

FILM STUDIES NEWSLETTER  
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# CUTAWAY

02 Interview: Steven Eastwood

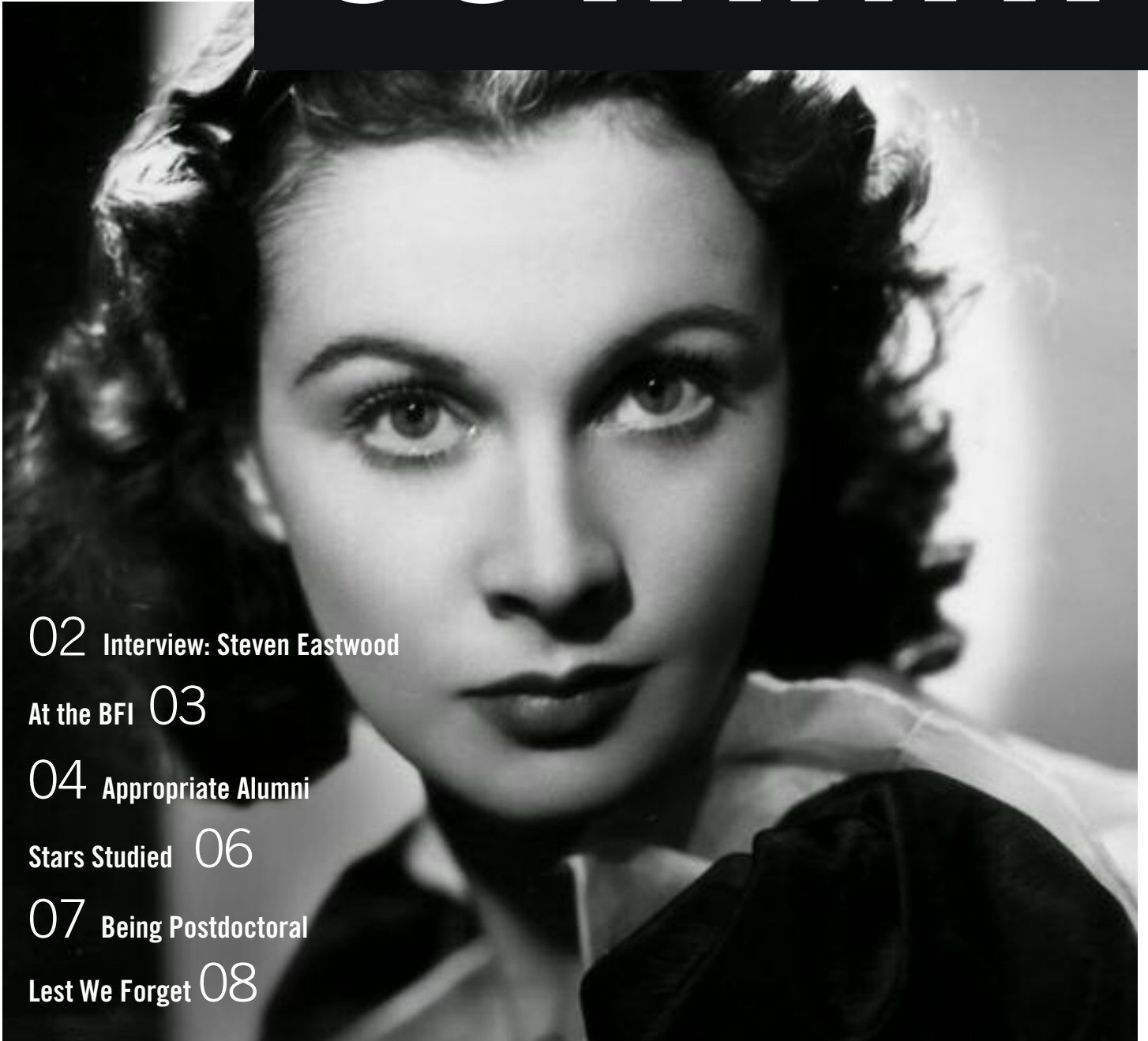
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# Interview: Steven Eastwood

Steven Eastwood joined Queen Mary as Reader in Film Practice in Autumn 2015. *Cutaway* talked to him about his approach to filmmaking and how he thinks about theory and practice in his teaching.

