Raiding the archive: film festivals and the revival of Classic Hollywood

Julian Stringer

History becomes heritage in various ways. Artifacts become appropriated by particular historical agendas, by particular ideologies of preservation, by specific versions of public history, and by particular values about exhibition, design, and display.

(Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenridge)¹

Film Studies has to date paid too little attention to the role cultural institutions play in the transformation of cinema history into heritage. At the dawn of cinema's second century, a range of organisational bodies – including museums and art galleries, the publicity and promotion industries, film journalism and publishing, as well as the academy – work to activate and commodify memory narratives concerning the movies' own glorious and fondly recalled past. Such bodies serve different kinds of agendas, broadly identifiable as the commercial, the cultural and the educational (or a combination thereof). However, all help determine the specific shape of current thinking regarding cinema's past, present and future.

At a time when more films than ever before are being exhibited on a greater number of different kinds of screens than ever before, the cumulative effect of all this institutional activity is to create consensus around which films should be remembered and which forgotten. With so many 'old' and contemporary titles jockeying for position at the multiplex and the art cinema, on television and cable, video, DVD and the Internet, as well as in the classroom, the relatively small number of titles eventually sold, projected, written about, taught or revived, will be largely confined to those legitimised for one reason or another by these different kinds of organisational bodies. In order for a film to stand the test of time, it needs to be 'voted' as worthy of preservation. If this does not happen, the movie concerned is in danger of slipping from public consciousness.

The institution of the film festival has over recent years provided a key location for the advancement of such historical and preservationist agendas. Major events like those held annually in Berlin, Cannes, Hong Kong, New York, Pusan, Toronto and Venice act as lynchpins around which a diverse range of cultural activities rotate. As Kenneth Turan's *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* has most recently confirmed, such events have developed a number of key roles and functions.² Filmmakers, producers and industry personnel, scholars and journalists, archivists and 'ordinary fans', among others, constitute the 'festival publics' who invest differently in diverse aspects of the jamboree atmosphere facilitated by such events. In attracting such a broad spread of participants and audiences, the ever-expanding globalised film festival circuit proves that cinephilia is alive and well and living in the international marketplace.

As news media reports habitually demonstrate, festivals can make or break new films. Certainly, many of the larger events act as launching pads for foreign (i.e. non-US), marginal or 'difficult' movies, and as such constitute an alternative distribution network for contemporary world cinema. In this sense, festivals have an important forward-looking sensibility, providing a vital arena for the emergence of the culturally 'new'.³

At the same time, however, it has been less widely acknowledged that many festivals also embody a backward-looking sensibility. Over recent years some festivals have come to function as veritable museums of audio-visual culture. The international festival circuit now plays a significant role in the re-circulation and re-commodification of 'old' and 'classic' movies. Taking the form of revivals, retrospectives, special gala screenings, and archive-driven events, the contemporary exhibition of such historical artefacts provides a powerful means of extending cinephilia into the second century of cinema through a process that Grant McCracken has identified as the 'displaced meaning strategy':

Confronted with the recognition that reality is impervious to cultural ideals, a community may displace these ideals. It will remove them from daily life and transport them to another cultural universe, there to be kept within reach but out of danger. The displaced meaning strategy allows a culture to remove its ideals from harm's way.⁴

It is the institutional nature of the film festival which creates the conditions necessary for the existence of this particular cultural arrangement. As with the process of labelling that happens at museums and art galleries, any movie shown at a film festival needs to be positioned for public display, and this is achieved through acts of classification and identification. At its moment of reception by a festival audience, a title will be made sense of, in part, through the weight of the interpretative frames provided at and around such events. When this happens, the classification identity and cultural status of old movies is likely to undergo change. In Steve Neale's terminology, titles initially produced as 'generically modelled films' (i.e. gangster films, musicals, and so on) are re-circulated as 'generically marked films': i.e. as 'festival films' (here understood for purposes of convenience simply as films shown at festivals). This exhibition and classificatory process works to secure the importance of some titles rather than others within the memory narratives of institutionalised culture.

