

# Saving, Rebuilding, or Making: Archival (Re)Constructions in Moving Image Archives

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## Abstract

This essay examines the contemporary restoration of legacy moving images. It argues that new technologies of restoration confront the archival profession with the need to reassess traditional methodologies and to articulate new theoretical frameworks. It introduces a range of conceptual problems including the nature and status of archival materials that require restoration and reconstitution, the desire to return moving images to their original states, and the differences between object-oriented and time- or event-oriented knowledge systems. A case study discusses three distinct archival representations of Marian Anderson's Lincoln Memorial Concert in 1939, which are symptomatic of a major shift within the moving image archival field. The paper suggests that the UCLA Film and Television Archive's experimental treatment of its archival footage of this historic concert represents an exemplary departure from the field's traditional and doctrinaire orientation toward neutrality and cautiousness. In addition to their previous role as custodians of legacy materials, archivists have now also begun to operate more openly as historical agents to fill in historical gaps by producing new works.

The concept of "giving the moment a posthumous shock" implies that when photographed or filmed, time is already dead. In executing images, one also executes time.<sup>1</sup>

In this way a cinematographic picture, in which a thousand plates add up into one scene and which is created between the source of light and the whiteness of the screen, makes it possible that the dead come to life and the absent come back.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, The Archive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 151.

<sup>2</sup> Boleslaw Matuszewski, *A New Source of History*, reprint (1898; repr., Warsaw: FilMOTEKA Narodowa, 1999), 26.

### Epistemological Anxiety: Objects, Objections, Objectivity

This paper explores the question of “what is to be done” when archival responsibilities seem quite daunting and the promises of a digital future seem still too utopian. With apologies to Jacques Derrida, a veritable *fever* of public attention has arisen around moving image archives and particularly the cause of film preservation over the past two decades. Indicators of a new focus include the birth and extraordinary growth of the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA);<sup>3</sup> the use of *preservation* as a term of art in television commercials for consumer electronics; the development of a *Code of Ethics* in 1999 by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF); and the establishment of graduate degree programs in moving image archiving at the University of East Anglia, the University of California at Los Angeles, New York University, Rochester University, and the University of Amsterdam. It is striking, however, that the field has written so little about itself and its core assumptions.

Predictions of the imminent demise of film duplicating stocks in the face of the multitudes of collections yet to be preserved rightfully lead moving image archivists to worry about the proximate future.<sup>4</sup> Recent attempts to professionalize the field, along with the accompanying uncertainties, can be seen at work in the field’s attempts to take stock of its past accomplishments and to explore its next steps. Thus, the perfect storm represented by the nearly simultaneous end of cinema’s first century and the end of the millennium occasioned soul searching with unprecedented fervor. In 1995, the FIAF Congress in Los Angeles literalized this self-reflection, emblematically entitling its symposium “The First Hundred Years, The Next Hundred Years.” FIAF’s London Congress in 2000 explored the tension between a romanticist nostalgia and critical self-examination. Its symposium was titled “The Last Nitrate Picture Show,” and it launched the retrospective publication about the glories and dangers of nitrate film stock, *This Film Is Dangerous*.<sup>5</sup> FIAF subsequently institutionalized its focus on (and anxiety about) the future by establishing an annual context for precisely such open-ended discourse. Since 2001, all FIAF congresses now also include a roundtable discussion called the Second Century Forum.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.amianet.org/>, accessed 14 June 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The major manufacturers of photographic raw stock have, over time, introduced, replaced, or simply discontinued numerous types of negative, reversal, and print stocks. For example, many of the 16 mm color reversal stocks, which were once the medium of choice for television news film, are no longer available. Starting in the early 1990s, just as announcements began to appear about the anticipated deployment of digital cinema projection and distribution, Kodak significantly reduced its budget for research and development of new film stocks. These reductions certainly reflect the widespread transition in the consumer market from still photography based on film to digital cameras. One of the more troubling developments, however, is that newer moving image stocks do not accurately reproduce the visual qualities of Kodak’s earlier products.

<sup>5</sup> Roger Smither, ed., *This Film Is Dangerous: A Celebration of Nitrate Film* (Brussels: International Federation of Film Archives, 2002).

Epochal shifts of the kind highlighted by the end of a millennium, or at least by the end of an art form's first century, often lead to deep questioning of that art form's very intellectual roots. The cultural tension between too much history (the mountainous volumes of media that must be preserved) and too little history (the virtual and nearly infinite possibilities of digital mediascapes) provokes a self-conscious (re)appraisal. To situate itself, the film archival field needs to describe its goals and articulate the underlying discourses of its practices. This paper focuses on the core epistemological questions that inform film archival philosophy and that precede and guide the restoration of archival moving images.<sup>6</sup>

Moving image restoration entered the film archivist's landscape relatively recently. The exhibition of the restored *Napoleon* (Abel Gance, 1925) at New York's Radio City Music Hall in 1981 catalyzed public attention more than any previous event. The film community now considers restoration to be a valid and attractive archival activity, as seen in the number of film festivals that either feature or are entirely dedicated to the topic, for example, *Le giornate del cinema muto* in Pordenone, Italy, *Festivals of Preservation* at UCLA and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, *Il Cinema Ritrovato* organized by the Cineteca di Bologna, and, for a brief moment, *Cine Memoire* in Paris. In addition, the term *restoration* itself has taken on culturewide cachet and is regularly mobilized in marketing campaigns for commercial re-releases of both legacy and contemporary titles on DVD. *The Big Lebowski* (1998), a Cohen Brothers comedy, for example, advertises what has become a fairly common conflation of archival restoration and the promises of digital technologies. While the liner notes promise an "exclusive introduction" into the "restoration" of the famous toe scene, they also prominently announce that the DVD features an "ALL NEW DIGITALLY REMASTERED PICTURE." Even though newly marketed DVDs are most often only the result of freshly duplicated copies and therefore constitute neither philological nor technical reconstructions, the fact that the term *restoration* is used so promiscuously testifies to its force and resonance with the public.

Despite its growing prominence and importance, the moving image archival field has not yet agreed upon standards for restoration. It has established explicit categories neither for this practice nor, more generally, for schools of restoration thought.<sup>7</sup> The absence of articulated restoration theories

<sup>6</sup> A parallel account could also be traced in relationship to the other distinctive character of moving image archiving, i.e., exhibition practices.

