

What to do with Cinema Memory?

ANNETTE KUHN

One of the most striking findings to emerge from oral history research into cinemagoing has been the extent to which interviewees' memories of cinema have revolved far more around the social act of cinemagoing than around the films they saw. Memories of individual films have played only a small part in these recorded cinema memories. This discovery raises significant questions not only for the methodology and concerns of research in cinema history, but also for the broad field of film studies, suggesting as it does a sharp divergence between those aspects of the field concerned with the critical and theoretical analysis of the individual film and those that seek to examine cinema as a social and cultural institution. Some historians of cinemagoing have largely eliminated a consideration of individual films from their analysis, while some film scholars in the other camp have dismissed cinema memory as doing no more than providing trivial anecdotes irrelevant to the field's dominant concerns.

My aim in this chapter is to consider the nature of cinema memory, and to examine how it works both as a kind of cultural experience and as a form of discourse. In developing a typology of cinema memory, I am seeking to explore how the personal or the private on the one hand, and the collective or the public on the other, work together and intersect in people's memory of cinema, just as they have done in people's experience of cinema. In the process, I hope not only to refine our understanding of the evidence that cinema memory can provide to cinema historians, but also to suggest ways in which the discursive processes of cinema memory are open to an examination that uses the textual and psychoanalytic procedures familiar to most film scholars.

The first and most extensive source of evidence for my analysis of cinema memory comes from my research project examining 'Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain',¹ the findings from which formed the basis of my book *An Everyday Magic*

Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies, First Edition.

Edited by Richard Maltby, Daniel Biltereyst and Philippe Meers.

© 2011 Blackwell Publishing Ltd. Published 2011 by Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

(Kuhn, 2002a). As generalisations inductively derived from empirical data, the propositions that I have developed from this research may be circumscribed by the temporal and geographical frame, of Britain in the 1930s, to which they refer. In this chapter, I use two other works on cinema and memory to test the validity of my propositions in interpreting and conceptualising research on cinemagoing and film reception in other times and places. The first of these is a British Film Institute project called *Screen Dreams*, which involved reminiscence work and interviews conducted several years ago at five cine-clubs for elderly people, mostly in the London area, and dealt with memories of cinemagoing over a much longer period than that covered by my own project.² For my second source, I have drawn on the ideas of artist and critic Victor Burgin in his book *The Remembered Film*, which in its consideration of remembered fragments of films and their associations provides a valuable alternative perspective to the emphasis on the social in other projects (Burgin, 2004).

One distinctive element in my 1930s research project was its 'bottom up' approach: its starting point was the experience – and in large part the *remembered* experience – of actual cinemagoers. The memory work part of that project (especially interviews conducted in the 1990s with men and women who were cinemagoers during the 1930s) produced certain repeated themes in their recollections of cinemagoing, and certain ways of narrating those recollections: ways, in other words, of 'doing' cinema memory. An examination of these and other expressions of cinema memory can shed light on how cinema memory works, and particularly on how the private and the public interact in this form of cultural memory.

Cinema memory may simply provide material for solitary reverie or daydream. It may also provide material for stories that we share with others – stories about our lives and the times and places we have inhabited:

It used to cost tuppence – two pennies old money and we saw a variation of films such as westerns, comedies, not too serious films. Mainly westerns ... I did my Saturday morning pictures at the Broadway, at the bottom of Tanners Hill, right opposite Deptford High Street. That was well used by everyone in my area. We mainly were all school kids together ... mainly because it was cheap and cheerful and the film suited us ... I invariably stood in the queue outside until they let us in with Alec, Gladys, Sid, Keithy – all schoolmates and we're still firm mates. In actual fact *I still see four or five of them now – even at my age and that's nice. We often talk about the old pictures* [emphasis added] (Ted)³

Both the reveries and the stories may enter wider, more public, domains in the form of writing, artwork, film-making (in the case of Victor Burgin, and also – perhaps more familiarly – of film director Terence Davies, whose cinemagoing memories are also referred to below); and even, of course, scholarly research. Such reveries, stories and cultural productions may be outwardly different from one another, but they also share certain thematic, discursive, formal or aesthetic attributes. Isolating these shared features will not only enhance our understanding

of the cultural instrumentality of cinema memory, but also inform further research on cinema memory, even perhaps bringing an element of predictiveness to such enquiries.