**CUTAWAY:** Your job title is Reader in Film Practice. What does that really mean?

**Steven Eastwood:** Well, I am carving out new space! I was a reader in film practice at my previous institution, but here at Queen Mary it is a bit of an unknown quantity. I don't really recognise a difference between theory and practice. I know that's easy to say and easy to be throwaway about, but I am constantly saying this to my students. Practice requires research methodology too, as much as building arguments in essays.

**CUTAWAY:** When you say practice, are you talking about documentary film mainly or fiction film too?

**Steven Eastwood:** I'm not particularly comfortable with these distinctions. I work with moving image. Sometimes I work with fiction, sometimes with non-fiction, sometimes with both. Sometimes I work in the gallery, sometimes in the cinema. But I don't tend to use the terms documentary or fiction.

**CUTAWAY:** Why do you think people are so concerned to identify 'truth' in film?

**Steven Eastwood:** People like to map what you're doing against a schema of preconceived ideas, and so they like to be able to compare it with something they have already experienced.

**CUTAWAY:** What kinds of filmmakers interest you, then? Errol Morris? Carol Morley?

**Steven Eastwood:** Well, I'm interested in films that remain as open as possible.

I really enjoy the work of Agnès Varda, Harun Farocki, Apichatpong Weerasethakul. And I constantly refer to Tarkovsky. My favourite film is *Mirror*, and how would we define that? Is it a diary

film, a fiction film, a documentary? Is it an archive film, an essay film, a film poem? It's all of those things and more. It's a film where the director didn't have a script, and when he got to the edit room he didn't have a schema – he had to find his way. I like being in that kind of relationship with the film I'm making. At the moment I'm making a film about death and dying, working with people who are dying, people at the moment of their deaths and beyond their deaths. Before I started I spent a lot of time thinking about the right methods for doing that – and then threw most of them out of the window.

**CUTAWAY:** Do you consider death as in a way emergent, then?

**Steven Eastwood:** I think death has more agency and movement than we might give it credit for, with terminal illness especially. I'm writing a piece at the moment about terminal illness and Levinas, and the term I most enjoy from Levinas is 'creative production': the idea that we are always creatively producing our identities. The problem with terminal illness is that as soon as someone is given a diagnosis they aren't really allowed to be creative producers any more.

**CUTAWAY:** How do you combine these ideas of emergence and movement with the demands of teaching. It seems a different kind of skill. Is there a tension between your approaches to teaching and research?

**Steven Eastwood:** We all try to reflect our research interests in our teaching, but I take something from Deleuze here, which is that the teaching context is a place to question our habits. But I'm very lucky in that the class I'm teaching at the moment is an MA documentary class that's all about experimenting with documentary

form, so it's a very nice relationship between practice and teaching.

**CUTAWAY:** What do you see as your particular contribution to the film department here at Queen Mary?

**Steven Eastwood:** There is such an exciting team here, with really diverse research interests, and there's an opportunity for film practice to benefit from those research activities. There is so much radical thinking going on in this department, I guess I would like to get film practice students to think more about these aspects of our work so that the theory and the practice work together.

**CUTAWAY:** What is it about the moving image that is so mesmerizing to you?

**Steven Eastwood:** I think it's strange. And I still find moving images unusual...they show us another world. Films do their own thing, not quite like our world. I've been fascinated by that since I was given a Super-8 camera at the age of nine, and am just as thrilled by it now. That image-to-image relation, how we mistake the image for the real world, is uncanny... There are so many possibilities.

