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Anthony Reynolds (University of Glasgow)

Introduction

Within film studies, a significant body of work has developed which has attempted to historicise and analyse the social aspects of cinema culture, or, cinema-going. Much of this has aimed to compile histories of the economic and industrial practices of film exhibition, citing them as infrastructures of social practice (Gomery 1992). More recently however, there have been efforts to research cinema-going as 'cultural geography' - mapping the particular nuances of cinema culture as they have developed in a *specific location* (Jancovich et al 2003). Concurrently, methodological approaches have developed which have sought to incorporate accounts of 'cultural memory' into the investigative methods of film history, in order to closer analyse the *social complexities* of cultural practice (Stacey 1994; Kuhn 2003). The following paper adopts a methodology which prioritises personal accounts as sources of historical evidence, and which seeks to draw from them data that is useful in creating an understanding the local specificities of a cinema-going culture - within the particular place and time period of south Glasgow 1945-60.[1]

The centre-south of Glasgow city was one of the most densely populated areas of the city, and also home to over a fifth of the city's 100-plus cinemas in 1945, with a geographic concentration of picture-houses second only to the city centre (Peter 1996, pp.10-15). However, as was the case in the rest of the UK, by the late

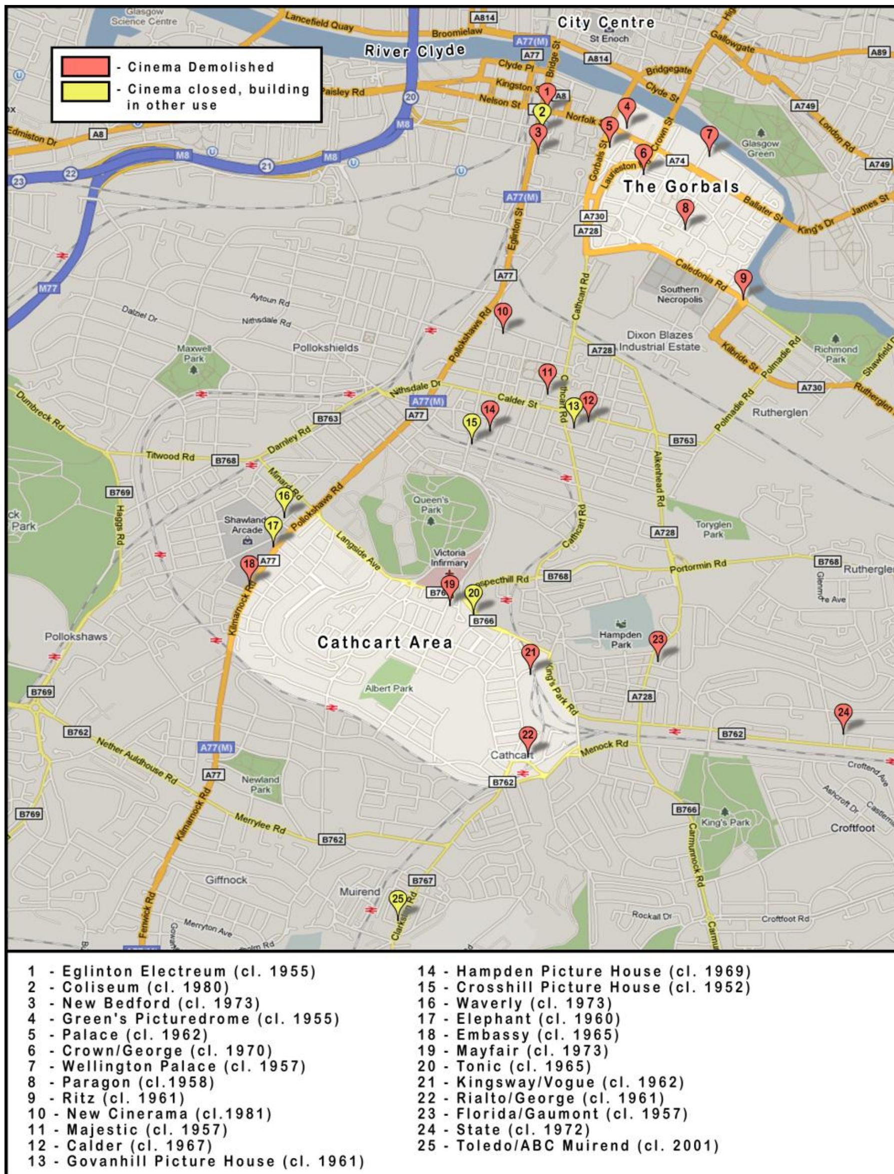
[1] This paper is drawn from Masters Research conducted at the University of Glasgow in 2010.