I have identified three forms or modes of cinema memory, which are particularly noticeable in early or childhood cinema memory. The modes are, firstly, remembered scenes or images from films (Type A memories); secondly, situated memories of films (Type B memories); and, finally, memories of cinemagoing (Type C memories). The empirical evidence suggests that these three forms of cinema memory are not separate or distinct from one another, but are more aptly seen as occupying positions along a continuum, with Type A memories at one end and Type C memories at the other. In many actual instances, these memory types merge or share characteristics.

Remembered Scenes/Images

A dark night, someone is walking down a narrow stream. I see only feet splashing through water, and broken reflections of light from somewhere ahead, where something mysterious and dreadful waits. (Victor Burgin, 2004, p. 16)

It was ... a silent film about the sea. And these waves were making this ship go, it was a sailing ship. And I was so frightened I got on the floor to hide my face in my mother's lap. (Tessa Amelan)⁴

Type A is the closest of the three modes to the 'remembered film' in Victor Burgin's sense: he calls his own vivid and detailed earliest memory of a film in the first quotation a 'sequence-image', since he is recalling 'a sequence of such brevity that I might almost be describing a still image' (Burgin, 2004, p. 15). In terms of content and tone, both of these examples have markedly distinctive qualities, and the fact that they are very *early* memories is important, suggesting that their vividness may at least in part result from the fact that the child experiencing them had not yet learned to negotiate the transition between the world on the screen and the ordinary world. Very few memories of this sort emerged in my 1930s research (and there are none in the online 'Screen Dreams' material); but in terms of the cultural significance of the finding, their intensity more than compensates for their scarcity.

Remembered scenes or images from films are distinctive in three respects, all of which are observable in the two examples quoted above. Firstly, the descriptions have a vividness and a visual quality that is almost dreamlike. Asking himself how he can be sure that the memory is from a film, Burgin can only assert 'I just know that it is. Besides, the memory is in black and white' (Burgin, 2004, p. 16). These are memories of individual, isolated shots, scenes and images, from films whose titles are more often than not forgotten or unknown. And yet these images are obviously still resonant, in all their intensity, in informants' consciousness decades after the event. It is clear that in the moment of telling in the present the remembered feelings or sensations associated with these memories are in some way being re-experienced.

It is perhaps worth noting that memories of this type may be historically specific in certain respects. For 1930s' cinemagoers at least, such memories seem to be associated particularly, but not exclusively, with recollections of having been frightened at the cinema at a very early age (Kuhn, 2002a, Chapter 4; 2007a). A number of the 1930s' cinemagoers, for example, still recollect with a shudder (and not always accurately in every detail) a particular, very brief moment in the 1933 version of *The Mummy*, which starred Boris Karloff in the title role. Recollecting the moment in the film 'when they opened the lid and it shows him like, you know, he moves his hand', Annie Wright mentions the film by name. Another informant cannot recall the title of the film, but does mention Karloff, and is in all likelihood referring to the same film: 'He [Karloff] had one where he sort of come out the coffin, you seen the hand coming up.'⁵

