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Local Views, Distant Scenes: Registering Affect in Surviving Mexican Actuality Films of the 1920s

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Local views, distant scenes and the 'view' aesthetic

This essay forms part of a larger project relating stylistic conventions in early actuality film in Mexico to nineteenth-century photography and the visual arts. Our research privileges the tradition of the topographical view, and relates representations of Mexico in photography and film to the emerging disciplines of archaeology and ethnography at the turn of the century. Our project takes as its central concern the analysis of representations made of Mexico and her people by North American and European photographers, since this is the tradition with which we are most familiar. To attempt to speak for a culture as diverse as that of Mexico in the nineteenth century is something we would not presume to undertake in our present study. Our concerns in this essay, then, are rather modest: to examine some of the style parameters of Mexican actuality film in the post-Revolutionary period of the 1920s, and to relate this discussion to images produced of Mexico in the nineteenth century.[1] Our aim is to show to what degree optical media recast earlier forms of visuality. After an initial section which discusses examples of nineteenth-century photographs and their relation to chromolithographs by Casimiro Castro, we consider the nature of optical registration before going on to address three specific concerns in Mexican actuality films of the 1920s: mobilised views, aerial views and framed views.

Consider two images drawn by Frederic Catherwood in the Yucatán peninsula in the early 1840s and worked up, respectively, as a lithograph and as a chromolithograph to accompany the publication of John Lloyd Stephens' *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* in 1843 and Frederick Catherwood's *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* in 1844. Both images depict an event during their exploration of the Yucatán in the winter of 1841–42 when they came across an archaeological ruin at Sabatsché which Stephens describes as 'not rich in ornament, but tasteful, having some shades of difference from any we had seen, overgrown by trees, and beautifully picturesque (Fig. 1).[2] Stephens characterises this building as 'beautifully picturesque', a concern to which we will return. Compare this engraving with a chromolithograph of the same structure which appeared in Catherwood's *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (Fig. 2). In the chromolithograph, Catherwood transposes an earlier moment in the exploration of the site, when he and Stephens encountered women around a well, and stages that moment – 'a curious and lively spectacle', Stephens observes – in front of the ruin:

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> A group of Indian women was around it [the well]. It had no rope or fixtures of any kind for raising water, but across the mouth was a round beam laid upon two posts, over which the women were letting down and hoisting up little bark buckets. Every woman brought with her and carried away her own bucket and rope, the latter coiled up and laid on the top of her head, with the end hanging down behind, and the coil forming a sort of headdress.[3]

Stephens refers to women who carry 'bark buckets', yet Catherwood's chromolithograph primarily shows women with terracotta pots, although two small bark buckets can be seen in the engraving. In describing the practicalities of drawing water by means of bark buckets, Stephens privileges ethnographic detail, yet Catherwood depicts women with, in the main, terracotta pots. We would argue that the exchange of bark buckets for terracotta pots is attended by an important change of association, one which will help us draw a distinction between what may be termed a 'local view' and a 'distant scene'.

Consider a not dissimilar moment recounted by the North American traveller, Charles Flandrau in the early twentieth century as he surveyed a street from his hotel balcony:

> Although the town was small and the day an unusually quiet one ... there was no dearth of incident against the usual background of big-hatted cargadores [porters] waiting for employment in the middle of the street; of burros, each with four large cobble-stones in a box on its back; of biblical-looking girls (an endless stream of them) bearing huge water-jars to and from a circular fountain lined with pale-blue tiles ...[4]

For Flandrau, women carrying water-jars to a well evokes a biblical scene. Does not Catherwood's depiction of terracotta pots also evoke a similar association through the conventions of biblical illustration or through nineteenth-century topographical paintings of the Middle East, scenes with which Catherwood would have been familiar since he lived for many years in Egypt before travelling to the Yucatán with Stephens? By primarily depicting terracotta water-jars rather than bark buckets, Catherwood has turned a 'local view', predicated on Stephens' ethnographic interest in the activity of women drawing water, into a geographically 'distant scene'. In trading ethnographic detail, in other words, for biblical allusion, a view of an everyday activity is charged with the dramaturgy of a very different scene.

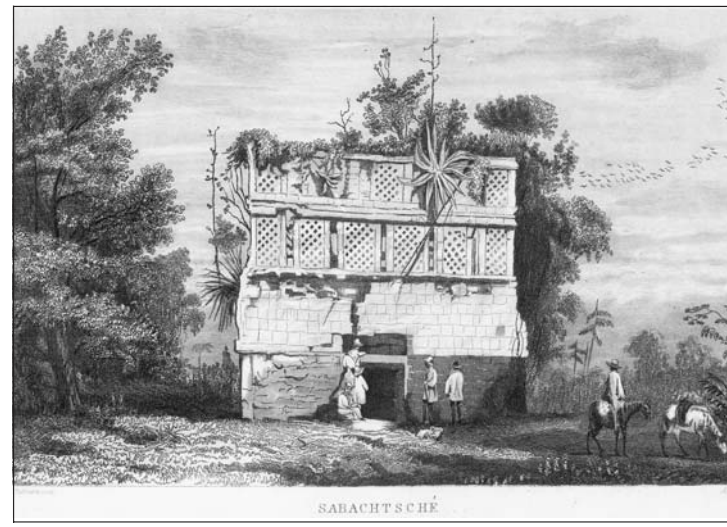
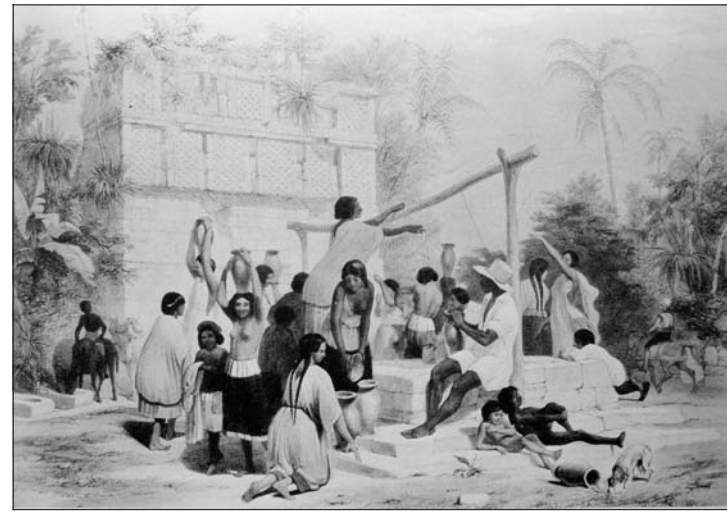


Fig. 1. Frederick Catherwood, Plate IV, 'Sabatsché', lithograph, in John Lloyd Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan* (1848 [1843]). [Courtesy Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm.]

Fig. 2. Frederick Catherwood, Plate XVIII, 'Sabatsché', chromolithograph, in Frederick Catherwood, *Views of Ancient Monuments in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatan* (1844), reproduced in Victor Wolfgang von Hagen, *Frederick Catherwood Archt.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), Plate XVIII.



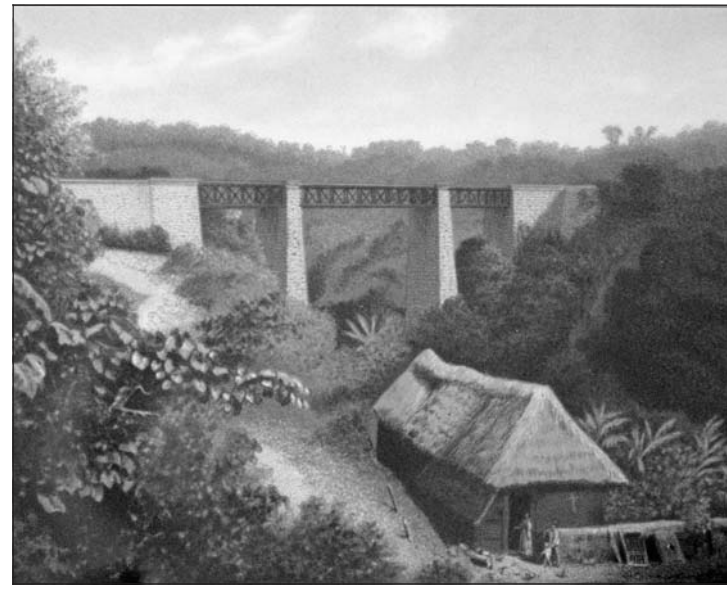
Tom Gunning has considered the issue of the view in early actuality film in an influential essay, 'Before Documentary: Early nonfiction films and the "view" aesthetic'.[5] For Gunning, the notion of the 'view' aesthetic highlights the manner in which early actuality films were 'structured around presenting

Fig. 3. Casimiro Castro, 'Puente de Metlac', chromolithograph, in Antonio Garcia Cubas, *Album del Ferro-Carril Mexicano. Colección de vistas Pintadas del natural por Casimiro Castro* (1877). [Museo Nacional del Arte, Mexico City.]

Fig. 4. Abel Briquet, 'Puente de Metlac', albumen print, 11.8cms x15.4cms. [Courtesy Michaud Collection, Fototeca UNAM, Mexico City.]

something visually, capturing and preserving a look or vantage point'.[6] As he points out, '"views" tend to carry the claim that the subject filmed either pre-existed the act of filming (a landscape, a social custom, a method of work) or would have taken place even if the camera had not been there'.[7] Importantly, Gunning stresses the fact that the activity of recording a view is not an innocent activity, that the impulse in '"just looking" is never *just* about looking'.[8] Just as the activity of looking is far from innocent, so too the viewing of a still photograph or a series of moving images is not an innocent process; the viewer is no *tabula rasa* since a view almost always stimulates an association, whether that be a formal concern, an iconographic convention, or whether the view departs from an established norm.