<sup>7</sup> An early attempt to provide a taxonomy of restoration types can be found in Eileen Bowser, "Some Principles of Film Restoration," *Griffithiana* (October 1990): 172. Bowser's categorizations are organized, however, less by analyses of underlying conceptualizations and more by an ecumenical and general description of types of restoration goals. Interestingly, Bowser's early contribution was later resurrected, largely in tact, in Paul Read and Mark-Paul Meyer's major study of the technical issues for restoration, *Restoration of Motion Picture Film* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000), 71.

is tied to the uncertainties provoked by the field's current anxiety about its professional development. The FIAF *Code of Ethics*, for example, takes a remarkable conceptual leap by investing archival objects themselves with *rights*. Eschewing the traditional formulation of ethical codes, which most often address issues of proper professional conduct and the potential for conflicts of interest, four of the FIAF code's five sections define what are seen to be both abstract and deeply embedded moral values: *the rights of collections*, *the rights of future generations*, *exploitation rights*, and *the rights of colleagues*. The code states: "When restoring materials, archives will endeavor only to complete what is incomplete and to remove the accretions of time, wear and misinformation. They will not seek to change or distort the nature of the original material or the intentions of its creators."<sup>8</sup> The generality of these provisions deflects some thorny epistemological questions. Does the desired "completeness" refer to archival objects as artifacts, documents, texts, or works? Left unaddressed is an account of what makes an original. Is it indeed an object, an event, a record, or a performance? As we know from critical theory in media studies, literary criticism, and art history, locating authoritative evidence for the "intention" of a creator is a particularly complex matter. While this section of the *Code of Ethics* authorizes the archivist to repair damages created by "accretions of time," it makes no provisions for the manner in which works were intentionally altered by censorship, re-editing, colorization, and so forth. The code's basic orientation toward a primordial "original" restricts the range of (legitimate) options available to archivists with respect to the construction, expansion, updating, or refreshing of historical memory.

Even when archivists address the need for explicitly theoretical principles, the discourse on ethics tends to intervene. In his recent essay, "Just Another Form of Ideology: Ethical and Methodological Principles in Film Restoration," Andreas Busche connects his theoretical discussion on restoration with the proper codes of conduct for the archivist: "Every profession that aspires to technical vocational recognition sooner or later faces the necessity of developing codified guidelines for professionals working in the field."<sup>9</sup>

Neither the FIAF *Code of Ethics* nor AMIA's membership has enabled FIAF or AMIA to take positions of public advocacy on the pressing issues of copyright reform and fair use. Similarly, AMIA has taken no public position regarding either the practice of colorization or the steady decline in duplicating stocks. To map out a more nuanced historical landscape and to build coherent and systematic theoretical models for moving image restoration, I begin with the first

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.fiafnet.org>, point 1.5, accessed 2 July 2008

<sup>9</sup> Andreas Busche, "Just Another Form of Ideology? Ethical and Methodological Principles in Film Restoration," *The Moving Image* 6 (Fall 2006): 2.

of several important questions. What is the nature and status of the work to be restored?<sup>10</sup> Even though film restoration has been around for only twenty years, the nature and status of the work present a wide range of options. These options include the work as performance, experience, artifact, ruin, author's work, historical document, text, or palimpsest. For each definition, the methodology of the archivist is fundamentally different. Thus, an original performance is to be *restaged*, an experience is to be *relived*, an artifact is to be *rediscovered*, a ruin is to be *excavated and stabilized*, and an author's work is either to be *completed*, *updated*, or *revised* (as with a director's cut). Documents have to be *corrected for accuracy*. A palimpsest is *uncovered*, *re-inscribed*, and then *re-read*.

Running beneath this rich range of options, a fundamental epistemological tension operates between the nature, status, and historicity of the archival objects considered for restoration. Broadly speaking, this tension informs accounts (whether explicitly articulated or implied from practical cases) that either conceptualize these materials primarily as fixable and finite material objects (artifacts) or those that must inevitably treat such objects as illusive, time-based events, performances, and textualities. Another frequently articulated account is a figurative hybrid between archival artifacts and the more temporal constructions. Thus, when archivists seek to bring the cinema "back to life," they participate in a figurative rhetoric that displaces concepts of history and historical memory by activating biological metaphors. For such archival "poetics" then, scratches, color fading, and shrinkage are symptoms of biological infirmity, both wounds and scars, that require palliative treatment. In the acquisition of materials, archivists often speak of "triage." In preservation, they identify the stages of a film's (natural) life span and work to arrest the physical decay and the aging of particular artifacts. In restoration, archival intervention "breathes new life" into previously unviewable materials that are figuratively "reborn." Thus, for example, the concluding remarks on the DVD restoration demonstration of Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960) reveal the biological metaphor: "A film is not unlike the life of a man. He is born and lives for many years and his soul is forever. But his body, after a while, begins to age. A film too lasts for many years and continues to live in the minds of the audience."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Paolo

<sup>10</sup> This essay is part of a larger research project in which five fundamental questions, drawn largely from literary criticism and particularly from hermeneutics, are plotted against archives discourse and restoration practices. The sheer scope of the challenges faced by working moving image archivists often leaves little time for self-reflection, but if the profession is to continue to evolve toward a unified field, it will need to articulate the explicit conceptual foundations for its practice. The questions are 1) What is the nature and status of the work to be restored?, 2) What is to be done to the work?, 3) What is the model and authority for the restoration, what guides the particular method?, 4) What does the restoration produce, in terms of temporality, pleasure, social function, and historicity?, and 5) What audience or constituency does it address? The long-term goal is to produce a historical taxonomy of restoration schools. For the purposes of the current study, we explore only the first of these five core questions.

<sup>11</sup> Nathan Carroll, "Unwrapping Archives: DVD Restoration Demonstrations and the Marketing of Authenticity," *Velvet Light Trap* 56, no. 1, 18–31.

Cherchi-Usai's influential *The Death of Cinema* is premised on an inevitable finality of films whose decay (aging) begins at the birth of the original image:

Moving image preservation will then be redefined as the science of its gradual loss and the art of coping with the consequences, very much like a physician who has accepted the inevitability of death even while he continues to fight for the patient's life.<sup>12</sup>

The professional cautiousness of the archival field leads to a general preference to consider archival materials as physical objects that need to be protected from the ravages of time and the unprincipled mutilation by various agencies. Mark-Paul Meyer and Paul Read in their well-documented study, *Restoration of Motion Picture Film*,<sup>13</sup> refer to "the differences between the materials you began with and the materials you end with." In general terms, this approach—that is, absolute fidelity with respect to materials received by the archives—appears in various influential essays and presentations by Paolo Cherchi-Usai, now chief curator of Australia's National Film and Sound Archive.

Several things happen to a film between the time of its first screening and its entry into a moving image archive or a collection. This segment of time shapes the "internal" history of the copy: the history of the places where it was shown and kept, and of the people who, with varying degrees of awareness, preserved it. It is also the history of the changes that have taken place with the object in the course of time: the history of its progressive self-destruction and, perhaps, of its final disappearance before it could be restored.<sup>14</sup>

When speaking of an "original" that needs some repair or reconstitution, archivists debate the value of the textual authority upon which to model this rebuilding. Historical authenticity is a matter of retracing the genetic code from an incomplete or damaged copy, to more complete preproduction elements, and finally to the original camera negative. William Routt, for example, bluntly questions even the authority provided by the original camera negative of a film, an authority that moving image archivists traditionally view as nearly absolute: "A negative is not the original of a film, although perhaps it comes close to that ideal. A film has no original."<sup>15</sup>

The return to an archival artifact's original state is a conceptual impossibility for two reasons. First, as we have seen with the biological metaphors, the

<sup>12</sup> Paolo Cherchi-Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory and the Digital Dark Age* (London: British Film Institute, 2001), 105.