One topic of particular significance for Film Studies is the revival at international film festivals of movies made during the heyday of the Hollywood studio system – that is to say, the recirculation of those films most commonly held to represent the popular memory of commercial cinema itself. In this chapter, I want to explore this subject by considering briefly the circulation of old Hollywood movies – especially, but not exclusively, those produced between 1910 and 1960 – at the London Film Festival during the years 1981–2001. I have chosen to focus on this particular festival and specific time period for largely practical reasons. On the one hand, London is a festival with which I have some familiarity. I have lived in the city and attended the event, worked in film distribution and on the fringes of the festival in the late 1980s, and have access to its relevant publications (i.e. the festival catalogues themselves; such materials constituting a major, if still largely untapped, source of information for film history scholars).

On the other hand, this concentration on a two-decade period in the life of one of the UK's most visible annual cinematic events provides a convenient point of historical comparison. In 1981, the London Film Festival's parent organisation, the British Film Institute, published *Water Under the Bridge*, a dossier on the history of the festival's first twenty-five years, from its founding in 1957 to that date. One of the most valuable aspects of this publication is that it

includes a list of all the films screened by the festival during those years.⁶ As such, this chapter provides a means of revisiting and updating some of the information contained in that dossier – in other words, to consider the screening of some of the festival's films in the twenty-year period since 1981. I am not concerned at the present time with the exhibition of new or contemporary movies at the London Film Festival. What I am interested in, though, is the question of how the revival of old Hollywood films serves distinct institutional interests.

Few old movies of any kind appear to have been screened at the London Film Festival prior to 1981. According to *Water Under the Bridge*, the first non-contemporary title to be exhibited was the Jean Renoir French classic *The Rules of The Game*, which was produced in 1938 but screened at the 1960 event. The first Hollywood title to be unspooled was Buster Keaton's *Seven Chances* (1925) in 1965. 1967 saw the revival of another Renoir classic from France, *La Marseillaise* (1937), while *The Movies That Made Us*, a Warner Bros. compilation film, was screened in 1973, and *Spite Marriage* (1929) in 1976. The start of the decade of the 1980s saw a watershed, however. *Twinkletoes* (1926), *Chang* (1927), *The Crowd* (1928) and the UK title *Elstree Calling* (1930) were all screened in 1981, and the initiation soon after of Thames Television's annual showcase – 'Thames Silent Classics' (revived silent movies with full orchestral accompaniment, later shown on British free-to-air television) – helped set in motion the fad for revivalism which has intensified markedly in subsequent years.

The Thames Silent Classics series established a useful baseline for examining the revival of classic Hollywood cinema at the London festival for two key reasons. First, such revivals immediately created a sense of rarefied distinction by activating the displaced meaning strategy around, on the one hand, aesthetics factors, and on the other, 'special' modes of public presentation. In short, these Thames titles, these examples of classic cinema, are both inherently worthy and worthy of being preserved. (Typically, they are presented as being among the most noteworthy of their time (e.g. the most expensive or most spectacular movies of the silent era).) Second, they also allow new varieties of cinephilia to be generated through the reproduction of original film viewing pleasures.

For example, the revival of *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924) in 1984 is presented as akin to a 1920s roadshow presentation of a silent

‘superspecial’, with an orchestral score ‘specially composed by Carl Davis who will conduct the Philharmonia Orchestra at each performance’, and variable ticket prices (£5, £7, £10) ‘available only from the Dominion, Tottenham Court Rd, London W1, until the period 9–29 November when a limited selection will be on sale at the NFT Box Office’.⁷ These forms of product differentiation – special musical accompaniment, prestige exhibition at a prestige venue and in prestige seats, exclusivity of exhibition dates and times – are meant to both recall the classic tradition of first-run presentation of Hollywood features, and also recreate it. Indeed, this has been a constant attraction at the London Film Festival during this twenty-year period. It characterises, for example, screenings of the following selected list of silent classics, all of which were showcased through such rarefied modes of public presentation: *The Big Parade* (1925; screened at the 1985 event), *Greed* (1924; screened in 1985), *Ben-Hur* (1925 [1987]), *Intolerance* (1916 [1988]), *Sign of the Cross* (1932 [1989]) and *Wings* (1927 [1993]). Many of these films were shown at venues like the London Palladium, rather than the festival’s regular institutional home, the National Film Theatre.

Such revivals also helped to set in motion two specific memory narratives which the London festival has activated in diverse kinds of ways across this twenty-year period. On the one hand, the Thames events very often fetishised industrial and technological innovations, or ‘firsts’. On the other hand, they promoted fairly traditional conceptions of authorship.

