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***Through the Balkan States: home movies as travel texts and tourism histories in the Mediterranean, c.1923 – 1939.***

### **Introduction**

Cine photography added a new dimension to the pleasure of travel in the inter-war years. Moving image offered amateur filmmakers new ways to show, share and present themselves and their travel experiences to family and friends back home. Specialist hobby literature, encouraged amateur enthusiasts to shoot, splice and show their individual holiday records for varied informative, entertainment and inspirational purposes (Hollis, 1927; Gale and Pessels, 1939). During the early 1920s, Kodak's promotion of lightweight, portable cine equipment and the option of an all in one package of camera, home projector and screen coincided with renewed opportunities, in the aftermath of World War One, to travel both in and beyond Europe. For the next fifteen or so years, trends in leisure activity, transport technologies and popular interest in the portrayal of place through print and, increasingly, on the screen, meant that the making and showing of amateur holiday films thrived. This article explores the significance of such travel footage: its relationship to literary forms of travel narration, its contribution to understanding a distinctive episode in the rise of modern tourism, and its insights on patterns of leisure consumption among wealthier sections of British society.

This discussion is based upon research funded by the British Academy and Krausna Krausz Foundation into the development of Britain's amateur film movement. Once dismissed from studies of mainstream film history, as being parochial, substandard in quality and of little interest, there is growing interest in the making and screening of home movies (Schneider, 2003; Stone and Streible, 2003). Amateur involvement in films discloses how mid-century socio-cultural meanings and ideologies were mediated and circulated within specific contexts. It was, indeed, as Denzin (1995) suggests, a time when society came to know itself through the cinema so amateur productions should be not be considered in a visual vacuum. In the words of Lukinbeal (2004:249), amateur representation practices help us to 'better understand the social geographies of an era's *scopic regime*' (original emphasis). Travel-related imagery, in particular, whether associated with colonial or civic activity, missionary, expeditionary, relief, educational visits, pilgrimages or as part of holiday experiences, expresses specific attitudes and behaviours (Norris Nicholson, 2002; 2003b;

2004). The cinematic gaze of the amateur, no less than the professional, reinforced particular ways of seeing and being seen or shown to others. Image makers explicitly framed people behind and in front of the camera in socio-political space and, however seemingly innocuous, their images encoded prevailing values.

This article discusses home movie footage held at the British Film Institute and at the North West Film Archive, one of Britain's foremost regional film repositories. Over ninety travel related films made by a total of twenty amateurs from different parts of Britain contributed to an analysis of how cine enthusiasts recorded landscapes, lifestyles and themselves on camera in different parts of the Mediterranean. The films vary from under four to over 50 minutes in length. All are silent. Most are in black and white although snippets of colour footage occur in the very late 1930s. The film footage varies from being polished productions edited with titles and captions (or inter-titles) to outtakes, the bits discarded but never thrown away. Generally such material is donated for archival safe keeping when families find themselves no longer able to show, store or enthuse about film stock made by a previous generation.

With detailed reference to an amateur film called *Through the Balkan States*, this article considers the contribution of non-professionally made travel-related footage material to understanding how twentieth century touristic visual practices evolved (see also Norris Nicholson, 2003a; 2004). Holiday travel footage, essentially, records what people wish to remember and share about their tourism experience. At its simplest, it approximates to the family album of holiday snaps and, like preceding and subsequent forms of mimetic equipment, its personal record may hold most meaning for those people personally involved in the scenes shown. Other forms of filmic travel log may prioritise place imagery over holiday reminiscences. Imaginative camera work, judicious editing and unexpected visual content free of clichéd imagery inevitably helps to enhance audience interest although the material's significance as visual history may not depend primarily upon its viewing quality. As with any form of travel narrative, amateur footage is selective: the cost of filming together with practical and technical constraints, personal interests and diverse externalities all influence when, where, how, what and why particular footage was filmed and retained in the final edited and screened version. Occasionally, edited outtakes may offer additional insights into the production process. Similarly, the survival of shooting notes, diary entries, reminiscences and other material helps with the interpretation of specific footage.

