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Domestic Cinema and Travel Films: Images between Brazil and Europe (1920-1930)

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In 1922, Pathé-Frères launched the Pathé-Baby projector in the French market, a small hand crank operated apparatus which showed small reels of film in the 9.5mm format. Interested consumers could purchase or rent films, bringing the cinematographic spectacle to the living room.

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Home cinema

In 1922, Pathé-Frères launched the Pathé-Baby projector in the French market, a small hand crank operated apparatus which showed small reels of film in the 9.5mm format. Interested consumers could purchase or rent films listed in the Pathé film library, bringing the cinematographic spectacle and images from the most distant corners of the world to the living room. In 1923, the 9.5mm system was complemented with a camera, consolidating a consumer market and the production of images in the domestic environment. This catalyzed a series of technological, cultural, and artistic transformations which gave a new status to the category of amateur filmmakers and their relationship with the moving image throughout the twentieth century.

Domestic cinema was not a novelty in the 1920s, and various entrepreneurs and companies invested in equipment for home use. In the case of Pathé, the company's first home cinema projects appeared in 1908, the year Charles Pathé informed the company board about projects for amateur cinematography, consisting of apparatuses which could be easily used in houses and apartments. To make domestic cinema --the so-called *cinéma de salon*-- *feasible*, the company began to invest in a series of technological developments for the secure use of film in the domestic environment, such as the production of cellulose acetate film. In 1912, the company launched the first system for the home, Pathé-KOK (Pathescope, in the US market), a projector that used films in the 28mm format produced in a cellulose acetate film, also called, safety film. The potential market for this system was not only homes, but also venues that were alternatives to commercial cinema, such as schools, churches, and farms.



Cinema, Rio de Janeiro, v.1, n.3, 12 de janeiro de 1913

This format not only began the domestic use of cinema but also its educational and instructive use, as can be seen in the advertising slogan: "Instruct-Educate-Recreate." The expansion of cinema to other exhibition spaces also had a moralizing dimension since it proposed alternatives to movie theaters, attended by a low-class audience, and with a structure that lacked the sophistication of the movie palaces that would be built years later. The equipment, a novelty in itself, was thus situated in a dual temporality, since it continued the tradition of devices for enjoying images in the home, such as magic lanterns and optical toys, but also took advantage of the technological and industrial structure of the production of entertainment equipment for bourgeois homes.

Pathé KOK did not achieve the desired sales due to its high production cost and technical difficulties which hindered home projection from competing with professional systems. It was only at the beginning of the 1920s that the domestic market expanded. Almost simultaneously to Pathé, Kodak launched the Ciné Kodak camera and the Kodascope projector in the United States, an amateur system that also included a film library. Kodak used 16mm film, signalizing the competition between amateur formats since the two film gauges — 9.5mm and 16mm — were not interchangeable. The beginning of the 1920s was thus marked by the launch of amateur systems, both resulting from a series of technological innovations that reduced production costs, allowing the expansion of access to the consumption of the production of domestic images, although still restricted to upper-class families.

Cinema would follow the steps of amateur photography, which was transformed by Kodak cameras in 1888. Using the slogan *You Press the Button, We Do the Rest*, photography stopped being restricted to practitioners who needed specific technical knowledge such as film developing. The act of taking photographs came to be practiced by amateurs/consumers, who centered their attention on the recording of moments with the family, on holidays or traveling, unconcerned with image processing. Cinematographic cameras in the 9.5mm and 16mm formats allowed the modernization of the famous family albums.

Commercial networks: Pathé and Kodak in Brazil

Manufactured by companies that operated on an international scale and dependent on foreign trade, within a few months of their release, the equipment had crossed frontiers and the ocean. Pathé-Frères created the *Societé Franco-Bresilienne du Pathé Baby* on 5 September 1923 in Paris, and two months later the Brazilian *Diário Oficial da União*, in degree no. 16.218, dated 28 November, announced the authorization for the opening of a limited company in Brazil. The headquarters of the *Societé*, also called *Casa Pathé*, were established in Rio de Janeiro the following year, while it had commercial representatives in other cities in the country: Lutz e Ferrando, Marco F. Bertea e Paul J.Cristoph Company, and Isnard e Cia., in Rio de Janeiro; João Nociti, in Curitiba; A. Mourão & Cia., in Manaus. The competitor Kodak was established in the country in the 1910s and the sale of amateur equipment took advantage of the structure already installed for the commercialization of photographic equipment and raw material. In the following years, advertisements for new equipment appeared on the pages of newspapers and illustrated magazines, educating the public on how to enjoy images in the home, encouraging the production of family films.