Use of the first of these two narratives is fairly widespread. At the simplest possible level, this means that the London festival has on occasion worked to underscore the most conservative storylines regarding the ‘great moments’ of cinema history. The tale being told here admittedly does extend beyond Hollywood. For example, the pioneering German silent classics *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1919), *Metropolis* (1927) and *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Terror* (1921) were revived in 1985, 1984 and 1995, respectively, and the Soviet milestone *October* (USSR, 1927–28) was shown in 1988 after Alan Fearon had ‘reconstructed the massive score using original research by musicologist David Kershaw’.⁸ However, these are all safe, stellar attractions from the global film canon which have in effect already been voted as worthy of preservation by international film culture.

Hollywood titles are often revived through the foregrounding of a sense of technological presence. Focusing on the soundtrack, for

example, easily allows for discussion of path-breaking industrial developments. *Gold Diggers of Broadway* (1929) was revived in 1987 as ‘one spectacular reel’ from this ‘long lost 2-strip Technicolour musical . . . recently discovered and restored by the National Film Archive with its music track transferred from the original 16’ discs by the National Sound Archive’.⁹ Similarly, the 1988 event included a MOMI Vitaphone – A Tribute show emphasising the rare, and hence special, nature of this particular festival presentation. ‘Many of these films from the late 20s were considered either totally lost or, if they did survive, existed in picture form with no sound.’ As if to compensate for the festival audience’s lack of familiarity with such films, though, other novel aspects are then emphasised: ‘Tonight’s selection opens with the first Vitaphone short seen by the general public, an address by Will Hays, which was filmed in June 1926.’ Furthermore, the presence of familiar named actors helps obviate the perceived ‘primitive’ nature of the technology put on show. These Vitaphone titles act ‘as a testing ground for new acting talent, as evidenced by Spencer Tracy in *The Hard Guy* (1930) and Pat O’Brien in *Crimes Square* (1930)’ (68).

The appeal to notions of authorship similarly provides a compelling way of presenting and recreating Hollywood pleasures. The screening in 1986 of the hour-long *Directed by William Wyler* (1986) was supported by the twenty-minute short, *It’s All True* (1942, directed by Orson Welles) – the only evident connection between these two films being the fact that the London festival has institutionally identified and framed them as auteur titles. In addition, an important component of the cinephiliac nostalgia for classic Hollywood demonstrated across the years at London is the frequent presentation of documentary films about old Hollywood. These contemporary movies often provide new knowledge and so present new ways of remembering films past. Again, however, they tend to tell fairly standard stories concerning the great and the good of film history. Such films include the following (unless stated otherwise, production date corresponds to screening date): *Marlene* (West Germany, 1984 – on Marlene), *The Thrill of Genius* (Italy, 1985 – on Hitchcock), *Making of a Legend: Gone With the Wind* (US, 1988, but screened in 1989), *Preston Sturges: The Rise and Fall of an American Dreamer* (US, 1990), *Jack L. Warner: The Last Mogul* (US, 1993), *Music for the Movies: The Hollywood Sound* (US, 1995), *Wild Bill: A Hollywood Maverick* (US, 1995 – on William Wellman) and

Carmen Miranda: Bananas is my Business (US/Brazil, 1994, but screened in 1995).

With the exhibition of these kinds of movies, the archive is 'raided' so as to revive key moments of cinema history via appropriate modes of big-screen audio-visual presentation. Such a method of promoting the highbrow and rarefied atmosphere of 'authentic' Hollywood pleasures works to separate public film festival screenings from the more private pleasures associated with home video spectatorship.

As the 1980s wore on, the London event evidenced a growing self-consciousness concerning the potentially problematic relationship between the popularity, or lowbrow nature, of classic Hollywood, and the highbrow or rarefied nature of the festival's own museum aesthetic. The sense that here is a festival which reproduces the official line on film history while not really wanting to can be seen most bizarrely in a catalogue description for the 1989 screening of *Safety Last* (1923). 'The still of Harold Lloyd hanging from the clock is an icon of silent comedy', write Kevin Brownlow and David Gill. 'Sadly, it's all most people know of Harold Lloyd. The most neglected of the great comedians, his films work best on the big screen. You have to see *Safety Last* with an audience to realise what a brilliantly funny piece of work it is.'¹⁰ The contradiction here is clear. On the one hand, this festival audience is learning nothing more than prior viewers of Lloyd's films – it is *Safety Last* which is once again being revived in showcase form, not other titles. On the other hand, while concentrating on the special circumstances of a 'big screen' and prestigious festival revival of this particular classic, the two writers evidently feel under no obligation to inform readers of the titles of the 'two short films from Harold Lloyd' (102) which accompany their revival of an already more-than-famous main attraction.

