

Travel knowledge – the travelogues in an amalgam of reality and spectacle

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Abstract

This article reflects on the connections, not always so dichotomous, between socially legitimized discourses like reality and the discourses leaning on the notion of spectacle and entertainment, focusing thus on the universe of travelogues – trip movies – very popular between 1910 and 1930, especially in the context of the United States of America. On one side, the travelogues helped to shape the documentary narrative, reaffirming a certain scientific/educational legitimacy; on another hand, they mobilized a desire for spectacle and fascination with media reproduction technology that already had a privileged place in the popular imagination as an ambiguous form of entertainment and knowledge since the end of the 19th century.

Keywords: reality effect, spectacle effect, travelogue

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INTRODUCTION

Towering above all else as an animal picture is a melodramatic story of native life in the jungle. Its continuity is perfect and the tale logical in all angles excepting here or there when the natives are doing chase stuff or escaping. (...) In fact, as a natural history lesson there could be no better than *Chang* (*Variety*, May 4th, 1927.)

<p>What Is CHANG?</p> <p>CHANG is not a travel picture—it is not an animal hunt picture—nor is it an educational picture.</p> <p>CHANG is a melodrama—a story of the jungle and of a man—Kru the pioneer. Like our own pioneers, Kru ever blazed his way farther into the unknown.</p> <p>CHANG is a powerful screen masterpiece replete with comedy and thrills—a picture with the most dramatic climax that has ever been</p>	<p>filmed—the utter destruction of an entire village by 360 wild elephants.</p> <p>A Paramount Picture produced by Merian Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack.</p> <p>Continuous showings—Doors open 11:30 A. M.</p> <p>POPULAR PRICES</p> <p>RIVOLI</p> <p>8th Big Week B'way at 49th</p>
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Notice published in the New York Times, in June 8th, 1927.

"Amazing Jungle Drama!" exclaims the Gorilla Hunt movie advertisement in the February 27th, 1927 edition of the *New York Times newspaper*. The criticism of *Variety* magazine, three months before, praised this same film, treating it as a novelty to the extent that it intensified the mixture of travelogues already established with the dramatic universe of fictional field, forming a narrative crossed by a touch of drama and comedy.

In April 1927, at the launch of *Chang*, the critique of the same newspaper extolled this production of Ernest B. Schoedsack and Merian C. Cooper as an extraordinary experience that transcended the usual films of hunting and wildlife:

This new subject is an unusual piece of work, beside which all big game hunting films pale into insignificance, and through the clever arrangement of its sequences, excellent comedy follows closely on the exciting episodes. (The New York Times, 1927).

In many points, throughout *Chang*, touches of comedy and effects of suspense and adventure are presented, negotiated the classical scenes typically documentary which shows another way of life, in this case the life of the Kru family, in the northern islands of Siam in Thailand. Such scenes are structured in a kind of parallel montage, alternating the documentary and the comic or the "adventurous", like the passage in which the protagonist family's pet monkey is chased by a tiger.

The jokes involving the monkey, Bimbo, as a point-of-view shot of him looking at the baby of the family or the presence of cards that mimic their speech, such as "Somebody stop

that tiger!"), Or the drama of the Elephant calf (Chang) captured and imprisoned by Kru punctuates the film with the same prominence of several scenes in which the narrative invests in description of the manufacturing techniques of a "primitive trap" and other actions of "wild life". I argue that parallelisms used in the filming techniques states a negotiation that served to attend the wishes of the public at that time: entertainment and knowledge of ways of life of an exotic people; articulating at the same time, the positivist Eurocentric discourse and the spectacular imagery that conformed the popular taste of that period.

Travelogues as *Chang* and *Grass*, the first film of the double Cooper and Schoedsack², operate as a joint between the legitimate discourses of definition and the representation of reality and practices of entertainment and spectacle; forming, in the wake of the success of *Nanook of the North* (Robert Flaherty, 1922), the main array from which will institutionalize the documentary genre over the years 1930.