The allusions to *The Mummy* signal a generationally specific aspect of cinema memory, which could offer interesting material for further research. In the 1930s, 'horrific' films and their effect on children were the focus of intense public concern, and the many references in my 1930s research to being frightened in the cinema indicate that the issues that exercised adults clearly affected young cinemagoers as well (Kuhn, 2007b). Another group of films that 1930s' cinemagoers remember seeing as children all depict World War I, including *Battle of the Somme* (1916), *Seventh Heaven* (1927), *Four Sons* (1928) and *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). For this generation (the median year of birth of interviewees is 1922), too, silent cinema has the quality of something barely remembered, if at all: something that coincides with, or predates, their earliest recollected visits to the cinema; something that is on the cusp of their own coming to consciousness. The allusions to World War I films also attest to the fascination with the recent past, especially recent war, that appears to mark everyday historical consciousness. Other generations will, of course, remember different films or media texts in this intense manner; but we might predict that the fascination with the recent past, and with the time of one's own arrival in the world or coming to consciousness, will continue to be apparent in the texts that are recalled most vividly.⁶

A second noteworthy feature of Type A memories is that the remembered scenes or images are characteristically very brief and are always recalled in isolation from the film's plot, which is not recounted and indeed in all likelihood is not remembered. These memories are not as a rule accompanied by details of the circumstances in which the film was seen: it is as if the remembered scene or image stands out in sharp relief against a background that is absent, or vague and lacking in detail; or else it has been displaced from any attachment to the context in which it was originally experienced. Victor Burgin's remembered image is an extreme example of this tendency. He notes that he can remember nothing more about the film than the scene or image he describes: 'There is nothing before, nothing after', he says, 'no other sequence, no plot, no names of characters or actors, and no title.' As to the circumstances in which he saw the film, he implies that he would have been in the cinema with his mother: 'my mother sought distraction at the cinema ... I became her companion there' (Burgin, 2004, p. 16). But

this is the adult Victor speaking, and there is no hint of his mother's presence within the telling of the memory itself. On the other hand, Tessa Amelan's remembered image, a frightening one, is associated with a memory of seeking comfort by burying her face in her mother's lap.

Mrs Amelan's story calls attention to a third distinctive aspect of Type A memories: accounts of these remembered scenes or images characteristically re-evolve strong emotions or bodily sensations on the narrator's part. Recollections of hiding or covering one's face, or of cowering under the seat, point to an embodied, and possibly preverbal, response that has become linked in memory to the image or the scene itself. It is as if the remembered image or scene and the body of the person remembering it are fused together in the moment of recollection, and in the feelings that the memory evokes. There is a sense in which the remembered scene or image *enfolds* the subject – who nevertheless figures at the same time as an observer of the film scene and the scene of memory, in much the way that Freud describes the subject of fantasy creating and also placing himself within a *mise-en-scène* – at once directing the fantasy scenario and helplessly caught up in it.⁷

All this lends support to Victor Burgin's observation that the remembered film, as one instance of our everyday encounters with the environment of media, is analogous to such 'interior' processes as inner speech and involuntary association, and that it bears the hallmarks of the primary processes of the 'raw' dream, day-dream or fantasy (Burgin, 2004, p. 14). This, along with the investment in the visual, and the fragmentary and non-narrative quality observable in Type A memories, aligns them with the non-verbal or the preverbal, and with the Preconscious and the Unconscious. Referring specifically to his own remembered sequence-image, Burgin notes that this memory, which he associates with a 'particular affect' – a sense of apprehension – becomes somehow diminished when put into words, as if the process of articulation takes the *shine* off the unspoken, unarticulated memory image. As in the telling of a dream, he suggests, forcing the synchrony of the memory 'into the diachrony of narrative' leads him 'to misrepresent, to transform, to diminish it' (Burgin, 2004, p. 15). Elsewhere, Burgin mentions the 'brilliance' that surrounds this kind of memory; a word that captures the feeling of effulgence and vividness apparent also in many of the 1930s' cinemagoers' remembered scenes. It is perhaps the bodily, primary process, preverbal, 'inner speech' quality that still attaches to these now verbalised memories that imbues them also with the directness and simplicity of the child's voice: a quality that is certainly apparent in 1930s' cinemagoers' accounts of their remembered scenes and images.

