documentary budgets.

³⁰ Unfortunately, Directors UK's survey of programmes broadcast 2011-2012 (DirectorsUK 2014) does not include 'single documentaries' in their 'factual' category so the data cannot be compared between the two sets.

I have argued that while documentary authorship is not as straightforward an object of critical analysis as in fiction due to the link to unscripted reality, it is celebrated often enough in certain documentary genres. Similarly to fiction filmmaking, women are rarely given opportunity to direct big budget cinematic documentaries with impressive visual effects or exclusive access which can lead to both critical appraisal and popular appeal; when women use voiceover to express their authorial voice, it is sometimes discounted as wavering or questioning, not assertive enough to let the narrator assume the mantle of director. Therefore it should come as no surprise that the relatively large number of women who direct their films for television work in the context where individual authorship is often subsumed under the channel's identity, dismissed as 'journalistic' or not deemed worthy of analysis due to alleged low artistic quality. While these trends can be seen as not gender-specific, the few directors recognised as TV documentary auteurs tend to be men. Ken Russell made genre-changing arts documentaries for the BBC (1959-1965) although his auteur status is built on his overall creative persona that includes bold fiction films; all documentaries by Adam Curtis were broadcast on BBC (1983-2016), but their characteristic propagandist style is instantly recognisable and results in an almost cult following (three of my respondents spontaneously mention his name when talking about authored TV documentaries). In a recent review for *Sight & Sound*, Trevor Johnston writes about British documentary director Marc Isaacs, regretting that 'since his work has by and large been for television, it doesn't come garlanded by the major international film festivals, and the films are too short to suit cinemas' (Johnston 2018). Johnston makes an argument against the neglect of Isaacs's work, suggesting he deserves the title of auteur: '[y]ou'll be wondering why he's not mentioned more often in the same breath as Loach, Leigh and Frears' (*ibid.*). From a gendered perspective, a critic trying to make a similar argument about a woman TV director wouldn't have as obvious recourse to the pedigree of British women auteurs.

Two British women documentarians most often recognised as auteurs are Kim Longinotto and Molly Dineen, both with a distinguished body of work consisting of films made almost entirely for British TV (Channel 4 and the BBC, respectively). Longinotto's consistency of style is rooted in her telling stories of rebellious women around the world. Dineen has often showed the life of British institutions from the inside but she might have

earned her auteur status with the film about ex-Spice Girl Geri Halliwell (*Geri*, 1999) in which she assertively argues for the final cut with the moody diva. When talking about Longinotto's and Dineen's work, some of my respondents say: 'Yes, she made films for television but they are not really television documentaries', which signals both the instability of the category (as all their films were commissioned by broadcasters) and the power of value judgements. Longinotto and Dineen may have broken out of the television author's anonymity also because they started building their careers at the time when artistic expression of those commissioned by TV channels was respected, as some of my respondents recall in Chapter Five. In most cases, however, even single authored documentaries on TV are referred to as a 'Channel 4 documentary' or 'BBC documentary' rather than by its director's name as it is difficult to imagine the audience waiting in suspense for the last of closing credits. TV director Sue Bourne, working through her own production company Wellpark Productions, has directed about twenty single documentaries for the BBC and Channel 4 since 2001. Still, reviewing her *Fabulous Fashionistas* (Channel 4, 2013), a journalist refers to Bourne, who makes an extensive use of voiceover as authorial commentary, as 'the commentator' whom she 'would like to slap' and 'Miss Silly' (Hanson 2013). In this case, the author is off the hook as the channel is blamed for the film's perceived shortcomings. However, it is easy to imagine the BBC being praised for a 'wonderful' documentary that was conceived and executed by a director and her team. The analysis of behind-the-scenes creative negotiations is often relegated to academic commentary that seldom reaches the general public (like Jermyn 2015). For some critics and audience members, negative or patronizing perceptions of the medium make it impossible to entertain the concept of a strong authorial voice behind the programme they watch, which has serious consequences for the way women's authorship of TV documentaries is discussed. Only insiders and industry commentators know that it's not only Molly Dineen, but also Sue Bourne, Vanessa Engle and Jane Treays who push the boundaries of TV documentary form towards performative action, leaving their authorial signature on the film by means of their probing interviewing.

Conclusion

In this chapter I demonstrated that the dominant approaches to documentary authorship remain rooted in the film text. While some critics insist that the author's subjective voice is manifested in all audiovisual features of the film, from framing of subjects to non-diegetic music, the instances of obvious authorial inscription in the film text like voiceover or appearing in front of the camera are preferred ways to determine and discuss documentary authorship. Although these filmmaking tools can be and are used by both male and female directors, they are culturally gendered masculine because of the authority linked with the disembodied voice and confidence (or is that vanity?) needed to appear on camera and interrogate people. Therefore, their use by women tends to be qualified like in the case of women's voice heard in first-person documentaries often described as hesitating and subjective rather than authoritatively shaping the reality and presenting the director's vision. While some women documentarians mean their authorial voice to be doubtful and gentle, other directors may be unable to create a more authoritative effect they aim for. Other types of documentaries popular with women filmmakers, like observational and talking heads film, are marginalised in the critical discourse around authorship. This includes feminist realist documentaries considered as niche filmmaking made for an activist audience. Women are also marginalised in commercial terms as they are seldom trusted with big budget cinematic documentaries but because of the appalling statistics on women directing fiction, feature documentaries are often held up as the realm of fulfilled promises for women filmmakers. Women who make work for television are in danger of having their authorial voice subsumed under the channel's brand and have their work habitually snubbed by the critics.

All these trends confirm the importance of my project which argues that a full appreciation of women's documentary authorship requires a move beyond the film text, especially the obvious manifestations of the authorial voice detectable there. This thesis will discuss three distinct extra-textual areas influencing women's documentary authorship: the filmmakers' background and training (Chapter Four), their everyday creative labour (Chapters Five and Six) and their self-perception and desires (Chapters

Seven to Nine). Before presenting the analysis of my interview data about each of these areas, in the following chapter I describe in detail aims and methods of my project.

Chapter 3: Aims and methods: towards an intersectional feminist methodology

The most significant interrogations of the authorship will lie not only in the study of film form but also in revelations of how the norms and productive conditions of authorship have been working for and against creative and theoretical productions the world over (Jaikumar 2017: 212).

Building on my argument regarding the marginalization of women documentarians and their work in feminist film and media studies as well as mainstream documentary studies and its consequences for the perceptions of women documentarians as creative agents, in this chapter I introduce my project as an original intervention at the intersection of these two fields of academic enquiry. Because my methodology is indebted to feminist scrutinising of the research process, I query my discursive position as a researcher producing knowledge about gender relations. I explain how I understand 'gender' in my project and introduce the customised intersectional approach I developed for the analysis of my interview material. Finally, I discuss the practitioner interview as my main research tool and explore the power relation between my respondents and myself in the process of interviewing.

The main aim of my project is to propose a model of documentary authorship that locates it in three areas outside the film text: documentarians background and training; the production process; documentarians' self-perceptions and desires. Not relying on the film text constitutes the major departure from film studies' methods while the focus on women directors as top creatives makes my project different from feminist production studies which often prioritise below-the-line women workers. My project also adds to the scant body of knowledge about British women documentarians, the area of study neglected, as I argued so far, both by feminist film and media scholars and documentary scholars.

The originality of my thesis lies in supplementing some of the traditional approaches to women's authorship with the analysis of documentary production process

from the perspective of a female top creative. In doing so, I see myself answering the call issued by Catherine Grant (2001) who urges feminist academics to move explorations of women filmmakers' authorial agency beyond the film text. She further argues that to fulfil this goal the researchers may need to bring back some of the 'sociological methods' (*ibid.*) dismissed within the hegemonic Anglophone feminist film studies paradigm, discussed in Chapter One, from the 1970s onwards. One of these methods is the practitioner interview, my main research tool discussed in detail later in this chapter. While my choice to focus on the areas different than the film text does not amount to a claim that this approach can substitute textual analysis entirely, I argue that it helps to make the picture of women's authorship more nuanced. Instead of relying on the textual analysis of my respondents' works in search of shared stylistic features, I have interviewed twenty-six women documentarians currently working in the UK to identify recurring patterns in their creative labour. The emphasis thus moves from the film text, explored by the 1970s feminist critics to identify the salient features of 'women's film', to the filmmaking process as I attempt to define 'women's documentary' through the ways it is being made.

Hailing the work done in feminist production studies on below-the-line media workers (Banks 2009), I strongly believe that attention to material and discursive conditions of documentary production is a quintessentially feminist strategy, indispensable in providing a more nuanced account of creative process. Prioritising the finished media product in critical analyses erases both the privilege and the struggle of people who get to make films and TV programmes, ignoring the power dynamics within the production context. Among three areas of inquiry identified in my respondents' talk, the first two are discussed in Part Two of the thesis as factors external to them: their background and training in Chapter Four and their everyday creative labour in Chapters Five and Six. Part Three is devoted to the third area influencing authorship, my respondents' perceptions of themselves as creative agents, comprising Chapter Seven about professional identity and Chapters Eight and Nine about my respondents' desires and motivations. This structure mirrors the fact that the tension between filmmaker-as-labourer and filmmaker-as-artist drives my enquiry. Not throwing the baby out with the bath water, I retain those aspects of traditional authorship studies that emphasise the

filmmaker's intentionality and their desire to express themselves (discussed in Part Three). However, as I do not perceive the link between my respondents' intentions and their finished films as obvious, I replace the film text as the subject of analysis with my respondents' accounts of their background and production process (Part Two). This allows me to ask broader questions about their work understood as creative labour.

As my project focuses on women who perform the main creative role in the production process, I am careful not to give the false impression, sometimes attributed to such studies, of equality for women documentarians in British film and TV. In the light of previously quoted statistics on the number of women directors and producers who make both British-qualifying cinematic and broadcast documentaries, it is obvious that my respondents are in the privileged minority of female top creatives. However, their privilege is relative to men's as they may still experience gender-based discrimination of different kinds, as I demonstrate in the following chapters. Moreover, the figure of a woman documentarian does not have the same discursive power and financial leverage as that of woman fiction filmmaker. Documentary budgets are smaller, which reduces the amount of exposure and diminishes the crew size as directors perform multiple roles on their projects: shooting, producing or co-producing, recording sound, acting as researchers or even editors. This multitasking, discussed subsequently, blurs the line between above-the-line and below-the-line workers, clearly drawn in fiction filmmaking or production of big budget TV programmes. Although at the top of their game, only a few of my interviewees are known beyond narrow circles, especially if they make predominantly broadcast work of length not exceeding one hour. As mentioned before, there is not a single monograph dedicated to a living British woman documentarian.

Two main research questions shaping my project are:

- Is gender a relevant analytical category for investigating authorship of British women documentarians?
- How does looking beyond the film text influence the ways in which women's documentary authorship is perceived?

The first of these questions builds on and expands investigations of women's authorship in film and media studies while the second draws on the research from feminist production studies, also explaining my use of the practitioner interview. My research methodology is indebted to feminist scholars in all these fields and I will now present the consequences of this legacy for my project.

Claiming a feminist methodology

[A]ll researchers are politically engaged, have personal biases and limited experiences, and are situated in particular cultures, locations and languages. Feminists can aim to be reasonable without claiming that reason either requires or produces detachment
(Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002: 54)

While discussions about what exactly constitutes ‘feminist research’ are far from settled among the scholars who claim they do it, there are several recurring themes in this debate. First, feminist researchers emphasise that no matter how ‘scientific’ the research method is, the process itself is always subjective and therefore the produced knowledge is situated and partial (Haraway 1988). Secondly, feminist researchers tend to pay attention to internal and external power relations in their projects, scrutinising both the relationship between themselves and the subjects of their study, sometimes neglected or rendered transparent in mainstream research, and the project’s external effects, ‘results that are relevant to the feminist endeavour’ (Zoonen 1994: 130).³¹ Although focusing on gender or women ‘is by no means the same as doing feminist research’ (Zoonen 1994: 127), feminist explorations tend to prioritise social phenomena that significantly impact women. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) suggest it is important *how* these phenomena are studied, offering an overview of the plethora of research methods used by scholars who call themselves ‘feminist’. Before discussing the practitioner interview as a research tool which allows me to explore ‘practical social investigations of gendered lives, experiences, relationships and inequalities’ (2002: 5), I will now address the issue of my partial perspective as a researcher and I will explain how I understand the category of ‘gender’ in my project.

³¹ Reports on gender inequality and discrimination in the film and TV industry, discussed in the previous chapter, are a good example of feminist research with strong potential for external impact. They are not direct political tools, but can be used by activists and pressure groups campaigning for the change of employment patterns in the industry.

Positioning myself as a researcher

As a feminist scholar I believe it is crucial to disclose my discursive position at the intersection of academia, film journalism and feminist activism. I am a passionate champion of women filmmakers, both fiction and non-fiction, and rather than subscribing to 'the perception of scarcity' (Mayer, Ostrowska, and Editors 2015) of women-made films and videos, I believe in plenty of women filmmakers' output. In 2015, together with poet and activist So Mayer I wrote an open letter to the editors of *Sight and Sound* magazine, urging them to pay attention to 'the rich, diverse, exciting and present moment of feminist cinema and moving-image media' (Mayer and Ostrowska 2015). I appreciate the important role that qualitative and quantitative studies documenting discrimination experienced by women working in different roles across the industry play in the feminist struggle for equality, but as a journalist and activist I choose to amplify and analyse work made by women. In this spirit, this thesis celebrates creativity of twenty-six women who make documentaries in the UK, building on their subjective accounts that subsequently get contextualised within the bigger material and discursive picture. Because of this particular focus as well as qualitative nature of my project, I am sadly not able to account for the women 'missing' in the creative industries, whom scholars employing quantitative methods have been recently attempting to theorize (Wreyford and Cobb 2017: 108). I will return to this point when discussing the relative privilege of my sample below. Further, the knowledge produced as a result of my project is necessarily partial as I do not offer exhaustive studies of documentary production which include perspectives of collaborators and executives (see D'Acci 1987). I argue, however, that my focus on authoring justifies this choice as the glimpses of production process get reflected in my respondents' accounts.

Beyond gender: intersectionality

My sample consists of twenty-six cisgender women (who were assigned ‘female’ at birth and identify as women now), but because I understand ‘gender’ as a socially constructed category I assume that similarities in my respondents’ experience result from their shared socialisation as women rather than their common biological make-up or some underlying ‘feminine essence’. As women documentarians working in the UK, they all encounter similar external expectations from the funders, broadcasters, commissioning editors, collaborators and contributors.³² This gendered professional environment influences but does not determine their individual experiences which vary depending on different production contexts as well as each respondent’s personality and biography. The bulk of this thesis is concerned with ‘gender’ as a socially constructed category but my respondents’ perceptions of gender as part of their professional identity are briefly discussed in the last two chapters.

Main findings of my research, presented in this thesis, give an unequivocally affirmative answer to the question about the relevance of gender as a social category for the professional lives and authoring process of my respondents. However, as they mention other social markers influencing their careers, I supplemented my original research question with a query about categories other than gender which can be identified as important for my sample. Considering gender alongside these other categories makes my analysis intersectional. As such, it belongs to the group of approaches to social phenomena which recognise the complexity of social relations and identities, investigating power as a relationship operating along numerous axes and having different effects on social actors, depending on their positioning. As a named strategy, ‘intersectionality’ evolved in the late 1980s from critical race studies in the US (see Crenshaw 1989). However, many scholars agree that as there had been earlier critical and activist approaches acknowledging multiple axes of oppression, intersectionality has in fact ‘provided a name to a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment’ (Nash 2008: 3). The focus of early intersectional scholarship was the intersection of gender and race in the lives of African American women, delivering a

³² I further recognise that my project contributes to such an extraneous labelling of them, too.

nuanced critique of identity politics and an alternative to the 'additive' model of oppression (Yuval-Davis 2006). As intersectionality was originally inextricably bound with social activism, some scholars argue it should always be critical praxis as much as critical inquiry (Collins and Bilge 2016: 37). However, in the context of this thesis I use intersectionality primarily as a method of inquiry, 'a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people and human experiences' (Collins and Bilge 2016: 2). Acknowledging the concept's origin in and its continuing importance for the Black women's epistemological project, I follow those who see it as a 'travelling concept' (Christensen and Qvortrup Jensen 2012: 109) taking on different meanings in different contexts and attending to different social categories, depending on the research project. I believe that every methodology deemed 'feminist' should be intersectional because of the multitude of positions women occupy in their socio-economic environments. I will now describe the intersectional method I developed to give a nuanced response to the question about the relevance of the category of 'gender' for my sample.

Intersectional analysis as a method of inquiry

There is an abundance of literature on general principles of intersectionality but only a few examples of concrete intersectional methodologies. In my study, I recognise the 'distinctive nature of each inequality strand' (Squires 2007: 162), accepting the pre-constituted categories like 'gender', 'social class' or 'maternity'³³ and using them 'strategically in the service of displaying the linkages between categories and inequality' (Nash 2008: 6). While some intersectional approaches focus on the lived experience of individuals, especially ones experiencing multiple social marginalisation, I use intersectionality as a theoretical framework for understanding social relationships rather than as a theory of intersectionally constituted identity. Christensen and Qvortrup Jensen advise to 'select a number of categories or establishing anchor points as a strategic choice', which not only 'makes the analysis manageable, but also makes it possible to focus on the categories that are deemed most important for a specific research question at a specific time' (2012: 112). In the process of identifying categories other than gender I was guided predominantly by my interviewees, but I also considered nine 'protected characteristics' listed by the 2010 Equality Act (EA), the main piece of anti-discrimination

³³ This makes my method 'inter-categorical' rather than 'intra-categorical' (McCall 2005).

legislation in the UK. I modified the EA's list and identified the following categories as crucial for understanding professional lives of my respondents:

Social class

'Social class' is not one of the nine protected characteristics in the EA. This fuzzy and ever-changing sociological category, notoriously difficult to define, is indispensable in researching social reality in the UK, where recent analysis of the data gathered in the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment lists seven social classes (Savage et al. 2013). Many of my respondents spontaneously declare their class background as 'middle class' or 'working class', sometimes reflecting on how their social positioning influences their lives. Almost all respondents mention class as an important factor shaping both British broadcasting environment and independent filmmaking sector, which confirms recent research findings that the alleged 'meritocracy' of British creative industries exists within the rigid, albeit seldom acknowledged, social class system (O'Brien et al. 2016) (Friedman et al. 2016).

Pregnancy and maternity

This category is relevant for both my interviewees' own experiences of pregnancy and having children and their opinions on the general impact of (especially early stages of) motherhood on women's careers in film and television. Because of social perceptions of women as primary carers, this category strongly intersects with gender.

Age

This category is important in two different ways. My respondent's age at the time of the interview in most cases suggests the approximate period of time when they started their career and as such is linked to the changing conditions within British film industry and television. Additionally, several respondents started making documentaries quite late in life (for example, one fifty-six-year-old respondent has just made her first documentary feature) and they experience discrimination as 'mature' women filmmakers, as their age intersects with gender.

Ethnicity

This category combines race and ethnicity, similarly to the EA's protected characteristic of 'Race' understood as a reason for discrimination of a 'group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins'. It is mostly mentioned by respondents who are not White British.

Relationships

Those respondents who have children often mention being able to share childcare responsibilities with a partner as an important factor influencing their careers.

The small size of my sample, combined with its particular make-up in terms of protected characteristics, described in Appendix 3, does not allow me to analyse the implications of other categories normally considered in equality analyses (most notably, 'disability status', 'sexual orientation', 'religion or belief' and 'trans status') on the careers of all women active in British documentary filmmaking. Not mentioned or hardly mentioned by my respondents,³⁴ these categories do not inform my analysis. However, they could be crucial for a different sample of women filmmakers or, more importantly, for a large-scale equality study of women working in British documentary.

³⁴ One respondent mentions being 'queer' and another refers to the 'people' rather than 'men' in the context of romantic relationships. Other respondents mention their relationships in passing, without elaborating on their sexual or relationship choices, although sometimes gendering their partner as male. While the majority can be seen as benefitting from the heterosexual privilege, with 'heterosexuality' being a hegemonic category seen as the norm, the scope of my project doesn't allow me to explore the positioning of lesbian and bisexual women documentarians.

The practitioner interview

Ethnographic research methods were used in media studies first in the 1970s to interview powerful TV producers and then in the 1980s to celebrate the new-found power of the audiences (Mayer 2008) via large scale audience reception studies, discussed in Chapter One (Ang 1985; Seiter et al. 1989). The practitioner interview has been gaining popularity, being employed in a variety of research projects also in film studies since the beginning of the 2000s (Cornea 2008). My main reason for conducting interviews with women practitioners was practical, dictated by my research interests: I wanted to find out about the way they work and the published accounts of women documentarians' practice are few, scattered, and normally describing the making of one film or focusing on personal anecdotes. Therefore, although I reflect on my research process and data analysis, I do not entirely abandon the 'positivist ideal in obtaining knowledge' (Cornea 2008: 119) through my interviews.

In the following section I discuss the interview as an exchange between my respondents and myself and its shifting balance of power. However, I also recognise that an important outcome of any interview is a subjective account given to the interviewer by a creative person who controls how much and what information they share, especially when the conversation is semi-structured and opening questions can lead in different directions. How the interviewee presents themselves and their achievements depends on their background and personality but also on the context of the exchange. In a promotional interview, the filmmaker may construct her image, strategically choosing and withdrawing information to enhance the account of her performance, while in a heart-to-heart with a friend she may admit to certain vulnerabilities or complain about systemic issues or concrete people. As an early career academic who offered my interviewees linked anonymity and who didn't know them personally at the time of interview, I assume that I received accounts situated somewhere between the two. On several occasions I was slightly disappointed when after my interview with a filmmaker I came across a published interview with her, quoting almost verbatim what she had told me. On the other hand, I experienced spontaneous confessions and unexpected declarations, which I find difficult not to compare to the revelation of a one-on-one

documentary interview whose ethical challenges brought up by my respondents I present in Chapter Nine.

Relying on the interviews with accomplished and relatively privileged practitioners can be seen as insufficiently sympathetic to the major feminist goal of increasing the representation of women in top creative roles in film and TV, or even as giving ‘the impression that their success is based on merit, implying that others could also have “made it” if they were good enough’ (Wreyford and Cobb 2017: 108). I argue that in my project this danger is minimised by two factors. First, when recounting their experiences, many of my respondents acknowledge themselves the influence of the broader social context on their careers. Some of them are humble, recognising their privilege resulting from their social background or the opportunities (‘breaks’) they were given; others describe their struggle to achieve their goals resulting from gender- or class-based discrimination. Secondly, my agency as a feminist researcher lies in critical engagement with my primary sources. Analysing first-person accounts, as a scholar I produce a third-person narrative, drawing on external discourses, including statistics about women in British film and TV to contextualise them. I also argue that the method of data analysis I use, described in detail in Appendix 2, further mitigates against reiteration of ‘success stories’. I employ a critical realist approach, moving from ‘acknowledging the ways individuals make meaning of their experience’ to considering ‘the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings’ (Braun and Clarke 2006: 81), showing how material aspects of their professional lives influence their authorial agency.

Interviewing, the feminist way

As a feminist researcher I am aware that the interaction between my interviewees and myself influences the information I obtain. Because of its roots in the nineteenth century encounter between an anthropologist and a native informant, the researcher-interviewee relationship has been traditionally seen as asymmetrically skewed towards the former. Investigating this power balance led feminist researchers to conclude that the subjects of a social and economic standing lower than the researcher’s often give socially accepted answers. As media researchers were getting access to top producers, the concept of

‘studying down’ has been replaced by ‘studying up’, as ‘some researchers have treated interview access as some sort of achievement prior to the actual research’ (Mayer 2008: 143). Several of my attempts to get access failed, from filmmakers never responding to my initial messages (were the precious email addresses I obtained even valid?) to my getting caught up in an email exchange with a seemingly encouraging agent, with no way of knowing whether that particular feature documentary director was ever told about my project (probably not). As I progressed in my interviews I also realised that in the filmmaking business timing is everything: approaching a filmmaker in the middle of shooting brings the chances of ever meeting her down to zero while catching someone just before she goes into edit means she might welcome a distraction before returning to her usual routine. For the interviews I conducted I describe my process as ‘studying sideways’ (Ortner 2009), a phrase that assumes that as an academic I am not that dissimilar from the filmmakers I talk to. We all belong to ‘the knowledge classes’ (Ortner 2009: 186), sharing enough cultural references and lifestyle choices to feel comfortable in each other’s company. However, this common ground was qualified by my junior academic standing as a PhD student (rather than a senior academic) as well as my foreign background (I was born and raised in Poland). While my passion for documentary and some knowledge of the industry acquired in my previous journalistic work helped me connect with my respondents in most cases, I did not share the familiarity with British popular culture and TV most of them have, nor their status as industry insiders. I have learnt a lot about the history of British TV and the minutiae of production process in numerous catch-up reading sessions after especially dense interviews. I also learnt ‘on the job’ (documentary style!) as I built on the insights from the previous interviews, comparing them with my study notes in order to better understand my subsequent respondents’ professional context. Towards the end of analysing my interview data I have built a picture, from the bottom up, of key relationships and processes in documentary filmmaking process and I felt gratified when I came across the same information written up in a systematic manner by more experienced researchers (de Jong et al. 2012).

At times I was also made aware of the ‘competitive edge’ of the relationship with my interlocutors. As discussed in Chapter Seven, some of them are academics as well as filmmakers and one of my respondents questioned a certain aspect of my method during

our conversation. Interviewing documentary filmmakers, I also felt at a relative disadvantage as many of them had perfected the art of interview as their authorial signature. Although it never happened, I expected to be judged or even challenged on the grounds of my professionalism as an interviewer. When I shared this story with one of my last interviewees, she suggested that, contrary to my concerns, it makes sense that those who interview others in their professional lives enjoy being given an opportunity to talk about themselves. In several instances I felt like a confidante, when a respondent spontaneously shared with me something of deeply personal nature or admitted their lack of confidence or self-doubt. In the latter situations, I found myself at times boosting a respondent's ego. My encouragement was always genuine, as I admire every one of them for their perseverance and strength, and sometimes as easy as reminding them how many well-received documentaries they have actually made.

Despite being a woman researcher working within patriarchal culture and in generally men-dominated and conservative academia, I have only experienced support and encouragement throughout my project. All my respondents were generous with their time and engagement and sympathetic to my project and research agenda. As I discuss in one of the subsequent chapters, my respondents' opinions on feminism differ: while some spontaneously declare themselves feminists and quote examples of activism in either their professional or personal life, others do not use the label at all. During each interview I tried to make it clear that it wasn't my aim to prove their position as inferior compared to male directors nor to look at their work through the lens of discrimination; instead, I gave them space to express their opinions, whatever they were, in an open-minded atmosphere. In the academic context, I have found a supportive community of like-minded feminist film and media scholars, starting with my excellent supervisors who encouraged me and supported me intellectually and emotionally throughout the process, to an international group of academics who make up Women's Film and Television History Network UK-Ireland (WFTHN). Presenting papers at international conferences in the UK and abroad was crucial for strengthening my conviction that research I am doing is timely, relevant and in dialogue with the growing body of academic work on women filmmakers, documentary and fiction.

External impact of my study

After discussing internal power relations in my project, I turn to external impact I hope my work to have. Besides fulfilling 'the feminist academic project to save women's experiences from oblivion and make them an accepted part of history and culture' (Zoonen 1994: 151), my thesis' focus on contemporary filmmakers is especially timely in British film and television studies as it complements the growing body of feminist explorations of British women documentarians of the past, especially the AHRC-funded research project Jill Craigie: Film Pioneer (2018-21).³⁵

Secondly, I see my intervention as moving documentary studies' explorations of authorship beyond the film text which I argue is necessary given the recent trend in documentary scholarship and criticism that focuses solely on the audiovisual effects of the author's artistic expression (Ostrowska 2018). Although my model has been developed on the basis of interviews with women documentary filmmakers, I believe that it can be applied to men-only or mixed-gender samples, especially in the areas where other social categories intersect with gender, and beyond documentary filmmaking.

Finally, I believe that because of its focus on practical aspects of documentary filmmaking, my research will have an impact beyond academia, too, for example among young women filmmakers aspiring to make documentaries. I will discuss the new paths of academic inquiry my work opens as well as its potential use for practitioners in the concluding chapter.

I now proceed to discuss the first area influencing my respondents' authoring: different routes they took to becoming documentary filmmakers.

³⁵ With Elizabeth Jane Thynne (University of Sussex) as Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators Yvonne Tasker (University of East Anglia) and Sadie Wearing (London School of Economics).

Part II: External factors influencing authorship

Chapter 4: Where does a voice come from? Getting into making documentaries in the UK

I went to a comprehensive school, I studied art, I didn't go to NFTS, I'm not independently wealthy, I've got a kid. I don't live in London.

Kathryn

This chapter looks into how different routes to becoming a documentary filmmaker in charge of her own projects influence my respondents' authoring. All women I interviewed are active documentary filmmakers who make films exhibited in various contexts including British terrestrial and satellite TV channels, international documentary film festivals in the UK and abroad, limited cinema release and one-off screenings for selected audiences; some of them move between different platforms or show one film in more than one context. I have found that the educational/training path they followed influences their ideas about authorship although it does not always determine a respondent's subsequent filmmaking style nor the main context of exhibition of her work. While a biographical method of data analysis would highlight the uniqueness of each career trajectory and track its precise development, the thematic method I use (see Appendix 2), focusing on similarities across the accounts, allows me to capture more universal dimensions of the link between a training route and authoring.

In the first section of this chapter I briefly describe different routes to documentary filmmaking taken by my respondents. Because of my thematic method, I grouped my respondents' accounts into clusters so for example, I discuss 'art school' as one route rather than splitting the focus into the different art colleges each of the respondents attended. Next, I discuss the difference between 'inner-directed' and 'outer-directed' development of students/trainees, identified in my respondents' talk and supported by the examples from literature, thus mapping out the internal effects of these

two approaches on my respondents' understanding of creativity and authorship. In the following section, I show how the fact of completing different routes, and gaining different credentials, influences the external perceptions of my respondents by their peers, critics and employers. The final section looks at the impact of factors like social class, gender and age on embarking on a filmmaking career or getting a job in British media.

Different routes to documentary filmmaking

Film school

Before I started my interviews, I expected the majority of my interviewees to have completed film school education. There are numerous undergraduate and postgraduate film and media degrees offered by British universities, including the most prestigious institutions like the National Film and Television School (NFTS) (established in 1971 as the National Film School), the London Film School (established in 1957 as the London School of Film Technique) and the School of Film and Television at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London (existing from mid-1960s to 1997).³⁶ The NFTS is best known for documentary training, and its graduates including Kim Longinotto, Molly Dineen and Nick Broomfield (all discussed in Chapter Two as documentary auteurs) are readily associated with the 'British documentary' brand. Yet, only five of my respondents (19%) graduated from a film school.³⁷ Four are NFTS graduates, but in this group Danielle³⁸ did an MA in editing not directing. Lucy graduated from the NFTS in the late 1970s, before the school introduced specialisation in 1983 (so she studied 'all-round' filmmaking and not documentary specifically) and Frances and Jacqui graduated from MA in Directing Documentary in the 2000s. Tamsin completed the postgraduate film programme at the RCA. Several other respondents took short filmmaking courses as part of their undergraduate (for example, media) degrees, and Bettina left film school to go to art college. Importantly, the respondents in this group are taught how to film by professional tutors and they make films throughout the course, which means that they graduate as fully-fledged 'filmmakers'.

Art school

Five of my respondents consider their art school education pivotal for getting into documentary filmmaking. However, their curricula or their practice as art students did not necessarily include film or video making. Danielle and Linda attended traditional craft-focused courses (painting and printmaking, respectively) and Kathryn and Bettina general

³⁶ See Petrie and Stoneman (2014) for a detailed account of history of film education in the UK.

³⁷ In a recent survey of 132 self-selecting documentary makers commissioned by British foundation The Whickers in collaboration with Sheffield Doc/Fest, 52% filmmakers described themselves as 'self taught' (Whickers 2019: 5).

³⁸ As explained in the introduction, I use pseudonyms rather than my respondents' real names; see Appendix 2 for description of data analysis method.

fine art degrees. Tina specialised in animated filmmaking during a postgraduate fine art film degree. Danielle, who studied painting, got interested in filmmaking by finding 'some Super 8 cameras in the basement' of her art college and Bettina was part of a filmmaking collective when in art school, making and producing political documentaries. On the other hand, Kathryn and Linda incorporated video and film into their practice only after graduating.

TV apprenticeship

The most popular route in my sample, followed by eleven respondents (around 40%), is a TV apprenticeship model, originally developed at the BBC and ITV when they still had a large number of employees. Subsequently, all British TV channels introduced the commissioning model pioneered by Channel 4 (discussed in detail in Chapter Five) and the majority of my respondents learnt 'on the job' as freelancers and not employees. Almost all respondents in this group have a humanities degree, often from Oxbridge or another top higher education institution and only a few took any practical film-related courses as part of their education. They mostly started as researchers, making their way up to producer/director.³⁹ The respondents following this route typically progressed steadily up but three had their careers accelerated by getting onto the prestigious BBC postgraduate Production Scheme in the 1980s and 1990s,⁴⁰ which included a two-year rotation between different BBC departments and provided a fast-track route to producing and directing. The respondents following this route were not taught how to film although the reasons for this, as explained in detail in Chapter Five, changed over the years. In the past, TV documentary directors were not expected to shoot and rarely did; today, filmmakers who want the directing credit are expected to shoot but need to learn camera skills themselves.

Independent paths

Six of my respondents got into making documentaries in more idiosyncratic ways, building their individual filmmaking careers in or outside television. By calling these

³⁹ Two respondents started as a runner, one in this cluster and one in independent cluster discussed subsequently.

⁴⁰ One other interviewee mentions the 'training scheme for directors' she attended at the BBC but it's not clear to me whether she means the same programme as she doesn't elaborate.

routes 'independent' I indicate they were less structured than the ones described so far and mostly self-designed. Roberta and Evelyn started making documentaries for TV without prior film or art training and with no higher education. Gina was producing fiction and documentaries for years before trying her hand at directing. Ethel was a film curator and then a documentary producer, assistant producer and cameraperson, learning her craft on the jobs she chose herself. Farrin is an independent producer (the only woman in my sample who does not direct documentaries) who also learnt her skills mostly on independently funded projects and Dot has been alternating between short documentary projects (broadcast and online), current affairs programmes and print journalism.

The internal effects of educational route taken: ‘inner-’ and ‘outer directed’ creative development

The creativity of a filmmaker, as well as of their collaborators, is always structured by the material conditions of the production context (Petrie 1991: 1), which I explore through my respondents’ accounts in Chapters Five and Six. In this section I investigate how much creative autonomy my respondents were given when developing towards being a filmmaker and how much emphasis was put on the external factors like the cost of production or expected reception. While different approaches to creative agency championed in different training environments do not determine my respondents’ work forever, they do make certain creative choices and professional opportunities more obvious than others, depending on the route followed.