To pursue this latter observation further, consider a chromolithograph of the Puente de Metlac by Casimiro Castro (Fig. 3) which appeared in Antonio Garcia Cubas' *Album del Ferro-Carril Mexicano, Colección de vistas Pintadas del natural por Casimiro Castro* in 1877, the year in which Porfirio Díaz first came to power in Mexico.[9] Garcia Cubas' descriptions of the Mexican landscape which accompanied each view regularly acknowledge the picturesque. For those who think of the picturesque primarily in terms of Christopher Hussey's classic formulation, 'when an art shifted its appeal from the reason to the imagination', the railway as an emblem of a rapidly industrialising nation may seem an unlikely candidate for the picturesque.[10] Yet, as Garcia Cubas' employment of the term demonstrates, we may propose that the taming of an inhospitable terrain by an expanding railway system was understood to imply such a discourse, at least in Mexico.[11] Recognition of the divergent associations a given discourse can evoke may also explain why the relation between a chromolithograph of the Puente de Metlac by Castro, a photograph of the bridge by the French professional photographer, Abel Briquet (Fig. 4), and an early twentieth-century hand-coloured picture postcard view reproducing a photograph of the bridge taken by C.B. Waite (Fig. 5), is not only close (since the views in all three images are composed from similar points in space), but may promote different interpretations for culturally different viewers. For an educated Mexican in the late nineteenth century, the chromolithograph may well have evoked the picturesque, Garcia Cubas' text helping to frame this response which the photograph by Briquet may also have reinforced. For a North American tourist, on the other hand, the photograph of the stationary train with travellers assembled on the bridge amidst a majestic valley may not only have evoked a sense of the grandeur of nature, but may also have instanced man's ability to conquer nature and, perhaps of greater importance for the visitor, record his or her visit to this remote location. The early twentieth-century coloured postcard view, with a stationary locomotive issuing a jet of steam as it blows its whistle, may also have implied synaesthesia since the sound



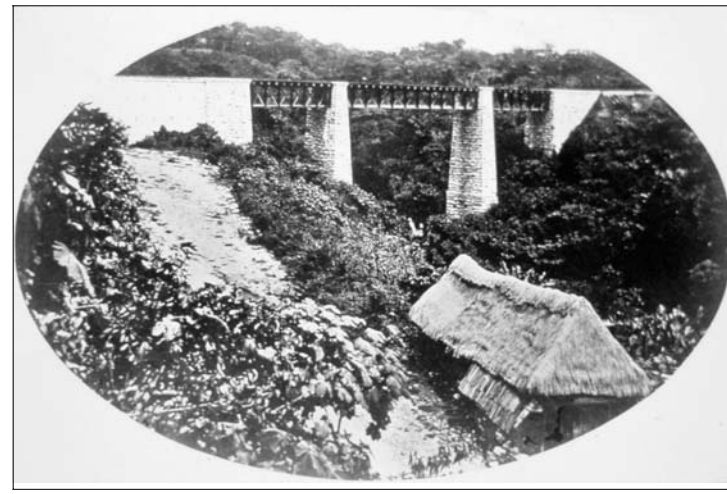


Fig. 5 (top). Charles Burlingame Waite, '145 Puente de Metlac, Veracruz, Méxicano', hand-coloured picture postcard, J. Suter & Co., 8.8cms x 13.8cms. [Authors' collection.]
Fig. 6 (centre). Casimiro Castro, 'Puente de Chiquihuite', chromolithograph, in Antonio Garcia Cubas, *Album del Ferro-Carril Mexicano. Colección de vistas Pintadas del natural por Casimiro Castro* (1877). [Museo Nacional del Arte, Mexico City.]
Fig. 7 (bottom). Abel Briquet, 'Puente de Chiquihuite', albumen print, 11.2cms x 16.1cms (excluding oval frame). [Courtesy Michaud Collection, Fototeca UNAM, Mexico City. The oval frame printed by Julio Michaud does not appear in the original albumen print, ca. 1876.]

the tourist would have heard, had he or she been near the bridge, is implied by the view. In short, three different responses to images that are very similar in their formal organisation.

The response we have posited for an educated Mexican in viewing the chromolithograph of the Puente de Metlac is also interesting if we compare the chromolithograph with Castro's chromolithograph of the Puente de Chiquihuite (Fig. 6), which Castro based on a photograph by Briquet (Fig. 7) who was commissioned to photograph the railway between Veracruz and Mexico City in 1876. In contrasting the railway bridge across the rear of the image with the agricultural building and an old road bridge at foreground centre and foreground right, the images stage the trope of 'the old and the new'. Yet Briquet's photograph, taken from a very similar position to that represented in Castro's engraving, shows this difference even more concretely since the chromolithograph is more muted in its rendering of form than the photograph. Could differences between the respective modes of representation have been instrumental in making Garcia Cubas evoke the picturesque in respect of the engraving when the subject of many of the chromolithographs departs so radically from what we, versed in the European or North American tradition, may understand the picturesque to imply?

Before considering the issue of medium specificity further, let us briefly return to the images of the Puente de Metlac. Given the similarity of the camera set-ups, we may propose that over a period of approximately thirty years, a pictorial norm for representing the bridge was established. If, however, we compare this convention with a picture postcard view of the bridge taken by Félix Miret in the early twentieth century (Fig. 8), Miret clearly departs from convention. By framing the view from a lower point so that the girders supporting the railway lines are

Fig. 8. Félix Miret, '(F.C.M.) Viaducto de Metlac', black and white picture postcard, no later than 1908, 14cms x 9cms. [Courtesy Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City.]

dramatically emphasised at foreground right, Miret defamiliarises the conventional view to generate affect. Thus departure from stylistic convention may, arguably, also secure affect since the 'local view' (in this case, the unconventional composition) presupposes familiarity with the convention of the 'distant scene', the pictorial norm. We may propose, then, that not only thematic and stylistic considerations promote affect, but, to return to the observation concerning photography vis-à-vis chromolithographs, matters of technological registration may also have been instrumental in promoting affect. To what extent, therefore, is medium specificity a salient criterion; to what extent may the *mode* of representation of a given technology generate different affective responses at different historical moments?

Optical inscription

Jacques Aumont has proposed that the introduction of film and the development of amateur photography at the end of the nineteenth century epitomised a distinction that had been introduced in painting by the beginning of the century between the *ébauche* and the *étude*. The primary characteristic of the former, Aumont argues, resides in its capacity 'to register a reality predetermined by the project of a future painting', to draw a picture that will be subject to further elaboration, whereas the primary function of the *étude* is to 'register reality "just as it is" and for no other reason'.[12] What was new about this way of sketching was its rapid execution: 'Never to be retouched, the *étude* remains a work destined to capture a first impression that it fixes in a record of artistic directness'.[13] Drawing on Peter Galassi, Aumont observes:

> at issue is a conception of the world as an uninterrupted field of potential tableaux, scanned by the gaze of the artist who, exploring as he travels through the world, will suddenly stop in order to cut it up and 'frame' it.[14]

The distinction which Aumont and Galassi consider – between *ébauche* and *étude*, between organisation of the pictorial field and contingency – is elaborated by James Lastra in an essay that discusses the turn to narrative in early film. Lastra is concerned to assess the impact the introduction of the Kodak hand camera and the cinematograph had on the metapsychology of the spectator. To this end, he draws on the distinction between the *ébauche* and the *étude*, between picture-making that presupposes a pictorial dramaturgy and a style that emphasises the 'singular and contingent rather than the universal and stable'.[15] Such a distinction, Lastra argues, was not only common in photography in the late nineteenth century, but became far more widespread among amateur photographers with the introduction of the Kodak hand camera in 1889. Central to the innovations that attended this development was the fact that photography privileged inscription rather than staging, a process wherein 'unbalanced figures, ungainly poses and compositions, previously thought to disunify an image, were increasingly read as signifiers of immediacy, rapidity, instantaneity'.[16] In the case of film, Lastra proposes, such features began to draw attention to the filmic as the primary site of representational activity rather than the pro-filmic.[17]

The arguments variously proposed by Aumont and Lastra help us understand the changes that attended the process of viewing for the turn-of-the-century spectator of film, and help us recognise the formal continuities and discontinuities that obtained between painting, photography and film in the nineteenth century. These concerns, however, would not appear to have been supported, at least in Britain, by the discourse which film producers articulated in their catalogues of films at the turn of the century. Rather, as Gerry Turvey has recently demonstrated, many of the traditional tenets of nineteenth-century picture-making were acknowledged, thus identifying some of the responses film was expected to promote.[18] Producers emphasised camera placement, point of view and composition in the filmed image, and 'brought such notions as "the picturesque", "the beautiful" and "the animated" to bear when explain-

Figs. 9, 10 & 11. *1925 Nuestra Ciudad*, 1925.

ing the significant aesthetic qualities of their films'.[19] Movement towards the camera was understood to heighten 'perspective effects' (i.e. the sense of composition in depth), while movement of the camera was frequently understood to engender 'stereoscopic effects' (i.e. proprioceptive responses).[20] Producers also began to address issues relating to duration, and began to consider how images could be organised in series or edited into longer units.[21] As Turvey observes, 'even at its moment of birth, actuality cinema was operating with a unique and sophisticated aesthetic system', one which producers assumed would be familiar to film viewers, at least in Britain, at the turn of the century.[22]

If in the case of British cinema, producers' catalogues imply a discourse which films were expected to evoke, in the case of Mexican cinema, as for many other cultures that did not produce films in the early 1900s (recall that at the turn into the twentieth century only Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the US had what may be regarded as significant artisanal production), such a discourse is largely absent. Since differences between the interpretative protocols of viewers with different cultural backgrounds may be more important than any similarities viewers may have shared or be presumed to have shared (as we observed with regard to the picturesque in the British and Mexican contexts), how can we begin to determine reception in the case of Mexico where there is little documentation that demonstrates how viewers might have been expected to respond to a given film?

As we have already observed with regard to Garcia Cubas' use of the term 'picturesque', a discussion of the discourse of the picturesque in photography and the visual arts in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Mexico, and the manner in which that discourse confirms or departs from European and North American traditions, or how it relates to matters of technological execution, may help identify whether the arguments Aumont and Lastra advance can be supported by historical means. In this respect, a culturally inflected definition of the picturesque may provide an answer, but this concern currently awaits investigation. Accordingly, the observations which follow provide an overview of some of the stylistic concerns that arise from examining the relation of film and photography in Mexico to the visual arts during the late nineteenth century

Figs. 12, 13 & 14. *1925 Nuestra Ciudad*, 1925.