The Type A cinema memories described by Victor Burgin and by some of the informants in my 1930s research operate on the side of the inner world and the phenomenological. Burgin's rich and resonant descriptions of the experience of the remembered film and of remembering films make especially apparent the connection of these memories to psychical or mental processes, with their marks of interior speech, and of productions of the Unconscious or the Preconscious. Intriguingly, these are among the very attributes of cinema spectatorship explored by Christian Metz and others in work on the psychodynamics and metapsychology

of cinema (Metz, 1982). Moreover, looked at discursively – in terms of their rhetoric or address – these Type A memories display many of the formal qualities that distinguish a cultural genre or mode named, in a rather different context, the ‘memory text’.⁸ These include in particular a non-continuous or non-sequential quality to the narration or telling; a non-specificity as to time; a fragmentary quality; a sense of synchrony, as if remembered events are somehow pulled out of a linear time frame or refuse to be anchored in ‘real’ historical time. Memory texts, in short, share the generally imagistic quality of unconscious productions like dreams and fantasies (Kuhn, 2002b, pp. 160, 162). Significantly, as we have seen, Burgin notes that his own earliest memory of a film is sufficient (‘sharply particular’, ‘brilliant’, he says) within itself, and yet at the same time it is vague as to everything outside itself.

The commonalities of observation and interpretation that emerge here indicate that if Type A memories operate on the side of the phenomenological or the metapsychological and bear the marks of inner world processes, they are by no means to be dismissed as purely subjective, personal or idiosyncratic. There is clearly at some level something shared, and even profoundly cultural, about such ‘inner world’ productions. At the same time, however, the fragmentary, non-narrative quality of such memories, and Burgin’s suggestion that there is ‘something private’ about them that demands they remain untold may also begin to explain the relative scarcity of recollections of this type in the records of cinema memory (Burgin, 2004, p. 16).

Situated Memories of Films

The cultural is rather more obviously apparent in Type B memories, in which films and scenes or images from films are remembered within a context of events in the subject’s own life. This is perhaps equivalent to a type of remembered film that Burgin describes as entirely different in timbre from his enigmatic and mysterious ‘sequence-image’, in that the former are associated with consciously recollected events in his childhood, recalled ‘either in direct relation to a film, or to something that happened shortly after seeing one’ (Burgin, 2004, p. 17). Burgin cites no personal examples of such memories, but in my 1930s research, expressions of this type of cinema memory are rather more prominent than examples of Type A. The detail and the nature of the remembered film and the associated life events vary considerably across different instances, as do the weight given to each and the relationship between the two.

Oh, I remember the first film we went to see [Boris Karloff] in, at the Globe, in, where was it? Old Trafford, I think it was. And it was *The Mummy*. Well there were benches then, you know, not seats. I don’t know whether I’d left school. Probably I’d left school. Anyway, I went to see him. I was sat there, dead quiet. And when they opened the lid and it shows him like, you know, and he moves his hand. Well I let out one! I slid along the seat. (Annie Wright)⁹

I must've been five, and seeing, we came in the middle. Films in those days were continuous. You see. And I remember going in, and it had already, it must've been halfway through. And I remember seeing Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell, in *Seventh Heaven*. I knew it was called *Seventh Heaven*. I remember them going up this spiral staircase. More than that I don't remember. (Beatrice Cooper)⁹

Annie Wright's story about when she saw *The Mummy* incorporates a vividly remembered image from the film – but this is set within a story of the cinema visit that also contains a considerable amount of scene-setting detail (the name and location of the cinema, a description of its seating arrangements), as well as her own bodily response to the mummy's stirring into life. Beatrice Cooper's brief but vivid recollection of an image in Borzage's *Seventh Heaven* (1927), which she mentions in both her interviews, lacks the kinds of contextual detail observable in Annie Wright's account, while setting the scene in another, rather intriguing, way. Mrs Cooper's allusion to the practice of continuous programming serves to enhance the 'brilliant' quality of her remembered image by making it, in her memory-story, the very first thing that she saw on entering the picture house as a 5-year-old.

