

Barbara Klinger: I was just going to ask the panelists to come up and assume your seats. Since we don't have the luxury of a lot of time for discussion I'm going to keep my comments brief and then turn over the Q&A to you all.

Lost, dead, never made, absent and more. We've heard a lot of those terms coursing through the various papers during this session and also during the course of the day, the ultimate challenge in many ways for the archivists as well as the film historian scholar. I wanted to share a ghoulish story of my own and then get to one of my remarks.

I've been looking for a rare radio program for about two years and it didn't turn up in any of the archives in the United States that I could find. It wasn't with any of the radio collectors on the internet. Then just a few days ago it became available because the person who had this extensive radio collection, an elderly gentleman, died. So upon his death this radio show magically appeared in one of the collectors online. I purchased it.

So the presence, the sort of mercurial nature of the archive is interesting. I think it's especially interesting when you try to balance and people when you do archival and historical research today when you try to balance digital sources and everything that that means in terms of what's available digitally with analog, old fashioned stuff like scripts that you, mysterious scripts that may or may not elude you with what's located in archives here in the United States and elsewhere. That makes everybody into detectives looking for traces here and there of these lost and rare objects.

I think one of the things that the panelists in this session share is that that search, that charge after these floating ephemeral objects that you try not only to capture but then assemble into some reconstructed narrative that will not only make sense but also maintain some truth to the performer or the artist you're studying or the film and media artifact at the same time.

So that's it for my remarks. It's just about the work of balancing between analog archival and/or digital sources that the contemporary media historian has to undertake and that everybody here has undertaken.

With that I'd like to open up the floor to questions to our panelists.

Matthew Bernstein: I am fascinated. What is the division between what's in Black Film Center and what's in the Lilly?

Barbara Tapa Lupack: I would say it's not really clear to me what the logic is. I think because of the nature of the bequest it was made over time that I think certain items went just in one shipment and in another shipment. I know that was true when I was working with the Kashinsky Collection at Yale at Beinecke that Mrs. Kashinsky would simply open her closet and whatever she found that particular week. I know Kurt Vonnegut donated similarly. He would just empty his wallets and send whatever he had.

It's difficult because many of the materials that I would have liked to have traced all the way through, as you were saying, for example, the ability to be able to find out since

Norman was such a wonderful record keeper, as you well know. He had these sheets that were incredible. He would start with 1918 all the way through the 1930's even into 1940. So you would see, for example, that a film like "The Green Eyed Monster" played in a particular theater and it ran for three days and then it played again in 1925 and in 1928. So some of those records are at the Black Film Center and Archive and some of them are at the Lilly. I believe that there is a movement afoot perhaps to join them once again.

Matthew Bernstein: Is that true, Michael or Brian?

Brian Graney: Yes, we were wondering about the peculiar split of the collection between the BFC/A and the Lilly Library as well. Michael [T. Martin] and I met recently with Lilly's curator of manuscripts to try to figure this out. It seems that the collection was donated in whole by Captain Norman to the Black Film Center/Archive at a time when the Black Film Center/Archive didn't really have the space or the resources to provide access. So a portion of the collection, roughly half, was transferred by a previous director of BFC/A to the Lilly placed on deposit there for access purposes. The Lilly had misunderstood that they had received it in whole and processed it as an entire collection. Independently of that the portion at the Black Film Center/Archive was also processed separately as if it was an entire collection. So we have these two finding aids now and what we talked about doing was collaborating with the Lilly to investigate reintegrating and reprocessing the collection as a single collection.

Barbara Tapa Lupack: That's why I was dancing so gently around the question.

Vassiliki Tsitsopoulou: Hello. Thank you very much. I wanted to say that this conference today happens at the same time, at the same weekend that the Modern Greek Studies Association biannual symposium takes place here on campus. I'm saying that for the sake of context and I'll get to why I'm here. I wasn't able to make the morning sessions because I was attending the Modern Greek Studies Association conference. But at the same time I am researching early film and silent film, even how we define it, that has European and Americans that represent Levantines, Greeks and Ottoman Turks but in which you find African American actors who were perhaps imported from the US or doing tours in Europe were somehow incorporated into films. In the course of my research I have encountered a number of European films in which you find African actors, African American whereupon I came across a serious problem of identifying those entertainers, figuring out where they're from, transatlantically, and how they came to be incorporated in those European films and why. And also when they were incorporated as entertainers the style of their performance whether it would be dancing or whatever was it something that came from the US or was it something that they were instructed to do according to some kind of other European standard of stereotypical performance that was expected in Europe.

So you see I'm throwing at you now like a giant set of questions that takes us to the question of funding and resources. My field is cinema and comparative literature. I didn't start out in modern Greek studies. Modern Greek studies is a Balkan field and I'll take that openly and in which does not have academic departments to itself. It is

completely under sourced, under resourced and underfunded. The similarities listening to people researching African American entertainers and researching Greek entertainers of the 20's and 30's and trying to navigate a completely hostile academic environment in which hegemonic departments and hegemonic fields are actually hogging all of the resources. The pathos for me associated with that, and I'll say that openly, is truly unbelievable especially considering that right now in modern Greece, whatever passes for such, archives that were already created partly by European Union money and state money are actually being closed down.