British educator Colin Young, who after launching the Ethnographic Film Program at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) in 1966 was invited to become the founding director of the National Film School in 1971, describes the difference between the model of an ‘open’ curriculum he introduced at the NFS which gave students lead on their education and the industry apprenticeship model thus:

There is a difference in attitude and technique between a person who has qualified through industry and one who has gone through school. The person who has learned in the industrial environment entirely, will have his or her time directed by others in a workplace which is keyed to a production of artefacts of somebody else's requirements. The other will have their time directed themselves in a school environment which is keyed to their development and will leave within them a spirit of an inner-directed development as opposed to the industry's outer-directed one (Toyeux 1985: 26).

Although Young gives an account of the specific moment in time and of specific British institutions, I quote him at length here because I see the distinction he introduces as a useful starting point for understanding my respondents’ opinions about their education and training. However, I also question the dichotomy’s neatness and describe the subsequent changes to the NFTS’ way of teaching mentioned by my respondents. I

start from discussing the accounts of 'inner-directed' development which in my sample come not only from the film school but also art school graduates. While the respondents who followed independent routes can also be said to have 'directed' their own development, they lacked the supportive educational environment providing them with tutors' expertise, studios or equipment. In contrast to some opinions of independent respondents who talk about stress and anxiety, discussed in Chapter Five, Lucy remembers her time at the NFS in the 1970s as 'three years of being safe'. She also confirms that the spirit of 'inner direction' was crucial for her:

It was very open-ended....it was just perfect for me and so you could say what you wanted to make and then you made it...I mean we didn't really have hardly any tuition. It was very much try things out for yourself.

Having taught at the NFTS recently, she recognises that this approach has changed to one more 'directed' by the school, now telling the students: 'you do this and then you do that', which she thinks means they need to be 'a little bit single-minded' to make the films they want. Jacqui remembers the school in 2011 as 'an incubator of madness'. She says 'it was like being at Hogwarts or something', recalling meeting 'people dressed up as aliens' in the corridors. On the other hand, Frances, who graduated in 2000, emphasises her struggle against the imposed rules. 'I think predominantly it's a super conservative course in terms of the type of filmmaking that they are interested in and believe in,' she offers. As the school's first director, Young introduced what he called 'observational cinema', radically breaking with the post-war Griersonian tradition but also distinctive from French *cinema vérité*. The mode of filmmaking that 'described the activity without making any false promises' (Petrie 2004: 85) continued as the NFTS' house style for years. In a published interview Molly Dineen remembers how her teacher Herb di Gioia, head of the NFTS documentary department 1983-1993, told students to shoot 'from the hip like Don Pennebaker' (Dineen 2003: 38). But what was a radical intervention in the 1970s gradually ossified into orthodoxy and in the late 1990s Frances fought against the 'purist observational' ethos all the way through her three-year course. Her accounts of unsuccessful pitching to the school board are reminiscent of the stories of negotiations with TV commissioning editors presented in Chapter Five: 'through the whole first half of my second year I had so many films get turned down that then it got to

like summertime, it runs January to January, and I still hadn't started my second year film,' she says.⁴¹ Jacqui agrees that the course 'will probably always have this sort of observational purist heart to it' but she believes that learning how to shoot observationally provides a good foundation for future experimentation:

[Y]ou just need that basic knowledge of how to do that to be able to expand and experiment with other things. Just like learning scales when you're learning music. You just need to know how to shoot observationally.

It is a testament to the NFTS' enduring belief in students' self-direction that Frances was allowed to make experimental films which included re-enactments, animation, voiceover and archival footage. The films made by three NFTS graduates in my sample since graduation prove that no uniform style was successfully imposed on them. Only Lucy has remained true to observational technique throughout her career; most of Frances' films are far from observational and Jacqui recently ventures into audio documentary. While Lucy and Jacqui always shoot their material and see it as part of their professional identity, Frances hires a cameraperson if it is affordable and appropriate for the project.

However, two respondents who graduated from art schools criticise some film schools' narrow curricula or the prescribed style of filmmaking. Bettina dropped out of a film degree at London College of Printing (now London College of Communication) when its focus narrowed from 'radical, political, arthouse cinema' she appreciated to mainstream Hollywood. Describing some of the films made by film school students, including the NFTS graduates, Kathryn complains: 'they all look the same, they all feel the same'. She opposes this uniformity to the freedom to experiment and encouragement to take risks which she experienced during her 'genre-busting' art degree. She recalls being told by her tutors to adopt a broad definition of art: 'maybe you should make the bride's dress for your chicken and bury it in the garden and dig it up at midnight and that is your artwork'. Bettina's art school course was not only 'strongly experimental' but also 'one of the most political courses you can imagine about representational politics', serving as a good training for political documentary practice she is pursuing.

⁴¹ These stories also draw attention to the fact that at least at the time of Frances' degree, the school was in touch with the marketplace reality of commissioning process.

While antagonistic opinions about the degree of creative freedom allowed to film school students come from differences in individual experience, both film school and art school graduates in my sample experienced a learning environment in which they were encouraged to take risks and experiment, devising bold projects from scratch and see them through to completion. Two main results of this approach for students' perceptions of themselves as authors is the understanding that they must generate original ideas and the feeling of being responsible for their projects as the main creative person who needs to execute it.

Those respondents who followed the TV apprenticeship route had a different experience of creative autonomy. The fact that television is, as Young defines it, 'a workplace which is keyed to a production of artefacts of somebody else's requirements' (Toyeux 1985: 26) substantially influenced their training. The rules of producing broadcast material include general content guidelines for all programmes (like the watershed rule or the previously discussed due impartiality) as well as practical stipulations about many aspects of production process. As I discuss in Chapter Five, those rules need to be followed or negotiated by any filmmaker who works on a commission. However, while some of the NFTS students like Frances successfully rebelled against the school's preferred observational style of filmmaking, the respondents learning their craft in TV had to follow the broadcaster's brief. The most important feature of the TV route influencing trainees' ideas about authorship is that they learn their skills through realizing other people's ideas. Even on reaching the top rung of the ladder, the credit of 'director' or 'producer/director', my respondents normally work for some years as so-called 'directors for hire', being in charge of programmes based on other people's pitches. As a consequence, and in a stark contrast to art school or film school projects, learning to be a documentary director in television is not linked to generating one's own ideas for the films. Theresa, who started working for TV in the 1980s, talks about being 'a weird slave for eleven years'. Lisa says that in twelve years of working on various kinds of factual entertainment, she 'wasn't entirely satisfied' with what she was doing 'for most of the time' and Sam was producing history and science programmes but 'wouldn't be moved by

them', which spoilt her appreciation of her own work. Theresa confirms that this way of training is good for learning craft but doesn't encourage individual expression:

You have to do whatever they give you, which is quite good because you end up being able to turn your hand at everything but you don't find your voice in particular. You don't, because you can't, you don't find your voice because you're given things to do.

While the apprentice needs to master new skills quickly and at times experiment as they respond to creative challenges thrown their way, after following the 'outer-directed' learning path it can be difficult to find one's authorial voice. Theresa admits she only managed to do it after being made redundant from the BBC, 'the best thing that ever happened' to her. She recalls: 'I discovered that if you don't come up with good ideas you die, you don't eat, and I discovered I was good at ideas.' Lisa left TV after several years of being a director for hire, convinced she 'would never be given a project that was particularly intellectual or wide in scope'. To make a documentary based on her idea and in the style she wanted, she 'went out there' and funded it independently. However, even the apprenticeship route allows for variations. Becky, who climbed up the ladder of TV credits within a supportive indie, says she managed to make films based on her own ideas from the beginning of her career, which she recognises makes it 'quite unusual'. But for most respondents in this group making authored documentaries for TV was the last, coveted stage of a long training process in which the apprentice acquires diverse skills in various areas of TV production, learning its rules. Although the ability to generate original ideas is requisite for making 'authored' TV documentaries, TV-trained directors are, somewhat paradoxically, not expected to do that until the very last step on their path. The confidence required to claim authorship of one's own project, instilled in art and film school students by making them pitch and defend their ideas from the beginning, is supposed to grow gradually in TV apprentices as they accumulate diverse skills and experience. Sam says than only after ten years of directing broadcast documentaries (conceived by other people) she 'felt secure enough and confident enough' to pitch her own idea for a film. However, as I demonstrate in Chapter Five, some women climbing in TV can have their confidence diminished because of gender-based discrimination in the workplace which makes reaching the last rung of the ladder difficult.

The external effects of educational route taken: can a voice come from anywhere?

Certainly in the UK, there's a sense of well, but have you actually been doing it? Do you have a track record of X short films? Why? Do you have a portfolio which you tend to develop from film school or something? ... well, how do you describe that layer? That layer is about allowing for a voice to come from anywhere, right?

Ethel

In the previous section I have discussed internal effects of training on my respondents, showing how their understanding of creativity and authorship has been shaped by the context in which they learnt how to be filmmakers. However, the different routes to filmmaking discussed in this chapter also influence the external perceptions of my respondents by their peers, employers and the audience. At least on the aspirational plane, the film school trajectory remains the gold standard in the industry, making it easier, as Ethel suggests above, to secure both funding and exhibition of one's project. Kathryn, art school graduate, is confident about her authorial voice but even she feels that not having attended film school makes her an atypical filmmaker. The enduring prestige of the NFTS is acknowledged by respondents who didn't attend film school; Ethel appreciates 'high standard' of its students' graduation films and Kelly, a TV-trained director, recalls that she 'rather envied' her friends who studied there in the 1980s as she felt 'that gave them a lot of confidence in their visual skills'. Some respondents who learnt to film themselves express envy of film school graduates because of the latter's camera skills. Besides the confidence to pursue their own projects, discussed in the previous section, the well-known film schools can help their graduates in a more practical way. Frances says she got her first Channel 4 commission quite soon after graduating and for the same strand that had previously acquired one of her NFTS student films. Jacqui emphasises the social capital she gained at the NFTS as she still draws on the contacts she made there, in a student filmmaking collective. The filmmakers' credentials after graduating from film school comprise both high standard of craft (evidenced in a portfolio which is useful when looking for jobs) and the makings of a strong professional network.

Climbing the rungs of TV production ladder is the most popular route to directing authored documentaries in my sample. For those who do not look down on TV as a lesser medium in artistic terms, becoming a researcher in TV is seen as putting their humanities degree to good use, as Olivia says she did. Sam describes the TV apprenticeship as a 'quite traditional' route to becoming a documentarian. For those who graduate to making authored documentaries, the equivalent of 'a track record of X short films' that Ethel mentions as necessary for independent filmmakers is embodied in a CV documenting all completed levels of apprenticeship. However, earning one's spurs in TV is considered less glamorous in the world of independent documentary filmmaking and is often snubbed by both film critics and some filmmakers with art school or film school background. Becky, who only made broadcast work, says she is often told in a disparaging way: 'Oh, you've only made films for television.' Because TV documentaries were historically perceived as of a lesser aesthetic value, as discussed in Chapter Two, women documentarians who were trained in TV are seldom known outside the broadcasting circles, besides a few established directors with long careers or who were nominated for prestigious TV awards. As my project does not focus on the film text, I do not assess or compare the quality of films made by filmmakers who followed different types of training. I do, however, argue that although the film school route and TV apprenticeship do not have the same status in critical discourse around British documentary, they both provide their followers with enough skills and social capital to pursue their careers in the production context of their choice.

It is those who 'clear their own path', as Dot describes her professional trajectory, who are in a more difficult position and often need to rely on a stroke of luck, for example when a commissioning editor takes a chance on them. The majority of my respondents agree that such opportunities were more common before the 2000s, which aligns with the changes to British broadcasting I discuss in Chapter Five, and several respondents had a truly maverick debut as documentary directors. The launch of Channel 4 in 1983 brought independent experimental work to television, blurring the boundary between 'documentary' and 'fiction' and, to a certain degree, between 'independent' and 'commercial' filmmakers. It was easier for a voice to come from 'anywhere' then, and for people to move between TV and film more freely. Tamsin was enabled by Channel 4

commissions to have her experimental films, made within an independent filmmaking collective, broadcast on public TV. Roberta, a self-taught artist with no higher education, describes the way she got into broadcasting in the mid-1980s as such:

I was working with some teenagers and I said, "Why don't we make a film for Channel 4?" I didn't realize you're supposed to get a commission or anything. I didn't know anything. I went right on telling people we're making a film for Channel 4 and various people helped me to shoot it because they believed me because I believed it...very strangely, Channel 4 saw this film and they bought it.

Evelyn's first break in the mid-1990s was also rather unconventional. Being a young runner from a working-class background and with no university education, working for an indie where 'obviously everyone else...was Oxbridge educated', was precisely what got her that first directing gig; she was the best person to get access to and earn trust of young vulnerable subjects of the commissioned film. She has been making broadcast documentaries ever since and currently teaches and pursues independently funded projects. However, Dot wasn't that lucky. She directed her first short film for Channel 4's prestigious new directors strand First Cut in 2009, but when we spoke in 2016, she still didn't manage to secure a commission for a sixty-minute film (which is commonly seen as feature length for television). She links this directly to her CV, which includes some elements of the TV ascent trajectory but not consistently enough:

I think mainstream television is difficult. I don't know what it is, it could be my route up...I haven't always worked within mainstream television and most directors climb their way up through...Because I have cleared my own path I might not have done myself any favours in that.

Always working on independent projects besides TV commissions, she didn't go through the required motions, which she believes would have involved spending 'years on *One Born Every Minute* or *24 hours in A&E* [both Channel 4]' or a similar formatted programme. Although the question Ethel says she often hears ('But have you actually been doing it?') is used to challenge independent filmmakers who are not film school graduates, Dot's career proves that it also resonates in the broadcasting context, where 'doing it' means earning the spurs one by one. How the gatekeepers of the film industry (especially funders and commissioning editors) perceive those who are trying to get in

plays a key role in who *does* get in. The requirement of certain credentials, the expectations of having completed certain professional steps, may be seen as assuring quality in the field. However, it also puts many aspirants at a disadvantage because of the external factors which do not depend on them but which influence their lives sometimes prior to their education and training. I will now discuss three such factors that my respondents mention as affecting their embarking on a filmmaking career: gender, social class and age.

Barriers to entry

Implementing my intersectional approach introduced in Chapter Three I consider gender alongside other social markers mentioned by my respondents as impacting the beginnings of their careers. Although the women I interviewed are practicing documentary filmmakers, which means they successfully overcame numerous obstacles in their professional lives, the factors they mention can also be seen as more general barriers to entry to the industry and as such prefigure some women ‘missing’ from British documentary filmmaking. However, they remain specific to my sample—which is small and quite homogeneous (see Appendix 3)—rather than being representative of the entire pool of potential entrants. Importantly, the fact that certain categories are not mentioned by my respondents in the context of getting into the industry (most notably, race and sexual orientation) does not mean that BAME and queer women are not disadvantaged as compared to white heterosexual women in this respect. While a larger study is needed to account for all barriers to entry faced by women in British filmmaking industry, the categories discussed in the context of my sample contribute towards that exhaustive list.

Gender

I suppose you always have to have these role models, don't you? You have to see that it's possible.

Sam

Embarking on a path to become a documentary filmmaker requires awareness of existing professional opportunities as well as confidence to pursue them. The former correlates strongly with social background, discussed in the following section, while the latter, when understood as an acquired and not innate personality trait that can be nourished or repressed, is often seen as gendered. Men are said to be socialised to assertively pursue what they desire while women are being primed for auxiliary and supporting roles, requiring more patience than leadership skills. Instead of focusing on changing the broader patterns of gendered socialisation and workplace discrimination, sadly in the current climate of ‘postfeminism’, confidence often becomes ‘a technology of self that

invites girls and women to work on themselves' (Gill and Orgad 2016: 324).

Acknowledging the link between their career aspirations and gendered socialisation, nine respondents emphasise that seeing women in the roles they want to perform helped their aspirations. Talking about her childhood, Tina credits her '1970s feminist' mother for instilling in her the belief that she was 'as good as men'. The majority of examples of women role models come from the early stages of my respondents' careers, when the former's existence boosted the latter's confidence to claim top creative jobs. Some respondents mention lack of role models at early stages of their career as something that held them back. When Tamsin enrolled on the photography course in the 1970s, she didn't know 'any women who have ever done this...there were no women television documentary directors, for instance, and definitely not any fiction ones'. Gina says: 'I always wanted to do documentaries but I really didn't think I could...it just seemed that's like what other people did, I almost felt like that it was something that was beyond me really'. Working as a features producer in the 1980s, Gina describes the industry as 'incredibly sexist', where women didn't tend to put themselves forward, occupying 'more minion roles'. Subsequently, she found her role model in a confident woman director she worked with on several films who 'was very kind of bold'. Other respondents speak highly of women who inspired them, too. Lucy, who is an observational self-shooting documentarian, was profoundly influenced by one of her film school tutors, an American camerawoman: 'She gave me confidence. I was lucky she was there because I think when I was there she was one of the few female camera operators that I knew of'. Tina found inspiration and courage when witnessing women animators being 'unapologetic' about their work in their interviews.

However, relying on role models has its limits. When only a few people from a social group seen as unprivileged 'made it', their lives may become token success stories, used as an apology for the status quo or even denial of the existence of inequality (Holdsworth 2019). Speaking about the intersection of gender and class, discussed in detail in the following section, Evelyn notes that a few working-class people 'who've done well' in TV always 'get held up as heroes, like you've got your Kathy Burke or Janet Street-Porter' while at the same time 'there're just complete barrier to working class people in TV and film.' On the other hand, Tina describes the mid-1990s, when she made her first short, as

the ‘golden age of Channel 4 commissioning’ in which half of the directors were women. ‘It didn’t occur to me that being a director wasn’t something that women did,’ she says. At that anomalous moment in time, she didn’t need an exceptional woman who made it against the odds to look up to; a relatively large number of women filmmakers simply doing their jobs normalised that career choice for her. While in the current situation of continuing employment discrimination on the basis of gender, race and social class the circulation of such success stories can inspire more people from unprivileged backgrounds to pursue certain careers, this should not distract from the need for bigger, systemic change. As ‘the only way to know what is really going on is through proper equality monitoring across the broadcasters’ (Holdsworth 2019), painstaking gathering of quantitative data undertaken by organisations like Directors UK or projects like Calling the Shots is crucial.

My respondents do not often mention gender as a barrier to getting the first job in film or TV. However, Theresa gives an example of blatant institutional sexism from the early 1980s, when she applied for a job in regional TV office:

When I first went to see a managing director of [regional TV station] and I said I wanted to work in television and he said, “I suggest you go and get secretarial skills”. I said, “I’ve just spent four years getting an MA in politics”. I said, “If I’d wanted to be a secretary I wouldn’t have done that”. That was the environment that I came into.

Kelly’s experience from around the same time (but in another TV channel) couldn’t be more different. Asked about the impact of gender on her career, she recounts the story of getting her first TV job not despite but because of her involvement with the Women’s Liberation Movement as male editor of a new factual strand appreciated her experience of working for iconic British feminist magazine *Spare Rib*. Felicity, the youngest in the sample who started as a researcher in TV in 2009, describes early years on the job as ‘gender neutral’, saying she was working with roughly the same number of men and women in different positions. She is now a producer and director for an unusual indie, discussed in detail in Chapter Six, which employs mostly women and she sees her female boss as ‘a fantastic role model’. However, she doesn’t want to feel she got her job

because of positive discrimination, saying: ‘Like with anybody, whether it's women or ethnic minorities, you wanna feel that you got there because they (sic) feel they won. You want to feel you got there because you're the best’. Her opinion adds another dimension to the rather complicated picture of successful women in top creative roles and their impact on both individual careers and the wider institutional context. Sam got a small directing job because the agency she registered with ‘needed a woman on the books’ but she doesn't seem to mind benefitting from being a token female director. While not mentioned often at the entry level, in Chapter Six I demonstrate that my respondents’ gender plays a major role in their everyday filmmaking practice and career progression.

Social class

Social class is an essential category for an analysis of any aspect of British society and culture (for example, in Chapter One I discussed how TV programming has been long shaped by the broadcaster’s assumptions about the link between the audience members’ social origin and their taste). In Chapter Three I indicated that social class is mentioned often by my respondents even when I do not ask explicitly about it, and that many of them spontaneously identify as middle-class or working-class. Several respondents see their identity as intersectional, talking about themselves as ‘working-class women’, locating the barriers they encounter at the intersection of their gender and class. Lisa says: ‘In some sense I felt more difficulty because of my class than I have because of my gender but I do feel that the two are very interlinked’. Evelyn, who is white and working-class, explicitly calls for including class in the analysis of privileges and obstacles experienced by people getting into film and television. “Intersectional” is always thought of as being gender and race’,⁴² she says, ‘but I think class is huge.’ On the other hand, Bettina isolates class-related oppression as having a stronger impact on her life than gender, saying that for her ‘[i]t's not even the woman [thing] it's the life experience that was the real issue’. She describes contemporary society as ‘the system which is so cutthroat and demands a certain type of articulation’ which people from unprivileged backgrounds, no matter what their gender, do not possess. My respondents notice the influence of class origin both at a personal level of early career aspirations and specifically in the context of getting a job in television, especially the BBC.

⁴² I have discussed the history of the use of ‘intersectionality’ as a critical concept in Chapter Three, acknowledging its origin in American critical race studies.

Four respondents identifying as working-class talk about their social background as negatively impacting their career aspirations and educational prospects. Bettina says: 'I was a sub-working class woman who has [sic] no parents, I have a lot of damage because of how I grew up'. In such environments, access to arts and culture is normally limited. Evelyn, who grew up in the UK praises TV as 'the only access I had really to culture', explaining: 'I grew up in a block of flats and we didn't go to the cinema. There wasn't really a lot of access to film unless it was discovering Mike Leigh on the telly, which I absolutely gobbled up'. Bettina, who grew up in a European country, says her exposure to arthouse and experimental cinema broadcast on TV, from Andrei Tarkovsky's films to transgressive work of Viennese Actionists ('blood everywhere, carcasses'), was one of the reasons she wanted to become a filmmaker. Growing up with British TV, Evelyn and Sam mention Brian Hill's 1990s documentaries about working-class people as a strong influence on their choice of documentary filmmaking as a job. Their accounts belie any classification of documentary audiences as male and middle-class, mentioned in Chapter One. Interestingly, as adults these respondents have different approaches to TV. Evelyn still has 'a real soft spot' for it and has done most of her films for broadcast (and so did Sam). Bettina only made one short for Channel 4 experimental arts strand and she doesn't feel that contemporary British TV is the right place for her films.

Lisa, who grew up in the North of England in the 1980s, says of her background: 'I really came from the world where [you are told]: "Don't dream too big"..."Maybe just get a nice job in the office in wherever"'. Because of these attitudes shaping her childhood, it was especially difficult for her to find confidence to believe that she can make an independent feature documentary. Danielle, in her mid-fifties, says that when growing up, she didn't realise she could go to university: 'I didn't know what university was...Well, my parents had never gone to university, so I didn't even know it really existed.' Evelyn didn't go to university but worked in a pub until she was twenty, went to art school 'a bit', without finishing the course, and recalls being 'slightly lost' before getting her first filmmaking job in what she describes as a stroke of luck. It is impossible to dream of something you don't know exists. Bettina, reflecting not only on her own experience but also on that of her mentees from rough backgrounds, asks poignantly: 'If

you don't even know where the doors are, how do you even know where to knock?', her question perfectly encapsulating both low levels of expectations and weak networks. Quoting one of their working-class respondents, Friedman, O'Brien, and Laurison (2016) titled their study of class origin's influence on occupational trajectories in British acting 'Like skydiving without a parachute'. Bettina says that despite having always been interested in filmmaking, she felt 'there was no opportunity'. Having left school at sixteen, she could not go to university in her home country and was able to enter higher education only thanks to access course in the UK. While top creative jobs in film and media are highly competitive and not every person from a middle-class background succeeds in getting a job of their choice, these insights of women from working-class backgrounds put the ideal of 'meritocracy' (see Littler 2017) into perspective, especially when contrasted with how middle-class respondents talk about their aspirations. Felicity says she 'knew from a really young age...probably from about eleven or twelve' that she wanted 'to get into some kind of journalism'. She summarises a tour of the BBC she went on at the time as such: 'it's all really exciting to realize that's really where you want to go'. Thanks to her background, even at a young age she could imagine herself working in that BBC office. Dot, who worked in print journalism before becoming a filmmaker, also says: 'From quite a young age, I knew I want to be a journalist'. Growing up in an environment with regular access to different forms of culture and the presence of creative people like filmmakers, writers or artists makes it easier to develop ambitions for a similar career for oneself. For people from less privileged backgrounds, even if they imagine they can do these jobs, the route from aspirations to a career tends to be tough, like 'trying to do things despite things always', as Danielle puts, it or like the aforementioned 'skydiving without a parachute'.

I will now discuss my respondents' opinions on how class origin shapes the chances of getting and retaining a job in the BBC. Most of my respondents (no matter with which social class they identify) talk about the middle-class bias of British creative industries, also well documented in literature (Friedman, O'Brien, and Laurison 2016; O'Brien et al. 2016; Savage et al. 2013). Those respondents who became researchers in the BBC normally have got not just any humanities degree but one from top universities: six respondents (more than a half of the TV apprenticeship group) graduated from

Cambridge or Oxford. Lisa, a working-class Northerner, notices how difficult it is to navigate this environment for working-class people: 'In television, most people are from a certain kind of background that often involves being public school educated, and I wasn't. I'm not at all like that and I think I felt slightly on the back foot always as a result'. Herself and Evelyn (also working-class) are the only two respondents who say they started as runners rather than researchers. Sam, who describes herself as not 'from a posh background', agrees that 'telly is incredibly middle class' and adds:

I'm sure that there would be people, female and male, from different sorts of backgrounds who would find navigating, not the filmmaking, because filmmaking is about all sorts of people, but the commissioning process and the politics and the society of television harder and more bewildering because they haven't had that opportunity to mix with those people in university.

She is one of two respondents from less privileged backgrounds who told me they were given an Oxbridge scholarship, resulting in both impeccable educational credentials and the ability to fit in with middle-class colleagues. In the quote above, Sam uses intersectional language ('people, female and male, from different backgrounds'), taking into account not only gender and social class but also race and nationality. She continues that 'people from minority backgrounds have been terribly represented in television' and her opinion is confirmed by the parliamentary Culture, Media and Sport Committee, which in its report on the BBC Charter Review states that '[m]any commentators have criticised the BBC's culture...as 'hideously white' [as explained in a footnote, this term was used by broadcaster and ex-director general of the BBC Greg Dyke], male and middle class in both personnel and output' (House of Commons 2016). The report states that 'The BBC has also been accused of a lack of understanding of working class communities and a failure to represent them in terms of both hours devoted to them and of giving a rounded picture of them' (*ibid.*). The report offers some statistics on low retention levels of BAME employees (linked to lack of BAME role models in higher positions) but does not discuss 'working-class employees' as a separate analytical category. Neither of my black respondents works for television and while one of them talks about her race as impacting her everyday work, neither mentions it in the context of entering the industry.

Three of my respondents who built their careers in TV attended the prestigious two-year BBC Production Scheme for postgraduates in the 1980s and 1990s. Although the scheme is still running, my respondents assert it was more coveted back then, accepting ten candidates from around five thousand applications every year.⁴³ The elitist yet unacknowledged expectations regarding the trainees' social origin—and a corresponding Oxbridge degree—were obvious during the recruitment process. Toni describes herself as 'one of those overachieving brats' who got accepted in the early 1980s because she 'went to the right university and jumped through the right kind of hoops'. She recognises her privilege, commenting in detail on her feelings at the time:

It's notable that actually in my cohort, when I was-- very much indeed. When I was at the training scheme at BBC, nine out of the ten of us came either from Oxford or Cambridge, not all. Immediately, we actually said to them-- at the end of our training period they said, "Have you got any questions or comments?" and we said, "Yes, we think it's slightly odd that we've all come from these top universities. It seems a bit elitist". They said, "But you were just the people who— fulfil the criteria." The idea they might adapt the criteria never occurred to them.

Another scheme's graduate is Barbara, with first degree from a European country where she grew up. She recalls that among ten successful applicants in her cohort everyone was white and she was one of three women and the only non-British born person. She calls it 'one of these amazing strokes of luck' in her life, aided by 'passing' for someone Oxbridge-educated:

My first degree is not from Oxford but I was doing a DPhil at Oxford which at that point I didn't finish so I dropped out. I was briefly at Oxford and I was briefly at the Oxford University Broadcasting Society and some guy from the BBC came to visit and I was there. He remembered me...then I went for the interview and he said to me, "Hi, [Barbara's real name], what happened to you? You're not at Oxford anymore," and I'm personally convinced, that it's just a terrible story, that sort of

⁴³ On the BBC website it ostensibly promotes diversity by seeking people 'from all backgrounds and walks of life, to...help us ensure that our content on screen, on radio and online reflects and represents the whole of the UK'.

helped me get in, because he thought, "Well, okay, something happened. She hasn't been able to finish but she's kind of one of us. At least she was at Oxford briefly."

Although we will never know what went through the head of Barbara's interviewer, the fact that she made that guess is a testament to the middle-class bias of the BBC she had already noticed as someone who moved to the UK as an adult. These two accounts suggest that the BBC strove to maintain the status quo in terms of its workforce, unreflectively using discriminatory recruitment criteria but also offer a promise of a lucky break through 'passing' as middle-class or Oxbridge-educated.

Natalie Wreyford's work on the socialised recruitment of screenwriters in the UK film industry (Wreyford 2018) investigates the informal workings of social class through the Bourdieusian concepts of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Her respondents, screenwriters and their employers of both genders, identify 'personal contacts and attendance at particular universities and schools' as crucial factors helping in getting into film industry (Wreyford 2018: 67). The 'right' universities in her sample are Oxford, Cambridge and Bristol but, importantly, they are more 'a signifier of the right habitus and considerable social capital' (71) than revered for 'the quality of their education' (70). 'Public school' and 'Oxbridge' are important points of reference in my sample, remaining synonymous with the rich and the 'posh'. No respondent admits to having attended a public school, but three respondents declare they went to a comprehensive school, the former's negative foil. Eight of my respondents (30%) got their undergraduate degree from Oxford or Cambridge, including Sam who studied there on a scholarship after attending comprehensive secondary school. She says:

It's not like I come from a posh background but I did get a chance to go to Cambridge and got introduced to people who are used to power, who are intimidating as hell, people who had been to very good schools and that gave me an ability to deal with the majority of television.

Sam's opinion resonates with Barbara's experience of being read as 'kind of one of us', and suggests that through attending the 'right' university non middle-class people get the chance to land a job in TV and keep it as they are able to 'deal with' middle- and

upper-class colleagues. However, embodied cultural capital manifesting for example in the way of speaking can still give them away. Lisa says she has always felt like 'this Northern woman who doesn't speak properly'. Barbara says she benefited from being to a certain extent unreadable to her British colleagues in terms of class and sometimes treated as a '[European demonym] princess' but she also admits to consciously working on her accent. 'Now, I sound exactly how I wanted to sound, educated, nice middle-class', she says. 'Now, people perceived me very much as very solidly one of them in terms of class'. These accounts of classist nature of the chief British TV station sit uncomfortably with the main reason for choosing TV rather than independent career quoted by my working-class respondents: being paid for learning on the job. As I demonstrate in Chapter Five, some of my respondents couldn't afford to let the BBC's middle-class bias to get in the way of building their career there. They persevered although it meant being employed by the organisation that disparages their social background.

Age

Age is mentioned as a barrier to entry to documentary filmmaking by three of my respondents who turned to directing documentaries later in life, after having other careers in film, TV or arts. It is therefore linked to the expectations of people at a certain age who want to be recognised as the main creative person on a documentary project to have completed conventional steps, from education and training to portfolio, discussed in the first part of this chapter. Ethel is black and didn't grow up in the UK but she feels that being a mature director with an unconventional CV holds her back more than her gender, race or country of origin. Before Gina started directing her own documentaries at the age of forty, she produced independent features and TV documentaries for years. She says she waited for her children to grow up before she could pursue her dream: 'only in the last ten years I've really been doing the sort of things that I want to do', she admits. Now in her fifties, she dreads 'the older woman thing' that she expects to come soon: 'I think that that's going to be difficult. That how older women are looked at'. When asked explicitly, she denies having experienced any age-based discrimination so far and admits she might have internalised the circulating stereotypes about 'the older women'. Danielle graduated from the NFTS editing MA and had a long career as a freelance editor of both fiction and documentary projects. Still, she talks about how being an 'emerging' director

in her mid-fifties affects her self-esteem. When applying for funding or mentoring schemes, she experiences failure more acutely, knowing she lost to younger people. Jacqui further says that because many of these schemes set an age limit for qualifying first-time feature directors at thirty-five, she is already excluded from them at the age of thirty-six (at the time of the interview). Lifting the age restriction on funding can be an effective way of promoting diversity of documentary voices. It was done recently by private British foundation The Whickers (which uses the legacy of late broadcaster Alan Whicker to support emerging makers of film and audio documentaries) whose annual £80,000 award goes to first-time director of an authored documentary of fifty minutes or longer (Ostrowska 2017). Opening funding opportunities to filmmakers of all ages benefits not only women but also other people with caring responsibilities and those from less privileged backgrounds who often follow idiosyncratic routes to filmmaking, sometimes completing their education part-time or taking up paid employment along the way.

Conclusion

In this chapter I considered how different training routes my respondents followed to become documentary filmmakers directing their own projects impact their authoring. I have identified internal and external effects of following different routes, corresponding to my respondents' perceptions of creative process and other people's perceptions of my respondents, respectively.