Associated archival paperwork and correspondence with surviving friends and family members sometimes yields useful contextual information although *Through the Balkan States* lacks such background detail. Clearly, an understanding of film provenance, and of where, when and to whom films were shown offers clues about how such footage was understood by different audiences. Watching amateur travel footage also sometimes discloses more about the individuals in charge of the camera than actual Mediterranean destinations. Yet shows by local filmmakers provided a source of contemporary place and cultural imagery that was unmatched in the decades before television. Amateur activities extended the 'picturing impulse' of previous generations (Schwartz and Ryan, 2003:8) and the conventions of the nineteenth century illustrated travel lecture (Barber, 1993). Like Behdad's (1996:58) 'amateur travelers' in search of orientalism, amateur filmmakers were often 'voracious observers' on holiday, image collectors leisurely gathering on camera visual signifiers of difference, much as their predecessors had acquired travel souvenirs. Amateur material may also be likened to the widely popular commercially produced travel films shown in public cinemas and elsewhere from the early years of moving image (Ruoff, 1998). Amateur productions on travel themes were promoted at public screenings, via cine club competitions and within specialist publications such as *Amateur Cine World*. Collectively, such visual practice lies within recognizable traditions of European encounter and observation. It shares similarities, as discussed later, with other travel texts and enables us to question how the gaze of outsiders helped to define and redefine places as tourist destinations.

Qualitative and inter-disciplinary approaches underpin this research. Methodologies drawn from oral and social history, cultural studies and historical geography inform discussion of how amateur material was made and shown. The shot by shot analysis resembles the detailed interpretation of still imagery although the succession of near identical frames inherent to the making of moving imagery distinguishes a cine sequence from the unique captured moment of a still photograph. The editing and projection of film footage also generally implies shared viewing rather than contemplation in an album or in private. There is also a profound material difference: photographs can be held, treasured or torn up unlike the tight reel of film stock or its flickering projected image. Schwartz and Ryan's edited work (2003) has contributed significantly to the geographical analysis of historical photography and also offers important guidance to cine footage. In this analysis, I also draw upon studies of identity (Chalfren, 1987; Citrone, 1999), memory (Chambers, 2003; Hirsch,

1997), material culture (Edwards,1999) and an emerging literature on archival film (Compton, 2003; Schneider, 2003, Stone and Streible, 2003)

The home moviemaker's visual incursions during Mediterranean holidays may be considered alongside written travel narratives. Often used as tools for authentic and truthful representations, amateur cine footage readily links to other texts associated with cultures of travel (Gregory, 2001:112). Just as a guidebook might steer tourists through a pre-selected itinerary of appropriate sites, well-made amateur travelogues could inform and guide their armchair viewers. Both could legitimize travel experience by recommending visits and activities deemed suitable for a vacation. The varied nature of amateur footage also combines characteristics of the impressionistic written travelogues and instructive guidebooks as identified by Behdad (1996:37-42) in his own discussion of 'belated travelers'. Indeed, broader comparisons between film and written texts seem appropriate as the rapid increase of travel to the Mediterranean (Feifer, 1985; Brendon, 1991) after the First World War was paralleled by a flourishing output of travel guides, novels and other travel-related narratives that were set in or linked in some with the Mediterranean (Kowalewski, 1992:1; Foulke, 1992). Arguably, holiday footage brought home imagery of well-known but geographically distant places that informed the wider shaping of place meanings and identities currently being constructed through publications and mainstream cinema. Amateur films offered a highly visual alternative to the printed page. As one contributor to *The Picturegoer* a contemporary magazine about cinematic practice commented, '(t)housands of us who would recoil from reading books of travel and exploration, are delighted with the same thing graphically and more fully depicted by the moving camera's magic' (Barrett, 1927:50).

The rise of British amateur travel filmmaking overseas readily ties in with other technological, social and cultural changes associated with tourism history during the same period. Indeed cinematography - as enthusiasts called their new hobby - was part of the new technological apparatus that, together with locomotives, cruise ships and motor cars, became associated with Mediterranean holidays (Fussell, 1992:71; Norris Nicholson, 2003a, 2007/8). Perhaps, deliberate irony prompted one author's apt description of contemporary cinema (without even alluding to the more obvious architectural of some 1930s cinema buildings) as 'the poor man's luxury liner' in the *The Picturegoer* (Newnham, 1931:7). Certainly, amateur travel footage discloses patterns of mobility and consumerism which chart the unequal spatial relations that were influenced but no longer confined by older configurations of colonial

authority. Increasingly, pleasure rather than notions of duty prompted inter-war travel choices and flows of visitor movement.