There is, then, a slight instability in the title of the 1995 restoration and revival season – 'Saved! Restorations From the Archives'.¹¹ Sure, by being preserved and screened at the London festival, such movies are being saved from obscurity and old age. Equally, though, the exhibition of canonic titles such as *Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, *October*, and *Safety Last* suggests that what is being saved are those films already well-known and available within the postmodern audio-visual archive. In short, the London Film Festival has on occasion given pride of place to those films which are already widely known, which do not technically *need* to be saved.

In fact, the picture is more complicated than this. Among the US titles presented through archive events at the festival are some intriguing selections. To take one example, *Paramount on Parade* (1930) – restored by UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) Film and Television Archive, ‘in cooperation with Universal Pictures’ – seemingly has nothing in particular going for it: ‘Some of the musical numbers were filmed in two-colour Technicolor. Unfortunately, all that remains of these segments is a faded, deteriorating work print, with no soundtrack; excerpts of these segments will be shown, to give an idea of the original staging’ (103). By contrast, there is a conscious attempt to rewrite history with a series of ‘Warner Bros. Second Vitaphone Programme, October 7 1926’ and ‘Jazz Age Vitaphone Shorts’ (USA, 1927–29). The former includes Al Jolson in *A Plantation Act* (1926); ‘a full year before his triumph in *The Jazz Singer* . . . Withdrawn by Warner Bros., this short had been considered lost until the Library of Congress found the picture, and the Vitaphone Project located the only surviving copy of the Vitaphone disc – broken into four pieces and badly glued together. Thanks to perseverance and the marvels of modern technology, we are pleased to present the first public screening of this landmark Al Jolson short in almost 70 years’ (105). Here, the London festival is itself presented as making cinema history by innovating a different and new kind of ‘first’.

Given the proliferation of examples such as these, it appears as if the two core memory narratives I have identified above were re-focused throughout the 1990s. Technological innovation and notions of authorship were retained in festival descriptions of archive-based events. However, these became framed slightly differently, and in a manner that exposes the specific institutional interests served by London’s preservationist agendas.

As a way of beginning to explain this phenomenon, consider the ‘Treasures from the Archive’ presentation of 1997. This series includes a short season on Frank Capra ‘in his centenary year’.¹² The three titles presented here are instructive in terms of the different ways in which ‘one of the greatest directors of Hollywood’s Golden Age’ (58) is being re-positioned for contemporary audiences. Readers are first told that this particular director ‘enjoyed complete creative freedom, producing evergreen comedies and warm morality fables such as *It Happened One Night*, *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, and *Arsenic and Old Lace*’. Next, three separate screenings are then

introduced. First, a new documentary, *Frank Capra's American Dream* (1997), creates updated specialised knowledge by 'inducing fresh admiration for Capra's seldom celebrated flair for crowd and action sequences, editing innovation and moody visual nuances'. Second, a print of the early Capra comedy, *The Matinee Idol* (1928), is unspooled; 'long thought lost, [it] was recently rediscovered in a foreign vault belonging to the Cinematheque Francaise. Newly restored under the auspices of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences and Sony Pictures, it is sure to charm and delight audiences anew'. (It is notable that what is being emphasised here is not just rarity and exclusivity, but the ambiguous status of the institutions involved – one is foreign, the other from the US, the former independent of Hollywood ownership, the latter part of the corporate system.) Finally, the 1997 festival is 'delighted to present the re-release of one of cinema's most enduringly popular titles, in memory of its star James Stewart' – namely, *It's a Wonderful Life* (58). The evocation of this re-release along the lines of it being 'in memory' of star Stewart is perhaps slightly disingenuous – after all, the film was about to be recirculated on commercial DVD. The festival's appeal to Stewart's cherished memory thus hides a clear commercial logic.

In short, these three Capra screenings present different aspects of the gradual refocusing of notions of innovation and authorship that occurs across the 1990s: the production of new knowledge concerning the Hollywood film industry; the promotion of rare and exclusive attractions; and the investment in tried and trusted pleasures (or the consolidation of the reputation of those films which have already been 'voted' as worthy of preservation in popular memory).