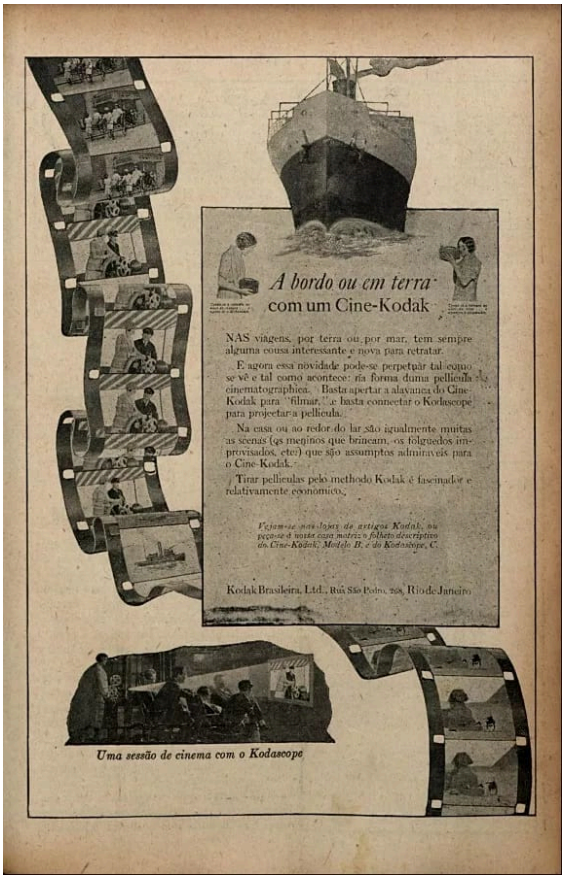


Fon Fon, Rio de Janeiro, 5 de abril de 1924

Source: Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira

In this commercial transit between France, the United States, and Brazil, not only the insertion of certain countries in a new mass-market niche was at play. Regarding the circulation of images, Kodak and Pathé films allowed the contact of the Brazilian public with films by the great stars of cinema, such as Harold Lloyd and Charlie Chaplin. The catalogues were also full of documentaries shot around the planet, films that fulfilled educational purposes and to a certain extent met the desire for international travel. If it was not possible to cross oceans and frontiers, the camera became a replacement for the human eye, presenting a vast and culturally diverse world. Countries from South America, Africa, and Asia appeared as exotic places, with curious cultural manifestations and the local population was frequently classified as primitive and rustic. These images were directly inserted in the pictorial and cinematographic tradition of photography and travel films — *travelogues* —, containing in their essence a desire for knowledge about other cultures departing from a Eurocentric perspective. To a certain extent, the visual conquest of the world also reflected the relations of power established between those who filmed and those filmed, between colonizers and colonized, between industrialized countries and countries still on the edge of development.

In the field of the amateur production of images, advertisements invested in the inseparable relationship between the act of traveling and the production of images. The expansion of the use of image production apparatus took place in parallel to the modernization of the means of transportation and the massification of tourism, while the conquest of the world also involved the capacity to transform it into an image. In an advertisement for Cine-Kodak, published in the illustrated magazine *Careta* in July 1927, the intertwining of travel and cinematography is evident in the slogan "Aboard or on land with a Cine Kodak — traveling by land or by sea there is always something interesting and new to portray."