**CUTAWAY:** What's next for you?

**Steven Eastwood:** The death and dying film I've been shooting for a year will finish in June. It will be a single channel feature length film first, and then be reworked for the gallery. I'm also thinking about the research for the film becoming a monograph looking at where we've got to as a culture with giving representations and images to death and dying.

Steven Eastwood's moving image work includes the feature film *Buried Land* (2010) and *The Hiss of the Blow* (2009), a multi-screen installation.



# At BFI Southbank

## Falling in Love Again?

Sophie Mayer considers feminism and love onscreen

'In classic Hollywood cinema, women end up by falling in love, by "getting her man", by getting married, or otherwise accepting a "normative" feminine role. If not, she may be directly punished.... Fortunately for feminists things are not always so clear cut in dominant cinema.' Annette Kuhn's observations about love on film, taken from her definitional *Women's Pictures*, are still relevant today – and acted as a guiding statement in my planning for 'The Feminist's Guide to Love on Film' in collaboration with David Edgar at the British Film Institute.

Part of the LOVE season, the sold-out 26 October panel event at BFI Southbank offered a 'guide' both to viewing dominant cinema with critical affection and to expanding our view beyond the mainstream. Queen Mary's Professor Kuhn looked beyond the assumption that

love means heteronormative romance with a profound consideration of the complex mother-daughter bond in the work of Chantal Akerman, especially poignant in light of the filmmaker's recent death. Filmmaker Campbell X – whose feature *Stud Life* was shot in the streets (and between the sheets) of East London – also pointed to the avant garde as a source for radical visions, showing Barbara Hammer's *Dyketactics* (1974), and talked about the imperative to represent queer desire onscreen.



Fellow filmmaker Desiree Akhavan, one of the first 'study abroad' students in Film Studies at Queen Mary, cited the protagonist's journey in *Working Girl* as a modern fairytale in which the princess not only gets a job, but bonds with her female co-worker – as well as getting sandwiches made by her new boyfriend. Also queering Hollywood cinema, with a female gaze on a female anti-heroine, was the BFI's Jane Giles, who pursued the iterations of *Fatal Attraction* from the original play to Bridget Jones watching that film on television. Women clearly love to watch women onscreen – and they love to talk about that love.

**Sophie Mayer (sophie@sophiemayer.net) is the author of *Political Animals: The New Feminist Cinema*, and in 2015 was a locum lecturer in Film Studies at Queen Mary.**

## An American in London

Three years ago, as I was completing my undergraduate degree, I did a semester abroad here in London through my university at a place called Accent. Accent allows American universities the facilities to send students to comprehensive and curated courses like 'London: Society and Space' and 'British Cinema'. After this I decided to take the MA in Film Studies at Queen Mary.

I grew up surrounded by sun and palm trees in Southern California and am frequently asked why I would leave home for London. In my time here, I've learned that London arguably loves cinema more than Tinseltown does. My favourite cinemas in Los Angeles are all at least thirty minutes' drive away from where I lived. They include the Landmark, the New Beverley Cinema and the Arclight on Sunset Boulevard. Two of these are quite pricey for students and the other has no major freeways surrounding it (this sounds like a ridiculous complaint, but it means I could rarely get out there).

In London, one of my favourite places is BFI Southbank. I feel at home in the metallic foyer that leads to the box office. I love the small, friendly library and knowing exactly where I want to sit in each screening room. I save on tickets because I'm a member and a student. We have no equivalent institution in Los Angeles. I have tried to think of an 'AFI' where I might go and feel the same way, but there is none. In fact, we do have an American Film Institute, which has a conservatory in the hills overlooking Hollywood to teach aspiring filmmakers. I have never been there and there is no cinema available to the public through the AFI. Though the AFI does have a festival where they showcase emerging talent, it doesn't do seasons of directors or genres, there are no discounts on screenings, and no mediatheque.