1950s the popularity and quantity of Glasgow's cinemas were declining, particularly in non-central areas, and by 1981, there was only one operating cinema in the area. This period in UK cinema culture is often characterised as beginning with a post-war spike and ending with the popularisation of television culture (Richards 1997). This paper will suggest that in south Glasgow, the period between 1945 and 1960 represents the last period of cinema-going as a mass-culture practice, and that this change precipitated the transformation of the function of cinema-going amongst people from poorer areas of the city, from a social practice to a leisure practice.

There are two key aims of this paper. Firstly, to assess what value and significance locally-specific evidence drawn from personal testimonies can hold for the investigation of the history of cinema-going practices during the period more broadly. Secondly, this work will provide a practical means to test the ways in which cultural geography and cultural memory research methods can be usefully combined, and will also make recommendations for future research along similar lines in this area. In respect of these aims, series of oral history interviews were conducted with people resident in the Gorbals and Cathcart areas during the period.

Overall, it will be argued here that an approach which prioritises 'local memory' represents a useful investigative method for researching both cultural geography and cultural memory. In analysing oral history accounts tied to particular locations on the micro level, the richness of the data produced is conducive to in-depth analysis of individual accounts, yet also has value for qualitative research into what communities of people have shared culturally within specific geographic localities. Furthermore, it will be suggested that local memory research can be used to discuss cultural memory at extremely specific geographic levels, allowing us to re-

consider historical notions of national or regional cultural identity at the micro-level of the local.



Map - The Cinemas of South Glasgow, 1945-1960.

Film History in the UK

In UK film history, there has been a strong tendency towards economic and industrial histories, methodologically borrowed from influential research into the industrial histories of US film exhibition, such as that of Gomery (1992). For example, John Sedgwick created the 'POPSTAT index'; a detailed statistical model from which he attempted to gauge film tastes in Bolton and Brighton, based on reel rentals, box-office receipts, etc (Sedgwick 1998/2000). Unfortunately, while such research is highly valuable in terms of *what* cultural practices occurred in the past, there is limited scope in work such as Sedgwick's for a richer cultural analysis of *why* they occurred. There is an ever-increasing wealth of quantitative and economic research into the British cinema going past, and there is also a well represented tendency towards research which reflects on developments in cultural history, frequently in relation to national identity. Prominent UK film historians such as Annette Kuhn (1988), Jeffrey Richards (1997), and James Chapman (2005), have written on the cultural history of Britain using textual methods. Very often, these have been conducted through adoption of the types of psychoanalytic, text-based methods prevalent within film studies. In research along these lines, the text acts as the primary historical source used to discuss the cultures and societies of the past.

However, there are increasing examples of research where a blurring of the boundaries between historical approaches is apparent. In reviewing the literature, divisions in method tend to be easier to identify; a tension which is evident in the work of Sarah Street. She compiled two contrasting studies of British cinema history: *British National Cinema* (1997), a cultural history which employed textual analysis of contemporary film texts as a principal research methodology; and *British Cinema in Documents* (2000), a detailed

investigation through a multitude of archival sources such as cinema listings, box office reports and Mass Observation statistics on cinema-going. Indeed, towards the end of the 1990s there was an increasingly flexible range of research methodologies in the study of British film history, yet research in this area has rarely attempted – or succeeded – to combine them meaningfully. Annette Kuhn has described the limitations within the customary practices of film history, claiming that while the methods described above hold some academic value, they have "nothing at all to do with how the people watching a film might respond to it" (2003, p.4).