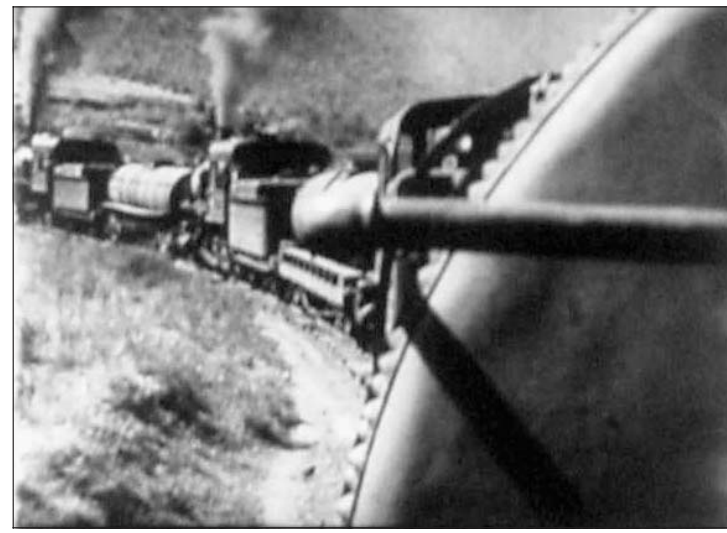
and early twentieth centuries. In particular, three aspects are considered: mobilised views, aerial views and framed views.

In developing this analysis we define local films as either those shot in the vicinity of Mexico City by Mexican filmmakers, or those (also shot by Mexican filmmakers) which depict tourist destinations that may be regarded as relatively local, at least for mobile North American visitors to Mexico City at the turn of the century. As with other national industries, only a small percentage of Mexican film production in the 1920s has survived, and production details for many surviving film fragments are missing. As far as we can ascertain, we have viewed all surviving actuality films produced in Mexico in the 1920s held either as 16mm or 35mm prints by Filmoteca UNAM, the major film archive in Mexico. We have also viewed many of the video copies of surviving film fragments shot by the travelling showman and early actuality filmmaker, Salvador Toscano, held by Fundación Carmen Toscano in Mexico City. Although our viewing of extant material is relatively small when comparison is made of Mexican production in the 1920s with the output of other national cinemas, our viewing in Mexico has been as comprehensive as possible. We have also viewed some material held by archives outside Mexico, although our viewing of this material to date has been somewhat limited.[23]

Mobilised views and aerial views in Mexican actuality film of the 1920s

The popularity of the phantom ride continued as an attraction until at least the mid-1920s judging from the fragment that has survived of *1925 Nuestra Ciudad* (*1925 Our City*).[24] In this film, the attraction of viewing a long take from the back of a tram in Mexico City (excepting jumps when the vehicle halts and the camera operator stops cranking the camera) is all that has survived, but the film inscribes a series of events, particularly when a car enters the busy street from a side street and almost collides with a *colectivo* bus (Figs. 9, 10, 11), or when a man tries to climb onto another moving bus as it advances down the street (Figs. 12, 13, 14).

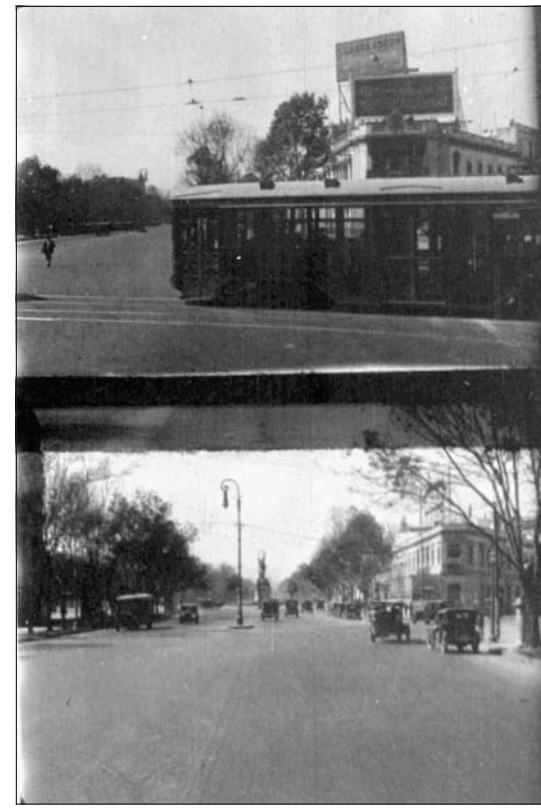
While the fragment from *1925 Nuestra Ciudad* is the only surviving film to record a phantom ride in Mexico City from the rear of a moving vehicle, there are a number of films (or film fragments) which include phantom rides that advance through space.



Figs. 15, 16 & 17. *For Mexico*, Ford Motor Company, 1921.

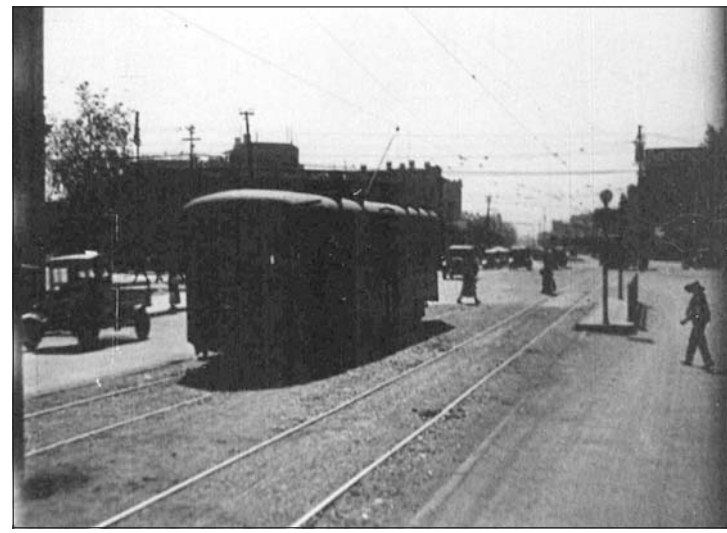
In *For Mexico*, for example, a short film produced by the Ford Motor Company in 1921 as part of its Ford Education Weekly series (Fifth Year, Number Seven), a single shot announced by the intertitle, 'On the way to the pyramids at San Juan Teotihuacan [sic]', comprises a short section of the film.[25] The camera is placed at the front of a tram drawn by two donkeys whose ears appear in the extreme foreground (Fig. 15). In the mid distance, another tram can be seen approaching a bend in the track. Later, another brief forward-moving view is shot from the front of a locomotive as it approaches the station in Guadalajara (Fig. 16).[26] As with phantom rides produced some twenty years earlier in Britain (such as *View from an Engine Front, Ilfracombe*, Warwick Trading Company, 1898), one of the attractions is that the viewer has no option but to follow the movement of the engine as, with a fixed but mobile camera, he or she embodies the movement of the engine as it approaches the station. An even more dynamic sense of motion can be seen later in the film when a train rounds a curve in its ascent of what an intertitle informs us is 'A 3000-foot climb'. Two locomotives steam up the gradient at mid-field left while a tanker, in the extreme foreground, partly obscures our view of the train as the tanker sways in front of the camera (Fig. 17). The proximity of the tanker to the camera not only restricts our view of the ascent, but in so doing, renders dynamic the motion of the tanker relative to the movement of the train and camera. If our interest in *1925 Nuestra Ciudad* was directed towards events that occurred in the street behind the tram, since there was little that impeded our gaze, in *For Mexico* our attention is focused on the objects in the foreground of the shots: the donkeys' ears, the railway track and the motion of a tanker relative to the camera and train. Such interest not only marks the camera as a mobile optical device, but, given that the tanker sways laterally in the extreme foreground, the shot inscribes a series of relations between foreground and mid-field space which is in constant flux.[27]

The most extended instance of a phantom ride in a Mexican film of the 1920s occurs in *Ciudad de México Años 20*, a film produced by Germán Camus y Compañía which currently can only be viewed as a negative copy.[28] Although the film is incomplete, extant footage opens with a mobile view taken from the front of a vehicle as it negotiates the junction of



Figs. 18, 19 & 20. *Ciudad de México Años 20*, Germán Camus y Compañía, 1920.

two major thoroughfares in Mexico City at the Glorieta [i.e. circus] de Bucareli: Avenida Juarez and Paseo de la Reforma. As the vehicle approaches the Lotería Nacional building on the northwest corner of the junction (Fig. 18), various vehicles enter the shot from off-frame right while the moving vehicle from which the film is shot threads its way through the intersection. The (uncompleted) Monument a la Revolución (some blocks to the west of the junction) can be seen momentarily across the rear of the shot as the camera turns into Reforma (Fig. 19), a wide boulevard running west towards the Castillo de Chapultepec, the official residence of the President of Mexico in the 1920s. As the vehicle from which the film is shot turns into Reforma, a jump in the print advances the spectator down the boulevard to a point where the vehicle begins to approach the circus around the Monument a Cuauhtémoc (Fig. 20). Cars pass on the inside of the vehicle on which the camera is mounted, and a car entering the shot at frame right from an off-frame side street (Fig. 21), forces another vehicle overtaking on the inside to halt as the vehicle entering from the side street crosses the foreground of the shot before exiting front left (Fig. 22). Picking up speed, the viewer advances towards the Monument a Cuauhtémoc until the vehicle on which the camera is mounted begins to take a left turn (towards the southwest) at the junction of Reforma with Avenida Insurgentes Sur. Up to this point, with the exception of the moment when the car comes into view from a side street, most of the interest has centred on the movement of the vehicle on which the camera is mounted as it negotiates a busy intersection before settling into a relatively gentle ride along Reforma. As the vehicle, however, continues down Insurgentes, the camera draws close to two tramlines which, after the camera reframes slightly to the left, recede diagonally from the lower left corner of the frame towards mid-field right

