

Scotland's History of Animation:

An exploratory account of the key figures and influential events

Abstract

Scotland's history of animation is a forgotten past accomplishment in the animation/VFX sector; with key influential animation professionals having caused an impact both at home and abroad. Yet, to date this history has not been meaningfully documented, and such documentation can help inform policy initiatives to help nurture and develop the industry. Such developments could help ensure the importance and accomplishments of its achievements will not be forgotten or remain undeveloped. Indeed, it is argued here that Scotland suffers from historical amnesia with regard to the country's past accomplishments and missed opportunities, but that public funding and further investment in talent development and retention can help establish the industry as a key player in society and economy. This paper presents the results from an investigative literature collection and consultation with central figures in the Scottish Animation industry, providing for the first time a clearer picture of the importance of animation in Scotland both for the country and for the industry worldwide. Discussing the initiatives and funding models of other European countries such as France, the article concludes by suggesting ways in which future policy initiatives could help assist Scotland's Animation industry grow and establish itself both for the future development of animation in Scotland and worldwide.

Keywords:

Animation, animation/VFX, animation Scotland, animation history, animation history Scotland

Scotland's animation/VFX sector was estimated to be worth £15.4 million in 2018 (Mortimer, 2018), and as an industry has received multiple awards, including BAFTA Scotland's New talent award, and Edinburgh International Film Festival's McLaren Award – for Best British Animation. However, to date, no singular or coherent record of Scotland's past accomplishments in the animation/VFX sector exists, and not even the National Libraries Scotland's Moving Image Archive has a dedicated Scotland collection. This article outlines how the history of Scotland's animation sector is distinct and unique, and how Scotland is now heading towards a 'national cinema for animation.' Such a Scottish national cinema is defined either through Scottish artists/teams creating animation, or through those working in collaboration with both national and international professionals in Scotland. This distinction is noted by Jonathan Murray (2015) in *The New Scottish Cinema*, which describes when reviewing Scottish filmmaking that such developments of a 'national' industry can ultimately be extended across national borders. It is important to note, nevertheless, that at the time of writing, Creative Scotland has not released their latest strategy for animation following the publication of their 2016 document (Creative Scotland 2016a).

This article focuses on the contribution of animation to the cinematic history of Scotland. It adopts a similar approach to David Martin-Jones (2009) in his work on the modes and identities of Scottish cinema by highlighting independent and big budget animated projects either in Scotland, or those that have involved Scottish talent. The article uncovers such films (both feature-length and short) that were not fully explored by Martin-Jones (2009), reflecting how animation is often displaced within the construction of national cinema histories. To support this claim, the article presents results from an investigative survey of literature and consultation with key players in the animation industry in Scotland as a way of portraying and revealing Scotland's history of animation, highlighting its central figures, influential events, and providing the first meaningful documentation to date. It will predominately focus on animation produced in Scotland from the 1980s - due to the information being publicly available from this time - however, it also surveys several key individual Scottish animators from the 1940s to the present day, who were involved in high-profile international animated feature films and other acclaimed animated projects outside of Scotland. The aim here is that through such historical documentation, the sector's numerous achievements can help inspire and influence the future of Scottish animation. This objective is achieved by first outlining Scotland's value as an animation industry meriting serious attention and funding, and showing how its unique character can be compared with other animation sectors elsewhere in the world. Scotland has its own distinct University and Art College courses; its own funding body (Creative Scotland) for funding animation in Scotland; its own

cultural approaches to storytelling and unique language (Gaelic) for animation; its own National Archive and record of Scotland's contribution to animation; and its own summit and animation festivals to promote Animation. When taken together, these opportunities and archives support the recognition of Scottish animation's achievements that are often neglected within histories of its broader national cinema.

1. Animation in Scotland: Towards a national cinema

A key issue in any history of animation in Scotland is what exactly denotes an animation, or indeed an animator, as being Scottish. In this context, Cameron Fraser (2015) highlights the irony of the Scottish Stirling born animator, Norman McLaren (1914-1987), who although recognised as being a Scottish born animation pioneer (EIFF, 2017), spent most of his life in Canada, and is better remembered there. McLaren's potential dual identity raises numerous issues regarding a possible distinction between the idea of Scottish animators and animators in Scotland, particularly considering whether a Scottish-born animator has a celebrated career in another country, but has never worked in their homeland, or the extent to which Scotland's history of animation is reliant upon whether the animation is exclusively produced in Scotland. Another question of definition relates to the place of international artists who have come to know Scotland as home, and their subsequent role in the development of Scotland's animation. A Scottish animator or artist should be defined as someone who identifies themselves as Scottish, not necessarily in reference to their place of birth, as many Scottish born animators (such as McLaren) have had major careers abroad, while many foreign animators' major careers have been cemented here in Scotland.

