

Introduction: memory and popular film

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As a technology able to picture and embody the temporality of the past, cinema has become central to the mediation of memory in modern cultural life. While, in representational terms, the past has been figured in variations of the history film, the costume drama and the heritage picture from early cinema to the present, rituals of remembrance have come to surround the culture of film. Whether in the form of commercial reruns, generic recycling, critical retrospectives or popular reminiscence, the memory of film scenes and movies screens, cinema and cinema-going, has become integral to the placement and location of film within the cultural imagination of this century and the last.

This volume uses memory as a specific framework for the study of popular film, intervening in growing debates about the status and function of memory in cultural life and discourse. Susannah Radstone has usefully mapped the boom in memory's valuation in recent decades, a contemporary resurgence that has led to an explosion of academic interest in questions of memory and memory work.¹ This cross-disciplinary field of enquiry, which has become loosely known as 'memory studies', has addressed itself both to historical and methodological concerns: how to understand the rising stock of memory in particular periods of history, and how to evaluate particular sites and texts of memory as they invoke the past in specific ways and for specific ends. At the centre of analysis is a fundamental concern with what the CCCS Popular Memory Group has called the 'past-present relation'.² While akin to the province of history, with its disposition towards 'knowing' and interpreting the past, memory suggests a more dialogic relationship between the temporal constituencies of 'now' and 'then'; it draws attention to the activations and eruptions of the past as they are experienced in and constituted by the present.

Despite the clear entanglements of history and memory, there remain important differences between them that prevent any simple conflation of terms. These differences have been mapped politically. Michel Foucault, for example, has discussed the tensions between official histories and their contestation in ‘popular’ or unofficial memory, analysing the bearing of historical and memorial knowledge on formations of identity and operations of power. In a discussion of ‘film and popular memory’ in French cinema of the 1970s (specifically, a number of films dealing with the French Resistance), Foucault suggests that memory is ‘a very important factor in struggle . . . if one controls people’s memory, one controls their dynamism’.³ Memory, in this context, is seen as a political force, a form of subjugated knowledge that can function as a site of potential opposition and resistance, but that is also vulnerable to containment and ‘reprogramming’. In a more recent study, Marita Sturken draws upon Foucault but refines his conceptual position. Rather than categorise memory as inherently oppositional, Sturken develops a concept of ‘cultural memory’ that is more varied and ambiguous, that lays stress on memory’s production through images, sites, objects and representations, but that neither inherently celebrates nor castigates manifestations of memory in the cultural terrain. Adapting her argument to events in American history and culture, she writes that:

[The] process of cultural memory is bound up in complex political stakes and meanings. It both defines a culture and is the means by which its divisions and conflicting agendas are revealed. To define a memory as cultural is, in effect, to enter into a debate about what that memory means. This process does not efface the individual but rather involves the interaction of individuals in the creation of meaning. Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history.⁴

In this definition, memory is socially produced and is bound in the struggles and investments of cultural and national identity formation. It retains a notion of contestation but does not give memory a prescribed politics or cultural orientation. Unlike Foucault, who equates ‘popular memory’ with the force of resistance, Sturken provides a useful model for the *negotiation of memory* in popular film, especially as it is produced within the context of American culture. If, as Erica Carter and Ken Hirschkop suggest,⁵ memory depends less on a conscious decision to record than an inability to forget, the

negotiation of memory describes the echo and pressure of the past as it is configured in present-based struggles over the meaning of lived experience.

While the study of memory and film extends itself to a number of national cinemas, with potentially different stakes in the form and nature of cinematic remembrance, this volume takes Hollywood, and the cultural history of the United States, as its principal focus of concern. Notwithstanding the dominance of Hollywood in world cinema, and its capacity to harness debates about the nature of popular film, America has become central to critical discussions about the status and bearing of memory in the cultural sphere. As I have written elsewhere, these discussions have focused on two principal questions or concerns.⁶ Firstly, the question of *what (or not)* is remembered in cultural life and practice has been carried into a number of debates within the United States figured around the content and transmission of memory within educational curricula and public and popular representation. This has derived, not least, from a deepening sense of the plural and discontinuous histories that have challenged ideas about the singularity of American experience, and that have led to battles of value fought over the (re)conception of the cultural centre. The balance of memory and forgetting in American culture – what is remembered, by who and for who – has in recent years become entwined in hegemonic struggles fought and figured around the negotiation of America's national past.