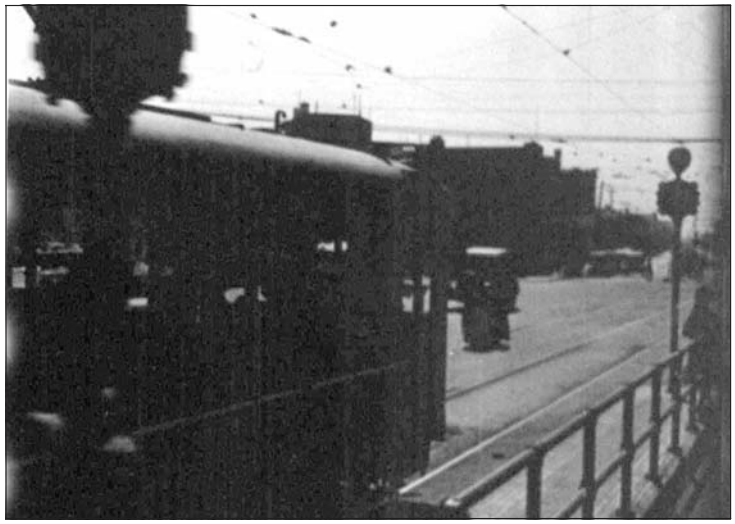


Figs. 21, 22 & 23. *Ciudad de México Años 20*, Germán Camus y Compañía, 1920.

of centre. As a result of this re-framing, a tram approaching the camera or one running past the camera from behind the moving vehicle become the principal interest of the phantom ride. As the camera begins to approach the next major junction at the intersection of Insurgentes Sur with Avenida Chapultepec, a tram advances towards the camera exiting foreground left (Fig. 23). As the tram on which the camera is mounted begins to slow down, a tram travelling in the same direction as the camera enters the shot at extreme foreground left (Fig. 24). Since this latter tram is travelling slightly faster than the tram on which the camera is mounted, the tram entering the shot advances across the frame before halting (Fig. 25). As the camera continues to advance towards the intersection, the viewer passes the now stationary tram on the left (Fig. 26) then manoeuvres into the centre of the intersection to turn left (Fig. 27). At this point, another tram crosses the shot at mid frame whereupon a cut relocates the camera to the front of a tram heading along Insurgentes Sur towards the Hipódromo de la Condesa (Fig. 28), a relatively new housing development, in the 1920s, on the southwest outskirts of the city.

To describe camera movement is to anticipate the corporeal presence of the viewer, to anticipate the spectator we will become who, as Christian Metz poetically phrased it, is 'at every moment ... in the film by my look's caress'.[29] The movement of one vehicle relative to the other, or the sudden appearance of a car from a side street renders the edge of the frame dynamic since the cinematographic frame restricts the peripheral vision the viewer would have exercised had he or she been in the vehicle. Thus what is off-frame remains unseen (and hence, in a very real sense, unforeseen) since such events remain outside the visual field until the very moment the car (or later a tram) enters the shot. The unexpected eruption of these moments returns us to the arguments variously advanced by Aumont and Lastra where interest in the contingent framing of space privileges the filmic event as the primary site of representational activity. On the evidence of the films considered here, Aumont and Lastra's argument concerning the contingency of the cinematographic view with regard to earlier systems of visual representation is confirmed.

Such films, however, also display another as-

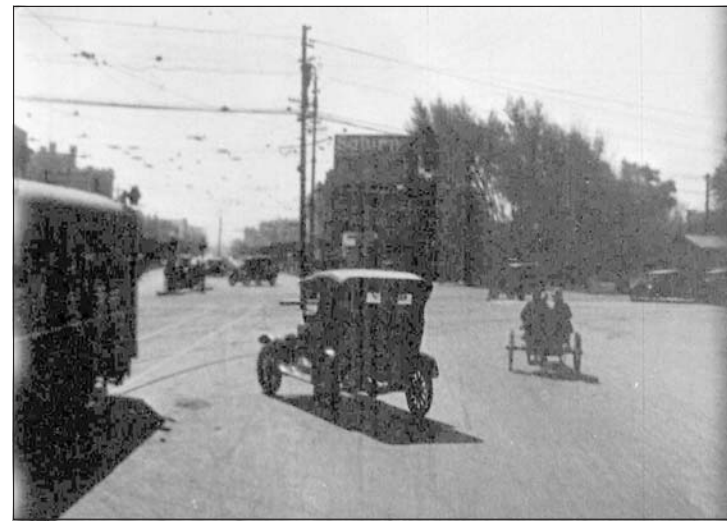


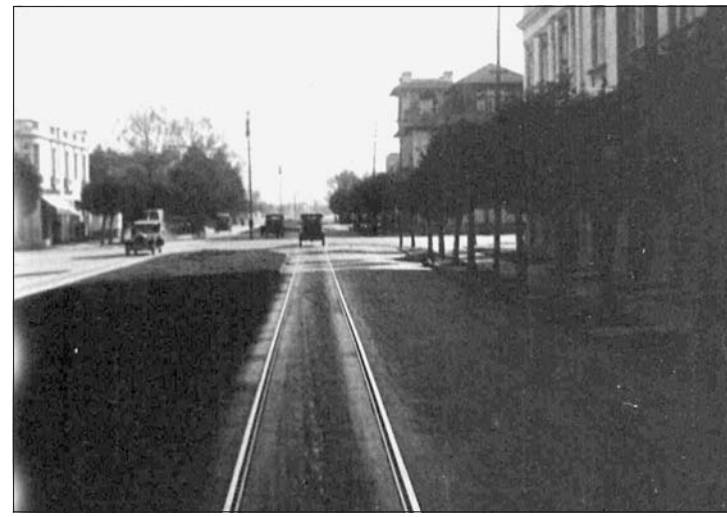
Figs. 24, 25 & 26. *Ciudad de México Años 20*, Germán Camus y Compañía, 1920.

pect of how optically-mediated vision not only departs significantly from human vision but represents events in a manner distinct from how they would have appeared had we been physically present. As David Bordwell has observed, the 50mm standard lens of the silent era has a very restricted field of view when compared with the binocular vision of humans. He states that the lens includes some 28 degrees of horizontal coverage compared with approximately 200 degrees (including peripheral vision) available to humans.[30] The 50mm standard lens also has the capacity, as Martin Loiperdinger has observed, to make objects filmed close up appear larger than they would appear in reality: 'every object is reduced in size by the square of its actual distance from the camera's lens and, conversely, increases in size in proportion to the square of its distance to the lens'.[31] Thus movement within the frame towards or away from the camera is optically emphasised by the standard 50mm lens just as its visual field is significantly restricted when compared with binocular human vision. Differences between optically-mediated views and our binocular vision account for some of the dynamic inscription of movement observed in viewing these phantom rides.

The other form of motion in Mexican actuality film of the 1920s which exhibits what Anne Friedberg has termed film's 'mobilized visuality' is aerial footage.[32] Aerial photography (as distinct from aerial cinematography) had been used by the Secretaría de Guerra y Marina in the period between 1913 and 1917. In 1920 aerial photographs were taken of Mexico City by the American Photo Supply Co. for the Secretaría Guerra y Marina and for the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas, some of which were published in periodicals during the 1920s including *Revista de Revistas*, *El Universal Ilustrado* and *Jueves de Excélsior*. The earliest cinematographic aerial views of Mexico City would appear to have been taken by Ezequiel Carrasco in 1917, but Sub-lieutenant Carlos Comball and Lieutenant Fernando G. Proal were the first team to shoot aerial footage at the Hipódromo de la Condesa. According to an article published in *Excélsior* in September 1920 ('La película de las carreras de autómoviles despierta gran entusiasmo'), aerial views of moving traffic at the Hipódromo proved particularly popular.[33] Alejandrina Escudero also mentions aerial foot-

Figs. 27 & 28. *Ciudad de México Años 20*, Germán Camus y Compañía, 1920.





age shot by P.F. Healy in 1920, where the aviator described his response in an article that appeared in *Revista de Revistas*. Healy wrote that 'with its avenues and roads, it [Mexico City] appeared to be an octopus lying on the surface of a sea, green like the Mediterranean ... The airplane has performed a miracle. This bird of steel *revealed another world*. The child who once lost paradise approaches the ideal, draws nearer to god'.[34] The analogy with the anatomy of a living organism was employed as a common metaphor for aerial photographs of the city in the 1920s, as an editorial in *Planificación*, cited in Escudero, makes clear: houses and buildings were compared with the city's bones and muscles; roads and streets, its circulatory system; parks, open spaces and sports fields, its lungs; rivers, its digestive and excretory systems; communications (electricity, telegraph and telephones), its central nervous system, and the University, schools and scientific institutions, the city's brain.

Revista México, produced by Produciónes Sáenz D Sicilia, opens with an intertitle ('La Ciudad de México desde un avión.') before the film cuts to a shot of a biplane taken from a plane whose wings dominate the foreground of the shot.[35] The film then cuts to an aerial view of the central part of Mexico City with the Zócalo at lower left and the Catedral Metropolitana in the lower right section of the frame (Fig. 29, lower frame).[36] After a further cut, the Zócalo is framed at the lower right with the Catedral Metropolitana at lower left (Fig. 30), after which the camera again reframes the view of the Zócalo so that the cathedral is now seen in the upper part of the frame (Fig. 31). Some moments later, an extremely high aerial view is presented with the Zócalo mid frame and the cathedral to the lower right of the square (Fig. 32). These views are quite brief, and most draw attention to the movement of the plane as it turns,