Reflecting this state of affairs, Scotland's funding and development body for the Screen sector, Screen Scotland (2018, para 9), supports both local and international projects in Scotland. They define the purpose of the Film development and production fund as:

"...to balance projects that have a strong cultural impact with those that have strong economic potential. We will prioritise the development and production of projects by filmmakers based in Scotland, as well projects which reflect or promote Scottish culture, creativity and diversity. We will also prioritise projects which offer significant opportunities to people currently under-represented in the sector. Additionally, we will fund the production of projects in Scotland from international producers, but only when working with writing and directing talent based in Scotland."

On this basis, Scotland's history of animation must include key figures and events both from and beyond Scotland. Indeed, The MOVE Summit (a flagship industry event for the Scottish animation

sector, which showcases the best work from throughout the industry, and offers a place for professionals to gather and get inspired [MOVE Summit, 2020]) now welcomes many international animators and artists from Hollywood studios such as Pixar and Disney to Scotland, to inform and inspire current and future generations. Past MOVE speakers have included many Disney artists who visited Scotland in 2006/07, in preparation of Disney's animated feature *Brave* (2012). The growing development and longevity of the MOVE Summit can be used to identify Scotland's interest and drive for animation. The summit has grown from a one-day event in 2017, split into a delivery focus of students and graduates in the morning and the latter half of the day for animation professionals, to a three-day event with multiple lectures taking over its venues (at the Pleasance) in Edinburgh in 2020. Originally, the MOVE Summit featured talent solely from Scotland and the rest of the UK, though it quickly evolved into a vital event for any animation enthusiast, with international guests but still showcasing local talent. This shift in focus indicates how the perception of animation has changed in Scotland with the appetite for the MOVE Summit.

Another factor to consider in this changing perception of animation in Scotland, and a factor relating to how unique animation is in any part of the world, is the type of language used and its role in shaping the animation produced there. The Scottish government explains that "Scotland's main language by custom and usage is English, with Gaelic, Scots, British Sign Language and minority languages making up the country's other main language groups.". There are several examples of English language animated television series produced in Scotland, such as *Ooglies* (2009), a stop-motion animated children's television series, which was produced by BBC Scotland with Scottish Producers Cameron Fraser (Ko Lik films) and Bob Last (Sellout Pictures). Another example is Ken Anderson (Red Kite Animation), whose animated series credits include; *Dennis & Gnasher* (2009) and *Wendy* (2013) (IMDb, 2020a,b,c,d). However, the 2011 census showing that 150 languages other than English are used in Scottish homes. Understandably, Dorota Ostrowska (2007) questions the role played by language in definitions of national cinema, highlighting that "Many contemporary European and non-European art cinema directors have decided to make their next film in a foreign language, most often English or French, which is not their native tongue. Many see the directors' decision to forfeit shooting in their native tongue as a step in the direction of a loss of cultural specificity by national cinemas."

In terms of studios in Scotland, West Highland Animation had a particular focus on creating animation for Gaelic users, highlighting the unique area of Gaelic animation, and showing how it is a very distinct and concentrated market in Scotland. The discrete focus of this market is supported by Scotland's Census 2011: Gaelic report (National Records of Scotland, 2015), which defined 1.7% of the population as having some Gaelic language skills. Ann-Marie Corvin, (2020)

indicated that BBC Alba has previously relied on dubbed animation from BBC's Children's channels, as well as other acquisitions, to fill its children's remit. In 2015, Glasgow-based company, Solus Productions, redubbed the eleven-part animated television series, *Dragons: Defenders of Berk* (2012-2018) into Gaelic for BBC Alba (BBC, 2015).

This move towards the value and importance of the use of Gaelic in Scottish animation resonates with the points made by Heather Macdougall in "Finding a Voice: The Role of Irish-Language Film in Irish National Cinema" (2012), which identifies Irish-Gaelic as a minority language constantly threatened by the domination of English in film. Macdougall also cites that 'current' film policies were focused primarily on the commercial or economic aspects of the film industry, rather than its cultural importance. She notes that such policies "focused primarily on suggestions for making Irish film more commercially viable and economically productive, rather than culturally distinct. Their recommendations included the advice that due to Ireland's small population, "producers must focus early on growth in the international market." With that premise, the report lists as one of Ireland's greatest competitive advantages "its English-speaking status in a predominantly English speaking medium." The Scots language, therefore, potentially presents a halfway solution between English and Gaelic in Scotland; showcasing a cultural language of Scotland but something that could be distributed to a more international market.

In the remainder of this article, we focus on the history and achievement of animation in Scotland, specifically on illustrating how the 'national' in Scotland consists of both 'national' (as in Scottish culture, language, individuals, and so on) and also 'international and more global' facets (as in incorporating contributions from other influences and individuals, and in contributing to key animations elsewhere). Such multivalence defines what Scotland's history of animation has come to incorporate and represent. Following this, we turn from the historical to the current, focusing on contemporary Scottish animation culture, again outlining similar key themes of the 'national' and the 'international' that follow on from the history, before concluding with some issues, problems and recommendations, such as the visibility of the animation sector in Scotland and funding, as merely two examples. This article outlines throughout for the distinct nature of animation in Scotland that sets it apart from conceptions of 'British animation', as a way to consider the best case approaches to developing the sector here, and how to implement policies that can fully support animation in Scotland in the future.

