

## From the Old Brewery S1-EP6.mp3

**Speaker 1** [00:00:03] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.

**Suk-Jun Kim** [00:00:22] Welcome. This is *From the Old Brewery*, a post-graduate podcast programme at the School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture. I'm Dr. Suk-Jun Kim. I'm the director of PGR and we have a co-host, Ian.

**Ian Grosz** [00:00:41] Yeah, hi, I'm a Ph.D. research student in creative writing and co-hosting the podcast with Jun.

**Jun** [00:00:49] Yes. For this episode, we have a guest, Lauren. So Lauren is a PGR student at Aberdeen. Specifically situated in the German department, she received a B.A. in German from King's College London and M.A. in Creative Writing from Newcastle University. So Lauren is originally from Jarrow, a town in the North East of England. Outside her research, Lauren's interests lie in horror films, films about the Vietnam War, crocheting and various other kinds of fibre arts, though she says she can't knit to save her life. Welcome.

**Lauren Cuthbert** [00:01:33] Hello. Thank you for having me.

**Jun** [00:01:35] Oh, you're welcome. It's good to have you here. So, a B.A. in German and an M.A. in Creative Writing. That's quite an unusual combination, Lauren. Can you tell us how these intersect and how you came to Aberdeen for your Ph.D.?

**Lauren** [00:01:53] Yeah. So I initially chose to study German after my A-Levels because I've always found the language very linguistically fascinating. I also had a really great German teacher at school who... she really inspired me to take it further. And I think as someone from the North East, there's a lot of similarities in the German language and the tonal way that the accent works where I come from, as well as slang terms, which I find really interesting. And so a B.A. in German, I mean, in most languages in the British education system, it's a very wide field. So you don't just learn the language. You also look at the culture, you look at the history, art, literature, all kinds of different areas as well as just the mechanics of learning the language. And then as for Aberdeen, it was pretty much my first and only choice.

**Jun** [00:02:34] Oh, really?

**Lauren** [00:02:35] Yes. I actually ended up coming here because I follow my former personal tutor from King's on Twitter, and he'd retweeted a tweet from my current supervisor, Katya Krylova. She was advertising the Isabella Middleton Scholarship, and she said, 'Anybody who's considering applying for a Ph.D., there's some funding available.' And I quite impulsively decided to go for it. But it's something that's been at the back of my mind ever since I first found out about these filmmakers because I had very briefly touched on them and I wanted to do a lot more.

**Jun** [00:03:39] So it sounds like you're from London and Newcastle and Aberdeen, so it's the general trajectory. You've been migrating...

**Ian** [00:03:47] Yeah, you're here on a scholarship? That's great. You mentioned film there, and you say you love film and particularly films about the Vietnam War. What is it that

interested you: that overtook your interest in creative writing? Was it just that interest in film that compelled you? What made you choose film to focus on, for a Ph.D.?

**Lauren** [00:04:12] So it really is a passion project for me. My Ph.D. is something that I would be sitting in my room writing about anyway if I wasn't here doing it academically. I mean, overall, there's a lot about film that interests me. I love the culture around film. I love watching a film for entertainment, and I also love picking them apart. I find there's a lot of fun that I have in my research. So yeah, I'm quite fortunate in that way.

**Ian** [00:04:48] Do you think your M.A. in Creative Writing, with that understanding of narrative, feeds into your love of film, and as you say, picking them apart and analysing them?

**Lauren** [00:05:02] Yeah, definitely. So I mean, creative writing is something that's always been a huge passion of mine personally, something that I did for my own enjoyment. And there's a lot that I've learnt from my M.A. that carried me through to where I am now, other than just the process of producing fiction. I think the biggest thing that I got from my M.A. is having quite a thick skin.

**Ian** [00:05:34] (Laughing) You need one of those in creative writing, that's for sure.

**Lauren** [00:05:36] Yes. So there's something about creative writing, studying it academically, that necessitates being able to not take things personally. And I think also, especially with my Ph.D. subject being such a personal thing for me as well, I think it's easy to get lost in... how it's important to me. So to be able to remove myself from my writing and see it objectively... When I get feedback from Katya and she says, 'Cut this,' or 'Move this around,' I'm like, 'I can see that objectively,' and I definitely got that from my M.A., because you come in to a seminar and you have this personal thing that you've written, and then people are saying, 'Well, that structurally doesn't work.' And it's quite difficult at first. So yeah, there's a lot that I got from my M.A., but I think that's the biggest thing.