Analysing internal effects of different learning contexts, I discovered it is not the particular skills my respondents were taught that impact their subsequent authoring most profoundly but rather the degree of creative freedom they were given in the process of learning the craft. Although nine of my respondents mention the ability to shoot material of good quality as part of their filmmaking identity, some of them are self-taught and therefore this skill cannot be seen as most significant legacy of film school education for my sample. Focusing on different ways in which creativity and authoring were understood and taught in different routes, I identified the 'inner-directed' development, experienced by film school and art school graduates and some followers of independent paths, and the 'outer-directed' development of TV apprentices. My respondents' accounts confirm that both the NFTS and various British art schools created an environment in which the students, future documentary filmmakers in my sample, were encouraged to turn their creative ideas into the final product, be it a film, an artefact or a performance. They were not taught explicitly how to direct a film but they were expected to find ways to execute their ideas while being given material and professional support to do so. Therefore art and film school graduates in my sample tend to find their authorial voice rather easily and they are used to being in charge of their projects, also choosing their own collaborators. Some respondents in this group move between media (film, photography, fine and performance art) or between filmic modes and genres (documentary and fiction, experimental works). On the other hand, those who learnt their craft in the broadcasting environment by a gradual ascent through the ranks were for years responding to external briefs, making films based on other people's ideas and following immutable rules of TV production. Art and film school graduates who subsequently pitch their projects to TV

commissioners, as I discuss in Chapter Five, can draw on the confidence acquired in the educational environment supporting their individual expression; some of those who followed the TV route experience initial difficulties when pitching their own ideas, as they are unsure of their authorial voice. The apprenticeship route does give the trainees strong and versatile skills and flexibility in approaching various topics and genres, but it locates creativity primarily in making other people's ideas work, often within tight deadlines. While for film and art school graduates, as well as for some 'independent' respondents, being the main creative person implies 'authoring' of the project understood traditionally as generating the idea behind it, some directors of broadcast documentaries do not author their projects in this sense, especially in the beginning of their careers. Importantly, I did not find that the training route determines every respondent's subsequent career and types of films she ends up making. My choice to scrutinise the fields other than the film text allows me to demonstrate (in Chapter Eight) how my respondents perceive themselves as authors and how these perceptions do not always align with their training paths.

External perceptions of creative professionals depending on their educational pathway are crucial for my respondents' career opportunities. In independent filmmaking circles, film school education remains the desired ideal and those who followed it may find it easier to get funding or exhibition opportunities based on both their skills and portfolio and cultural capital associated with this route. Although the majority of my respondents, including film and art school graduates, have made broadcast work, television as the training environment tends to be snubbed in the industry. It is much easier for a film school graduate to get a TV commission than for someone TV-trained to make a film outside TV. However, confirming the insight that the paths taken do not determine my respondents' future, Lisa made a feature documentary after leaving television, funding it independently, securing limited cinematic release and gaining critical acclaim. As certain credentials are expected of those who want to make documentaries, the respondents who followed independent training routes can be disadvantaged, relying on funders trusting them enough to take risk. Finally, before the impact of any route to filmmaking can be considered, it is important to scrutinise the factors influencing

embarking on them, which I did in the final section of this chapter, finding that social origin is mentioned most often as a barrier to starting a filmmaking career.

In the following two chapters I analyse the impact that the rules and processes governing the production context have on my respondents' authoring. Similarly to this chapter, I devote much space to British TV channels, this time as bodies commissioning work and controlling the conditions of production. While Chapter Six presents the findings about the negative impact of gender on my respondents' everyday work, Chapter Five continues the themes of creative autonomy and authorial voice introduced in this chapter, putting them in the context of material conditions of labour.

Chapter 5: Making films or making a living? The practical dimensions of creativity

Although traditional approaches to authoring, indebted to the Romantic ideal of the artist-genius already discussed in the context of the auteur theory, consider creative activity in the sphere of ideas and abstraction, making documentaries is for most of my respondents not just their main creative engagement but also the main, sometimes the sole, source of income. None of my respondents identifies as a 'trustafarian' or admits to funding her projects through recourse to independent wealth. Ten of my respondents (38%) have made work only or predominantly for television and further eleven (total of 76%) have mixed TV commissions with projects financed outside of TV; only five of my respondents have never worked on a TV commission. The majority of my respondents agree that the decision on the source of funding significantly influences the subsequent production process.

Investigating how material conditions of my respondents' everyday labour influence their authorship is crucial to my project which insists on treating documentary filmmakers as both artists and creative labourers. The relatively new concept of 'creative industries', which can be tracked to Tony Blair's government's establishing of Creative Industries Task Force (CITF) in 1997 (Flew 2012: 9), tries to capture 'the conceptual and practical convergence' of creative 'individual talent' with mass scale of 'cultural industry' (Hartley 2005: 5). While discussing the ramifications of the 'creative industries' paradigm for the British independent production sector (see Lee 2018) is outside the scope of this thesis, I find this approach helpful for conceptualising authorship of my respondents. While it is more obviously applicable to those who make broadcast work, most independent projects undertaken by my respondents have a budget and their directors interact with funders, collaborators, distributors and exhibitors. In their 2012 book aimed at aspiring documentary filmmakers, de Jong, Knudsen and Rothwell warn the readers that 'the conventional way of financing documentaries solely via broadcasters is changing. Budgets have decreased and additional funds need to be found' (de Jong et al. 2012: 52). Although my more experienced respondents recognise that the rules of TV

documentary programming and commissioning have changed, the majority of them started their careers in the times of 'conventional way of financing', subsequently making documentaries solely or predominantly on TV commissions. Therefore, while I discuss briefly at the end of this chapter how the recent changes to commissioning process impact their careers, getting a full TV commission is the most popular source of funding mentioned by my respondents, even as several of them have diversified their funding portfolio in the last ten years. Another model of financing my respondents use is an 'independent' one, the description I use to signify obtaining funds from any source other than TV and not in its older meaning linked to a merger of filmmaking and political activism from the late 1960s onwards, suggesting non-profit business models. The respondents who don't pitch for large TV commissions usually put together smaller sums of money from private and public organisations, crowdfund their projects or rely on personal savings or loans. I first discuss the tension between the need to make a living and the desire to express oneself freely as an artist, which is followed by a section offering a more positive picture of the meeting point of my respondents' creative vision and the industry, embodied in the special relationship some of my more established respondents had with TV commissioning editors. Finally, I discuss some practical production decisions controlled by TV channels which influence the film's final shape.

Making a living vs. refusing to 'submit to demands'

I'd rather work at Tesco's than put out something where I feel I've let myself be beaten up
or something I don't believe in.

Roberta

Those of my respondents for whom making documentaries is the main source of income tend to use a different language to talk about their practice than several respondents who make their living elsewhere, sometimes living frugally. The former predominantly seek TV commissions and many of them also followed the TV apprenticeship route discussed in Chapter Four, which means they learnt their skills in paid employment. They talk about pursuing careers in TV in the context of meeting everyday needs which for many respondents increased when they started a family (which is further discussed in Chapter Six). The respondents in the other group focus on their desire for artistic or political expression. However, I argue that the dichotomy of 'making a living' versus 'realising one's creative vision' is not the same as the difference between regularly seeking and never seeking TV commissions. In Chapter Eight I demonstrate that respondents who work on TV commissions also feel the urge to express themselves, alongside other documentary desires. Importantly, the respondents who make broadcast work are not a homogenous group and the degree of creative freedom they are allowed depends not only on their training route (discussed in Chapter Four) and professional standing but also the time when they were commissioned. For example, art and film school graduates who pitched their ideas from an assured authorial position especially in the 1980s and 1990s were making experimental and controversial projects for TV. Even Bettina, who sees TV as too prescriptive and only applies for arts funding, admits: 'there are certain times where I would've loved to work in [British] TV'.

In terms of labour relations, almost all my respondents have been working on TV commissions as freelancers (I will discuss three exceptions subsequently). Channel 4 never employed filmmakers nor had in-house crews and when I was conducting my interviews, the BBC laid off the remaining in-house directors. Wendy, who at the time of

our interview in 2017 just went freelance after thirty years of enjoying a unique status of being on the BBC payroll, told me: 'I left because they sacked all their filmmakers. It's over. They're not going to employ anyone anymore.' A few of my respondents worked as freelancers directly for the BBC but the majority have made their films via independent production companies ('indies'). They set up and co-own their own indies, believing it gives them most control (Kathryn), team up with other filmmakers and producers (Lisa) or direct films produced by companies run by others so they can focus on directing only, even if that means sharing the producer/director fee (Roberta). Therefore when it comes to terms of employment, all my respondents are 'independent', and recently the way of working on TV commissions resembles more and more that of a filmmaker relying on non-broadcast sources of funding, moving away from big crews and towards a 'one-woman band', which I discuss in the last section of this chapter.

My respondents make assumptions about filmmakers relying on a different financing model than theirs. Many of those who have built their careers climbing up in TV believe that only independently rich people can afford to not seek TV commissions. As Sam soberly remarks, 'TV at least pays'. Lisa made her first independently funded feature documentary in 2016, crowdfunding part of it, but she did so after years of working for TV. Not being 'from a rich background', she describes her situation when she moved to London from the North years prior to that as such: 'I really did have to just get work. I couldn't really sit around and do the indie route straight away.' She feels that initially she didn't have 'the luxury of choosing' what projects she worked on. Sam finds it 'funny' when some people explain why they don't pitch for TV by saying: "I can't bear to submit myself to demands of the commissioner" (this is the phrase she uses, quoting or paraphrasing some people she talked to). Having made one short film for Channel 4, Bettina mentions 'a set of rules and expectations' and indeed complains that 'you have to submit yourself to certain things'. Linda has never worked on a TV commission but she mentions her friends' stories of 'immense' editorial control and 'enormous' compromises required of the filmmaker as stopping her from considering it. Danielle and Bettina, and to some extent Jacqui, say they wouldn't be able to secure a TV commission as the current commissioning process requires a detailed breakdown of the anticipated film

already at the initial meetings, which they are not able to provide as they don't know it themselves.

However, despite the myth of an independently wealthy indie filmmaker, those of my respondents who do not seek TV commissions tend to worry about their financial situation. Bettina names finances as the biggest challenge independent filmmakers face. Although her latest film screened in the major international film festival, she emphasises that critical acclaim does not necessarily result in financial security: 'I still have no money to afford to open it up to finish the sound work,' she tells me in the interview. Danielle and Farrin consider themselves 'lucky' to own their flats as this cuts their cost of living. Theresa has tenants living in her big house so she can supplement her TV commissions: she adds extra time to research and edit stages, using her professional position to negotiate unusually long production periods with broadcasters (which are not funded). Danielle has no children and she says it helps her work the way she wants to: 'I don't have to feed anybody else.' None of the five respondents who usually fund their projects independently has any dependants and Lisa admits that her giving up broadcast work seriously influences her thinking on whether to have a child. In Chapter Six I discuss working on TV commissions as a solution preferred by working mothers. Frances, who has experience of both models, describes the independent one as 'knitting together the patchwork quilt of funding' as opposed to getting a large sum of money from one source. She remarks that the amount of time and energy invested in the search is sometimes not worth the secured amount. But for Kathryn, giving each funder 'just a small piece of the pie' guarantees that 'they don't have that much control'. Roberta also praises 'varied funding', saying: 'it gives you more freedom, because there's not one commissioner who can then try and control what you do because the money is coming from all over the place'.

Those respondents who do not move from one TV commission to another supplement their income with working on other people's films or commercial media projects. Academic teaching is also a popular solution of securing a regular income, different from precarious ways of being paid as independent filmmaker. Tina especially appreciates this aspect of teaching but also mentions the struggle to keep it part-time so

she has time for pursuing her own creative projects. Bettina admits she teaches too much, just to be able to pay her bills ('I like teaching but it's killing me,' she says) and working on her films in her 'spare' time. 'I work all the time. I never take time out,' she says. Farrin also notices the danger of total commitment to creative projects with unpredictable and irregular payments, which is 'all-consuming' as 'you never really switch off'. Farrin and Ethel say they often forgo holidays. Recalling the stress of funding one of her films completely independently, when she 'maxed out her credit cards', Frances talks about 'auto-exploitation' of indie filmmakers, not only documentarians, who 'end up not paying themselves in order to pay other people'. She adds that 'making career out of that can be incredibly difficult and incredibly stressful'. Jacqui at the time of our interview was a full-time university teacher, following a couple of years after graduating from film school when she was 'boshing out' two or more projects a year, 'on no money, almost dying'. Although Jacqui's main professional activity is now teaching, she highlights that it gives her headspace to work on her own projects. Linda had had an established fine art practice for ten years before she started making documentaries and she admits the former remains her main source of income. It is clear that most of my respondents who only pursue the projects they author and which they are absolutely committed to cannot 'afford it' in the traditional sense of being able to comfortably cover their living costs with money they already have. Some of them choose a relatively low standard of living or have a skewed work/life balance only to be able to make this kind of work. I believe that precarious ways of living should be considered in a model of authorship that goes beyond the analysis of the authorial voice detectable in the film text.

In the context of applying for funding, the issue of artistic autonomy becomes the question about how much a filmmaker is prepared to modify their project to suit the expectations of a funding body. As discussed, some respondents find it difficult to pitch their projects anywhere as their process requires an open-minded approach more popular in the arts funding, where the applicant is allowed to be unsure about the final result. Eight respondents admit they strategically modify their pitches, depending on the funder's profile. Such strategic pitching can be subversive: Wendy and Theresa give examples of 'selling' their ideas to British TV channels framed in a way acceptable for the broadcaster and then making the film they wanted to make (which in Theresa's case

ended with a falling out with Channel 4's executives). Gina thinks about 'how to sell' her ideas and says that when pitching to TV one needs to be 'realistic' about what can get commissioned. Frances tries to pitch 'things that are fundable and commissionable', saying: 'I'm not gonna take them something that they don't want, it would be waste of everybody's time'. But she admits that this pragmatic strategy can be counterproductive when taken to extremes:

[T]here was this period of time when I came up with an idea, or a half-formed idea, and I would kill it in my own head really quickly because I'd be like, nobody's gonna commission that. I can't think of who's gonna fund that. So I wouldn't even try, wouldn't give it the time to develop into something.

Zoellner (2009: 513) confirms that this type of auto-censorship has been recently more common among the filmmakers as competition for the diminishing number of single documentary slots grows. In this depressing scenario, commissioning editors only hear pitches that match their personal preferences and slot requirements so the system auto-regulates, preventing diversity and innovation. On the other hand, six women in my sample declare they would never tweak their pitch to please the funder, including Roberta, quoted in the beginning of this chapter as saying she'd rather work at Tesco's than do that. Despite this uncompromising approach, she has done work predominantly for TV and she recalls two situations when she stood by her version of broadcast documentary despite the repeated threats she would 'never work for television again'. Her experience challenges the simplistic equating of broadcast work with giving up on individual expression and creative autonomy, but it also comes from a specific period of British public service broadcasting. If public arts funding, as advocated by Bettina, allows the artist/filmmaker to take bigger risks as the funded project does not need to make profit, then arguably the highly individualistic model of commissioning which reigned among British public service broadcasters until the early 2000s shares at least some of the features of that model (although some rules of TV production could not be bypassed). Before discussing the special relationship that some of my respondents had with their commissioning editors in the past, I present my respondents' opinions on why TV commissions are worth getting in general.

'Bigger money, easier money': getting TV commissions

Most of my respondents, including those who only fund their projects independently, agree that in financial terms a TV commission is 'great' (Barbara) and a 'huge help' (Linda), as a relatively large sum of money is made available to the filmmaker from the start of the project. Being able to get commissioned regularly made documentary filmmaking a sustainable way of making a living for many of my respondents, also enabling regular work routines which make it feasible to work when having young children, which I discuss in Chapter Six. Frances calls broadcast money not only 'bigger' but also 'easier' as compared to obtaining small bits of funding from many sources, because there's 'just one person' you need to convince of the viability of your idea. She refers to the TV commissioning model, which doesn't exist anymore, in which commissioning editor indeed had the power to make an executive decision on a pitched film. In 1982 Channel 4 was set up as a broadcaster-publisher with no in-house production units and the remit to outsource all production to external bodies, originally filmmakers' cooperatives referred to as 'workshops'. The job of commissioning editors, appointed to cover different areas of society/culture, was to select the best ideas pitched to them for funding. In the late 1970s, my respondent Tamsin was part of the workshop movement which helped negotiate the 1982 Workshop Declaration, an agreement between the Independent Filmmakers Association (IFA), British Film Institute (BFI) and the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT)⁴⁴ allowing independent filmmakers' workshops to make films and TV programmes without stepping on the toes of established trade unions and their members (Holdsworth 2017).⁴⁵ The first eight years of Channel 4 documentary programming (1983-1991) showcased passionately political and experimental works, including a film by my respondent Roberta, mixing documentary footage with dramatic re-enactments and bold cinematography. In the BBC, both ideas and production were generated in-house until the 1990 Broadcasting Act

⁴⁴ ACTT was a union for ITV employees while the BBC staff had their separate union, ABS.

⁴⁵ Lee (2018) provides a critical view of long-term consequences of the creation of the indie system, noticing that the process from the beginning had 'a strong focus on entrepreneurialism and free-market economic liberalism' (172). Rather than increasing diversity of programmes, giving the audience a bigger choice, it 'resulted in a higher degree of uniformity as broadcasters struggled to maintain and grow audience share' (*ibid.*)

stipulated that at least 25% of original programmes broadcast by the BBC and ITV must come from external producers; by 1991 over a half of original content on BBC and ITV was produced by indies (Lee 2018: 38).⁴⁶ Subsequently, the corporation also introduced the role of ‘commissioning editor’, but some of my respondents worked directly with channel controllers in the beginning of their BBC careers. Commenting on the new layers of management in the editorial chain of command added in the BBC throughout the years, Wendy says she doesn’t understand ‘why they need teams and teams of commissioners’ for the same number of broadcast hours to fill. Some respondents with established position and strong professional networks mention the instances of approaching channel controllers directly, bypassing a commissioning editor even when there was one in place, cutting through what they saw as unnecessary red tape. The special position of established TV directors allowed them to have creative negotiations with commissioning editors when pitching their films. The majority of my respondents make ‘authored’ documentaries, which are not a form of ‘extended reportage’, the description historically disparaging TV documentaries, as discussed in Chapter Two. The commissioning editor’s input, and indeed their creative ‘voice’, can be seen as adding a personal dimension to the faceless authoring function of TV channel, discussed in Chapter Two, which lies in ‘augmenting’ the work of others to promote its own brand.

Special relationship

Those of my respondents who established themselves as directors of authored TV documentaries from the late 1980s to the early 2000s, both at Channel 4 and the BBC, describe their relationship with commissioning editors as mutually respectful and creatively enriching or at least satisfying. Some of them were art school or film school graduates and others followed the TV apprenticeship route. Barbara feels that in this period it was possible for TV documentary directors to be treated like artists whose authorial voice was respected. That was mirrored by the schedules which featured several ‘serious documentary series which came with prestige guaranteed’, drawing ‘the best young producers and directors and researchers’, as remembered by a managing director interviewed by Lee (Lee 2018: 183). Especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, creative freedom granted to directors could be immense. Roberta, describing her first

⁴⁶ Lee quotes the number of indies in 1991 at 668.

commission for Channel 4 in 1988, says she wanted to make a documentary about a small Northern town with recently decommissioned steelworks but all she pitched to the commissioning editor was a very cinematic opening shot of the film, inspired by a classic noir. ‘He said, “Oh, that sounds great”,’ recalls Roberta. ‘Literally, on saying that, and I had £40,000 and I made the film, and [commissioning editor’s first name] didn’t see it until it was finished.’ This sounds like the time when Bettina would have wanted to make films for British TV. Subsequently Roberta made more TV documentaries and commissioning editors gave her occasional ‘helpful comments’ rather than ‘minute notes on what to do’. The relationship between a filmmaker and commissioning editor used to be very personal: Lucy, who started getting Channel 4 commissions also in the late 1980s, says that she didn’t feel like she was dealing with the channel as the institution but rather with individual commissioning editors who were ‘really wonderful’: ‘every one of them was brilliant, nice’, she says, calling them by first names. Iona praises the ‘maverick people’ still commissioning in the early 2000s, both for Channel 4 and the BBC. She says they were industry experts not afraid to take creative risks and understanding the importance of cultivating relationships with filmmakers who were trusted to deliver quality material and given the freedom to do it, also when it comes to production schedule.

From the filmmakers’ perspective, the concentration of power in the hands of one person, who often stayed in the role for many years, had both good and bad sides. Tamsin appreciated that Channel 4 commissioning editors’ executive power allowed her to have ‘a really intense and creative conversation’ with them when pitching. Recalling her first TV commission, granted by a BBC controller, Kathryn emphasises the personal dimension of this dynamic, saying: ‘He was commissioning me, he absolutely commissioned me’. Both her and Gina understand that sometimes being commissioned was not about them or their project as much as it was about the commissioning editor’s life situation, like having a child of certain age or being recently divorced, which resonated with the subject of the pitched film. But when only one person makes the decision, the fate of the finished film and its author can be changed by their departure. Theresa jokingly calls herself ‘a favourite flavour of the month at Channel 4’ for a while who later fell out of favour; Frances describes her trajectory, also at Channel 4, ‘from

being golden child who could do whatever they wanted to totally untouchable'. After she finished a documentary series for the channel, the director of programming changed, which resulted in many people, including her commissioning editor, being replaced. As the new team didn't like the project, it got 'buried' in the schedule. It was broadcast at 11:30pm instead of 8pm, which affected the film's reception and, by extension, Frances' next career move.

When this close relationship works well, commissioning can be seen as being 'about good ideas', as declared by Becky and Theresa and repeated in the literature on the subject (de Jong, Knudsen, and Rothwell 2012: 45) or being, as Dot calls it, 'an exchange of ideas'. Even Farrin, generally concerned about the limitations of TV as an exhibition place for the political documentaries she works on, admits that commissioning editors 'can bring in a lot of positive things to stories'. Roberta, most of the time uncompromising, praises the commissioning editor's input to one of her films, which she believes made it more accessible to the audience. Still, the nitty-gritty of these intense exchanges can be tough. 'I've had loads of pressure, masses of pressure, and loads of arguments, not unpleasant arguments but debates about what a film should be,' admits Evelyn. She says that by being stubborn she always managed to 'protect her baby' and notices that in the end of the day it is the filmmaker who cares about their project more than a TV executive. 'They're annoying and they make you write and rewrite and rewrite things,' agrees Toni. But other respondents mention unhelpful suggestions by commissioning editors, often trying to make the film conform to the preferred format, especially the demands to add explanatory voiceover or intertitles. Some recall bad experiences, for example Gina describes as 'horrendous' negotiating of the cut of a politically sensitive film for the BBC, which she links to the channel's commitment to impartiality. Theresa was so appalled with the way the commissioning editor treated her contributors that she stopped pitching to that particular strand.

While presenting the relationship with a commissioning editor as highly individualised means that disagreements can be viewed as personal creative conflicts, numerous respondents complain about unwanted pressure from executive producers and other employees of production companies who have a more corporate agenda. Sam and

Kelly had bad experiences in the UK and Frances, Lucy and Kathryn in the US, where the commissioning model with a long top-down chain of people who authorise creative decisions and numerous middlemen liaising between the channel and the filmmaker, has been in place for a long time. Many of my established respondents believe that the old model they knew in the UK also gave way to this new, corporate one.

Changes in documentary commissioning: the end of the affair

In his opinion piece for *The Observer* written in 2000, ex-TV producer Karl Sabbagh comments on the shift in approach to documentary commissioning he starts noticing at Channel 4: 'Tim Gardam, the director of programmes, has been heard to say that he is not very interested in ideas that come from outside', writes embittered Sabbagh, adding that Gardam 'wants his commissioning editors to have the ideas and select tame production companies to make them' (Sabbagh 2000). Acknowledging that generating ideas in-house worked for years for the BBC, he differentiates between knowledgeable programmers and commissioning editors of the yesteryear and contemporary corporate types who 'know about nothing except television itself' (*ibid.*). Similarly, those of my respondents who have been working for a long time also notice the gradual corporatisation of British public service broadcasters, which has made it more difficult to get commissions in recent years. Lucy states matter-of-factly that 'Channel 4 isn't funding films anymore. They don't make films, they make sort of things like MasterChef.' Tamsin notices the diminished power of a Channel 4 commissioning editor who 'no longer has the right just to approve something' and says the process became more bureaucratic, like in the BBC or ITV, with a string of meetings and a long time to get the reply. Roberta, who at the time of the interview was sixty-seven and has been working for British TV channels for more than thirty years, summarises the changes thus:

It used to be you'd have an idea, somebody from TV would give you the money to do it, and then you'd make the film and it would come out. That isn't the world that we live in anymore, unless you want to make factual entertainment and those kind of things, or those sort of rig shows. I'm not interested really.

Her opinion confirms the aforementioned advice issued by de Jong and her co-authors to the aspiring filmmakers. Lucy complains that all the commissioning editors she

worked with in Channel 4 left, and Gina says she has lost '[her] people at the BBC', mostly due to promotions ('Everyone I work with ends up running a channel', she complains). Some of Evelyn's contacts who still do the job often apologise these days for not commissioning her projects, saying: "It's quite difficult for us to find a slot for what you want to do", which can be the result of the trend noticed by Roberta above, prioritising factual entertainment and fixed rig shows. Some of my respondents feel that despite the broadcasters' occasional ostensible calls for 'original stories' and 'new voices' (in the interviews, press releases or on the official 'What we commission'-style web pages), the programming slots for single authored documentaries are few and far between. Evelyn and Theresa agree that commissioning editors hired in the new corporate spirit do not stay on the job long enough to build meaningful relationships with filmmakers which were the core of the old model. This makes sense in the 'formatted' media landscape, where all 'factual' programmes are supposed to follow established patterns: both people who make them and who commission them should be easily replaceable. Big indies employ development teams that research stories and pitch their ideas to the channel, choosing the director and the rest of the crew only after getting a commission. The 'special' relationship survives but is now not between director and commissioning editor but between the latter and the indie's executives. Zoellner's case study (2009) suggests that after a good rapport is built between one of the indie's chief decision-makers and the commissioning editor, the latter extends their trust onto the entire production company and its employees. This worked out for my youngest respondent Felicity, who directed her first documentary (as a director for hire) thanks to the head of her indie who drew on the company's long relationship with the channel to recommend her for the job. Unlike an individual filmmaker, who normally has a limited scope of interests and collaboration possibilities, a production company can cultivate their relationship with a commissioning editor even after they move to another slot or even change a channel (Zoellner 2009: 515-16), as long as the indie keeps its factual slate fairly big. As the personal relationship got replaced with a more mass-production approach, the trust in a filmmaker's ability to deliver quality film in agreed time just because of their track record gave way to the requirement of knowing exactly what the finished film will be at the stage of pitching. Jacqui reports from hearsay that even old-timers are now expected to offer detailed scene-by-scene breakdowns to young commissioning editors. Some

respondents who are established TV directors say they are planning to look for other sources of funding rather than risk such treatment.

However, announcing TV as no longer relevant for established women documentarians in my sample would be premature. More than a half of my respondents have had a new film broadcast on a British network channel in the three years I have been working on my project: a mixture of commissions and acquisitions (by *Storyville* or regional BBC channels). However, only a few respondents remain optimistic about their ability to rely on TV commissions in the future, both because of the described changes and because older filmmakers like Gina and Theresa feel their ideas are too 'old-fashioned' to fit in with new commissioning trends. They both do not feel they would be able to, and don't want to, change the way they work, so they consider looking for alternative sources of funding or maybe even retiring (Theresa). On the other hand, Roberta, in her late sixties, has been reinventing herself as a filmmaker and artist throughout her career and is not planning to stop, telling me enthusiastically about a YouTube channel she is helping set up.

While it seems obvious that TV money is no longer that 'easy' for an individual filmmaker with original ideas, another question is whether it is also not 'big' money anymore. Echoing numerous opinion pieces in the industry press, Theresa, Wendy and Kathryn talk about 'diminishing TV budgets'. Wendy says she has been moving from one BBC channel to another for years now, chasing bigger budgets; Theresa supplemented money from BBC Two with grants from two charities for her last project, completed in 2017; despite an outstanding track record, Lucy had to finance her last documentary abroad, although it was subsequently acquired by the BBC. But putting things into perspective, Toni points out that in the era of in-house production, the BBC budgets were not 'real' as they were not checked against market value of TV production. Dot, one of the youngest in my sample and still to direct a sixty-minute TV documentary, disputes this common knowledge, insisting that 'actually budgets are still pretty high and healthy in TV documentaries'. As an emerging filmmaker, she struggles with 'a conservative climate over the kind of subjects that are getting tackled and the directors that are getting chosen'. This may suggest that the budgets for authored singles are getting smaller as the money gets re-routed to formatted series or to films with strongly defined, easily recognisable style or featuring celebrity presenters. And yet, the indie Felicity and Becky

work for (the latter as head of its regional chapter) is a rare example of a company thriving in the new commissioning landscape while producing hard-hitting social issues documentaries. Felicity recognises that the indie's commissioning luck 'ebbs and flows', but she still declares: 'We certainly haven't ever struggled with commissions. If anything we've had more documentaries in the last two years commissioned than ever before'. She is aware of the company's niche position, however, and admits she has not worked long enough to be able to make comparisons with the past situation. Becky, with much longer filmmaking experience, says she hasn't found television 'very prescriptive' but this may be because she has 'just made a niche' for herself.

Those of my respondents who started getting TV commissions in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s claim to have had a large degree of creative freedom in their practice and talk about their broadcast work as generally allowing them to express themselves and leave the authorial mark on their films. This is different from the current climate in which young people (not in my sample though) abandon 'earlier more "artistic" ambitions' and see 'matching a programme idea to broadcaster requirements as a "creative challenge" rather than as an artistic limitation' (Zoellner 2009: 530). But while this change can be seen as the sign of gradual corporatisation of British public broadcasters, peaking now, Barbara emphasises the emotional price she feels she has always paid for negotiating with commissioning editors from the 1990s onwards. Her last broadcast documentary was commissioned in 2009 as she admits that after years of pitching she got 'very tired with negotiating with broadcasters'. 'It's exhausting, trying to hold on to integrity of the work, at the same time deliver something that they will be happy with,' she says, challenging the idyllic picture of working with like-minded commissioning editors that I have painted so far. Moreover, making broadcast work has always meant certain artistic compromises because of the rules governing broadcast production that couldn't be changed, which I will discuss in the following section.

Production choices influenced by the context of production

Besides influencing creative ideas about the film's content and style, which are part of its traditionally understood 'authoring' function, the channel also has a say about a number of practical decisions in the production process. This explains why applying the auteur theory which assumes that all audiovisual aspects of the finished film are controlled by its director can be difficult in the broadcasting context. The degree to which TV channels control production process has changed in the last forty years, especially in the BBC and ITV which started with large in-house production units and trade unions watching over crew members' appointments. Although they now outsource the majority of their production to indies, according to some of my respondents the channels still control certain aspects of the process, for example by pressuring indies for certain appointments.

Choice of collaborators

Those respondents who worked for the BBC in the 1980s and 1990s recall the large crews whose size was dictated by shooting on film and controlled by the unions (ACTT for ITV technicians and ABS for the BBC staff). Before the 1982 Workshop Declaration, discussed previously, the 'closed shop' model of employment in the UK film and television industry meant that only union members could get a job. As Tamsin points out, this process was circular as to get the union ticket one needed a job in film or TV. Union members' salaries were uniform within the grade and pre-agreed on, and unions pushed for employment of as many members as possible. On a positive note, union members would only work a certain amount of hours a week, a far cry from today's overworked freelancers (who wouldn't have, however, gotten the job back then). In one of the chapters of anthology *Rethinking Documentary* (Austin and de Jong 2008), TV director Marilyn Gaunt recalls documentary crews of eight in 1978, adding that 'if very large lights were used, you had to have a spark for each light' (Gaunt 2008: 158). Toni and Kelly in the 1980s worked with a crew of six people, which they both say was not ideal in the situations where a more intimate setting was required. Unionised technicians would also take regular breaks, sometimes disregarding the shoot's flow. The combination of technological changes,

including the switch to digital shooting (Becky says that her 2002 BBC documentary was one of the last ones shot on film for TV) and relatively smaller budgets means that some of my respondents drastically changed the way they work. Wendy, a non-shooting director who only quit the BBC shortly before our interview, has been working with three or even two people on location: a cameraman (the same one on twenty-three films), a sound recordist and an AP if the budget allows it. Kelly currently makes films only with a cameraman, both of them doing sound, and hiring a sound recordist only occasionally. When considering the films made by my respondents in past ten-fifteen years, there isn't much difference in crew size between production of TV commissions and independently funded films. Some of my respondents express the view that especially the preference for self-shooting directors pushes broadcast documentary production towards a 'one-person band', similar to independent DIY filmmaking.

Although production of broadcast documentaries has been outsourced to independent production companies, my respondents say that TV channels often reserve the right to control the appointments of creative workers. Felicity and Dot, two youngest directors in my sample, mention the circulation of 'lists' of directors approved by a given channel, so when the indie gets a commission for a project without specifying the director upfront, someone who is not on the list stands a small chance of getting hired. It seems that because one gets added to the list based on track record, preferably with the commissioning channel, this situation bears an uncanny resemblance to the vicious circle of trade union 'tickets'. The existence of such lists disrupts yet again the ideal picture of meritocracy and 'open market' of creative labour predicated on the notion that the best person gets the job. 'It wouldn't surprise me if there more men on these lists,' muses Felicity, suggesting it could explain why she sees more men than women directing documentaries for TV. Dot recalls the upsetting situation in which, working as head of development for an indie, she put together a shortlist of directors she saw as appropriate to tackle a film about 'the relationship between gay community and the police'. Expressing her disappointment, she says: 'The commissioning editor at BBC came back with— basically he only wanted to hear the names of straight white men'. Gina recalls her conversations with 'younger women producers' working for Channel 4, who are 'developing the story, talking with the contributors, often working on the structure and

the narrative' but are kept from being allowed to direct as 'the people that are really getting the films at the moment in Channel 4 tend to be men'. Felicity and Dot say that some commissioning editors also have preferred editors they want to hire regardless of the director's opinion.

The respondents with experience of mostly non-broadcast projects can freely choose their collaborators but in practice this decision can be restrained by a small budget. Farrin, who has produced independent documentaries, says that 'sometimes it's a luxury to have a team'. Jacqui, who always works on her own, sees having a sound recordist as 'quite a luxury I would kill for'. Normally self-funding her projects, she truly is a one-woman band, sometimes also editing her material, and she would like a collaborator both for the sake of film's quality and to have some company:

Just to have someone with you who's seen everything that you've seen. At the end of the shooting day, you go and have a beer and be like, that was interesting, that happened. Did you notice this thing happened in the--? Just having someone who's there but also getting you the best sound.

Danielle, who shot her first documentary feature on her own, expresses a similar sentiment saying it is crucial to have someone to give you support and 'to also validate what you're doing'. Toni, who moved from large TV crews with DPs shooting on film to shooting on her own, also misses the companionship and 'that wonderful collaborative sense'. It is a delicate balance between freedom to make a film on one's own, on a minimal budget, and benefitting from creative collaborations with other professionals. Not being able to afford to pay collaborators can influence the project in a similar way that being forced to work with certain people does.