These struggles sharpened significantly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a moment of reported 'culture war' where consensual narratives of American identity were (seen to be) challenged by an emergent politics of difference. According to Robert Burgoyne, Hollywood played its part in these struggles, in some cases reasserting traditional narratives of nation and, in others, addressing the 'recovered memory' of the American nation-state – taking on traumas such as slavery, genocide, political assassination and the war in Vietnam – to express a reconfigured sense of American identity.⁷ The 1990s, in particular, were a time when the metanarratives of American memory began to strain for legitimacy against the multiple pasts of the marginalised. This must be set within a broad climate where national identity itself was, and continues to be, called into question by transnational political and economic restructuring. If memory discourses have accelerated in response to crucial changes in the ideological structure of US society – symptomatic, according to Andreas Huyssen, of a more

general challenge to progressive Western paradigms of history, modernity, and nation⁸ – Hollywood has functioned strategically in the articulation and codification of the cultural past. Although varied in its discursive contribution to the ‘field of national imaginings’ that Burgoyne describes, Hollywood has shown a concerted fascination with cinematic renderings of American history and memory, levied in films such as *Glory* (1989), *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989), *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *JFK* (1991), *Malcolm X* (1992), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Nixon* (1995), *Lone Star* (1996), *Amistad* (1997), *Titanic* (1997), *Pleasantville* (1998) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), to name just a few. Whether or not these films represent an anxious response to the ‘end of history’, a revisionist programme of alternative remembrance, or something more benign, memory has garnered a powerful currency in the discursive operations of contemporary American film.

Of course, Hollywood’s bearing on constructions of memory and identity are not constrained to the domestic sphere alone. Hollywood film has been taken up in discussions about the degree to which its products advance, adumbrate or even ‘Americanise’ the memory of events and peoples that belong, figuratively, to other cultures and contexts. Steven Spielberg’s treatment of the Holocaust in *Schindler’s List* (1993) is a marked example, generating discussion about the capacity of American/popular film to address the gravity of a subject that has become an encompassing trope of twentieth-century trauma. On the one hand, *Schindler’s List* was accused of representing events within conventional narrative frames, for concentrating on survivors rather than victims, and for presenting, within its documentary mode, the ‘voluptuous anguish and ravishing images’ that Saul Friedlander has linked with the re-evocation of Nazism in the West.⁹ On the other hand, Spielberg’s film was praised for problematising Nazi clichés, for its mood of visual gravity and seriousness, and for the way that *Schindler’s List* dealt with the Holocaust in affective terms. The debates that unfurled posed a series of questions not simply about the capacity of Hollywood to understand and respect the Holocaust, but also, and perhaps more fundamentally, about the nature of popular film and its function as an approbate or ‘authentic’ memory text.

The question of authenticity is a complex one that has frequently come to manifest itself in debates about the fidelity of popular film to historically remembered events. The brouhaha over Oliver Stone’s depiction of events surrounding the assassination of

President Kennedy in *JFK* was an especially publicised example of this, figured around questions of historical accuracy and the perception of Stone's obfuscating conspiratorial obsessions. For its part, *Schindler's List* generated fears that 'authentic cultural memory' was being compromised by the film's particular blending of fictive and factual elements. These debates were embroiled in larger questions about the limits of representing the Holocaust. However, the distinction between real and imagined pasts became a central focus of complaint for critics like Claude Lanzmann who objected to the film's very pretensions of being able to approximate, in representational terms, the Nazi genocide.

The concept of 'authentic memory' is, of course, highly problematic. The desire for memory as stable, reassuring, and constant has always been plagued by the fear of its instability and unreliability, and its disposition towards fantasy and forgetting. The impact of digital mediation further compounds and complicates the question of authenticity, as Robert Burgoyne outlines in his essay for this volume. In certain kinds of critique, however, a notion of memorial authenticity has endured, linked negatively to presumptions about the deracinating effects on memory produced by and within particular forms of technological media. In his sweeping theory of modern memory, Pierre Nora suggests that the 'real' or 'unbidden' experience of memory has been replaced by its trace and secretion in particular sites, or *lieux de memoire*.¹⁰ This is a type of memory 'deformed and transformed' by its essential materialisation within mass culture. The attendant 'collapse of memory' that Nora posits is based on a premise that memory is a matter of retrieving and reliving experience rather than something that is bound in, and structured through, representation and narrative. While not all would agree with Nora's romanticised notion of spontaneous memory, there is enough critical scepticism felt towards the forms and narratives of popular culture (not least, by documentary filmmakers like Lanzmann) to make certain of Nora's observations resonate in theories that suggest an essentially fallacious or inauthentic rendering of memory in mainstream commercial film.