Another example of this mode of cinema memory, complete with the scene-setting details, sets out a kind of originary moment of an obsession with cinema that was ultimately to inspire the speaker's own artistic production:

When I was seven I was taken by my eldest sister to see *Singin' in the Rain*. Sitting in the dark brown, baroque interior of the Odeon, Liverpool, watching Gene Kelly dance with an umbrella, I entered for the first time a world of magic: the cinema. (Terence Davies)¹⁰

In discursive terms, Type B memories are distinguished by what may be termed an 'anecdotal' rhetoric, a form of address that typically involves a story narrated in the first person singular about a specific, one-off event or occasion, a story in which the informant constructs herself or himself as chief protagonist. The narrator, in other words, figures in the account both as the central character in the personal life events narrated and also as observer of (though not usually as participant in) the scenes or images on the cinema screen (Kuhn, 2002a, p. 10). In my 1930s research, anecdotal address is relatively rare across the entire body of informants' memories; but it is a marked, and perhaps even invariable, feature of Type B cinema memories.

In some narrations of these memories, informants deploy a 'weak' variant of the anecdotal to position themselves as central protagonists of life events or remembered film scenes or images that are in all likelihood (with apologies to *Blade Runner*) implants. Implanted memories might originate, for example – with or without acknowledgement on the informant's part – from family stories. Norman MacDonald recounts a story told him by his mother about his unruly behaviour as an infant taken to a screening of *The Kid* (1921). A similar story is told by another of my informants, Leonard Finegold, who writes that in 1938, at the age of three, he was taken to see *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). He recalls

'the (green?) witch/stepmother/queen looking out of a frame. I ran out of the cinema. My mother said she didn't catch me for several hundred yards' [emphasis added] (Kuhn, 2002a, p. 39).¹¹

Sometimes informants' 'memories' of seeing film scenes or images have almost certainly entered their stories after the event, as a particular image has acquired cultural iconicity in later years. A number of interviewees, for instance, 'remember' iconic moments in the 1933 *King Kong*, and above all they remember the scene in which King Kong sits atop the Empire State Building (Kuhn, 2002a, pp. 77–78). In another very common manifestation of this phenomenon, 'Screen Dreams' informant Ted recollects the serials at children's cinema matinees:

And sometimes there would be drama and I can always remember the lady being tied down on the track and the hero coming to rescue her, and the music playing. Pearl White I believe.¹²

These memories tend to give themselves away as 'implants' in that in the telling they lack the 'brilliance' of scenes from the truly remembered film.

Describing what he calls a secreted 'memory' of his mother, 'pale and anxious' and pregnant with him, in a bomb shelter during World War II, Victor Burgin also alludes to this 'implant' phenomenon. "This "memory" of course", he observes, 'is a fantasy with a décor almost certainly derived from a film'.¹³ He suggests that 'the tendency for personal history to be mixed with recollections from films and other media productions' is 'almost universal' (Burgin, 2004, p. 68). Investigating the same phenomenon, in which recollections of life events become unconsciously coloured or shaped by scenes in films, oral historian Marie-Claude Taranger has called them 'second-hand' memories. When Taranger conducted life story research with a group of women living in southern France, a number of her informants talked about how, in the absence of nylon stockings during World War II, they improvised by painting seams up the backs of their legs. As Taranger notes, the details of their descriptions of this activity, however, exactly mirror a scene from François Truffaut's 1980 film set in World War II, *Le Dernier Métro* (Taranger, 1991).

Situated memories tend to lack the 'illumination', the shine and intensity, that mark the remembered scenes or images of Type A. These 'anecdotal' memories bear the traces of having been subjected to various forms of secondary revision; and may well also have been embellished over the years through numerous retellings and the retrospective addition of details. Unlike the intense, and apparently idiosyncratic, quality of remembered scenes or images from films, cinema memories of Type B outwardly manifest an active, or at least a potential, *social* currency as stories that have been exchanged, negotiated, re-enlivened, and even embroidered in retellings over the years.