Self-shooting

As discussed in Chapter Four, self-shooting is part of the ethos of 'purist' observational filmmaking, to the point where the filmmaker and her camera can be seen as one (Dineen 2003). On the other hand, in the context of TV documentary production the status of self-shooting is a prime example of an institutionally controlled factor, changing with time just like crew sizes. As described in Chapter Four, the accepted route to directing

documentaries in the BBC and ITV was normally followed by respondents with no camera skills. As unionised cameramen needed work (there were hardly any women working as camera operators in the BBC studios), there was no incentive for TV directors without film school training to learn the craft. After the 'closed shop' opened and digital cameras entered the scene, shooting became cheaper and relatively easier to learn, at least at a basic level, so removing the experienced cameraperson from the crew became a popular way to cut costs. The majority of my TV-trained (that is, originally non-shooting) directors, with the exception of Becky, Kelly, Wendy and Theresa, now shoot their own material digitally, embracing the freedom to pursue more projects in a flexible and cheaper manner. For Gina, the amount of self-shooting she did on a single project grew with time: in the course of making her last three BBC documentaries, she went from shooting 50% to 90% of her material.⁴⁷ Roberta shot her last three TV-commissioned documentaries herself and Toni is now a 'one-woman band', both of them having worked with large crews shooting on film in the beginning of their careers. On the other hand, Lisa, who had to learn to shoot during her TV ascent, simply says: 'I hate it. Because I feel it limits my ability to make good films.' Therefore, when directing her own feature with independently raised budget she hired a professional DP to ensure a high quality of image and be able to focus fully on directing. Frances, the NFTS graduate, also says she hires a DP when she can afford it. These examples confirm that the type of filmmaking prevailing in the training context does not determine my respondents' future work. It is important to note, however, that when working on TV commissions many of my respondents had to follow whatever rules were in place, either working with big crews regardless of the intimacy of filmed situations or having to learn how to shoot even if they preferred not to.

There is a difference, however, between the older filmmakers in my sample who learnt to shoot after years of collaborating with DPs and young people entering TV now who face the choice to film or to perish. The former add camera skills to their rich experience of directing successful broadcast documentaries, while the latter learn to shoot after hours, like Felicity who relied on online materials or short filmmaking courses,

⁴⁷ This is echoed in the aforementioned account by Marilyn Gaunt, who between 2000 and 2004 went from having a professional cameraman to shooting an entire film herself (Gaunt 2008: 159).

at the same time as they learn the grammar of broadcast programme-making. New job titles have appeared, like 'self-shooting AP [assistant producer]' and 'DV director', for people shooting on the ground who are not credited as 'directors of photography' nor 'directors'. Some of more experienced filmmakers in my sample heavily criticise these practices, both because of the overwhelming volume of low-quality material generated in the process (Roberta, Wendy) and because it creates a curious situation in which the person credited as a director only supervises the edit. Felicity explains that these 'directors' do not meet the contributors nor shoot anything, but merely 'stitch together' material provided by 'shooters' on the ground, credited as 'self-shooting APs'. While Caldwell (2013: 349) recognises the agency of below-the-line workers who may not want the individual creative credit for their job, in the context of documentary authorship it seems that certain people are pushed into 'technical' roles without due recognition rather than choosing this positioning, and some of my respondents suggest this division of labour tends to be gendered. Prioritising the contributors' feelings, Roberta calls the situation in which director has never met them 'amoral': 'You're holding people's lives in your hand; at least you should have the courage to actually face up to it if they're not happy or they feel betrayed or whatever it is,' she says.

All of my respondents who shoot their own material at least occasionally emphasise the freedom and flexibility it gives them. At the same time, most of those who learnt shooting themselves admit their camera skills are not as good as those of professional cinematographers so their choice to shoot themselves depends on the nature of the project. Talking about two films she shot herself, Roberta admits that a professional DP 'would have shot it much better'. She further explains why this compromise was worth it: 'I was able to do things and be in places that I don't think I could have been with a full crew.' Initially, Theresa wanted a first-person documentary about her mother to be shot by her AP, but her mother started chatting to the man she didn't know, 'performing and showing off', so Theresa shot the entire film herself (it is the only one in her *oeuvre*). Roberta notes that 'what you do get with the self shooting thing is time'. Working on TV commissions, she could save some of her budget by not hiring a DP.

Other aspects of production process controlled by TV

Another practical aspect of production controlled by a broadcaster mentioned by my respondents is the length of time granted to a production company or a freelance filmmaker to complete the project. Compared to independent projects that sometimes take a very long time (up to ten years for Bettina, four-five years for Farrin and Ethel), the turnover in TV is relatively short: three-six months at most. It is ironic that while the current requirement for TV directors to film themselves seems to encourage a kind of observational mode, they are not given enough time to follow the story and watch it unfold properly. Many respondents notice that too little time in post-production can negatively impact the results of filmmaker's creative process. They agree that when commissioning editor or executive producers do not trust a filmmaker, they demand to see rushes or a very early cut. Kelly says that because of added layers of control, so many people need to see the film before it's approved that there is pressure to show a 'not viewable' rough cut. She says that some commissioning editors and executive producers like boasting about 'saving' films which they had seen in this early stage, when they were 'full of black holes or very raggedy or boring', and then 'sorted them out'. She insists filmmakers should be given more time to finish their projects. Kathryn agrees that showing the film too early is a bad idea as executives 'get worried and they start giving terrible solutions', and Theresa says that 'if you let them in early and you haven't quite cracked it, it's a recipe for disaster'. She simply states: 'I don't let anyone see the film until I'm happy with it even if that means delaying views'. It is, however, her track record and working through her own production company that give her leverage unavailable to less experienced filmmakers, including the ones hired by indies. Even recently she has succeeded in negotiating a year to deliver one of her BBC commissions, spreading her budget thin and sometimes supplementing it with her own money. TV documentary director Marilyn Gaunt, who started her career in the late 1970s, criticizes the current instances of 're-editing and re-scoring films after the director has left the scene' (Gaunt 2008: 160) although my respondents do not mention such drastic practices.

Conclusion

My respondents' opinions about external factors influencing their creative choices presented in this chapter make it clear that making broadcast work, which majority of them do, substantially influences the filmmaker's creative process. Their accounts also present British broadcasting as a dynamic context of production changing through time. This is made possible by the fact that my sample includes women filmmakers of different ages who worked for or collaborated with TV channels in different periods of time. The majority of my respondents are women between their mid-forties and late sixties who fit the business model of 'the individual self-employed filmmaker' (de Jong, Knudsen, and Rothwell 2012: 46). Pitching their films as directors to TV channels from the late 1980s to early 2000s, they benefited from a unique commissioning model in which they had their authorial voice recognised. Depending on their background and personality, some of them were able to negotiate exceptional treatment, allowing them both formal experiments and longer than usual production times. They describe this relationship mostly as a creative exchange of equal partners, not dissimilar from the way respondents who make non-broadcast work talk about their creative collaborations, discussed in Chapter Nine. As the commissioning and programming model started changing in British TV from the early 2000s, some of these filmmakers decided to seek alternative sources of funding but others continue making TV documentaries. Established directors like Theresa and Wendy can still draw on their outstanding track record and their TV-auteur status: Theresa says some commissioning editors may want 'a [Theresa's real name] documentary' and Wendy asserts that 'It says in the newspapers, [Wendy's real name]'s film'. Despite the reduced number of slots for 'singles', they had two and three films, respectively, broadcast on the BBC since 2015. For some who left TV, like Barbara, negotiating one's creative vision in the commercial setting is always draining. The changes to commissioning processes affected a few younger directors in my sample who find it more difficult to start directing their own material. Far from the creative freedom allowed to their more experienced colleagues, they face a structured system of appointments and more frequent restrictions of the films' format and style.

Those respondents who work in more unconventional ways do not want to compromise their vision by seeking approval of the final cut by a broadcaster and sometimes admit they probably wouldn't be able to secure a commission in the first place because of the way their creative process develops. But working without a commission can take its toll on independent filmmakers' wellbeing, which several of them openly admit. While it is impossible to quantify the impact of precarious living on authoring, I think it should be acknowledged when contrasting the alleged creative 'freedom' of independent filmmakers with restrictions placed on broadcast directors. Additionally, small budgets affect many creative decisions, especially bringing collaborators on board. As TV channels' requirements are changing, some of self-employed TV directors say they are being pushed towards a 'one-woman band' style of work, similar to that of independent filmmakers. They sometimes need to be a 'total filmmaker' doing everything on the project, which in the past was associated with independent or DIY filmmaking only and unthinkable at the time of eight-person documentary crews in TV, which some of my respondents experienced.

Besides documenting the changing ways in which British TV channels have influenced a documentarian's creative process in the past thirty years, my respondents' opinions presented in this chapter prove that the ideas of 'artistic freedom' and 'compromise' are subjective as each filmmaker's projects are conceived with different aims. Each of my respondents is positioned differently on the spectrum between understanding filmmaking as uncompromising artistic expression and as a way of making a living. Both these aspects are discussed in their gendered dimension in the following chapter, in which I present both how my respondents are perceived as creative agents because they are women and how their gender influences their everyday work.

Chapter 6: Being a woman director: gendering of creative labour

I do remember when somebody who was auditioning me for something, and they said— what was it they said? They said: "Are you very practical? For instance, do you like cooking?" and I thought, "They wouldn't say that to a guy." [laughs] I said: "No, I hate cooking. I'm really bad at it. But, I can load an Aaton⁴⁸ in twenty seconds flat," that kind of thing.

Tamsin

In this chapter I continue the investigation of how different aspects of the production process shape my respondents' authorship. While in Chapter Five I focused on how the decision to make broadcast work influences the content and form of the final cut, touching upon gendered aspects of the broadcasting environment only in passing, this chapter investigates how the fact that my respondents are women impacts their everyday creative labour. In Chapter Four I identified social origin as an important category intersecting with gender, and in this chapter gender intersects with pregnancy, motherhood and child caring responsibilities. I start from analysing how the early stages of motherhood impact my respondents' professional lives and then proceed to dispel the myth of 'pre-children women' as being treated equally to men in the workplace by discussing numerous examples quoted by my respondents of the obstacles they face in their everyday work even when not caring for young children. I move beyond listing the instances of gender-based discrimination my respondents experience towards an understanding how those everyday situations impact the process of documentary authoring.

⁴⁸ Aaton is a brand of French handheld camera popular among independent filmmakers.

Gender in 'meritocratic' creative workplace

So-called 'creative industries', introduced in Chapter Five, run on a myth of meritocracy, the idea that it is the best and the brightest who get the jobs that require creativity, initiative and brilliance. Perpetuating such ideas in a notoriously unregulated field makes it possible to gloss over material differences among creative workers (Littler 2017). In Chapter Four I indicated how various gatekeeping mechanisms prevent people from less privileged backgrounds from even entering the competition (for example, when an Oxbridge degree is an unarticulated requisite for the job). Although new creative workplaces are supposed to give employees 'freedom' and flexibility, some research suggests that 'the ostensibly detraditionalized cultural economy continues to play host to some markedly regressive traditional social structures' (Banks and Milestone 2011: 73), most prominently gender inequality and discrimination. Interestingly, women who achieved a degree of success working in creative jobs often disarticulate gender disadvantage when reflecting on their careers (Wreyford 2018). I have observed a similar tendency among some of my respondents who highlight the meritocratic nature of the filmmaking process, especially in television, calling it 'democratic' (Toni) and 'egalitarian' (Iona). They see themselves as individuals, unmarked by their gender, successfully navigating the highly competitive field. Becky says simply: 'I haven't ever found that I've been discriminated against because I've been a woman'. Lucy told me that my probing of gender-based discrimination is 'quite old-fashioned way of thinking', with a Western-centric bias. Roberta, a powerhouse fuelled by DIY spirit, refuses to indulge in a speculation how her career would have developed were she a man. Brushing off everyday sexism as an inevitable hurdle to jump over is part of this position, as is occasional blaming of other women for not being assertive enough. Aware that 'gender' is a category I'm investigating in my project, Roberta warns that her opinion 'might not be a very popular thing to say' as she goes on to compare women with men when it comes to career development: 'it's because the boys go and get it, and the girls still were thinking somebody is going to come and pat you on the head and say, "You're a very hard worker and you're very good. So, why don't I promote you?"'. Such a stance leaves little room for

consideration of any systemic issues, from society's gendered socialisation of children and perceptions of assertive women to concrete examples of workplace discrimination.

And yet, these accounts of meritocracy and 'gender-blindness' in British documentary filmmaking are countered by other respondents' experiences. While Theresa and Becky say that 'commissioning is about good ideas', other respondents whom I quote in Chapter Nine give examples of having been encouraged to make certain films, or to abandon others, because some stories and styles are gendered 'masculine' and others 'feminine'. Some of my respondents' accounts are also internally contradictory, similar to the woman screenwriters in Wreyford's study who 'played down the role their gender might play in their lack of success' (2018: 80) as they were quoting numerous examples of gendered experiences at work, mostly putting them at a disadvantage. For example my respondent Theresa, in her sixties, announces: 'For my generation I don't think being a woman has held me back' immediately after recalling an example of blatant sexism at her first job interview when she was told 'to get secretarial skills' rather than become a TV researcher. Theresa and other women in my study found ways to succeed in sexist work environments but their success does not make a discriminatory workplace fairer. Insisting on the alleged 'meritocracy' of a creative workplace while experiencing gender-based discrimination is often resolved by introducing a category of a 'pre-children' woman, which makes pregnancy and motherhood a widely accepted excuse for gender inequality. Wendy was 'pre-children' during 'this really interesting time' at the BBC in the 1980s, which makes her remember it as a period when nobody gave 'a damn whether you were male or female'. This approach, also echoed by Iona, normalises the discrimination of working mothers (even by working mothers themselves) and sees having children as solely woman's decision whose consequences she needs to work around. Theresa organised childcare for her daughter by any means necessary, finding it obvious to never admit to her colleagues to having a young child at home. Kathryn, who has made several award-winning feature documentaries with a young child, rejects 'sad mum stories' and advises women to 'just get on with it' and 'stop whining'. Further in this chapter I demonstrate that being able to 'make it work' often depends on external circumstances like a supportive family network or enough money to pay babysitters. What is missing from these accounts is the

acknowledgement of the fact that because caring for young children is gendered, it is impossible to divorce its impact on women's careers from their gender. Even more importantly, it becomes obvious that a 'meritocracy' structured to make it impossible to succeed for people of any gender who have caring responsibilities is hardly meritocracy.

Motherhood and filmmaking

When you have a small kid and you're a single mother, you have to earn money. It's a completely different situation when twenty years on, the kid is out there doing [their] own stuff.

Barbara

I think we get a sort of myth that we can make films and have families, that it could be a kind of part-time thing. I think some people can do that but I've never been able to do that. For me when you're making film that's all you're doing. You're not getting home at 3:30 to pick the kids up from school. It's an obsession.

Lucy

The two quotes I open this section with, positing documentary filmmaking as material necessity or all-consuming passion, evoke yet again the binary governing my consideration of women documentarians' authorship, an artist versus a creative worker, this time in the light of women's caring responsibilities. They also signal that, although all my respondents are women, their opinions on the relationship between having a filmmaking career and childcare responsibilities differ. The material conditions of caring for young children are influenced by the sphere of perceptions of professional women as mothers (and the employer's willingness to make concrete adjustments to work routines) and my respondents express varied opinions on these issues. Some admit to internalising stereotypes about women's nurturing role while others reject them, and this split does not ideally map onto the one between respondents who do and do not have children.

As signalled above, discussions about discrimination of women in the labour market tend to emphasise the biological fact of the majority of women's ability to bear children and quote it as the main reason for women's unequal treatment in the workplace. The maternal assumption affects all working women as the employers fear (or at least quote the fear) that any woman in reproductive age may at some point have a child and abandon her professional duties. Further, being a primary carer of young children is a gendered position, taken up by women more often than men for both material and discursive reasons. The job market's gender bias means that a mother's

male partner is likely to earn more money than her, which makes it a viable option for a woman to stay at home looking after her child. At the same time, many women who go back to work soon after giving birth see being a primary carer as fulfilling their duty to be a 'good mother', prescribed by society. The belief that 'the mother, and not the father, is responsible for childcare' (Smithson and Stokoe 2005: 156) results in the circulation of discursive category of 'generic female parent', which also means that single motherhood is far more common than single fatherhood. My research data confirms that being a carer of young children influences the career choices of those respondents who are mothers, even if only temporarily. On the other hand, some respondents who do not have children or have only one child quote their career choices as influencing this decision. These findings confirm the pertinence of 'gender' as analytical category for women documentarians' professional lives, which is one of the research questions my project seeks to answer.

Despite workplace discrimination against pregnant women and mothers (in terms of employment itself, pay, pay rise, promotion), the majority of women have no other option but to go back to work when their children are still quite young. Yet, few women working in creative industries, especially in top creative positions, have children, and early motherhood has become the acceptable reason to explain the lack of women in these roles (Gill 2014). 'Creative industries' rely on freelancers and are notorious for offering none or minimal employment benefits, including maternity leave. What makes my sample unusual and my findings especially valuable is the fact that fifteen of my respondents (58%) have children and that the majority of them kept working when having young children. One of my respondents was pregnant at the time of the interview and none of the respondents had a child younger than teenage. Four women declare having been single mothers at the time when their children were growing up, and several respondents declare being their family's main breadwinners. Because all my respondents are active documentarians, I do not account for those 'missing' from the industry because of childcare responsibilities but discuss my respondents' practical solutions that made it possible for them to keep working, tracking their influence on the authorship.

I was interested to find out how those women in my sample who had children managed to work creatively around them. Several respondents (in their sixties at the time of the interview) had their children very young. Roberta had her son when she was nineteen and only started making films when he was a teenager. When interviewed, she opposes the phrasing of my question which posits childcare as 'interfering' with a career:

[T]he worst thing is seeing children as somehow "interfering" with your career. How can that be? Actually, it's a really valuable experience...When you come back, you haven't been doing "nothing" during that period, you've actually been living and experiencing things that will give you a better understanding of the world.

While many mothers would wholeheartedly agree with this sentiment, the job market reality is that it is very difficult for women to go back to creative work after spending a year or two with their children. Iona remarks that this lack of provisions for mothers who want to go back to work as directors dampens the impact of widely publicised schemes for training young women filmmakers. Gina started making documentaries when she was in her forties, after her children grew up and she could take bigger professional risks. Before that, she worked as a producer, a job easier to combine with child caring responsibilities, but she says that when her children were very young she wasn't sure she'd be able to go back even to that job. Thinking she'd need 'a complete change of career', she studied law which renewed her interest in documentary with a new journalistic angle: 'Studying the law I got very interested in immigration law, Yarl's Wood, what was happening there.' Jacqui is in her thirties and doesn't have children. However, working with postgraduate students at university, she admits she is tempted to give women students that kind of advice: 'Get your Masters, go get pregnant, then wait fifteen years, start making films when you hit thirty-nine, that's how you do it'. She stops short of articulating her feelings and it seems highly unlikely that a significant number of aspiring women documentarians would follow that kind of advice, not least because in 2016 in England and Wales the average age of first-time mothers was 28.8 years, increasing from 28.6 in the year before (ONS 2017). Although several of my respondents only started making documentaries when their children were teenagers, they do not present this situation as a calculated, pragmatic choice.

Those women who kept working when taking care of young children generally talk of supportive male partners happy to split childcare arrangements and/or supportive family network, including mothers, sometimes conveniently located 'around the corner' (Iona), and sometimes au-pairs and nannies, although the last option is expensive and several respondents say they had to abandon it after a year or two or only use it in emergency. Tina's male partner has always been the primary carer and Kathryn declares always having 'parity of childcare' with her male partner, also a creative professional. No matter what their particular solutions, working mothers agree it is very hard to combine having young children with a filmmaking career; it means 'being exhausted all the time' (Evelyn) or 'a really uphill battle' (Frances). Some of my respondents who eventually went back to directing after their children got a bit older also admit to certain adjustments in the beginning which put their careers on hold. Kelly used to take her first child on a shoot with her but after the second one was born, she worked as a film and archive researcher for a year, not to be away too much. 'That held me back a bit', she admits. Toni describes an intense and long-lasting psychological effect having children had on her directing career, admitting it destroyed her self-confidence. Another option mentioned by my respondents is keeping the directing credit while settling for at times not as challenging projects as a director for hire. Because all my interviewees went back to making authored films, these solutions were temporary for them; many other women in the industry are not that lucky.

When it became obvious to me that those respondents who worked with young children in tow have mostly relied on TV commissions, I was initially convinced that many of them enjoyed the employee status and hence had access to benefits. However, as previously discussed, I subsequently found out that the majority of them worked for TV as freelancers. Only three of my respondents benefited from the BBC or ITV maternity leaves. Kelly, who got it twice, admits it was at least part of the reason why she wasn't looking for professional opportunities outside TV at the time. Olivia doesn't mention maternity leave but emphasises the importance of the stability of her job as a director of documentary arts series (for a digital TV channel) for her as a mother:

I probably wouldn't be doing that particular series if I didn't have children. It's because it is not stressful and I can finish at a set time. They let me work part-time so I can do my other

project around it. I need to have a job so it's great and it's interesting. But it's not groundbreaking. I wouldn't probably do it if I was just a single woman going around foraging on my own.

However, the majority of my respondents who were working mothers of young children, including single mothers, were not salaried employees of British TV channels entitled to maternity leave. TV commissions were attractive for them because of being granted a large sum of money upfront but they remained freelancers, typical of creative industries. Therefore, they had to work without a financial safety net within a framework which ostensibly champions universal unmarked 'talent' but in fact is skewed towards a self-sufficient worker with no caring responsibilities, available at all times to prove their commitment to the job. In practice, this ideal worker is a man, because of the assumption (the flipside of 'maternal assumption') that even if he is a father, his female partner will do the bulk of childcare. However, one of my important findings is that TV was an attractive place for working mothers also because of the type of documentaries that got commissioned.

In numerous accounts in my sample the link between scripted documentaries, television and being a carer of young children is made conspicuous. In Chapter Five I explained why for many years observational documentaries were not being made for the BBC and ITV (Channel 4 was different because of the immediate outsourcing of production). Observational filmmaking is presented by many of my respondents as a documentary mode impossible to practice with caring responsibilities, especially in its traditional ethnographic variety discussed in the context of the NFTS in Chapter Four, when the filmmaker is expected to stay with her subject for weeks or months to produce the best material. There is a good reason why Lucy calls this kind of filmmaking an 'obsession' and insists it cannot be done 'part-time'. In the world of British documentary there has been an interesting development when Molly Dineen quit making films after years of delivering acclaimed documentaries that normally required spending long periods of time with her subjects. She said in an interview that she chose to spend time with her children as she didn't feel OK delegating their care to others, adding: 'I have to be able to immerse myself totally, that's what I've learned, I realised I couldn't do it in a

half-baked way. It's not possible' (Brown 2003). However, Dineen's case is controversial among my respondents who emphasise her privileged situation (which Dineen herself admits in press interviews and during Q&As). She married an independently rich man and didn't need to make money from filmmaking, which is a luxury none of my respondents can afford.⁴⁹

I have discussed that many TV-commissioned documentaries tend to be scripted 'talking heads' films, featuring seated interviews alongside voiceover or some archival images, which both makes production feasible in the shorter timeframe and helps fulfil their 'educational' role. It is no wonder that mothers with young children prefer this more 'containable', as Iona calls it, way of working. As part of very first generation of self-shooting directors, she has alternated between different filmmaking modes when she had children: 'I can still be around a bit but I can choose the times when I'm around or not'. She confirms that 'if you're doing observational films that may have to be the case.' Wendy, mother of two, says she could have never become 'all embedded with a platoon in Iraq or a drug dealer in Mexico'. Many respondents mention the importance of not being away from their families for more than a week. Becky talks about having 'really firm boundaries' and says she was 'really choosy' about her projects when her children were little. Evelyn would take a week off work after each week away from her children when they were young. Some respondents prefer flexible solutions (Iona talks about working a shorter week, having a trusted AP on the ground on the remaining days) while others value a nine to five schedule which makes it easier to incorporate childcare duties. For example, Wendy says that 'if you finish work in a very disciplined way, and for years, you come back every night to put your kids in the bed'. But the fact that many of my respondents managed to secure TV commissions one after another, which gave them flexibility to combine work with familial commitments, is a testament to their unique position as established filmmakers. They were able to modify the usual TV production process which tends to be not 'family-friendly' because of 'the hours that you have to work, you're expected to go and live bloody miles away', as Theresa describes it. Pitching

⁴⁹ In 2018, Dineen made a documentary for the BBC, *Being Blacker*, after eleven years of filmmaking silence.

one's own project means the filmmaker can choose what type of documentary she makes and control the project's budget, which allows her to plan a structured workflow.

This privileged position is also time-specific. I discussed in Chapter Two that TV documentaries called 'observational' can include a small amount of observational footage, not requiring immersion, and that in the past TV directors never filmed their material. However, following the self-shooting revolution, the production of TV documentaries is now changing. It bears some resemblance to strictly observational mode, if only in time-investment and not the ethos. Sam, around forty and pregnant at the time of our interview, talks about being 'the contributors' bitch' who follows them, waiting for their stories to unfold. Talking to me, she was not sure whether she would be able to keep working the same way after giving birth to twins. Some accounts of the current TV production process confirm that it requires relentless readiness. Felicity, the youngest in my sample and 'born' self-shooter, says:

I don't have children so I don't know but I think it's definitely one of those elephants in the room. People often say, it's a young person's game, well, yes, I have all time in the world at the moment. Most of my job means dropping anything, going at the drop of the hat and working days and days away from home.

Her opinion confirms that seeking a TV commission has become a less likely choice for women filmmakers who want to have children. This goes hand in hand with the diminishing number of slots for authored documentaries, changes to the commissioning process and decline of the assured position of directors of singles, discussed in Chapter Five. Women directors have less flexibility in choosing their projects and the ways they deliver them. While self-discipline and planning are undoubtedly important, they are meaningless without the existence of concrete opportunities for women to work flexibly. Becky is the head of an indie that employs many women, including mothers. She insists that it's not affirmative action (she insists she chooses the 'best people') but also says:

I think it is important to give women opportunities in this role - in this industry. I think it's especially important to give women who've got children opportunities. So I have an office in [regional city] which is full of working mums all doing different roles.

As a woman boss with three children of her own, she understands the importance of being able to work in one's own time: 'What I say to all my teams, I say to everybody that works for me now I say, "I do not care when you work"'. This type of approach is a move towards true 'meritocracy', the system which recognises that to fully tap into creative potential of women who have young children it is necessary to make certain practical adjustments.

The fact that documentaries made by women who work part-time or flexibly have good ratings and enthusiastic critical response challenges the prevalent concept, built around the figure of an 'obsessed' director with no caring responsibilities, that only working long hours can result in a worthy cultural product. The accounts of my respondents prove that not all documentary projects require such a punishing regime and that it is possible to work flexibly and finish on time. Obviously, the insistence on working long, anti-social hours contradicts the alleged meritocracy of TV production yet again: if creative workers are to be judged only by the quality of the fruits of their labour, it should be up to them how they manage their (and their crews') time while working towards the deadline. But straying from the model of a 24/7 commitment often jeopardises woman director's chances of professional development by negatively impacting the way she is perceived. Iona, mother of two, who successfully directed for TV with young children, says that when 'you're basically doing your film slightly part-time and choosing some periods to spend with the kids, you immediately step off the ladder of being an absolute top director'. Treating part-time workers as second category employees, by no means exclusive to film and TV industries, is gendered as women work part-time more often than men. It can be difficult to convince commissioners that a director working part-time will not compromise the project's quality, which means that women are often pushed towards the roles other than directing, which I discuss below.

Being the competent director of a scripted talking-heads documentary demands a different type of commitment than making an observational documentary while 'embedded with a platoon in Iraq'. Theresa, who has been producing TV commissioned documentaries via her own indie for almost twenty years, contrasts her usual process with making one feature documentary with independent funding, saying is 'certainly less

stressful...I think making films is hard enough without adding unnecessary layers of stress'. As discussed, having young children often tips the scales towards the project which is more predictable, less time-consuming and closer to home. Therefore most of my respondents who seek mainly or only independent funding for their projects do not have children. Danielle values her self-sufficiency and freedom to travel and make films in any way she wants. Linda recognises that not having children is part of the price she paid for her 'creative professional freedom' but she feels happy about it, not regretting her choice. Danielle doesn't think the sacrifices she had to make would have been possible with young children. Ethel is full of admiration for her independent peers who make it happen with children, which she calls 'a whole another ball game', which is seconded by Lisa who says: 'I don't know how they do that', postponing the decision to get pregnant since she quit working for TV. Tamsin, now in her sixties, made a decision not to have children when she was younger because she didn't want to put her career on hold even for several years: 'I just did (sic) a film, a film, a film. I made a lot of films'.

While some independent filmmakers who don't have children find it hard to imagine adding children-related responsibilities to their already full plate, in my sample working mothers have a better work-life balance. Wendy, who has two children, asserts: 'I've never worked in summer holiday, I've never overrun an edit, I've never worked late into evening in an edit.' Olivia, a mother of two, who besides directing TV documentaries is also a freelance screenwriter, says: 'especially if you're in some creative field where there's procrastination involved, it can help you because there's no time for procrastination, you actually got to be more.' In contrast to working mothers maintaining strict boundaries between work and private life as described above, those who don't have children and work on independently funded projects talk a lot about work spilling over weekends and holiday, as their 'passion' takes over their lives. Dot, who has been moving between TV commissions and independent projects, shortly before our interview took up the position as head of development in an indie. She says:

I think that since I've taken this TV job, that's made me improve my work-life balance because when I work from home completely full time then I will allow work to completely take over I'm working till late at night, I work all over my weekends.

Working on TV commissions, more structured and predictable than long observational or experimental projects, can reduce work-related stress even when juggling filmmaking and childcare, especially with the right support network in place. While independent filmmakers are free to pursue projects that take longer time, require more immersion and often change in unpredictable ways, my respondents' accounts confirm that their work-life balance may suffer (although many of them would not use this phrase, for example Bettina sees life and work as one). The fact that some of my independent respondents mention their decision to not have children proves that the issue of motherhood is present in the professional lives of both women who have children and those who do not. For the former, having young children influenced the choice of films they were making; for the latter, the films they were making influenced the decision not to have children.

Even though TV commissions seem to be the preferred choice of working mothers, respondents who have children make different production decisions, correlating with the degree to which they internalised circulating opinions about the nature of motherhood and the role of women as mothers. Wendy feels strongly that 'if you have children then they're your responsibility' and she believes that 'the role of the mother was different from the role of a father'. 'I've internalised that somewhere along the way,' she admits, so even as the main breadwinner she could not justify going away for a longer period of time. Kelly says she chose to do archive research (rather than direct) for a year after her second child was born, but adds immediately: 'it wasn't exactly choice because you've got to look after your children'. Some mothers in my sample complain about external expectations they feel they are subjected to, not being trusted with any other choice than complete commitment to their offspring. Tina's female PhD supervisor suggested the former should go part-time not because of the poor quality of her work but because she had two children and a part-time university job at that time. 'She didn't know my husband is the primary carer, has always been, for my children, and I don't have to do that stuff', says Tina, before declaring: 'Don't fucking treat me like a walking vagina. I have other things going on. I have a brain here, too. I'm not just about my children.' While Wendy not only never left her children for more than a week but is also appalled by her male colleagues who did so, Frances recalls a situation when she wanted to go abroad for

a ten-day shoot when her child was seven months old. She felt confident about leaving her 'fully weaned' baby with her mother and was angered by a male colleague who tried to shame her during the production meeting. She comments on the gendering of the role of the child's primary carer: 'But the PA that I was taking on a trip who was a man had four children, one of whom was four months old and nobody ever said to him, "Don't you feel bad that you're abandoning your family for ten days?"' When saying that her career 'has suffered from the inability to put as much effort and time into it', Frances means concrete physical obstacles resulting from pregnancy or motherhood and not her perceptions of her role (for example, she mentions missing out on a job interview abroad because she couldn't get on a plane being seven months pregnant). Similarly, Tina describes her early motherhood thus: 'Your body conspires against you to leak the whole time'; she also brings up 'shitty maternity pay', another objective obstacle. Several respondents quote examples of delivering quality work despite such external expectations. Becky found out she was pregnant when directing her first documentary; she now has three children (the only woman in my sample with more than two) and is a successful award-winning documentary director and producer. Evelyn and Kathryn were commissioned by TV channels when pregnant. However, in Evelyn's case the channel's high-ranking male executive needed to reprimand the people from an indie who didn't want to give her the job because she was 'five or six' months pregnant. She feels she did 'a great job' with the film, including 'cut[ting] the bloody thing with the baby in a pram'. Kathryn recounts building the set for one of her video installations with her three-month-old child strapped to her back. Tina delivers the uncompromising creative mother's manifesto:

If you're a creative person of any kind you have to have a selfish kernel of cold ice in your heart which essentially says the work is the most important thing, that this work gets done. I totally believe in this project and it needs to be done. If you don't believe that, then you won't make the work.

Mothers in my sample perceive their motherhood differently, from having internalised some of the ideas about motherly sacrifice to being annoyed with people insisting on seeing them only through this lens. This diversity of opinions about what creative mothers can or should do paints a non-essentialist picture of motherhood among my respondents, showing how their creative decisions are influenced by both material

conditions of pregnancy and motherhood and external expectations of their peers and employers. My findings in this section, which include numerous examples of practical solutions my respondents used, add to the scant body of research about creative women in top roles who work when raising young children.⁵⁰ Some mothers valued TV commissions on which they could control the type of films they made and make the workflow more family friendly. Others faced criticism when choosing to keep working throughout their pregnancies or with young children. Having established motherhood as the crucial gender-related factor impacting one of the basic documentary filmmaker's choices, the source of funding, in the following section I consider other gendered factors influencing my respondents' everyday practice.

⁵⁰ Raising Films' website (2019) is a great repository of testimonies and interviews with creative women and men who raise children and care for other family members while making films.

Gender beyond mothering

Filmmaking generally probably is quite egalitarian...I think at the start, I wouldn't think there's much barriers really to being woman. Because as a woman without kids, I think you have pretty much the same opportunities as men.

Iona

If the belief held by some of my respondents that 'pre-children' women are equal to men were true, I could end this chapter after an extended discussion of the issues affecting pregnant directors and working mothers of young children. Alas, my research findings prove that women documentarians experience discrimination because of their gender in other stages of their careers, too, and that women who do not have children also feel that their gender affects the way they are perceived and treated by their peers and bosses. As I indicate throughout this section, many of these situations are still being justified with the prevalence of the maternal assumption. Importantly, I argue that my respondents' experiences are not just a nuisance or a reason to file complaints but that they also influence their authorship, through having direct impact on some of their creative choices. I will discuss in turn: encouraging women to take up non-directing roles; blatant sexism towards women directors on part of their close male collaborators; men-dominated networking culture and attempts at women-only networking.