Robert Allen has argued for the focus of film histories to shift away from national or city-level concepts of the audience, to small town and suburban audiences, as wider geographic catchments can serve to dilute and obscure the uniqueness of localised findings (2008, p.22). Some work has focused on local cinema going culture in recent years, but much of this has little or no participant-based audience research, largely due to the methodological inclination towards archival or text-based research noted above, and a tendency to focus on the earliest cinema-going audiences (Malby et al 2007; Fuller-Seeley 2008). The study conducted by Mark Jancovich et al into the history of cinema culture in Nottingham (2003) developed as a synthesis of a highly meticulous archival approach to film history advocated by Allen and Gomery (1985), and an audience studies approach. The researchers deemed this as necessary to enhance the social value of the study. This resulted in a remarkably comprehensive survey of Nottingham's cinema history from its earliest days to DVD, researched from technological, economic, cultural and social perspectives. Jancovich et al actively set themselves apart from the traditionally textual practices of film studies, as well as what they describe as the "colonial gaze" of anthropology (2003,

pp.27-9). This describes a tendency within the film studies discipline to claim textual analysis of past consumption as a "social diagnosis where films function as tools of analysis" (Diken & Bagge Lausten 2007, p.14). Instead, Jancovich et al mapped the changing characteristics of the leisure practices that were local to Nottingham at particular stages during its first hundred years of cinema exhibition.

In historical studies, there has long been a growing acceptance of the movement towards participant-based methods, and the challenges they can present to narrative history. In the realm of cultural studies, the analysis of the personal accounts has lent itself to the study of the present, often presenting a primary methodology in the study of television viewing, but oral history has not 'come through' in the same way within film studies (Jancovich et al 2003, pp.3-6). In one of the most notable uses of oral evidence in UK film history, *An Everyday Magic (*2003), Annette Kuhn carried out extensive research into personal histories of cinema going in 1930s Britain. This work is impressive for its sheer scale and includes a number of accounts from Glasgow amongst other regions, but combined, these accounts form what Kuhn has termed a 'cultural memory'. *An Everyday Magic* is an as-yet unparalleled work of academic oral history relating solely to experiences of the cinema, and shows the ways in which findings from personal accounts can add a depth to film histories that social theorising or archival research often overlooks. Kuhn notes that this form of research forced her into:

> [reformulating] the methods and objects of film studies… rethinking theories and models of the relationship between film text and spectators… and admitting a broader range of embodied engagements into that relationship. (2003, p.237)

What is particularly useful about Kuhn's work is the balance sought in scrutinizing personal accounts for their shared tendencies, while keeping sight of the importance of their singularity. In order to engage with this, Kuhn demarcates personal 'anecdotal memory', and collective 'repetitive memory discourse' as different categories of account but which form the theoretical basis of 'cultural memory' (2003, pp.40-1). Kuhn notes:

> There is a quality at once universal and particular about the earliest cinemagoing memories of the 1930s generation. A combination of idiosyncratic detail and collective voice marks these stories, sometimes lending the histories they embody a timeless, even mythic, quality. (2003, p.60)

It seems that Kuhn's work was primarily aimed at finding out the recurring patterns within oral accounts of cinema-going. Kuhn's respondents related their nostalgia for the past to the loss of the physical spaces in which it took place – cinemas which had since been closed or destroyed. Such memories are expressed in strictly local terms, yet Kuhn analyses the cultural significance of this nostalgia on a national basis. For Kuhn, regional difference is discussed in terms of pattern and divergence (the greater degree of topographic detail - or 'place-memory' - given by city-dwelling respondents as opposed to those from rural locales, etc.) and the research does not aim to define these differences, and it was not its aim to discern if there are any analysable characteristics in the accounts which might suggest more localised patterns and divergences.