The act of viewing cinema, being a spectator and immersing ourselves in films is integral to how we study cinema and, frankly put, I don't regret my decision to move to London to do this. I have favourite cinemas here, too, that as

well as being fabulously accessible give me a discount: the aforementioned BFI, or the ICA and of course our local Genesis. I chose Queen Mary to work on my masters because the staff seemed like wonderfully invested people – invested in cinema, in their students, in the University. It is my belief that what makes an academic experience invaluable are the tutors, and in this regard Queen Mary has exceeded my expectations. However I find that true Londoners often take for granted the amount of culture present and accessible in this city. From free museums to discounted cinema tickets, London offers such a variety of culture and spectacle that I can't imagine ever being bored here. So, why did I decide to do my MA in Film Studies here? Three years ago I visited BFI Southbank for the first time and never got over it.

**Karen Melgar (k.melgar@hss15.qmul.ac.uk) took her undergraduate degree in Literary Journalism at the University of California Irvine.**

# Appropriate Alumni

## Director/producer team Desiree Akhavan and Cecilia Frugiuele talk to Sue Harris

Iranian-American filmmaker Desiree Akhavan and Italian-born producer Cecilia Frugiuele met as students at QMUL in the early years of the BA Film Studies degree. Cecilia was in the first graduating cohort in 2007, while Desiree spent a year at QMUL as an Associate Student, before returning to New York's Tisch School of the Arts to study filmmaking. Both have carved out successful careers in the decade since, and are currently enjoying critical success with Desiree's debut feature *Appropriate Behaviour* (2014). The film premiered at the Sundance Festival, and was shown at the London Film Festival before being theatrically released in the UK. They recently took time out of their very busy schedules to talk to *Cutaway* about their time at Queen Mary, and the projects they have been working on recently.

**Sue Harris:** It's so nice to see you both again, and thanks for agreeing to do this interview for *Cutaway*. What are your memories of your time at Queen Mary?

**Desiree Akhavan:** Studying the French New Wave! To me that class was a big stepping stone. I hadn't been exposed to films like that before, where the directors clearly loved cinema but wanted to do something else with it. I was inspired because that's what I wanted to do too: pay homage, but also mess around with it. And of course that was the class where I met Cecilia: all I could think was how damn beautiful and smart she was. And I kept wondering why is this crazy Italian woman studying film when she already knows all the answers!

**Cecilia Frugiuele:** Well for me, film was a passion. I was a cinephile before I came to university. I loved Truffaut especially and knew a lot about his work, but being in class was like hitting a wall. My English wasn't nearly as good then as it is now, and I couldn't always express myself well. I remember being jealous of Desiree who was so articulate.

**Sue Harris:** So you met in class – and I remember that class well and loved having you both in it! How did you get from being classmates to professional partners?



Desiree Akhavan in *Appropriate Behaviour*

**Cecilia Frugiuele:** It was all about friendship at first. We had the same sense of humour!

**Desiree Akhavan:** For me, it was the first time I connected with someone who was on my level. The friendship was a revelation for me: I wasn't very popular growing up and always felt like I was auditioning with other people. Meeting Cecilia was almost romantic: finally I'd met someone who saw me as I wanted to be seen. We were only twenty years old and it was so new. So, after college we kept in touch, flying to each other's continents, sharing scripts. And I think the reason we work so well together is that there wasn't an agenda to begin with.

**Cecilia Frugiuele:** Well during my time at Queen Mary, I didn't know I wanted to be a producer. I knew I wanted to work in film, but not necessarily as a director. And I remember reading Desiree's script in Eugene Doyen's class and telling my parents how talented she was. It was after I'd graduated and worked as a producer on some shorts that I thought, yes, now I can see how I can work with Desiree to showcase that talent.

**Sue Harris:** Do you think it was useful to your careers to study film as an academic subject?

**Desiree Akhavan:** For me, definitely. Growing up in America with immigrant parents, I had only been exposed to popular American film, and when I came here I discovered so many filmmakers who were dealing with subjects I'd never thought of. It's really important to know what came before, and in the film industry it's hard to have dialogue with people who haven't got that background. Then I went to graduate Film School in New York, where I studied practical filmmaking. I don't think that's the right path for everyone, but I needed that structure to test out my ideas and way of working.