The narrative imperatives of popular cinema in both classical and post-classical forms – largely character-driven, marked by continuous editing, demanding resolute closure – have led historians and cultural critics alike to form of ring of suspicion around Hollywood's treatment of the historically remembered past. More

recently, however, theories about the narrative character of history itself, powerfully addressed by Hayden White, have inspired a re-appraisal of the workings of history and memory in film.¹¹ Addressing the shibboleths of objective modernist history and the tendency on the part of many historians to dismiss film as distorting, subjective and trivial, Robert A. Rosenstone points out that such a view does not give due attention either to the narrative dimensions of history-writing or to the specificity of film as an influential mode of engaging with the past.¹² If *Schindler's List* is able to demonstrate anything about the status of memory in popular film, it is perhaps that memory is never straightforwardly authentic or inauthentic. Spielberg's film was mortgaged to a notion of authenticity that relied as much upon mediated memories – notably, the ranging registers of black and white photography and the various scenes and images that evoked previous films about the Holocaust – as it did upon the use of genuine Polish film locations or the presence of living Holocaust survivors. While the film played upon the experiential chords of personal and collective memory, it also 'remembered' a line of narrative and visual representations of the Holocaust. Simply put, *Schindler's List* drew out the multiple facets of cultural memory as lived in history and experienced through the auspices of twentieth-century media.

In both national and international terms, Hollywood has become powerfully associated with the cultural politics of contemporary memory and its associated questions of taste, representation, ideology and identity. However, products of the American film industry have also become endemic to the second major focus of critical discussion associated with cultural memory: the issue of *how (or not)* cultures remember in a climate of accelerated technological media. If, as Andreas Huyssen suggests, 'the very structure of memory (and not just its contents) is strongly contingent upon the social formation that produces it',¹³ memory has been theorised in terms of a formation where new technologies and multinational organisations of capital have engendered a culture of hyperreality and capitalist hyperdevelopment, where changing relations of space and time have produced a culture 'haunted by the explosion of temporality in the expanding synchronicity of our media world'.¹⁴ This conditional diagnosis has been largely hatched within the critical discourses of postmodernism and has been consistently mapped onto the US as the most discreet and supposedly complete locus of late capitalist

and/or postmodern energy. Specifically, the issue of amnesia has gathered conceptual momentum in significant strands of postmodern literature, refiguring the clichés of American forgetting and ahistoricism (symptomatic of a culture that has long been seen to invest, ideologically, in trajectories of the future) at a more fundamental level. The perils of postmodernism, especially as they have become associated with the US, are bound in a culture of increasing speed, space and simulacra unable to retain or engage with a meaningful sense of its own past.

For critics like Fredric Jameson, postmodernism represents a situation where ‘our entire social situation has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve’.¹⁵ Less concerned with the content of memory, the debates that figure around how (or not) the past is remembered address the prospective dissolution or potential refiguration of memory in a culture of electronic mediation and semiotic excess. If Jameson’s theory of a depthless and historically impoverished culture represents the former position, a number of historians and cultural critics have challenged assumptions of postmodern amnesia, leading to discussion about the form and experience of what Andrew Hoskins has come to call ‘new memory’.¹⁶

Defining memory in terms of a new phase or epoch brings with it the usual problems, and potential crudities, of historical periodisation. If there *is* something new or particular about the way the past is experienced in cultural life, however, this arguably turns on a heavily mediated contemporary landscape able to transmit, store, retrieve, refigure and circulate memories in very specific ways.¹⁷ This is linked inimitably to the electronic and digital technologies that are influencing the form and development of national and transnational modes of cultural remembrance. In different ways, the notion of authentic and territorialised memory, tied to personal and collective experience, has been challenged in a media world where the past may no longer be felt or understood in any culturally specific or referential sense. It is the perceived artificiality of memory, associated with the (global) media sphere, which has led to various assumptions and theories of amnesia. However, notions of historical and memorial blockage present a limited view of modern memory practice. Crucially, they fail to address the means and possibilities for articulating

the past *through* established and developing forms of technological mediation. While this will be addressed specifically in part three of *Memory and popular film*, emphasis lies throughout the volume with the presence and persistence of (American) cultural memory, rather than with the sense of loss and absence inscribed within much post-modern theory.

The concentration on contemporary culture outlined thus far should not be taken to suggest that mediated memory does not have relevance for earlier periods of history. While the relationship between memory and technological media became a central theme for critics of modernity like Walter Benjamin and Henri Bergson, memory itself has a modern history that can be examined and discursively traced. Susannah Radstone suggests that memory has developed visibility at specific historical junctures, principally as a means of expressing, and holding in balance, particular ambivalences and equivocations about identity and cultural value. While, from the nineteenth century, she suggests that these equivocations were turned towards the status of history, community, and tradition, in the late twentieth century, they focused more on fantasy, subjectivity, and fabrication.¹⁸ These ideas are brought into focus through particular, and historically rooted, notions of memory crisis. For example, while the memory crisis of the American 1920s – which saw fears about the dilution of national purity and tradition by ‘alien’ elements and ideologies – was addressed in the public history films and commemoration pictures examined by Roberta E. Pearson and Heidi Kenaga in this book, *Blade Runner* (1982), *Total Recall* (1990) and *Memento* (2000) demonstrate a more contemporary concern with the unsettled boundaries between reality and simulation in the constitution of remembered identity and experience. If concerns with history, community and tradition govern the former, a preoccupation with fantasy, subjectivity and fabrication inform the latter. Of course, the distinction between history/fantasy, community/subjectivity, tradition/fabrication, can hardly be contained within set historical periods, but there is perhaps a question of emphasis here that underscores the historicity of the relationship between memory and film.