2. History and Achievement of Animation in Scotland

Scotland has an extensive history of renowned key players, and a number of internationally recognized animation films, short animations, animated television series and international collaborations. Scotland's international animation involvement has a strong provenance and record of achievement, with a number of Scottish animators and artists who have made their impact on short format animation and, indeed, on the wider animation sector. Such animators and artists clearly illustrate the value of Scotland's individual animation, and display its innovative nature and the significance of its contributions. McLaren (1914-1987) is well remembered through the Edinburgh International Film Festival's (EIFF) McLaren award (EIFF, 2019). As a student, McLaren enrolled for Interior Design but became interested in making motion pictures, and produced a number of experimental and avant-garde films whilst still a student (Jordan, 1953). A number of McLaren's early films (e.g. *Seven till Five* (1933) and *Hell Unlimited* (1935 with Helen Biggar)) illustrate the development of many "pioneering animation techniques" and the formal experimentalism that came to symbolize his later professional career (Glasgow School of Art, 2014).

Further, the writer and animator, John W. Dunn (1919–1983) could be considered the greatest Scottish animation writer/screenwriter, amassing a staggering 250 credits throughout his prestigious career in Hollywood; having worked on animated icons such as Tom and Jerry, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, The Flintstones, The Pink Panther and Scooby-Doo. He received a nomination for Documentary Short at the 29th Academy Awards in 1957 (The Academy Awards, 2020a), for Disney's *Man in Space* (1955), before winning the Oscar for Best Short Subject (Cartoon), *The Pink Phink* (1964) (The Academy Awards, 2020b). Dunn's legacy in animation is explained by Cartoon Brew co-founder, Amid Amidi, (in Ghez 2018: 160) through his time at DePatie–Freleng Enterprises;

"In many ways, the history of DePatie-Freleng is also the history of John Dunn. No major animation studio had previously relied so heavily on a single individual for creative direction. Studio co-founder David DePatie says that Dunn was the primary source of ideas at the studio from the beginning until the mid-1970s."

With Dunn spending his career writing stories for animated royalty, it seems only fitting that *Daffy Duck's Movie: Fantastic Island* (1983) is dedicated to Dunn's memory. Another Scottish artist who found success working internationally was the comic book artist Michael Docherty

[1955–2016], best known for his work with Marvel Comics and Conan Comics (Campbell, 2016). Docherty transitioned to working as a storyboard artist in productions which similarly built upon established franchises, such as *The Incredible Hulk* (1996–1998), *Godzilla: The Series* (1998–2001) and *Masters of the Universe vs. the Snake Men* (2002–2004). Another illustrator and animator, the Kilwinning born Malcolm McGookin perhaps better known for his comic & editor strips, also found work on popular television series with credits including *The BFG* (1989), *Danger Mouse* (1981–1992) and *Count Duckula* (1988–1993).

Beyond these eminent filmmakers working across a number of animated film and television, Scotland was also central to the history of the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts, established in 1968) and nurturing future generations such as filmmakers John Lasseter, Tim Burton, Brad Bird and Henry Selick (California Institute of the Arts, 2020b), and other creative talent from industry professionals rather than academy courses (California Institute of the Arts, 2020a). In 1968, when CalArts assembled the most innovative and unorthodox voices in the arts, they included American-Scottish director, Alexander MacKendrick (1912-1993) (Screen Online, 2014), as their Dean of the School of Film/Video.

Another aspect of animation that is important to consider in any history of Scotland's animation is that of Scotland's involvement in animation related festivals and events, as these too showcase both the Scottish and international aspects of the industry. Scotland is home to internationally-renowned film festivals, conferences and events, including the Edinburgh International Film Festival (EIFF) (EIFF, 2020), celebrated as the world's longest continually running film festival; the Glasgow Short Film Festival (GSFF) (Glasgow Short Film Festival, 2020), the largest competitive short film festival in Scotland, and an annual showcase for new and established Scottish and international filmmakers. In addition, there is also BAFTA Scotland, which champions the film, television and video game industries in Scotland through Animation and New Talents awards.

With regard to the education of animation, however, there is little material available which charts the history and development of animation courses in Scotland, with the notable exception of Edinburgh College of Art, which celebrated the 30th anniversary of their animation course in 2020 (Cinemaattic, 2020). This is comparative to The University for the Creative Arts (formerly West Surrey College of Art), who cite that they established their animation course 18 years earlier in 1972 (thanks to Academy Award winner Bob Godfrey), and are the UK's first course to take an academic approach to animation (UCAS, 2020). With Godfrey and Dick Taylor later developing a separate animation course at the Royal College of Art, in 1985, this potentially set a trend in the development of animation programmes in the UK. In the same period of the last 30 to 40 years,