**Cecilia Frugiuele:** I've been thinking about this a lot recently. As a producer, I spend a lot of time in business meetings, so maybe that would have been the right path to follow. But I just enjoyed learning about cinema so much! And the process of writing essays and scripts gave me so much confidence. Now when I'm looking at scripts or thinking about storyline, I see the layers because I was taught that way. But I have to say, the best thing about doing Film Studies at Queen Mary was the lecturers, who all had such a deep knowledge of their subject, and were experts in languages and other cultures. The quality of the teaching is the most important thing.



Cecilia Frugiuele and Desiree Akhavan at the London Film Festival

**Sue Harris:** We are all thrilled here at Queen Mary with the incredible success of your film *Appropriate Behaviour*. It's so great, and incredibly funny. Tell us about the project and the reactions you've had to it.

**Desiree Akhavan:** Well I initially wrote a script that I was hoping to turn into a film with the help of film school friends and a loan of a few thousand dollars. I had already made a web series (*The Slope*) for almost no money, so I guess I was on a roll and my work was getting some attention. The script was small scale and really crude, and so I asked Cecilia to look at it. She was the one who saw the potential for something on a larger scale, and we spent a year prepping it while she was raising money in the UK. She said, trust me, I believe in it, and she would give me very strict assignments, to write about my family or other personal experiences. At that point our ten years of friendship turned into a really close collaboration that allowed the project to come together.

**Cecilia Frugiuele:** My partner at Parkville Production was as fed up as me with applying for grants for film projects, and we decided we wanted to raise finance for

ourselves. This was the ideal opportunity. The web series served as a 'proof of concept', and we knew that Desiree would be the lead role – that was a no brainer. In June 2013, a year after we signed the contract to work together, we were able to begin shooting.

**Desiree Akhavan:** It all happened really quickly, and we weren't expecting it to go places. We never even said the word 'Sundance' out loud in case we jinxed it! But we knew there was a real deficit of work by female directors out there, especially female-driven comedies. It was exciting to be able to say OK, what does it mean to be young and female and have a particular view of the world around you?

**Sue Harris:** So what's next for you two?

**Desiree Akhavan:** Right now we're co-writing a script that's an adaptation of a young adult novel. The process is really different from writing original scripts, it's much harder, and we're mining our way around that at the moment. We're also writing a television series for E4: it's set in London, and we've been working through lots of drafts of that.

**Sue Harris:** Is London your base now?

**Desiree Akhavan:** I think I'm forever going to be looking for my home, and you have to go where the opportunities are in this business. But a year ago I came to London to start writing with Cecilia and I'm just really happy here.

**Cecilia Frugiuele:** My projects are split between here and Italy, but London is definitely my base. I've been here eleven years now. It's home.

**Sue Harris:** Do you have any final words of advice for our current students?

**Desiree Akhavan:** I'd say this: stop waiting for other people to enable you. Enable yourself and it's OK if you do the wrong thing. Create your own project and do it within your means because no one is ever going to say 'here's the money, off you go, we believe in you'.

**Cecilia Frugiuele:** I agree with Desiree and I'd add, don't stop at the idea of being a director. Being a creative producer in Europe is incredibly important. It can be a hard job, but when you've got the right partner it's incredibly fulfilling.

**Sue Harris:** Well we are incredibly proud of you both here at Queen Mary. Thanks for taking the time to talk to us today and good luck with the new projects.