Holiday footage illustrates the changing nature of more sunshine-orientated tourism too (Brendon, 1991:260). This study finds that, prior to the introduction of one week's paid leave in 1938, home movie making and Mediterranean holidays were affordable primarily by architects, doctors, chemists and other professionals as well as members of the new middle classes whose wealth derived from industry and commerce. If, as Urry (2002:149) suggests, the histories of tourism and photography welded together as 'an irreversible and momentous double helix' from the mid 1840s, moving image further extends our understanding of the relationship between visualization, status, travel and the meaning of place. Inter-war amateur film practice confirms the Mediterranean region's enduring desirability as a site of privileged leisure activity for northern Europeans (Pemble, 1988; Feifer, 1985; Towner, 1996). Indeed, imagery of emerging package destinations, coach tour holidays and independent holidays by camper van only begin to appeal in the later 1950s as a generation of filmmakers including teachers and white collar workers begin to travel abroad (Norris Nicholson, 2004).

Camera-touting visitors went southwards during the relatively short-lived flowering of more accessible tourist opportunities across and beyond European frontiers between the two world wars. Cine photography benefited directly from the strong light of the southern sun. After years of limited civilian travel, motifs of heat and palm trees as well as the allure of citrus fruits, unavailable during wartime, augmented the exotic and quasi-tropical (or at non European) appeal of many Mediterranean destinations. Footage of two to four week long cruises past sun-baked shores and palm-fringed quaysides or motor tours through landscapes dotted with oranges echo the recurrence of such southern evocations in the writings of Lawrence (1921), Sitwell (1950) and others (Fussell, 1980: 3-5). Perhaps, in the aftermath of war, the neglected films of these vacationers - screened during years when southern film settings also occurred in mainstream cinema programmes - even helped to re-position the Mediterranean in the British middle class imagination.

Travel footage offered vicarious access to distinctive geographical settings for a wider public that thirsted for diversions from the mundane and increasingly bleak socio-economic realities of inter-war Britain. Other levels of escapism are discernible too: public interest in the amateur's capacity to reconfigure the Mediterranean into a series of photo-opportunities, sights and

sometimes amusingly titled sequences featuring known people in unfamiliar settings hints at power-related uncertainties beyond the domestic sphere. The Briton abroad, during the inter-war years, encountered new notions of status, identity and authority. However mundane and clichéd many amateur cinematic travel adventures now seem, their tourist imagery was shaped by broader processes of socio-cultural, national and cultural change. Touristic exploration of places was undoubtedly more packaged and less ambitious than in previous centuries (Chard, 1999; Jacobs, 1995; Towner, 1996). The reassuring images of familiar people in foreign places, perhaps, also contributed to processes of psychic and societal reorientation in the increasingly unstable politics of the 1930s. If, as Gregory (2001:112) suggests, ‘traveling through space is freighted with its own geographies of uncertainty’, home movies, like travel writings, may also be understood as responses to anxieties about the new and unfamiliar.

Notwithstanding advertisers' frequent promotion of cine equipment's new capacity to emulate big screen effects, hobby filmmakers repeated certain long-established visual conventions. Indeed, although only a minority among British visitors to the Mediterranean between the wars, cine enthusiasts tended to visit places that had regularly featured in guidebook itineraries and travellers' accounts over the previous two centuries (Sitwell, 1950; Buzard, 1993). The tourist had long become a consumer of sights and a passive observer of the already seen (Behdad, 1996:64), the textual aides of their predecessors guiding what to see and do. As Mitchell (1991:31) notes, it was ‘the chain of references that produce[d] the effect of the place’ and the desire to capture on film. Printed guides and promotional literature feature in film footage most frequently as sources of images used in montage effect title sequences or sometimes in the hands of a filmmaker's companion during a sightseeing excursion. Thus, the new hobby - and its potential for sharing overseas experiences with audiences at home - seems to replicate how earlier outsiders gazed upon foreign places and shaped their responses for later consumption. Citationary structures, associated but by no means limited to orientalist discursive practice (Mitchell, 1991: 30-31, citing Said, 1978: 176-178) seem to prompt decisions about what and where to film and give shape to holiday memories. By the start of the twentieth century, many established tourist destinations in and adjacent to the Mediterranean, were well-established spaces of ‘constructed visibility’ (Gregory, 2001). Interwar holiday footage lies within a recognizable tradition of touristic encounter. Its imagery exemplifies what Foucault (1972:173) calls the dynamics of ‘continuity, return and repetition’ that give shape to how we give meaning to the world around us.