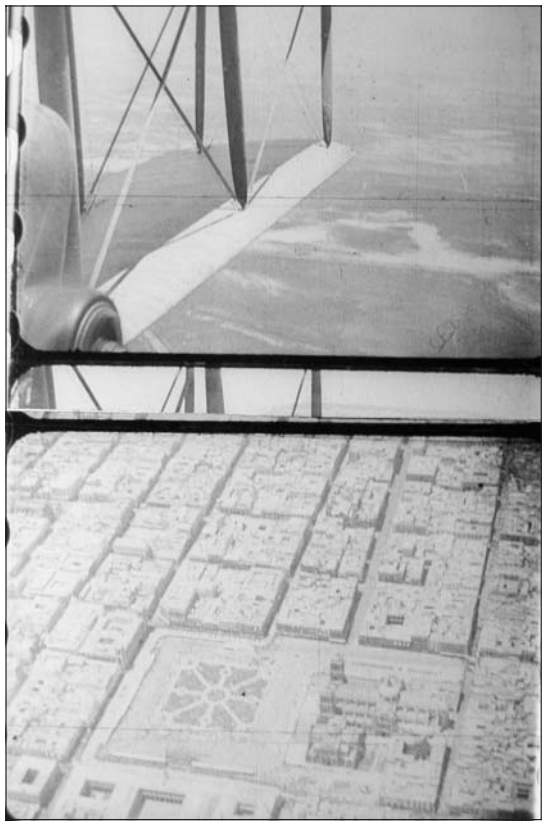
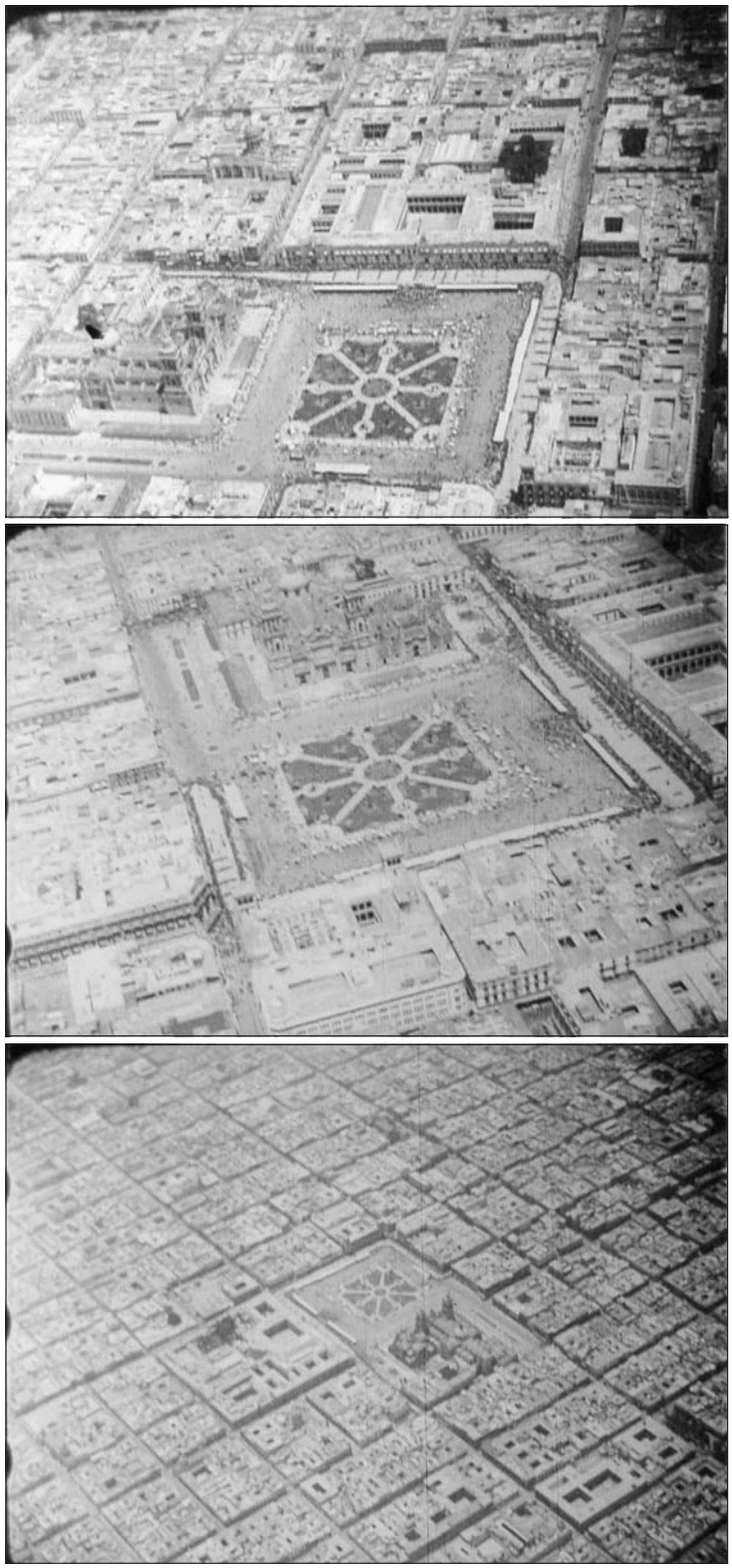


Fig. 29 (left). *Revista México*, Produciónes Sáenz D Sicilia, 1923/24.



Figs. 30, 31 & 32. *Revista México*, Produciónes Sáenz D Sicilia, 1923/24.

circles locations or wavers in the air. We won't detail further the views of the city at the opening of the film, but what should be clear from the frame enlargements is that aerial views, as was recognised by European photographers in the 1920s, flatten perspective, converting the familiar space of the city as a physically negotiated environment into a relatively abstract pattern.[37] By radically compressing three-dimensional space, such views counter our haptical experience of space with its quasi-ichnographic representation. In that the scale of the city also exceeds what the lens includes at any given moment, the viewer's vision is once again restricted by the limits of the cinematographic frame.

If we compare such optically-mediated aerial images of the city with an engraving from the nineteenth century, the difference between optically-mediated views and the haptical exploration of space becomes more clear. Compare the frame enlargements we have just considered with 'La ciudad de México tomada en globo' (Fig. 33), a mid-nineteenth-century lithograph by Casimiro Castro published in 1855 in Marcos Arroniz et al. *México y sus alrededores. Colección de monumentos, trajes y paisajes*.[38] Unlike the aerial views in *Revista México*, Castro's bird's-eye view places the spectator at a considerable height above the city, yet retains a sense of projection: the facades of buildings in the lower right corner of the engraving retain a three-dimensionality which the aerial views in *Revista México* largely suppress. While the aerial views in the film are not fully perpendicular to the axis of the lens, they nonetheless appear more ichnographic than in Castro's engraving which organises the view of the city around a vanishing point in the upper left part of the image. The organisation of the view also leaves the eye free to roam over the picture, taking in the range of volcanoes on the edge of the Valle de México across the rear of the composition. Combining a high view looking down onto the city with a view towards the horizon, the engraving offers the compression of space associated with an aerial view while it retains the expansive sense of space more typical of a nineteenth-century panorama painting where the spectator commands the view. The aerial views presented in *Revista México*, however, provide no comparable sense of space nor do they offer a point from which the city can be surveyed in its entirety.

Framed views in a Mexican actuality film of the 1920s

It would be interesting to consider the operation of horizontal and vertical camera reframings and panorama shots in Mexican actuality film of the 1920s, and compare these practices with the nineteenth-century photographic panorama. However, in an essay of this length, space precludes their examination. If the images we have considered so far speak of modernity, however distant in time the 'modernity' of the view of Mexico City from a balloon in *México y sus alrededores* may have appeared to a film viewer in the 1920s, surviving Mexican actuality films also evidence a quite different concern in their deployment of motifs that draw on pictorial conventions. This concern will be considered in respect of the film, *México ante los ojos del Mundo/Mexico Before the Eyes of the World*, a dual-language film (with intertitles in English and Spanish) produced in 1925 by Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México, the national railway of Mexico, and directed by Miguel Chejada. As one might anticipate, the film includes a number of travelling shots taken, variously, from the back or from the front of a train, and a number of lateral travelling views are also included. These will not be considered here. Rather, we will examine one brief segment filmed in the Jardín Borda, a landscaped garden in Cuernavaca, before closing with a brief consideration of views framed through the motif of the arch.

Jardín Borda was established by José Manuel Arrieta and bought by José de la Borda in 1763. Much of its current lay-out dates from 1783 when Borda's son, Manuel, redesigned the garden, established near the centre of Cuernavaca, a city some ninety kilometres to the south of Mexico City. Two of the more illustrious owners of the Borda garden in the nineteenth century were Emperor Maximilian and Empress Carlota, who chose the garden and its buildings as their summer retreat. With the arrival of the railway in Cuernavaca in 1897, the city became a popular destination for North American tourists, one group of whom is seen visiting the garden in *For Mexico*, the film sponsored by the Ford Motor Company we considered earlier.[39] Like Flandrau, who visited the garden in 1908, or Waite, who photographed the garden in the early 1900s, visitors in the early twentieth century would have encountered a rather overgrown garden carved out of the side of one of the many ravines over which the city of Cuernavaca expanded in the twentieth century. The garden does have some formal elements which Flandrau considers (particularly two lakes), but the Jardín Borda also has many elements typical of a small landscaped garden. Flandrau closes the account of his visit on a melancholic note:

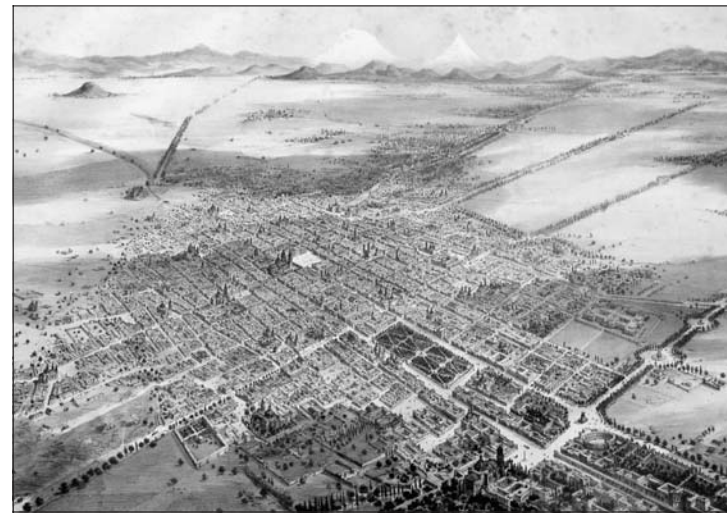


Fig. 33. Casimiro Castro, *La ciudad de México tomada en globo*, chromolithograph, in Marcos Arroniz et al., *México y sus alrededores. Colección de monumentos, trajes y paisajes* (1855). [Museo Nacional del Arte, Mexico City.]