Re-routing women from directing

Numerous interviewees agree that although it is always 'slightly easier' for women in documentaries than in fiction ('because it's less money, it's less lucrative', as Barbara says), there are still more women researchers, producers and editors (as well as commissioning editors and heads of development) than documentary directors or producer/directors. These opinions confirm the statistics I quoted in Chapter Two for both British-qualifying cinematic documentaries and single documentaries on British TV channels. Felicity, who works for an indie employing a large number of women and as such is used to seeing women directors, realises that this is an unusual situation, as she

sees many more men than women directors in TV outside her immediate work context. Several respondents agree that compared to the past, currently funders try to minimise risk when granting commissions, which means that it is difficult for any new directors to break in, and within this group the chances of women and BAME directors succeeding are even slimmer. Iona suggests that because of 'nervousness maybe about ratings' commissioning editors want 'safe bets' which she links to being 'available twenty-four hours, five days a week'. Felicity, talking about the existence of the lists of 'accepted' directors that commissioning editors rely on, rather than investing in in-depth relationships with filmmakers, says it wouldn't surprise her 'if there are more men on these lists'. Dot recalls a BBC commissioning editor who 'only wanted to hear the names of straight white men' to direct documentary 'about the relationship between gay community and the police', which upset her and made her realise the 'conservative climate' reigning there. As discussed in the previous section, taking up jobs other than directing temporarily, after children are born, is one of the practical solutions adopted by my respondents. However, the systemic problem lies in lack of opportunities for mothers to go back to directing even when their children do not require constant care. Both in fiction and documentary, women en masse are encouraged to become producers because of the essentialist stereotype of women as 'naturally' nurturing as well as the fact of them being groomed to be supportive and organised. Ethel says that in the industry,

What you get is women who have always done the producing, they always do the organizing, they fall into that role because, I don't know, this, you know, just meant to be multitaskers and all of this and we're cultured into that.

But settling for a role of an executive producer or head of development may result in what Dot describes as 'a sad very personal loss of identity around being someone who facilitates other people's ideas rather than making your own work'. Some of my respondents suggest that this 'choice' tends to be imposed on women. Talking about British TV channels in the 1990s and early 2000s, Barbara remembers she felt it was 'very possible to move from directing to being a sort of exec in broadcasting structures'. Women in prominent executive roles, including Charlotte Moore who was appointed the BBC's Head of Content in 2016, helps create the impression that, as Theresa proclaims,

'the whole of television is run by women'. I have presented the feminist scholars' warning against focusing on women in top roles and also discussed a variant of it in the context of role models in Chapter Four. Even Wendy, who has been directing for TV for thirty years, guesses wrongly that 'it has been probably more women documentary directors than there are men'. As discussed in Chapter One, due to the complexities of TV production processes, female executives are not always able to promote women creatives and, even if they have this power, they don't necessarily do that. There is no agreement between my respondents on whether working with women or men commissioning editors is better. While Becky sees it as 'important' that many of her commissions came from women, several respondents, especially Lucy and Kathryn, praise men in this role. The only commissioning editor complained about by two respondents is a woman. Iona links animosities between women differently placed in the production hierarchy to the issue of childcare, suggesting that some of the successful executive women 'have had to pay the cost of working all the time, and having full-time nannies, and never ever seeing their kids. The last thing they want to do is give breaks to people who are trying to do both'. Ethel thinks female executive producers can be especially harsh on women who want to move to directing as they never made that transition themselves. As Barbara summarises it: 'you really have to be a proper feminist to advance another woman'. The employment strategy employed by Becky as the head of an indie, discussed previously, is a great example of such advancement although Becky herself doesn't describe it as 'feminist'.

'Shot Under Protest': everyday sexism on set

Despite the institutional power those women wield, Barbara feels that TV executive roles are not as prestigious as being a director. Kelly calls them 'desk jobs' and Toni rather soberly notes that all the women 'running' the BBC are still 'supporting other people's creativity' that itself remains coded as masculine:

The person who's the whirling dervish at the centre, the person who's the ringmaster, the person who just has to be fascinating and brilliant and everything will come to them, is still almost always a man. It's really hard for women to believe that they are that fascinating and that brilliant, come what may.

It is hardly surprising that women directors find it hard to believe in their own creative brilliance when everybody around them seems to agree this is a feature only

men can possess. Felicity, emerging TV director who has worked her way up in TV ranks, is taken aback by her colleagues, male and female, who put male directors on a pedestal for no apparent reason. Or is there one? Is male director always better than a woman just 'because he has a dick', as Barbara impatiently suggests? The omnipresent belief in men's inherent creative brilliance, which runs deeper than the hackneyed argument about women dropping out because of childcare responsibilities, can make women directors' everyday job a nightmare. Speaking of some of her collaborators, Evelyn says: 'it's difficult for them to get excited because people don't think women can be geniuses, do they?' Six respondents say it is difficult to be taken seriously as a woman director: Sam believes that 'you have to work that little bit harder to be respected' and Lisa felt that some of her crews required 'some sort of legitimacy' from her. Dot and Olivia mention the intersection of gender and age, making it even harder for younger women to be respected as directors (although in Chapter Nine I show how female filmmakers can use this perception to their advantage, filming in charged situations with men). Evelyn, Sam and Barbara agree it takes extra thick skin as a woman in this role. Theresa describes her behaviour as at times 'headbutty' and Farrin emphasise the importance of being 'upfront about your credentials' to avoid misunderstandings. However, female directors need to be cautiously assertive, not to earn the reputation of being aggressive and difficult to work with which is not ideal in the industry relying on the word-of-mouth recruitment.

Shocking as it may be, one of my findings is that for many people in the contemporary British film and TV industry a woman claiming the director's mantle is always out of place. After getting through the first hoop of getting a commission, many of my respondents needed to deal with the blatant sexism of their crews. The expectation that a director should simply be a man (no matter what their qualifications or track record actually are) is often attributed to the bygone era of 'old farts' (Theresa's wording) of the Ealing crews,⁵¹ with whom non-shooting women directors working for the BBC in the 1980s and 1990s had to collaborate. Theresa says she didn't mince her words dealing with those sexist cameramen, telling them things like: "If you call me that one more time I am going to fucking headbutt you so stop it, I'm directing, you do what you [are told], if

⁵¹ Ealing Studios is a TV and film production company that was owned by the BBC until 1995. Ealing camera crews were shooting BBC-commissioned documentaries also on location.

you don't want to do it then you can refuse to work for me and then we know what that means". Toni describes the deliberate and rather juvenile ways her Ealing crews used to protest being directed by a woman, including scrawling acronyms like 'SUP' (Shot Under Protest) and 'DFI' (Different Fucking Idea) on the clapperboard. She dealt with it more diplomatically, asking not to work with certain people. However, Lisa (in her early forties) recalls the situation from only ten years ago when as a freshly minted director she was challenged by her crew in a similar manner, followed by patronising statements of the "We're just trying to help you" kind. Toni had an awful experience in 2014, directing and producing a docudrama abroad with male crew members in their forties and fifties, and some of her stories beggar belief:

There was a game once, you would go up behind somebody else and while they were bending over and looking at a camera or looking at some shot or something, and then you'd be pretending to ass fuck them and then you can take a picture of yourself doing that and that would be very hilarious.

Although Toni also hopes that behaviour was 'just a hangover' from the past era, there are sadly more recent examples in my sample, also among women working independently. Dot, in her late thirties, was undermined by an older cameraman in front of her contributors only recently. Working as a freelancer, she was able to choose her own DP but with the deadline approaching and budget constraints, she went for the first available one in that particular area of the country. A couple of years ago, Danielle was treated in a patronising and 'slightly abusive' (verbally) way by two male executive producers (whom she subsequently dropped). While being able to shoot your own material eliminates the danger of a sexist DP, Danielle's example proves that male collaborators other than cameramen can undermine a woman director, too. Therefore the ability to choose one's own collaborators, discussed in Chapter Nine, is so important for women documentarians.

I argue that although the exact impact of these micro-aggressions is impossible to assess, they do influence female directors' authoring process even if only by wasting their time and energy on dealing with them. Many of my respondents accept blatant everyday sexism as a fact of life and for example Olivia asserts: 'I was able to rebuff and continue.

And I don't think it affected me at all'. But even 'headbutty' Theresa recognises the energy and commitment it takes to brush it off, admitting she couldn't still be doing it now, in her sixties. Other strategies of coping in these situations include Kelly preempting sexist behaviour: 'I'm so aware of having to sort of fight to be taken seriously that I almost don't let them patronise me...I don't think that I've let that happen to me'. In extreme cases and over a long period of time, it can have more serious psychological effects on women directors. Gina admits: 'I think I internalised so much anyway that I probably feel it myself before I felt someone else was giving it to me,' an approach that may have a negative effect on her self-confidence as she always is in the defensive position. Lisa names the constant undermining she had experienced from male TV crews as one of the reasons she started an independent career: it made her doubt her own skills and opinions. Three women hint, without uncovering much detail, at cases of sexual harassment from both colleagues and contributors. The sample is peppered with numerous recollections of minor everyday annoyances like being treated as a secretary/assistant/ cameraman's lover. The examples given by my respondents can to a certain degree account for 'missing' women directors, those who were not thick-skinned enough to endure the constant barrage of harassment. I believe that when considering the creative process and authoring of women who remained active filmmakers for years, it is crucial to inquire into the obstacles they need to overcome on their sets, from practical issues of rebelling crew members to the tiresome need to constantly prove themselves that they are indeed capable of calling the shots.

Networking with and without men

Networking with one's peers after the day of shooting is often seen, alongside the 24-hour availability, as requisite to be hailed as a top director. Both are gendered and biased against women due to the non family-friendly hours of punishing production schedules and pub outings alike. Some of my respondents feel that not partaking in these events has adversely affected their careers in an industry that relies on informal recruitment practices: Iona believes that by not being seen in the pub, women 'disappear' from the scene. It is impossible to quantify women directors' exact losses in this department but Wendy believes that 'you can be pretty sure, when you see how feted a lot of the male documentarians are, that it has had an impact'. She sarcastically adds that women

directors probably make their male peers feel bad by going home and being ‘busy doing all the stuff that they tell their wives they don’t have time to do’. However, contradicting the myth of ‘pre-children’ women as equal to men, it is not just mothers rushing home who fail at traditional networking. Frances suggests that because of the way gender operates in an informal setting of post-work drinks, women cannot take full professional advantage of the informal socialising with men. Toni points out that women may not be keen on traditional ‘networking’ also because of their ‘personality or integrities’: ‘You might not be the kind of person who particularly likes to stay up until three in the morning doing coke’, she says. This may suggest that men-dominated networking events, held at the times and in the spaces chosen by men, is not ideal for women in general, not only mothers.

Because women often feel disadvantaged in traditional film and media industry networking, I was interested in my respondents’ opinions on women-only networking events, training and funding opportunities targeting women. Most of my respondents have heard of, used to be or were at the time of the interview members of Women in Film and TV UK (WFiTV) but the reception of the organisation’s significance is mixed, from the opinions that they are a valuable networking forum (Felicity) to criticising the events they organise as not leading to concrete work-related opportunities. Kelly (in her sixties) thinks the organisation is not for her as the focus seems to be on mentoring young women and Kathryn dislikes that they expect her to give motivational talks for free. Other organisations are mentioned sporadically, including Film Fatales and Women on Docs, London-based curating initiative I mentioned earlier. Farrin, who has no children and as a documentary producer sees networking as important part of her job, speaks highly of women-only networking events as they can help build confidence before mixing with men. Iona and Olivia found support in informal groups of female friends, meeting as regularly as possible when having young children to discuss practical solutions for creative mothers. Regional filmmakers complain about the London-centric nature of any industry networking. Some older directors don’t see any kind of networking as relevant to their careers, which may be connected to the traditional model of commissioning, discussed in Chapter Five, built around a very personal and often long lasting relationship with a commissioning editor. While networking should be more relevant for younger directors

working in the climate of bigger competition, for freelancers like Jacqui it can be difficult to find time for it, even without child caring responsibilities. She says she benefits every time she goes to a networking event, by following it up with the people involved, and wishes she did it more often, just like Gina who says:

I have been for the last five years in a complete bubble of just making films. Because I've just kind of gone from one to the other and now coming out to and finding it quite a bit tougher I have got to go and start doing a bit of that.

Talking to my respondents, I also found out that there aren't many funding and training opportunities targeting women only, although Dot attended the Filmonomics course, put on by Bird's Eye View festival, and Bettina got funding from a private foundation available for women only. Many of my respondents have received funding from Creative Skillset, which is not gender-specific.

Conclusion

Continuing with the investigation of how the production context influences authoring process of my respondents, in this chapter I explored which creative decisions made by my respondents can be seen as gendered. I identified pregnancy and motherhood as strongly intersecting with gender in my sample, both because almost 60% of my respondents have children (and most of them made films when their children were young) and due to circulating ideas about motherhood that affect all working women. Those respondents who had young children perceived their role as a mother in different ways. Several women who wanted to work in the same way as before faced criticism from colleagues and peers. Other respondents adjusted their work to childcare responsibilities to best fulfil their role; several admit to internalising some of the mothering stereotypes and external expectations. This affected an important creative decision about what type of films to make, as working mothers tend to avoid extended observational projects which mean being away from their family for a long time. I found that for many of my respondents this choice was realised by taking on TV commissions, which goes against the circulating opinions of TV production process as punishing and involving being away and working long hours. The fact that they could negotiate flexible working hours and work on projects they chose is a testament to the unique position of women directors I talked to. It can be seen as a different type of negotiation with the channel, adding to creative relationships with commissioning editors discussed in the previous chapter. Most of my respondents who work on independent, more unpredictable projects do not have children, reversing the direction of the causal relationship between motherhood and creative choices: to make the work they want to make, they normally do not have dependants. While the ability to control one's working schedule when making scripted documentaries is mentioned by those respondents who worked for TV up to the early 2000s, the recent changes requiring young directors to shoot on location blurs the boundaries between TV and independent ways of making films and makes planning work around childcare responsibilities more difficult for women TV directors. Importantly, while in Chapters Five and Six television is presented as the production context chosen for practical reasons, mostly related to personal life and childcare, in Chapter Eight I will

discuss the desire to change the world as another reason to opt for broadcast work, due to the large size and diversity of TV audience.

In the second part of this chapter I dispelled the myth of 'pre-children' women as equal to men, which some of my respondents subscribe to, by quoting numerous examples of TV working culture being biased towards the single male worker, which adds to the non gender-specific rules of TV production which influence authoring discussed in Chapter Five. First, because of maternal assumption affecting all women, they are pushed into roles seen as safe and more predictable, like producing, executive producing or being heads of development. Moreover, much emphasis is put on masculinised activities like after-work socialising which can exclude not only working mothers but also other women. Not attending these outings, similarly to working part-time, can seriously affect external perceptions of women directors as 'top' creatives, influencing in turn the projects they are offered. In their everyday work, both women working on TV commissions and independent projects need to deal with the sexist behaviour of their male crew members and collaborators who challenge their authority. Although the majority of my respondents tend to normalise these behaviours and brush them off, disarticulating their gender disadvantage, some respondents describe them as having a long-term negative effect on their confidence and authorial identity. Although difficult to quantify, this effect is similar to being drained by constant negotiations of their creativity with more business-minded commissioning editors, described in Chapter Five.

I argue that the examples I presented in Part Two of this thesis confirm that many creative choices which without delving into my respondents' accounts of their professional background and everyday labour could be construed as decisions of a free creative agent led by her desires, are in fact influenced by the host of practical factors. These include financial concerns, rules and procedures governing different production contexts, and the way my respondents' gender affects their creative labour, especially collaborations and being able to claim directorial authority. In the final part of my thesis I shift the emphasis onto the creative agent herself, demonstrating how her perceptions of herself as an author and of her creative process as well as her articulated creative desires complete the holistic picture of authorship I propose in this thesis.

Part III: The internal dimensions of authoring

Chapter 7: What do you say you do? The professional identity of women documentarians

In the opening chapters of this thesis I established that the majority of scholarly approaches to documentary authorship remain rooted in the film text, focusing on a distinguished visual style, from camerawork to formal innovations, and the obvious authorial references in the film text. Conversely, my project insists on locating authorship outside the film text and to fulfil this objective in Part Two of this thesis I have considered how two areas external to my respondents, their background and training (Chapter Four) and the main production context they work in (Chapters Five and Six), influence their creative decisions and subsequently their authorship. Analysing my respondents' accounts of these environments I adhered to my intersectional methodology, being mindful of how their gender intersects with other categories like social origin, pregnancy and motherhood in the context of external conditions my respondents negotiate in their work. In the final part of my thesis (Part Three) I consider how the internal opinions my respondents hold about themselves as creative professionals and their creative process can be utilised to make the picture of their authoring more nuanced. In this chapter I analyse how my respondents define their professional identity, considering their opinions in the light of my previous findings about the significance of both educational/training pathways they followed and gendered assumptions about creativity circulating in film industry. The question I ask my respondents is what they answer when asked by someone "What do you do?", or what they put on their business cards. While this approach implies an outward projection, a constructed image offered to the outside world, some of my respondents spontaneously talk about their professional identity as an ethos, the set of internally held beliefs that inform their work. This confirms professional identity as a product of both internal convictions and the industry's expectations, again confirming the auteur / creative labourer continuum as a useful research framework.

Labels galore

There is a wide spectrum of answers to the professional identity question in my sample. Some respondents give me just one description they feel strongly about, others strategically switch between two or more labels, and several claim hyphenated professional identities when they see two (or more) areas of their professional life informing each other. For eleven respondents (42%) making documentary films is the only source of income and the only creative engagement. Fifteen respondents make documentary films but also fiction films or audio documentaries; they are practising fine artists, journalists or academic teachers. My respondents use sixteen different nouns to describe their professional identity, which can be divided into the following groups:

- Related to live-action filmmaking: filmmaker, documentary filmmaker, documentary director, producer, producer/director;
- Related to creating in other media: animated documentary maker, media maker, documentary maker, artist;
- Related to other professional and creative activities: teacher, academic, lecturer, writer, programmer, activist.

Only Farrin, who describes herself as a 'producer and programmer', doesn't helm the process of making documentaries in any medium. Tina only makes animated documentaries and calls herself an 'animated documentary maker' while Jacqui currently makes mostly radio documentaries, accordingly calling herself a 'media maker' rather than a 'filmmaker'. The remaining twenty-three respondents use at least one word from the first group to describe what they do, identifying as a filmmaker of some kind. In this chapter I demonstrate that while the choice of words to describe their professional identity is influenced by both the training route and the main production context, it is not determined by it.

Claiming the name

Because often you need a label and it makes you feel more confident, having an identity.

Danielle

No matter what exactly my respondents call themselves, the names they claim describe a top creative role on a documentary project.⁵² Danielle, quoted above, emphasises that claiming a name for oneself can boost one's confidence. But confidence is also needed to perform the act of naming. I discussed in Chapter Four how both gender and social origin impact career aspirations negatively, both through lack of awareness of existing professional opportunities in the field and lack of role models (when there is nobody looking and speaking similarly to you who does a creative job). I also showed that, differences in character notwithstanding, some training environments instil confidence in the students by putting them in charge of their creative development and making them responsible for their creative projects. Those of my respondents who attended art schools and film schools (and some self-taught interviewees who needed to affirm themselves early in their careers to be recognised) are convinced about the power of their authorial voice. They tend to make films based on their own ideas, both independently funded for non-broadcast exhibition and pitching directly to TV commissioning editors or channel controllers. Additionally, having attended prestigious film school offers an easier entry to the industry because of both high quality skills and social capital connected with the brand (like the NFTS). For example, for Frances it was a natural progression to pitch her films as an emerging director to Channel 4 soon after graduation. This way of working fits the business model of an 'individual self-employed filmmaker' (de Jong et al. 2012: 46), the group which 'increased significantly in the 1980s and 1990s' (*ibid.*). I argue this increase is related to the existence of the highly personalised documentary commissioning model I discussed in Chapter Five (which is now disappearing) as it created the industrial context receptive to their assertions of authorship. Kathryn is an art school graduate who runs her own production company, which makes her business model closer to 'the commercial entrepreneur' (de Jong et al. 2012: 49) but all her films were co-

⁵² Besides Farrin who is a producer, as explained above.

financed by British TV channels and broadcast. Describing how she gets funding for her projects, she asserts: 'It's my film and it's my job to persuade them [the funders] that the film I want to make is the film they are financing.'

On the other hand, the experience of other respondents is similar to what Danielle describes, when the confidence to claim the name comes after years of professional experience. Although Danielle went to both art school and the NFTS, her route was idiosyncratic because she initially specialised in editing; calling herself a 'filmmaker' (I discuss later that she is one of respondents who do not use the label 'director') was a crucial point in a late stage of her career. Gina, who didn't go to film school and worked for years as an independent producer before she started directing documentaries in her forties, is in awe of young people who 'come out of film school or something, or university, and they just decide that they're "documentary filmmakers"'. 'It's taken me thirty years before I could even say it,' she admits. For some respondents who took idiosyncratic routes to becoming a filmmaker the ability to be able to finally claim the name of 'director' or 'filmmaker' is confidence-boosting, just as it is for those who climbed the TV ranks. The latter are self-assured when it comes to their programme production skills but, as discussed in Chapter Four, it may take them a long time to find confidence to assert their authorial voice. Lisa refers to the age of twenty-eight or twenty-nine as 'a perfectly acceptable age to be directing', suggesting that the timing of authorial declaration is prescribed. Sam describes the moment of calling the shots for the first time as 'terrifying', especially her understanding that 'the buck stops with you...you're the one in charge'. The job title of producer/director is explained on the BBC website as a person who 'takes an idea and delivers the programme, usually leading a team of people, and working to a series producer' but progressing from being a director for hire to making authored films requires another leap and different type of confidence. I have shown that generating and realising their own ideas from an early stage helped some of my TV-trained respondents to progress faster. On the other hand, Wendy and Toni comment on the practical downside of this: TV documentary auteurs find it more difficult to get commissioned than those who make more generic films.

In Chapter Six I also demonstrated that because women documentarians construct their professional identity within the gendered industrial discourse of creativity and authorship, biased towards male creators, they tend to be encouraged to settle for roles other than directing. To persevere in their chosen job, they need to claim their leadership assertively, often being more forceful than men whose capability to lead is taken for granted. Some respondents believe women filmmakers should 'go and get it'. But while Roberta insists that arriving on the set as a director guarantees that 'you are given respect because nobody can do anything without you', I demonstrated that even established directors have to deal with the instances of resistance and undermining from male crew members. Lisa's account is the most striking when she admits that years of this kind of treatment made her doubt her ability to lead on a documentary project. Dot warns that being 'stuck' in the roles supporting others' creativity may lead for some women to 'the loss of identity' (creative identity). On the other hand, for Danielle and Ethel supporting other people's creativity for years (as editor and programmer/curator, respectively) generated the impulse necessary for their own creative filmmaking practice. Farrin is a dedicated producer in my sample who chose that role after trying her hand at directing and for whom it is a highly creative endeavour rather than a job she was pushed into. It is against this discursive context that my respondents construct their professional identities, and I now discuss what they choose to call themselves.

'Filmmaker' or 'documentary filmmaker'?

Besides three exceptions (animated documentary maker, audio documentary maker and independent documentary producer), twenty-three of my respondents identify as some kind of a filmmaker. The choice of words they use to describe themselves depends both on the main production context they work in and the types of films they make. British television influences this choice both as an exhibition context, defining documentary subgenres and influencing audiences' opinions, and as a production context, especially for those respondents who make mostly broadcast material. Five respondents who call themselves a 'documentary director' have progressed through the TV apprenticeship route and are still mostly making work for TV. Three of them say that they also use the official TV credit of 'producer/director', for example on their business cards. Seven respondents, who also make predominantly broadcast work, call themselves 'documentary filmmaker'; Iona alternates between the two and Wendy uses either 'documentary filmmaker' or 'filmmaker' and says she doesn't really pay attention to these labels. It seems that when it comes to the image projected to the outside world, both terms are associated with working for television. I will now discuss why other respondents avoid either designation, starting with demonstrating why they would not wish to include 'documentary' as part of their professional identity.

'It's all cinema'

Some of my respondents call themselves just 'filmmakers' for a practical, descriptive reason: they move between documentary and fiction so using the name 'documentary filmmaker' would miss an important part of their professional activity. But some respondents who only make documentaries also prefer the 'filmmaker' label. This includes Lucy, observational documentarian, and Ethel, who has only worked on documentary projects. 'It's all cinema', says the latter and Lisa agrees: 'It's the same process. You're just not working with actors'.⁵³ Those respondents do not see it necessary to qualify the designation 'filmmaker' with 'documentary' because of what 'filmmaking'

⁵³ Theresa feels strongly about not wanting to work with actors, saying she would hate to 'cajole' performances from them.

means for them, which resonates with identifying the ‘mimetic drive, common to all cinema’ (Renov 1993: 22) which I return to in Chapter Eight. Bettina calls herself a ‘filmmaker’ and she finds the documentary/fiction split ‘unhelpful’, saying: ‘I think the same language can be used for lies as it can be used for truth.’ For Farrin the story she is interested in leads her to documentary mode, not the other way around. ‘It’s more about the subject matter and what’s necessary for that subject matter,’ she asserts and adds she can imagine working on a fiction project if she felt the subject called for it.

Documentary as a genre tarnished by TV

While some respondents skip ‘documentary’ as a description of their professional identity because they also make fiction films, others avoid it because of the way the term is understood by both the audiences and industry peers, even if they only make non-fiction work. Lisa and Frances, who mix broadcast and independent work, introduce themselves as a ‘documentary filmmaker’ rather reluctantly. Frances explains that the only reason why she doesn’t introduce herself as a ‘filmmaker’ is that when she does, people ask her: “Well, what kind of a filmmaker? What do you make?”, to which she answers, ‘documentaries’. She would prefer to skip ‘documentary’ because of the associations she believes the term evokes as a predominantly televisual genre. “‘Documentary’ is putting me in a smaller box than what I feel like my work really is’, she says. She thinks the audiences are familiar with a narrow definition of the term, including ‘Discovery Channel type stuff or David Attenborough natural history stuff’. When asked about her job, Lisa, who followed the TV apprenticeship route, also prefers to say ‘I make films’ because people often think of documentary as ‘something they see on television’.

But what exactly do the viewers see on television? I have demonstrated in Chapter Two that as an industrial genre, ‘TV documentary’ is difficult to define, not least because it constantly changes with the medium. Lisa believes that because of linking it with TV, the audiences perceive documentaries as a ‘lesser form of filmmaking’, which resonates with Corner’s argument that after documentaries entered British television, they left behind their more glamorous cinematic past and became like an extended reportage. The association of television with documentaries of lesser artistic quality lingers despite the presence in the schedules of both authored documentaries made on a commission and acquired feature documentaries. I have previously demonstrated that

especially in the first years of Channel 4 numerous broadcast documentaries went far beyond ‘current affairs kind of stuff’ as Frances describes the majority of TV documentaries. But arguably, in the division of labour set up by Reithian principles, the role of documentaries was mostly to educate. De Jong suggests that because of the proliferation of documentaries aiming to ‘present disembodied knowledge and an objective reality’, the genre’s reputation has been ruined for the audiences who now see it as ‘boring’ and ‘information-heavy’ (de Jong et al. 2012: 19). Similarly, in their popular book on documentary *Imagining Reality*, Mark Cousins and Kevin Macdonald say the D-word is ‘the most dreary and off-putting of terms’ (1996: xi). De Jong quotes a commissioning editor she interviewed in 2006 who calls their commissions ‘programmes’ or ‘films’ because the term ‘documentary’ ‘sounds like homework. It sounds like it’s going to ask you for something rather than offer you something’ (de Jong 2008: 143).

While in the past TV documentary might have been ‘educational’ and information-heavy to the point of being boring,⁵⁴ the current broadcasting trend has been to blend ‘information’ and ‘entertainment’, dropping the educational dimension altogether. In recent years ‘TV documentary’ has become synonymous with the formatted series, often offering mainly entertainment. While *Wife Swap* (Channel 4, 2003-09) is innocent enough, *Benefits Street* (Channel 4, 2014-15) became notorious for mocking its arguably vulnerable subjects. Although it is possible to track the reality TV shows’ lineage back to docusoaps or even further back to direct cinema’s ‘pure’ observational techniques, these programmes in critical discourse tend to be equated with the lowest and ethically suspect forms of entertainment, which resonates with Lisa’s worry about coding of contemporary TV documentaries as a ‘lesser’ form of filmmaking. Felicity, who followed the TV apprenticeship route and who works solely on TV-commissioned investigative documentaries, calls herself a ‘filmmaker’. She sometimes cautiously adds that she works ‘in documentaries’, but avoids the terms ‘TV’ and ‘journalist’ when talking to potential contributors, assuming they would be suspicious of her intentions.

⁵⁴ However, Holmes (2008) challenges the idea of the BBC being boring and staid even in the fifties and demonstrates the connections between older programmes and contemporary ones, including reality TV.

Olivia, who at the time of our interview was working as a director for hire on an established arts series, is a good example of someone seeing professional identity as strictly describing one's professional role. She calls herself a 'documentary director' and 'TV producer' and she's proud of her professional status, but working within the formatted parameters, she dislikes the formulaic nature of the programmes she makes ('just talking heads and clips'). She recognises that because she is not established enough as a director, she is not allowed to subvert these conventions in authored documentary, in the way my more experienced respondents are. One of them is Becky who simply says: 'People have a perception that television is very prescriptive and I haven't found it to be so.' I have shown that my respondents have followed different routes to pitching documentaries based on their own ideas, and one of them was doing so after years of being a director for hire. However, Olivia and Lisa, in their late thirties at the time of our interviews, do not see TV as the place where they can pursue their creative ideas. Olivia is working on independent fiction projects parallel to directing TV documentary series while Lisa left TV to make an independent documentary feature. Dot has been similarly struggling with having her authorship recognised in the broadcasting context. This suggests that, unlike in the past when some of my respondents managed to establish themselves as TV documentary auteurs, the current climate in British television is not favourable to new authorial voices breaking through.

In this section I showed that some of my respondents prefer not to use the 'documentary' label even if they only make non-fiction work and even when they feel, like Lisa, that 'documentary is one of the most exciting spaces creatively to work in'. This apparent paradox is a result of the difference in how 'documentary' is understood in the popular discourse and the way my respondents understand it. I explore the latter in Chapter Eight, discussing my respondents' 'love of actuality' and quoting those who argue that documentary is superior to fiction.

Which documentaries can be 'directed'?

Those of my respondents who mainly make broadcast work approach the title of 'documentary director' in two ways. First, it is the official credit confirming being the main creative person on the programme and I have discussed the importance of being listed as the last person when the closing credits roll. Secondly, it boosts confidence of those who strove for years to achieve it, both climbing the TV ranks and building their careers outside television, like Gina, Theresa, Kelly and Tamsin, who started their careers in the 1980s, also recall the times when the title of 'director' was coveted because of the union's power to restrict access to the role. Kelly says she used to be credited as a 'producer' on the films she in fact directed. Currently, the main creative person on a TV documentary often acts as both director and producer, overseeing the project from the initial idea to the finish, which is evident in the popularity of the 'producer/director' credit. Three of my respondents who work only for TV use this title to answer the 'What do you do?' question. Sam explains that sometimes, when working with an experienced producer whose expertise she needs and who wants the main producer credit, she keeps 'director' only.

However, the label of 'documentary director' has connotations beyond the customary industry credit, hinting at the types of documentaries my respondents make. In the past, TV directors made scripted, story-boarded documentaries while being in charge of large crews, which corresponded with their title. On the other hand, Lucy, who only shoots observationally, says that 'directing' does not describe her practice at all as most of the scenes she films would happen no matter if she was present or not and because she does not interact with her subjects, trying to influence their actions. She contrasts her practice of 'filming something that's already there' with that of fiction directors who 'create something from nothing'. She agrees, however, that filmmakers like Michael Moore and Werner Herzog do direct their documentaries, which confirms that 'documentary director' can be applied to both the filmmakers in charge of traditional TV documentaries (with seated interviews and voiceover) and those authoring independent projects with staged elements, filmmaker's physical presence in the film and re-

enactments. But in the contemporary discourse, 'directing' sometimes mixes with 'observational documentary'. Despite its ethnographic roots discussed in Chapter Four, the NFTS course is currently called (on the NFTS website) 'Directing Documentary MA'. The current cost-cutting trend in broadcasting, moving away from scripted, 'information-heavy' documentaries towards filming a 'story unfolding in the present' (Iona), demands self-shot observational material. Therefore Sam, firmly embedded in the context of TV production, calls herself a 'contributor's bitch', which seems the opposite of 'director' influencing the actors' actions. However, she remains 'very protective' of her directing credit as she has worked hard to earn it. Calling oneself a 'director' can be also linked to power to elevate oneself to the top of the production hierarchy. Danielle feels it implies telling other people what to do, and she rejects the label as an observational filmmaker of 'gentle' stories. While it's typical of observational filmmakers to cede the power to 'direct' people or tell them what to do, in the following chapter I will discuss the ideas around filmmaking as a collaborative process and seeing the director as a team leader rather than authoritarian despot.

While they choose different names to describe what they do, almost half of my interviewees declare that making documentary films is the only thing they do to make their living. The majority of them secure ongoing TV commissions, being paid for their work in a regular manner, and they seldom venture outside this framework, funding their projects independently. However, it would be a mistake to treat them only as creative labourers who see filmmaking as 'just' a job. Becky who makes social issues TV documentaries says: 'I'm very lucky. I'm really doing what I want to do', which is seconded by Theresa, who only made one independently funded film, asserting: 'I love doing documentaries, it's absolutely what I want to do, that's all I want to do really.' Theresa and Lucy, both in their sixties, who have relied on TV commissions all their careers, notice that this has been more difficult lately. However, they can't imagine doing anything else (Lucy says: 'I suppose I could do waitressing or something but I'm not equipped to do anything else') and they have been looking for funding outside British TV channels, also abroad. At the time of the interview Theresa was trying to get an independent feature off the ground but she says that she also may 'go away on holiday' if this doesn't work out.

Multiple professional identities

Mostly I would say I'm a filmmaker, but I'm also a writer and I'm also an opera director and I make fiction and documentaries. It's a bit fluid.

Roberta

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that those respondents who do not primarily rely on TV commissions supplement their income with other jobs like teaching, having an art practice or working for a production company. In this chapter I am less interested in so-called 'portfolio careers' and their financial impact but rather I emphasise creative links between different professional engagements that my interviewees pursue, showing how they come together to influence their sense of professional identity. This distinction is important, as some of my respondents do not get paid for their creative projects, including some of their films. In analysing the accounts of those of my respondents who say they are 'a filmmaker and...', I found that the most popular labels beyond filmmaking they claim are 'artist' and 'teacher' (or 'academic'), while others include 'programmer', 'writer' and 'journalist'.

An artist and a filmmaker

I personally think there is always a very big difference between the sort of filmmakers who think of themselves as artists and those who are more business people with some editorial skills and I think they're different kind of characters, they really are.