**Sue Harris (s.harris@qmul.ac.uk) is Reader in French Cinema at Queen Mary and author of *An American in Paris* in the BFI Film Classics series.**



*Appropriate Behaviour*

# Star Studies at QMUL

Star studies is enjoying a resurgence at the moment, with a BFI book series on film stars, several conferences and publications on particular aspects of stardom from national and international perspectives, and growing interest in the archived papers of individual stars. At Queen Mary, Film Studies has seen a good deal of star-focussed activity since the last issue of *Cutaway*, with an explosion of events and projects at the university and beyond, involving staff, students, public audiences and national cultural institutions, as well as some real-life stars.

Last Spring, with support from the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film, the film history research group hosted a Vivien Leigh study day, welcoming guest speakers from the Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Portrait Gallery. Kate Dorney and Keith Lodwick from the V&A showcased some of the treasures in the museum's Vivien Leigh Archive; and NPG curators Clare Freestone and Terence Pepper offered insights into the processes involved in mounting a star exhibition at the gallery. Attendees included members of the Vivien Leigh Circle as well as archivists from the British Film Institute and many Leigh fans, academic and otherwise.

Terence Pepper was one of the curators of the exhibition 'Audrey Hepburn: Portraits of an Icon', which ran at the NPG throughout last Summer. Among the various events accompanying the show were screenings, in the Gallery's regular evening 'Late Shift' slot, of a dozen films from the full span of Hepburn's career, ranging from *Roman Holiday* (1953) to *Robin and Marian* (1976). For each film, a Queen Mary Film Studies student gave an introduction, set the scene and outlined Film Studies perspectives on it. Also associated with the exhibition was an 'in conversation' between Senior Lecturer in Film Studies Lucy Bolton and the

NPG's Terence Pepper about Hepburn as an international cover girl, focussed on the evolution of the star's image – as charted through a lifetime of magazine covers – from *ingénue* to fashion model to humanitarian ambassador. Collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery continues, in the shape of a launch event in June during a 'Late Shifts' evening of talks, conversation – and prosecco – for Lucy Bolton and Julie Lobalzo Wright's new book *Lasting Screen Stars: Images that Fade and Personas that Endure*.

Lucy also co-convened two events associated with a season of Marilyn Monroe films held at BFI Southbank last June. With cultural critics Bonnie Greer and Jacqueline Rose she took part in 'Who Do You Think You Are? Marilyn Monroe?', a panel discussion assessing Monroe's significance as a feminist icon. Also in association with the Monroe season, Lucy chaired a study day on the star's continuing appeal and cultural impact. Audience members and guest speakers Pamela Church Gibson, Sarah Churchwell and BFI Events Manager (and QM Film Studies graduate) Laura Adams reflected on the star's lasting presence in people's daily lives. Lasting outcomes of the day include a forthcoming special issue of the journal *Film Fashion and Consumption* and the Twitter hashtag #Marilyneveryday. More recently, as part of the BFI's LOVE season Lucy gave a talk, called 'Falling in Love with the Stars', about how we absorb many of our ideas about love from films.



In November, as part of 'Being Human' (a national festival of the humanities coordinated by the British Academy, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and London University's School of Advanced Studies), the film history group held 'Ageing Stars', an afternoon of talks, discussion (and tea and scones) celebrating the visibility and performances of such screen actors as James Mason, Charlotte Rampling, Tom Courtenay, Emmanuelle Riva, Jean-Louis Trintignant and Catherine Deneuve in their mature years. The symposium, supported by Queen Mary's Centre for Public Engagement, was organised by Reader in French Cinema Studies Sue Harris, who presented her current work on Gérard Depardieu. Sue has recently published a volume on *An American in Paris* in the BFI Film Classics series, and so was a natural choice to interview one of that film's stars, Leslie Caron, at a Q+A at BFI Southbank in November. Sue also hosted a reunion of *Gregory's Girl* cast members John Gordon Sinclair, Clare Grogan and Dee Hepburn in a joyous evening that brought the stars of the much-loved film together for the first time in many years.