From its first beginnings, the temporal realities of early cinema – what Leo Charney equates with the shock and embodiment of modern space and time – has posed significant questions for the

formation of modern memory.¹⁹ In discursive terms, however, the contemporary period remains the key focus of concern. If a particular moment can be identified where the connections between memory and film become more tangible and self-conscious, it arguably begins in the 1970s. Discussing broad transformations in the history of American film, Robert Sklar suggests that, since the 1970s, historical memory has become the touchstone of a movie's cultural power, replacing a 'traditional rhetoric of myths and dreams'.²⁰ For Sklar, the identification of a shift from 'myth to memory' in the rhetorical power of mainstream American film relates to a particular dissolution of the consensus that, until the 1970s, had underpinned American liberal ideologies in the postwar period. While speculative in nature, ideological schemas of this sort do have a certain use in identifying broad historical trends and patterns in the discursive propensities of popular cinema. Sklar is one of many critics who identify the 1970s as the origin of the contemporary 'memory boom' in American life and society. In a time when it is claimed that metanarratives of history and progress have been severely undermined, and when the past has become increasingly subject to cultural mediation, textual reconfiguration, and ideological contestation in the present, memory has developed a new discursive significance. In cinema, as in other modes of cultural practice, memory has become a powerful locus for the articulation of identity in the sphere of cultural imaginings. This has been levied in rhetorical terms – Sklar's transition from the 'myths and dreams' of classical film to the 'historical memory' of more recent work – but it has also become figured in particular generic transformations and bound in regimes of industrial and institutional commercialism, such that movie memory itself has experienced a heightened cultural significance.

Hollywood has long had an obsessive fascination with the memory of its own past. From the affectionate parody of the sound era in *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) to the nostalgic atmosphere of the *Last Picture Show* (1971) and the retro sensibility of *Pulp Fiction* (1993), memory has played an instrumental part in Hollywood's strategies of production and self-promotion. In representational terms, this has been marked in recent decades by the use and reformulation of genre memory in works such as *American Graffiti* (1973), *Chinatown* (1974), *Star Wars* (1977), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Back to the Future III* (1989) and *Moulin Rouge* (2001). Genre memory depends less on the explicit remembering of events,

characters and experiences, than on the use and appropriation of previous cinematic modes and conventions. This can involve the recreation and re-situation of motifs, music, atmosphere and feel in cinematic forms that draw from a repertoire of past styles and generic traits. In critical terms, this tendency has been levied in discussions around pastiche. Critics such as Jameson and Richard Dyer have each examined pastiche as a mode of (postmodern) cultural production, relating it in different ways to questions of historicity, authorship and cultural memory. While Jameson finds the ‘nostalgia film’ – his chosen label for the embodiment of postmodern pastiche – a form of evisceration or ‘blank parody’, Dyer holds a more positive view, suggesting a more complex cultural mode that has the potential to be critical and transgressive, but that can also suggest an awareness about the constructed nature of feelings and emotions while allowing them to be experienced and enjoyed.²¹ While arriving at different conclusions about the historical antecedents and cultural value of pastiche, each critic maintains and develops the supposition that film itself has become central to the landscape and production of contemporary cultural memory.

Movie memory may be a question of representation and generic style. However, this should not prohibit or relegate the significant industrial factors that contribute to Hollywood’s relationship with, and conspicuous fostering of, cultural remembering. Indeed, the development of memory since the 1970s has been linked to various aspects that are not strictly ideological or textual in nature. These include diversifying markets for memory, the growth of the heritage industry, and the proliferation of technologies of time-shifting like VCR and DVD. In various ways, these have shaped a burgeoning market for cinematic remembrance, and led to new media channels for consuming Hollywood history.