**Ian** [00:06:36] Yeah, it's very useful, because you have to... If you're passionate about what you're writing about, you then have to remove yourself from that passion and analyse the text itself objectively.

**Jun** [00:06:45] Yeah, let's go a bit detail over your research. So your research interest is in the films about the Vietnam War, particularly these documentary film makers – if I can pronounce their names correctly – Heynowski and Scheumann.

**Lauren** [00:07:05] Yes, that's right. Yeah.

**Jun** [00:07:06] Oh, excellent. OK. So Heynowski and Scheumann were filmmakers in East Germany? So what brought you to the films of Heynowski and Scheumann?

**Lauren** [00:07:20] So it's actually quite an interesting story. In my final year at King's for my B.A., I was getting independently really interested in films about the Vietnam War. I love films about war. I find them so interesting as a cultural reflection of values, I think. So, things like the miniseries Band of Brothers. And then I think there's something really fascinating about films about the Vietnam War like Apocalypse Now, Full Metal Jacket, Platoon, those really iconic films. I think there's a lot of aesthetic markers in the films that are used as shorthand to signal other things in filmmaking. And you can see that as the

way that the Vietnam War becomes a cultural thing in America, which is really interesting to me. And it works as shorthand for themes of protest and criticising the military because you come out of the Second World War and you have a slightly more problematic military in that sense.

**Ian** [00:08:30] I suppose it's a cultural object in itself. You think of Vietnam and it's got so many associations, hasn't it? It was the first time mass media was involved in war, and the imagery of it, the horror of it, and the protests, and people's attitudes towards war maybe changed quite a lot during that time.

**Lauren** [00:08:48] I think the image that most people in the society that I live in have of Vietnam is definitely mediated through the American experience of it and how American films portray it as well. So that was all happening in the background of my German B.A., and I was maybe worrying that I'd gone down the wrong path academically because I was so invested in the culture and the films about Vietnam and what they say about America as well. And then I took a class in my final year taught by Dr. Martin Brady, who is great. I still email him now. He had a class on 'New German Cinema in East and West'. So we did a lot of different films that came out of East and West Germany, so when they were two different countries, and I took this class, and we were introduced to these films by Heynowski and Scheumann. They made several Vietnam films. They were documentary films, and it was such a stroke of luck that I got to find them because I was at the time worrying that I'd made the wrong choice. And then along come these two guys who made this really niche connection. Yeah, just for me. And I was also, yeah... I was really taken by them quite instantly. I found them, really... They have such a strong voice in all of their films that I find really investing. And yeah, so I wrote an essay on it and it was very short because of the word count, and I've always felt like I could write so much more. So that's why I'm here now.

**Ian** [00:10:41] So you said you wrote an essay on it. Is that the essay that you won the prize for?

**Lauren** [00:10:45] No. So this was back during my B.A., yeah. I wrote an essay for this class. And then ever since then, I've been like, 'I need to write more.'

**Ian** [00:10:57] You say they have a very strong voice. Is that what stands out about their work, or can you tell us a little bit more about why the films stand out for you, apart from this intersection of the German culture and the way German culture views the Vietnam War, or East German culture views the Vietnam War?

**Lauren** [00:11:16] Yeah, so this is quite a brief rundown of who they are. It's very truncated. But so basically, they were making these films for the GDR. That's the German Democratic Republic, which was East Germany, and at the time it was a socialist country and it was a satellite state of the USSR. So there's all these elements of surveillance and censorship that form the background of the films they were making. And when they first started working together, they were working for DEFA, which was the... it's the name of the state-owned production company that used to exist in the GDR. So pretty much every film that was made in the GDR would be through DEFA. They would get money from DEFA to film, and it was all owned by the government.