> And yet, on the sad, silent terraces of the Jardin Borda one always thinks of Maximilian and Carlotta, and pays them the tribute of a sentimental pang.[40]

Here, knowledge concerning an earlier owner of the garden informs Flandrau's response. His account is infused with the knowledge that a traveller might bring, knowledge which promotes fantasy on Flandrau's part concerning the past coupled with a sense of melancholy. Surely the 'view' aesthetic that Gunning discusses is as much an aesthetic of the contemplative as it is an aesthetic of the attraction, as Gunning's brief discussion of *Burnham Beeches* (Hepworth Manufacturing Company, 1909) in his essay on the 'view' aesthetic implies?[41] In this respect, the aesthetic may designate a more personal response to a given image where reverie, as Jennifer Lynn Peterson has proposed,[42] accounts for some of the responses spectators may have experienced when viewing actuality films in the 1910s. If this is so, then the project characterising modernity in early film turns as much on notions of the Picturesque with its attendant association of Arcadian loss, as it more obviously relates to, and valorises, modernity.[43] Such a response, we propose, informed images that circulated of the garden in photographs and films in the early twentieth century where a melancholic reg-

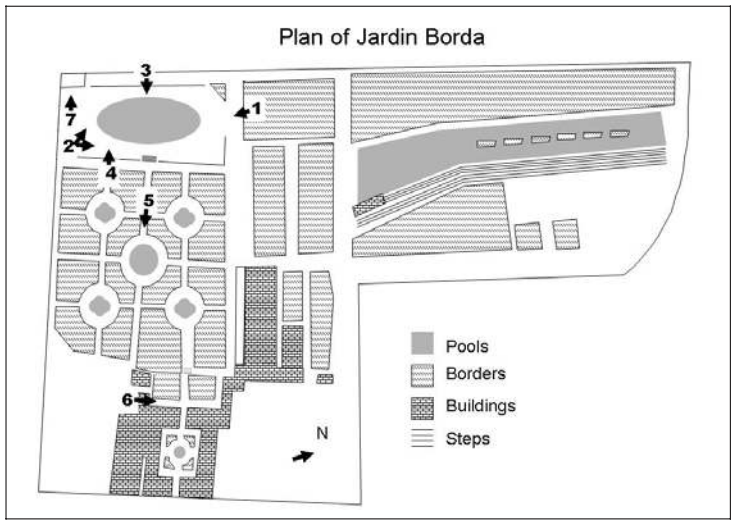


Fig. 34. Plan of Jardín Borda, Cuernavaca.

ister prevails, as the title of a photograph of a belvedere in the garden – 'Carlota's favourite corner in Borda Garden, Cuernavaca Méx' – taken by Waite in 1904 implies.[44]

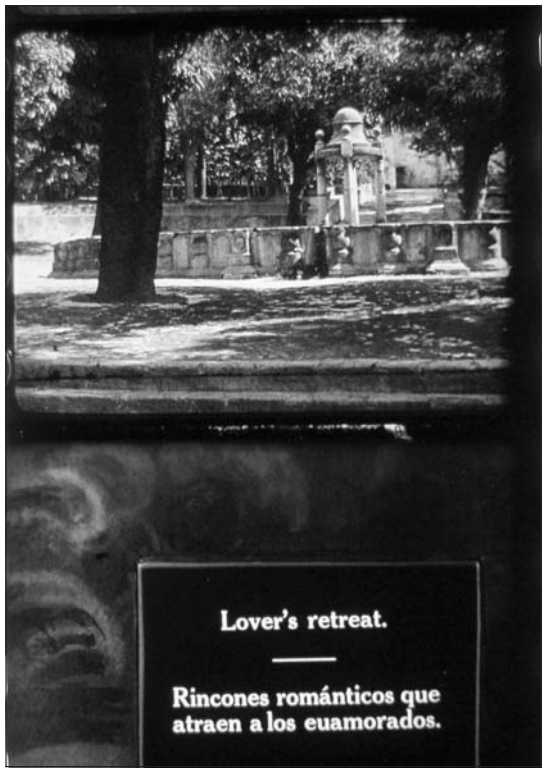
One of the places visited in *México ante los ojos del mundo* is, of course, Jardín Borda. We will discuss the segment where the garden is featured in the film in relation to photographs taken by Waite and by the German emigré photographer, Hugo Brehme, who, famous for the publication of *México Pintoresco* in 1923, took photographs of the garden and of Cuernavaca contemporary with the production of the film.[45] Some of the photographs taken by Waite and a number of picture postcard views taken by Brehme share common stylistic concerns with the film.

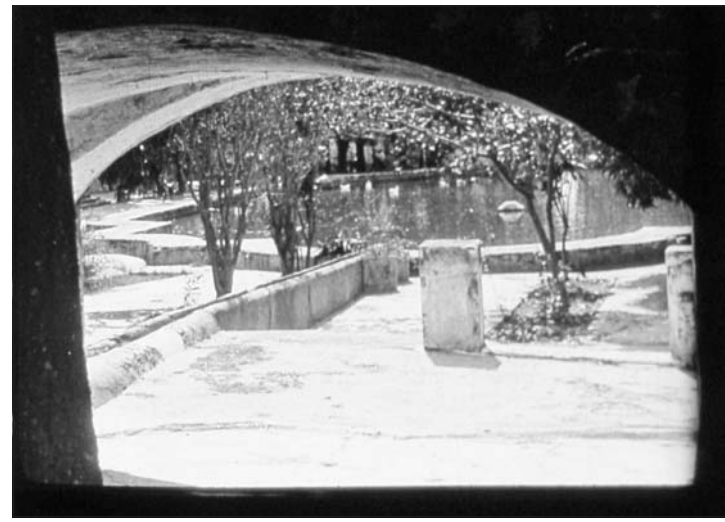
An inspection of a plan of the gardens reveals that all but one of the camera set-ups for this segment of the film are centred around the smaller of the two lakes (Fig. 34). The first view of the garden was shot from under an arch in an inclined path to the north of the lake with the camera facing south (set-up 1). Shot 2 was taken from the other end of the lake, from its southeast corner, and as the shot runs, the camera re-frames to the left as it turns towards the west. Shot 3 is taken from the west side of the lake with the camera facing steps on the far side of the lake. Shot 4 was taken from the opposite side of the lake, near the southeast corner with the camera overlooking the lake. Shot 5, of an ornamental fountain to the east of the lake, was shot on a gentle incline with the camera tilted slightly up towards the fountain beyond which a path can be seen. In shot 6, the camera was located on the eastern side of the garden, on a pathway (which no longer exists) adjacent to a wall with steps at mid field. Shot 7, the final shot of the segment, was taken close to the southern perimeter wall with the camera facing west in the direction of a belvedere on the southwest corner of the garden.

Fig. 35. Hugo Brehme, '974 Lake in Borda Garden, Cuernavaca, Mex.', black and white picture postcard, 13.7cms x 8.7cms. [Courtesy Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City.]

The part of the garden seen in the film appears quite large. However, as a picture postcard view of the lake by Brehme reveals (Fig. 35), the lake is little more than an ornamental pond. Photographed from a path on a gentle incline, Brehme's view is close to, although a little higher than, the set-up used for shot 1 of the film which was taken from the arch under the path on which Brehme placed his camera (Fig. 36). The view of the lake in the film is framed by the arch which crosses the upper part of the shot, a view that shares a formal correspondence, as we shall observe, with the framing of views in other shots of the film and in a picture postcard view of the belvedere taken by Brehme.

The second shot, from the opposite end of the lake, includes a view of the inclined pathway at the rear of the shot. Trees frame the view at foreground right before the camera re-frames to the left to reveal a classically-inspired stone plinth (Fig. 37), one of four near each corner of the lake. The camera continues to re-frame left until the end of the shot when the trunk of a tree frames the view at extreme foreground left. The relatively low views seen in the first two shots of the segment are continued in the third shot which provides a view across the lake with a low wall crossing the foreground of the shot. A small fountain (not in operation) can be seen towards mid-field right. The shot shows a man coming down the steps on the far side of the lake to take a photograph (Fig. 38, upper frame). In shot 4 (Fig. 38, lower frame), the man sits near the corner of the low wall





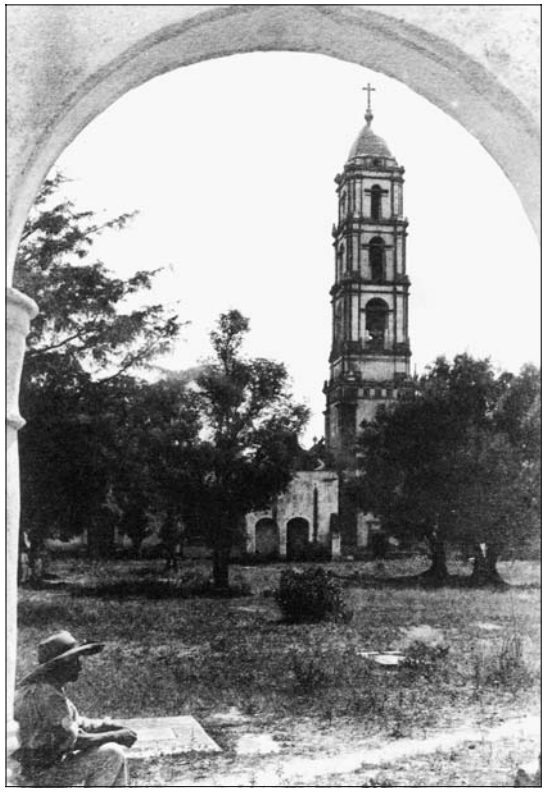
towards foreground left as he takes a photograph. After the fifth shot (Fig. 39, upper frame) of an ornamental fountain without human interest, an intertitle – 'Lover's retreat/Rincones románticos que atraen a los euamorados [sic]'[46] – introduces the final two shots of the segment: shot 6 (Fig. 40, lower frame) in which the man accompanied by a woman walks away from camera towards steps at the base of a wall at mid-field centre, and shot 7 (Fig. 41, lower frame), a view of the belvedere, with the man standing to the right of rear centre as he takes a photograph of the woman seated in a deck-chair at left of rear centre. This view, although framed closer to the belvedere, is similar to the photograph taken by Waite titled, 'Carlota's favourite corner of the garden' where, as we observed earlier, a melancholic register prevails.