Together with the revolution in video during the 1980s, one of the most significant contemporary developments for the circulation and exhibition of Hollywood film has been the evolution of cable. The deregulation of the cable industry’s pricing structure in the 1980s led to an explosion of cable channels pursuing strategies of market segmentation and niche programming. Together with the likes of MTV and CNN, some of the most successful channels to emerge have been those with rerun formats such as American Movie Classics, TV Land, and Turner Classic Movies. As Jan-Christopher Horak writes, ‘the proliferation of cable networks and other new

media, and the concomitant development of ever more specialized and fragmented audiences, forced distributors to turn to the collective movie past'.²² With new outlets for movie memory, typified by cable's ability to generate audiences through the (inexpensive) replaying and recontextualising of old films and television products, a renewed interest in Hollywood heritage began to emerge in the 1980s and 1990s. While the studios' desire to collect and archive history was, according to Horak, 'driven by marketing and branding considerations, rather than any altruistic urge to preserve history',²³ investments in film memory certainly became more acute. This has, of course, developed in conjunction with the technological revolutions associated with video and DVD which have not only given film and television industries a means of repackaging their products in new commercial lines ('vintage classics', 'Hollywood legends' etc.), but that have also given the consumer more control over the way that film and television can be watched, consumed and collected. Marketing the past has, in various ways, become a lucrative by-product of the new relationship being forged in the age of video and DVD between institutions, texts and audiences.

The place of the audience is, of course, highly significant in discussions of film as a *subject* of memory. As Sarah Stubbings investigates in this book, film memory is often figured around generational nostalgia felt towards the place and purpose of cinema in specific communities. Whether this turns on particular exhibition sites, rituals and experiences, or on stars and films themselves, a growing body of work has begun to examine cultural constructions of identity produced through audience memory.²⁴ If what might be called a 'political economy of cinematic memory' has seen new industrial investments being figured around the form and selling of particularised film histories, appealing to fluid notions of movie classicism and various kinds of fan nostalgia, approaches within audience studies have focused on the cultural and emotional investments in cinematic memory that have been produced locally and from specific subject positions. While memory has long attached itself to the products of Hollywood, the changing status of cinema at the dawn of the twenty-first century has brought with it acute questions about the representational, institutional, and spectatorial formations of memory that inform the place and basis of film in cultural life and practice.

The broad relationship between cinema and the past has been examined in a number of recent collections, notably Robert Rosenstone's *Revisioning History*, Vivien Sobchack's *The Persistence of History* and Marcia Landy's *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media*.²⁵ In different ways, these address the representation of history in film and television, applying critical questions about the status of history (encompassing issues of truth, knowledge, authenticity, and verisimilitude) to the forms of visual media that increasingly shape historical sensitivities within the public sphere. Memory is embroiled in these discussions but, frequently, the subject of memory remains a tangential issue or is rather loosely defined as history's conceptual 'other'. This volume contributes to the broad analysis of film and its representation of the past but puts memory at the *centre* of analysis; it establishes a framework for discussing issues of memory *in* film and of film *as* memory.

This does not mean to say that all methodologies of memory criticism will or could possibly be addressed. The analysis of film and memory has been developed in numerous cultural, psychoanalytic, ethnographic and formalist directions. While some critics have used memory as a means of investigating narrative techniques like that of film flashback, others have examined specific audience memories of films, stars and cinema-related experiences. Enquiries have been mapped in relation to particular kinds of remembrance, like that of the Holocaust and other cultural traumata, and with specific national contexts in mind. This collection seeks to introduce approaches to memory and film but from a position that foregrounds memory as a locus, and film as a site, for the articulation and negotiation of cultural identity. If the 'memory film' can be said to explore the means by which the past exerts a contextual bearing on contemporary life and its structures of belief, *Memory and popular film* is crucially concerned with the questions of (American) cultural identity that derive from this relationship.

The book is organised in three main sections. The first section examines the relationship between official and popular history and the constitution of memory narratives in and around the production and consumption of American cinema. The four chapters in Part I explore the status and entanglements of public history and popular memory, focused through two chapter pairings which introduce representational, industrial, audience-based and institutional contexts of study. Addressing different historical periods and using

different methodological approaches, the four chapters examine the interrelations of history and memory as they apply to American cinema in the 1920s and to British memories of American cinema in the 1980s and 1990s. These contextual frames enable a focused consideration of national and international formations of the cultural and cinematic past.

The periods in question are not entirely arbitrary. Both represent moments where memory acquired currency and discursive visibility in the respective cultures at large. In the 1920s, this was linked to anxieties about the status of American identity and tradition in the face and fear of sweeping change, leading to a stake in the articulation of national history and memory. As Roberta E. Pearson and Heidi Kenaga demonstrate, this was undertaken through the auspices of cinema, and can be related to particular ideological and corporate imperatives. Examining a series of educational feature films by Yale University Press in chapter 1: 'A white man's country: Yale's *Chronicles of America*', Pearson demonstrates how the white Anglo-Saxon producers of the series made attempts to fashion the country's history and memory to make it consonant with their own cultural values. This led to an ideological project that necessitated the representation of Native Americans as 'savage savages'. Situated in a period of social turbulence and contested national identity, Pearson uses the *Chronicles of America* series to open up questions about the inscription and reformulation of the past in official and popular texts. Specifically, she suggests that, in having to appeal to a mass audience, Hollywood responded to society's contradictory discourses about Native Americans with less ideologically coherent, more polysemic texts.