As conceptions of technological development and authorship began to change, the links established between the various relevant cultural institutions became easier to see. Consider the fact that the description of the 1987 screening of *The Big Trail* (1930), a film 'more often quoted than seen', is presented courtesy of 'the New York Museum of Modern Art Film Department's remarkable reconstruction' (23). (The same holds true for the 1997 screening of *Orphans of the Storm* [1921]). FIAF (the International Federation of Film Archives) reveals itself to be another important organisation. The 1988 festival celebrates FIAF's fiftieth anniversary by screening two restorations (including John Ford's *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* [1949]) carried out by the UCLA Film and Television Archive, 'with the cooperation of RKO Pictures and Turner Entertainment

Company and sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and AFI/NEA'. Moreover, an extra degree of specialness is secured in this particular case through knowledge that 'this restored print was much acclaimed at the Berlin festival' (68): success at one globalised film festival now justifies success at another. Other institutional activities include restorations from the National Film and Television Archive in 1993, such as *The Glorious Adventure* (1922), *Under Capricorn* (1949) and the 'lush Technicolor spectacle' (28) of *Jungle Book* (1942).¹³ Similarly, the year 2000 brought the showcasing of George Eastman House's restoration work on *When a Man Loves* (1927).¹⁴

Crucially, a key form of institutional involvement in the London Film Festival involves the presence of the Hollywood studios themselves. They appear to facilitate the restoration and re-presentation process at every opportunity, demonstrating that when it comes to turning Hollywood history into heritage, the studios are the most adept of all. As these examples are too numerous to note, just one should suffice: *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) was restored for exhibition in 1992 by Photoplay Productions based on a negative presented by MGM.

More interesting, perhaps, is the convergence of the studios' interests with those of related institutions. 1992 also saw the public arrival of the Champagne Piper-Heidsieck Classic Film Collection of the British Film Institute. According to Project Manager, Erich Sargeant, this 'is the first international project of its kind and involves the cooperation of rights holders [i.e. the studios], film organisations and archives throughout the world. Over the next four years the BFI will be assembling 200 pristine prints of classic films programmed into imaginative seasons. These seasons will tour worldwide and feature in many prestigious arts and film festivals as well as at a number of cinemateques'.¹⁵ In emphasising the prestigious nature of both festivals and cinemateques, this description once again plays down the humdrum availability of these same films for domestic consumption. The studios' home video and DVD releases of these same titles constitute the commercial Other of rarefied film festival screenings.

The 1993 'Gala screening' of *The Searchers* also forms part of the Champagne Piper-Heidsieck Classic Film Collection's promotional activities. Once again, this re-release '[has] featured at festivals throughout Europe' (117). Moreover, the 'second season, Early

Hitchcock, has just completed a successful American tour and is currently to be seen at venues in Belgium' (117). Along these same lines, further 'Special Events' at London across the years have included a 1999 screening of *Annie Laurie* (1927), a work 'greatly admired' upon its 're-launch' at the 1998 Pordenone Film Festival, and now presented as one of 'the incomparable Lillian Gish's lesser-known, late silent starring vehicles'. This is announced as a 'collector's piece which will be complemented by a special lecture presentation on Lillian Gish's career by her former personal manager, James Frasher'.¹⁶ The notion of a collector's piece is highly significant. Such language refers not to an available material object which may be acquired (such as a video or reel of celluloid), but to the more intangible 'collection' of a rare and distinct event – namely, a special film festival exhibition and presentation. According to the London Film Festival, it is enough simply to have been there; if you attended the event that day, you 'collected' a unique and 'lesser-known' film viewing experience. (Even if the festival public at Pordenone had already enjoyed a similar kind of experience.)

Re-launches often take the form of anniversary events. The fiftieth anniversary of the National Film Archive was occasioned in 1985 by the showcase presentation of *The Toll of the Sea* (1922) and *Becky Sharp* (1935). But for the studios, anniversaries represent a new window of opportunity where old films can be re-commodified under the guise of celebrating this or that particular attraction. *The Apartment* (1960) was presented in 2000 'to commemorate the 40th anniversary of its release' (60) and *Rear Window* (1954) in 1999 as conclusion to 'the BFI's year of Hitchcock Centenary celebrations' (56). Moreover, *Elvis – That's the Way It Is* (1970–2000), shown in 2000 to 'coincide with the 30th anniversary of the release of this documentary and accompanying album', was enabled because 'Turner Classic Movies have undertaken comprehensive re-editing and digital restoration' (61). This latter example suggests both an underlying commercial motivation, and that the definition of 'old' and 'classic' movies is now moving out of the studio period (i.e. into the 1960s and beyond). This is another highly significant development. Simply put, it is one thing to 'save' canonic and endangered old films so as to preserve their memory. But it is quite another to digitally update a work from the much more recent past so as to reclassify it as a must-see movie classic.