Figs. 36 (top right), 37 (bottom right), 38 (top left) & 39 (bottom left). *México ante los ojos del mundo*, Miguel Chejada, 1925.

Figs. 40, 41. *México ante los ojos del mundo*, Miguel Chejada, 1925.

Most of the shots are framed by shrubs or trees in the foreground: shot 1 is framed by the arch as we have already noted; shot 2 is framed by trees in the foreground at the opening and close of the shot; in shot 3, a low wall frames the view of the lake across the foreground of the image, and in shot 4, shrubs frame the view at foreground right, while shot 7 is framed by branches in the upper right foreground. Many of the shots also articulate space by means of framing devices: in shot 1, the low wall surrounding the lake recedes from foreground left so articulating mid-field space (see Fig. 36); in shot 2, a low wall recedes from foreground left to the mid field as the camera re-frames to the left (see Fig. 37); in shot 6, the walls and pillars on either side of the path articulate receding space (see Fig. 40) and in shot 7, a low wall receding from foreground left articulates the space between the camera and the belvedere (see Fig. 41). Composition in depth is also evident in the still photographs we have considered: in Brehme's view of the lake, for example, where borders in the garden articulate foreground space. The manner of articulating space is closely echoed in a picture postcard view of the belvedere by Brehme (Fig. 42): although Brehme's view is taken from the north of the belvedere, the west perimeter wall of the garden on the right of the photograph articulates the space between the viewer and the belvedere in much the same manner as the view in *México ante los ojos del mundo* where an inclined path leads the eye to the belvedere. We may propose, therefore, that many of the formal concerns in this part of the film are also evident in photographs taken by Waite and Brehme. The use of arches, walls and shrubbery to frame foreground or mid-field space not only demonstrates that the views presented in the film share a similar sense of composition, but draws attention to the manner in which composition in depth is articulated by framing devices. Such a process implies a very different dynamic to that identified in the mobilised views considered in *Ciudad de México Años 20* where contingency is inscribed.

While framing devices in picture postcards photographed by Brehme can be seen in other views he took of Cuernavaca in the 1920s – in a view of the town through an arch from a terrace of the now-demolished Hotel Morelos (Fig. 43) or of an unidentified church (Fig. 44) – such images demonstrate that certain formal elements in the composition are not only interchangeable (a flowerpot in the foreground of one photograph may be substituted by a seated



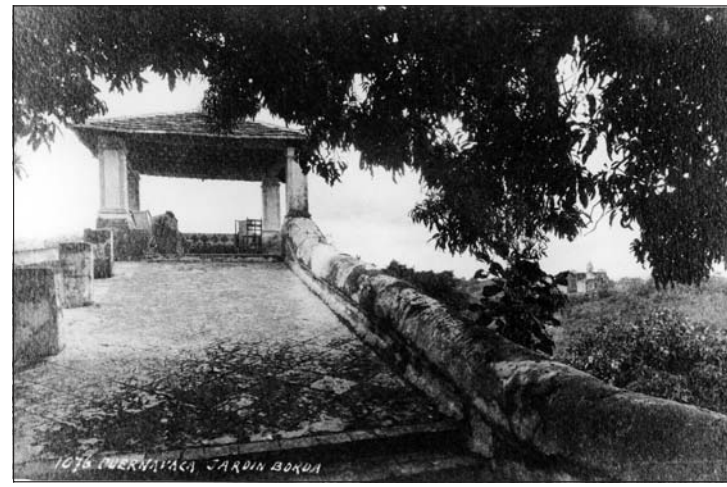


figure in another), but also draws attention to how the framing of foreground space contributes to the articulation of depth cues that organise the views into a series of receding planes.[47] In the case of the view from the hotel, the foreground is defined by the arch and the flowerpot; mid-field space is defined by tiled roofs and palm trees, and the far distance is articulated by a line of hills. By being printed with relatively high contrast, the photograph is also rendered more plastic. In the case of the view of the church, the seated man and arch frame foreground space; trees articulate mid-field space, and the church at the rear of the composition marks the extent of the view while the frame defining the upper limits of the photograph also evokes the convention of the curved frame that was often used in stereographic views in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Do the framed views of Brehme, then, with their planar construction allude to the perceptual organisation of space seen in stereographic views? Does the emphasis given to framing in Brehme and in *México ante los ojos del mundo* constitute, in other words, a formal metonymy? If we compare the way the device of the arch is employed in these instances with views elsewhere in the film that include arches as the principal subject of a composition (in a segment of the film shot in Amecameca [Fig. 45], for example) what is shown beyond the arch is usually incidental to the response the arch itself is presumed to evoke. In this respect, the motif of the arch in the shot from Amecameca is employed for pictorial effect rather than as a device that draws attention to the planar construction of the image.

The concern with affect through pictorial means is also evident in the surviving unidentified

Fig. 42 (above). Hugo Brehme, '1076 Cuernavaca Jardin Borda', black and white picture postcard, no later than 1924, 8.8cms x 13.7cms.

Fig. 43 (top left). Hugo Brehme, '1108 Cuernavaca, Mor. Desde el Hotel Morelos', black and white picture postcard, 13.7cms x 8.8cms.

Fig. 44 (bottom left). Hugo Brehme, unidentified subject without Brehme's catalogue number, Cuernavaca, black and white picture postcard, 13.7cms x 8.8cms. [All images courtesy Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City.]

Figs. 45 (above). *México ante los ojos del mundo*, Miguel Chejada, 1925.

actuality fragment with which we conclude.[48] Unlike conventional photographic representations of the Catedral Metropolitana which framed the facade of the cathedral obliquely, we view the facade through the decorative pillars of the Casa Municipal on the opposite side of the square (Fig. 46). While the filmmaker selects an unconventional framing to views that would have circulated in the nineteenth century (since the columns seen in the film were added to the top floor of the Casa Municipal in the early twentieth century), such a motif can be traced back at least seventy-five years to a lithograph of the first-floor cloister of the Convento de la Merced which appeared in *Album Pintoresco de la República Mexicana*.[49] The view of the cathedral in the film thus adopts an earlier convention. However, since the framing in the film fragment crops the top of the arches (presumably because the camera could not be placed at sufficient distance from the pillars to include the tops of the arches in the frame), the convention of showing the complete arch in nineteenth-century lithographs and photographs of cloisters is compromised. In short, the cinematographic view inscribes contingency in its application of the convention. While we may never know whether this unconventional application of the motif was noted by the historical spectator, an 'archaeology' of the view aesthetic nonetheless suggests that actuality films in Mexico drew on and intensified many of the concerns of nineteenth-century and turn-of-the-century visual culture giving them often strikingly new forms of affect through the contingency of phantom rides and aerial views. Mexican actuality film also presented views that were steeped in nineteenth-century iconography and nineteenth-century viewing practices, as our discussion of framing devices and the planar organisation of the views in Cuernavaca attests. On occasion, both registers could be co-present as the view of the cathedral from the Casa Municipal demonstrates.

Figs. 46 (below). Unidentified film fragment.

We may propose, therefore, that Mexican actuality film in the 1920s evidences distinct registers of affect in their inscribing of contingency, their evocation of the picturesque and their framing of space. While it remains to be discovered whether the discourse of the picturesque may have admitted to local interpretation in the Mexican context, if the introduction of film at the turn of the century was accompanied by a perceptual revolution, as some writers have maintained, then our discussion of Mexican actuality films of the 1920s would seem to demonstrate a degree of ambivalence. On the one hand, mobilised views inscribe contingency so drawing attention to the filmic as the primary site of representational activity. On the other hand, Mexican actuality films also evoke nineteenth-century viewing practices through framing devices that emphasise the planar organisation of composition in depth. Whether this dichotomy is more widespread in actuality film produced in other national cinemas during the 1920s cannot at this point be assessed. What we may propose is that this dichotomy not only subtends modern processes of viewing, but may also have been instrumental in redefining earlier conventions of the picturesque, however distinct the Mexican

interpretation of that discourse may prove to be. In this respect, many of the local views considered here attest to deep-rooted conventions that originated in very distant scenes; many views, however, also declare their modernity, while some – perhaps the most intriguing case – embrace both registers in one and the same image.

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Without the unstinting support and friendship of Aurelio de los Reyes, the research for this essay would not have been possible. For introducing us to many of the collections in Mexico City, and for his enthusiasm for our work, we owe Aurelio a deep debt of gratitude. We are also grateful to the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas and, particularly, María Teresa Uriarte who, as director of the Instituto, supported the application for a visiting scholarship. Our thanks go to Angel Martínez Juárez at Filmoteca UNAM who spent many hours searching for prints for us to view. Without his support, many of the films and most of the fragments we have viewed while preparing this essay would have remained unknown to us. We also thank Alejandra Toscano and Sylvie Manuels of the Fundación Carmen Toscano for their help in letting us view films shot by Salvador Toscano. We are grateful to Alma del Carmen Vázquez Morales, Eva Aurora Ibarra Reyes, Citlalitl Nares Ramos and Lizbeth Meza Valencia at Archivo General de la Nación, and Pedro Angeles and Cecilia Gutierrez Arriola at Fototeca UNAM where we worked in the photographic collections during spring and summer 2004. We thank Högskoleföreningens stiftelse för docentstipendier which supported our initial research in Mexico during summer 2003, and The British Academy who, through an international network grant, funded the Symposia on Local Films and the research seminar held in Stockholm. Finally, we thank Carlos Bustamante who not only read the essay and, as always, provided insightful comments, but who has been a very great friend for more years than we care to mention – to Aurelio and Carlos, a heart-felt *abrazo*.