<sup>13</sup> Read and Meyer, *Restoration of Motion Picture Film*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Paolo Cherchi-Usai, *Burning Passions: An Introduction to the Study of Silent Cinema, Revised Edition* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 12.

<sup>15</sup> William Routt, "Textual Criticism in the Study of Film," *Screening the Past*, Issue 1, 1997, available at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/firjul/wdr.html>, accessed 2 July 2008.

“natural” processes of material decay are automatic and are never completely repairable. Duplication, whether by analog or digital means, always produces some loss of information in subsequent generations of physical copies. Second, given the inherent multiplicity of copies, versions, formats, and delivery systems, the nagging question of what exactly constitutes *the* original moving image may indeed be deemed permanently irresolvable. So, for example, in the first paragraph of his study of the recent restorations of Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927), Martin Koerber concludes: “Many have, at some point, seen something on the screen called *Metropolis*. But what did they see? Certainly not the film written in 1924 by Thea von Harbou and directed by Fritz Lang in 1925/26, because that film ceased to exist in April 1927.”<sup>16</sup> Archives are nonetheless left with several fundamental questions. Short of abandoning all claims to the (re)production of historical memory, and assuming that appropriate material procedures can be identified, what kind of record can be produced by archival reconstructions? Of what are these restorations evidence? Until now, answers to these questions have largely eluded both the traditionalist “neutrality” and the more contemporary “professionalism” of the moving image archival field.

#### **Time Honored: Restoration, Rustle, and Flow**

Once restorers seek to restore wholeness to an artifact, curatorial judgment encounters the need for historical analysis. In this encounter, the referents of reliability and accuracy lie outside the object itself. The indexical chain between physically cloned copies is superimposed upon, if not trumped by, contingencies beyond the innate properties of a given material artifact. This disjuncture then induces questions about the placement of the artifact and its text within time. The archivist then begins to grapple within an array of historiographic questions around causality, periodization, and the historical effects of given cultural operations. Given the processes of continual decay built into the physical properties of film and the often fragmentary status of individual copies, historical analysis and interpretation become the archivist’s primary tools. Thus, archival artifacts, whether “whole” or fragmentary, cannot stand alone.

With respect to archaeology, Wolfgang Ernst considers the act of reading simply essential: “Hermeneutics makes the reader animate the past” because

The philological work of critical historians is both based on fragments and deals with fragments. Archaeological findings (like any monument out of the archive) are not the fundament, but the abyss of historical interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Martin Koerber, “Notes on the Proliferation of *Metropolis* (1927),” *The Moving Image* 2 (Spring 2002): 74.

<sup>17</sup> Wolfgang Ernst, “Modular Readings (Writing the Monument),” *Rethinking History* 3, no. 1 (1999): 53–78.

If we consider the specific role played by hermeneutics in the history of moving image media, the analytical operation adds clarity to restoration practices. In the case of *Metropolis*, Giorgio Bertellini makes a compelling case for media historians (and archivists) to embrace intellectual traditions outside the customary and often exclusionary boundaries of studies that begin and end with the singular artifact:

I am sure that Patalas has specified his goal and the limits of his enterprise several times; I am not sure historians clearly acknowledge the lucid historiographic partiality of his initiative. Thus, I would argue that “restoring *Metropolis*” means to establish complex and plurivocal transactions between the film text(s) and the cultural sites of their historical production and consumption. Once more, I would like to stress that it is in such restagings of cultural and historical assemblages that film studies questions its specificity and encounters wider references of historical study and intelligibility.<sup>18</sup>

In this context, one of the most interesting intellectual currents within recent art history, archaeology, and museum studies explores the relationship between ruins and the pleasure derived by observing them. For Dominic Paini, former curator of the Cinémathèque Française, that relationship leads to a kind of reverie. In playfully describing the re-viewing of nitrate-based cinema, Paini suggested at FIAF’s *Last Nitrate Picture Show*:

We project many things onto nitrate for want of being able to project it! Threatened by disappearance, inflammable, dangerous? Certainly! All of this is true. But in this looking-back to nitrate there is also an imaginary realm peculiar to the Cinémathèque, a melancholy reverie of ruins.<sup>19</sup>

This current expresses, however, both a romanticist sentiment over the disappearance of golden ages and an attempt to historically locate the charge and significance that witnessing traces of the past holds for both archaeological discovery and contemporary museum practices. Ruins and by extension lacunae, look both to the past and to the future. They are simultaneously indexical references to the passage of time and signs of resistance against an eventual oblivion. In his introduction to *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*, Michael S. Roth contextualizes the goals of a recent exhibition and conference organized by the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles to

...explore the attractions of decay: the curiosity, *frisson*, reverence, and pleasure that ruins seem to arouse in those who contemplate the past through its

<sup>18</sup> Enno Patalas is the former curator of the Munich Film Archive who reconstructed works by some of the cinema’s most influential directors, including Sergei Eisenstein and Fritz Lang. Giorgio Bertellini, “Restoration Genealogy and Palimpsests: On Some Historiographical Questions,” *Film History* 7 (Autumn 1995): 277–90.

<sup>19</sup> Dominic Paini, “Reproduction . . . Disappearance,” in *This Film Is Dangerous*, 172.



physical traces, often its architectural remains. . . .When we frame an object as a ruin, we reclaim that object *from* its fall into decay and oblivion and often *for* some kind of cultural attention and care that, in a sense, elevates its value.<sup>20</sup>

For Roth, the cultural historian and museum curator must achieve a balance in their treatment of such objects between that which is *ruined* and the process of *ruination*. Whereas the former permanently obstructs a vision into the past, the latter represents the centrality of human agency in its struggle against decay and for the future. A particularly provocative theorem flows from this conceptual distinction. On the one hand, if a ruin was to be repaired, a lacuna to be filled in, the object would consequently lose some of its charge; its significance would be reduced, and the potential pleasures of its re-reception would diminish. By extension, if an archivist restored a film so that no vestigial traces of the act of repair remained, the new version would reify the work by suppressing the archives' relationship to its own agency. The restored film would become a denatured contemporary work. On the other hand, leaving behind traces of the restorative process calls attention to what's arguably most at stake, that is, the long-term struggle to arrest decay as a contemporary act, a modern act of resistance against the natural passage of time. "Imperfect" or "incomplete" restorations contain signs of what Roland Barthes refers to as the "rustle" of language.<sup>21</sup> Although this appears counterintuitive from the viewpoint of media as entertainment, the implied presence of the archivist's hand represents the possibility of returning "aura"<sup>22</sup> to a modern work of restoration.