**Ian** [00:12:02] Was this during the 1960s?

**Lauren** [00:12:04] Yes, it was. Actually DFA was established in... It was the early fifties, very early fifties (edited note from Lauren: it was 1946!). And so they were working for DEFA, and then in 1969, they were given their own production company. It was called Studio H&S. And it was a huge privilege to be given that kind of autonomy in the GDR. So they had a lot of economic independence and the independence to be able to travel and interact with Western people, Western culture. They even sold one of their films to the American broadcast company NBC, which was a huge deal. So they gave East Germany quite a bit of international legitimacy, because they were making these films that almost transcended boundaries of this huge political divide. And as for their background... So they were teenagers during the Second World War. And I think the things they experienced in the Nazi regime really informed the films that they were making once they were no longer in that culture. So Heynowski was a very, very low-level assistant in the Luftwaffe. And Scheumann attended a Napola School, which was a special school that was made by the Nazi government to indoctrinate young people to get them to the peak and prepare them for the 'Thousand Year Reich', basically. So they were just children at this period in their lives. And they came out of that experience with very strongly socialist beliefs. And you can see in all of their films, there's this struggle that they have with collective guilt and responsibility, which I definitely think is as strong as it is because of the way they were experiencing the Second World War. And I think it's also really important to note that they did believe in socialism. I think it was a thing that they really engaged with, but they weren't uncritical of socialism and they weren't uncritical of the GDR or of communism. So they made a film called Die Angkar, which is about the Cambodian genocide by the Khmer Rouge. So in a lot of ways, that film is their own personal interrogation of how you can be socialist or communist and how you can identify with imagery like the hammer and sickle, and then also understand and accept the fact that a terrible genocide was committed in the name of that symbol. So they wanted to solve the problems of socialism with their films as much as they wanted to support socialism.

**Ian** [00:15:04] Do you think they were critiquing the socialist system in the German Democratic Republic, vicariously almost, through the Vietnam conflict and what was going on in Cambodia? Do you think they were, in a roundabout way, critiquing, or do you think they were properly embedded in that system?

**Lauren** [00:15:29] I think there's definitely enough self-awareness to me in their films to suggest that they weren't uncritical of the country they lived in. And I think they had aspirations to make the country a place where you can say, 'Well, maybe this isn't right.' But to still... they still very much wanted to live in a socialist society.

**Jun** [00:15:52] So amongst Heynowski and Scheumann's work, what films especially are focussing on for your project?

**Lauren** [00:15:59] So I'm very much focussed on their Vietnam films. And I recently finished quite a huge chapter on their four-part documentary, Pilots in Pyjamas.

**Ian** [00:16:12] Pilots in Pyjamas? That sounds intriguing. Do you want to tell us a little bit more about that?

**Lauren** [00:16:17] Yeah, so it was made in 1968, so that's before they were more independent from the government production company. So it's in four parts. It's actually all available on YouTube in English, if you search 'Pilots in Pyjamas'.

**Jun** [00:16:19] How long is it?

**Lauren** [00:16:20] About five hours long. Yeah, it's not... Yeah, if you if you've ever got five hours to kill with nothing else to do, it's really fascinating. So they were granted special dispensation to go to Vietnam in 1967 and film in a prison camp for American P.O.W.s who'd been shot down in the process of bombing Vietnam. So it's really quite unique because it captures this moment where many other people would not have been able to get in contact with these men.

**Ian** [00:17:22] Why do you think they managed that? Because, I mean, I can imagine the regime in North Vietnam being completely... You imagine that it was completely closed.

**Lauren** [00:17:31] Yeah. So I mean, to an extent it was. But there was this implied solidarity between socialist and communist countries at the time and the GDR and the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam – that was the communist part at the time. They had a political relationship. So they made a film called 400cm<sup>3</sup>, which was a documentary film to drum up East Germans to donate blood to the North Vietnamese war effort. And I think the authorities in North Vietnam quite like that. And so they liked the filmmakers and they said, 'Well, you can come over.' So basically, this film is a series of interviews with P.O.W.s, who had been captured. There's about 10 of them, the main guys. They have some other people coming in as well, and they're quite big names. So you have Robinson Risner, who was a really... he's quite famous in certain circles, and Everett Alvarez Jr, who was the first American airman to be shot down over North Vietnam. Also, Edward Hubbard, who I was really fortunate to be able to talk to a few weeks ago. So I got in contact with him and he explained... he was really helpful. He talked about the way that the film was put together.