Such movies, as well as many *travelogues* of the period, are paradigmatic cases that end up reaffirming the imagination which produced the movie experience and that, rather than separate spheres of knowledge and entertainment, reality and spectacle joined them to satisfy the popular taste³.

In fact, what we see in these films is a perfect trading of two effects that are experienced together, but they occupy distinct speech and legitimacy places (must foci, in this sense, the stories and discursive implications of this): the Reality Effect (as theorized by Roland Barthes) and what I would like to call the *Spectacle Effect* (and in some cases is up from the intertextuality incorporation within the narrative strategies of matrix of melodrama).

In this article, I will not cover the melodrama incorporations⁴, instead I will be focusing on a comparison of the more general spectacle issue taken as a sphere of articulation of a wonderment and seduction feeling that often (and this is precisely the case in *travelogues*) naturalizes the political and ideological positivist and Eurocentric speech. The wonder and seduction, articulated through the Spectacle Effects, engender the entertainment arena, thereby weaving a multifaceted and ambivalent invitation to the viewer, a circular invitation between knowledge, power and pleasure.

² It is interesting to note that Merian c. Cooper and Ernest b. Schoedsack are important figures within a universe of production which connects the taste for exotic travel and tempered by the junction between the excitement of the thriller and the real legitimacy. Both are highlighted in this article by his work on realization of *Grass* and *Chang*, but we must not forget that the same imaginary crossed the direction of the highly successful *King Kong* (1933), the duo's first fictional works, also produced and distributed by Paramount.

³ We must reiterate that it is precisely by this power, at the same time, of teaching and seducing (satiating a double desire for knowledge and spectacle) that such array, which has in Robert Flaherty its biggest name, was built the template for the type of engaged film proposed in the pedagogical and liberal project of John Grierson and the English school of documentaries. On such a move and its implications, see Winston (1995).

⁴ About the dimensions and implications of specific dialogue with the melodramatic confer doctoral dissertation Baltar (2007) – *Lachrymose Reality*.

Specifically, such effects are central to the project of classical documentary, despite its "aura" of pedagogical sobriety. In a more general development, I argue that the notion of spectacle is a relevant category to forward the analytical look toward much of the discourses that circulate in the audiovisual media culture yet, and even in the contemporary context.

REALITY EFFECT AND SPECTACLE EFFECT - THE IMAGINATION OF "WONDERMENT" IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

"Cinema has always oscillated between two poles, to provide a new standard for realistic representation and (simultaneously) to present a sense of unreality, a realm of ghosts elusive", writes Tom Gunning (1996:25) in an essay dedicated to plot the imaginary which allowed the emergence of cinema. In this article, the author thinks of the cinema in the context of a correlation between reality and spectacle, showing how it is part of a series of other nineteenth century inventions that shared a tradition that dates back to, at least, since the enlightenment.

If the film is derived from this diverse genealogy of fascination optics that embarrasses the poles separate optical entertainment and scientific evidence, the real invention of cinematic devices in the late nineteenth century by Marey, Demeny, Edison and Lumière rehearsed this *pas-de-deux* elegantly compressed (...) This time, however, the dispute does not preclude a more occult sick infant to a secular science. Instead, an empirical science, increasingly suspicious of visual evidence, was confronted with a popular culture that reached audiences in constant expansion, through the mechanical reproduction of visual attraction (Gunning, 1996: 35).

Gunning's article, therefore, gives an account of an imaginary scenario that informs an appreciation of science and dissemination of this as a spectacle, because, in parallel to a process of disenchantment of the world (as would say Max Weber), there is a process of what we might call the wonderment of scientific-rational discovery of the world.

Several authors are engaged in thinking of these issues, as well as implications from the analysis of practices such as universal fairs, theme parks, wax museums, the illusionist shows and other, associated, mainly, with the experience of modern life⁵. Here, the point is not to retrace this route, but point to more specific comparisons that reaffirm the emergence of cinema as heir – as effect and instrument – of this imaginary.