Comparing Kuhn's approach to that of Jancovich et al, displays differences in research aims which transcend their differing methodologies. They both aim to interrogate historical periods, yet, while *The Place of the Audience* seeks to use archival evidence in order

to draw conclusions relating to *local specificities of culture*, Kuhn's work in *An Everyday Magic* tries to draw comparisons of oral histories drawn from a base of the UK, in order to describe something that is, in the national sense, *culturally shared*. Between these texts lie divisions in method - *the archival and the oral* - and aim - *the specific and the shared*.

In the present project, respondents discuss whether the cinemas had some kind of unifying 'force' of community and - pivotally - if it was unifying in a way that was particular to a local area *within a city*. In total, thirteen interviews were conducted with people who attended cinemas in the south side of Glasgow as part of their cultural and social lives between 1945 and 1960. These interviews concern south Glasgow cinema culture, which has long since physically existed, yet now exists *as history*. Because of these circumstances, the accounts will describe communities 'imagined' in the present, and engage with the pre-existing 'myths' of history that surround them.

Within academic, popular and amateur histories of Glasgow, 'myths' have become very important in the understanding of how the city's cultural history is represented and retold. It should be noted that 'myths' are not historical falsehoods or tall tales, but folklore and stereotype. They are based on historical detail that has entered a popular consciousness and is considered as indicative of a local identity. Kuhn discussed the tendency of cultural memory to conform to and propagate such myths, in relation to the disputed 'jam jar myth' – that precocious children from poor families would reportedly exchange old jars and bottles for the price of their entry at the box office (Kuhn 2003, pp.38-65). Other works have arrived at conclusions from 'myths', real or imagined. Janet McBain has argued that cinema was popular as a result of poverty, providing not only an

economically accessible leisure activity, but also comfort due to the fact that it presented a cheaper alternative to lighting a coal fire (McBain 1985, p.57). Similarly, the city's mythically bipolar bouts between mindless violence and kindly wisdom remain ill-resolved by the accounts which tackle them, and the lines between the real and the imagined are particularly hard to interrogate. For example, Seán Damer dismisses Alexander McArthur's novel about Glasgow's violent culture, *No Mean City* as sensationalism; a claim that does not sit easily with his assertions that a night out at Green's Playhouse in the city centre would be plagued by an "atmosphere of violence" that "inevitably" accompanied the city's social and cultural practices (Damer, pp.201-3).

In the cultural histories of Glasgow, what Annette Kuhn might describe as a *shared cultural memory* - a complex social construction of the past based on collective language and collective ideas of cultural experience - is often simplified and presented as a *shared past experience* of Glaswegians; a 'true myth' of sorts. Of course 'myth' and 'true myth' are intricately linked concepts. Joanna Bornat has suggested that the "popularity of community oral history exposes it to the dangers of routinisation" – 'myth'-making – and that to counteract that, "the identification and celebration of difference should become a more central component of the theoretical drive of community oral history" (Bornat 1993, pp.88-92). It would be inappropriate to suggest that a broad collective agreement discovered through research can tell us what 'the past was like'. Yet it is also inappropriate to suggest that a community's experiences of sixty or more years ago are mere fantasy, and should not be cherished and missed by those who recall them. Suggestion of 'myth' as shared fantasy both denies individual difference and potentially disavows the more complicated or difficult aspects of cultural memory – aspects

that few would *want* to recall. In this sense, 'myths' are inherently 'incomplete' accounts of the past.

