

Review: Annette Kuhn, Exploring Cinema Memory, Thirsty Books, 2023. ISBN-10: 1739992296

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Since the 1990s the study of cinema memory has been closely associated with the work of Annette Kuhn. Her research on *Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain* was the first to systematically collect, map, and analyse the memories of cinemagoers across four UK locations: Glasgow, Greater Manchester, East Anglia, and the London suburb of Harrow. This work, whose results were published in Kuhn's seminal book *An Everyday Magic* (2002), has inspired a wide range of local, national, and international projects that have followed Kuhn's methodology and findings (such as Treveri Gennari et al., 2021 or Stokes, Jones and Pett, 2022). Her concept of cinema memory, which has been articulated and elaborated over the last three decades, is essential for any scholar interested in exploring the impact and traces of cinema-going and films on audiences.

Annette Kuhn's writings about cinema memory have been collected together for the first time in this newly published book *Exploring Cinema Memory* (2023). Most of the chapters in the book have been released before in some form, but this is the first time they have been brought together in one volume. The book also includes a forward by Professor Daniel Biltereyst, whose extensive research on audiences makes him uniquely qualified to comment on Kuhn's volume. Moreover, in addition to the main chapters, the book also includes two appendixes that complement the previous research with both a list of academic publications stemming from *Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain*, as well as some precious information about Kuhn's recent AHRC-funded *The Cinema Memory and the Digital Archive* (CMDA) project, which aimed to archive and digitise the wealth of materials collected in the *Cinema Culture in 1930s Britain* research. This new project has allowed the creation of a digital archive (<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/projects/cmda/>) of over a hundred audio-recorded interviews with cinemagoers from that period, as well as other related correspondence, documents, and memorabilia donated by participants. This unique archive is now available to the scholarly community and the general public, and it provides a wealth of new information about the history and practice of cinemagoing, and of British culture more broadly.

The concept of cinema memory is across this book always grounded in empirical research. This is evident in all of Kuhn's chapters, which are filled with examples from her extensive data on British audiences. Whether they are remembered scenes or images of films (Type A) situated memories of films (Type B) or memories of cinemagoing (Type C), the voices of the British participants emerge vividly to illustrate the complex articulation of the three modalities of cinema memories identified by Kuhn. These examples, however, not only demonstrate the richness and complexity of cinema memory as coherently expressed by the author. They also help illuminate the ways in which cinema-going can shape our individual and collective identities. From the social dimension of cinemagoing to the intimate world of its spectators, these memory stories are at the same time geographically specific and generalised, as other research projects that have followed Kuhn's examples have demonstrated.

The six chapters explore the key concepts associated with cinema memory, such as place and topographical memory (Chapter 2), the interaction between private and public (Chapter 3), as well as the fundamental features of cinema memory (the remembered scenes, the situated memories of films as well as memories of cinema-going) (Chapter 5). However, they also illustrate how Kuhn skillfully applies key aspects of psychoanalysis, in particular of the concepts of transitional objects, spaces and phenomena as developed by D.W. Winnicott, to explore the complex relation between cinemagoers, home and the world beyond the home (Chapter 4 and Chapter 6). These two chapters are particularly significant also because they give Kuhn the opportunity to prompt scholars to imagine the future of cinema memory. The author, in fact, suggests new questions that need addressing and somehow encourages researchers to investigate cinema memory across different ways in which 'films and cinema are delivered to the consumer and in how and where films are consumed and used'. Questions Kuhn suggests include whether cinema today figures as a 'transitional phenomenon', or how the role of place/space can change in the current consumption of films; or ultimately how the distinction and the relationship between film and cinema operate today and in the future.

Exploring Cinema Memory is much more than just a collection of previously published or delivered work. And not only because the author has 'revised, corrected, updated, augmented or condensed' the work for the purpose of this volume. It offers a unique opportunity to read all of Kuhn's writings on cinema memory together, in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the concept and its many applications, through a chronological overview of Kuhn's work on cinema memory, from her early research in the 1990s to her most recent work on the digital archive. It is certainly an essential resource for anyone interested in the study of cinema memory.

Biographical Note

Daniela Treveri Gennari is Professor of Cinema Studies at Oxford Brookes University with an interest in audiences, popular cinema, film exhibition and programming. Daniela has led the AHRC-funded projects “Italian Cinema Audiences” and “European Cinema Audiences: Entangled Histories and Shared Memories” and is currently co-investigator of the AHRC-funded project “Women in the Italian film industry” (led by the University of Warwick).

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