A general logic that is reaffirmed in practices of the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the 20th century, such as the illustrated travel lectures, panoramas in the universal fairs and exhibitions, the wax museums and visits to showroom Paris morgue (these last three

⁵ In this regard, I would refer to the work of Jonathan Crary, beyond Tom Gunning, Ben Singer, Leo Charney and Vanessa r. Schwartz. Articles of authors can be seen in Portuguese in Cinema and the invention of modern life, organized by Charney and Schwartz (2001). For a reflection about the association between anthropological discourse and performance in the context of universal fairs and theme parks, I refer to the work of Alison Griffiths (2002).

analyzed in the article Vanessa r. Schwartz, 2001). In these practices can be found similar devices that both legitimize them as real speech – putting into operation strategies and narrative elements enshrined by the scientific discourse, and the journalistic history – as well as strategies from the spectacle realm. Faced to with this amalgamation, the spectatorial experience also articulates a double space, ambiguous, sensational, perceptually consistent with the scenario of hyper stimulus, saturation and uncertainty that marked the high modernity. Or, in the words of Ben Singer, "a phenomenal world - especially urban - that was markedly faster, chaotic, fragmented and disorienting than the earlier stages of human culture" (2001:116).

If the precise demarcation of modernity beginning is something open, because depending on the bias (moral/political, socioeconomic, cognitive, neurological...) approached, his strokes vary in centuries, the set of transformations that will consolidate such historical training are unmistakable. Among its pillars are a way of life and social organization, the association between science and technology catalyzing an immense economic, socio political and demographic explosion, with different forms of production and consumption.

Accordingly, several authors – Anthony Giddens, Krishan Kumar, among others – advocate by an intrinsic interlink between scientific and industrial revolution in the arise of modernity, where a new paradigm of rationality – based on experimentation and valuation of rationality as a human characteristic to be exalted – guides, beside the moral instance, the normalization of subjectivities. In this process, however, rationalism does not exclude another paradigm, equally important and fundamental to the project of modernity, that is related to a complex censorship and sentimental intense game, associating the experience of modern life to a double place combining the experience of modern life to a double instead of reason-planning and "profusion of impressions, shocks, heels" (Singer, 2001b: 35).

In the argument developed by Singer (2001 and 2001b), is precisely this twofold and ambiguous place that generates the boom of "a trade in sensory shocks", or the "sensationalization" of commercial entertainment. Among them, the cinema, museums, fairs and universal exhibitions which circulated, as reality and wonderment, apparatus generated from the scientific news, ethnographic images and imagery and sound reproduction technologies.

Analyzing the panoramas in fairs and universal exhibitions, Musée Grévin and the extremely popular visits to showroom Paris morgue, Vanessa r. Schwartz associates this same scenario identified by Singer to public taste by reality. Says the author:

life in Paris, I want to show here, became strongly identified with the spectacle. Real life was seen as a spectacle, but, at the same time, the spectacle became increasingly similar to life (Schwartz, 2001: 411).

When analyzing the wax scenes mounted at Musée Grévin, the author emphasizes the strategies undertaken by the Museum to anchor their wax reproductions in more realistic frames, underlining the attention to details from the scene, making use of real objects or copies that were "used to create a recognizable scenarios, taxonomic and appropriate for the figures – small narratives in the form of a magic eye directed to Parisian life"⁶ (Schwartz, 2001: 422).

The repertoire exposed in the Museum rooms used to change in a fast and dynamic way, often putting in scene facts and personalities also discussed by the newspapers, forming almost a walk shared season life narrative, and, therefore, fully recognizable by the public. For Schwartz, such features used to mark an enhanced realism, because it took the newspaper itself as a model, and, at the same time, brought a strong spectacular and sensational identification dimension and, anticipating, in form and spectatorial manner, the movie experience. After all, the author's argument is in direction to reaffirm:

How reality was transformed into the show (as in the morgue) while the plays were obsessively realistic. (...) The study of the observations of the season indicates that, like in any technological apparatus, the effect-also resided in reality viewers ability to make connections between what they saw in spectacles and the family narratives of press that they already knew⁷ (Schwartz, 2001: 435).