many Scottish individuals who had either followed such courses, or who were educated as such courses became established, made highly significant contributions to the development of animation. For example, Fraser MacLean has worked on major productions including *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), *Space Jam* (1996) and *Tarzan* (1999). He also penned the highly regarded animation book, *Setting the Scene: The Art & Evolution of Animation Layout* (2011), mentioned by Anton Giuroiu (2019) as one of nine best layout and background painting books for animation, and listed by Concept Art Empire, (2020) in their *Best books on Layout & Background Painting for Animation*. Scottish VFX artist Stephen McDermott has also worked as part of the creative team on Disney animation, being part of the illustrious Disney feature films *Hercules* (1997), *Tarzan* (1999) and *Lilo & Stitch* (2002). With his most recent credit at the time of writing being in *Klaus* (2019). Brendan Body also has a prestigious career working for several internationally known companies (Framestore CFC, Double Negative, Industrial Light & Magic and Weta Digital) and on blockbuster productions including the Harry Potter franchise, *The Dark Knight* (2008) and *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies* (2014). Body was also a lecturer and Programme Director of Animation at University of Dundee from 2015 – 2021.

In the latter part of the last century, Andy Fry (1998, para 2) reflected on Scottish Television Enterprises (STE) surprise partnership with Canadian animation company Nelvana to produce six animated series for the American broadcast group, CBS. The terms of the deal awarded STE had significant creative input in the production of animated series and secured UK distribution rights on all of the series, totaling 117 half-hours. Darrel James, General Manager and Director of Business Development at STE from 1994 – 1998, and Managing Director from 1999 – 2000, oversaw the STE/CBS deal. He stated that:

“It came together in a surprisingly short time. We have worked very successfully with Nelvana on the ‘*Rupert*’ series in the past. So when they came and asked us if we wanted to get involved, we said ‘yes’ almost immediately. It is not often that you get the opportunity to work on such a high volume of co-produced material at one time.”

Fry (1998) wrote that STE had emerged as one of the most active co-producers of children’s programming in the UK in the later 1990s, and this is something attested to by the huge range of animated television series co-produced with Scottish Television Productions. Key to any history of Scotland’s animation and an appreciation of its breadth and value is a consideration of animation of the short format type. As Creative Scotland (2016) notes, short filmmaking is of critical importance to all filmmakers, and notably so in animation. It is a medium that develops the

skills required for storytelling across all platforms, and filmmakers use shorts as calling cards, as well as to trial ideas for longer format productions.

Ross Hogg (2018) presented his interpretation of the success of Scottish animation, through his programme of *Scottish Animation: Abstraction & Experimentation*, by identifying filmmakers such as Margaret Tait, Donald Holwill, Lesley Keen, Will Anderson and Ainslie Henderson. Hogg suggests that Scottish animation has been successful and mentions several works of animation that have had BAFTA nominations and wins to support his point, a fact noted by Creative Scotland (2017, 12) who champion how “Scotland has achieved success in animated shorts with several BAFTA wins and nominations” (Creative Scotland 2017, 12). Elsewhere, Lauren Dezenski (2013) celebrates the illustrator and animator Graham McCallum’s 50-year career, creating iconic TV branding for events such as the launch of The Discovery Channel, and on children’s shows such as *Play School* and *Crystal Tipps and Alistair*. McCallum’s credited Graphic Designer work (Dezenski, 2013) would be defined in the modern term, Motion Graphics.

Founded in 1988 by Producer/Director Leslie MacKenzie. West Highland Animation promotes Gaelic language and culture to a wider audience through the medium of animation and interactivity. With a target audience defined as children and Gaelic learners, West Highland Animation has produced over forty animation films based on stories inspired by Highland myths and legends. *Fraochy Bay* (2009-2015) is an animated TV series created by Neillydubh Animation Limited. Conceived by Neil Stewart with the Stornoway based television production company Moja, in 2008 (Fraochy bay, 2012). Corvin (2020) highlights the collaboration between Celtic broadcasters; Ireland’s TG4, Scotland’s BBC Alba and Wales’ S4C. Combined with new funding from the BFI’s Young Audiences Content Fund (YACF), these collaborations have led to a new wave of high-quality indigenous language content with international ambition. Such ‘national’ type aspects work in synchronous symbiosis with the way in which Scottish animators have been influenced by and contributed to animation worldwide, giving Scottish animation a unique character achieved through a blend of home grown and internationally gained ideas and productions.

In terms of where the history of Scottish animation can be accessed, Scotland’s national collection of moving image is held at the National Library in The Moving Image Archive. The Archive’s catalogue features 2,300 clips and full-length films, with 123 animated videos, and as such it constitutes a key potential source for anyone wanting to explore and research Scotland’s animation. Yet it is not a straightforward task to find Scottish animation as, despite being based in Scotland, the Archive (to date) does not have any facility to isolate or identify Scottish produced or related animations. The Moving Image Archive could clearly underline the national and

international aspects of Scottish Animation, which we are arguing here make Scotland's History of Animation unique, with a relatively straightforward categorization that would both heighten visibility and at the same time improve access. Upon discussion with Moving Image Archive's Learning & Outreach Officer, Dr Emily Munro, she was able to confirm that the oldest animated film listed in their database includes *The Adventures of Wee Rob Roy* (1916). Yet she stressed that while some may refer to *The Adventures of Wee Rob Roy* as 'Scotland's first animation', there is no evidence it was made in Scotland, nor do we know if it was made specifically for a Scottish audience. While mentioned in Malcolm Cook's (2019) book on early British animation, the film contains potentially controversial language with an imperialist view of Scotland with racist stereotypes. Munro explains that of the 123 videos listed in the archive under the terms; animation / animated / cartoon, there is no formal collection on Scottish animation, although there is a gathering of animated and illustrated adverts with other animated content which has not been formally authored. She speculates that there may be a larger gathering of Scottish animated content located in the BFI National Archive. Again though, with further investigation and research into these aspects, Scotland's history of animation could be made more visible and more accessible.