As the above examples suggest, the London Film Festival appears to hold a special place in its heart for film archive-friendly people. Without wishing to take anything away from the extremely good work that such professionals undoubtedly do, it is also worth mentioning that archivists can easily become enlisted in the recommodification process. A primary reason for the studios to re-circulate films in the contemporary era is to make profit from new DVD releases. Indeed, DVD technology draws monies through promoting a patina of cultural distinction, for example, on those occasions when a DVD re-release becomes culturally sanctioned because the film concerned has already been revived at highbrow festivals.

In 1999, the festival screening of *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) was advertised as a 'chance to see another of the impeccable restorations of classic American films (this one with crucially renovated sound) to come out of the Academy Film Archive in Beverly Hills' (54). More than this, it 'is also an opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of one of its stars, the British-born Roddy McDowell – a friend and benefactor of film archives in the United States – who died this year' (54). The specific connotations being advanced here – of the work of other institutions, the appropriateness of having a 'British-born' actor spotlighted at a London event, and of once more 'paying tribute' to the 'memory' of a star's work – all disguise the fact that what we have here is another commercial re-release in the making. The DVD of *How Green Was My Valley* became available in UK high street shops shortly thereafter.

Furthermore, as the London festival itself acknowledged in its description in 2000 of *In Cold Blood* (1967), 'even the more recent classic movies need restoration. Legendary cameraman Conrad Hall [*American Beauty*] collaborated with Grover Crisp of Sony Pictures to bring his own timeless (and very topical) stunning black and white widescreen images to atmospheric life' (63). Here, cinemagoers and fans now have the very welcome opportunity to see an important title from the recent past in excellent and enjoyable exhibition circumstances. On the other hand, the opportunities for future exploitation are revealed through this particular occasion to be enormous. Just think of all the collaborations that could potentially be made between contemporary creative workers and huge conglomerates such as Sony Pictures. Films currently on release could always be enlisted in the marketing of an 'old' movie tangentially linked to it in some way. (The latter may well appear 'timeless' if

claimed to be enough times.) In other words, what is now beginning to happen at festivals such as London is the construction of an institutionalised memory for relatively recent, not to say contemporary Hollywood titles.

At the time of writing, the most recent London Film Festival, held in 2001, gives some interesting indications of what may be expected in the near future. With this event, the refocusing of technological developments and firsts, and the concomitant shifts in conceptualisations of authorship, come full-circle. Its ‘Treasures from the Archives’ season is now clearly ‘Sponsored by Turner Classic Movies’, thus solidifying the link between festivals and studios. Beyond this, though, three of the films presented at this particular event are worth commenting upon in more specific detail.

First, *The Big Heat* (1953) is explicitly introduced through a new kind of auteurism – namely, the craft of the preservationist him/her self: ‘This has been a remarkable year for Sony Pictures’ knowledgeable preservationist Grover Crisp (see also *Funny Girl* and *Ride Lonesome*), but nothing exemplifies the perfectionism in his craft better than this restoration of Fritz Lang’s *noir* masterpiece’.¹⁷ Fittingly, perhaps, the preservationist has now become the very centre of attention.

Second, *The Sin of Nora Moran* (1933) constitutes an interesting attempt to shift the focus of attention around ever-more obscure, rather than simply canonic or rare material. This movie is described as a ‘bizarre, fast-moving, bold, “avant-garde” B movie from the early 30s, about a victimised woman accused of murder’, and as ‘rapidly achieving cult status. Described as “neither classic nor camp, but a unique melange of both” . . . [it] is (in the words of UCLA’s 2000 Festival of Preservation brochure), “haunting, hallucinatory, artistic, exploitative . . . maybe the best Hollywood B-movie of the 1930s”’ (65). Clearly, the festival is making appeals here both to the cultish nature of connoisseurship and cinephilia and to the interest of B-film production. This provides a further sense of product differentiation within the cultural remit of preservation work. Tellingly, in a novel spin on the self-perpetuating cycle of festivals supporting and promoting each other, a preservation company’s own festival is now referenced and quoted with approval by its peers.