Kenaga examines the same period and context but from a different perspective, exploring the industrial context within which popular commemoration films emerged in the 1920s. Her chapter, 'Civic pageantry and public memory in the silent era commemorative film: *The Pony Express* at the Diamond Jubilee', more closely examines the commercial status of the popular memory texts inferred in Pearson's essay. Specifically, Kenaga explores the means by which studios refigured lowbrow genres such as the Western historical feature into key commodities of the heritage industry, largely as a means of enabling studios such as Paramount to exploit a new position for itself as a 'legitimate' purveyor or guardian of historical memory. Together, these chapters demonstrate the adaptive and public relations potential

of popular memory texts, and the means by which they are set in relation to questions of cultural and corporate legitimacy.

The second chapter pairing examines the discursive and institutional apparatus that has come to support the memory of Classic Hollywood in British cultural life. Both Sarah Stubbings and Julian Stringer examine manifestations of cinema memory in the 1980s and 1990s, a period where cultural stock and economic fortune was increasingly vested in notions of 'heritage' in British life. In "Look behind you": memories of cinema-going in the "Golden Age" of Hollywood', Stubbings examines popular memory of cinema-going as framed through letters and articles featured in the memory narratives of a provincial city press. Refining questionnaire-based approaches to audience memory, Stubbings examines personal reminiscence of cinema-going in the public realm of the *Nottingham Evening Post*, focusing on the creation of a number of culturally sanctioned discourses figured around age, community and city identity.

Stringer is also concerned with the memory of cinema, but examines this in institutional terms. Specifically, his chapter, 'Raiding the archive: film festivals and the revival of Classic Hollywood', explores the role of the metropolitan film festival in transforming cinema history into heritage. Focusing on the circulation of old Hollywood movies at the London Film Festival between 1981 and 2001, Stringer examines the historical and preservationist agendas that lie behind the consensus about which films should be remembered and which forgotten. If the first chapter pairing examines cinema and the articulation of national memory, the second explores memories of cinema articulated in a particular national context. In each case, 'official' and 'popular' expressions of memory are set beside each other, demonstrating the frequent (con)fusion of such categories. While no pure realm of popular memory exists outside and beyond public history, public history is necessarily informed by the will and insistence of popular recall.

If Part I establishes historical and methodological case studies focusing on the tangled categories of public/popular and history/memory, Part II examines the politics of memory in a series of chapters that take as their focus three pivotal sites of national conflict in postwar America. This includes the war in Vietnam, American race relations and the Civil Rights Movement, and the history of marginality in the geographic and cultural borderlands of the US. These sites have generated hard fought battles of memory within American

historical and political identity formation. Examining specific ‘memory work’ within contemporary Hollywood cinema, Part II explores the specificity of film in constituting memory narratives that can function in coercive ways but that can also, alternatively, hold the potential for progressive political understanding.

The first two chapters concentrate on the former tendency. Considering cinematic articulations of the Vietnam War in Hollywood film, John Storey’s ‘The articulation of memory and desire: from Vietnam to the war in the Persian Gulf’ establishes a series of issues that bear upon, and illuminate, the relationship between memory, culture and power. Building on Maurice Halbwachs’ influential concept of collective memory – where remembering is theorised as a social process located in the present – Storey explores the articulation of Vietnam memory (and forgetting) in American cinema during the 1980s. Arguing that Hollywood produced a particular ‘regime of truth’ about Vietnam that was politically serviceable to President Bush in the build up to the Gulf War, Storey considers the politics of Vietnam revisionism and how ‘enabling memories’ were produced to legitimate subsequent political and military engagements.

In her ranging consideration of Hollywood’s treatment of the Civil Rights Movement, Sharon Monteith establishes a different political context for the articulation of cinematic memory. Her chapter, ‘The movie-made Movement: civil rites of passage’, considers how the ‘sedimented layers of civil rights preoccupations’ are codified in memory films such as *Mississippi Burning* (1988), *The Long Walk Home* (1994) and *A Time to Kill* (1996). Suggesting that post-civil rights cinema frequently translates larger historical and political issues into personal histories and domestic situations, Monteith considers whether this represents a devaluation of race and rights in the present, or is, rather, a reassertion of the personal as part of the political. If Storey is concerned with the memory politics of revisionism, Monteith examines the memory politics of reconciliation as a prevailing mode of civil rights cinema. In each case, the memory work of contemporary Hollywood is seen to inflect pivotal legacies in the history of postwar America, legitimating dominant power relations and establishing potentially restrictive parameters of cultural and political thinking.