3. Contemporary Scottish Animation Culture

An overview of contemporary animation production in Scotland since 2009-2010 provides a strong picture of an ever-changing and developing industry. Indeed, it is clear that the elements of the national and the international continue to feed into Scotland's Animation industry, making it unique in terms of its blend of Scottish themes and Gaelic language with international influences and appeal. In terms of creating their own animated films, not until the 21st century did Scottish companies venture into longer format animation. Scotland's first co-produced animated feature film was Sylvain Chomet's French-British 2D animated film, *The Illusionist* (2010), principally animated in the Edinburgh based studio, Django films, which was formed by Chomet and Bob Last. *The Illusionist* is Scotland's most critically acclaimed animated project to date, nominated for Best Animated Feature Film at the 83rd Academy Awards and the Annie Awards and eventually winning at the 2010 European Film Awards and the first César Award for Best Animated Feature. Scotland's first 3D computer generated animated feature film was Sascha Hartmann's *Sir Billi* (2012), produced by Glasgow Animation Limited, founded by Sascha and Tessa Hartmann. Although not well received by the critics (Crown, 2013), the film featured Sir Sean Connery voicing the titular character and acting as Executive Producer, which reflects something of the growing ambition of Scottish studios.

Since 2012, Scottish studios have continued to collaborate on a number of animated feature films with studios and investors from other countries. This includes the British / German / Belgian production *Princess Emmy* (2019), produced by Scotland's Red Kite Animation with Studio 100 Media, Talking Horse, Whitebox and Animationsfabrik. Sellout Animation also contributed on shots for Netflix/Sergio Pablos's critically acclaimed, *Klaus*. At the time of writing, Axis Studios Group are recruiting for on-site roles in Glasgow for an upcoming feature project. As an indication of further industrial developments in the country, Creative Scotland's Animation sector review of 2017 proposes that an alternative avenue to feature film production was also being undertaken by US toy giant Mattel, who commissioned Axis Animation to produce two feature films from their Monster High property. These were released as an online broadcast, however, instead of a traditional cinematic release (Scotsman, 2017).

As Mattel's partnership with Axis Animation makes clear, one key recent development in terms of televised and viewing of content on screens in domestic households and mobile devices has been the huge growth in streaming services. Both Chris Lee (2019) and Wendy Lee (2018) attribute the revived demand for animated content down to streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon. Lee (2018) states that streaming companies, led by Netflix and Amazon, are rapidly increasing their spending on animated content, with estimates projecting that investment will grow dramatically to nearly \$5 billion (£4.09 billion) for Netflix and \$1.86 billion (£1.52 billion) for Amazon Prime Video by 2022. Scotland's animation sector has also played a key role here too. Creative Scotland's Animation sector review of 2017 presents online broadcasting as a legitimate alternative to traditional cinematic feature release, again highlighting Axis Animation's work on the Monster High property (Milligan, 2016). In the Scotsman (2017, para 6), Axis CEO Richard Scott reflects on Axis' transition to longer format work and how television is catching up with the games sector:

"Then we started to see Flaunt, one of our other studios, break out of what it was doing into longer-form work with Amazon Studios and Mattel. And then Axis, which was predominantly making the game trailers, started doing more work outside that space. If you look at the revenues of the entire business, games still make up the majority, but television is catching up rapidly."

Axis has gone on to work with Netflix on; *Happy!* (2017). Milligan (2018) describes Axis delivering 900 shots across eight episodes of the TV series, the gritty anti-hero trope based on the work of Scottish comic-book writer Grant Morrison (Milligan, 2018). Entirely producing the BAFTA Scotland winning episode "The Helping Hand" from the eighteen-part animated short series *Love*

Death and Robots (2019). Axis also collaborated with Sister Pictures on HBO's five-part dramatic series, *Chernobyl* (2019) (BAFTA Scotland, 2020).

Netflix's vice-president of original animation, Melissa Cobb, is quoted as saying "We've found that there's a lot of great opportunity right now to work with fantastic creators, not only in the U.S., but all over the world. So we're dedicated to finding those creators and supporting them" (Lee, 2018, para 7). This statement, combined with Axis Studios' work with streamers on short and longer format productions (as well as Sellout Animation's previously mentioned involvement on Netflix's animated feature *Klaus*) suggests that there is potential for other animation studios in Scotland to engage in a similar practice for future projects.