Careta, Rio de Janeiro, jul.1927

Source: Biblioteca Digital da Artes do Espetáculo, Museu Lasar Segall

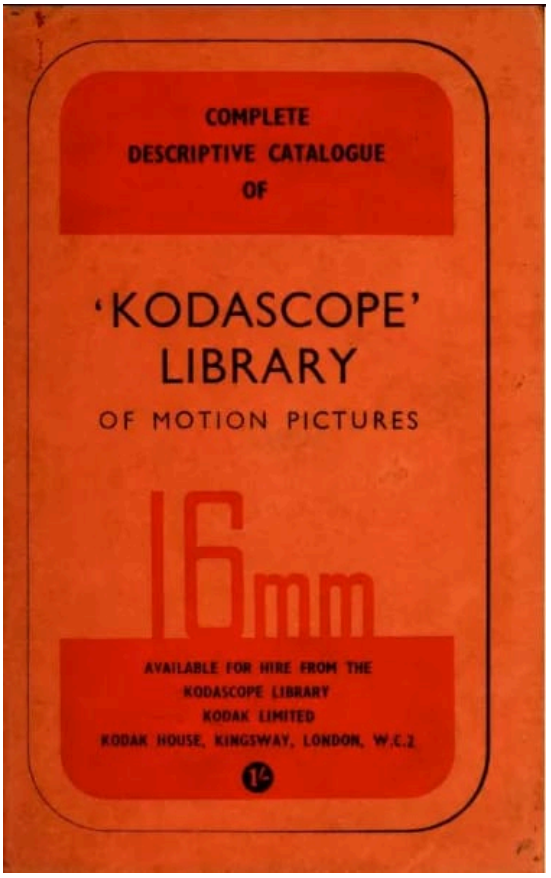
Through the collection of family films from this period held in Brazilian archives, it is possible to identify a series of films shot in Europe, *travelogues* of rich families who had the resources to purchase the new equipment for the production of images for overseas travel. Focused on this precise class, rich Brazilians filmed European tourist attractions, ski resorts, and cruises. These Brazilians, members of a social and economic elite, contrasted much with the Brazilians who were registered in an exoticizing manner by the professional cameramen who produced films for the Kodascope and Pathé libraries.

With the amateur system the images of the world arrived via film libraries for domestic consumption and films produced by amateur filmmakers during their national and intercontinental travel. In this sense the *travelogues* assumed a dual feature and movement. The first was based on the tradition of panoramic picture taking and documentary cinema, often ethnographic and based on a search for alterity — whether regional, cultural, or economic. What was forged was a perspective and a conception of civilization and progress coming from developed countries. On the other hand, the travel films shot by Brazilian amateurs were characterized by the production of memory artifacts, *souvenirs* which would be consumed much later. The focus was everything that seemed familiar, including relatives, friends, and spaces of circulation in the same social class. The perspective was of elite living in an undeveloped world going to see the wonders of the Old World. A world of harmony was built between the rich houses of the wealthy Brazilian neighborhoods and rich European neighborhoods.

Documentaries and travelogues: the world in the living room

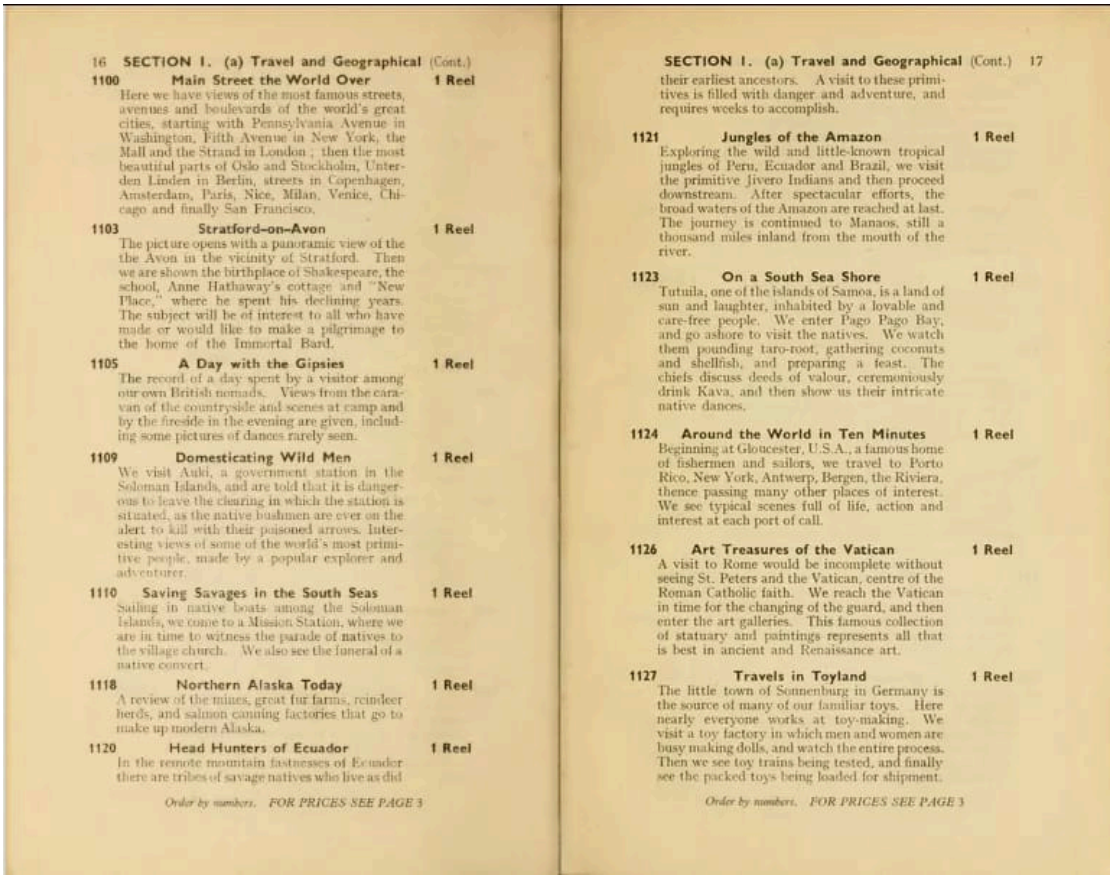
Tom Gunning [1] has identified how the enchantment with travel and the exotic crossed media and forms of expression, including magic lanterns, panoramas, postcards, stereoscopic views, and photography. In dealing with the social conditions that fostered the production of cinematographic *travelogues* — the industry of tourism, the modernization of the means of transport and the expansion of colonialism —, he also highlights how these characteristics assumed a formal status and shaped a point of view on how people and landscapes were portrayed. The open and long shots, which allowed men and women to be seen in their natural habitat, invited the viewer to enter the universe portrayed. These traits reinforced how the manner geography was shot reflected a gesture of cultural appropriation.