In a similar way argued by Singer and Schwartz, among others, states here the articulation of a double effect that will be present also in the exemplary case of travelogues: the Real and the spectacle.

Roland Barthes introduces the idea of a "reality effect" in an essay with the same name, written in 1968. In it, the author develops, in a way, two lines of argumentation: the considerations of reality effect as an element constructed on the narratives and the limitations of a purely structural analysis (criticism that Barthes formalizes in *SZ*, originally published in 1970 based on seminars given by him, in Paris, between 1968 and 1969).

Already, at the beginning of *The Reality Effect*, Barthes (1986) argues that the structural analysis fails to consider various aspects of the text signification process, and one of these aspects is precisely the role of description, taken by a structural method as insignificant details (or "superfluous detail," as the author writes). However, Barthes argues, that those exact details which produce not only an aesthetic effect of beauty, but a sense of real.

⁶ "criavam cenários reconhecíveis, taxonômicos e apropriados para as figuras – mininarrativas na forma de um olho mágico dirigido à vida parisiense" (Schwartz, 2001:422).

⁷ "o modo como a realidade era transformada em espetáculo (como no necrotério) ao mesmo tempo que os espetáculos eram obsessivamente realistas. (...) O estudo das observações da época indica que, como em qualquer aparato tecnológico, o efeito-realidade também residia na capacidade dos espectadores de fazer conexões entre espetáculos que viam e as narrativas familiares da imprensa que já conheciam" (Schwartz, 2001:435).

Are exactly the detailed descriptions that Barthes recognizes in authors such as Gustav Flaubert and Michelet, which articulate the reality effect in the narrative. This aspect would be disregarded or underestimated in an analysis of structural basis, because it would not have a predicative sense, nor would it have a causal role, being its internal structure merely a summation of elements. In the anti-nuclear trend of that kind of analysis and argument, Barthes undertakes, in this essay, a reflection about the descriptions role as symbolic elements that invite the reader to establish with the text a species of belief in the narrative reality.

According to Barthes, descriptions eventually entail a reality effect, because bind it in correspondence between the described, the reference system, and the reader's historic world. In a sense, therefore, the descriptions motivations change, although its strong aesthetic appeal remains.

Taking the Flaubert's writings as an example, Barthes argues how, then, shall descriptions assume an idea of plausibility for consistency with reality shared by the reader:

Thus, although the description of Rouen is quite irrelevant to the narrative structure of *Madame Bovary* (...) it is not in the least scandalous, it is justified, if not by the work's logic, at least by the laws of literature, it's 'meaning' exists, it depends on conformity not to the model but to the cultural rules of representation. (...) the aesthetic goal of a Flaubertian description is thoroughly mixed with 'realism' imperatives, as if the referent's exactitude, superior or indifferent to any other function, governed and alone justified its description, (Barthes, 1986:145).

To develop his argument, Barthes takes a certain genealogy of description's paper in Western culture, pointing that it is from the modernity that it passes to acquire such character of correspondence to the references in the world. And it is not randomly, because it is precisely in the modernity project that a certain conception of History becomes a narrative model to be followed, organizing, in some measure, a unifying look to the experience of the world in allocating a certain notion of linear progress.

Thus, the change in the role of descriptions is part of changes in narrative structures that take the "History" as a model, in a way, exalting the causality and the evidence⁸. The historical narratives and its constant assertions of evidence put in use "technologies" that, as pointed by the author, teach how one should describe in modernity scenario. "Concrete reality becomes the sufficient justification for speaking (Barthes, 1986: 146).

Barthes argues that the descriptions in the literary narratives, don't say exactly the role of evidence, as in historical narratives, but link to them, because they carry their sense, its

⁸ Of course, Barthes is taking as a reference a particular conception of History engendered by modernity which the theoretical realm of history, especially from the *École des Annales*, was discussing.

connotation, its effect: "all they do – without saying so – is signify it; (...) saying nothing but this: *we are the real*" (Barthes, 1986: 148).