In Type B memories the balance of emphasis in narration between memories of films on the one hand and memories of life events on the other may vary across different instances. Where the balance of emphasis rests mainly on life events, however, these situated memories begin to shade into the third mode.

Memories of Cinemagoing

Normally when we went to the 'Ionic' [in Golders Green], one of us would pay and then ... go to the toilet and open the emergency exit doors and let our friends in for free. (J.B. Ryall, b. 1922, Bournemouth)¹⁴

Used to be shelling the nuts on the floor, and then they'd take an orange, peel would be on the floor. All these were going backwards and forwards. And when you sat next to some children you could smell camphorated oil. You know, they'd have their chests rubbed with camphorated oil. (Ellen Casey)¹⁴

Memories of this type do not involve 'remembered *films*' at all. They are actually memories of the activity of going to the cinema. Even in recollections of the very earliest cinema visits – as, for example, in Ted's 'Screen Dreams' memory quoted at the beginning of this chapter – the name and the location of the picture house are typically carefully noted, and there is very often also some detail about the journey to it and the routes taken. Informants also frequently recollect their cinemagoing companions, as well as what it was like inside the cinema: the decor, the seating, the behaviour of the staff and the audience, and so on.

In my 1930s research, these Type C memories are more prevalent by far than those in the other two categories; and they are normally recounted entirely separately from memories of actual films. In fact, one of the key conclusions to emerge from my project is that, certainly in the memories of the vast majority of these cinemagoers of the 1930s' generation, the essentially *social* act of 'going to the pictures' is of far greater consequence than the cultural activity of seeing films. This is true also of the 'Screen Dreams' accounts. Significantly, however, this 'social' mode of cinema memory plays little or no part in *The Remembered Film*, since, as its title suggests, Victor Burgin's book is about film rather than cinema, and his central concern lies with the experience of seeing and remembering *films*. In an important argument that helps to illuminate the relative scarcity of Type A and Type B memories, Burgin suggests that the fragmented sequences that constitute their content are 'transient and provisional images, no doubt unconsciously selected for their association with thoughts already in motion ... but no more or less suitable for this purpose than other memories I might have recovered, and destined to be forgotten once used' (Burgin, 2004, p. 16).

Informants' memories of cinemagoing are often discursively marked by the deployment of a 'repetitive' type of narrative rhetoric. In 'repetitive memory discourse' – the stance in fact most frequently adopted by these 1930s' cinemagoers – the narrator implicates himself or herself in the events recollected, but (by contrast with the anecdotal) those events are represented as habitual rather than as singular or one-off. Often the narrator will adopt the first person plural, which brings with it a certain personal distance from the events being narrated, while at the same time imparting a strong sense of collective involvement. 'We used to' is the characteristic introductory turn of phrase here; and it is implicit in both of the stories quoted above. Although Mr Ryall

sets the scene in a particular picture house, his story is about what he and his friends habitually did in order to get into the cinema without paying. Mrs Casey's story about the behaviour of children at matinees suggests that she was part of the scene as an observer of all the naughtiness; but in referring to her fellow picturegoers as 'they', she distances herself somewhat from the rowdy behaviour. Mr Ryall's setting the scene for his story by mentioning the name and the location of his picture house is an instance of another frequently observable attribute of memories of cinemagoing, their investment in place: indeed, it is a very striking feature of cinema memory that place operates as both a prompt and a *mise en scène* of memory (Kuhn, 2002a, Chapter 2; 2004).

