



## Visualising Age –

**an international, interdisciplinary symposium exploring ageing on screen**

**WHEN: 11am to 1pm Friday March 14, 2025**

**WHERE: Room OG.08, 18 College Green**

### **Introduction**

ARK@25 would like to invite you to an international symposium. Working with our colleagues in the [Irish Gerontological Society](#) we are thrilled to welcome [Professor Justine McGovern, City University New York](#) who is the current Chair of the Humanities, Arts and Cultural Gerontology Advisory Panel of the Gerontological Society of America. The symposium will feature papers exploring gender and ageing in film and TV as well as an overview of the importance of arts and humanities approaches to understanding ageing by Professor McGovern. This event is organised by Gemma Carney, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work and Sian Barber, School of Arts, English and Languages. Both are members of the [Queen's on Ageing](#) research network.

### **11am Welcome from the Chair, Tea and coffee on arrival**

Gemma Carney, ARK Ageing programme and Queen's on Ageing.

### **Paper 1: 11.10-11.30am - Justine McGovern – City University of New York.**

*Humanities, Arts and Cultural Gerontology: What are we talking about and why do we care?*

This presentation introduces the Humanities, Arts and Cultural Gerontology as access points to understanding ageing. Examples of both theoretical perspectives and practice models provide takeaways for those interested in extending the reach of ageing studies as scholars and practitioners. A counterpoint to the medical model and its deficit narrative, cultural gerontology offers a new language for understanding meaning-making processes across the

life span. Moreover, foregrounding cultural studies underscores the field's reciprocal relationship with aging studies. Beyond exploring theoretical perspectives, the presentation demonstrates ways the arts and humanities engage with ageing from a practice standpoint.

**Paper 2: 11.35 – 11.50am - Neasa FitzPatrick – University College Cork.**

*Little Old Lady, Me? Modern Cinematic Representations of Older Women and the Narrative of Decline*

In this paper Fitzpatrick argues that older women have traditionally been under-represented in cinema, though their visibility has increased in the past two decades. We explore the common representations of older women in modern cinema and their relationship to the narrative of decline and other ageing stereotypes. Films of the past two decades with female leads over the age of 65 were reviewed. Focus was directed on popular and/or acclaimed films across both mainstream and independent cinema. Characterisations of the older women were analysed for common themes and patterns. Three stereotypical portrayals of older women were identified and subsequently described in terms that link them to the narrative of decline.

**Paper 3: 11.55-12.10 - Camilla Zampolini –QUB**

*Aged but Alive: The Adult Women of American Television*

In this paper, Zampolini presents her PhD research, exploring the representation of women over 50 in contemporary American television of the last decade. Building on previous studies (Dolan, 2017; Zecchi, 2021;), the project focuses on how mature women are portrayed in terms of desire, agency and representation in the changing socio-cultural and production landscape. The project combines textual analysis and audience reactions, contributing to the academic debate on the role of television in addressing age and gender stereotypes. Furthermore, a multidisciplinary analysis will highlight the relationship between the representation of female ageing and specific mainstream genres, such as comedy, crime and period drama.

**Paper 4: 12.15 – 12.30 - Sian Barber and Gemma Carney - QUB**

*Excavating and understanding the eccentric: textual analysis of gender and ageing in British cinema*

In this paper Barber and Carney use their combined expertise in textual film analysis and social/cultural gerontology to interrogate visualisations of age and gender in *Hampstead* (2017) and the *Lady in the Van* (2015). Building on existing work which analyses film as a narrative (Oró-Piqueras and Casado-Gual, 2020) this paper engages with cinematography, mise-en-scene, aesthetics and sound, viewing the film as a vivid and moving imaginary of old age. In particular, the paper draws on Barber's (2015) expertise in British cinema to link the performances of Smith and Keaton to incarnations of ageing women which are deeply rooted in British cinema.

**12.30-12.55pm Q&A chaired by Gemma Carney**

**Author biographies**

Sian Barber is a film historian with expertise in censorship, British cinema and audiences. Her monograph on British local censorship will be published in April 2025. She has also published in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, *Historical Research* and *Journal of British Cinema and Television*.

Gemma Carney is a social and cultural gerontologist who works across disciplines to understand human ageing. Her work is published in major journals including *Gerontologist* and *Age, Culture, Humanities*. She has a chapter on age and civic culture in the forthcoming *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology*. She is founder of [Queen's on Ageing](#).

Neasa FitzPatrick is a Specialist Registrar in Geriatric Medicine, who is currently based in Cork University Hospital, Ireland. She has a special interest in cultural gerontology and is currently completing an MA in Medical Humanities in Durham University. She has published papers on ageing on screen and her work on the impact of older female directors has been presented at international gerontology conferences.

Justine McGovern is the Chair of Health Promotion and Nutrition Sciences at Lehman College, City University of New York. As a scholar practitioner, she focuses on the arts and ageing, seeking new ways to engage students, generate knowledge, extend the reach of gerontology, and enhance wellbeing among older adults.

Camilla Zampolini is a PhD Student in Media and Broadcasting Studies at QUB. She has expertise in Film and Television studies, particularly in female representation and US visual landscape. Her thesis explores female age in American tv-shows of the last 10 years and the audiences feedback related to them.

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