The next two chapters interpret Hollywood’s memory work more positively. In ‘Prosthetic memory: the ethics and politics of memory in an age of mass culture’, Alison Landsberg attempts to ‘imagine a

relationship to memory that forges, rather than prevents the formation of progressive political alliances and solidarities'. Developing her provocative concept of 'prosthetic memory', Landsberg explores the impact of mass cultural technologies and their particular ability to make memories available to those who may not have lived or experienced them directly. Positing the radical potential of prosthetic memory, Landsberg examines John Singleton's *Rosewood* (1997) as a progressive and counterhegemonic text that challenges, rather than contains, the historical politics of American race relations. She suggests that *Rosewood* invites the question of 'whether white children – and by extension, a white audience – can take on memories of racial oppression and in the process develop empathy for African Americans'. While aware of the conceptual difficulties of this position, Landsberg provides an important strategic position in thinking through the ethical and political dimension of cultural memory and collective identification.

In the next chapter, "Forget the Alamo": history, legend and memory in John Sayles' *Lone Star*, Neil Campbell provides a detailed examination of a film deliberately concerned with various ethnic memories (Hispanic, Anglo, African and Native American) of those living in the southwestern border town of Frontera. Using George Lipsitz's work on counter-memory, and set in the context of wider redefinitions of power and identity in the US, Campbell explores how *Lone Star* functions as a multi-layered, intertextual film, revealing the secret histories of the New West as a contested space where cultures collide and coexist in an uneasy, hybrid set of relations. In its use of the past, indelibly marked by creative forgetting, Campbell suggests that *Lone Star* presents a radical, challenging revision of history and an optimistic, contested sense of the future for a multi-ethnic America.

If 'cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history', Part II explores the political stakes of cinematic discourse in its production of national memory. While these issues are not left behind in Part III, the final section concentrates on the issue of mediation; it explores how technological and semiotic shifts in the cultural terrain have influenced the coding and experience of memory in contemporary cinema. Part III considers both the presence of music and colour in nostalgia films of the 1990s and the impact of digital and video technologies on the representational determinants of mediated memory.

Focusing on the place and function of music in contemporary retro movies, Philip Drake considers how the past has been dealt with stylistically in films such as *Jackie Brown* (1997) and *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993). In “‘Mortgaged to music’: new retro movies in 1990s Hollywood cinema”, Drake makes a distinction between the ‘history’, ‘period’ and ‘retro’ film, arguing that retro films mobilise particular codes that have come to connote a past sensibility metonymically re-remembered in the present. Music is a highly significant code in this cinematic patterning of memory, instrumental to the pleasures of ‘pastness’ that characterise retro’s particular feel and meaning. As Drake contends, ‘the language of memory in retro cinema is insistently musical as well as visual’. The consideration of music is linked in Drake’s chapter to Hollywood’s commercial strategies (specifically, branding considerations and the selling of film soundtracks) and to popular discourses of nostalgia as they are expressed and experienced in affective terms.

If music is a means of creating cinematic ‘feel’ for memory and nostalgia, so too is the use of colour (and black and white). My own chapter, ‘Colouring the past: *Pleasantville* and the textuality of media memory’, uses the spectacle of digital colourisation to unlock questions about the effect of postmodern technology/representation on the figuration of cultural memory. Suggesting that *Pleasantville* is an indicative memory text of the late 1990s, I locate the film in two critical contexts: within the contested field of meaning that came to debate the memory and status of the American 1960s, and in relation to the domestication of digital technology as a contemporary textual mode. Examining *Pleasantville*’s reflexive play with culture war discourse, and spectacular deployment of colourisation technique, my essay challenges theories of postmodern amnesia that suppose an evisceration of memory caused by quotational and/or technological excess.

In ‘Memory, history and digital imagery in contemporary film’, Robert Burgoyne deepens this concern with digital technology, providing an incisive framework for the consideration of computer generated imagery and cinematic representations of the past. Focusing on the use of documentary images, and the sense of authenticity that documentary has accrued in providing a trace of the past, Burgoyne considers the way that digital imaging has turned the (documentary) past into a site of imaginative reconstruction. Considering films such as *Forrest Gump*, *JFK* and *Wag the Dog* (1997), Burgoyne examines

the ‘negative and positive potential for the new kind of interweaving of fiction and history that computer generated imagery allows’. Specifically, he suggests that the destabilising of historical and referential truth may lead to a new genre of visual history that confounds, as in premodern times, the very boundaries of fantasy, fact and speculation. Returning to the relationship between history, memory and media, Burgoyne explores changes in the fundamental categories of value that underpin traditional givens of the historically remembered past: origins, authenticity and documentation.