Notes

1. We employ the term, 'actuality film', as a collective critical term to denote a wide range of narrative films of a purportedly non-fictional status (usually shot on location) subsuming films which were historically categorised as, variously, 'panorama', 'view', 'local', 'scenic', 'travelogue', 'topical', 'educational', 'industrial' or 'documentary' etc. Some of the earliest examples of this practice were designated *vues* (views) by producers as different as the Lumière brothers and Georges Méliès, a term which collapses the traditional dichotomy established between narrative fiction and narrative non-fiction films. 'Views' is the preferred term Tom Gunning has more recently adopted to characterise actuality films in the period of the cinema of attractions before the advent of the German *Kulturfilm* and the documentary film in the 1920s.
2. John L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Yucatan*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers for Henry Bill, 1848 [1843]), II, Plate IV. According to Mario Humberto Magaña Arara, a Maya guide, this structure no longer exists, conversation with the authors, Oxkutzcab, 28 May 2004.
3. Ibid., 39.
4. Charles Flandrau, *Viva Mexico! A Traveller's Account of Life in Mexico* (London: Eland, 1982 [1908]), 30.
5. Tom Gunning, 'Before Documentary: Early nonfiction film and the "view" aesthetic', in Daan Hertogs and Nico de Klerk (eds.), *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Nonfiction Film* (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997), 9–24.
6. Ibid., 14.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., 24.
9. The title of the album may be translated as, 'Album of the Mexican Railway: A collection of views painted from nature by Casimiro Castro'. All translations from Spanish are by John Fullerton.
10. Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass, 1927), 4.
11. The railway from Mexico City to Veracruz, of which Casimiro Castro provided chromolithographs to accompany Garcia Cubas' *Album del Ferro-Carril Mexicano*, opened in 1872.
12. Jacques Aumont, 'The Variable Eye, or the Mobilization of the Gaze', trans. Charles O'Brien and Sally Shafto, in Dudley Andrew (ed.), *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 232.
13. Ibid.

14. Ibid. The work to which Aumont refers is Peter Galassi, 'Before Photography', preface to *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art/New York Graphic Society, 1981), 11–31.

15. James Lastra, 'From the Captured Moment to the Cinematic Image: A Transformation in Pictorial Order', in Dudley Andrew (ed.), *The Image in Dispute*, 274.

16. Peter Galassi quoted in ibid., 276. There are, of course, antecedents to this trend in nineteenth-century painting as the well-known reception accorded the work of Edgar Degas demonstrates.

17. Ibid., 277.

18. See Gerry Turvey, 'Panoramas, parades and the picturesque: the aesthetics of British actuality films, 1895–1901', *Film History* 16.1 (2004): 9–27. The essay develops a number of points first advanced by Stephen Bottomore in 'Shots in the dark: the real origins of film editing', *Sight and Sound* 57.3 (Summer 1988): 200–204.

19. Ibid., 16.

20. Ibid., 21.

21. Ibid., 25.

22. Ibid.

23. We know, for example, that some Mexican footage is held at the Nederlands Filmmuseum and at the Imperial War Museum in London, but we have not viewed this material to date. Amongst collections outside Mexico, we have viewed some of the Edison films held in the Paper Prints Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., and we have viewed films shot for the Lumière company in Mexico held by the Archives du Film of the Centre National de la Cinématographie, Bois d'Arcy; we have also viewed some of the material held by the National Film and Television Archive in London. All films discussed in this essay are held by Filmoteca UNAM, Mexico City, and frame enlargements appearing in this essay have been prepared from Filmoteca UNAM prints.

24. A 35mm viewing copy of this fragment can be viewed at Filmoteca UNAM; other production details are not available.

25. The following identification number appears on the outside of the can of the 16mm viewing copy: SO 535/A 22971. The frame enlargements reproduced in Figs. 15, 16 & 17 are from a 16mm print of the film, and are almost certainly slightly cropped. The cropping of the original 35mm print would not, however, be sufficient to qualify the observations made here.

26. As with the other two shots discussed from this film, the phantom ride is announced by an intertitle, in this case: 'The Los Angeles Board of Commerce visits Guadalajara, a well kept, beautiful city, known as "The Paris of Mexico."' A lap dissolve occurs shortly after the shot opens.

27. A number of travelling shots taken from a moving train documenting Francisco Madero's progression towards Mexico City can be seen in a compilation film, *Memorias de un Mexicano* (Fundación Carmen Toscano/Archivo Histórico Cinematográfico/Archivo Toscano Méxicano, Javier Sierra, 1967) compiled from footage shot by Salvador Toscano in 1911. According to the voice-over narration, shots from Durango, Torreón, Saltillo, San Miguel de Allende, Zacatecas, Lagos, León, Silao, Irapuato, Salamanca and Tula are included, many of which are travelling shots taken from the front, rear or side of the train. Two non-consecutive shots taken from a train as it negotiates a sharp curve near Zacatecas are similar in their dynamic effect to the shot taken from the freight train in *For Mexico*. We have yet to acquire frame enlargements of this footage.

28. Frame enlargements photographed from the 35mm negative copy of the film have been digitally reversed. The following identification number appears on the outside of the can: A-22538/S-79. The company specialised in the distribution of European films, periodically sending an agent to Europe to purchase material, and opened a studio at las calles de Revillagigedo 51 in Mexico City where the company produced the first version of *Santa*, directed by Luis G. Peredo, in 1918 and *La banda del automóvil* which was produced the following year. The company also produced *Alas abiertas* which included aerial footage shot of the *sierra* in the state of Hidalgo. See Aurelio de los Reyes, *Cine y Sociedad en México 1896–1930*, vol. 2, *Bajo el Cielo de México, 1920–1924* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1993), 48, 214. This latter film does not appear to have survived.

29. Christian Metz, 'The Imaginary Signifier', in *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, Alfred Guzzetti (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), 3–87, 54.

30. See David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 182.

31. Martin Loiperdinger, 'Lumière's *Arrival of the Train*: Cinema's Founding Myth', *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 4.1 (Spring 2004): 89–118.

32. See Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993) and Anne Friedberg, '*Trottoir roulant*: The Cinema and New Mobilities of Spectatorship', in John Fullerton and Jan Olsson (eds.), *Allegories of Communication: Intermedial Concerns from Cinema to the Digital* (Rome: John Libbey Publishing – CIC, 2004), 263–276.

33. See Aurelio de los Reyes, op. cit., II, 47 and Alejandrina Escudero, 'En la región de las nubes', *Alquimia* 18 (May-August 2003): 43–45, 44.

34. 'con sus avenidas y calzadas, se nos antojaba un pulpo sobre la superficie de un mar, verde como el Mediterráneo ... El aeroplano ha hecho el milagro. Ese pájaro de acero *descubrió otro mundo*. La criatura que en un tiempo abandonara el paraíso se acerca al ideal, se aproxima a dios.' Escudero, op. cit., 43. Emphasis in the original.

35. The following identification number appears on the outside of the can of the 35mm viewing copy: 51473. Filmoteca UNAM propose 1923/24 as a possible date of production.

36. Located in the centre of Mexico City, the Zócalo (aka Plaza de la Constitución) is the city's largest square onto which the Catedral Metropolitana (north of the square), the Palacio Nacional (east of the square) and the Casa Municipal (south of the square) face.

37. See, for example, the work of Günther Petschow (plates 9 and 19) reproduced in Franz Roh and Jan Tschichold, *foto-auge/œil et photo/photo-eye* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974 [1929]), n.p., or the examples of aerial photography by, variously, Junkers Luftbild (plate 16) and Aero-Kartographisches Institute Breslau (present-day Wroclaw, plate 17) and, without acknowledgement, plate 15 reproduced in Roh and Tschichold, op. cit. See also Franz Roh's brief discussion of what he terms 'astronomic perspective' (*astronomische perspektiven*) in the introductory essay, 'mechanismus und ausdruk: wesen und wert der fotografie', ibid., 6. Kazimir Malevich, an artist associated with the Bauhaus in the 1920s, was also very interested in aerial photography, see aerial photographs reproduced in Kazimir Malevich, *Die gegenstandslose welt* (Munich: Bauhausbuch 11, 1927).

38. Published in Mexico City by Decaen, the engraving was coloured by Fordo Ricardo Excamilla. A highly cropped, monochrome reproduction of the engraving can be found in Guillermo Tovar de Teresa, *The City of Palaces: Chronicle of a Lost Heritage*, 2 vols. (Mexico City: Fundación Cultural Televisa, 1990), I, 18. The title of the book may be translated as 'Mexico City and its Surroundings: A collection of monuments, costumes and landscapes'.

39. One shot of the tourists shows them posing for the camera on Calle de Hidalgo, the main street which runs from the cathedral enclosure east of Jardín Borda to Cortés' palace, a fortress-like structure which Cortés established as his private residence on the site of an Aztec pyramid which the Spanish destroyed when they torched the city in 1521. Two shots show the tourists near the ornamental lake considered in this essay, and one further shot shows the other lake not seen in *México ante los ojos del mundo*.

40. Flandrau, *Viva Mexico!*, 256.

41. See Gunning, 'Before doumentary', 16.

42. See Jennifer Lynn Peterson, 'Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film', in Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (eds.), *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 191–213, in particular, the concluding section, 204–208.

43. In this context, it is interesting to note that Emperor Maximilian changed the name of the Casa Borda in the grounds of the garden to Edén, see Hugo Arciniega, 'Variaciones sobre el Edén', *Alquimia* 18 (May-August 2003): 13–21, 15.

44. A reproduction of this photograph appears in Arciniega, 'Variaciones sobre el Edén': 20.

45. Brehme's album of photographs was also published in Germany as *Mexiko. Baukunst. Landschaft. Volksleben* (1925) and in the USA as *Picturesque Mexico* (1925).

46. The intertitle can be translated as: 'A romantic corner that attracts the lovers.'

47. Only one photograph in *México Pintoresco* includes a view of Jardín Borda: the photograph is taken outside the garden with the southern perimeter wall and belvedere framing a symmetrical view of a narrow lane (today Callejon Borda) running between the walls of Jardín Borda on the right of the photograph and, presumably, another garden surrounded by a high wall on the left of the photograph. Of the other photographs included in *México Pintoresco*, some frame views by means of an arch in the foreground.

48. A print of this unidentified fragment is held at Filmoteca UNAM. The frame enlargement photographed from the 35mm negative has been digitally reversed.

49. See Julio Michaud and Thomas Michaud, *Album Pintoresco de la República Mexicana* (Picturesque Album of the Republic of Mexico), (Mexico City: Julio Michaud and Thomas Michaud, n.d. [ca.1849–52]), reprinted in facsimile edition by Centro de Estudios de Historia de México Condumex (Mexico City, 2000), 83.