Over the last decade, Scottish animation has been highly prominent in short film making internationally, and in the spearheading of home-grown initiatives by Scots. Tom Bryant was the CG Supervisor & Lead CG Artist on Shaun Tan's *The Lost Thing* (2010), which went on to win the Oscar for Best Animated Short Film at the 83rd Academy Awards in 2011. Bryant had already founded the animation studio Interference Pattern in 2008, as well as the MOVE Summit in 2017. Iain Gardner, whose credits include *The Thief and the Cobbler* (1993) and *Ethel & Ernest* (2016) (IMDb, 2020c) took on the role of Programme Director for Animation at the EIFF for ten years (Gardner, 2019) and was recipient of the BFI's Young Audiences Content Fund (YACF) for his original animated series concept, *Ketchup & Mustard* (Henderson, S, Skwigly, 2020). Nancy Denney-Phelps (2019) acknowledges that Scotland is not the immediate thought when it comes to animation. However, she believes the success and expansion of the MOVE Summit is changing international perceptions of Scotland's animation sector and leading to Scotland being seen as having its own unique national cinema. She argues that "Scotland is not the first place that comes to mind when you think of animation, but the country is working hard to change that. The MOVE Summit is a big step in that direction... I am anxious to follow the growth of Animation Scotland and to watch and participate in the advances that Move Summit makes to create a meeting place for students and professionals alike to come together." Denney-Phelps (2019) is also enthusiastic about the launch of Scotland's newly formed trade body, Animation Scotland, and what these stronger foundations mean for the future of animation in Scotland.

There are also many other awards and events of importance that serve to underline Scotland's longstanding contributions to the animation industry. For example, Iain Gardner (2019) reflects on his ten years (2009-2019) as EIFF's Animation Programmer, commenting to Steve Henderson during an interview with Skwigly (2019) that "During the past ten years, I've tried my best to put a spotlight on the flourishing animation sector in Scotland. With so many individual interests to serve, I've not always being able to join up all the dots. I came closest during 2014

with the McLaren Centenary. I've regularly spoken to graduating years from Edinburgh College of Art about Festival Strategies, how to navigate BAFTA entry etc, and I think it's fair to say that my overview from the Festival helped give some film makers the added push to enter for those awards. But there are so many Animation related events springing up now in Scotland – like the MOVE SUMMIT in February – that Scotland's presence on the World stage is being well represented." Inaugurated in honor of the Stirling-born animator Norman McLaren, the McLaren Award for Best British Animation also celebrated its 30th year in 2020. In addition, the website Skwigly (2015), believes Edinburgh Film Festival Animation Lab 2015 offered a unique opportunity for emerging filmmakers. This followed a similar model from the pilot Animation Lab in 2014, the same year Scotland celebrated the centenary of McLaren's birth. Up-and-coming filmmaker participants came together to gain knowledge, advice and inspiration from key industry players through inspirational masterclasses and roundtables, alongside sessions focusing on topics from feature length development to international working partnerships.

In addition, and founded in 2010 by Andrew Partridge, Scotland Loves Animation is a charity that holds the distinction of presenting the *Scotland Loves Anime* festival in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, and which showcases a varied look at the world of Japanese animation. Launched in 2019, Animated Women UK Scotland (AWUK Scotland), represented by Sueann Rochester, the Volunteer group AWUK Scotland, hosts events with the aim to create a stronger sense of community for women in the Animation and VFX industries in Scotland (Animated Women UK, 2019). There have also been a number of one-off animation events in Scotland, such as ACCESS:VFX Scotland, AniJam and the Animation Base Camp. 2018 saw the first the event organized between ACCESS:VFX and animation studios in Scotland, to present ACCESS:VFX Scotland. Working in collaboration with Film City Glasgow and Edinburgh Napier University, events were held in both cities. Rowena McIntosh (2015), highlights the partnership between the Glasgow Short Film Festival and Smudge Digital, to offer the AniJam, a 48-hour animation competition, where participants are able to enter in teams of two up to ten, and have just two short days to produce a 30 – 90 second film based on a particular theme.

Considering Scotland's contemporary animation industry, achievements and culture along with its historical provenance and achievement underlines the unique strength of its industry and how it is moving towards an identity as a distinct national cinema; one whereby it is simultaneously forged through its history and contemporary development of unique Scottish national elements, and of unique international contributions and influences. As the final section of this article demonstrates, Scotland's animation can be further compared to similar industries elsewhere (such as in France or the United States or Mexico), as such comparisons are extremely useful,

particularly with regard to considering the issues and problems Scotland's animation industry is faced with, and also any recommendations to address these.