The social significance of such a returned aura is especially powerful in the context of the field's epistemological anxiety about the status of originals. It potentially contributes to archival claims of authority and, hence, increases the likelihood of positive critical readings, popular reception, and institutional funding by shifting attention away from the ontology of the original to the *authenticity* of restored works. In his discussion of the manner in which colorization processes "tamper" with the historical record, Charles Acland argues for the power of the authentic:

One of the principle constructs involved in the formulation of popular histories is that of originality and authenticity. The value of authenticity, though reworked by the reproducibility of the image and theories of authorship, continues to carry a terrific weight, particularly in our commonsensical notions

<sup>20</sup> Michael S. Roth, "Ruins Reclaimed," in *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed*, ed. Michael S. Roth, Claire Lyons, and Charles Merewether (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1997), 1.

<sup>21</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> In this context, the term "aura" derives from Walter Benjamin's seminal 1937 article: "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," available at <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>, accessed 2 July 2008.

of films of distinction and value. There is a lot at stake in the establishment of stable reference points and in the re-installation of the aura, what might be referred to as the reproduction of the authentic.<sup>23</sup>

The “archaeological,” time-oriented approach to media archiving is applied to two phases of practice: stabilization and updating. In the first phase, priority is given to the preservation of the artifact as it arrives at the archival institution. Thus, duplication of damaged and/or incomplete artifacts is equivalent to the archaeologist’s plaster-casting of ruins as unearthed *in situ*. In the second stage, the repair of damaged artifacts is conducted, not only to return the object’s original integrity, but also to render it enjoyable to contemporary, nonspecialist audiences. Examples of this form of updating are quite common within the private sector and include the transformation of monaural sound tracks to stereo, the colorization of formerly black-and-white works, and the resizing of legacy aspect ratios for their presentation on television or computer screens. To circumvent the theoretical authority located in the restaging of an author’s original artistic vision, for example, updaters claim that technical advances merely extend that vision. In the much-discussed case of the restored *Vertigo* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1958), the archivists claim that Hitchcock would have used digital stereo technologies on the sound track had they been available in 1958.<sup>24</sup> In this case, the integrity of the original film had not been altered by the intrusion of the Hollywood studio system. Thus, the technical “updating” of the film was guided by the artistic sensibilities, the interpretive skills of its restorers, James Katz and Robert Harris. Despite their controversial decision to entirely remix the original sound track, it has been suggested that the restoration team significantly improved on Hitchcock’s vision.

The restoration (or improvement) of *Vertigo* raises some of the same concerns that Ted Turner’s colorization attempts do. At what point does the work of enhancing images and sound tracks (in *Vertigo*’s case, through extensive remixing and the recording of a brand-new Foley track) begin to corrupt the original work? These questions, at least in the case of *Vertigo*, pale before the restoration team’s achievement: There can be no doubt that Hitchcock’s film benefited from the work of Harris and Katz. In short, Harris and Katz—through judicious decisions and careful work—created a *Vertigo* that Hitchcock himself would have enjoyed watching.

The second phase of updating—the repair of damaged artifacts to render them enjoyable to contemporary, nonspecialist audiences—occurs less frequently and less obviously in public-sector archives. When it does, it is often

<sup>23</sup> Charles Acland, “Tampering with the Inventory: Colorization and Popular Histories,” *Wide Angle* 12 (April 1990): 12–20.

<sup>24</sup> Dan Aulier, *Vertigo: The Making of a Hitchcock Classic* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 196.

considered controversial. As a site of contention over archival ethics, archivists seek to maintain boundaries between themselves and the “user” community, contrasting disinterested, objective, and “neutral” preservation with the “improper” and subjective appropriation of archival objects. Archivists are suspicious about what they often consider the antipreservationist remixing of legacy materials frequently practiced by both activist documentarians and experimental filmmakers in works such as Bill Morrison’s *The Film of Her* (1996) and *DeCasia: The State of Decay* (2002), Gustav Deutsch’s *Film Ist 1-6* (2002), Ken Jacobs’s *Tom Tom the Piper’s Son* (1969), and Peter Depeut’s *Lyrical Nitrate* (1991). A number of films (the experimental works of Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi, Ernie Gehr, and Bruce Conner) use found (archival) footage to explore the very theme of the material decay of film. Institutional anxiety over the appropriate treatment of legacy materials explicitly surfaces, for example, in the program notes from the UCLA Film and Television Archive’s Twelfth Annual Festival of Preservation. In describing one of the festival’s programs, *Remains To Be Seen*, the UCLA Archive made sure to dissociate its own vision of preservation from some of the works presented:

None of the films in tonight’s program has been preserved by the Archive. Rather, they explore an alternative mode of “preservation. . . all the films take faded, scratched, blotched, corroded or disintegrating celluloid from cinema’s past, and transform them into something new. . . .”<sup>25</sup>

The nervousness in UCLA’s program notes over such rhetorical differences stems from the theoretical possibility that a professional, public-sector archives might depart from its historic steadfastness with respect to an underlying doctrine of archival neutrality. It is a self-reflexive indication of that doctrine’s inadequacy with respect to at least two contemporary forces that make for both daunting challenges and paradigm-shifting opportunities.

### Fragments and New History

First, the theoretical inability to (re)create a stable and singular original for legacy materials (defined as *either* objects or events) is compounded by the practical impossibility of “keeping up” with the future by preserving a significant percentage of that which is newly produced. Second, whether we understand this challenge from within a Derridian framework (memory, and therefore archives, are based on loss) or as a statistical account of impossible volumes and economies of scale, archives are always fragmentary and therefore profoundly

<sup>25</sup> The *Remains To Be Seen* series included works by Bill Morrison, Peggy Ahwesh, Phil Solomon, Stan Brakhage, Yervant Gianikian, and Angela Ricci Lucchi.

metonymic. Unrestored works are always fragments of larger wholes. Collections of works only represent slices of larger histories.<sup>26</sup>

Even at this historical juncture, the fundamental law of the archival universe continues to be a scarcity of resources compared to a plenitude of collections (and a multiplicity of copies, versions, and formats). Archives have always had to make choices: what to collect, how to document, how to prioritize for preservation, how to provide access. Until recently, however, the field has largely left this basic contradiction unstated, preferring instead to circulate discourses of impartiality and professional objectivity. The consequences of explicit and visible interventions have been seen to be potentially destabilizing insofar as they might exceed the bounds of that archival humility by impressing a personal or political stamp upon History. However, such interventions may also act as self-disclosure and, as such, enable a widened public discussion about archival priorities and claims. They provide the foundation for explicit debate and advocacy within the public sphere. As the loss of film-/analog-based reproduction capacities emphasizes breaks in the traditional genetic chain of fidelity, contemporary archival practice has begun to more readily insert self-reflexive markers of its own agency. The question becomes: What role should archives play in proposing models for what the cinema can or should become in the future?