While travel film and travel writing complement each other, there were also significant differences in content, style and tone. Just as amateur film enthusiasts delighted in exploring and recording the visual pleasures of being abroad, other observers lamented the loss of freedom of movement, exploration and informed insights associated with some earlier traveling writing (Fussell, 1980:215-218). Cine hobbyists were part of the qualitative shift from comfortable travel as a minority activity to more affordable mass holiday provision. Their unofficial filmic record captures many of the changes evident within the Mediterranean during the interwar years. Some commentators, however, likened the darkening mood and changing character of travel writing to a 'lost age of travel' (Fussell, 1992:79) in the increasingly restrictive geo-politics of the later 1930s. Publishing reflected a changing 'travel atmosphere' (Fussell, 1992:81) and most British cine enthusiasts had suspended their overseas European travels by late 1938. Until then, much amateur holiday footage continues to display some of the quirky individuality associated with earlier written commentators. Films disclose how visual exploration continued to attract interest even as organised tourism gained momentum. Interestingly, Zimmerman's pioneering study of North American archival footage, suggests that most amateur travel films of the 1930s tend to 'defy narrative, functioning more as indexes of arrival, beginnings, of introductions, of first contacts, of incoherencies, of fantasies' (1995:88). In contrast, this research suggests that many British amateurs did attempt narrative form even if, generally, it seems to lack the imaginative or psychological intensity of some written travel texts.

Travel-related writing and amateur film also share what Mark Cocker (1992:6) calls 'a mixed pedigree'. At times they have even shared the same name as commentators have searched for definitions: Fussell refers to how early literary critics sometimes called written texts *travelogues* 'perhaps recalling the illustrated travel lectures of their youth or the travel films that used to be shown as short subjects' (1980: 202; 1992: 80). Both travel writing and amateur films are hybrid forms that mix fact and fiction, actuality and invention. Moreover, much amateur travel footage espoused a style that combined direct sequential observation with minimal editorial intervention. Story lines typically derived from a succession of compressed temporal and physical realities. Overt visual inventiveness largely depended on an individual filmmaker's competence, resources and inclination. A filmmaker's mediating gaze, nonetheless, frames the apparent objectivity of bearing witness. Likewise, accuracy, authenticity and 'being faithful to the facts' (Cocker, 1992:6), reduced the scope for creativity



in many early travel books. Plot lines were often straightforward: real journeys sequenced temporal and spatial encounters in authentic foreign or at least unfamiliar settings.

It would be misleading to push the analogy too far: as more people came to travel in both independent and organised ways, the proliferation of publications (Dodd, 1982: 1-2) and holiday footage became increasingly varied. Just as travel-related publications evolved a breadth that spanned from practical guidebooks, characterised by their underpinning 'axis of information' (Foulke, 1992:96), to narratives with highly autobiographical and nuanced authorial intent and meaning, amateur travel footage varies in style and quality. Both defy easy attempts at classification: as a result, within cognate areas of disciplinary interest, written travel-related texts, like amateur films have been devalued, trivialised and marginalised (Zimmerman, 1996:86). Amateur filmmaking gained little serious attention until the mid 1990s when reassessment of its historical significance began (Zimmerman, 1995; Norris Nicholson, 1996; see also Kapstein, 1997). Lukinbeal (2004:248, 250) now suggests that 'the cultural politics of film geography' is being extended by analysis of amateur practice's 'extra-textual world of production and consumption'. Notwithstanding the recent upsurge of geographical interest in travel writing (Duncan and Gregory, 1999; Gregory, 2001; Sharp, 2002), literary travel was also long dismissed as a subject for serious study and some twelve years after Fussell's seminal work, Cocker (1992) and Kowalewski (1992:1) both highlighted the continuing absence of critical analysis (see also Pratt, 1992; Holland and Huggen, 1998). It seems timely to bring two recently established strands of geographical interest together.