4. Issues, Problems and Recommendations

In order to make Scotland's animation recognizably visible and heralded as a unique institution, there are a number of issues and problems that need to be considered, as well as a number of recommendations that we argue would be of use in consolidating its future. Firstly, there is an issue surrounding insufficient funding is a theme observed throughout all the arts in Scotland, with the BBC (2019) article "Scotland's arts funding needs 'urgent' overhaul", stating that the arts funding system urgently needs an overhaul to focus on artists. Joan McAlpine MSP (Scottish Journalist and politician) declared that "Public funding of Scotland's arts and culture will only become sustainable if artists are at the centre of policy and paid the fair wage they deserve" (Scottish Parliament, 2019, para 5). Critical to facilitating and justifying funding for animation is an awareness of animation's historical role and position. Yet, as Cameron Fraser (2015) notes, public funders in Scotland remain unaware of the challenges and rewards that animation offers over other mediums. Further, they may be unaware of the international connections held by Scottish animation and animators. Thus, establishing the visibility of Scotland's unique animation is key to ensuring it received the funding it requires to forge ahead.

Indeed, little to no legacy is left behind from Scotland's most ambitious animated projects to help build or inspire local talent (Mortimer, 2018). For example, Visit Scotland's £7m global marketing campaign promoted Scottish tourism with Disney, prior to the release of *Brave* (Visit Scotland, 2020) involved Disney-Pixar artists being welcomed on a fact-finding visit to Scotland in 2006 and 2007 (McKenzie, 2012), but no records exist of attempts to engage these artists in talent development projects, students or lectures. There was a potential opportunity missed here when a Visit Scotland / Pixar collaborative deal was not developed.

Moreover, although education (colleges, universities) often works with industry, the above account of Scotland's animation industry and moves towards a national cinema arguably underlines the need for funding for education too. The importance of having an 'Education-to-Society' (Plate, 2012) situation where education and industry work symbiotically to produce students who can help contribute to society through their education is key. In this context, a more symbiotic relationship between education and the local animation/VFX industry has been proposed, by inviting industry to play a more active role in course design and structure, as a means for course content to be industry relevant (Mortimer, 2018). Dermot Corrigan's (2008) piece on *Irish Animation*, highlights education as a key component, when he notes that, "in 1989

Sullivan Bluth and Ballyfermot Senior College came together to establish the Irish School of Classical Animation, which offered the first university-level animation course in Ireland. Another Dublin institution, Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design, soon introduced another degree-level programme. The two courses differed slightly in emphasis, with Ballyfermot training classically skilled animators, and Dun Laoghaire producing directors of animated pieces”.

However, as Noah Charney (2017) comments, current education funding favors STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) instead of the humanities, and notably in an animation context, this neglects the importance of art history in learning how to learn to be a well-rounded animator. But it does not have to be this way, as illustrated by the funding and success of the France based art school Les Gobelins, ranked 2nd worldwide and 1st in Europe by Animation Career Review in 2020 (Gobelins, 2020). Indeed, Les Gobelins displays and follows a model Scotland could emulate, and at the MOVE Summit 2019, staff Moïra Marguin (Head of the Animation Department) and Cécile Blondel (Head of International Development) identified what made Les Gobelins special, including a permanent contact with the professional sector; continual research into the dynamic French animation market, and, critically, receiving regular state funding. As noted elsewhere, Les Gobelins has benefitted from a “first-rate state-funded system” (Connexion, 2016, para 1). Connexion France (2016) suggests the success of the French animation sector can be accredited in part to great schools, citing *Les Gobelins* as one of the best animation schools in the world. Within the article it expands upon how it is funded by the Chamber of Commerce, whose primary objective is to respond to the needs of industry. With funding available from bodies such as the *Centre National du Cinéma et de l’Image Animée* [National Center for Cinema and the Animated Image] (CNC) and *Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques* [Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers] (SACD), with Moïra Marguin (Head of the Animation Department at Gobelins) commenting: “the French system has created a cyclical process that is especially effective at nurturing up-and-coming writers and filmmakers”. Marguin elaborates that for every cinema admission ticket sold in France a percentage of money circulates into the CNC, enabling financing so the CNC can continue to help writers’ projects. This in itself represents a significant return on investment, but is undoubtedly also involving a leap of faith on the part of the funding authorities in Scotland.

For Scotland to seek funding to transform its own animation industry into anything aspiring towards emulating the likes of Les Gobelins, it is essential that any case is underpinned by a comprehensive picture and historical documentation of its true achievements and scope. That such education-focused Animation events are possible in Scotland is illustrated by the success of the first Animation Base Camp in 2016 (Creative Scotland, 2016), which helped participants to

develop skills and support the transition from study to employment within the animation sector. The base camp was presented by the animation studio Once Were Farmers and The Animation Centrifuge with support from Creative Scotland, Animation Skillnet, Screen Training Ireland, Norwegian Film Institute, Midtnorsk Filmsenter, Viken Filmsenter; and with additional support from Glasgow Caledonian University, The Foundry, Eurohostel and Chromacolor. It saw fifteen animation graduates from Scotland, The Republic of Ireland and Norway, participate in an intense eight-week trainee programme. Graduates worked with industry mentors from Sony Pictures Animation, to develop an original concept from Director and creator of Cow and Chicken, David Feiss. Whilst the Republic of Ireland continues to use a similar Animation Base Camp model, with the Animation Bootcamps 2017 (Animation Ireland, 2017) and the Next Step Animation Bootcamps 2019 (Animation Skillnet, 2020), presented by Animation Skillnet and Screen Skills Ireland; to date, however, Scotland has not revisited the Animation Base Camp approach. The Irish animation sector has a far more comprehensive record of their history, with particular attention focused towards the late 1980s, with the establishment of large-scale multinational studio operations (Walsh, 2018). The inclusion of international studios such as Sullivan-Bluth and Murakami-Wolf, resulted in training a generation of animators in Ireland, passing on many skills for both drawing and producing animation to Irish staff or European residents living there (Woods, 2003). The animation sector in Ireland has had continued investment and support during its development (O'Brien, 2014), with examples of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) determining that the animation sector was a suitable business; "to encourage as it needed a large semi-skilled body of workers - inkers and painters mostly - to create animated films" (Woods, 2003). In 1983, the IDA developed a scheme that offered tax breaks to film makers who opted to produce animation in Ireland, which attracted the fore mentioned multinational studios to Ireland - employing just short of five hundred people altogether.