**Jun** [00:18:54] Roughly how old is he?

**Lauren** [00:18:56] He's 83, and yeah, he had amazing recall of his experiences. He talked me through a lot of the circumstances around how it was made. He wasn't told very much, for example, before he was sat down and interrogated, basically, by these two Germans. And it really helped to strengthen my critical understanding of the documentary.

**Ian** [00:19:21] Do you think it was a film that was a piece of propaganda for communism, and for the North Vietnamese?

**Lauren** [00:19:29] Yes, definitely. It was. I think it's very difficult to divorce Heynowski and Scheumann from the concept of propaganda, especially because they themselves said they weren't offended that, they were making... People would say, 'Well, you're making propaganda,' and they'd say, 'Well, that's not a bad thing to do,' is pretty much what they were arguing. And so as well as these interviews... They come into it with the idea that they want to understand the pilots, what makes them act the way they do, what makes them agree to drop bombs on civilian areas.

**Ian** [00:20:07] That's interesting, because it flips the whole thing on its head, because in the West, anyway, when we think of pilots being in captivity, they've been shot down. We immediately think about how they're being treated as prisoners of war. That's just because of the way that we've viewed the war through that lens; through American films basically, and to turn it on its head and to try and understand why the pilots might want [be motivated] to attack people in these other countries is really interesting.

**Lauren** [00:20:38] Yeah. And so quite a large part of this documentary is the links they make between the American pilots and Nazism, which is quite an inflammatory thing, I think. So they very explicitly make these connections. They talk about Adolf Eichmann, who is popularly known to be the 'architect of the Holocaust', and he was trialled in Jerusalem in really quite a famous trial. And he made the argument that he was just following orders, just doing what he was told. And that's actually where the phrase 'the banality of evil' comes from. So you have the sociologist Hannah Arendt, who observed the trial, and she coined that phrase to describe Eichmann. So they take these interviews and they look for instances where the pilots make these arguments that evoke Eichmann's defence of his own actions.

**Ian** [00:21:40] Yes, the way they rationalise. It's quite a leap, though, from a serviceman and Eichmann.

**Lauren** [00:21:48] Yeah, yeah. And they're not equating the two exactly, because they are also coming at it from an angle of having, however unwillingly, aided and abetted the Nazi regime or being a part of it in a school. So I don't think they're pointing the finger and saying, 'You are Nazis.' I think that they're just opening up the... Yeah, I think they're trying to open up the conversation and talk about the Vietnam War on different levels as well as to be able to have this conversation with the American soldiers and also to be able to think about the East German identity in the wake of the Second World War. And this is actually... It's where having German as a second language comes in really helpful because *Pilots in Pyjamas* was... it was the film that they sold to NBC, and so they have this English version, and they also have a German version. And so being able to compare how they translate the pilots is really helpful because you can see where they make these very slight adjustments to really emphasise this...

**Ian** [00:23:01] Their own kind of narrative in a way.

**Lauren** [00:23:02] Yeah. I wouldn't say that they doctor statements. I think they just translate it in a way that... Yeah, they translate it in a way that very specifically emphasises the points that they're making.

**Ian** [00:23:16] Do you have an example?

**Lauren** [00:23:18] For example, they will ask pilots very directly, 'To what extent do you think you're responsible for the destruction that's been caused in Vietnam?' And the pilots will often – not all of them, some of them are quite cognisant of the fact that they do have a degree of responsibility even if they were following orders, which is quite a nuanced take. But for example, you'll get some pilots who will say, 'I only did what I was told. I'm a member of the United States Air Force and I have a responsibility to do what my superior officers tell me to do.' And that's the statement that they gave. And in the translation, it would be, in German, rendered something closer to... Instead of saying, 'I have to do what my superior officers tell me to do,' they would say, 'I have to follow the orders my superior officers gave me.' So they inject the word 'orders' into there, so that response, that 'I was only following orders' thing, is always at the forefront of the viewer's mind.

**Ian** [00:24:18] And that goes back to the trials.

**Lauren** [00:24:21] Yeah, yeah. And not just Eichmann. It was a very common defence to just say, 'I was just doing what I was told. I was just following orders.'