It is somewhat easy to recognize, in the non-fictional cinema field, elements that drive the "reality effect", thus, reaffirming the legitimacy of the speech in its correlation to the rational-scientific domain. The look that stares into the camera, the natural position of bodies and objects, the medium shot with camera movements that invest in the description (action and ways of living and being of the pictured "object"), as well as the element of narration voice over and, later, the interview, are some of these elements.

It Does not fit here recover how, genealogically, these elements bind a "scientific" use of reproducible images, especially in the physical anthropology realm, it is worth pointing out that this membership engenders its actual reality effect⁹, because its made use of photographs and films procedures that circulated to the general public, and not only the academic, whose speeches were coated with a scientific status (guaranteed especially through the sponsorship and the sanction of museums and other academic centers).

It is interesting to notice that many of these products ended up circulating as attractions of exhibitions in museums of natural history, universal fairs and through travel lectures, operating an intense motion of popularization of scientific knowledge: "ethnographic filmmaking before 1915 formed part of the visual lexicon of mainstream American popular culture. For example, it was not unusual for nickelodeon audiences to view a film of *Life of Japan* on the same bill as a melodrama or a slapstick comedy" (Griffiths, 2002: xxvi).

The ethnographic authority conferred to such products that used to circulate commercially ended up combining two attraction and spectacle sources to the subject in early twentieth century: the real reproduced by the photographic image and the other exotic – thus enhancing a sense that Alison Griffiths (2002) defines as a "*wondrous difference*".

That circuit, both scientific and popular, reaffirms the communion imaginary between knowledge and spectacle that marked the nineteenth century and went through the emergence of cinema, and is permeated by this feeling that arises, in the first decades of the twentieth century,

⁹ It is important to remember that the first images taken in anthropological field dating back to 1898, therefore only three years after the "invention" of the cinematographer. Such images were taken by Alfred Cort Haddon during his expedition to Torres Strait, group of islands between the coast of Australia and Papua New Guinea. "Because of films and photographs, the psychologist, the ethnographer, sociologist, linguist and folklorist will collect in their laboratories all ways of various ethnic groups and will be able to access the real life at any moment", celebrated, in 1895, the French anthropologist and physician, Félix-Louis Regnault. I recovered part of genealogy in Chapter 1 of the dissertation "Weepening Reality – dialogues between the universe of the documentary and the melodramatic imagination" (Baltar, 2007). About this, see also Alison Griffiths (2002), in the book about the interrelationships between film, anthropology and the visual culture of the nineteenth century to the twentieth century.

the travelogue, direct descendant of travel lectures in practice since the late roaming of the previous century.

Such a spirit, a combination between the real and the entertainment, makes it possible to think of another effect articulated by these narratives. An effect that weaves the wonderment feeling, emphasizing the notion of spectacle. In this way, taking the argument of Barthes as inspiration, I want to point out the marks of travelogues Spectacle Effect that operated in the universe relates to, on the one hand, identifying with the explorers, frequently present in the narrative (mobilizing the sense of adventure), and another, exaltation of technological wonderment (quenching the desire of looking the other made possible by technology). In many cases, as in the films of Osa and Martin Johnson (financed by the American Museum of Natural history and commercially distributed by Fox), identification, and fascination with the explorers was further strengthened by investment in a bourgeois family, and accordingly, Osa was represented as wife and adventurer, both by the films, and the publicity surrounding them.



THE TRAVELOGUES – MOBILIZING THE DESIRE TO LOOK AND TRAVEL WITHOUT LEAVING HOME¹⁰

The travelogues, or expedition films, used to occupy both the commercial channels and cinema, as the educational circuits of roaming travel lectures, and the first nickelodeons and later, around the years 1920, in theaters of newsreel (exclusive rooms for non-fiction films and audiovisual newspapers exhibition).