In another promoting initiative, a Scottish delegation visited CTN Expo (Creative Talent Network) in 2015 organized by Fraser Maclean, Will Adams and Rory Lowe. It saw delegates engage in studio visits at Disney Studios, DreamWorks, Sony Animation and Titmouse Animation, before then attending the CTN Expo. Members of the CTN Scottish delegation went on to found The MOVE Summit, Animation Scotland, and to organize workshops with input from international animation professionals the likes of whom included; John Nevarez, Wouter Tulp, Stephen Sliver and Karl Gnass. There is certainly evidence to suggest that the CTN Expo trip in 2015 was hugely influential for the animation sector in Scotland.

As the above history of animation in Scotland shows, the sector has a strong provenance of involvement in many forms of animation, has had many key players both in Scotland and

internationally, and has its own unique focuses such as Gaelic, as well as a plethora of cutting edge and world-renowned studios. However, despite this industrial vibrancy, the sector is not funded anywhere near to the same extent as is the case for studios such as *Les Gobelins* in France, and the breadth, depth and impact of Scottish animation can often go largely unheeded and unrecognised. Yet, despite this lack of development or capitalising on the animation sector successes, and despite animation in Scotland being described as underfunded and misunderstood (Fraser, 2015), there is hope this can change. Firstly, there are currently many grassroots projects and initiatives currently taking place. The animation sector is collaboratively forming their own trade body, Animation Scotland, and with the creation of volunteer groups such as Animation Women UK Scotland and the MOVE Summit, support is increased in the wider animation community. Combined with the new funding and distributing avenues offered with streaming services, this provides wider scale audience engagement and the opportunity for competing studios to collaborate together on larger animated projects. The full potential of the sector (and it is a strong sector with significant domestic and international potential, as the above shows) will arguably only be fully realized with national funding in a similar strategic vein to that undertaken in France.

This article's desire to historically document the achievements and significance of the Scottish animation industry, and its moves towards developing its own national cinema, can hopefully help inspire and influence positive moves to consolidate its industrial development. In terms of funding, greater investment is required to make better use of talent based in Scotland, such as Ignacio Ferreras (Writer & Director), who is currently residing in Edinburgh and obtained an Annecy 2003 (Annecy Festival, 2003) official selection for *How to Cope with Death* (2002). There exists a strong opportunity to strengthen the animation sector and how Scotland is portrayed internationally through animation. As Richard Plate (2012) concludes "a curriculum must evolve with the society for which it is designed", while acknowledging the exponential growth in our population and our technological capability to affect large-scale systems. There is an opportunity to review curriculum development for animation in Scotland, by following international examples of best practice and innovative animation teaching, such as that of CalArts and Gobelins. This would not be unprecedented, as Darrel James, former General Manager and Director of Business Development at STE has commented; "Scottish Television co-produced and co-financed 100s of hours of animation in the 1990s. Why couldn't this be done again in Scotland?" (James, D, personal communication 2020).

One way in which this could be achieved is through more inventive approaches to the way in which money and funding can find its way to the Animation sector. For example, in the context

of the animation sector in Ireland, Animation in Europe (2019) states that Ireland's productivity in animation dramatically increased when its tax credit rose from 28% to 32% of eligible Irish expenditure for film and TV animation in 2015. It is worth noting that the UK Film Tax Relief is 25% (BFC, 2020). Animation in Europe (2019) provides the following details of what funding is available to Irish animation companies:

“Other avenues for funding available to Irish animation companies include the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, Irish-language broadcaster TG4 and Screen Ireland (formerly known as the Irish Film Board), which works with Animation Ireland to provide development and production funds for both film and TV series.”

Scotland's history of animation is important. Not only for the development of the animation/VFX sector in Scotland, through learning from past mistakes and challenges, but to assist Scotland's talent in developing their employability skillset, forming their own identity, how they wish to be presented as well as how they represent their view of the world. In addition, the above survey of Scotland's animation industry raises broader questions about how the history of animation is presented, who is remembered and who is forgotten, and how the way such questions and answers are linked to the value and priority we give to animation as a medium. It is hoped the above can help provide a documentary history of the sector in Scotland to promote the case for funding for this to be achieved.

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