The overwhelmingly repetitive and collective rhetoric of memory stories of Type C is typically allied with a set of repeated themes and contents, and also with stereotypical turns of phrase in the narration. For example, variations on the theme of 'making do' or evading adult authority, all deploying the same narrative tropes and even turns of phrase – stories of collecting jam jars to pay for admission, children's matinees, stories about getting adults to 'take them in' to 'A' films – come up again and again in my informants' cinemagoing memories (Kuhn, 2002a, Chapter 3). There are examples, too, in the 'Screen Dreams' interviews:

So you had to go out on Saturday mornings with a bucket and shovel, shovelling up horse manure because we had all the horse traffic around and selling it for a penny a bucket ... All young boys would be doing it because we'd all go to the cinema ... This was the Park Cinema up at Hither Green. (Ronald)¹⁵

This significant observation draws us onto a little-explored byway in the terrain of oral history studies, where it has been observed that raw oral history interview material, especially from working-class or peasant informants, often features conventional forms of speech and modes of narration in a manner that melds the personal with the collective, or frames the personal within a collective experience. As the Italian historian Sandro Portelli notes,

The degree of presence of 'formalised materials' like proverbs, songs, formulaic language, stereotypes, can be a measure of the degree of presence of a 'collective viewpoint'. (Portelli, 1981, 99)

The repeated themes and formulaic modes of telling that mark so many of these memories of cinemagoing (and especially memories of early and childhood cinemagoing), allied with the continuing active currency of these much-told stories, may well signal something that is quite distinctive and culturally significant about this form of cultural memory – and not only in relation to one generation or one country. The collective forms and currencies of Type C memories, along with their characteristically formulaic themes and contents, suggest a sliding together of the personal and the collective. It also aligns them on the side of the social (and the cultural), and of the social audience (as against the spectator, as

Table 4.1 Attributes and interrelationships of the three modes of cinema memory.

A	B	C
Remembered scenes/images <i>Sequence-image</i>	Situated memories of films	Memories of cinemagoing <i>Social cinema scenes</i>
Phenomenological	Secondary revision	Social audience
Metapsychological	Social currency	Everyday life
Primary process		Place
Inner world/speech		
Pre-Conscious, Unconscious		

Table 4.2 Discursive features of the three modes of cinema memory.

A	B	C
Remembered scenes/images <i>Sequence-image</i>	Situated memories of films	Memories of cinemagoing <i>Social cinema scenes</i>
Fragmented narration	Anecdotal	Collective
Memory-text		Repetitive Formulaic

constructed in some branches of film theory), and locates them on the terrain of film (and media) as they figure in everyday life. In her study of the cinemagoing habits of postwar immigrants to Britain from South Asia, the sociologist Nirmal Puwar coins the term ‘social cinema scenes’ to describe the sociality (and the place-related nature) of this noteworthy aspect of cultural memory and cinema memory, and looks at the instrumentality of social cinema scenes in forging collective identities (Puwar, 2007).

The attributes, interrelationships and discursive features of the three modes of cinema memory may be represented as shown in Table 4.1, and their respective discursive features are summarised in Table 4.2.

What can be concluded from this about cinema memory, about the remembered film, and indeed about the remembered visit to the cinema? What are the uses of this knowledge? What else might it be useful or important to know, and how can we go about finding out? Drawing on empirical data, this exploration brings to light a great deal about the discursive, thematic and experiential features of cinema memory, and with it a great deal about what marks out cinema memory as a distinctive subtype of cultural memory.

For example, while cinema memory has qualities that might appear universal, even archetypal, these are expressed through memory-stories and other elements that are historically and generationally situated or specific. At the same time, features of cinema memory that might at first sight seem merely personal or idiosyncratic will usually, on closer inspection, reveal certain shared or collective attributes.

Therefore a deeper understanding of how cinema memory works discursively, rhetorically and experientially can bring to light, concretely, some of the psychical and cultural processes through which the act of remembering film and remembering cinema can bind us into shared subjectivities. This exploration thus demonstrates how in the production and operation of cinema memory private and public, personal and collective, worlds shade into one another, interweave and work together in a range of different ways. Finally, and coming full circle, all this in turn can offer broader insights into the workings of cultural memory in general, especially with regard to the production and sustaining of identities and communities. Because a similar inductive exercise may be productively conducted with any corpus of cinema memory data, it is possible to test the propositions that I have made, and also to adjust them for sensitivity to historical, cultural and geographical variation in the expression of cinema memory. In this way, the research I have described in this chapter can allow us to bring a global perspective to the very local, everyday activity of cinemagoing, and memories of cinemagoing.