The term travelogue was coined in 1903 by Burton Holmes, entertainment area entrepreneur, who traveled ministering travel lectures through a wide variety of pictures, photographs, slides, until the newly captured "views". In fact, the Holmes' events, or many others that as he built the routes of movement of moving images, included various types of images and movies. As part of this program, and what they used to classify as a portion of "refined educational entertainment", was the display of various thematic short films, which generally used to bring scenes captured in more distant parts of the world, produced mainly by

¹⁰ It is clear that the whole tradition of travelogues connects to imaginary consolidation around the trip and the articulation of the tourism industry, both significant aspects of the project of modernity. It would be interesting to articulate, in the wake of a comparative and intertextual analysis, such practices with the fascination mobilized since long before the consolidation of modernity, by travel literature. This approach, however, would go beyond the purposes of this article.

the Lumière brothers, by filmmakers from Pathé and Edson Company (the so-called Conquest Pictures, many of them conducted by Edwin S. Porter) in the end of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century:

" In the early 1900s the travelogue could deal with a much wider range of issues: the world traveller could present himself as an expert in history, literature, sports (covering the Summer Olympics), global conflicts (having visited both Russia and Japan, Burton Holmes gave programmes on the Russo-Japanese War), ecological policy (a visit to Yellowstone and other wilderness areas) etc." (Musser, 1990:123).

The Repertoire was really big. The Lumière company catalog, for example, included images of Egypt, Japan, Mexico, Tunisia, as well as scenes from the streets from major European cities. Without doubt, these "views" – in General movies with less than a minute long, with a single plan which shows the actions of daily life that unfolds in front of an immobile camera – formulated the travelogue roots of actual popular taste for different images, from far away. Such taste joins the nascent tourist industry demands, and much of the appeal of travelogue in relation to the development of this culture of tourism:

Of all the ethnographic genres in circulation during the early cinema period, it was the travel film (or travelogue) that most consistently co-opted the idea of ethnographic accuracy, fusing anthropological discourse with the rhetoric of the infant travel industry (Griffiths, 2002:203).

Gradually, the travelogues became more sophisticated in relation to the length and assemble of their images, as the exhibitors/speakers themselves start making their films, while incorporating in their itinerant travel lectures images of many scientific expeditions, financed, in general, by museums, in progress throughout the 1920s.

Burton Holmes was one of the most prolific filmmakers of travelogues that, let's say, first generation (i.e. the first two decades of the last century). Besides Holmes, Lyman H. Howe was notable in the scenario, although he hasn't exactly done films. Both were like "showmen", performing, in combination with the films displaying, explanatory comments in the form of lectures, that while coalesced scientific value to the event as a whole, assisted in the seduction process of the public given the performance spectacle. In one of the many archived documents about the period, in collections such as the Museum of modern art in New York, a photo of Holmes using a Japanese kimono costume for the series of lectures about Japan can be seen, this lecture was part of the program Around the World Series, which took place at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, in 1909.

The films used to illustrate these lectures, exactly travelogues, in general were structured to simulate the travel situation. Often, their initial scenes used to show illustrations of maps, to locate geographically spectators, or used to show train track plans or images simulating the point of view of a ship. And the rest of the film was composed with images of streets of exotic locations usually with the subject facing the camera in a performance, whether of their ways of life, rituals or dances.

After the end of the Decade of 1920, when the situation of production and exhibition of movies changed – in a institutionalization scenario of the nascent film industry and classic fiction and narrative with the introduction of commercial cinemas, cinema display or by consolidating a circuit, though, more unique to the alternative view of movies – the travelogues, following such change, came to present a more structured narrative, without already, to some extent, the comment of the lecture, incorporating it by a certain linear narrative that recounted the expedition's footsteps, through intertitles and, thereafter, a locution in voice over.

In this context, the travelogues were increasingly linked to scientific expeditions financed by museums, notably the American Museum of Natural history. Such films, which used to insert comical situations, emotion and action, notably a certain suspense, used to bring, among its signs of opening, a species of assurance seal which claimed the Museum's participation, in fact its sanction, in which were highlighted the goals of endeavor with the following words: "Research, Exploration, Education, Exhibition".