It is curious to observe the persistence of the genre and also the power relations established when we analyze Pathé and Kodak catalogues from the 1920s and 1930s with a list of films produced by professional cameramen. Covering all the continents of the planet and various cultures, the titles evidence the power of conquest of these cinematographic ventures. A Kodascope catalogue available for the English public, and probably edited at the beginning of the 1930s, contains in its titles reference to all the continents: "Mount Everest Expedition", 1933, "From London to Japan," "Children of Romania," "Head hunters of Ecuador," "A Day with the gypsies," and "Bali East Indian Island," amongst others.



Complete Descriptive Catalogue of Kodascope Libray of Motion Pictures, Kodak House, Kingsway, London

Source: Archive.org



16 SECTION I. (a) Travel and Geographical (Cont.)

1100 Main Street the World Over — 1 Reel
Here we have views of the most famous streets, avenues and boulevards of the world's great cities, starting with Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, Fifth Avenue in New York, the Mall and the Strand in London ; then the most beautiful parts of Oslo and Stockholm, Unter-den Linden in Berlin, streets in Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris, Nice, Milan, Venice, Chicago and finally San Francisco.

1103 Stratford-on-Avon — 1 Reel
The picture opens with a panoramic view of the the Avon in the vicinity of Stratford. Then we are shown the birthplace of Shakespeare, the school, Anne Hathaway's cottage and "New Place," where he spent his declining years. The subject will be of interest to all who have made or would like to make a pilgrimage to the home of the Immortal Bard.

1105 A Day with the Gipsies — 1 Reel
The record of a day spent by a visitor among our own British nomads. Views from the caravan of the countryside and scenes at camp and by the fireside in the evening are given, including some pictures of dances rarely seen.

1109 Domesticating Wild Men — 1 Reel
We visit Auki, a government station in the Soloman Islands, and are told that it is dangerous to leave the clearing in which the station is situated, as the native bushmen are ever on the alert to kill with their poisoned arrows. Interesting views of some of the world's most primitive people, made by a popular explorer and adventurer.

1110 Saving Savages in the South Seas — 1 Reel
Sailing in native boats among the Soloman Islands, we come to a Mission Station, where we are in time to witness the parade of natives to the village church. We also see the funeral of a native convert.

1118 Northern Alaska Today — 1 Reel
A review of the mines, great fur farms, reindeer herds, and salmon canning factories that go to make up modern Alaska.

1120 Head Hunters of Ecuador — 1 Reel
In the remote mountain fastnesses of Ecuador there are tribes of savage natives who live as did

Order by numbers. FOR PRICES SEE PAGE 3

SECTION I. (a) Travel and Geographical (Cont.) 17

their earliest ancestors. A visit to these primitives is filled with danger and adventure, and requires weeks to accomplish.

1121 Jungles of the Amazon — 1 Reel
Exploring the wild and little-known tropical jungles of Peru, Ecuador and Brazil, we visit the primitive Jivero Indians and then proceed downstream. After spectacular efforts, the broad waters of the Amazon are reached at last. The journey is continued to Manaos, still a thousand miles inland from the mouth of the river.