Notes

- 1 'Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain', Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Project R000235385 (hereafter CCINTB).
- 2 'Screen Dreams: Cinema-going in South East London 1920–60', held at the Age Exchange Reminiscence Centre, September–December 2003. The interview transcripts are not at present publicly available, but some quotations from interviews included in an exhibition held in London in 2003 are available online, at <http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/screendreams/> (accessed 16 January 2009). It is perhaps worth noting that these quotations were selected from a large corpus of material for a non-scholarly purpose.
- 3 'Screen Dreams'.
- 4 CCINTB T95-158, Tessa Amelan, Manchester (quoted in Kuhn, 2002a, p. 72).
- 5 CCINTB T95-32, Annie Wright, Manchester, quoted in Kuhn, 2002a, p. 66; CCINTB T95-15, Helen Donaghy, Glasgow, quoted in Kuhn, 2002a, p. 71.
- 6 For further discussion of this phenomenon, see Kuhn, 2002b, Chapter 7.
- 7 On enfolding see Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Sigmund Freud, "A child is being beaten." A contribution to the origin of sexual perversions', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud XVII*, trans. and ed. J. Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), pp. 177–204.
- 8 For a fuller discussion of 'memory texts', see Kuhn, 2002b, Chapter 8.
- 9 CCINTB T95-32, Annie Wright, Manchester, quoted in Kuhn, 2002a, p. 66; CCINTB T95-96, Beatrice Cooper, Harrow, 20 July 1995.
- 10 In an exhibition on Terence Davies at BFI Southbank, March 2007.
- 11 CCINTB 07–08, questionnaire Leonard Finegold.
- 12 Ted, 'Screen Dreams'.
- 13 Burgin borrows from Jean Laplanche the idea that memory and fantasy comprise a "time of the human subject" that the individual "secretetes" independently of historical time. Temporal "secretions" very often combine memories and fantasies with material from films and other media sources.' Burgin (2004, p. 15).
- 14 CCINTB, 95-48-1 letter, J.B. Ryall, Bournemouth; CCINTB T95-37, Ellen Casey, Manchester, quoted in Kuhn, 2002a, p. 59.
- 15 Ronald, 'Screen Dreams'.

References

- Burgin, V. (2004) *The Remembered Film*, Reaktion Books, London.
- Kuhn, A. (2002a) *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory*, I.B. Tauris, London; published in the USA as *Dreaming of Fred and Ginger*, New York University Press, New York, 2002.
- Kuhn, A. (2002b) *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, Verso, London.
- Kuhn, A. (2004) Heterotopia, heterochronia: place and time in cinema memory. *Screen*, 45 (2), 106–114.
- Kuhn, A. (2007a) *Snow White* in the 1930s. Raphael Samuel Memorial Lecture, Bishopsgate Institute, London, Nov. 2007.
- Kuhn, A. (2007b) Children, 'horrific' films and censorship in 1930s Britain, in *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema* (eds R. Maltby, M. Stokes and R.C. Allen), Exeter University Press, Exeter, pp. 323–332.
- Metz, C. (1982) *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (trans. C. Britton, A. Williams, B. Brewster and A. Guzzetti), Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Portelli, A. (1981) The peculiarities of oral history. *History Workshop Journal*, 12, 96–107.
- Puwar, N. (2007) Social cinema scenes. *Space and Culture*, 10 (2), 253–70.
- Taranger, M-C. (1991) Une mémoire de seconde main? Film, emprunt et référence dans le récit de vie. *Hors-Cadre*, no. 9, pp. 41–60.