This seal conforms a frame that allows the audience relates to the movie as a reality speech (hence, a reality effect), directing the spectatorial experience toward a speech place aligned with speeches of sobriety (to use the term consecrated by Bill Nichols).

Another strategy to establish such a link was to structure, at the time of launch, the exhibition of some objects and artifacts related to the topic of the film, which, not by chance, were displayed in a similar manner to the Organization of a museum. Such a strategy continued until around the year 1950, when the travelogues still retained on prestige, although occupy different circuits of commercial mediation.

At the release of *Latiko: we saw primitive man* (Edgar Monsanto Queeny, 1951), for example, artifacts, maps and photos of the expeditions of Queeny to Sudan were displayed in the lobby of the cinema:

These museum-like display cases provided an educational sensibility for movie-goers at the same time that they authenticated the exotic imagery seen on screen (Staples, 2005:54).

Latiko: we saw primitive man is part of a tradition of travelogues commercially distributed – most bought by already established Hollywood studios, particularly Fox, MGM and Paramount – held under the sponsorship of the American Museum of Natural history since the late 1920.

Over the Decade of 1930, the popularity of travelogues with the public who frequented the cinemas was large, causing such movies deserve to earn attention from specialised press, notably the weekly arts and entertainment magazine *American Variety*, as well as stories in newspapers like *The New York Times*.

According to *Variety*, in 1931, about 100 expeditions were planned. On the January 7 Edition, the magazine's columnists explained that

reason for the activity is the current popularity of two-reel lecture stuff. In the silent days the travelogues were generally looked upon fillers, but since the addition of sound-effects, plus oral descriptive matter, the scenic material in many stands is getting a better audience play than short comedies.

However, in spite of the approach taken by *Variety*, the trajectory of popular success of the genre came from a long time before.

Arrival of the sound actually revitalized the travelogues that replaced the comments of the speakers and could organize, in a little more linear manner, both the informational character moments regarding those of more spectacular appeal.

In travelogues, the same voice over – direct heiress of radio locutions, with a serious and imposed tone – exercised the explanatory-informational role and did the trivial comments, accentuating, in this way, the spectacular dimension. The sound of this voice kept the eloquence and the imposition, and this intonation attended to a dual educational function and spectacularly attractive.

GRASS AND AFRICA SEEN BY OSA AND MARTIN JOHNSON

One of the most successful Travelogues was *Grass* (1925), the first film of Merian c. Cooper and Ernest Leslie. Before *Chang*, in 1927, the duo had already embarked on a successful experience with the genre from the footage of the expedition undertaken in conjunction with the reporter Marguerite Harrison.

The film follows the migration of the semi-nomadic tribe, Bakhtiari, in an area that belongs to Iran today. The initials cards of the film explain the theme, present the Explorers (merging the text with each image of the three) and describe the experience as epic. This

procedure ends up becoming a Spectacular Effect, because it maximizes the identification with the explorers in their adventure journey.

Accordingly, Margueritte is presented as a heroin in this adventure movie and the film invests in describing her actions between the men of the tribe, showing her preparing herself to sleep in the caravan hut, the same way that invests in describing the ways of life and the local landscapes.

Grass began circulating initially as a movie for travel lectures taught by Cooper himself. However, due to the immense popularity of these lectures, the film was bought by Paramount and commercially distributed. It was from the success of Grass, that Cooper and Leslie went to perform *Chang*, whose released advertising reaffirmed the melodramatic character of its narrative alongside the calls of reality.

Among the travelogues with larger spectacle effect, those produced by the explorers Osa and Martin Johnson stood out. Their work is unique for several reasons. The main one is that the couple seamlessly combines a scientific authority's speech with an invitation to entertainment, inserting, in a first-person narrative that gives account of expeditions' daily life to Africa, constantly, jokes and trivial comments made to convene a more affective engagement of common spectator. One of their films, *Across the World with Mr. and Mrs. Johnson* (1930) begins with images of the couple's apartment in New York, in the best family film style¹¹.