In larger social terms, what's at stake in this renegotiation is the public's shifting expectations of archives. For most of the history of the archival profession, the deployment of canons of excellence and significance often validated archival decisions. One need only think of the American Film Institute's annual listing of the "best" one hundred titles and the Library of Congress's annual selection of twenty-five films for inclusion in the National Film Registry. Such lists indicate a cultural shift in archiving from a previous, antiquarian mode to a more contemporary engagement with discourses on history. However, the underlying historiographic implications of this transition have as much to do with suggestions about future practice as they do with creating categories for the cinema's past. As such, the AFI lists are broadcast each year and clearly also function in support of the marketing of such titles to home video.<sup>27</sup> The films selected for the National Film Registry, on the other hand, are designated for

<sup>26</sup> Because there are many different types of fragments and lacunae, a detailed analysis of their figurative and rhetorical operations with respect to archival restoration could be particularly illuminating. Although it focuses primarily on avant-garde films, Jeffrey Skoller's work is a promising point of departure. Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> The AFI lists have been criticized for establishing canons that effectively exclude works by women and minority communities. See Chon Noriega, "The Aztlán Film Institute's Top 100 List," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* (Fall 1998). The lists have been equally criticized for their narrow construction of film history and for a lack of scholarly and/or cinephilic justification. See Jonathan Rosenbaum, "List-o-Mania: Or, How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Movies," *Chicago Reader*, 26 June 1998.

immediate preservation. The overarching question has to do with the social effects of the discourse of lists. Is list making a centripetal or centrifugal operation? In other words, do the included titles figuratively embody and socially reconfirm the qualities of their particular categories, or are they metonymically suggestive in the sense that they point outward to other works yet to be named? The intellectual difference is that the former seeks stability, closure, and commodification, while the latter invites curiosity, critical awareness, and further research.

In both cases, such lists participate in the tension between an archaeological desire to stabilize objects as strata of history and a critical intervention on the part of archivists to interpret and intervene into History. Such selections and interpretations identify source materials for the writing of cinema history that tend toward the grand narratives of corporate studios and the famous directors and stars of the cultural mainstream. Jan-Christopher Horak reflects on the exclusionary potential this approach has for film education:

If only a limited canon is available for such classroom use, then only the canon according to Blockbuster will indeed be taught and shown to students. How do you teach a course on Third World Cinema, on American independent documentary, on classical documentaries from the thirties, on avant-garde films from any period, when at present virtually no one is willing to finance their digitization? Given these restrictions, students are confronted with a fragmented, incomplete, and distorted view of film history, based on what commercial distributors deem viable in the market place, rather than what academic discourse has ascertained as important.<sup>28</sup>

But AFI and National Film Registry operations are not the entire story. The archival community has indeed taken up a position of public advocacy for different approaches to its collections and their relationship to History. Now that the field has realized that “nitrate can wait,” the new clarion call (since the late nineties) emphasizes the cultural and historical significance of the orphan film. This new emphasis suggests an enabling of if not oppositional, at least alternative, historiographic models. For future debates, the field will have to examine another potential risk of loss. Embedded in the topology of the orphan film discourse lurks the possibility of a different kind of nostalgic episteme. The concept of *orphan* implies an incomplete or fragmented familial order. If then the work of the archivist is to restabilize such works within an ordered wholeness commensurate with the traditional hierarchical order of the nuclear and patriarchal family, such a framework may ironically diminish the potentially oppositional quality of the films themselves. While the actual political force of this figural risk

<sup>28</sup> Jan-Christopher Horak, “Old Media Becomes New Media: The Metamorphoses of Historical Films in the Age of Their Digital Dissemination,” in *Celluloid Goes Digital*, ed. Martin Loiperdinger (Trier, Ger.: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2003), 21.

may not, in reality, compromise the field's new orientation, the questions are whether this particular historical turn broadens the archival landscape and whether such works will be validated on their own unique historical terms. In any event, the overriding point is that such a discussion can now be undertaken within a field whose family secrets were closely guarded for most of its evolution.

### **The Future of the Past:<sup>29</sup> Saving or Making Worlds that Never Were**

#### **Case Study: Marian Anderson's Lincoln Memorial Concert, 1939**

Over the last decade, evidence indicates archivists have begun to explore practices that significantly depart from tradition and from the field's long-term ethical commitment to neutrality. Do these departures represent occasional experiments and/or lapses, or are they symptomatic of a larger historical turn? And, if something truly new is afoot, are we witnessing a weakening of professional standards or a progressive and liberating turn toward activism and historical agency?

To explore these questions, I looked at three archival works that are bound together by their common reference to a specific historical event: Marian Anderson's 9 April 1939 concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. All three works have been presented publicly, on numerous occasions, by the UCLA Film and Television Archive. Each work contains figural traces of distinct philosophical orientations to the restoration and (re)construction of archival moving images. Unlike other archival practices, restoration raises particularly challenging questions about the relationship between events and their representation, and it calls into question the archives' relationship to History.

#### **The Event**

A 9 April 1939 article in the *New York Times* reported on Marian Anderson's hugely successful Easter morning concert:

An enthusiastic crowd estimated at 75,000, including many government officials, stood at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial today and heard Marian Anderson, Negro contralto, give a concert and tendered an unusual ovation.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> The title of this section echoes both Janet Staiger's contribution to the *Cinema Journal* forum on film history; *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 126 and Alexander Stille's book, *The Future of the Past* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> "Throng Honors Marian Anderson in Concert at Lincoln Memorial: Estimated 75,000, Gathered at Monument to Emancipator, Rush Toward Negro Singer at End—Ickes Introduces Her," *New York Times*, 9 April 1939.

The article hints at the event's political backstory. Anderson's concert was originally proposed for Washington, D.C.'s Constitution Hall, but the Daughters of the American Revolution, who owned the hall, denied access to her. The Marian Anderson Citizens Committee, with support from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, sought to redress the problem and circulated a petition of protest that found its way to Eleanor Roosevelt. After resigning her membership in the D.A.R., the first lady supported the selection of an "alternative" venue, the Lincoln Memorial. In early March, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes assented to the request from concert organizers Walter White and Sol Hurok for the use of this national monument.<sup>31</sup> The concert itself has often been memorialized as an important event in the movement for civil rights in the United States. It inspired a range of scholarly studies and richly documented commemorative publications including several illustrated Marian Anderson biographies.<sup>32</sup> In her thorough account of UCLA's archival treatment of the film of the concert, Andrea Leigh describes the concert's historic placement as

... a convincing argument that the Lincoln Memorial concert was the first significant civil rights action invoking the "political use of Lincoln's memory" into a "tactical learning experience" that positively promoted the rights of African-Americans.<sup>33</sup>

I examined three film works that relate to the famous concert.