Central to this useful 'incompleteness' is myth, which can be used to critically engage with matters of locality. Annette Kuhn interrogated the meaning of the 'jam jar myth' as part of cultural memory, defining it as cultural shorthand for the "resourcefulness in the face of poverty and constraint" (Kuhn 2003, p.64). Janet McBain included in her monograph on Glasgow cinema culture, *Pictures Past*, a humorous appeal to new respondents to come forward under the guise of 'resolving' the troublesome, (and already well worn by 1985) myth (1985 p.74). Local memory does not resolve incompleteness in oral history - in fact, it may intensify it. Through interaction with individual accounts of local memory, myths might offer parameters within which one could conduct an analysis on the 'text' of the memory, and prove useful not only in considering how the use of myths differ (if recounted for *different* localities, by *different* individuals) but also for considering why this occurs.

Community Memories

The participants in this project, born between 1922 and 1944, all engaged with the cinema culture myths of Glasgow, albeit in diverse ways, dictated primarily by their differing experiences of class, gender, age, and social situations. These interviews were specifically designed to ask the participants to engage with the popular myths, and compare their experiences *to* them, rather than relate their cultural memories *through* them. Of the participants interviewed for this study, there were clear divisions between them based on socio-economic class and geographic residence between 1945 and 1960, and these made them definable into two distinct groups. This was

not by design, simply dictated by the respondents whom applied to the project.[2]

Approximately half of the participants spent the period living in the Gorbals and unsurprisingly were uniformly from poorer, working class families. They all lived in 'single-end' tenement homes with outside toilets,[3] in areas which would latterly be condemned en masse, many in the mid-1950s, leading on to a mass exodus of the population, largely to satellite towns. These participants frequently framed their stories in reference - specifically resistant reference - to the myths of crime and violence that still pervade conceptions of the Gorbals in this period. The other participants, either had, or were married to people with 'white collar' clerical or drafting jobs. They lived in and around the more affluent areas of Cathcart, either in garden cottages or multi-room tenements.

Regularity of attendance was a constant in the participants' accounts. All claimed to have attended the cinema at least twice a week, describing often in great detail how this 'fitted in' to their every day life, balanced with work, finance, practicalities and relationships. Jean Murphy (b.1942) describe how cinema going fitted into life for a Gorbals schoolgirl with working parents, looking after her younger siblings:

> On a Saturday you got your shilling or your sixpence pocket money, I think it was sixpence, on a Saturday to go to the pictures, so I tain the two weans with me to the pictures. On a Tuesday, I always remember, we used to belt along the road from school, me and my young brother, because if you ran from there to my ma's house, she would have the money ready for me an Alec to run, through the Gorbals to the Palace

[2] The original methodology recruited from sheltered housing, reminiscence groups and bowling clubs, seeking out people who were resident in the central-south of Glasgow during the period.

[3] A 'single-end' was a small apartment house consisting only of a room and a kitchen.

> picture house and if you made it for half past four, you got in for sixpence, if you didnae, it cost you tenpence. So every Tuesday, it was a race.[4]

Mary Strang (b.1943), also from the Gorbals, had to balance cinema going with family life, albeit in different ways:

> My mother liked the pictures, my daddy didn't. I was banned by my brothers… They did take me to the movies once, but we were thrown out because I wasn't behaving (laughs). I was quite young… and probably it wasn't to my taste, what they had come to see. I remember I was sat on the seat and the usherette shone the torch at me, and then she said to my brothers, 'just take her home', so they were glaring at me and then they said they would never take me again (laughs)…. I was able to go with my mother. Tuesday night we went, and quite often a Friday.

However, those that were a little older than Jean and Mary found that the balance changed between 1945 and 1960, as dictated by changes in their own life stage and social circumstances. As a young woman, Rena Craig (b.1929) from Cathcart, spent most of this period single, before getting married in 1954. Many of her recollections of cinema going on the period differ to those of the participants who were very young. Rena's memories reflect her middle class home situation, and working as a shorthand typist and getting married to a shipyard draughtsman, meaning she had some disposable income, and therefore she had more choices of activity:

> Gradually we started going to the dancing as we got a wee bit older, gradually, so we didn't go to the cinema quite so much… In 1954, I got married then, and I really didn't go to the cinema much after that. Um, I don't know if it didn't interest us as much, but

[4] The Palace picture hall (*map:5*), which was situated directly next to the Citizens' Theatre.