### **Mediating regional identity: *Through the Balkan States* (1933)**

*Through the Balkan States* is an intriguing and recently discovered example of amateur travel footage. It records a motor holiday tour through southeast Europe in 1933. Its fascination with the region's hybrid and distinctive character and resultant visual patchwork of diverse identities merit closer examination given the on-going debate about Balkan identity/identities since the conflicts during the 1990s (see especially, Tordova, 1997, 2004). Little is known about Geoffrey Morey, the Lincoln doctor and first world war veteran who made the film. Morey made various travel-related films including *By Car to Persia and Back in 28 Days* (c.1934), *Madagascar. The Forgotten Island* (c.1955-1960), *In the Far North. An Introduction to Arctic Lapland* (1956) and *Drums of Africa* (1960). All his material conveys

an interest in ethnography and seems ambitiously conceived, from the initial overland car tours through to filming from a helicopter by courtesy of the petroleum giant, Shell at offshore Nigerian drilling sites. Upon retirement in 1964, Morey and his wife, Yvonne, donated their travel films to the British Film Institute (formerly, National Film Archives), together with a personal collection of wartime newsreels and 16mm silent films on animal, medical and missionary topics that Morey had shown in prisons and hospitals. From these scanty contextual details, Morey's instructive imperative is apparent and it seems likely that *Through the Balkans* was made to be shared with wider audiences, particularly given the careful design of illustrated inter-titles, frequent insertion of place names and other captions and the detailed opening sequence.

The film starts by showing an Automobile Association (AA) handbook, maps, passports and other travel documents in close up. Unidentified hands arrange a montage succession of over-lapping pictures that indicate some of the holiday encounters that lie ahead - architectural gems from classical, Venetian and Turkish periods, crumbling remains of past grandeur and people wearing regional costumes. Landscapes, street scenes and monuments flicker past as fingers flip through printed guides and the camera pans steadily across brochures of Dubrovnik and elsewhere. The combination of text, image and camera work, is an elaborate example of a fairly standard scene-setting technique found in more polished home productions and encouraged in the specialist amateur literature. The woman's hands (probably belonging to Yvonne) attest to an involvement in what was a predominantly male hobby that goes beyond just featuring in specific views although camera work on holiday does not indicate if she also shared the filming.

The footage charts an extensive tour by road through Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Hungary and Rumania and reminds us about the shifting contours of the Balkans as geographical entity (Fleming, 2000:9). Other parts of Morey's journey through Europe are omitted, as are any indications of overall duration of the trip and identities of fellow travellers accompanying the filmmaker and his wife. Filming concentrates on the most visually distinctive section of the journey, notably ethnographic details, and Ottoman imagery, although there are also visual references to more familiar European histories and architectural traditions. In common with some of the contemporary accounts of travelling in the Balkans, including Muriel Currey's *Dalmatia* (1930) and subsequent *Yugoslavia. A Guide Book approved by the Official Tourist Department for Yugoslavia* (1939) as well as *Dalmatia* (Ball,

1932), *Yugoslavia* (Ellison, 1936) and *Wanderings in Yugoslavia* (Alexander, 1936), the Moreys travel south visiting Sibernik, Solin, Split, Dubrovnic and Cavtat before heading inland via Trebinje, Mostar and Sarajevo. From Belgrade, they continue in a southeasterly loop across Bulgaria and Turkey to Istanbul where the car is shipped along the Black Sea Coast to Constanta before the overland return drive to the UK. Discussion here focuses upon footage filmed during the couple's journey across former Yugoslavia.

Morey's camera work combines long and medium range shots with steady hand held close ups of facial expressions, folk costumes and scenes of domestic routine. Detailed footage includes harbour scenes, markets and architecture as well as numerous wayside encounters with local people, other road users and villagers on festive occasions. Images are in focus. Careful positioning ensures minimal overexposure and filming into areas of shadow is avoided. Individual shots are carefully framed without undue attention to aesthetic effect. The end result is a visual record without overt individualism. Imagery is straightforward reportage and concentrates on unfamiliarity so there are virtually no references to the holiday group apart from occasional scenes of the family car being hoisted to and from the deck of a coastal ferry.