**Ian** [00:24:29] This idea of being complicit. Passively complicit, almost...

**Jun** [00:24:36] So it seems like, in this documentary obviously there are two filmmakers there their own, you know, vague or a very detailed narrative they would apply to this film. And then of course, there is a narrative given by the American soldiers and also East Germany there. And so we have North Vietnam there, and we also have a whole audience, I guess the immediate audience would be probably from East Germany. But you mentioned it was aired in...

**Lauren** [00:25:11] It wasn't actually aired by NBC, but they did buy it.

**Jun** [00:25:15] So that means there is similar, there are multiple personal and collective memories colliding. And you mentioned in your in the summary, we researched a little bit about the Michael Rothberg and his 'multidirectional memory'. So could you just talk a little bit more about that? How does that relate to your research?

**Lauren** [00:25:41] Yeah. So Rothberg's theory of multi-directional memory is very central to my research and the way I'm studying these films. Memory studies as a whole comes out of a very specific response to the Holocaust. So you have notions of collective memory or inherited memory that come from distinct groups of people surviving something that wiped out a lot of their family and their ancestors. So there's this inherent understanding that memory studies is about victims of trauma, and it always feeds back into this idea that the Holocaust is held up as a point of comparison for other traumatic historical incidents. So you tend to see this kind of argument in memory studies – academically an argument. So scholars will often either criticise the way the Holocaust is... it loses its singularity when it's compared, or it's placed on a pedestal and it's made untouchable. And those two things often dominate conversations on memory studies. It means that the Holocaust and also anything it's compared to can't really be touched on a productive level. But Michael Rothberg suggests this idea of multi-directional memory, and he rallies against the idea that memory is a competition or, he calls it, he says it's not a 'zero-sum game'. So it's not the sense that you have these two competing incidents and then one of them will win out when you make a comparison, one of them is 'worse'. He says that's...

**Ian** [00:27:23] To try and gauge the impact of the severity, you can't make comparisons. It has to be looked at...well, it sounds like that has to be looked at on its own merit. But where does the multidirectional...?

**Lauren** [00:27:35] So he argues that in a productive engagement with memory, there should be comparisons between different historical events that produce trauma because you can see in the commonalities and you can see in the discrepancies that there's a productive interpretation that can come from that. So for example, he talks about the African-American sociologist W.E.B. Du Bois, who is quite famous, but one of his less famous pieces that he wrote was about a trip to the Warsaw Ghetto. He was obviously coming into it with a history of understanding slavery in America, and obviously the continued impact of racism in America. And he went to the Warsaw Ghetto, obviously after the Second World War, and he saw similarities in those experiences that helped him better understand his own history. So it wasn't that he went there and decided, 'Oh, my experiences are worse than what the Jewish people and the other people in the ghetto experienced.' He didn't come out saying, 'This is worse than my own experience.' He came out of it understanding his own experience better. And I think that's what Rothberg is trying to advocate for.

**Ian** [00:28:54] Just the relatable levels that... What you're tackling is actually very complex, and it reaches out into our understanding of war and trauma, and not just the Vietnam War through these filmmakers, but also the Cold War, the Second World War, Germany's experience emerging out of the Second World War, and coming to terms with its own collective memory. It's a lot to handle, and I can imagine that that can get away with you really easily. It's a lot to contain and hold down. I wonder, how do you manage to navigate all that research in your approach to your thesis?

**Lauren** [00:29:29] It's a really broad subject. I think there's a lot of really huge concepts. And it would be very easy to get overwhelmed, which is why I find the films very helpful because they constrict me in a way that's productive. On top of all these larger concepts, I also have close reading of specific films to guide the way that my structure works. It's also, yeah, there's this question of the legitimacy of propaganda films that comes into it as well. And I think it's really interesting to consider that, especially because we consider propaganda to be quite a dirty word in the sense that it's only used to further a political idea that's damaging. But there's a Vietnamese American author named Viet Thanh Nguyen, and he suggested kind of provocatively in an interview that big Hollywood films – even major blockbusters like Marvel films – are themselves kind of American propaganda. You have that really almost hidden fact that whenever there's an American military in a film, they usually do consult to make sure that it's portrayed in a certain light. So the fact that propaganda is intended... People believe the propaganda is this relic of the past, but it's actually something that's really very regular.