> we started going to the theatre more, like the Citizen's Theatre, and things like that, rather than things like the cinema.

Some real distinctions can be made of the Gorbals residents, as families that lived in the area were very poor and socially, they struggled to overcome their area's negative cultural reputation (whether accurate or not) amongst the rest of the city's population. Another thing which is reflected in the accounts collected here, is that all the participants consider their area to have been a 'special' place, and they regret the loss of its cinemas as they conducted a particular sense of community. Mary Wood (b.1927) draws this into the present:

> If anybody asks me where I came from I'll tell them I'm a Gorbalonian (laughs)... It's going back to your roots, isn't it? You hear a lot of people talking about the 'bad old Gorbals', well I don't remember anything like that, and I was happy in it, and had a good life.

These self-described 'Gorbalonians' feel this loss much more than the other participants, all of whom came from more affluent areas in the south side that saw only minor changes occur to their areas, and much more slowly. In 1954, the Glasgow Corporation made major redevelopment plans for the Gorbals. Seán Damer has suggested this was a direct result of myth-based prejudices, saying "it was no accident that the Gorbals was the first to go" because it was "synonymous internationally with slums and violence". This led to:

> The total devastation of the area. More than 100 acres containing 20,000 people were cleared… but only 10,000 were to be allowed in the new houses. There are only a handful of original buildings still standing in the Gorbals. (Damer 1990, pp.192-3)

All the participants interviewed here left (or were forced to leave) the Gorbals shortly after 1955, at the beginning of its tower-block 'redevelopment'. They retain near-unconditional affection for the picture-houses that used to be in the area, no matter how dilapidated they might have been, because they were taken away from them. When speaking about the Paragon cinema (*map:8*), there was a tendency amongst the Gorbals respondents to acknowledge the decrepitude of the cinema, its lack of comfort and constant state of disrepair, but to also single out 'redeeming' qualities. Mary Wood says "they had some great movies", Rose McFadden (b.1922) remarked that "it had a great screen", and Jean Murphy even put a positive spin on its tendency to pick up reels after other cinemas, saying "if you missed it there, you'd see it in the Paragon for sure".

These community cinemas were destroyed along with the tenements of the Gorbals, with the last one, the Crown, or 'Crownie' (latterly the George, *map:6*), surviving almost ten years after its peers, but only until 1970 (Barr & Painter, 2001-11). In Govanhill, Cathcart, Battlefield, and Shawlands amongst others, local cinemas persisted until the 1980s, with one (The Toledo/ABC Muirend, *map:25*) only closing in 2001. Local memory accounts allow us to examine how much greater the impact of economic change is on the cultural practices of poorer communities. Robert Thomson (b.1934) rather bitterly noted that when he returned to the Gorbals from the army in the late fifties, "prices had changed. People would say they'd shot up". Asked about his feelings on changes in cinema going in the same period in Cathcart, Jack Gray (b.1927) said: "I was working, so I wouldn't really notice", and Rena Craig remarked "I think it was maybe a wee bit dearer."

The life stages and individual practices of Jack and Rena are reflected in the way they discuss this cinema. Jack spoke about

cinemas with their convenience being a primary attraction, so a local cinema he could fit into his busy working life was best. Rena on the other hand, spoke about the usefulness of the cinema space for the particular function of her visit; such as twin seats for courting, or grander, more glamorous halls for 'nights out' with friends. These statements show some variation amongst these people in the difference between whether they viewed cinema going as a social or leisure practice: whether it was *habit* – part of a daily routine of convenience; or whether it was a *luxury* – an event that was planned, anticipated and savoured. Dot Cameron (b.1944), reflecting her family's tendency to enjoy cinema as one of the 'arts' more than social practice, recalls the Tonic (*map:20*) as the area's culturally diverse picture house:

> And I remember my father, he did take me to some different films, um which is why I'm something of a Francophile at the moment, um now. I remember him taking me to *Mr Hulot's Holiday* at the Tonic. And a film called *The Red Balloon*.[5]

Meanwhile Jack Gray described The Tonic as his area's 'fleapit'. Differences of opinion regarding particular halls were also significant in analysing practices of the Gorbals respondents. When he was asked if there were any cinemas he didn't like in the Gorbals, Robert Thomson said: "Crownie. Called the Fleapit (laughs)". However, Mary Strang thought highly of it:

> There was one on Crown street, which, we just called it the Crownie. Maybe it was called the Crown or something. That was a nicer picture hall, actually. I think if my mother was a bit flush we would go there.

[5] *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (Jacques Tati, 1953) & *Le Ballon Rouge* (Albert Lamorisse, 1956).

The ways in which the participants use the term 'fleapit' seems inconsistent, but is useful in the examination of types of cinema going practice. This is linked to the ways in which participants from the different areas discuss their cinema memories relative to their means: their physical relationship with their local cinema, the convenience of going, and the practicalities concerned. Those from the poorer areas had less physical mobility between 1945 and 1960, due at least in part to their inability to afford public transport on a regular basis, and managed by the presence of all the conveniences available in the local area. This geographic stasis is clear from the surprising lack of knowledge they have of other Glasgow areas. For example, to this day Jean Murphy does not know her way around the city centre of Glasgow, which only lies metres across the Clyde from the Gorbals. It is also apparent in the ways they discuss their feelings of going to the cinema in another area. Of non-Gorbals cinemas, Jean said:

> I found them, how do you put it, a wee bit posher… Once you got used to it, it was okay. It's just getting used to your surroundings, what you're comfortable with. You know, at first I felt a bit strange 'cause that picture hall was all new to me.

Robert Thomson echoes this, suggesting that he expected animosity when in other communities (perhaps alluding to prejudices being the product of myth - as discussed above), which acted as another 'pull' factor to the local cinemas:

> We just felt strange in other areas. I've never had that fear of, eh, because I was in another area, people would know who I was... I didn't feel fear.

Accordingly the Gorbals residents' favourite cinemas were those closest to home. Rose McFadden said: "I had no call to go

anywhere, just locally" and Mary Wood tells how convenience won over comfort: "It wasn't comfortable in the Paragon, but they had some really good movies… More or less, I just stayed across the road from it".[6] Yet as discussed above, in the Gorbals one person's favourite could just as easily be another's 'fleapit'. For those from the Gorbals, the 'fleapits' were not the 'poorest' cinemas, as they were all 'poor' cinemas. Within these accounts, the term 'fleapit' was more often used to denote what was simply a less familiar cinema. Much like their struggle to justify why the Gorbals was 'special' despite its dilapidation, the fondness for local cinemas was driven both by convenience and necessity (travel to cinemas elsewhere in the city was costly, and there were multiple cheap cinemas within walking distance), but most importantly the frequent, habitual use of the local cinema as a social and practical space.

The respondents from Cathcart discussed 'fleapits' differently. Jack Grey, who fitted the role of a 'social practice' cinema goer (much like those from the Gorbals), described the Tonic as a 'fleapit' because he preferred the Mayfair (*map:19*). Rena and Dot, however, who fit the role of 'leisure practice' cinema goers liked the Tonic for a particular material reason, and used the term 'fleapit' with specific connotations of shabbiness and poverty. In general, Cathcart's cinema goers had a much wider base of cinemas they attended, and spoke more frequently of the excitement of extra luxury.