So just as we started the process of collecting and digitizing material that could be invaluable not only for Greek but all European researchers is now in the process of being shut down. The political aspects of that, and I will also say that openly, the racial aspects of it, me as a modern Greek trying to access material in European archives these are all issues that are not raised openly and because I am really tired of beating about the bush in questions like that. European ethnicities that are racialized in European that were openly racialized in the 20's and 30's and teens the same period that you're looking about, looking at and some of the questions you come across and the difficulties you come across are the same difficulties that I'm having.

So I was really eager to come here and at least introduce myself and try to find a community of researchers who at least I could ask some questions to and maybe they can help me. If they can't at least they'll know that I shouldn't stress out too much about certain things and things like that.

Also, the interdisciplinary work of what you're doing and the usefulness of what you're working at to other fields that you may not imagine exists or may be interested in what you're doing. That's a lot of stuff I ask but let me, because I said it and talked too much I want to come back to my original but there was a question there. It's the question of potentially African American entertainers incorporated into European silent films, which we know they weren't so silent but that's a whole other issue, silent and early talkies and who might be researching that area and how much of the information we have about that. Thank you.

Allyson Nadia Field: We're whispering amongst ourselves because we're trying to think about who they would be and how they would get there. Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak] can speak to that, I think, too.

Jan-Christopher Horak: There is a book in German and it's about 400 pages on actors of color in the German film industry from the very beginning through the 50's. I don't remember the name and I don't remember the title or the author.

Allyson Nadia Field: Tobias Nogal's book?

Jan-Christopher Horak: Yes, it's Tobias Nogal's book.

Allyson Nadia Field: Yes, it's really interesting.

Jan-Christopher Horak: So that's one place to look at least to identify a lot of those actors because they did travel around especially in the 20's in Europe. There was a lot of cross-pollination between the French, the German and the English film industries. So that's one place to check.

Miriam Petty: Hi, so thank you all for such diverse and really informative presentations. There was so much in all of them that I could relate to, especially the sort of ephemerality of this archive and the way that you can be chasing something. Sometimes someone dying makes things available and sometimes someone dying means that things are no longer available. So it can go either way. There are so many examples of this that I'm sort of sorting through but the one that I'm sort of sticking with right now is Charlene [Regester] and I both work on Stepin Fetchit. UCLA had the Fox Studio archives for like the last ten years but the last time I was there Fox had taken all of their archives back. Even when they were there you had to like request them in advance and talk to their lawyer and all of that such and sort of thing. But at this point they're no longer there. I feel happy that I was anal enough as a graduate student to have shelled out the \$300 bucks to make them photocopy the whole Stepin Fetchit file for me. So I do have it and I guess I should digitize it and make it available. But I'm wondering about that relationship to studios when studios decide that they're going to pull their materials back. I don't know if it's a political reason. I actually have been trying to follow up with Fox about it. If you all want to talk about that specifically or even more broadly I think it has to do with the question, Barbara [Klinger], that you raised about when things are in private hands. The thing that everybody here, I'm sure, is clear about creating relationships with folks and those relationships being key to having access.

Shola Lynch: I can respond to that from another point of view as being a maker of films and documentary films and having to deal with corporate entities for licensing. So we start on a project because we're interested in the subject and we want to be in conversation around ideas. But corporations like Fox, and somebody was talking about music licensing earlier, they're not interested in conversation. They are interested in monetizing everything. So when they see you or me coming, and in fact I've had several folks say this to me, you may think this film is all important or whatever but it's not worth our time because we're not going to make any money off of it.

It is about ownership and it is about money. If you're lucky enough to get somebody who cares you can gain a little bit of access. I think that one of the things that we haven't talked about is the corporatization of major archives that relate to black history and black culture that it's going to be problematic in the future going forward.

Charlene Regester: I have to say I had one experience that I wanted to share. I had done an essay on Dorothy Dandridge the way she was positioned in a particular photo. She had this necklace on and I was talking about how the necklace was strangling her and all of this other stuff. Okay, but anyway, in order to get the article published I had to have the photo to go with it. So I bought the photo off of some little photo store in LA. The publisher told me I had to get copyright clearance and I would have to go through the studio because it was a 20th Century Fox picture. So I sent the article and a nice letter and they were not cooperative. So I was in a library one day and there was an

independent filmmaker in there and he said oh I get copyright clearance all the time. I can get it for you. So he goes and he tries to get it. When he comes back he says your name is mud out there. Don't you dare ask for anything out there. So anyway, I never got it. I realized I was not going to get the copyright clearance to this photo. So I have friends at Duke. Duke said all I would need to do is they would digitize the photo as an illustration which would show enough to show how she was positioned, how her face was pointed in one direction, the necklace I was talking about. They did and I got the thing published but it was not the original photo as released by 20th Century Fox. I was able to get around and get my work out there through that means. So that's what I did.