This awareness of the vogue-ish nature of contemporary memory work around old Hollywood movies is to be found in a final description from the 2001 catalogue. A collection of ‘Warner Brothers Shorts

from the Turner Film Library' is introduced thus: 'With the current fashion for restoring great classics, "lost" masterpieces and director's cuts, it is easy to forget the true orphans of the cinema – the bread-and-butter movies, especially those from and about Hollywood, which supported the main feature and made up the cinema programmes of the past.' This leads into a series of restored two-reelers from the 1930s and 1940s, restored by 'Richard May, in charge of preservation at Warner Bros.' (65), linked together once more by technological novelty – here, the fact that all were shot in Technicolor.

Two points are worth emphasising about this most recent development. First, the shift in focus around more obscure material is justified by the claim that these B movie titles are the 'true' orphans of cinema history. Second, it is also justified through the attempt to recreate what was felt to have once been a common type of movie experience, and so to experience a time – the 1930s and 1940s – now fading from lived experience: 'From Dick May's recommendations we have compiled this sampling of newly-restored Warner subjects – all Technicolor – of the kind which made pre-television era moviegoers happy as they waited for the big picture' (65).

As this final example suggests, notions of historical authenticity played an important role in the revival of Hollywood cinema at the 2001 London Film Festival. Yet while some movies may or may not be 'lost', some revivals are certainly more 'true' than others. Symptomatically, even a modern classic like *The Exorcist – The Director's Cut* (aka *The Version You've Never Seen*) (1973–2000, and shown at the London Film Festival in 2000) epitomises this same trend. This movie is indeed part of a current 'fashion' – it is a restored 'great classic', a film that audiences have 'never seen before' – but it is in no sense 'lost' since *The Exorcist* has been widely available for years on video in a slightly different version. Against this, the titles exhibited as part of the Warner Brothers Shorts series wear their obscurity like a badge of honour: examples include *Romance of Robert Burns* ('as it says (expect the worst), with Owen King, 1937' [65]) and *Hollywood Wonderland* ('Fritz Feld ... as a Michael Curtiz-style director conducting a musical tour of the Warner Studio, 1946' [65]).

As the above discussion has hopefully demonstrated, there is much at stake in the revival of these kinds of films at these kinds of events. At London between 1981–2001, the emphasis on technological developments and firsts, as well as on authorship, has mutated over

time into a celebration of the act of preservation itself: the artistry and the tools of archival memory work, as well as the skills of those who preserve Hollywood's fondly recalled past, have now taken centre stage. However, the process of reviving Hollywood films at this particular festival arguably still emphasises the logic of the commercial agenda over cultural and educational agendas.

Yet one of the most intriguing aspects of the growth of the international film festival circuit is the possibility it opens for a more de-centred and de-territorialised view of Hollywood's reception history. If at London old Hollywood films are revived within familiar contexts – technological developments and firsts, special modes of public presentation, traditional conceptions of authorship and opportunities for recommodification – they may be screened elsewhere around different preservationist concerns.

To give just one example, the Universal horror classics *Frankenstein* (1931) and *The Mummy* (1932) were revived at the Puchon International Fantastic Film Festival, South Korea, in 2001, within the context of a desire to explore knowledge around this particular genre.¹⁸ To be sure, there was a 'reason', a justification, for such revivals – the appearance of the 1999 Hollywood blockbuster *The Mummy*. However, history has here become heritage in very different ways. These particular Hollywood artefacts have become appropriated by different kinds of historical agendas, by differing ideologies of preservation, by other versions of public history, and around alternative values about exhibition, design, and display. (Certainly, all of this is dependent on the existence at Puchon of a different set of festival publics.) Such will also be the case at the multifarious other festivals around the world where the Hollywood archive is being raided in order to advance specific institutional interests. However, this process always happens in conjunction with, or under the watchful eye of, the Hollywood studios and archives themselves.

Notes

- 1 Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenridge, 'Museums Are Good to Think: Heritage on View in India', in Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer and Steven D. Kavine (eds), *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), pp. 36–7.

- 2 Kenneth Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film Festivals and the World They Made* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
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- 7 28th London Film Festival, National Film Theatre, 15 November–2 December 1984, programme booklet, 78.
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