**Ian** [30:37] It's just part of everyday life, isn't it?

**Lauren** [30:38] Yeah. And you just maybe don't notice it because it's not as overt. And yeah, I think there's the topics of war and memory dovetail together really well because you always have this... After the war, after the war's ended, you always have people struggling to come to terms with it. That phrasing is quite intentional. So there's a very long German word which is used to describe the concept of how Germany, after the Second World War, chose to look at its own past. The word is 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung'.

**Ian** [00:31:37] Once more please...

**Lauren** [00:31:38] Vergangenheitsbewältigung. It's translated as 'coming to terms with the past'. And it really informs a lot of how people study the cultural outputs like films and TV and poetry and literature that came out of Germany after the Second World War. So it's a very active process of facing the past.

**Ian** [00:32:00] A conscious one...

**Jun** [00:32:00] Considering that it's quite a daunting task, but somehow, I believe, up to this far you've been successful because you've recently written an essay which won the 2021 Women in German Studies Essay Prize. So can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Lauren** [00:32:18] Yeah. So that essay was an abridged version of my chapter on Pilots in Pyjamas. And I really engaged with Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory in that. It's currently being reviewed for publication. So hopefully soon I will be able to share that.

**Jun** [00:32:35] Wonderful. Which journal?

**Lauren** [00:32:37] German Life and Letters.

**Jun** [00:32:37] OK, that's wonderful. Let's talk a little bit about your thesis, your dissertation. So how do you approach the structure of your thesis considering that this is a really difficult subject to talk about, you know, given the scope and the limit, for example, word counts and you know, what the Ph.D. research should be about, and all of those things, because you cannot do everything. You have to somehow structure it. How do you do it?

**Lauren** [00:33:10] It depends on the content that I'm looking at within the films. So I have a chapter that's entirely focussed on Pilots in Pyjamas, because it's such a huge amount of content to look at it. Like I said, it's almost five hours long. But they did make a variety of quite short films. Some of them are only about five minutes. And in that case, I look at their Vietnam films as a whole and pick out elements that follow through in multiple different films. So, for example, I'm also looking at, in various films, how the Vietnamese people within their films are presented and what they do with the images of Vietnamese people. I'm especially looking at Susan Sontag and her work on photography and images of suffering and how we should engage with those images. In that case, I have four or five films that I'm looking at, and it's not the whole content of the film, but rather I'm picking out the elements that I think are relevant to the critical study that I'm using. So, for example, they have a short film called 'Am Wassergraben' or 'At the Ditch', which is very specifically about the My Lai massacre of 1968, where between 350 and 500 South Vietnamese civilians were killed by American forces. I think this short film is possibly one of their best films. It's kind of the pinnacle of the way that they engage with the Vietnamese presence in their films, because they have these images of a U.S. Army photographer took in in the aftermath of this massacre, and they're obviously really quite violent images. They're very unpleasant to look at. But they do contrast that, and they contrast it with footage of Vietnamese people who survived the massacre. So they really do centre the Vietnamese voice in this film. That's the most productive way to look at images of suffering by also talking, as close as possible, to the people that...

**Ian** [00:35:31] A concentration on a focus on the people themselves rather than that voyeuristic kind of external viewpoint?

**Lauren** [00:35:36] Yes, and I think as well as these images of violence and suffering, they do place a lot of emphasis on images of Vietnamese people living their lives. And I think at the same time, there is an element of tugging at heartstrings that goes into that. So you have images of children and babies, which is obviously very specifically intended to make people think, 'Oh, these people are human, too,' which didn't occur to a lot of people a lot of the time, I think. And yeah, I think it's really interesting that they have this duality where they use these really violent images and they also have these images of Vietnamese life...

**Ian** [00:36:18] The rural idyll side of it.

**Lauren** [00:36:19] Yes. On top of that, obviously they are making propaganda and they're influenced by socialist realism, which is a kind of filmmaking which prioritises the image of manual labour, I would say, as an ideal for a communist or a socialist...

**Ian** [00:36:35] A noble pursuit...

**Lauren** [00:36:36] Yes. So basically, the structure of my thesis is formed around the films, depending on the content that the film encompasses. I pick out different aspects that I want to talk about. So you have the way that they talk about memory. You also have this

engagement they have with the Vietnamese people and their culture. Yeah, there's various different aspects that I can go through the films and pick out what I want to talk about.