The similarity of Morey's cinematic route with published journeys may be variously explained. As the opening sequence implies, published material helped with planning the tour. Current road conditions and the prevailing lack of alternative routes constrained choice for the motoring tourist, as along much of the Dalmatian coast (Waugh, 1930:149). Currey (1930:56) advises that, for example, 'it is well to see that both the chauffeur and the car have their proper papers'. In common with other writers and many amateur filmmakers, road halts and border crossings attract Morey's interest too. They punctuate journeys as memorable moments of engagement with people outside the car as well as signifying arrivals, departures and transitions between now charted and as yet un-entered touristic space. Here, as elsewhere, no rules yet forbid filming and clear lettering obviates any later need to insert place-names.

Links with other published travel texts seem likely too, not least the repetition of specific views although such visual similarities may be coincidental. Torodova (1997, 2004) traces much of the myth-making that has produced notions of undifferentiated regional culture and Balkan identity to the influence of Western travelers who wrote about

'discovering' the Balkans from the eighteenth century onward. Morey's filmic quest in search of visual difference clearly follows in established footsteps and its enframing of diversities is usefully set alongside Torodova's genealogy of evolving external representations of Balkan identity (see Lindstrom, 2003: 315) and also her model of Balkanism that avoids ascribing any single monolithic identity to the peninsula region. *Through the Balkan States* coincided with an upsurge of public and political interest that, according to Torodova (2004:181) crystallized in a specific (and, generally, highly reductive) discourse about the region after the Balkan wars and the First World War. Morey's film invites us to look closely at ambiguities underlying the putative Balkan-wide identity taking shape discursively during the interwar years.

Writing in English about travel-related experiences in the Balkans had flourished, particularly from the later nineteenth century as improvements to land and sea routes attracted more independently minded visitors to exploring accessible parts of southeastern Europe (Finder, 1991). Prevailing notions about the region's sense of otherness and, as Allcock and Young (1991, xv) suggest, 'the expectation about its extreme contrast to their homelands' ensured a readership for musings about the 'rough, wild, semi-civilised and more than half Orientalised little countries' (cited in Allcock and Young, 1991, xv). Shaped by styles drawn from adventure fiction and travelogue, these fin-de-siècle depictions of the Balkans as 'wild, exciting, and filled with mystery and danger' captured the popular imagination rather like the American West' (Fleming, 2000:6, citing Torodova 1997:23). Underlying this romantic appeal were the ambiguities created from the peninsula's liminal position at the margins of both Europe and the East.

In the late nineteenth century and again, during the 1920s, compelling eye-witness accounts by nurses, doctors, relief workers and other dedicated commentators with direct wartime experience augmented the continuing output of publications about the region's complex histories, cultures and landscapes (Durham, 1920; Wilson, 1920, 1930; St Clair Stobart, 1935; see also Finder, 1991). Economic, social and political changes in the aftermath of war, revived interest in travelling to the region before modernity eclipsed its distinctive appeal. Edith Durham, a political activist, relief worker and prolific travel observer sought to document the complexity of fast-disappearing cultures in one of her later works, *Some Tribal Origins, Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (1928). The travel writer Muriel Currey (1930: 54) warned starkly about 'the blight of the standardisation of the 'ready made' so dear to

democracy'. Notwithstanding their fear of modernity's pervasive spread, these authors seem specifically attracted by the region's diversities. Like Morey, their gaze avoids lapsing into clichéd notions of a uniform Balkan identity and mentality.

On the other hand, Morey does not share prevailing concerns about modernization. His footage suggests that western influences were still relatively easy to ignore. In roadside shots, for instance, he concentrates on animal harness, wheel and cart design and garments but electricity wires occur too. Wayside encounters provide many opportunities for Morey to film scarves, hats, footwear and the embroidered motifs or panels on jackets, bodices, skirts and sleeves with impunity. The inter-title, 'A holiday in a small Serbian village' introduces a fascinating four-minute sequence in which people take part in festivities with apparent disregard to the presence of either outsiders or the cine camera. A group of men of mixed ages, wearing dark baggy trousers, jackets, short waistcoats and Trilby-like hats or fezes, play violins, while others similarly dressed and wearing garlands link arms and dance shuffling side steps in the middle of the road as a few women stand around. The scene is left unexplained, exemplifying the serendipity nature of filmic encounters found in much amateur travel material. A sense of mystery - especially when it is unthreatening - also heightens the allure of recording difference.