1123 On a South Sea Shore — 1 Reel
Tutuila, one of the islands of Samoa, is a land of sun and laughter, inhabited by a lovable and care-free people. We enter Pago Pago Bay, and go ashore to visit the natives. We watch them pounding taro-root, gathering coconuts and shellfish, and preparing a feast. The chiefs discuss deeds of valour, ceremoniously drink Kava, and then show us their intricate native dances.

1124 Around the World in Ten Minutes — 1 Reel
Beginning at Gloucester, U.S.A., a famous home of fishermen and sailors, we travel to Porto Rico, New York, Antwerp, Bergen, the Riviera, thence passing many other places of interest. We see typical scenes full of life, action and interest at each port of call.

1126 Art Treasures of the Vatican — 1 Reel
A visit to Rome would be incomplete without seeing St. Peters and the Vatican, centre of the Roman Catholic faith. We reach the Vatican in time for the changing of the guard, and then enter the art galleries. This famous collection of statuary and paintings represents all that is best in ancient and Renaissance art.

1127 Travels in Toyland — 1 Reel
The little town of Sonnenburg in Germany is the source of many of our familiar toys. Here nearly everyone works at toy-making. We visit a toy factory in which men and women are busy making dolls, and watch the entire process. Then we see toy trains being tested, and finally see the packed toys being loaded for shipment.

Order by numbers. FOR PRICES SEE PAGE 3

The section "Travel and Geographical" from the Kodascope Catalogue: the world in images.

Source: Archive.org

With only the textual references available, some descriptions emphasize the exoticizing perspective directed at native populations, such as the title "Domesticating Wild Men," about the people of the Solomon Islands, classified as the most primitive in the world. In titles that covered South American countries, such as "Ecuador" and "Argentina," the fruit of the earth, agricultural products, and local livestock were highlighted, delimiting the place of the extractivist economy and place of exportation of primary goods these countries assumed in the global economy. In the same catalogue, the natural beauties, the indigenous population, and agriculture were the main themes of the films dedicated to Brazil. "Jungles of the Amazon" explores the wild nature of the little known tropical forest located between Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil, while the Kodak cameras go out to meet the "primitive" Jivero Indians. The north and the south of the country appear in "Brazil - Amazonian Lowlands" and "Brazil - Eastern Highlands." The former looks at the rubber extraction culture from the north of Brazil, Brazil nuts in Pará, and its native population. In the latter, the main products of Brazilian agriculture and industry are highlighted: coffee, cacao, mandioca, sugar, tobacco, silk, and shoes.

In the case of the Pathé library, a rich collection of films can be consulted in the "Pathé Baby Collection" in the Princeton University Library. Even though in this period the documentary had acquired other formal perspectives and codes, the aesthetics of these *travelogues* very much resembled the older *vistas cinematográficas*: a space presented with long shots, interest in the picturesque, and a point of view of the conquerors, as in the case of the series *Pathé-Magazine Revue Universelle des Sciences, Arts, Industries, Voyages et Sports*. With small reports, each from a different region of the planet, the series emphasized the shortening of distances between the various regions of the world and highlighted the importance of the scientific and educational nature of domestic cinema. In edition no. 25, the images of the archeological

ruins of Chellah in Morocco are accompanied by scenes of mongoose — small carnivorous mammals from the region of the River Nile —, a man teaching diving, and a class about how to make your tea properly. It ends with the "The harvesting of *carnauba*," about the production of wax from the *carnauba* tree, a palm from the Brazilian northeast.

Filmed in one of the poorest regions in the country, this small excerpt shows a wide shot of various palm trees and a rural worker collecting *carnauba* branches. A closer shot shows the leaves being left to dry in the sun. The branches are being prepared by women and children sitting on the ground, showing a rudimentary process. The workspaces are also rustic, the houses which appear in the background are made from wattle and clay, while the workers shown are mostly black and mixed color, highlighting the racial dimension of the social inequality in the country. Within the same edition of *Pathé Revue*, the poor space and the simplicity of work contrasts with the images of developed countries. The foreign perspective is interested in alterity which affirms its position of economic and cultural superiority.