#### **Hearst Metrotone News of the Day (volume 10, no. 259)**

The fourth of the nine stories in this Hearst Metrotone newsreel is titled "Lesson in Tolerance at the Nation's Capitol!" and features Anderson singing "America."<sup>34</sup> For its preservation, UCLA's Blaine Bartell produced a 35 mm composite fine grain master positive and a 35 mm re-recorded sound track negative. The restoration work included repairing individual frames and splices, and inserting occasional frames to keep the image and sound track in sync. The Anderson footage runs approximately one-and-a-half minutes from the total of nine minutes, thirteen seconds of the released newsreel.

<sup>31</sup> The Marian Anderson Citizens Committee's request to use the auditorium of Armstrong High School was also initially denied.

<sup>32</sup> Russell Freedman, *The Voice that Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (New York: Clarion Books, 2004); Allan Keller, *Marian Anderson: A Singer's Journey* (New York: Scribner, 2000); Pam Muñoz, *When Marian Anderson Sang* (New York: Scholastic Press, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> Andrea Leigh, "The Marian Anderson Lincoln Memorial Concert: An Event Re-creation," *The Moving Image* 2 (Spring 2002): 95. Leigh is paraphrasing historian Mark Sandage, "A Marble House Divided: The Lincoln Memorial, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Politics of Memory: 1939–1963," *Journal of American History* 80 (June 1993): 135–67.

<sup>34</sup> The full newsreel contains the following stories: "Europe's War Crisis," "Poland Gets Ready," "Keeping America Neutral," "Spring Avalanches Bury Villages!," "Treacherous Rocks Wreck Freighter!," "Danish Royalty on First Visit Here!," "English Dinghy Fleet Braves Choppy Seas," and "Football Training on Bucking Bronco."

**Marian Anderson: The Lincoln Memorial Concert**

After preserving the footage from the released newsreel, the Film Archive turned its attention to film of the entire concert. While UCLA's preservation staff was able to locate the real-time transcription of NBC's radio broadcast, original filmed images of the entire concert remained beyond reach. Rather than cutting the radio transmission to match the extant footage, archivists interspersed other materials from their newsreel collections (cuts, outtakes, unreleased newsfilm) to fill in the temporal gaps. Where Marian Anderson's voice is heard on the radio but she cannot be seen on the memorial's steps, they "completed" the film by interjecting images, such as aerial views of the Capitol, cherry trees in bloom, and other monuments, that seemed appropriate to an imagined time/space of springtime Washington, D.C. Some of these chronotopical images date to the time period of the newsreel. Others were produced well after the original newsreel's release.<sup>35</sup> Although the use of "cutaway" images is a common practice in documentary filmmaking, the inclusion of anachronistic materials in a historical reconstruction represents something of a departure from tradition at UCLA and other public-sector archives. This second work runs approximately thirty-two minutes and was publicly exhibited in 1998 at the Film and Television Archive's Ninth Annual Festival of Preservation.

**(From) Marian Anderson: The Lincoln Memorial Concert**

This production runs approximately eight minutes and represents a condensation of the concert reconstruction production. It is included in the National Film Preservation Foundation's (NFPF) DVD *Treasures from the American Film Archives* released in 2002. Extensive liner notes explain the differences between it, as an experiment, and the original released newsreel. The new title itself reflects both inevitable lacunae as well as the institution's recognition that a reconstruction of the original newsreel would never constitute a complete record of the concert. Indeed, the liner notes alternatively refer to this project as "draft" and as a "work in progress." In the end, although this operation frequently mobilizes the discourse of restoration and UCLA's considerable reputation,<sup>36</sup> it must be considered an entirely new work.

<sup>35</sup> UCLA's online catalog is particularly detailed and indicates the issue dates and provenance of each of these elements, available at <http://cinema.library.ucla.edu>, accessed 2 July 2008.

<sup>36</sup> The UCLA Film and Television Archive is internationally recognized for its meticulous restorations of films such as *Becky Sharp* (1935, Rouben Mamoulian), *Caught* (1949, Max Ophuls), *Cleopatra* (1934, Cecil B. DeMille), *Stagecoach* (1939, John Ford), and *The Wild Party* (1929, Dorothy Arzner). As an oft-cited standard setter for the moving image archival field, the archive's departure from and/or experiment with traditional practice is particularly significant.



## Comparison

In addition to the extended running time, there are at least three significant differences between the first work (the material restoration of the newsreel as archival artifact) and the second and third works (the (re)productions of historical accounts of the concert as an event). First, for the newsreel, the authority for archival intervention derives from a meticulous retracing of the chain of extant copies of the released newsreel back to the original Hearst materials. For the second and third productions, the Film Archive's analysis of the political and social circumstances surrounding both the original artifact *and* the historical significance of the concert informed, in part, the guidelines for the archival labor. Thus, for example, the new works contain representations of what the archive considered "typical" families who might have listened to the concert on their radios at home.<sup>37</sup>

Second, because the later works include views that could not have been filmed, at that time, by the Hearst cameramen (aerial views from dirigibles, the chronotopical radio audiences, etc.), they transfer the narration and authorship from the Hearst Corporation to the UCLA Archive.

Third, the inclusion of these "impossible" views serves, not only to fill in temporal gaps, but also to address what, from a contemporary perspective, might be considered the structural insufficiency of the newsreel form to get the whole picture. On the one hand, newsreels are confined to representing *mise-en-scenes* as they happen or as they are restaged for cameras located in fixed positions. On the other hand, ironically, even though the images of the family audiences were clearly inserted into the new work *after the fact* of the concert, they lay claim to an authenticity, an additional authority for *the real* by introducing representations of *liveness*. In writing about the differences between filmed documentaries and television news programs, Philip Rosen describes these effects in the following way:

The possibility of liveness is, of course, a distinguishing possibility of broadcast technologies, with television adding moving perspectival images to radio's sound. . . . To indexical media in which liveness is a possibility, we can oppose these media of indexical traces, such as photography, phonography and cinema, in which liveness is not possible.<sup>38</sup>

Yet another, and perhaps more complex, structural difference distinguishes the newsreel restoration from the concert film. UCLA used the transcription of the NBC broadcast as a guide for arranging the images not

<sup>37</sup> In other contexts, this is the difference between effects of mimesis and the narrative structure of historical accounts.

<sup>38</sup> Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 227.

contained within the original newsreel. But since the transcription did not contain all of Anderson's songs, the archive looked to the structure and rhythm of the *silent* newsreel form to enhance the overall effect of the new work. Thus, Leigh describes the archive's attempts to balance a fidelity to newsreel form with its appreciation of the event's historical significance:

The UCLA Film and Television Archive made a concerted effort to piece together the re-creation following the structure of silent newsreels. Since it was not desirable to have an authoritative narrative, the Archive chose, instead, to have the images speak for themselves, while inserting intertitles to introduce each of the songs. This anachronistic approach may not capture the newsreel structure exhibited after the coming of sound, but it is a choice that was meant to heighten the importance of this very solemn and moving event.<sup>39</sup>

From the perspective of moving image media history, the simultaneous invoking of different media forms (radio and silent newsreels) and the anachronistic combining of images from different sources—practices more common in experimental film than in “archivally faithful” reconstructions—produce effects of authenticity. UCLA is not alone, however, among professional and well-respected archives in making the transition from using traditional restoration practices to acting as author and producer of new works.