Barbara

Art school graduates Kathryn, Linda, Danielle and Bettina call themselves 'artists' as well as 'filmmakers'. Tina attended art school on a postgraduate level but she doesn't use 'artist' to describe herself, which serves as a good reminder that my respondents' background influences but does not determine their professional identity. Bettina and Linda have ongoing fine art practices, which for Linda is the main source of income. Barbara, quoted above, does not describe herself as an 'artist' when asked explicitly

about her professional identity but it is clear from the way she talks about her practice that she thinks of herself as one, seeing her films as 'some form of creative expression'. I quoted her in Chapter Five as getting 'incredibly exhausted' negotiating this approach with TV executives who see documentaries as a product. Danielle was trained as a painter and when talking about filmmaking, she uses a painterly metaphor, comparing her camera (she shoots herself) to a paintbrush, offering an art-inspired argument for self shooting: 'It's like I need to hold the paintbrush to make the marks and as soon as someone else is holding that paintbrush, I don't quite know where the paintbrush should move.' Kathryn wanted to tell stories in her work and after practising as a fine artist for a while she understood she should be an 'arty filmmaker' rather than a 'filmy artist' because 'it's so hard to tell stories in art, no-one wants to know what you're thinking'. At the same time, combining the two gives her a licence to be more free in her films which she sees as artworks, both in the context of the autonomy of making them and in making them 'visually creative and challenging'. Bettina's filmmaking process resembles creating an artwork on a conceptual level, as she takes as long as she needs to 'find' her film, experimenting with different approaches and styles.

I find it fruitful to compare my findings about the filmmakers' perceptions of themselves as 'an artist' with the 'artist-documentary filmmaker' as one of the business models de Jong identifies among independent documentary filmmakers (de Jong, Knudsen, and Rothwell 2012: 48). In this taxonomy, the 'artist-documentary filmmaker' is self-employed or works through her own production company, avoiding broadcasters or working for other companies, and makes films influenced by personal interests or even obsessions, often autobiographical. This description is close to how Danielle talks about her work but Bettina and Linda mention activist/political motivations for their work although neither makes ostensibly 'activist' films. The most interesting example in my sample is Kathryn who ticks a couple of boxes from the 'artist-documentary filmmaker' checklist but at the same time she crosses over to de Jong's model of 'commercial entrepreneur' operating 'within the demands of the market, and of broadcasters' (49). Almost all her films were co-commissioned by big British funders including non-broadcast players alongside the BBC and Channel 4. She explains that by diversifying her sources of

funding, she manages to retain creative control over her films but at the same time she secured broadcast for almost all of them.

'I make documentaries and I teach other people to make them'

Nine respondents mention academic teaching as an additional professional activity, with seven currently teaching at British higher education institutions. In the previous chapter I discussed teaching as a source of steady income between freelance commissions or sometimes the only income for the respondents making non-commercial work. Here I consider teaching and research as fuelling creative identity of my respondents.

Barbara and Evelyn explicitly mention being an academic or 'teaching' as part of their professional identity; Bettina and Toni also mention 'lecturer' and 'teacher' as one of the things they 'are'. Barbara talks about how her filmmaking practice and teaching inform each other, especially when it comes to the issues around the ethics of the encounter with her contributors. She also emphasises being a 'scholar' (rather than 'teacher') and 'writer', engaging with ideas in the academic context. Other respondents prioritise pedagogy. Evelyn is aware of intersectionality, especially of the intersection of gender and class. She actively promotes participation of women in her course. Although Tina consistently talks about teaching as a means of having a stable income between commissions ('I definitely see myself as a filmmaker first and foremost before I am a lecturer'), she also comes across as a passionate teacher rather than someone who does the job only for financial benefit. She believes in the power of role models so when inviting practitioners to come and talk to her students, she wants to show diversity along the lines of race, gender and sexuality. Tamsin makes her classroom a place to challenge the mainstream industry's status quo, for example when ridiculing topics and types of characters currently preferred by commissioning editors. She makes students come up with random titles of TV documentaries based on a grid, with the results of potential commissions including 'Pregnant antique dealers on ice' or 'Teenage dogs get tattooed'. In her late sixties, she feels 'totally in tune' with her twenty- or thirty-year-old students and hails the return of the identity 'independent filmmaker' worn as a badge of honour among the younger generation. 'We're all doing it the same way, but I'm doing it having been around a few more blocks, but it's that same excitement,' she enthuses. Other

examples of classroom interactions informing filmmaking include Farrin, who at the time of our interview just gave up teaching after ten years to focus solely on producing. 'I really value teaching and what it brings to your practice', she says, recalling how revisiting documentary classics with her students gave her new ideas for approaching the films she was working on. For Linda being a university lecturer in the past meant she was doing more 'experimental or boundary shifting, new media work' as she had the right kind of 'contacts'.

Some of my older respondents say they deliver lectures or masterclasses only occasionally and focus more on mentoring younger filmmakers. Lucy used to teach at NFTS for years but she says: 'I don't think you can teach filmmaking;' she was rather 'getting people to think for themselves' and trying to give them confidence. Roberta enjoys mentoring students from Open City Docs School and Lisa mentors emerging and returning filmmakers for a local production company. Many respondents are involved in informal mentoring. Bettina mentors people from unprivileged backgrounds who turn to her or whose projects she likes. Roberta mentors her assistants, pushing 'them from the nest as soon as I think they're ready'; she mentions three young women she mentored recently but she doesn't elaborate on the significance of their gender. Wendy informally mentors young women who come to work with her as APs because they see her as a role model, a woman doing what they want to do. She says she mentors them 'indefinitely': 'They all still call me and ask me, and I absolutely mentor them', she admits. Lucy, opposing gender essentialism, emphasises that her two recent favourite tutees were both men. I have noticed an interesting correlation in my sample: the assertive respondents who are the most outspoken advocates of women 'going and getting it' themselves, also dismissing the need for systemic change or gender-specific adjustments, often mentor younger women filmmakers, becoming a sort of reluctant role models.

Other areas informing professional identities

Other professional descriptions my respondents use include 'journalist', which for Dot is so crucial that she refers to herself as 'a journalist and a filmmaker' and not the other way round. Farrin introduces herself as 'a producer and a programmer', seeing the two as 'the two sides of the same coin' because the type of films she works on involve 'thinking very

clearly about who's your audience'. Although the two are 'completely different roles', they enhance each other in her professional life. Ethel only calls herself a 'filmmaker' but she says her past experience as a programmer triggered her filmmaking practice as she was made aware whose stories are missing. After Roberta listed all her professional 'hats' to me, I jokingly called her a 'Renaissance woman'. She brushed off the label ('But I like telling stories,' she added) but I argue it is fitting not just for her but also several other respondents. When she got accepted for the NFTS documentary course, Frances was in the middle of a PhD in philosophy of science, which she says shaped her strong reaction, discussed previously, to the 'purist' observational ethos of the school. Danielle graduated from a degree in painting and completed NFTS MA in Editing before embarking on her authored film projects. Toni makes films but also writes novels and newspaper columns, works on multimedia projects and runs a therapeutic creative writing group ('There's an impresario-producer role in that,' she remarks casually). All the hyphenated professional identities discussed in this section confirm that documentary as the exciting area of filmmaking also draws the people with exciting professional and life experiences, for whom making documentary films is sometimes one of the many ways of realising their creative potential.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented different ways in which my respondents approach their professional identity. I argue that their insights illuminate the link between what they call themselves and their authoring process in two important ways. First, they foreground the external aspect of professional identity, most conspicuous in the fact that introducing oneself with a particular name always takes place in a professional situation. Therefore Bettina says that how she describes herself 'depends on who's asking', offering seven different descriptions of herself which she uses strategically. 'If I were to apply for a job, right? I would call myself whatever the job needs,' she asserts, emphasising the outward effect of claiming the professional name. But at the same time as it influences external perceptions, this name is also influenced by the external context. The best examples of this are the broadcast-specific titles of 'documentary director' and 'producer / director' claimed by some respondents as both obvious descriptions of their professional status and the proof of earning their industry credentials. I also showed that common associations of 'documentary' as a genre predominantly with television make some of my respondents avoid this designation for fear of having their work perceived in a narrow way. On the other hand, the choice of 'director' label is influenced by the type of films made, and therefore rejected by observational filmmakers who employ non-interventionist approach in their work and patiently wait for the story to unfold.

Secondly, professional identity has a complex internal dimension of how my respondents perceive themselves as practitioners, which is most conspicuous among those for whom documentary filmmaking is just one area of creative practice. Those respondents who describe themselves as 'artists' as well as 'filmmakers' tend to realise their creative vision in any medium, speaking with assured authorial voice. This approached will be discussed in detail in the following chapter as the desire to express. Other respondents mention teaching and mentoring as well as programming as other areas of their professional lives enriching their filmmaking identity, inspiring them and giving them new ideas as well as expanding their social networks.

When considering professional identity, gender and social class are meaningful categories in the context of confidence to claim the name, which I argue precedes the confidence gained from performing that act, mentioned by Danielle. As Dot suggests, the gendered practice of pushing women towards the roles other than directing, discussed in Chapter Six, can result in their losing belief in their ability to ever call themselves that name.

Chapter 8: Documentarian's desires: Capturing 'the author outside the text'

In this chapter I continue the exploration of the final extra-textual area I propose to consider in the context of documentary authorship: my respondents' self-perceptions of themselves as creative agents. After having discussed how my respondents define their professional identity in Chapter Seven, in this chapter I focus on their insights about what motivates them to make documentaries. In doing so, I attempt to capture the elusive 'author outside the text' drawing on her own account rather than relying on the authorial signature detected in the film text and interpreted by a critic. As I discussed in Chapter Two, searching for the traces of the author in the film text, 'certain sounds, images, characterological motifs, narrative patterns, and/or formal configurations' (Silverman 1988: 212), remains the influential way of discussing documentary authorship. In doing so, scholars also tends to prioritise the most obvious instances of authorial inscription like voiceover or the filmmaker's interactions with their contributors in front of the camera, which are normally seen as manifestations of the author 'outside' the text, the filmmaker who makes creative decisions. Because of the long tradition of educational and activist documentaries, and the reluctance of critics to perceive documentaries as works of art, the relationship between the author 'outside' and 'inside' the text in non-fiction films is often seen as straightforward. Arguably, the reception of documentaries is prone to 'intentional fallacy' more than that of fiction films as the critics and audiences tend to assume the author's strong intention that can be revealed by identifying the clear message for the viewers lodged in the film text.⁵⁵ This reinforces the conviction that in the documentary realm, the gap between the authors 'inside' and 'outside' the text is not that big.

In the studies of fiction cinema, the author 'outside' the text has also been theorised by recourse to psychoanalysis. Some film scholars scan the film text on a deep level in search for clues about the author's unconscious drives and impulses, as opposed to their conscious motivations and goals that can be inferred from the semantic layer of the text,

⁵⁵ Conversely, Lewis (2007) argues for analysis of documentaries that leaves room for irony and ambiguity, appreciating the subtleties.

as discussed above. Silverman defines the ‘fantasmatic scene of authorial desire’ as ‘that unconscious fantasy or cluster of fantasies which structures not merely dreams and other related psychic formations but object-choice, identity and “the subject’s life as a whole”’ (Silverman 1988: 216). However, psychoanalytically-inclined critics are not trained psychoanalysts who interview actual film directors; the author’s desire is theorised on the basis of how it ‘manages to invade a particular corpus’ (217) just as the viewer’s scopophilic desire was gleaned from textual clues. Compared to fiction film studies, there is much less talk of desire in documentary studies, mainly because the mode has been associated with the ‘objective’ scientific discourse, devoid of passion. In a rare intervention, Cowie (2011) offers a Lacanian reading of documentary desire, focusing on the viewer’s expectations and identifications as well as the interplay between the discourses of the filmmaker and the subject discernible in the film text. Piotrowska (2013) joins Renov (1999, 1993) in theorising ‘the subjective turn’ in documentary, championing documentary desire to oppose the dominating discourses of sobriety and objectivity in documentary studies. Drawing the reader’s attention to ‘the “hidden” mechanics of documentary filmmaking’ (Piotrowska 2013: 60), she foregrounds the ethics of a relationship between the filmmaker and her subjects. Crucially for my project, in her exploration of desire Piotrowska goes beyond both theory and the film text, analysing her own filmmaking process.

While these approaches to documentary filmmaking, breaking as they do with the ‘discourse of sobriety’, are invaluable for my approach, my project differs from them in several important ways. First, I take the subjectivity of documentary endeavour for granted and therefore I do not build a case against an alleged objectivity of non-fiction discourse. Secondly, in prioritising my respondents’ accounts of their process, I only occasionally juxtapose their talk of intentions and desires with their finished films. I do not look for traces of the author’s desire in the film text but report on what they *say* inspires them and what they *say* they desire.⁵⁶ That makes my understanding of ‘desire’ at odds with the psychoanalytical framework; I am aware that a spelt out desire has a different status than the unconscious drive whose reflection can be found in the work.

⁵⁶ Appendix 2 discusses in detail my method of data analysis, including my focus on semantic rather than latent content of my respondents’ speech.

Some of my respondents admit they are not sure what drives them (using Silverman's language, they are unable to describe their own 'fantasmatic scene') while others make an attempt at it, as I show below.

To report on the motivations my respondents mention as being behind their filmmaking process, I draw on Renov's typology of four 'rhetorical/aesthetic functions attributable to documentary practice' (Renov 1993: 21) that he identifies as part of his project to 'trace the contours of a poetics of documentary'.⁵⁷ Four modalities of documentary desire are:

- To record/reveal/preserve: Renov calls it 'the mimetic drive' common to 'all cinema' (22), but I focus on this function being 'intensified by the documentary signifier's ontological status' (21) as it presents itself as a desire for 'the real' among documentary filmmakers.
- To persuade/promote: historically seen as emblematic of the work of John Grierson, for whom 'the screen was a pulpit, the film a hammer to be used in shaping the destiny of nations' (Renov 1993: 29), the rhetorical function of documentary is a fundamental characteristic of this mode of filmmaking, the desire of filmmaker 'to persuade viewers to adopt his [sic] perspective as their own' (Nichols 2010: 5). Renov suggests that the category shouldn't be limited to 'projects exhibiting the singularity of purpose and tone' (1993: 30), like Grierson's or Riefenstahl's, but include 'the greater diversity of the promotional impetus' (*ibid.*). The promotional impulse may be realised for example in 'rallying support for social movements' (Renov 1993: 24), when filmmaker becomes an activist (see Waugh 1984).
- To analyse/interrogate: Renov seems to be more interested in 'deep-seated cognitive functions' than in 'a strictly informational imperative' of documentary (24), while I champion the latter as it is expressed especially by my respondents with journalistic background making broadcast work who talk about 'making sense' of the world and explaining it.

⁵⁷ Renov's states his main objective is to make documentary scholars notice potential in all of these functions rather than prioritise only one.

- To express: the aesthetic function seems to be readily detectable in ‘thick text’ documentaries where the traces of ‘the author inside the text’ are frequent and conspicuous. I use it also to talk about the filmmaker as an ‘artist’ defined by the Romantic ideal, selfishly or single-mindedly realising her creative vision, who sometimes scrutinises her own desires.

Although Renov formulates the modalities ‘in the active voice, appropriate to their role in a “poiesis”, an “active making”’ (1993: 21), in his model they soon become ‘the governing discursive conditions’ (22) of non-fiction rather than functions of filmmaking practice. However, I propose to use them to analyse not desire detected in the documentary film text but rather motivations and preferences expressed by my interviewees. I modify Renov’s model to describe three types of documentary desire identified in my interviews:

- To express oneself as an artist, both through realising one’s unique vision and in paying attention to the visual aspects of the films.
- To engage with the world by trying to understand it and explain it as well as by promoting other people’s causes.
- To record and preserve the historical world we share, sometimes expressed as ‘love of actuality’.

Renov admits that not every documentary text ‘strikes an ideal balance’ between all functions he lists or even ‘integrates them in a particular way’ (1993: 21), but also that these modalities are not mutually exclusive, sometimes overlapping within one film text. I notice a similar mechanism in the way my respondents talk about their desires but because my analysis is thematic and not biographical (see Appendix 2), I do not analyse frictions between different modes within one person’s account, which could lead to labelling that account coherent or contradictory.⁵⁸ My goal is to map out different approaches to authoring coexisting in the virtual discursive space of my interviews, as I

⁵⁸ I do not juxtapose my filmmakers’ declarations about their desires with the finished film text, either, although the project of that kind could be fascinating: for example, Bettina who expresses strong desire both to effect change and to express herself made a film about an urgent social issue following an experimental process.

group together similar themes identified in the talk of different women. The three types of desire I identified can be associated with creative sensibilities of 'an artist' (the will to express), 'a journalist' or 'an activist' (the will to understand and promote) and 'a documentarian' (the will to record actuality). They do not map ideally onto the different routes to documentary filmmaking discussed in Chapter Four. For many of my respondents making documentaries combines the creative urge to express themselves as an artist with the need to analyse social reality as a journalist or to persuade the audience about the cause they promote as an activist; many view their films as both artefacts for the audience's visual and intellectual pleasure and as records of reality, with the potential to change people's opinions, media representations or the world itself. As different modalities of desire merge in my respondents' accounts, I am acutely aware of the paradox observed by Renov (1993: 28) of artificially separating different strands of desire in this kind of analysis in order to understand how they work together. The merger of documentary functions is obvious in Becky's description of her career plans after getting an English degree: 'I knew that I wanted to do something creative and I thought I was going to write. I also knew that I wanted to change the world and do something useful'. This sentiment is discernible in many other accounts in my sample, even if not phrased so succinctly.

Desire to express oneself creatively

So every single film I've made up to now has been for me.

Kathryn

Desire to express oneself, 'to do something creative', mentioned by numerous respondents can be considered within the traditional Romantic model of artistic creativity foregrounding the 'genius', an extraordinary individual 'considered to have innate personal qualities which other people lack' (de Jong et al. 2012: 10) who experiences the internal urge to make work. For many of my respondents, this creative urge manifests as the need to 'tell stories'. Describing the beginnings of her professional trajectory, Barbara simply says: 'I've always been into telling stories, anyway. In life.' Lucy and Becky thought they would be writers; Kelly, who started in print journalism, says she was always interested in 'visual stories': 'telling a story as a film, more like a narrative film'. These references to novels and narrative film point to the link between 'storytelling' and fiction, both literary and filmic. However, Lisa, after saying that she was drawn to documentary as 'storytelling in a film form', immediately adds that she is only interested in real-life stories. Kathryn moved to documentaries from fine art practice because she wanted to tell stories and 'it's so hard to tell stories in arts'. Becky sees this desire as crucial to her authoring: 'I feel like if I didn't have that drive, that narrative drive in my head, I wouldn't be able to do it.' In some accounts, television plays the role in steering general desire to narrate specifically towards documentary filmmaking. "I want to tell stories like that, it's so amazing," Evelyn says she thought after seeing Brian Hill's documentary *Saturday Night* (1996) on TV. For some of my respondents, a long time passed between such a realisation and directing documentaries and in the previous chapters I discussed various aspects of the material context in which their careers developed which tempered that all-consuming desire to create.

Equating 'storytelling' with 'documentary filmmaking' is not obvious; in a recently published online manifesto, Juhasz and Lebow argue against 'the privileging of story as the most viable or supported organizing principle for documentary' (Juhasz and Lebow

2018). However, the metaphor prevails among my respondents, and therefore I use it as they do, without qualifying each time that documentary form includes numerous non-narrative strategies. Besides the quoted insights about the internal urge to narrate, documentary filmmaking as storytelling can have a rather pragmatic dimension, the one that seems the main object of Juhasz and Lebow's criticism. Departing from the discourse of desire, Sam offers a commercial reason for crafting TV documentaries like stories, saying that people 'don't come to essays so well as they come to stories because people love stories, they watch drama'. The majority of my respondents make documentaries about other people, and the desire to make the stories of others will be discussed in the following section. On the other hand, 'telling stories' as a means of fulfilment of creative desire spotlights the director as someone who does the telling.

In line with the Romantic ideal of a solitary creator, resonant in auteur theory, some of my respondents emphasise the individualistic aspect of their creative urge. Kathryn's desire to be 'the sole author of the work' made her move to documentaries from collaborative/interactive art installations and she embraces the documentary mode's enabling of the filmmaker to create on her own, in any situation. 'I could just be here now filming you,' she says during our interview, 'and that intimacy shows in the film'. Tina asserts that as an artist you need to have 'a selfish kernel of cold ice in your heart' that makes you focus on the job, ignoring anything else. For some respondents this leads to filmmaking becoming 'an obsession' (Lucy) and the filmmaking process 'obsessive' (Evelyn). Working obsessively takes time and energy; Frances admits that 'making those films is a really fucking hard work, this is not just making money, doing the job, going home at six o'clock. You are all in when you're doing this.' I have discussed previously that some of my respondents recall not being able to take up certain types of projects because of their decision, often seen as gendered, to fulfil their family duties. However, the fact that some women in my sample present themselves as 'selfish' creators suggests that gendering of the obsessive artist as male is done by society and not by nature. Tina, advocating selfishness as prerequisite for creative work, admits that her family life suffered at times but she stands by her choice; Frances remembers being judged by her male collaborator when she chose to leave her baby with a carer to film abroad. On a more general level, these insights confirm that following one's creative

desire single-mindedly is a luxury not everyone can afford, and gender often intersects with class, as discussed previously in the context of choosing the indie route. My data suggests that the departure from the Romantic myth of total artistic autonomy is necessary and that creativity can be realised in details. The majority of Kathryn's films are a testament to her artistic vision, but even when she acted as a director for hire on one occasion, she still feels the film was 'for her': 'I found something in it that I loved to make it worthwhile'. It is easy to forget that the original auteurs were male directors for hire, working normally with somebody else's script and always against the rules and prohibitions of the studio system. Because of practical reasons, numerous women have been making documentaries for British TV for years but their work is snubbed in critical discourse despite the fact that some of them were able to negotiate with commissioning editors from the position of an artist, as discussed in Chapter Five.

My respondents mention a wide range of sources of inspiration. Some see it as an impenetrable force, which again harks back to the Romantic model. Lucy uses a language of almost divine intervention, saying: 'I don't really choose [subjects for my films], something happens and I think: "I want to do that"'. Danielle, observational filmmaker like Lucy, says: 'What motivates me? It's like a tiny seed that grows, I just get excited by something and I don't know why.' Lisa sees 'a little bit of truth' in the hackneyed statement that 'every director only really has one subject'; she admits to being 'obsessed with getting underneath what makes people tick'. Barbara articulates a psychoanalytic approach to her creative output, describing her own fantasmatic scene: 'I have been making the same film forever, about love and betrayal...just finding different ways of telling that story'. Evelyn makes a similar attempt to identify the latent thread running through her *oeuvre*, saying she recently realised that in her films 'everything's always about shame'. Jacqui admits that her two autobiographical shorts were therapy for personal issues. Not quite as strong as obsession, many respondents mention a personal starting point for many of their films, an impactful past event or something they are going through when filming: 'When I was having children, I've often done programmes about moms', says Iona. Many of my respondents say they go for stories they simply 'find interesting', again foregrounding the filmmaker rather than the social context, the

storyteller more than the story.⁵⁹ By way of a warning, Theresa offers a sound piece of advice on how to make sure your ‘interesting’ ideas are relevant to others: she gauges reaction of her dinner guests to the news about any new project she embarks on: ‘if they all turn away and carry on talking then I shouldn’t do it’.

Under the heading of ‘desire to express’, I also consider how much emphasis my respondents put on audiovisual aspects of their work. This approach, employing a narrow understanding of ‘art’, complements the findings I presented in the previous chapter which proposed ‘artist’ as a broader sensibility and part of my respondents’ professional identity. If ‘art’ of documentary implies first and foremost an impressive visual layer, it would be easier to apply the term to ‘thick text’ cinematic documentaries and not to ‘thin text’ observational or TV documentaries of which little aesthetic thrill is expected.

Echoing other established observational documentarians (Cunningham 2005: 2-6), Lucy does not see her work as ‘art’ but more as ‘craft’, calling an editor ‘the artist in a film’, ‘the real artist because they are the imagination and the genius behind it.’ However, many of my respondents, including those who make broadcast work, are passionate about the importance of the visual in their films. Kelly, who started working in TV in the mid-1980s, emphasises that when making documentaries she was trying to ‘tell the story through pictures’, which made her work different from her colleagues engaged in ‘current affair stories’, merely ‘illustrating’ them with images. Wendy, who has only made broadcast work, asserts she has ‘huge powers of visual observation’ and she always instructs a cameraman to film specific cutaways, ‘the shots ...that somehow illustrate what’s going on in film’, which she sees as one of defining features of her style. She also pays a lot of attention to colour and grading. Toni, another predominantly TV director, admits to having a side that is ‘very attached to the beauty of the image’. Olivia, who has been directing arts documentary series for years, has a humanities background but she was ‘always into arts, photography, design’ and always wanted the films she directs to be ‘aesthetically pleasing’. For Kathryn, the anomalous artist-filmmaker in my sample who does mostly broadcast work, films need to be ‘visually creative and challenging’ and she puts in ‘a lot of visual referencing’. These opinions show that some broadcast directors

⁵⁹ Admittedly, several of them find human rights, women’s rights, feminist and social justice issues ‘interesting’. I discuss the filmmaker’s desire to represent people in unprivileged social positions in the following section.

see their projects as much more than 'extended reportage'.⁶⁰ They also confirm that the educational path to documentary filmmaking does not determine future sensibilities as Kathryn is the only respondent in this group who graduated from art school.

My respondents notice that the customary gendering of creative agency as male influences how their colleagues and collaborators as well as their subjects perceive them, which is discussed in Chapters Six and Nine, respectively. However, many of the women I interviewed name the urge to express themselves creatively, sometimes against the odds, as what contributed to their becoming documentary filmmakers, which poses a serious challenge to the claim that genius is 'naturally' male. The way they talk about themselves as authors of their work does not necessarily depend on the types of films they make because even those respondents who feel strongly about their authorial position seldom make films traditionally coded as 'authored'. Despite the obstacles to claiming authorship of observational documentaries discussed in Chapter Two, Danielle says confidently: 'I definitely feel an auteur and I feel that that's empowering and that I do have a particular voice and vision that's specific'. After discussing the desire of my respondents to express themselves, I now move to their desire to analyse and understand the world they live in and represent and promote the interests of their contributors.

⁶⁰ On the other hand, Dot recalls being annoyed with a 'difficult' cameraman who insisted on staging every shot: 'I was less concerned with the visuals in a sense. It was more about what people were saying'.

Desire to engage with the world

I just thought I'd rather get into a big, deep story and actually try and change things through other people's voices.

Felicity

If documentary filmmaking is storytelling, it is the kind in which pureness of the authorial vision is contaminated by the messiness and unpredictability of the world. Some of my respondents do not prioritise their own desire to 'tell stories' but talk about 'telling other people's stories' or even 'giving voice' to other people. In this modality of documentary desire, the filmmaker's agency lies in 'finding stories' circulating out there in the world (Becky), discovering stories (Linda says she likes to 'discover the epic stories' in ordinary situations) or 'following the story', which is a standard description of observational filmmakers' practice among my respondents. They don't just want to represent other people in sounds and images as filmmakers (Renov's basic 'mimetic' drive) but also represent their cause, speaking as their proxy and amplifying the others' story. In her seminal essay 'Can the subaltern speak?' postcolonial literary critic Gayatri Spivak considers the play between these two meanings of 'represent' (Spivak 1988: 276-77), urging us to scrutinise the motivations of those with power to speak for the underprivileged. In this spirit, Rangan (2017) criticises those contemporary documentarians who perceive the representation of their subjects as transparent and always beneficial for the latter as at best naïve and at worst manipulative; as a filmmaker, the 'activist' documentarian plays a crucial role in mediating reality and presenting it to the audience. In my sample, nine respondents use 'voice' as a metaphor for their own creative vision; three who talk about 'giving a voice' to their contributors qualify this statement and discuss their active role as mediators.

My respondents' desire to represent other people and their causes before the audience has different shades of political activism. Becky and Felicity, whose films are mostly about violence against women, want to effect social change. Becky asserts powerfully:

I see my role very much as being able to turn the stone over and expose stuff and say the difficult stuff and say the unsayable, expose the unexposable...and give people a voice that have been desperately abused.

She is in constant dialogue with her contributors, which prevents her from positioning herself as their unproblematic proxy. For Felicity, who is in the beginning of her career, a documentary 'has to change something'. She expresses a strong dismissal of the desire to express oneself, discussed in the previous section, as a motivation in the field of non-fiction. 'I don't really like making documentaries for the sake of making a film,' she says and adds that she wants to work on documentaries 'that people watch and change their perceptions'. When presenting the decision to make work for television as a practical choice for working mothers, already in Chapter Six I signalled that other respondents value the medium for different reasons. British public broadcasting channels have been regarded as enabling social change from the 1960s. Nicholas Garnham, who worked at the BBC as a director until 1970, says that 'a whole generation of the British creative intelligentsia' saw television back then as 'a progressive medium of popular education and enlightenment' (quoted in Lee 2011: 159). Echoing Garnham, Theresa asserts that in the late 1970s 'you went into television because you thought you wanted to change the world...television was a tool, it was a very powerful tool to get things across to the public'. She got the job in TV in the late 1970s because she was 'quite politicised' at the time. Although British television has changed since then and especially in the past ten years it has been charged with, among others, the erosion of ethical approach to the representation of unprivileged social groups, as discussed throughout this thesis, the size and makeup of the television audience remains attractive for those filmmakers who want their films to change people's perceptions of burning social issues. Talking about the impact of one of her documentaries, broadcast in 2016, Becky says:

I think that the television audience is a great audience. [her film's title], 3.2 million people watched the film at peak time at nine o'clock on BBC One about horrific domestic violence. Now that is a good achievement. If I'd made that film in the cinema, it would have taken me thirty years to reach the point where 3.2 million people have watched that. For me, I feel like making films for television is great because you've got the audience there...for me, if I can reach (this is my social justice hat on) if I can reach 2.5 million people and teach them

about coercive control, then I've done my job. I can go home and go, "That was good."

That's why I want to carry on doing what I'm doing.

Other respondents who want to change the status quo make work both for TV and other exhibition contexts. Bettina says she wants to change representations of people who are left on the margins of the current economic situation but her documentary about a community affected by gentrification was deemed too experimental to be acquired by any of British TV channels. Roberta says she is 'very interested in what happens on the margins' because 'that tells you a lot about the kind of the world that you live in' and all her social-issues documentaries were broadcast on British TV. Ethel wants to make films about the experience of black women because working as a programmer she realised that there aren't enough stories like that, and she pursues independent route. Danielle, financing her films independently, is happy with telling 'small ordinary stories', not linked to broader political movements or struggles: 'it could be literally my neighbour next door struggling with something', she says.

Because of my project's investigation of the influence of gender on authoring, it is of special interest to me whether any of my respondents frame their desire to represent other people's causes as 'feminist' or if they want to prioritise 'women's issues' in their documentaries. As I discussed before, realist feminist documentary continues to have a broad appeal among both women filmmakers and audiences internationally. More than a third of my respondents mention working on projects which focus on social issues affecting women (like the gender pay gap, housing problems, single motherhood and domestic violence) and which include mostly or only women contributors. However, only three of my respondents (Barbara, Kelly and Tina) spontaneously call themselves 'feminists' or say that their films are 'feminist', and Iona admits it after my additional question. Barbara recalls problems she encountered when trying to use the word 'feminist' in her films' promotional materials; she says all her films are feminist because she proves in them her commitment to equal opportunities through showing 'women in positions of power and authority' on screen. Kelly and Tamsin, both in their sixties, have been involved in feminist activism in the UK in the 1970s and Kelly says many of her films are 'about feminism and human rights type issues' and that she has done 'a lot of

women's subjects on purpose'. Because of her feminist agenda she says she 'never felt ghettoised', even when commissioned to make a short TV programme investigating the alleged link between bras and cancer. Linda and Wendy mention feminism and social activism in passing as something obviously present in their lives but they do not elaborate on it nor mention it as something driving their work. Numerous respondents who make films about women disarticulate and disavow feminism. Gina starts by saying that her films are not 'overtly feminist' and that she just gravitates 'towards women characters' without planning it, but then describes her current project as being about 'working-class radical feminist women up in the North'. 'I would love to get a little bit of that on telly,' she admits. She slightly mocks her male colleague who was taken aback by the group's 'radicalism': 'Yes, they're just feminists who are trying to work with other women and saying that they're still fighting misogyny within the system. Shocking!' Becky's contributors are mostly abused women but she says that 'the social justice or the social purpose of a film' is paramount without mentioning gender. Danielle says she is 'more interested in a young girl, or young woman say in [one of her films] rather than a young boy' but doesn't call her work 'feminist' either, only saying she focuses 'on stories about women or young people'. Lucy describes her films, pretty much all about women, as 'a love letter to rebels' focusing on 'a fight against tradition' but she rejects gender binaries and identity politics built on them as 'old-fashioned' and 'Western'. Re-presenting the lives of real, often vulnerable people on camera paired with representing their cause to the audience carries serious ethical obligations. I discuss the relationship with contributors as one of the important elements of documentary authoring in detail in the following chapter.

Love of actuality

It's not scripted, it's not like a drama or fiction, it's surprising you and you've got to remain completely in the moment to capture it effectively.

Linda

For Renov the documentary function 'to record, reveal, preserve' is the most fundamental one. This 'mimetic drive, common to all of cinema' (Renov 1993:22) is a desire to represent, as in 'convey in images', the world and its inhabitants. Indeed, some of my respondents who move between documentary and fiction say they were driven to 'filmmaking' in general, confirming the universality of the urge for all types of films. Most of them also switch between documentary and fiction modes of representation and, as discussed in Chapter Seven, tend to prefer the designation 'filmmaker' rather than 'documentary filmmaker'. But for the analysis of my respondents' talk it is crucial that in the documentary realm the desire to 'record, reveal, preserve' is 'intensified by the documentary signifier's ontological status' (*ibid.*). While fiction filmmaking relies on the viewer's suspension of disbelief, debates about realism and 'reality' recur in documentary discourse. Cowie argues that viewers of documentaries are driven by epistephilia, a 'wish to know' (2011: 86), which makes documentary desire more than mimetic. Some of my respondents talk about their choice to make only documentaries because of their fascination with real people, real situations and unexpectedness of the process. In these accounts documentary is compared to and defined against fiction films. Lisa asserts: 'I was more interested in how to make sense of the world than I was in telling stories from within my own head' and Wendy agrees: 'when truth is stranger than fiction, I find that much more rewarding than making stuff up.' She recalls a meeting with TV drama producers at a time when she was considering embarking on a fiction project. When asked about one of the fictional characters' motivations, all she could think about was: "She doesn't exist. She's not real." Jacqui had a job as a casting assistant after university and although she enjoyed talking to actors, she quickly discovered that she found 'the process of looking at those actors before they went into an audition more interesting than what they were doing in the audition': she was drawn to real-life stories she heard in

the waiting room more than to the minutiae of the actors' put-on performance. Danielle feels 'there's something so magical about actuality...It's so rich, tapestry, there's so much stuff that sometimes when you decide to fiction[ise] it, you never get nuances and subtleties.' She says she prefers 'responding to actuality' to starting from scratch. Linda, who already had a fine art career (but not as a video artist) when she turned to documentary filmmaking, mentions the unscripted nature of filmmaking as one of the main reasons for it:

When I first started making documentaries, with [title of her first film] I really remember feeling it and thinking, "I have found what I should be doing," I felt like I had found a dance that was my dance and that's what's great about it, nothing else matters when you're shooting a scene that is surprising you.