As an aspect of Film Studies, star studies embraces many topics – performance, genre, costume, film industry, film history, and more. But it is surely helped along by a good deal of academic fandom (with fandom itself another lively area of inquiry within star studies). The enthusiasm of the public and of cultural institutions like the BFI, the V&A and the National Portrait Gallery, for informed and thoughtful perspectives on film stars, is a fabulous way for film academics to share research and enthusiasms with people who have long standing personal investment in film stars. More events and publications are planned, so watch this star-shaped space!

Part of Sue Harris's conversation with Leslie Caron can be viewed at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIFaQ8D-Obk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIFaQ8D-Obk)

# Being Postdoctoral

Two early career researchers discuss life and work at Queen Mary

**Ros Murray:** I joined Queen Mary in 2013 as Leverhulme postdoctoral research fellow. My project focuses on French feminist and queer filmmakers and video collectives. I come from a French Studies background, and it's been fantastic to engage with teaching and research in film and related media, thinking outside the context of French and francophone culture.

**Nick Jones:** I came aboard as a British Academy postdoctoral research fellow in 2015, but have been in the department for a while, having completed my PhD here. My own work is on digital 3D and builds on my earlier research into film and spatial theory. It's been great to be able to teach these topics on our MA Film Studies core course, and get a feel for how students respond to these ideas. I've always felt at home at Queen Mary; and while moving from PhD to postdoc is challenging, doing so in a comfortable environment helps – and my application to the British Academy would certainly not have stood out had it not been for the generous help of colleagues like Guy Westwell, Libby Saxton, Alasdair King, and Shirley Jordan among many others. There are also plenty of opportunities to get involved in the life of the Film Studies department, which helps one not feel disconnected as a postdoc.

**Ros Murray:** There is certainly a vibrant research culture at Queen Mary, and I've found it particularly productive getting involved with the activities of Film Studies research groups like the film-philosophy cluster Think Tank, as well as with the interdisciplinary Visual Cultures Forum.

**Nick Jones:** Since finishing my PhD I've handed over Post Production, our postgraduate research seminar series started in 2012 by Hollie Price and Jo Stephenson (both of whom have now completed their PhDs) to some of our new PhD students. It's not only important to provide PhDs, postgraduate researchers and, yes, full-fledged lecturers with a venue for trying out ideas, it's also vital to offer everyone a chance to meet regularly

and keep in touch. Being a fulltime researcher can be isolating, and providing opportunities to bring people together seems crucial. As well, in my role this year as co-curator of the School's Visual Cultures Forum I've enjoyed bringing in a range of academic speakers, among them Owen Weetch, author of *Expressive Spaces in Digital 3D Cinema*, to talk about their research. The technical challenge of including 3D clips in Owen's talk was effectively met, and his absorbing paper helped many members of the department get a sense of what 3D films look and feel like. To me it's invaluable hearing how a range of scholars respond to an exhibition technology which normally gets thought about only in limited, and frequently derogatory, ways.

**Ros Murray:** Sharing ideas with colleagues is definitely the most important element of research, particularly in the initial stages of a project. I've been lucky to be surrounded by a department of congenial researchers with whom I've enjoyed organising events. For example, in May last year Sophie Mayer and I organised a conference on Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*, along with Sam McBean from the English department. We had a great time brainstorming before the event, thinking about what we could do to make it truly participatory: initial ideas included a Portapak video workshop, fanzine making, feminist re-enactments and an impromptu crêche in the Hitchcock cinema. In the end, we settled on a structure that started and ended with Firestone's text, with some more activist-related activities in between. We invited the Sex Worker Open University, a collective of sex workers and their supporters, to present their work in tackling oppression and protecting the rights of women in the sex industry. We included screenings of work by Agnès Varda (the short film *Women Reply*, 1975) and by the video collective Vidéo Out (extracts from *The Prostitutes of Lyon Speak Out*, 1975), followed by a roundtable discussion with invited speakers, and concluded with a reading group session where we split into groups

to discuss Firestone's text. Another highlight was chairing a keynote session for the Drama department's 'Sex, Work and Performance' conference in November, in the form of a Q+A with filmmaker Nicola Mai on his film *Samira*, a two-screen art-science installation presenting an ethnographic account of an Algerian sex-worker in Marseille. I've really enjoyed getting involved with and hearing about projects like these that reach beyond the academy and connect with broader issues.