In *Congorilla* (1932), commercially distributed by Fox, the voice of Martin narrating the images of the expedition, explicitly addressing the public through phrases like "you will see and hear the first sound film ever made in Africa ..." or "in this way, any Explorer wonders why he left home ..." Such sentences claim a wonderment with the technology, becoming thus, a Spectacle Effect. The film recounts, chronologically, the expedition, first showing animal life and after the encounter with various African groups, which are described in their customs by long sequences of medium shots where you can see performances of dances and many glances toward the camera.

The spectacle effects are more distinctly articulated in the second half of the film, when the couple encounters a group of Pygmies and Martin's voice asserts that was one of the greatest adventures of his career. In one of the sequences in the second part, the Pygmies demonstrate their dance – a recurring image among the ethnographic films – and then, in the next scene, Osa appears dancing with the Pygmies a modern jazz, as informed in the voice over. A sequel,

¹¹ Martin and Osa produced five films of dispatch, three of them distributed by Fox, between 1928 and 1937, in addition to several other films for the travel lectures (different versions of the filmed material arranged for the circuit exclusively educational).

marked by many direct looks to the camera, makes explicit the situation of interaction between them and, in equal measure, the interaction with the camera, reinforcing a dual sense – the knowledge of that distant reality and the excitement caused by this knowledge.

As a spectacle effect articulation, the case of Johnson is notable also for the attention given by the media through the criticisms of movies and for its interest in the couple's private life. On more than one occasion, the press has published stories in female supplements uplifting the adventurous spirit and, at the same time, dedicated Osa, combining the roles of scientist and wife. In April 21, 1940, three years after Martin's death, The New York Times magazine ran a special reportage that recounted the 25 year career of the couple. In it, Osa stated about her husband and his career:

He set out to preserve for posterity a record of the wildlife of his time. I lived a glorious life with him and I am sure that I helped a little. Wherever we camped I tried to make a home.

These matters, of extra-filmic order, ended up working as an intertext in relation to the couple's films, corroborating the appearances of Osa in the movies and their Spectacle Effect.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The issues involved in the universe of the travelogues, as well as its tradition, were not exhausted at the end of the year 1940. Rather, it changes to occupy other commercial circuits, formed by other film experiences coming up the television, keeping the association between the desire for travel and meeting with another exotic or simply different, and the audiovisual seduction that allows a certain satisfaction of this desire. Also keeping the legitimacy universe legitimately articulated from reality effects.

Accordingly, the studies of travelogue tradition reinforce its connection with the Cinerama¹², with the recent IMAX films and with the profusion of television programmes, in particular related to the Discovery and National Geographic Group¹³.

In the narratives that circulate in such vehicles, the recovery of real effects and the Spectacle Effect that crossed the travelogues analyzed here can be seen. Especially which with regards to a certain sense of technological wonderment (and this is particularly relevant in the case of IMAX) and a discourse that enhances the appeal of the adventure sense in the wild and

¹² The Cinerama is part of experiments in film and display formats that leverage what we could identify as the use of immersive technology to mobilize a particular and more sensory cinematic experience. It is a very popular format, over the 1950s and early 1960s, where the movie is displayed on a screen with three projectors. Among the most successful cineramas are: *this is cinerama* (Merian c. Cooper, Gunther von Fritsch, Ernest b. Schoedsack and Michael Todd Jr., 1952), *Cinerama Holiday* (Robert I. Bendick and Philippe De Lacy, 1955), *Adventures in the South Seas* (Carl Dudley and Richard Goldstone, 1958).

dangerous world (this aspect is, particularly, in Discovery and National Geographic productions). Although differently from travelogues of 1930 (perhaps without the positivist discourse that permeated), such productions claims that the imaginary that has led to the emergence of cinema, and even more so in the field of documentary, coalescing the real and the spectacle, are still present and pulsating.

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¹³ About it, check out Ruoff, Jeffrey (org) – *Virtual Voyages. Cinema and travel*. Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2006 University and Fürsich, Elfriede - *Between credibility and commodification. Nonfiction entertainment as a global media genre*. *International Journal of cultural studies*. Volume 6 (2), 2003.

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