Concluding Part III, Jeffrey Pence moves the ground of analysis to the competing forms of technology that have challenged cinema’s cultural supremacy at the turn of the twentieth century and, with it, its mediation of experience and memory. In his chapter, ‘Postcinema/Postmemory’, Pence concentrates on postcinematic forms that have emerged through video technology, and that have been absorbed within the creative corpus of filmmakers like Atom Egoyan. Investigating questions of subjective and collective memory in a world of discrepant temporalities, Pence situates the question of memory and film in relation to new technologies of remediation and to an increasingly globalised terrain of space and time, culture and identity. While varied in approach and focus, each essay in Part III takes issue with the diagnosis in postmodern criticism (significantly, that of Jameson) that we are living in a commodified culture of historical blockage and cultural forgetting. All of the essays deal with the complex constitution, rather than mere abdication, of memory in a resolutely technologised present.

The three parts of *Memory and popular film* raise themes and questions that interpenetrate and cross each other. The popular, political and mediated status of memory, inscribed within American film, are issues that are conveyed throughout the volume. Sturken suggests that ‘cultural memory is a central aspect of how American culture functions and how the nation is defined’.²⁶ This book explores the stakes of cultural remembering in the United States and the means by which memory has been figured through, and in relation to, Hollywood cinema. While America has been seen as a country of the future, and a land of habitual forgetting, the musical leitmotif of *Casablanca* (1943) provides this book with a final and fundamental cultural gist – ‘you must remember this . . .’

Notes

- 1 Susannah Radstone, 'Working With Memory: An Introduction', in Susannah Radstone (ed.) *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), pp. 1–22.
- 2 Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method', in Richard Johnson, Gregor McLennan, Bill Schwarz, David Sutton (eds), *Making Histories: Studies in History and History Writing* (London: Hutchinson and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1982), pp. 205–52.
- 3 Michel Foucault, 'Film and Popular Memory', *Radical Philosophy* (1975), 28.
- 4 Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 1.
- 5 Erica Carter and Ken Hirschkop, 'Editorial', *New Formations*, Winter (1996), v–vii.
- 6 See Paul Grainge, *Monochrome Memories: Nostalgia and Style in Retro America* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2002).
- 7 Robert Burgoyne, *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
- 8 Andreas Huyssen, 'Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.) *Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 69.
- 9 Saul Friedlander, *Reflections on Nazism: An Essay on Kitsch and Death* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 21. For a detailed consideration of the debates surrounding *Schindler's List*, see Yosefa Loshitsky (ed.), *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
- 10 Pierre Nora, 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire', trans. Marc Roudebush, *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7–25.
- 11 See Hayden White, 'The Modernist Event', in Vivien Sobchack (ed.) *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event* (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 17–38.
- 12 Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- 13 Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 252.
- 14 Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, p. 100.
- 15 Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in E. Ann Kaplan (ed.), *Postmodernism and its Discontents* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 8. For a more extensive discussion, see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

- 16 Andrew Hoskins, 'New Memory: Mediating History', *The Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 21: 4 (2001), 333–46.
- 17 See Grainge, *Monochrome Memories*, pp. 41–64.
- 18 Radstone, 'Working With Memory'. Discussing the 'divergent temporalities that distinguish nineteenth and late twentieth century understandings of and preoccupations with memory', Radstone writes: 'Whereas in the nineteenth century, it was the felt break with tradition and long dureé which constituted the temporal aspect of the memory crisis, in the late twentieth century, that crisis is inflected, rather, by the experiences of immediacy, instantaneity and simultaneity', p. 7.
- 19 Leo Charney, 'In a Moment: Film and the Philosophy of Modernity', in Leo Charney and Vanessa R. Schwartz (eds), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 279–94.
- 20 Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 357.
- 21 Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*; Richard Dyer, 'The Idea of Pastiche', in Jostein Gripsrud (ed.) *The Aesthetic of Popular Art* (Kristiansand/Bergen: Høyskoleforlaget, 2001), pp. 79–91.
- 22 Jan-Christopher Horak, 'The Hollywood History Business', in Jon Lewis (ed.) *The End of Cinema As We Know It* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), p. 33.
- 23 Horak, 'The Hollywood History Business', p. 34. Horak notes that the first studio to found a fully-fledged archive was Warner Brothers in 1994.
- 24 See Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1994); and Annette Kuhn, 'Cinema-going in Britain in the 1930s: Report of a Questionnaire Survey', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19 (4) 1999, 531–43.
- 25 Robert A. Rosenstone (ed.), *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Sobchack (ed.), *The Persistence of History*; Marcia Landy (ed.), *The Historical Film: History and Memory in Media* (London: The Athlone Press, 2001).
- 26 Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, p. 2.