My respondents' fascination with reality does not make them passive witnesses of it, as they all describe active approach they have to authoring their films. Lisa describes documentary filmmaking as a process of physically grappling with reality, and her job as a director is to figure out 'how as a team we can work together to best capture, sort of put the octopus in the bag and capture it, and make it into something compelling'. However, those who shoot observationally often try to minimise their disruption of the scene, unlike the 'performative' directors who record their interactions with contributors. The former strategy is often portrayed as a naïve belief in the transparency of the medium but observational filmmaker Lucy emphasises another dimension of it. She contrasts fiction and documentary filmmaking by ascribing to the former creation of a new world and to the latter, 'entering a world'. 'I'm not creating something from nothing, I'm filming something that's already there,' she says, adding:

I know that a lot of the scenes that I film would happen if I was there or not. I try and be so gentle in a way that it lets the thing breathe and it would be like that whether I was there or not.

Lucy is normally accompanied by a sound person and an assistant, and yet she tries to be 'as unobtrusive as possible', not provoking events but letting them develop at their own pace. The observational self-shooting filmmaker still has creative agency, which is well described by Danielle whose account is influenced by her art background:

The best analogy is like drawing or being a painter. It's like I need to hold the paintbrush to make the marks and as soon as someone else is holding that paintbrush, I don't quite know where the paintbrush should move. I can sort of say, "Oh, move it left," but it doesn't feel as instinctive, so I have to be part of the connection with what's happening because I use purely instinct and emotion when I make films and I respond intuitively.

Even as she responds 'intuitively' to what happens in front of her, her camera records what she makes it record and therefore in her films the audience watches the reality she 'paints' for them, not an unmediated 'real'. Other respondents highlight the subjectivity of documentary filmmaking, even with the unscripted material: '[t]here's no such thing as a fly on the wall', says Evelyn. 'The camera changes the subject, and I love that about it', she adds. Frances simply says that 'the minute you arrive and you point the camera in this direction and not that direction you're imposing your viewpoint on the situation'. These accounts confirm self-reflexivity of my respondents and their understanding that their creative decisions shape their films, even if parts of them are unscripted.

Some respondents believe that their engagement with the world should extend beyond the production period. Kathryn says documentary filmmakers should be talking to people around them more often than to people from the industry; 'Who cares what the filmmakers think?' she asks rhetorically after describing her diversified social and professional circles. Linda also holds 'meeting ordinary people and enacting the world as an ordinary citizen' above 'meeting other filmmakers and looking at other films'. Frances sees such an approach as a distinguishing feature of documentary filmmakers, highlighting the difference between the people she meets at documentary festivals, who are 'deeply engaged in this exercise of figuring out the world and making sense of it', and 'self-obsessed, egotistical fiction directors' frequenting feature film festivals. Frances also shares how she finds engagement with actuality rewarding and enriching on a personal level: 'I would learn all these interesting things and I'd be challenged and at the end of the project I would feel I'd grown so much as a human being, I've learned so much about something'. Toni appreciates travelling a lot and meeting people 'doing extraordinary things that I wouldn't have met in any other activity at all'. However, she is also a bit

more pragmatic in her comparison of documentary and fiction filmmaking, saying how all the rewarding aspects of being a documentarian would have been replaced by the mundane: 'if I would've been a fiction filmmaker, I would've been wrestling with tedious things to do with permissions and finding the right song'. Danielle appreciates the fact that in documentary she can slowly build her connections with subjects and collaborators rather than putting herself on the line as a director working with actors. Interestingly, while the majority of respondents appreciate greater financial accessibility of documentaries, requiring less money than fiction projects (Kathryn refers to the 'funding nightmare' encountered by fiction filmmakers), Frances considers to move into fiction for 'pragmatic' reasons as she says it is easier to be represented by an agent and thus get funding.

Conclusion

The work I have done in this chapter, considering different modalities of documentary filmmakers' desire as a field of investigation in its own right, separate from the finished film, offers an original perspective on documentary authoring. I have demonstrated that the documentary impulse propelling my respondents to make their work comes from different sources, and that one filmmaker can have motivations of different kinds behind her project. The three modalities of desire I identified in my respondents' talk correspond to the sensibilities of an artist, expressing herself and concerned with visual aspects of her film; an activist, promoting the social causes to bring about a change; and a documentarian, fascinated with preserving of the historical world we share. Put together, they capture the complexity of most documentary projects in which the filmmaker meets her subjects and represents this encounter on film. I argue that prioritising what my respondents say about their motivations over searching for the traces of their intentions in the film text provides me with information that may be missing from the final cut. As a research method, it can be a useful feminist tool given that women make fewer documentaries than men: accounting for women's documentaries that haven't been made. Although my respondents are all active filmmakers, I have indicated in Chapter Six that they are sometimes encouraged to make films of specific type or on certain subjects, the issue I will expand on in Chapter Nine. These discursive and institutional mechanisms widen the gap between the filmmaker's motivations and desires ('the author outside the text') and the final cut of her film (based on which 'the author inside the text' is constructed). I argue that analysing women documentarians' desires and motivations can help fill the gaps in authorship research and add depth to it, celebrating the diversity of their interests and countering the claim that women are not interested in certain subjects or types of documentaries.

Chapter 9: Towards a ‘women’s way’ of making documentaries

Throughout this thesis I have demonstrated how selected areas outside the film text influence women documentarians’ authorship, supporting my argument that this kind of analysis is necessary to paint a full picture of women filmmakers’ creative efforts. In this chapter I present the final element of analysis of my respondents’ self-perceptions which have been the focus of Part Three of this work: the ways in which they locate their authorial agency in practical decisions they make in their everyday work. In doing so, this chapter revisits the production context, but instead of focusing on the factors external to my respondents, discussed in Chapters Five and Six, it spotlights the filmmaker’s creative choices during filmmaking.

Crucially, in the final chapter of this thesis I return to the question I posed in Chapter Three: Is there such thing as ‘women’s documentary’? My line of enquiry was inspired by the early feminist film scholars’ project to define ‘women’s cinema’, which my predecessors pursued first by means of textual analysis of films made by women (in search for shared stylistic features) and later by considering distinct ways of film production (like feminist filmmaking collectives that challenged the cult of individual authorship), as discussed previously. However, as my respondents make documentaries that vary in both subject matter and style and they work in different production contexts, in order to define ‘women’s documentary’ in the contemporary British context I focus on filmmaking strategies shared by my respondents. Building on the findings about the impact of external factors on the filmmaker’s creative choices, from the commissioning mechanism to interactions with crew members, I argue that working consistently in certain ways is a production-process equivalent of the authorial inscription in the film text and as such should be an essential part of the exhaustive account of authorship I argue for in my thesis.

In keeping with my intersectional approach to interview data, I recognise that gender may not be the only factor shaping filmmakers' decisions in the production process. However, as my sample is rather homogenous in terms of social markers other than gender (see Appendix 3), 'women documentarians' authorship' I investigate in this chapter is chiefly one of white British women who are either from middle-class background or who have acquired enough cultural and social capital to adapt to middle-class dominated professional environments. Social origin, the most significant marker of difference in my sample, is mentioned most often as impacting the beginnings of a career (discussed in Chapter Four); therefore gender is the most salient category influencing my respondents' creative decisions discussed in this chapter.

This chapter is divided in three sections, discussing in turn: the importance of collaborations in the filmmaking process; the influence of relationships with contributors on authoring; the meeting point of filmmaker's intentions and industry's expectations of 'women's documentaries'.

Authoring as a team effort: collaborations

I've got a massive issue about documentaries and the kind of fetishisation of the director
'having their film'.

Felicity

In Chapter Six I demonstrated how the abiding myth of the male artist-genius makes it difficult for women who call the shots on documentary sets to be respected by their colleagues and collaborators, some of whom believe that women are 'naturally' incapable of creativity and originality. I discussed how feminist media scholars challenged the fetishised authority of the individual director by researching and amplifying work of those in below-the-line, often feminised, production roles and how feminist filmmakers and activists rejected this construct by engaging in collective ways of filmmaking, where the group members took turns performing different roles or the entire group was credited as the author of the work. However, very few of my respondents recall the experience of this type of filmmaking. It is only Tamsin, in her mid-sixties, who talks about her involvement in film collectives in the 1970s London in the heyday of this practice and Bettina, in her mid-forties, who was part of an artist filmmaking collective in London in the early 2000s. Neither of them elaborates on how these groups challenged the ideas around individual authorship; Bettina emphasises learning from each other and from the people in the community with which her collective engaged, and Tamsin focuses on the importance of the 1982 Workshop Declaration, discussed previously. Lucy often credits her women collaborators as co-directors and so does Linda, who works with her long-time woman collaborator, a fellow artist, in what their website describes as 'a multi-disciplinary, non-profit creative organisation'.

The majority of my respondents get individual credit as the main creative person on their films and I have indicated that having the end credit on a broadcast documentary is crucial both for maintaining the professional status as a 'director' or 'producer/director' in the broadcasting environment and the ability to claim royalties. But rather than supporting 'the kind of fetishisation of the director', opposed by Felicity on the grounds

that it 'writes out the efforts of the other five or six people', my interviewees talk about working with a team as an important part of being documentary director. Olivia understands 'directing' as being in charge of a group of people where everyone is 'serving the idea', trying to make the film 'the best it can be' rather than working towards making the director's vision 'great'. She describes how filmmaking as a team effort makes her feel:

I just feel really high when that happens, really excited and really a bit like you're a kid and you're playing the magic of game with lots of other friends and everyone's in that imaginative world with you, it's not just you on your own.

In her account directing is collaborative rather than authoritarian. Toni also calls making broadcast documentaries 'a really democratic and team endeavour' and says she loved working with a team of really skilled people who 'could make together something that none of [them] could do on their own'. Sam summarises her role as such: 'as a director, I enjoy being at the centre of the decision-making, but I don't discount the input that other people can have', saying she doesn't believe in 'just being a crazy megalomaniac'. These accounts of team work offer a positive dimension of TV documentary production, adding to its previously discussed negative aspects like influencing the final cut and imposing inflexible rules on filmmakers. If the director is *primus inter pares*, it is important for her to choose her collaborators. Thanks to their established position and the fact they often work through their own production companies, the majority of my respondents choose who they work with, although it's not always the case for those in early stages of their careers. Moreover, even experienced filmmakers encounter situations when their desired collaborator is unavailable or, as in case of Tina, they cannot afford to pay the person they want to work with. In general, my respondents like going back to the same people, echoing Farrin's feelings:

I think it's really nice to actually work with— to have long time collaborators. Certainly, I think when you find that you have shared values with, there are things that you really can see works within a team, it's great to use them and continue with them.

Wendy says she has made 'twenty three films with the same cameraman' and my other non-shooting respondents tend to have long lasting collaborations with DPs, mostly men. 'I've learnt so much from working with her,' says Kathryn about the 'brilliant'

woman producer she co-produced several of her films with. For some respondents, especially those with art school background, their collaborations turn into deep creative partnerships. Linda runs a production company with her long-term female collaborator about whom she says that they have 'a sort of unspoken way of communicating'. Describing an intense way of working with a camerawoman who later joined her as a co-editor, Bettina also says they didn't talk much but rather shared an understanding about what the final cut should be. 'I need to have a distancing device, but I need to have also someone who is bringing poetry,' she says about that partnership. The collaborators of this kind often have a significant impact on creative process.

The relationship with an editor is especially important from the perspective of authoring because, as Linda says echoing the industry wisdom, 'documentaries are really made in the edit'. All my respondents work with editors and only a few have occasionally edited final cuts of their own work. Felicity agrees that editors 'have a huge creative input' into the film and Lucy calls the editor, not herself, the 'artist' in the process. 'There's nothing better I think that sitting down with a really good editor,' says Toni, 'and showing her or him your material and working out between you how to make it into a great film'. She provides a great metaphor for documentary authoring as happening between shooting and editing:

I absolutely love that business of alternation of being an Amazonian hunter, where you go out into the world and grab your prey and track it down and capture it, but sometimes that's very difficult and incredibly painful. Then you drag it back to the cave, which is the edit, and you chop it up. You spend slow, measured, thoughtful hours making it into a beautiful stew. I love the alternation of the intensity of the shoot and the measured lace-making activity of the edit. I like that very much.

Sam says she 'would hold off an edit to get the right editor', and Dot says she always asks for the same editor at Channel 4 because they are 'on the same wavelength'. Although hiring a crew can be a challenge for freelancers working with small budgets, Jacqui turned down jobs on which she was expected to both shoot and edit: 'It's not that I can't, I just don't feel it's the right way to do something,' she says. She calls her editor the 'ally who's with you on the storytelling front', devoid of an agenda that broadcaster or client may have. Because of the intimacy of this relationship, many respondents work

with the same editor on many films, sharing 'a good shorthand' (Evelyn) creatively but also a non-verbal understanding, which is key for getting along during long hours in the editing room. Lucy says about the editor with whom she made twelve films: 'he doesn't get cross with me, I don't get cross with him' and Olivia appreciates being able to recognise that her editor is just having a bad day because she knows her well. Jacqui as a director 'can be pretty vulnerable in the edit' and therefore she prefers women editors but many of my respondents have had long creative relationships with men editors.

Several respondents send their editor a rough cut to open a creative dialogue, preferring visual communication to talking. The majority work with the editor closely, seeing the process as collaboration. Roberta is in the edit all the time: 'I'm not one of those directors that flex in and out of the cutting room,' she declares. Similarly, Linda talks about 'long days in the dark room drinking tea and rolling things around' with her editor. Conversely, Frances says: 'Ideally I wouldn't sit in the edit...you need another person to have some distance and to be able to look at it in a different way than what you're doing.' Similarly to her, Gina likes to leave her editors to do their job: 'he'd go nuts if I stayed in the room while he's trying to assemble, really.' Allowed to 'rummage around in the footage' (Gina), the editor is a fresh pair of eyes, beneficial for the project. Sam always wants her editors to watch the rushes on their own for the first time. 'I want their emotional reaction', she says, adding that the director sometimes needs to let go of their initial idea about the film's shape.

Wendy admits that she returns to the same cameraman, sound recordists, graphic designers and graders but feels strongly that 'every now and then you have to get divorced from an editor'. She explains her choice of this strong marital metaphor by the intensity of the relationship; after several films together 'you just can't take it anymore,' she says. Other respondents also recognise the point at which collaborations stop being creatively stimulating. Bettina says that she is 'quite loyal and sometimes that's a mistake, because when the collaboration doesn't work, it's hard to extract yourself from it'. Tina worked several times with a Canadian composer but needed to stop because, as she says: 'I was worried that my work was becoming too much like— his work was inflecting my work too much that it was becoming like that was the sound of my film'. Recognising the power of collaborators to shape one's project and acknowledging the value of their

expertise is not the same as collective filmmaking in terms of erasing the hierarchy of different roles. However, I argue that it does pose a serious challenge to the authoritarian model of filmmaking in which team members realise the director's vision without being given a say.

Performing many roles on the project

Often [woman collaborator's name] films and I do the sound. It depends what is needed, I paint the sets, I bring coffee to you. It doesn't matter; I'd do anything.

Bettina

For better or worse, working with a big documentary crew in which everyone has just one clearly defined function (as discussed in Chapter Five) is by and large a thing of the past and the majority of my respondents perform multiple roles on their projects. The ability to multitask and flexibly change roles is an important feature of contemporary documentary filmmaking, both for broadcast and independent exhibition. Iona emphasises that apart from editing, she can perform all the roles and she thinks 'that's probably important in the modern climate'. By choice or necessity, all but four of my respondents shoot at least some of their material. When working with a camera person, the director often records sound. Being a producer as well as director is a popular choice, mirrored by the official TV credit of 'producer/director'. The majority of my respondents research their films and produce (or co-produce) them, and those who make scripted documentaries also tend to write the script and/or narrative. This multitasking is seen most often as a practical choice dictated by either budgetary constraints or the nature of documentary process itself, as it gives especially the self-shooting respondents freedom to pursue a variety of projects. But Linda sees the skill of learning any role 'to the best of [her] ability' as part of her 'sensibility as an artist', therefore incorporating it as a feature of her practice and not just a pragmatic choice. Similarly, TV directors see a broad range of skills they possess as an important part of their professional identity. Kelly quotes the guidelines of Directors UK recommending that the person in charge of the film should oversee its three stages: research, shooting and editing. 'I wouldn't really want to take a job where I was only doing one part, like just looking after the edit,' she says. Felicity offers a long list of tasks performed by a contemporary early-career TV producer/director: 'everything from creating relationships, researching the story and filming all the time, being a main person on the ground' as well as 'making the decisions on how the film's

going to be shown'. Emphasising that 'the thing about directing is you have to have so many different skills', Wendy lists being good with ideas and with people; being able to deliver artistic direction of visuals and music; having 'clarity around ideas' and good project management skills. These opinions support my argument that a diversified set of skills possessed by contemporary British women documentarians constitutes another form of challenge to the model in which a director with a narrowly defined role is endowed with authority to claim credit for creative work of others. As the director performs many other roles, including sound recording and camera, documentary production hierarchy for the majority of my respondents is flatter than in big-budget fiction productions.

While gender strongly influences collaborations imposed on my respondents, as the instances of sexist crew members discussed in Chapter Six, It is not as clear a factor in the chosen collaborations described in this section. The respondents who don't shoot select their male DPs carefully to make sure the latter treat not only the director but also contributors with respect. 'I expect everybody on my team to be brilliant with people,' says Becky, 'I don't expect my cameraman to come in and boss everyone around, throw his weight around.' 'I hate blokes, macho attitude, I can't bear it,' says Bettina but this comment follows her mentioning 'quite a few' outstanding male collaborators whom she calls 'honorary women'. Lucy, battling gender essentialism, hopes she could work with 'a very particular kind of man' in any situation, 'somebody who definitely wasn't going to be perceived as a threat' by women contributors. 'Small man?' she offers, tentatively. While several respondents have had long lasting enriching creative partnerships with other women, the majority have preferred male collaborators they return to. Sadly, very few of my respondents (most notably, Bettina and Roberta) have ever worked with a woman cinematographer although several say they feel they should seek them out. Kelly also includes herself when saying: 'It must be really annoying if you're a camerawoman, to see all these women directors who call themselves feminists working with cameramen all the time'.⁶¹ Those respondents who worked with camerawomen praise their skills and

⁶¹ The website of British collective Illuminatrix, comprising experienced women cinematographers based in the UK but working internationally, is an answer to those who say they know of no women DoPs: <https://www.illuminatrixdops.com/>

professionalism. Becky and Tamsin also mention the importance of gender in their interactions with collaborators as they admit to having nurturing instincts. The former talks about having 'happy teams' by feeding collaborators properly and planning the shoot with them in the collaborative spirit; the latter reprimands herself for playing into gendered stereotypes as on location she worries about her crew's hotel rooms being comfortable or recommends local restaurants she had scouted.

Contributors

Part of the thing for me about being a director on a documentary, is that one thing, is your relationship with the contributor.

Iona

Besides relationships with team members, the substantial part of documentary collaboration happens between the filmmaker and her subjects. My respondents agree that this relationship, starting with getting access and continuing through weeks, months or sometimes years of shooting, is crucial for the process of documentary authoring. Many of my respondents say that their gender matters in their interaction with contributors at most fundamental level. 'People talk to women more easily, I think,' says Evelyn about her filmmaking experience. Not being taken seriously by male collaborators may impede the filmmaking process, as discussed in Chapter Six, but it can be helpful for gaining access to some male subjects. Iona says she sometimes uses her 'feminine charms' strategically and Kathryn agrees that 'sometimes there's nothing more persuasive than a girl in a nice dress'. The fact that men would refer to and treat women as 'girls', often frowned upon by feminist writers, can be used to female director's advantage. 'They quite like chatting to a girl...to them, I'm a "girl",' says Sam. Lisa, who was forty at the time of our interview and telling me about her recent experiences, mocks this attitude, saying that she can get material she wants as her contributors think: 'Oh, it's just a little girl. The girl's making a film, a video for that lot, just a little video, just wants to get a few shots, and it's okay.' Ethel maintains access to a male fixer on her current project by presenting as an agreeable woman who always shows on time and pretends to obey him. Working as a producer on a couple of projects with a male director, she recalls that they played out a man-woman dynamic in front of the contributors for the benefit of the film. Bettina observes that male contributors do not get competitive with women who interview them, which they sometimes do in the presence of male crew members. Roberta thinks this makes it easier for a woman to film in dangerous, testosterone-filled environments dominated by men. Having made a film about inner-city gangs, she says:

'Even though I have had people pull guns on me and threaten to kill me, in the end, they're not going to show off about it: "Oh, I managed to kill [Roberta's real name]." I'm sixty-seven now.' It is important to note that the majority of these examples takes place within the unacknowledged heterosexual framework of men-women interactions, in which 'a girl in a nice dress' who makes a conscious effort to appear wide-eyed, obedient or clueless, also appears sexy to assumedly heterosexual men around her. Because only one of my respondents identifies as 'queer' in the interview, and she doesn't mention her sexual orientation as impacting her relationships during filmmaking, I do not explore the impact of sexual orientation on my respondents' work. Potentially any woman could strategically take up and perform this conventional female persona, just as any woman, also heterosexual one, can refuse to engage in this game (and it is only few respondents who do).

Being a woman filmmaker can aid interactions with female contributors, too. Some respondents assert that it would have been impossible for them to get access on some of their films if they were men. Lucy's most recent documentary (at the time of our interview) was shot among a group of women rape survivors and Gina was working on a film about women's refuge. 'I couldn't have made a film about teenage girls if I'd had a penis, there's no way, you just can't,' says Evelyn who filmed in teenagers' bedrooms. But Sam's opinion disturbs the idyll of 'sisterhood' between the female filmmaker and her women subjects, suggesting that the rules of their encounter are shaped by external ideas about women's behaviour. Men, Sam believes, are generally let off the hook 'if they do something emotionally inappropriate', and she mentions male directors she knows who limit their interactions with contributors to the minimum and send their female APs to check in with the subjects after the shoot. On the other hand, she feels that because she is a woman director, her female contributors expect her 'to be doing the emotional mopping up' besides performing her filmmaking duties. Several other respondents articulate the feeling of ethical obligation towards contributors unprompted, locating it in the internal impulse rather than external expectation. Linda talks about having 'a dogged kind of sense' that 'nothing could be left out of the story' of her subjects. She contrasts it with feeling 'liberated' when working with autobiographical material when 'you've only yourself to answer'. This resonates with the difference discussed in Chapter Eight

between the desire to 'tell stories' to express oneself and to tell 'other people's stories' to represent them fairly. Roberta admits that she has made films that hurt her contributors. She thinks that in these situations, the director has the responsibility 'to actually face up to it' and confront the situation. 'You're holding people's lives in your hand,' she says poignantly. Sam recalls that on her first TV documentary she didn't feel any 'warmth' towards her contributors and as a result she made 'quite a mocking film', although unintentionally: 'It was a big lesson for me about choosing subject matters and contributors that I have some empathy with even if I don't really agree with them'. Theresa, who admits to not 'liking' professional actors, declares she'll 'move heaven and earth' for her contributors whom she loves 'to bits', feeling privileged to work with people who bravely open up to the camera about difficult personal issues. She tends to call them after the film is broadcast to make sure they are doing OK. Frances had made several documentaries for TV in the past but to protect her contributors she did not seek TV commission for one of her projects. She realised that TV executives expected her to take a particular angle in telling her subjects' story which she didn't want to agree on. Dot remembers being appalled by the approach her male ex-boss had towards his contributors which she describes as him giving the impression of: "I'm going to fucking walk into your environment and dominate it and dictate to you". 'That's just not the way I am,' she muses, 'and maybe that makes me more female director but I don't care.' Because my analysis of my respondents' talk is semantic, I do not hypothesise about how they might adjust their behaviour towards contributors because of internalising of gendered stereotypes about women being nurturing and caring unless they mention it themselves like Sam, quoted previously.

'Getting the best material out of people'

The need to prioritise the contributors' needs and their wellbeing, even after the film is finished, can be seen as an emotional extension of the desire to represent people discussed in the previous chapter. At the same time, the way contributors appear on camera (are re-presented) is part of the filmmaker's accomplishment as an author or 'artist', the fulfilment of their desire to express themselves. Becky says that good relationship with contributors is necessary for getting 'the best material out of people'. Some of the respondents who agree that a 'good relationship' with contributors shows on

film also believe that the rapport between them and the subjects develops best when they are alone. Evelyn says she always works on her own because she believes that 'when you're alone with someone, something really interesting happens'. 'Hanging out' with her subjects in informal settings like a pub or their kitchen means she can 'have an entirely different type of conversation' which allows her to 'really get to the heart of what someone is, how they're motivated, what they feel'.

However, the crucial moment in which the intimacy of the subject-filmmaker relationship shows to the viewer is the one-on-one interview. Barbara tends to film those herself with a small unobtrusive camera, although she would include other crew members for 'formal interview shot', and this approach is shared by some other respondents who shoot. Barbara says she does it to 'get the material that people will be interested in' as she doesn't believe that contributors 'are going to be telling the same stuff with the crew'. But for other respondents that is precisely the problem. Olivia says it doesn't make sense to be alone with your contributor 'unless you're literally doing something illegal and undercover'. Wendy poses an ethical challenge to this set-up, pointing out that the people whom she interviews as TV documentary director 'have made a decision to give their testimony'. That is why creating the atmosphere of intimacy which may suggest that the filmmaker is the only person to hear their story can backfire: 'if you are hoodwinking them into that thinking then you got problems lying ahead with issues of consent'. She further argues that just as it would be absurd for a patient to ask a dental nurse to leave the room, her contributors don't mind the carefully selected, experienced crew members she works with.⁶²

While Wendy, who never shoots her material, always works with a cameraman and a sound recordist, even those respondents who shoot sometimes choose to work with a cameraperson during interviews. They say this improves the quality of their relationship with contributors as they can devote all their time and attention to them rather than focusing on technical issues. While Olivia sometimes does the camera, she still says 'it's better to have no technology in your hands' when interviewing. The intimacy

⁶² As I analyse the manifest rather than the latent meaning of my respondents' speech, I don't look for a psychological significance of the fact that Wendy associates the event of documentary interview with the visit at the dentist's.

of the relationship for her is about ‘staring’ into the contributor’s eyes and giving them all possible attention, which makes them forget all other crew members and ‘reveal something they’ve never revealed before’. Similarly Roberta, who both films on her own and works with a crew, does not feel the latter is ruining intimacy. ‘Because I make very strong relationships with people, if I turn up with several large men with equipment, it doesn’t actually affect that because people are still connecting to me,’ she says confidently.

Some respondents mention the presence of documentary subjects as governing the entire filmmaking process and defining their role. Lucy, who rejects the title of ‘director’, sees her role as ‘making a film happen’ and because she is attuned to the contributors’ needs and energies, she says: ‘I have a different role in each film, depending on the person.’ Her insight allows for an unorthodox re-definition of ‘character-driven’, the phrase normally used to suggest a larger-than-life documentary subject in order to boost the audience’s interest. For Bettina her role is making ‘a space where things can happen that might even be challenging’ to her contributors. ‘I’m doing stuff that might be uncomfortable for people,’ she admits, ‘to push them somewhere’; she accepts that she can be challenged by her contributors when she pushes them too far.

I have demonstrated that gender is a meaningful factor influencing my respondents’ filmmaking in the situations when they respond to external, gendered expectations expressed by their collaborators and contributors. However, when it comes to those creative choices they describe as ones they are in control of, there is not enough material in my data set to draw a strong conclusion about gender influencing their collaborations with peers or the people they film. Nobody wants to work with an arrogant macho cameraman but carefully chosen male collaborators, from DPs to editors, are valued and returned to. My respondents also recognise two meanings of the ‘good relationship’ with contributors: the nurturing and protective one, gendered feminine, and the more selfish artistic one, traditionally gendered masculine. Therefore the talk about ethical obligations towards their contributors, both during and after the shoot, coexists with the explicit desire to get ‘the best material’ out of interviewees even if that means nobody else can be present in the room.

‘Women’s subjects’ and human interest stories: between creative desire and external expectations

Documentary relations of authority and address—of authorship—are themselves inflected, though by no means determined, by gender (White 2006: 124).

After discussing my respondents’ creative choices in the context of their relationships with collaborators and contributors, in this section I return to the issue of gendering of the authorship of the documentary text, discussed at length in Chapter Two, juxtaposing it with my respondents’ creative desires presented in Chapter Eight. By doing that I am able to show how the final decision of what kind of documentaries my respondents make is a product of both their internal motivations and external realities of the industry. As such, this analysis is the fitting final element of my argument that women’s documentary authorship should be considered beyond the film text, and that any instance of women’s in-text authorial inscription should be approached carefully in the context of criticism and scholarship.

Documentary ‘genres’ are both categories in documentary studies (Nichols 2001; Nichols 2010) and industry labels used in funding, programming and exhibition contexts. For example, TV documentaries are divided into subgenres ‘in close orientation to standard broadcasting categories, which are employed by broadcasters and independent producers’ (Zoellner 2009: 507), based on their subject matter (like history, natural history, art or religion) but also divided into broader categories like ‘human interest stories’ or ‘society’. The majority of my respondents make one-off singles (varying in length between thirty and ninety minutes) or short series (for example, Wendy is famous for her three-part documentary series). Some of my respondents, especially those who see themselves as ‘artists’ as well as ‘filmmakers’, do not like to use the category of ‘genre’ to talk about their practice. Danielle says she is put off by this idea and wants to make unique films, ‘something you’ve never seen before’. Bettina admits that all her films completely changed in the course of their making and it is difficult to categorize them. As

discussed in Chapter Five, this approach makes it difficult for them to apply for funding in the climate when the funders want to know exactly what the film will be like. On the other hand, the majority of my respondents describe the films they make using generic categories.

External expectations of funders who make decisions about what types of documentaries women documentarians are trusted to direct affect mostly those respondents who make broadcast work. Some of the respondents who followed the TV apprenticeship route, as directors for hire were asked to cover 'women's issues' understood simplistically or commercially. Lisa found it disheartening: 'I remember at a certain point just being asked to develop things on fashion, or celebrity, or whatever, and it just really isn't me', she says. Women directors who progressed to pitching their own ideas, including my respondents discussed in Chapter Five who have enjoyed 'special' relationship with commissioning editors, were not subjects of such crude suggestions. Yet, they were mostly working and pitching their ideas in the late 1980s and 1990s, in the context of proliferation of 'human interest' news stories and intimate documentaries on British TV. Myra Macdonald points out that this 'personalisation' of television schedules is a source of a 'curious ambivalence' (1998: 105) from the perspective of feminist media critic. While it can be seen as a welcome corrective to 'a masculinized agenda' of media, it does not challenge the traditional binary of those personal narratives (coded feminine) and 'rational' news stories and debates (coded masculine), which trivialises the former (*ibid.*). Considering the entire factual TV output, Macdonald draws the gender line between news and documentaries; within documentaries themselves, 'human interest' documentaries can be opposed to 'big issues' documentaries. The former focus on one or several characters whose lives are shown to the audience in detail, trying to elicit identification and empathy with the subjects. The latter approach their subject matter more analytically, and expert talking heads may be the only people present on screen. While male and female directors make both types of films, 'human interest' documentaries are gendered feminine and therefore it is easier for women directors to

get commissions for this kind of films, as reported by my respondents.⁶³ Although in the previous section I demonstrated that the relationship between filmmakers and contributors is multifaceted, one of the main reasons for commissioning editors' bias in this matter is the abiding stereotype of women as nurturing, willing to do emotional labour and therefore developing better relationships with contributors. I investigate what consequences this approach may have for the types of films women documentarians pitch and make.

Although autobiographical filmmaking is a popular genre among women documentarians internationally, as discussed in Chapter Two, my respondents seldom turn their cameras on themselves or their families. Jacqui has made a couple of short autobiographical films and Sam, Linda, Evelyn and Theresa made one autobiographical film each. Further, only a few respondents—most notably Toni, Frances and Tina—have made films about science, technology or economy. The majority of my respondents admit they make films about other people or that they 'tell other people's stories'. In the previous chapter I have discussed the urge to represent the unprivileged and the abused, expressed especially by Becky, Felicity, Bettina and Roberta, as well as other respondents' interest in extraordinary people (Lucy) or very ordinary ones (Danielle and Linda). Many of my respondents state that they make films 'about people' without analysing the reasons for doing so and without hinting that this decision is externally influenced. However, several women in my sample believe that because of the existence of the unchallenged stereotype linking women filmmakers to 'human interest' documentaries at some points in their careers they were not allowed to make other types of films. Barbara recalls she 'simply wasn't allowed to' be at the helm of 'a bigger film about bigger issues' that she pitched. She was taken aback by some people around her who suggested at the time that her lack of success in winning a commission was in part due to her particular 'performance of femininity'. Dot feels it was partly because of her being 'a young queer woman' in a conservative broadcasting environment that she wasn't allowed to make certain current affairs programmes although she 'might have already covered that story

⁶³ Another type of documentaries traditionally associated with women is arts documentaries. In my sample Wendy and Olivia used to make them and Kelly still does, asserting that there's unusually high number of women producer/directors in this genre.

in print journalism'. Those examples indicate that a large number of women directing 'human interest' stories may be the result of the commissioners' bias and not only of the alleged lack of interest on part of women directors in tackling big social issues in analytical way.

Tamsin worries about the proliferation of 'human-interest kind of documentary' not because it is gendered feminine but for a political reason, mentioning the impact she thinks these films have on the audience. Focusing on one or several 'sad' characters, she says, they 'teach us all empathy, and we feel moved' but they 'don't take anything forward'. To make films where the viewers can see 'the bigger picture', she escaped television executives' gender pigeonholing by getting funding from other sources. She explicitly criticises the BBC for maintaining the requirement of 'due impartiality':

It hasn't quite responded to the way politics has changed. And it's still trying to be this voice of balance and even-handedness. Yet, we're fighting a right-wing media that gave up being even-handed. It's a bit like we're fighting, if you think of the very right-wing media, and Murdoch press as some kind of assassin on human rights [laughs] we're trying to be all meek and mild, the way we're fighting. "Do take a seat," and, "How many sugars in your tea?" while being smacked over the head!