**Nick Jones:** These kinds of organised events can be so rewarding. I'm hoping to set up some off-campus screenings in the later years of my project, with introductions and discussions seeking to spark debate around the aesthetic potential of 3D. It is nice to have the validation of a research fellowship, but also to enjoy the freedom to seek out – or at least say yes to – interesting side projects or events. Last year I enjoyed introducing an Audrey Hepburn film (*Wait Until Dark*, 1967) to an audience at the National Portrait Gallery, and also giving a talk at Stepney's Genesis Cinema about who should be the next Bond. Given the onus on universities to engage with the wider public, I find these events not only enjoyable but crucial in connecting my research with the world beyond the academy.

**Ros Murray (r.murray@qmul.ac.uk) and Nick Jones (n.jones@qmul.ac.uk) are postdoctoral fellows in Film Studies at Queen Mary. Jo Stephenson and Hollie Price discuss the launch of Post Production in Cutaway issue 2; for latest news see <https://postproductionqmul.wordpress.com/about/>**

# Lest We Forget

## Charles Drazin reports on the 2016 Alfred Hitchcock Lecture

Ten years ago the School of History and the Department of Film Studies joined together to establish the annual Alfred Hitchcock lecture in film history. The title was chosen in honour of a world-renowned filmmaker who grew up within a stone's throw of the university. There was no specific requirement that the lecture had to be about Hitchcock, but it is perhaps some measure of the director's towering status that it took an occasion as momentous as the hundredth anniversary of the Battle of the Somme for the two departments to decide that the time had come to turn away from him – if no doubt only temporarily. This year we invited film historian Dr Lawrence Napper of King's College, London, to give a talk on the battle that drew on his recent book *The Great War in Popular British Cinema of the 1920s*.

In a lecture called 'Over the Top: Representing the Battle of the Somme in the Cinema', Dr Napper chose to focus on representations of what he called 'one of the most iconic walks of the twentieth century'--the morning of 1 July 1916 when several divisions of the British army climbed out of their trenches and headed towards the German lines. The worst single day in the history of the British army, before or since, the day cost the lives of 19,000 British soldiers.

The first of the two films Dr Napper analysed was the officially made *The Battle of the Somme*, which used actuality footage and was released in August 1916 while the battle was still being fought. As he went on to consider a sound recording from 1917 called 'The Big Push' and, finally, the 1927 film *The Somme*, he traced the stages by which the idea of 'over the top' came to enter the popular imagination. The talk offered a fascinating account of how the first hours of the first day of the Somme battle became a symbol of not only the First World War but also the pity and horror of war itself.

*The Battle of the Somme* was one of the most successful documentaries ever made, although in 1916 the word 'documentary' had yet to be coined. When it was released, twenty million people in Britain went to see this record of a cataclysm that continued to affect the lives of everyone. I couldn't help thinking



THE TENTH ANNUAL ALFRED HITCHCOCK  
LECTURE IN FILM HISTORY

**Dr Lawrence Napper**

**OVER THE TOP**

**Representing the Battle of the  
Somme in the Cinema**

that, even a hundred years on, many members of our large audience would have had memories of the war that had been passed down within their own families. In introducing the talk, I was able to give my own example: I showed a photograph (below) of the spent spent shell casing that my grandfather, Company Sergeant Major Patrick Lynch,



Royal Engineers, had picked up from the Somme battlefield in August 1916. Back home in Ireland he turned it into a dinner gong, in his own small homage to the idea that swords are better turned into ploughshares.

**Charles Drazin is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Queen Mary. His books include *Film Finances* and *Dr No***

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