The UCLA Film and Television Archive began to utilize its collections for new media productions in the late nineties with *Executive Order 9066: The Incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II* (Grolier International, 1998). Since 2000, a substantial number of members of the International Federation of Film Archives, including British Film Institute, Bundersarchiv, Cineteca di Friuli, Cinémathèque of Greece/Museum of Cinema, Cinémathèque de Bretagne, Cinémathèque of Macedonia, Cineteca Nacional (Mexico), Deutsches Filminstitut, Filmoteca de la UNAM (Mexico), Fondazione Cineteca Italiana, Hungarian Film Institute, Imperial War Museum, Nederlands Filmmuseum, Norwegian Film Institute, Romanian Film Archive, ScreenSound Australia, Slovenian Cinémathèque, and Wales Film and Television Archive, have produced new titles either in CD-ROM, VHS, or DVD formats. And, although not produced exclusively by FIAF archives, an avalanche of new media titles draws heavily from such repositories.<sup>40</sup>

One of the most immediate exigencies of this historical turn will be to create appropriate categories for the classification of new works that make use of legacy materials and also show visible signs of archival intervention. For example, many of the new archival works rely upon the act of compilation rather

<sup>39</sup> Leigh, *Marian Anderson Lincoln Memorial Concert*, 100.

<sup>40</sup> Three of the more compelling non-FIAF titles include *Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant-Garde Film 1894–1941* (2001), *Immaterial Bodies* (1999), *Overlord* (1975/2007).

than repair or completion for their (re)creation. Thus, the order in which individual artifacts are placed within narrative wholes represents a substantive alteration of the nature of the work. In his description of the British Film Institute's DVD *Electric Edwardians: The Films of Mitchell and Kenyon* (2005), Nathan Carroll stresses the project's significance both for the British Film Institute as a cultural agency in constant search of limited resources and as symptomatic of an archives' role in the construction of historical memory for the cinema. He makes a compelling case that the very architecture of such DVDs expresses important social valences:

To this end, the concerted act of digging and archiving is productive of the surplus value of history, whether of the films or other cultural artifacts. It is the effort exuded in archival restoration and reconstruction projects that at the end of the day produces the future value of what lost films will mean to the public—and further, what they should have meant all along. . . . DVDs index not only the contingency of time recorded in the film's emulsion but, as virtual archival architectures, also provide immediate access to how a film might have been otherwise restored, spatially coordinated, and publicly remembered. DVDs push the limits of archival discourse as new media by self-reflexively archiving the contingency of their own archival practices.<sup>41</sup>

At the very least, it can be argued that digital technologies (specifically the DVD) render such restorations as new works. When incomplete or previously undiscovered materials are compiled in DVDs, new palimpsests for the individual bits and new narratives about their *wholeness* within the history of cinema are presented to the public for the first time. Indeed, one could expand this formulation to include the context, place, and scheduling of film exhibitions where archival restorations are presented to contemporary audiences. Within DVDs, numerous signs give additional focus to concept of "the [archive's] contingency of their own archival practices." When dealing with legacy collections, therefore, the images cannot speak for themselves in all their original glory and authenticity. This realization is a major departure from the manner in which archives have located the "the sanctity of evidence; respect des fonds, provenance, and original order; the life cycle of records; the organic nature of records; and hierarchy in records and their descriptions."<sup>42</sup>

In the archival field, then, how do we classify the DVD extras, voice-over narrations, and menus if indeed we are dealing, through these, with a new way of representing the archives itself and how it has now begun to function as

<sup>41</sup> Nathan Carroll, "Mitchell and Kenyon, Archival Contingency, and the Cultural Production of Historical License," *The Moving Image* 6 (Fall 2006): 55.

<sup>42</sup> For Anne Gilliland, these seven qualities lie at the base of the archival profession. Anne Gilliland, *Enduring Paradigm, New Opportunities: The Value of the Archival Perspective in the Digital Environment* (Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, 2000).

creative and historical agency? Carroll provides what is perhaps a very useful conceptual tool for future classifications: "Thus a digital restoration is, for all practical purposes, a new version: not a director's cut but an *archival cut*."<sup>43</sup> Nathan Carroll describes the restoration demonstration as a particular form, with its own rhetorical structures and discursive strategies. He lists nearly a hundred DVDs that feature such demonstrations and suggests that

It is in this cultural battle for the future of authentic cinema memory and archival authority that restoration demonstrations stake their claim. . . . Restoration demonstrations make it clear that we are no longer content with removing superficial damage. By editing into the image itself, we employ the means and motivation to resurface the intended content of film history, changing the nature, and, hence, the meaning of cultural memories.<sup>44</sup>

In this context, what can we say about the nature and purpose of compilations such as *Treasures from the American Archives*, *The Unseen Cinema*, and the upcoming *Century of Sound* from Chase Audio and the UCLA Film and Television Archive? What implications can be drawn about the metaphors that guide their acts of compiling, selecting, and ordering and the wholeness that they seek to establish; the cinema history that they seek to narrate? Is it fair to say, for example, that these figurative strategies enounce a rhetorical distinction between the memory of cinema *as it once was* and the history of cinema *as it should be*?

From the perspective of the three works produced by UCLA regarding the Marian Anderson concert, we can now pose a different question: What are the archival and historical contingencies that the Film Archive sought to suture or stabilize? In other words, what insufficiencies arise in the context of the traditional archival premise of fidelity to the original? For UCLA, the "historical" problems were innate and contextual, that is, they arose from both the incompleteness *and* the "inaccuracy" of the original newsreel footage. Thus, the "gaps" that Leigh refers to in her article are both literal/material and figurative/ideological:

. . . despite the unusually extensive and high-quality Hearst footage of the Lincoln memorial concert, it is still an incomplete record of the event. The actual length of the concert has never been precisely verified. NBC scheduled the concert broadcast at thirty minutes, but not all seven songs that Anderson sang are included in the broadcast. . . . As a result, gaps had to be filled in.<sup>45</sup>

UCLA's project is a metacritical, self-reflexive critique of the racism generally and deeply embedded in the newsreel form. According to Leigh, "What is

<sup>43</sup> Nathan Carroll, "Unwrapping Archives: DVD Restoration Demonstrations and the Marketing of Authenticity," *The Velvet Light Trap* 56 (Fall 2005): 20.

<sup>44</sup> Carroll, "Unwrapping Archives," 20.