She has no qualms about the need for making one-sided films about the burning political issues of the day, like the refugee crisis. Becky and Felicity found a niche for hard-hitting social issues documentaries on Channel 4 and their indie has produced numerous programmes about violence against women, which often follow police investigations. In the previous chapter I have quoted Becky talking about 'turning the stone over' to expose injustice. On the other hand, Frances, when I ask her whether she'd consider making a film entirely about women (which she hasn't), answers in affirmative but with a caveat she would be 'less likely to make a film that was straightforwardly a piece of feminist propaganda'. She says she'd prefer something more 'interesting', suggesting she sees the campaigning film as creatively dull. Gina, who makes TV documentaries about social issues affecting women like the housing crisis and domestic violence is realistic about what type of film she can pitch. 'You have to go in knowing that you're going to have to make something really balanced,' she says, alluding to the requirement of balanced coverage criticised by Tamsin. She does not go as far as saying she censors herself,

knowing the rules, but similarly to Frances she finds something unsatisfactory about ‘campaigning films’ even as a viewer: ‘if I go and see them then I feel like I’m only being told one side of the story and that frustrates me’. Those of my respondents who declare they want their films to affect social change, on a small or large scale, and who make films about various social issues, can be seen as operating within Renov’s modality to ‘persuade/promote’ discussed in the previous chapter. However, only few try to ‘persuade’ their audience to adopt their uncompromising take on the state of affairs, like Tamsin who declares that the dire socio-political situation requires biased artistic statement. Many more occupy the position of ‘promoting’ social causes gently, making the audience aware of certain issues.

The exploration of whether documentaries can affect measurable social change at all and if so, what types of documentaries are best suited for this task, is beyond the scope of my thesis. However, I am interested in how, in the context of authorship, the bias of ‘campaigning films’ gets translated into a strongly articulated authorial position of the filmmaker. Many of the contemporary feature documentaries which are most successful at the box-office are in fact ‘campaigning’ films, tackling big global issues like climate change or financial crisis not in an objective, analytical manner but being biased both in their explanation of the situation and in their suggested solution to the problem. These films are directed and produced by men, like pretty much the entire *oeuvre* of Michael Moore (with a performative element added) or the famous *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) written and narrated by Al Gore. Several of my respondents mention the work of British documentarian Adam Curtis, especially pertinent for my inquiry of authorship as his one-sided, idiosyncratic documentary essays have all been broadcast on the BBC. Tamsin, Barbara and Wendy praise his films, both for their political audacity and artistic risks taken, but Wendy is also critical of Curtis’ style of delivery. She feels that he ‘pontificates and lays down the law and tells you how it is’ with ‘a sort of arrogance and pomposity to that which I think is very masculine’. Having gendered Curtis’ style, she defines hers against it: ‘I make films where I don’t push my own point of view, I leave it much more [open], you can take what you want from my films, you can interpret them how you want.’ Theresa doesn’t mention the gender of the filmmakers whose style she dislikes but the way she presents her practice sounds similar to Wendy’s: ‘I don’t like

fingers being wagged at me telling me what to do. I'm not telling anyone how to think.' She describes her work as 'little gentle funny wee films'. Danielle refers to her films as 'quiet gentle stories' which are also 'hopefully about compassion'. I did not ask any of these respondents why they choose not to tell their viewers what to think or why they don't push their point of view. But when Wendy says that 'you don't get women pontificating in that way, in that rather arrogant "I know best" kind of a way', her comment resonates with one of the themes recurring in my project, of different expectations of men and women when it comes both to their behaviour and creative output. While these expectations are often explained as being rooted in men's and women's essential 'nature', they in fact create the differences they claim as their origin. In a professional context, people tend to modify their behaviour knowing what is expected of them; it is plausible that some women directors, not necessarily those in my sample, may think it is inappropriate for them to 'pontificate' in their films.

However, Wendy does notice that male directors who are 'banging their own drum' are 'prized' and get more attention than women who allow the viewer to make up their own mind. It seems that the degree to which the filmmaker is prepared to 'persuade' the audience of their version of reality surpasses the influence the particular type of film may have on the perception of its director. It is true that many human-interest documentaries, which are gendered feminine also in the British broadcasting context, tend to occlude the authorial position of the filmmaker, emphasising the subjects the audience is supposed to empathise with instead. However, it is possible to make a human-interest documentary with the authorial signature all over it, which was recently proved by Sean McAllister whose *A Northern Soul* (2018) may serve as a textbook example of such practice. The film tells the story of Steve Arnott, a struggling warehouse worker in Hull, but frames it using the director's voiceover and his interactions with Steve and his own parents who also live in Hull, where McAllister hails from. We admire Steve for his perseverance and creative efforts but we are never allowed to forget Sean who brings Steve's story to us as he goes back to his roots. On the other hand, some 'big issue' films are often made in a balanced, journalistic way which can make the director's authorial voice insignificant, giving priority to 'objectivity' of the mechanisms presented on screen.

The majority of my respondents can decide which types of authorial inscription they include in their films and as professionals they understand, as evidenced by Wendy's remarks above, what consequences this decision will have for the external perceptions of their authorship and the recognition of them as authors of their work. In the interviews my respondents express different views on their sonoric and visual presence in the film text, the obvious means of authorial signature in documentary discussed in Chapter Two. Some respondents see voiceover as an obligatory, generic aspect of TV documentary that was pushed on them by commissioning editors or executive producers: Kathryn mentions it as one of 'terrible solutions' offered by executives who see the cut too early. Frances once pitched to a TV strand whose definition of the 'authored documentary' was so narrow that it made voiceover or the filmmaker's presence in the film compulsory. She told me she wasn't able to do it because after some film school experimenting with these tools she knew how she felt about them:

I found that it just didn't suit me at all. I ended up stripping myself out of the film and getting somebody else to do the voiceover because, to be perfectly honest, I just don't have the right kind of ego for it. I hated looking at myself on the screen, I couldn't bear it, I hated listening to my own voice on screen.

Frances doesn't link 'the right kind of ego' for appearing on screen with her gender or personal history but during our interview she comes across as confident and proactive, giving many examples of being forceful and assertive in professional situations, also when interacting with male collaborators. On the other hand, those respondents who make only broadcast films treat writing and reading of commentary, as well as interviewing their subjects, as normal part of their process. However, as discussed previously, the woman providing voiceover in TV documentary can be mistaken for a reader merely delivering the script prepared by the channel in line with its brand and values. Wendy experienced some people who see her films treating her 'as an interviewer rather than as a director' which she finds 'annoying': 'Of course I have done interviews but I've also done everything else,' she says. The fact that the viewers and critics fail to acknowledge women TV directors as authors even when they use voiceover or interview their subjects with flair confirms that these preferred indices of documentary authorship depend both on the author's gender and the context of exhibition: a woman's voiceover in an

independent 'arty' documentary is more readily recognised as an authorial statement, like in the case of my respondent Linda's work.

Concluding her essay on gendering of 'human interest' stories, Macdonald hopes that 'the personal and the political, access and exposition, do not have to inevitably exist on separate planes, or possess inherently different claims to legitimisation' (1998: 120). Indeed, many of my interviewees mention the type of film which combines the personal and the political, 'big issues' and everyday people. Farrin says she is motivated by the intersection of something 'very political' and 'very human'. Dot likes picking 'human case studies' to illustrate larger socioeconomic trends describing the thread that runs through her projects in these words: 'They're niche worlds, but they say something like bigger about the rest of society.' Sam follows stories of individuals which are 'a metaphor for something bigger that is going on in society'. Barbara is especially proud of one of her films, 'about big issues with really nice intimate interviews with people'. In these films sensitive interviews and close observation of contributors, enabled by a good relationship between them and the filmmaker, become a vehicle for conveying universal or topical issues.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented two aspects of documentary production discussed by my respondents which challenge the traditional model of filmmaking associated with the authoritarian, normally male, director. The first of these is the way my respondents treat their collaborations as influencing their creative process and the second is the impact they claim the relationship with their contributors has on their authoring. When it comes to the collaborations that are chosen by my respondents, as opposed to the ones they need to accept and navigate, discussed in Chapter Six, gender is not the only factor impacting these interactions. Both male and female collaborators are praised and valued. On the other hand, the relationship with the contributors is gendered, mainly because of the expectations the documentary subjects have of women filmmakers. My respondents are affected negatively by some of these expectations but can also turn them to their advantage.

Although my goal was to prioritise my respondents' perceptions of their creative process, the external gendering of documentary genres, especially in television, took centre stage in the last section. There is a correlation between the fact that commissioning editors trust women directors predominantly with so-called 'human interest' documentaries, confirmed both in literature and in my interviews, and the majority of my respondents making documentaries of this kind. Moreover, some of my respondents explicitly blame this gender bias for not being commissioned to make films gendered 'masculine'. While it is impossible to quantify the extent to which the types of films British women documentarians make are determined by their internalisation of what is expected of them, it is plausible that the more 'human interest' stories women directors pitch and are commissioned to make, the stronger the 'natural' link between the two appears.

However, the gendering of documentary genres is not the biggest threat to full recognition of women documentarians' authorship. Some of my respondents make hard-hitting social documentaries or films about technology and science. As discussed in

Chapter One, the ways in which TV audiences are consuming and perceiving factual content are changing, which renders the gendering of both televisual genres and the segments of audience obsolete. My research locates the bigger obstacle in the entrenchment in the critical documentary discourse of the 'persuasive' function of documentary as hegemonic. This results in treating the types of authorial inscription traditionally associated with this mode (pontificating voiceover, suggestive edit, interrogating subjects in front of the camera with a performative effect) as the only legitimate markers of documentary authorship. Some of my respondents quoted in this chapter speak explicitly against 'pontificating' or 'wagging their finger' at their audience, both primary tools of the rhetorical documentary function. Even if they have the urge to 'change the world' or 'change the representations' of some social groups, my respondents often choose the means of artistic expression which do not foreground their authorial voice. While in the British context their approach could be perhaps explained by the BBC's long tradition of balanced coverage and due impartiality, my respondents themselves prove this issue is gendered. They quote the names of male directors whose one-sided films are broadcast on TV and who are recognised as documentary auteurs for using the very techniques the women avoid.

One of the key findings of my research is that while the majority of women documentarians who I interviewed are confident about their authorial voice and assertively claim the authorship of their projects in my interviews, as detailed in Chapter Eight, they seldom use the methods of referencing their authorship which are traditionally recognised and celebrated as such. This reinforces my overall argument that for women's documentary authorship to be fully appreciated, the prevailing text-based rules need to be amended and extended, taking into account the filmmakers' background, the rules governing the context of production and the creators' perceptions of their creative process.

Conclusion: 'Why wouldn't you make films?'

Tamsin

If films are like a 'heightened reality', then, I think, when you make films, you're in a heightened reality. And that's the state I like to be in.

Ania

You like to be high on film all the time?

Tamsin

Yeah, exactly. [laughs] Yeah, exactly. It's like— Why wouldn't you make films? Why wouldn't you?

Tamsin was the last woman documentarian I interviewed for my project. It was July 2017, the weather was gorgeous and we were talking in the garden at the back of London's Geffrye Museum after a screening of her latest film. In the beginning of our conversation Tamsin apologised for having to keep her phone on as she was waiting to hear about the outcome of a funding grant application (the funders surely rang towards the end of our interview). Although in her mid-sixties, she exuded youthful energy and her enthusiasm was contagious as she shared with me the projects she was engaged in, from teaching postgraduate students how to make documentaries and editing a scholarly book to finishing her independently funded documentary feature about refugee children. Talking to Tamsin for almost an hour was a high note to end my interviewing process on, and I believe that her final question, the last sentence I audio-recorded for my project, also makes an apt epigraph introducing my conclusion.

For Tamsin, 'Why wouldn't you make films?' is a rhetorical question, an expression of her unstoppable creative impulse realised through filmmaking. But when understood at face value, the same question can be answered by listing the multiple reasons why other women don't make films at all, or don't make films they want to make. I have discussed many of these reasons in this thesis, while insisting throughout that 'women filmmakers' is not a homogenous category and that the context of filmmaking always

matters. In case of Tamsin, it is important that she graduated from film school and that she started her career in the 1980s, benefiting from the Workshop Declaration and early Channel 4 commissions. She believes that her personality made it relatively easy to brush off any instances of everyday sexism and gender-based discrimination she encountered; she asserts that her strong work ethic is a direct result of being from a working-class background and always having to work. She also admits that at some point in her life she consciously chose not to have children to be able to make films constantly; she moves between documentary and fiction, working on TV and cinematic projects. Her filmmaker's desire as expressed in that short quote emphasises the urge to express as a selfish 'artist', but in other parts of our interview Tamsin also comes across as one of the most ardent 'activist' filmmakers in my sample, and her desire to represent the causes of the suffering and marginalised people shines through her statements.

My aim in this thesis was to discover whether the attention to discursive and material contexts of filmmaking can make the picture of women documentarians' authorial agency more nuanced, adding to traditional authorship studies which prioritise the film text. After analysing my interview data I found out that whilst the extra-textual factors shape my respondents' authorship, they do not determine it, allowing for a diversity of approaches and filmmaking models in my sample. Answering my other research question, I established that gender as a category plays an important role in the analysis of authorial agency within these new broader parameters, but I also discovered that it intersects with other categories, most notably social origin, motherhood and age. My thesis constitutes an intervention first into film studies (including documentary studies), challenging the premise that the film text is sufficient to determine the authorial signature. Secondly, my findings complement and enrich the research done in production studies, which pays close attention to the filmmaking process but usually separates it from the immaterial sphere of creativity, just like 'below-the-line' and 'above-the-line' workers were occupying two separate areas on the old production budget sheets. Conversely, I argue that the immaterial sphere of desires and ideas on one hand and the material sphere of creative labour on the other cannot be separated, as they jointly shape documentary authorship of my respondents. My main research findings, summarised below, also confirm that the investigation of extra-textual areas of documentary

filmmaking throws the impact of gender on women documentarians' careers into sharp relief.

The analysis of my research data confirms that the fact of being a woman influences my respondents' professional lives at both practical and discursive levels. Regardless of the main context of production (TV commissions or independent projects), many respondents quote the instances of sexist behaviour on part of their collaborators, especially cameramen, which make their job of being in charge of production extremely difficult. Women in top creative roles need to constantly prove themselves to their collaborators, contributors and executives. They are sometimes perceived as less competent or accomplished than their male counterparts not on the basis of their actual creative output but in line with engrained stereotypes gendering creativity as masculine or because of their unwillingness to participate in masculinised forms of socialising like late-night outings. On the other hand, I found that some women filmmakers use their gender to their advantage, gaining access to both women-only spaces and testosterone-fuelled environments of male posturing.

In my sample gender intersects with early motherhood, impacting the creative choices of those women documentarians who decided to start families: the majority of respondents agree that making observational documentaries that require being embedded with the subjects for prolonged periods of time is not possible when caring for young children. Therefore mothers in my sample were choosing more structured and predictable projects at that time of their lives. Many of my respondents who started their filmmaking careers in the late 1980s and early 1990s and had children worked on TV commissions as this offered them relative financial stability and made it possible to design their own working schedule. However, I also found that for many respondents TV is a perfect medium for reaching a large audience and their choice to make broadcast work is not dictated by practical issues as much as by their desire to represent the causes of marginalised groups or to draw attention to social issues.

British TV channels, especially the BBC and Channel 4, emerge as major players in the professional lives of my respondents, even those who only make broadcast work

occasionally. While working on TV commissions has been a popular choice among working mothers and those who want to effect social change in my sample, I also found it can have a negative effect on women directors' creative autonomy and the way they are perceived as authors. My respondents talk about being limited by TV executives regarding the type of films they are allowed to make or, in earlier stages of their careers, pushed into making programmes crudely gendered as 'feminine' (for example, about fashion or cooking). Some of my respondents hint at self-censoring themselves as they pitch the ideas they feel have a bigger chance of being commissioned. Therefore my findings regarding my filmmakers' desires and motivations are especially valuable, offering a necessary corrective to straightforward textual analysis of films made by women that get commissioned and made. Making broadcast work also influences how my respondents are perceived as authors externally. Despite TV documentaries being traditionally seen as of lesser artistic value than cinematic ones, some of my respondents who make only broadcast work talk at length about the importance of audio-visual aspects of their films. Directors of TV documentaries are sometimes seen as expressing the views of a TV channel, which is confirmed in my sample by even established TV directors, with twenty or more prime-time documentaries under their belt, complaining about being perceived as merely 'interviewers' or 'commentators'.

While gender influences many aspects of my respondents' authorial process, social origin is another salient social marker in my sample that intersects with it. It is mentioned as the main obstacle to embarking on a film or other media-related career, as respondents from working-class backgrounds are not encouraged to 'dream big' and don't have access to social networks making such a career viable. The BBC is pictured across my interviews as a paradoxical place of work for working-class women filmmakers. The majority of my respondents, declaring both middle-class and working-class background, agree that because of the corporation's strong middle-class bias, creatives from less privileged backgrounds need to learn to navigate that environment or try to 'pass' as middle-class, which is sometimes achieved by obtaining an Oxbridge degree, often on a scholarship. On the other hand, the need to make a living is quoted by many respondents as the reason to embark on a TV, rather than independent, filmmaking career. The BBC's elitist bias also sits awkwardly with the circulating perceptions of TV

documentaries as inferior and, by extension, of their authors as 'lesser' filmmakers. My multi-site analysis identifies a correlation between a large number of women directing documentaries for television (some of them for practical reasons) and the dismissal of TV documentaries as worthy of critical acclaim (bar a handful of exceptions). Therefore my call for revaluation of television documentary as an object worthy of critical attention is inextricably bound with my research into work of women directors.

One of the most important findings of my study regards traditional methods of establishing documentary authorship, discussed in Chapter Two, which prioritise obvious authorial inscriptions in the film text like voiceover or appearing in front of the camera. I found that many of my respondents associate authorial voiceover with run-of-the-mill TV documentaries and avoid it in their authored films. On the other hand, those who make more conventional documentaries consider it a basic tool of their craft but, as noted above, their authorial agency often gets displaced onto the channel's identity. I found that authorial desires to express oneself and to represent other people's causes do not translate among my respondents into using the tools commonly recognised in discourses around authorship as a strong manifestation of authorial voice. This creative choice is sometimes presented as personal (not having 'the right ego' for appearing in front of the camera, as Frances puts it) but in other instances it is portrayed as gendered, as 'pontificating' and 'telling people what to think' are coded masculine. I discovered, however, that close attention to the film text can pay off as several respondents talk at length about the effort they put into embellishing visual aspects of their films. Moreover, many respondents argue that getting 'best material' out of contributors is related to building a close, trusting relationship with them. This process is gendered feminine by commissioning editors who trust women directors with 'human interest stories', valued less than more analytic programmes because of their intimacy and focus on the everyday. Conversely, I argue that foregrounding this intimate relationship, both in production and in the way it shows on film, can be another way of re-assessing women's documentary authorship, especially in TV documentary.

While my findings demonstrate that consideration of factors other than the final cut is crucial for getting a fuller picture of women's documentary authorship, there are other

new paths of research that my project opens. As signalled in Chapter One, a study of the link between female audiences of TV documentaries and a (relatively) large number of women making documentaries on TV commissions would be an original contribution to feminist TV studies. Secondly, although I believe that my choice of thematic method and anonymising of my research findings was right for my project, the dearth of research on British women documentarians calls for biographical approaches like case studies and monographs; I find it appalling that there is no monograph devoted to neither Kim Longinotto nor Molly Dineen. I suggest, however, that attention to the context of production would enrich textual analysis which would naturally constitute an important part of such studies. Last but not least, I wholeheartedly support Belinda Smaill's call for revaluation of realist feminist documentary which in the British context would mean focussing on contemporary women documentarians who tackle not only traditionally defined 'women's issues' but also broader social problems in contemporary society like gentrification (Sarah Turner's *Public House*, 2015) and homelessness (Daisy-May Hudson's *Half Way*, 2015).

Finally, I see my project as having significant impact beyond the academic fields of film, TV and media studies. I believe it can be useful for established women documentarians, who can find their experiences reflected in my text or learn about career paths different than theirs. On the other hand, aspiring and early-career women filmmakers can benefit from the variety of subjective accounts of the recent history of their field. Given the current situation in British creative industries, it is plausible to think that many women embarking on a filmmaking career today ask themselves: 'Why would I even make films?' I hope that my project will enable them to partake in enthusiasm of their more established peers, so they can join Tamsin and others in a 'heightened reality' of documentary filmmaking.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Study design

My primary research data was gathered in twenty-six semi-structured interviews I conducted with women filmmakers who are currently making documentaries in the UK, for broadcast, limited cinematic release or film festivals/art galleries. The interviews were based on the indicative questionnaire (included in Appendix 6) sent to each respondent in advance of our meeting. They took place between July 2016 and July 2017 in my respondents' homes, workplaces/studios or in public places. The interviews lasted between thirty-four and seventy-nine minutes (on average fifty-five minutes), were all audio recorded and transcribed by one of two transcribing companies bound by confidentiality, with the exception of two interviews that I transcribed myself. For ethical reasons (agreement in consent forms), a pseudonymised dataset comprising interview transcripts was not assigned a DOI and will only be available for University of Southampton researchers with ethical approval after initial two-year embargo.

In choosing my sample I started off ambitiously, trying to get access to several established women documentarians whose work is popular with British audiences and appreciated critically, and I secured several high-profile interviews through my professional and social networks. My list of desired interviewees was expanding as I was watching more documentaries as part of my research, including attending public screenings and discussions after which I approached the filmmakers, introducing my project. I sent unsolicited emails through filmmakers' website contact forms and contacted them via Twitter and LinkedIn messages. Several respondents were recruited by snowballing, recommended as interesting subjects for my study by someone I just interviewed. I did not know any of my respondents in personal capacity before our meeting although I had interviewed a couple of them in the past as a film journalist and had been introduced to others in person before interviewing them for this project. Because of the way I recruited my respondents, most of them are established directors with at least ten years' experience of making documentaries. The accounts of several

early career filmmakers, including one who never directed a sixty-minute film and one who has only acted as a director for hire, provide an interesting counterpoint to those of more experienced ones. Apart from one respondent who is a committed independent documentary feature producer and never directs and another who is an animated documentary filmmaker, all others act as a main creative person in production of live-action documentaries, sometimes also producing and co-producing them.

Appendix 2: Thematic analysis of interview data

As an early career researcher working in a humanities department, with humanities background and scant experience of qualitative research, I analysed my interview data using a thematic method as it is flexible and ‘does not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches’ employed in social sciences (Braun and Clarke 2006: 81). In this section I will clearly state what decisions I made along the way to demonstrate the rigour and transparency of my process.

Thematic method searches ‘for certain themes or patterns across an (entire) data set, rather than *within* a data item, such as an individual interview or interviews from one person’ (*ibid.*). This approach, as opposed to biographical or case study approach, makes my study non-auterist as I identify themes and patterns that my respondents share rather than seeing each of them as a unique creator with her own life story and *oeuvre*. Given a paucity of research on British women documentarians, a case-study approach merits another major study. Identifying recurring patterns made me anonymise my interview data, so that each respondent was assigned an alias and all proper nouns were replaced by a generic description (‘production company’, ‘commissioning editor’) in direct quotations to make identification impossible or at least difficult. I also wanted my respondents to feel safe and free to speak candidly about their experiences but my decision met with mixed reception among my interviewees. Some of them said they would be happy to be quoted by their real name or even expressed regret that they won’t be while others indicated they were telling me certain things only because they would remain anonymous. Anonymisation has serious consequences for my own authorial agency, making it difficult to hide behind the declaration of ‘giving a voice’ to my respondents; I claim an active role in identifying, selecting and grouping themes across their accounts. I see it as an ethical obligation to my respondents to not misrepresent them nor betray their trust but in the process of data interpretation I often felt my relationship to be with a collective subject rather than with each individual separately.

When analysing transcripts of interviews, one of the first decisions to make is whether the respondents’ talk is considered within a realist or constructionist paradigm.

The former reports respondents' experiences and meanings as they described them while the latter sees those meanings as effects of discourses circulating in a given society, prioritising mechanisms of their construction. Between these two poles, I use this thematic method as a 'contextualist' one (Braun and Clarke 2006: 81). I report how my respondents make sense of their experience but also acknowledge 'the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings' (*ibid.*). The transcripts provide me with the 'accounts of subjective experience' (Willig 1999: 139) of my respondents which I subsequently contextualise in relation to a wide range of textual sources on material conditions of their practice (e. g. statistics on women directors in film and TV; industry press articles on documentary production) and its discursive context (e. g. theoretical works on documentary filmmaking and authorship; published accounts of documentary filmmakers' practice). The wider social/professional context gleaned from these sources is not seen as determining my interviewees' experiences or perceptions but as influencing and to some extent limiting the pool of their choices.

Within this contextualist approach, my analysis of my respondents' talk is semantic rather than latent. I theorize their motivations and experience in a straightforward way, assuming 'a simple, largely unidirectional relationship...between meaning and experience and language (language reflects and enables us to articulate meaning and experience)' (Braun and Clarke 2006: 85). When I report my respondents' experiences of getting into making documentaries (Chapter Four) and of their everyday work (Chapters Five and Six), this approach allows me to talk about institutions and processes as 'facts' shared across the sample. Consistently, when asking about my respondents' perceptions of themselves as creative agents (Chapter Seven) and their creative desires (Chapter Eight), I do not attempt to unearth my respondents' unconscious drives but rather analyse what they articulate.

Finally, my analysis is deductive, driven by my theoretical and analytic interest in the area delineated by my two main research questions:

- How relevant is gender as an analytical category for women's documentary authorship?

- How does looking beyond the film text can influence the ways in which women's documentary authorship is discussed?

Interview data was coded to these questions and I offer a detailed account of a group of themes relating to the above questions.

Appendix 3: Description of the sample

My project does not deal specifically with employment discrimination based on protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act (2010). It is nearly impossible to measure how representative my sample is: while there is some quantitative data on TV directors (Directors UK 2018, 2014), it is not disaggregated in relation to all equality strands, and some documentarians work outside the broadcasting context and as such are not captured by any statistics. Therefore, as explained in Chapter Three, I do not consider all equality strands in the intersectional analysis of my data but only those mentioned by my respondents. To complement the thematic analysis of my interview, in this section I offer an overview of my sample's sociological make-up, which to some degree explains why only certain categories appear in my respondents' talk. Information included in this appendix is based on my respondents' self-declaration during the interview or information freely available online, including on the filmmakers' websites.

My sample is rather homogenous in terms of race and declared sexual orientation. Therefore based on my sample I cannot make any claims about race or sexuality as barriers to entry into or remaining in documentary filmmaking in the UK. On the other hand, although 'social class' is not a protected characteristic under the 2010 Equality Act, a significant number of respondents identify as working-class in the interview.

Age

My respondents were between 29 and 67 at the time of interview.

For the purposes of my study I have divided them in three age groups:

- 29-40: ten respondents (38%)
- 41-60: ten respondents (38%)
- 60+: six respondents (24%)

More than 60% of my respondents were 41+ at the time of the interview, which makes my sample skewed towards experienced/established documentarians.

Ethnicity

Twenty-four respondents are White (92%).

Among these, four (15%) declare not being born British and moving to the UK later in life.

Two respondents identify as Scottish.

Two respondents are Black (8%).

Based on the information in their films and available online, one of them grew up in the UK and the other one in the Caribbean.

Social class

Five respondents explicitly identify as working class and two hint at being from a working-class background (seven in total, 27%); six of these women are White British and one is White European.

Nineteen respondents explicitly identify or hint at being middle-class (73%).

Pregnancy and maternity

Sixteen respondents (61%) declare they have children. Fourteen of them kept directing documentaries when having young children and two had children as young women and started their filmmaking careers later.

One respondent was pregnant at the time of interview.

Sexual orientation

One respondent identifies as 'queer' in the interview.

One respondent hints at being bisexual in the interview by talking about 'people' rather than 'men' in the context of romantic love, which is confirmed in one of her films.

One respondent is open about her bisexuality in her public life but does not mention it to me in the context of her professional career.

The remaining respondents do not explicitly declare their sexual orientation. However, the majority mention ex- or current male partners and most of them refer to being in heterosexual relationships.

Disability status

Disability, understood as 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities' (EA 2010) is not mentioned by any of my respondents; further, none of them has a visible disability. Two respondents mention recurring health problems (back pain and arthritis) as preventing them from excessive self-shooting.

Religion or belief

No respondent mentions her religion or belief in the interview.

Trans status

No respondent declares trans status in the interview. No information publicly available about my respondents suggests any of them is a trans person.

Appendix 4: Participant information sheet



Participant Information Sheet (Face to Face) version 3/APR17

Study Title: Not quite an auteur, more than a creative labourer: authorial agency of British women documentarians.

Researcher: Ania Ostrowska

Ethics number: 18803

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the research about and who is the Researcher?

‘Not quite an auteur, more than a creative labourer: authorial agency of British women documentarians’ (“Project”) is a postgraduate research project conducted by Ania Ostrowska (“Researcher”). I am a full-time PhD student in the Film department of the University of Southampton (“University”), funded by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) as part of a large research project Calling the Shots: Women and Contemporary Film Culture in the UK, researching and reporting the numbers of women working in the UK industry. Dr Shelley Cobb, a principal investigator in Calling the Shots project, is my PhD supervisor.

My research focuses specifically on the work of women involved in documentary filmmaking in the UK since 2000 and I want to interview between 20 and 30 filmmakers to be able to establish an historically specific and grounded analysis of their experience. In doing that, I offer a valuable addition to Calling the Shots project, within which the majority of interviews will be with practitioners working in fiction film production, and more importantly I provide an unprecedented study of a field traditionally, if only anecdotally, portrayed as one with a bigger representation of women than fiction filmmaking.

Based on a sample questionnaire I include, you will be able to see that after introductory questions about how you got into documentary filmmaking, I will want to find out, among other things: whether/how you cross over between film and TV (and possibly other media); how

collaborative your work is; how important networking and further skills training are for you; how you normally finance your films; how you balance your work and personal life.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are a woman who is/has been making documentaries in or for the UK exhibition in the period since 2000. We will have discussed this via email or on the phone already, but your name as a possible participant has been given to me either by a mutual friend/colleague or through someone in one of professional organisations partnered with Calling the Shots project (for example, WFTV-UK).

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the Project, I will interview you. The interview is meant to be an informal discussion, giving you room to tell stories and share insights, and will be based on the sample questions (attached) but my questions may not be limited to those. You can choose not to answer any question, withdraw an answer or end the interview at any time, without explaining why and without negative consequences. I plan for the interview to take about an hour but I think the minimum time to go through the questions would be 45 minutes.

With your permission, I would like to audio record this interview using my smart phone. This will allow me to concentrate on listening to what you say during the interview and to check later that I have understood you correctly. Our conversation, the recording and any notes I take during the interview will remain confidential.

What will be done with the recorded interview?

The recording will be transcribed by myself or by a professional transcription company, following highest confidentiality standards, and will become one of the primary sources for my PhD thesis. This means I may quote you in my thesis but only after your contribution is de-identified and anonymised so a quote is not attributable to you. The audio recording of your interview will be deleted upon transcription.

What are the benefits of participation?

I am not in a position to offer any individual compensation. However, I hope that your interest in my project means that you believe that my researching, recording and sharing the stories of women who work in documentary film will benefit both academic and non-academic audiences in the UK, perhaps contributing to the practitioners' bigger recognition.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no risks involved beyond those of the everyday kind.

Will my participation be confidential?

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, the University of Southampton is the data controller for this study.

Your participation will be confidential and the professional transcription company is committed to industry leading confidentiality and security standards.

All research data will be stored safely on a password-protected computer and recording of your interview will be deleted upon transcription.

I also offer you “linked anonymity”: in transcripts, and subsequently in my thesis, your data will be coded and you will not be identified (only I will be able to link you to your data). These transcripts will be available in anonymised form to me and other researchers at the University: we will be able to use the data for future research, but will not be able to identify you.

What happens if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time before the interview takes place and this will not affect your legal rights. You may withdraw any data/information you have already provided up until it is transcribed for use in my PhD thesis (December 2017).

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of concern or complaint, please contact Chair of the Faculty Ethics Committee Prof Chris Janaway (023 80593424, c.janaway@soton.ac.uk).

Where can I get more information?

For more information, please contact Ania Ostrowska: ania.ostrowska@soton.ac.uk. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr Shelley Cobb (02380597541, s.cobb@soton.ac.uk).

CONSENT FORM (FACE TO FACE) version 3/APR17

Study title: Not quite an auteur, more than a creative labourer: authorial agency of British women documentarians.

Researcher: Ania Ostrowska

Student number: 28180747

ERGO reference number: 18803

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

1. I have read and understood the information sheet (*version 3/APR17*) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

2. I agree to take part in this research project by being interviewed by the Researcher.

3. I agree for my participation to be audio recorded by the Researcher and transcribed by Researcher or external professional agency bound by confidentiality.

4. I give my consent to the Researcher and the University of Southampton to collect and use sensitive personal information about me for the purposes of this study and for the future research in a way described in this document.

5. I understand I will not be identified and personally associated with my contribution in this study and in any subsequent publication and use. My name will be removed and my comments made unattributable.

6. I understand my participation is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw my consent at any time before and during the interview. I also understand I may withdraw any data/information provided up until it is transcribed for use in the PhD thesis (December 2017).

Data Protection

I understand that my personal information obtained during the Project will be held confidentially in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and will not be disclosed to any third party unless it is with my consent or where the University is required to do so by law. At no point will the information I provide be shared in a way that would allow for me to be personally identified.

Copyright

In order for us to make full use of your contribution and to copy, reformat and reuse it, it is necessary that you assign your copyright to the University of Southampton and the Researcher.

I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to the University of Southampton, and the Researcher:

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

Appendix 6: Indicative questionnaire

Not quite an auteur, more than a creative labourer: authorial agency of British women documentarians.

Ethics number: 18803

Researcher: Ania Ostrowska

ania.ostrowska@soton.ac.uk

Interview with practitioner: sample questionnaire

Predicted duration of the interview: 45 min – 1h 15 min

1. How did you get into making documentaries?
Did you get any formal film training (documentary or general)?
What do you like most about making documentaries?
How long have you been making documentaries?

2. What is your professional identity?
What do you answer when people ask, 'What do you do?'?
Do you do other things, like teaching, writing, visual art?

3. Do you make work mainly for TV or for independent circuit?
If you have experience of both, what are the main differences between the two from your perspective?
Do you make films for other platforms (online, digital)?

4. How do you choose subjects of your work?

5. How do you usually get your funding?
Does the source of potential funding influence your pitch?

6. What roles do you perform when making your films?
If you had unlimited budget, what crew members would you hire and what would you do yourself?

7. Collaboration: do you tend to work with the same people on your projects?
Do you co-direct?
Do you prefer working with men or women?

8. How is your work/life balance: family life; children + other caring responsibilities; leisure time?

9. How do recent changes in documentary landscape affect your work? Please describe how the situation has changed since the beginning of your career.

10. How important for you is networking and getting additional training?

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