The Gorbals participants – as was discussed above – all consider their area, despite its small geographic space, to have been 'special', and 'unique', despite also acknowledging that it was stricken by poverty and ill health. Those from the more affluent areas

[6] The Paragon, a former church, was frequented by all the Gorbals participants at some point in the period. It was one of the cheapest cinemas in Glasgow, and retained wooden pews. All participants who went there singled this out as a particularly uncomfortable cinema to spend time in.

however, consider their own areas to have been 'special' for more practical reasons, as May Shirlaw's (b.1927) recollection shows:

> The area was very good at that time. Lovely shopping area on Victoria Road, Cathcart Road, up to Shawlands. Not now, because half the shops are closed down and the area's just not the same.

And this group do not uniformly discuss their areas with the same sense of loss as the Gorbals residents. Dot Cameron suggests that the decline of the cinemas in Cathcart were not as damaging to a sense of community as it was elsewhere:

> *DC:* There were a lot of picture houses in the area… It's always been a very good family community
> *Int:* Do you think it still is?
> *DC:* It is, because there's people go, uh, there's young families go from the flats into the avenues for houses, um, and there's still a lot of older folk in the area.

For those like Dot Cameron, treats like ice cream and chips were part of the appeal of cinema going. Going to the city centre was an option for Dot too, but still a luxury of sorts. Rena Craig speaks of cinemas which were some distance from her home, but held a particular luxury appeal:

> The Toledo at Muirend, it was decorated inside like Venice, with Gondolas and things like that at the side, but that's the only fancy one I can remember. The Waverly in Shawlands, that was very big I remember. A huge one. And I think they had a wee tea room you could go to afterwards.[7]

Rena, Dot, Jack and May also spoke of other leisure activities that they would attend, such as theatre, opera and ballet, however, none

[7] The Waverly (*map:16*)

of the Gorbals respondents mentioned other forms of cultural consumption, apart from describing television arriving at the end of the period (although most didn't own one for some time after). Mary Strang notes of cinema going in the Gorbals: "we didn't consider it such a luxury as we maybe do now". Indeed it was such a normal part of life that Mary Wood said that if there were good films, she "would have gone every night". It is perhaps that those from Cathcart had a greater choice of leisure practices, and that these were diverse in terms of place and luxury. The habitual, social practice of cinema never played such a huge part in their cultural lives, because there were other choices.

Conclusion

Looking at the emotive aspects of oral history accounts is valuable, but for local memory the most meaningful findings are those drawn together not through something deeply personal such as familial relationships, or something as diffuse as general notions of neighbourhood, but through memories of a very specific shared community practice. What emerges is an oral history that interacts with, and challenges cultural and historical myths, while enlightening us in a detailed and sometimes emotional way. 'True myths' such as Glasgow's violent character or its 'love affair' with cinema would not have been interrogated in quite the same way had the method used here not focused research onto very particular locales within the city, and would have lapsed into wider myths that surround a wider, imagined Glasgow. This study has found cinema going to be a social practice which is remembered as uninhibited by the purported violence and trouble of the city, and its poorer areas. It is, however, remembered with some trauma, expressed through the loss of Glasgow as a 'cinema city'. Yet, it is understood that the nostalgia for

cinemas lost as suddenly as they were in the Gorbals, is more acute than it is for the slow declining cinemas of the Cathcart area. Similarly, Glasgow's 'love affair' with cinema can be viewed as coupled with fondness for familial and social practice, which was equally 'lost' in the overall decline of the cinema spaces. It is in ways like this that we can see the cultural myths of Glasgow embodying different roles within the different areas of the city.

Research into local cultural memory bears a richness of detail about highly localised differences in past cultural practice in ways that cultural memory and cultural Geography have not. It highlights things like the link between an area's relative wealth and whether cinema going within it should be considered a social practice or a leisure practice. Most importantly, it allows us to examine the often loose and broad concept of past cultural communities in more practical and specific terms. South Glasgow felt the effects of the post-war decline of the cinemas in different ways. While some generalisations can be made with regards to differences in how this occurred as defined by geography and social class, there remains a complex and emotional personal engagement with these memories on the part of the individual respondent. The importance and meaningfulness of this can be drawn out through oral histories that aim specifically to explore local memory.

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