Morey's camera work displays ambivalence over objectifying people involved in everyday activities, and exemplifies the tourist's role as an amateur ethnographer (Behdad, 1996:64). Few of his subjects suggest unwillingness although some shots end abruptly and possibly indicate the filmmaker's respect for local feeling as faces turn or veils are adjusted. Sometimes, at markets or on quaysides, it seems that Morey decides to film from behind, from above or at a discrete distance: at times, close ups of patterned socks, straw shoes, sandals or leather slippers may even hint at a preference for unobtrusive filming. Alternatively, he simply wished to record as clearly as possible the distinctive abstract and natural motifs that still existed in different regions and contemporary cine technology meant being very close! Indifference to the camera's presence predominates, although at Mostar, two seated men clearly comment to each other about being filmed but do not seem to acknowledge the photographer directly. Similarly, the flicker of an eye is the only recognition of Morey's slow pan along a man lying on a low wall in Dubrovnik and no other exchange occurs. Technology's capacity to mask the photographer in a camera's one-way gaze both makes possible and seems to sanction touristic voyeurism. The inserted words, 'A beauty

queen of Sarajevo' introduce a close up of an elderly woman's worn face and toothless smile to the camera. Undeterred by the unblinking stare of a child standing nearby, the steady focus illustrates how intentional humour further demeans a tourist's act of visual appropriation.

Morey's footage of regional dress positions *Through the Balkan States* temporally within the wider 'spaces of visibility' (Gregory, 2001:112). Traditional garments worn as people journey between villages in high wheeled oxen drawn carts and by country people coming to trade at ports and markets denote social and economic conditions markedly different from those back home. Morey evokes a sense of folk culture that contrasts with the reality of inter-war Britain. Collectively, these visible signs of continuing traditions represent a holiday record that perhaps unconsciously confers status to the holidaymaker even as it constructs a world that seems exotic, backward and primitive. Despite the immediacy of filming in shared time and space, Morey's ethnographic gaze places Balkan otherness predominantly in non-western time (see also Fabian, 1983:7). According to Allcock and Young (1991: xv) Victorian and Edwardian images of the region's 'wild and savage nature' still framed prevailing perceptions. Even four years after Morey's film, one visitor's published record praises Cook's travel arrangements and 'being able to survive the Balkans without a serious scratch' (Brendon, 1991:276). Morey's unproblematic visual encounters with alien and non-understood customs avoid such hyperbole and lack the drama or artistry to be found within Rebecca West's slightly later response to travelling in the Balkans, *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons* (1942). Yet, for an audience back home, his footage offers an accessible armchair journey into what Edith Durham called, 'the land of the living past' (Allcock, 1991:189).

Constructing the Balkans as a relic of pre-industrial Europe is only one facet of Morey's pictorial record. Veiled women and Turkish influenced men's clothing and headgear attract his attention too. The sloping sails and lowered booms of moored vessels, with lateen rigging, also feature at the quayside in Sibernik and in many coastal views. Rooftop scenes of minarets as well as detailed exterior shots of mosques recur through the film as both foregrounded subject and backdrop. Footage discloses the region's ethnic mosaic and the spatial interweaving of past religious and cultural groups that fragmented so violently during the early 1990s. He offers brief shots of the massive fourth century cathedral and palace at Split. His scenes of unnamed remains at Solin (Salona) seems to be what Currey (1939:143-144), describes as 'once a great Christian city', but 'now a heap of ruins' that 'has served as a stone

quarry ...'. As with other visitors encountering monuments of antiquity, their imminent disappearance and cultural loss enhances their picturesqueness (Nochlin, 1989: 209-210).