**Ian** [00:37:05] Did that structure present itself to you as an obvious way to go about it? Like, you've got the films. You're interested in the films, and you recognise quite quickly that they were a launchpad into all these different issues? Or did you have to figure that out?

**Lauren** [00:37:20] A little bit of both, really. Because, yeah, there's obviously things like... 'Pilots in Pyjamas' is quite a huge part of it, and you can see the themes in it very clearly. And then in looking for other chapters, other things that I can discuss in detail and... I mean, when you're watching the films, and I don't know how often people would do this, but for me, it was the thing that I did: I watched them one after the other. And when you do that, you can see the connections that maybe aren't obvious if you just watch one.

**Ian** [00:37:54] I think only a Ph.D. researcher might do that. [laughs]

**Lauren** [00:37:55] Yes.

**Ian** [00:37:58] So, having gone through all that, you've already had some success with the output of your research with this essay, so it's certainly already showing some early results, so off the back of that, how do you see your research filtering out, or being relevant, beyond your own studies? Do you think you've seen that already?

**Lauren** [00:38:21] Yeah. So that's actually something that I'm... It's very large in my mind right now, because as I'm writing up, I'm trying to constantly think about the importance of my research and what can be gleaned from it, rather than just specifically as an analysis of their films. And I think, so, as I was saying before about memory studies, it is very closely linked with the experience of victims of trauma and obviously using it for... to examine the perpetrator angle is something that you have to do very carefully, something that I have to be very aware of. And for example, the use of the word 'trauma' is, in an academic sense, very specific. It has a lot of associations that need to be really carefully considered. One thing that has come out of my research is that I think there's something to be argued for in the case of applying some of these theories of memory studies to the perpetrator side in the sense that...

**Ian** [00:39:27] To try to understand the perpetrators?

**Lauren** [00:39:31] Yes, because I mean, the ultimate goal of memory studies, I think, as well as being able to access the past and understand the past in a productive way, is to look ahead and to see these patterns repeating and be able to maybe prevent them. I think one of the key things that really came out of my research is this understanding that to apply theories of multidirectional memory to a perpetrator angle, I think you do definitely get a more nuanced understanding of memory and a more productive understanding as well. So I think there's definitely...

**Ian** [00:40:13] So when you say 'productive understanding', can you just qualify that just a little bit?

**Lauren** [00:40:17] When I say productive understanding, I mean the sense that you can look at an incident in the past, a historical event, and you can not only think of it as an event in the past, but also take elements of it and look at our current situation and also

look to the future as well. So rather than just viewing something as a thing that happened, to also be able to see where you know, where you can take these thoughts in the future as well.

**Ian** [00:40:47] Yeah.

**Jun** [00:40:49] So the final question, and it can be a scary one. So what do you hope to do beyond the Ph.D.? Do you have any ideas yet?

**Lauren** [00:41:00] Yes. Thankfully. So, I mean, the benefit of my Ph.D. straddling German and film studies is that I'm not closing myself off to one area. I feel like my career is... Looking ahead, it's quite open, there's a lot of different areas that I can go. And I don't think that going in one direction would close off any other directions. Much like the fact that getting my M.A. in Creative Writing hasn't closed off my ability to get my Ph.D. in German. I've also been teaching a bit at the university and I've really enjoyed that. It's something that I would definitely like to do in in the future. As much as this is a passion project for me, there's definitely a lot of other areas of film, especially film on Vietnam, that I would love to study in more depth.

**Ian** [00:41:55] You're already lining up the postdoc...

**Lauren** [00:41:57] Yes. And I mean, there are the elements that I sort of... At the beginning, you mentioned that I love horror films. There's a lot that I think I can imagine myself writing about films like Saw and Hostel and how we engage with gore and stuff on film. Also, on the German or linguistic side of it as well, one of my favourite things to do is wherever possible, I try to watch films in English with German subtitles to see how the translations work. I would love also to have some fiction published too. That would be really nice. I don't want to stop writing fiction.

**Jun** [00:42:38] This means a lot of ideas. Yeah, okay. This concludes this episode with Lauren. Thanks, Lauren, thanks, Ian, for this wonderful discussion. Thank you.

**Speaker 1** [00:43:14] This podcast is brought to you by the University of Aberdeen.