Various series such as the "Documentaires Colonies" also reinforce an interest in the colonial imagination and express the presumption of the superiority of the colonizer, including films about the African continent such as "L'Ordre des Missions Africaines", and North America, such as "Chez les Peaux-Rouges da L'Amerique du Nord". Filmed by professionals to feed the image production machinery that was still based on the idea of conquering the world, another position is in play in the travel films produced by Brazilian amateurs. Another movement and perspective are established in these travel films, a look which captures an enchantment with European touristic sites, produced by a social class that did not interest professional cameramen: the Brazilian elite, the same elite which consumed travel films, the same elite which had resources to travel and make movies.

Overseas visions: domestic travel films

In Brazilian archives we can find various collections of domestic films from the 1920s and 1930s. The imagery of the family and the bourgeois homes, recurrent in advertisements published in magazines and newspapers, is confirmed in images shot by amateurs in the period, films which registered foreign travel, life in upper-class houses and neighborhoods, their *farms* and beach houses. Even though access to equipment was facilitated by paying in installments, the price of a Pathé camera was equivalent at the time to a third-class ticket in a steamship to Europe. In other words, few could have access to it.

These films give us indications of how the Brazilian elite lived in that period and how the possibility of filming oneself reflected power over the means of visual production. In the years before the release of amateur cameras, many rich families hired professional cameramen to record their family rituals. This is the case of *Batismo de Carmencita, 25 de Junho de 1921* (Gilberto Rossi, 1921), from the Franco-Brazilian Silveira Jullien family, commissioned from Rossi Natural Film, owned by Gilberto Rossi (1882-1971), an important photographer and cameraman at that time. Italian immigrant, Rossi was one of the pioneers of cinema in Brazil. Owner of a photographic studio in Italy, he came to Brazil in the 1910s, when he worked as a photographer in the interior of the country, before establishing himself as a cameraman in São Paulo. He produced various fictional films such as *O Segredo do Corcunda* (Alberto Traversa, 1924) and *Fragmentos da Vida* (José Medina, 1929) with the money obtained from his professional activities in Rossi Film, the production company for Rossi Actualidades newsreels.

The film *Batismo de Carmencita* shows the interior of bourgeois houses and an organization of images and framing which also dialogued with family photography. Shortly afterward, Carmencita Silveira Jullien had her childhood filmed with a Cine-Kodak camera, family films which showed life in São Paulo and the movement between Europe and Brazil, highlighting integration in the international touristic circuit. [2] Between 1926 and 1932, the family visited Biarritz, Chamonix, Nice, Monte Carlo, and Berlin, went to the Swiss lakes, and toured Italy. In addition to the shots dedicated to touristic sites, such as the house of Joan of Arc, the days spent on ships were recorded, as well as arrivals and departures.

The Alves de Lima films [3] clearly show the spaces of circulation of the elite during leisure time. It is a collection that depicts the life of Antoninho Alves de Lima and his wife before the arrival of their daughter Nelita and her early years. Member of the coffee elite, Antoninho was the grandson of Martinico Prado, owner of one of the largest coffee plantations in the state of São Paulo. With images produced at the end of the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s, the growth of his daughter is recorded in their luxurious residence on Rua Higienópolis, located in an elite neighborhood in São Paulo. In the case of the beach house and the *fa*rms, the gathering with family and friends reveal the exclusive interest in filming leisure time. Work is only seen when the *farm's* workers appear, faces that are similar to the carnauba planters present in Pathé-Revue.

In the travel films what is accentuated is the interest in palaces, churches, and monuments. The shots are long and detail the architecture, revealing an enchantment with the Old World. In Spain, the Del Greco Museum in Toledo is shown in detail, as well as the interiors of churches, stained glass windows, and religious figures. In Madrid, a long scene without cuts shows the interior of Las Ventas bullring and the public packing out the place. No face stands out in the crowd, what is of interest is the register of the spectacle. In these domestic *travelogues*, there is no ethnographic interest or register of anything outside the ideal of a touristic film.

During the twentieth century, the figure of the amateur took on many different forms, whether through the increasing amplification of the means of image production, or the creative perspectives which this equipment gave dilettantes around the world. Travel would continue to be a privileged moment to record. In the movement between images and points of view, between contrast and communion, the domestic consumption of images and the production of amateur films composed an important part of the history of transnational movements of images in the twentieth century, showing the relations of power between those who filmed, what is filmed, and how the world became an image.

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NOTES

1. Tom Gunning, "The whole world within reach: travel images without borders," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), 25-41.
2. The domestic films of the Silveira Jullien family are held in the *Cinemateca Brasileira* collection.
3. The films of the Alves de Lima family are also held in the *Cinemateca Brasileira* collection and can be consulted in the institution's library.