<sup>45</sup> Leigh, *Marian Anderson Lincoln Memorial Concert*, 100.

even more evident is that newsreels recorded the everyday world of America's dominant *white culture*. African-Americans, for example, were rarely featured."<sup>46</sup>

The final lines of the DVD's liner notes prophetically anticipate a set of theoretical and political quandaries by suggesting a distinctively new cultural role for the archivist in the future: "The unifying idealism of 'America' from this singer in this setting made for an unrepeatable moment. UCLA's reconstruction helps bring it back to us."<sup>47</sup> Thus, the UCLA productions and the surrounding contextual discourses are less faithful re-presentations of the concert and more contemporary exhortations to the imagined "unifying" idealism that is potentially embodied by the archival project itself. Once the archivists were free to choose elements that were not part of the provenance chain going back to the original image and sound tracks, the specific selections of "other" materials became ideological in nature. For example, the imagined families listening at home to the concert *as if it were broadcast* do not match the demographics of the actual gathering. Where, in the main, that "real" audience was African American, the stock footage families were universally white and middle class. As a result, the eventfulness produced by the concatenation of repertory material, serves to denature a reading of the film as "out of the past," and, instead, expresses a wish fulfillment for an imminently social future. By building a noncontingent unity between the two social bodies (the crowd gathered at the Lincoln Memorial and the families listening at home), *(From) Marian Anderson Lincoln Memorial Concert* delivers an imagined world of both contemporary constituencies *and* for today's audiences.

Although the specific technologies employed depended, on the whole, on traditional film-to-film duplication,<sup>48</sup> a particular new media technique is nonetheless in evidence and can be seen as a cultural response to the current historical context of digital culture. Thus, the archivists at UCLA made common sense of their (impossible) decisions by performing a kind of faux sampling. In this way, the use of stock footage materials updates and corrects the underlying ideological message of the released newsreel by compiling images and sounds that represent a new historicity for the concert. While the cultural corollary for the birth of the modern archival movement was the new historiography (Abel, Allen, Gunning, Hansen, Musser, Staiger, et al.), the second and third Marian Anderson projects can be recast as symptomatic responses to the very presence of contemporary digital media practices. Sampling, and by extension remixing, offer a provocative potential for archives to create new works that replace fidelity with a new form of authenticity. The task for the field then becomes explicitly identify-

<sup>46</sup> Leigh, *Marian Anderson Lincoln Memorial Concert*, 100.

<sup>47</sup> *Treasures from the American Film Archives*, liner notes, DVD (Image Entertainment, 2000).

<sup>48</sup> The UCLA Archive only used digital technologies to retransfer the original soundtrack elements while assiduously refraining from "over-improving" the original. They purposefully decided not to remove artifacts that were native to the original sound.

ing the meta-archival strategies that create, through their own historical agency, new forms of uniqueness and of aura when working with legacy materials.

## Conclusion

What is at stake, to be gained or lost by this turn to historical agency? It is undeniable that archive fever is contagious. The issue for the moving image archival field is whether this historical turn constitutes a promising fork in the road or a cultural and social U-turn. Future studies need to address four questions that have significant implications for both archival theory and practice.

First, will digital formats, venues, and platforms invite new forms of textual participation or will they reiterate traditional roles for audiences, critics, and historians? How visible the archival intervention should be, even when the institution is aware of its new role as producer of new works, begs the question of who is the appropriate interlocutor for the contemporary audience: the Hearst Newsreel Corporation, the UCLA Film and Television Archive, or History itself?

Second, will the turn to historical agency create the impression that the mission of archives has been accomplished or that it is only just beginning? Even if archives continue to operate within the episteme of the object-oriented micro-historicity of artifacts, film has always also existed in multiple versions, multiple copies, and multiple formats. But the new question is whether the archival field's general trend toward democratization and its recent focus on amateur cinema and orphan works presage additional attention to alternative histories and to the often unspoken voices of underrepresented communities. Will the field's recognition of the impossibility of preserving everything and of the inadequacies of determinist and teleological historiographies lead to a conservative retrenchment or to additional advocacy?<sup>49</sup> In practical terms, what activist role

<sup>49</sup> The clearest example of the activist side of this equation is the Internet Archive's universalist orientation. Stewart Brand, president of the Long Now Foundation describes the importance of the archive's democratizing intent in the following way: "Digitized information, especially on the Internet, has such rapid turnover these days that total loss is the norm. . . . The Internet Archive is the beginning of a cure [for a societal amnesia]—the beginning of complete, detailed, accessible, searchable memory for society, and not just scholars of this time, but everyone," available at <http://www.archive.org/about/about.php>, accessed 2 July 2008. Rick Prelinger, the founder of the Internet Archive, suggests that advocacy and activism are not just important influences on the contemporary archival community, but prerequisites for its continuing existence:

Archives are endangered right now. The danger is that if they don't work hard to push their materials out to the public and find new ways for their amazing holdings to enrich contemporary and future cultures, they'll be deemed irrelevant. . . . If archives don't make it easier for their holdings to be seen, heard, quoted and remixed, emerging generations of artists, scholars and media makers will look elsewhere, and archives will have greater difficulty justifying their existence to funders.

Interview by Steve Anderson, "Media Mapmaker: Rick Prelinger," *Res Magazine* (September/October 2005).

can the field play in influencing the restoration and exhibition of legacy materials through the new mechanisms for digital delivery?

Third, to what extent will this turn change the nature of the archival field's relationship to the creative community? Clearly, archival practice has begun to free itself of previous limitations inherent in notions of neutrality and objectivity by more openly engaging in critical discourse. But the profession is not yet entirely comfortable with its potential role as critic in relationship to the filmmakers that most use their legacy collections. The recent thread regarding Ken Burns's PBS World War II documentary on the AMIA Listserv is a case in point. Archivists were quick to use the list to voice their opinions in response to the public criticism that Burns had initially neglected to represent the contributions of Latinos and Native Americans in this major new work. The AMIA was divided on this matter. The debate, however, was less about the specifics of the film (which was yet to air) and more about the appropriateness of the critical attention itself in the context of discussions among archivists. For some, Burns (and by implication, all documentarians) should be free to use archival materials to express a particular creative vision. For others, insofar as archival materials are mobilized to create accurate historical narratives, Burns should be held responsible, not only to archival fidelity, but also to a socially defined account of historical truth. It is the underlying notion of historical agency that creates common ground between the archival community and documentary filmmakers and suggests that the traditional collector/user dichotomy has now imploded.

Finally, if it is true that the archival field is in the process of rethinking itself, how will its core functions be altered? Even though the field has not yet explicitly conceptualized the long-term ramifications of digital technologies on its core functions of collection development, preservation, documentation, restoration, and access, it is clear that each of these will be significantly modified by new social and cultural forces. The task at hand, therefore, is to excavate the underlying discourses for each core function and to provide self-reflexive tools that lead to gaining control and direction over the changes that are coming. It may not be too early to suggest that the traditional formulation of "to preserve and to show" will soon add at least a third motivational term. To increase its cultural reputation, to encourage new forms of participation and pleasure, and to attract new sources of sponsorship, the profession's stewardship on behalf of visions from the past may now extend the mission "to preserve and make available," to "to preserve, to show, and to make."