Shola Lynch: That raises a fascinating question about how honest we should be with movie studios. It does raise a fascinating question about how honest, I mean perhaps if you had requested it without sending the article about the necklace choking Dorothy Dandridge but at the same time then it would be published. I don't know. I'm just throwing that out.

Barbara Tapa Lupack: Something I found when I was doing research on "Hallelujah." I contacted at that time it was Terri Geesken and Mary Corliss at the MoMA stills and they sent me what they said was a still, a still from the film, not a publicity. I actually stopped framed the film. It's nothing like it. In the still that they sent me Daniel Haynes is dressed very formally. He's got a bow tie on and a white shirt. Nina Mae McKinney is dressed in an elegant gown and she doesn't look whorish the way she does in the actual film and he doesn't look like the poor redeemed farm boy. For years this was thought to be a piece of the film and it is not. I think I have examples of that that I brought with me.

But I think that's part of the problem about the way information is construed and misconstrued and then passed on and that's the difficulty that we experience when we do not have access to primary materials.

Terri Francis: Actually I ran into something, I ran into something similar when I was researching Baker in Paris. There's a clippings file of kind of announcements about her shows and things. There is a photograph of an actor playing Zu Zu, like the girl who plays the, well, an actor who played the girl Zu Zu at the beginning of the film. It was labeled Josephine Baker as a child. So it was in the early biographical section. I was like, no, that's not her in any biographical, biological sense this is a totally different person. People were really shocked. I had never seen anyone cite, I don't think anyone has cited it. I've never seen that in anyone's book but just that it had been sitting there like that and labeled was just really kind of jarring but also instructive about paying real close attention when we're looking through these materials. They have an authority, they offer an authority archival materials do but they're often not entirely authoritative because they do, they are managed by their institutions where they're housed.

Allyson Nadia Field: The Herrick has a photo, production stills from the "Squaw Man" identifying Noble Johnson who was not in the "Squaw Man" and not in that photo. When I tried to point that out they were not entirely convinced that I knew what I was talking about.

Barbara Tapa Lupack: In some of the materials that Brian [Graney] sent us prior to conference there was the essay by Gosta Werner about the perpetuation of mistakes and mentions that in the writing of biography of Erich von Stroheim, he refers to the fact that on his first two films the biographer said that the director signed his name as Eric Stromme (S-T-R-O-M-M-E). In fact, that was an error but it was perpetuated and it was like incremental repetition because somewhere else along the line another scholar took it further and said various authors have taken over this information and accept it as fact and even elaborate on it with interpretations such as this, "This was because of the anti-German mood in the United States during those days." So, again, that perpetuation of mistakes is certainly a concern.

Mike Mashon: As a representative of archive I will tell you that we do welcome corrections. I've worked with many, many people who have contacted me about things that we've got online that are not correct. We make every effort to correct them. We're gullible that way. We just believe you when you tell us. We figure you know more than us and you probably do.

I did want to make a point about the availability of corporate archives. It raises, points out how miraculous it is when you can find any primary information about black film studios. It's just amazing that any of it is out there because even the big corporate archives are either completely inaccessible or they're incomplete or no longer exist. There are some good ones out there. We celebrate the fact that in Madison, Wisconsin you can get the corporate records for United Artists and Warner Brothers, NBC, great primary documentation out there. We've got a lot of material from NBC as well.

A thing that I've been searching for part of my research for a long time is corporate records from CBS. I've pretty much come to the conclusion that the urban legend is true that CBS did pulp their corporate records sometime in the Larry Tish regime in the 1980's because I can't ever find anybody at CBS who seems to know anything about it other than they got sent to some place where they got pulped in the 1980's. So it's very difficult when you're trying to do research on Fox or any of the other major studios. I'm hoping that as time goes along folks will understand that as academics we're not seeking to tear the studio down or burn it to the ground. There's a lot of corporate documentation that they're holding onto that would have no monetary value. If they don't want to release anything before 1950 fine. I realize they are ongoing entities that need to keep making money but I don't think they should be that threatened by it. I know, Chris [Jan-Christopher Horak], maybe this is something you can speak to having formerly done that work.

Jan-Christopher Horak: Just a short comment, having been a corporate archivist at Universal for several years. For the studios it's always an issue of the bottom line. So Universal buried all of its corporate records before 1950. Then as late as the 1980's when you think things would have maybe changed, they realized that they had forgotten a warehouse in New Jersey which was chock full of all of Irving Thalberg's records when he worked at Universal before he went to MGM. So they sold the warehouse, including the contents, which were then chucked.

Most of the studios do not actually set up corporate archives for ephemera other than their legal files until the 1990's. Warner Brothers was the first, which was good, although of course Warner Brothers is in the best position because they donated. They are the only studio that donated their records to Yale and to USC and now they have all been unified at USC. So that studio is relatively complete but every other studio forget it, they're gone.

Terri Francis: It's like we're really gleaners around the edges of what remains.

Brian Graney: I hate to cut this discussion short but I'd like to thank Barb [Barbara Klinger] and our panel. This was terrific.