Generally, Morey concentrates more on the region's Ottoman rather than overtly European architectural legacy. He introduces Trebinje, some two hours' drive from Dubrovnik, as 'An old Turkish town in Yugo-slavia' (sic). One of the medieval town's two mosques, destroyed in the ethnic cleansing of south west Bosnia in 1992-93, is filmed from its gate with a long medium close up of the crescent on top of its minaret.<sup>1</sup> Street scenes of people wearing varied costumes also include shots of the wood carving associated with vernacular architecture that dates from the Turkish period. His inter-title, 'The quaint little village of Mostar. Picturesque despite its filth' introduces a view of the Stari Most, the arched sixteenth century bridge built over the Neretva river. Not infrequently, amateur recording captures sights and situations that are now just memories. Morey pans slowly across the facades, rooftops and tall, slim minarets of the Karadjoz mosque and an entirely destroyed historic quarter (Eirinberg, 1992:25). He documents a Turkish/Muslim heritage of dwellings, small dark shop fronts, guard houses and fortifications that has now been erased. His images show people and animals crossing between east and west while children play under the bridge's arches. Touristic curiosity prompted Morey's filmic gaze upon these unassuming images of ordinariness and they contrast poignantly with more recent visual representation. Stari Most's destruction in November 1993 was, in the words of another film maker, 'one of the single most deliberate and pointless acts of wanton vandalism' and 'a metaphor for the pointless tragedy of the (Serbo-Croat-Bosnian) war' (Long, 1994).<sup>2</sup>

Morey's sequence on Sarajevo opens with a pen and ink sketch of the fifteenth century Central Mosque and bridge over the Miljacka river. Whether an original sketch or copied from a print, the drawing reinforces the film-maker's fascination with visible Ottoman influences. An inter-title introduces 'The most Oriental City in Europe.' Successive images convey Morey's visual delight in a city once shaped by centuries of tolerating diversity: he depicts the distinctive market stalls, dress styles, house frontages and livestock in the Bistic district. He films his way through the multi-ethnic crowd of artisans, craft-workers, traders and purchasers that throng between the tiny booths of the Bas-Carsija market. Cyrillic lettering adds another exotic dimension as the camera pans across sign posts and shop fronts. So too do the slightly inept translations of visitor information into different European languages and restrictions on non-Muslims entering the Gazi Husref-beg Mosque. Morey's

uninhibited documentary impulse prompts him to film into the main hall during prayers as well as the washing of hands, and removal of shoes inside the courtyard precinct. Such unfamiliar rituals of worship reinforce non-European influences even if some men are wearing fully western clothes.

Visual contrasts are juxtaposed in other scenes of Sarajevo and elsewhere in *Through the Balkan States*. Western dress and modern buildings intermingle with older traditions as do churches and mosques. Visual denial of a single shared heritage is impossible and underscores the internecine violence of subsequent ethnic conflict. Morey's imagery captures the prevailing Western mystique for both city and the wider Balkans. Like many of his contemporaries, as Allcock (1991:181) discusses, Morey found repeatedly that the region was in but not entirely of the Orient. His Orientalism is never quite complete: a handbag, suit or power line gets in the way. So too do the occasional brief glimpses of Roman columns, arches and other fragments of masonry bearing inscriptions in Greek or Latin. Such material clues to distant periods of shared cultural influences, as well as later buildings in Gothic and Renaissance style, survive amidst the visible Ottoman legacy. Such details underscore the salience of the translated titles, 'The East's West' or 'West of the East', given to Elli Skopetea's (1992, cited in Fleming, 2000:8) work on Balkan historiography.

Unwittingly, Morey's positioning of the Balkans 'at the interstices between worlds, histories, continents' (Fleming, 2000:11) has contemporary relevance. His mosaic of clichéd perceptions capture characteristics that have become central to the debates again taking place on the peninsula's varied identities and on the suitability of Orientalist discourses in this particular context. *Through the Balkans* may lack the visceral quality bestowed upon the region for different reasons by such interwar writers as Durham (1920; 1928), Wilder Lane (1923; 1943) or West (1942). Yet, its production and screening helped to mediate images of what Waugh called the 'mongrel kingdom of the Jugo-Slavs' (Waugh, 1930:146). As an alternative or an addition to reading or watching a fast growing range of educational shorts from British and American studios, such amateur footage, for all its shortcomings, contributed in the unprecedented process of 'showing the world to the stay at homes' (Newnham, 1931:7).

### **Exploring links between page and screen**



Let us now take further some of the narrative issues raised by travel footage. Many amateurs produced documentary-style footage just as their professional and middle class equivalents were associated with the documentary film movement of the 1930s (Low, 1979). Fact and fiction combine in these visual narratives. Amateurs told stories on camera about themselves that they wished to remember but their films are not merely animated family photo albums or holiday records. The imagery discloses social relations, middle class activities and how people made sense of themselves, others and the world around them. How possible is it to approach amateur travel footage as a technological variant upon earlier travel-related writing? The previous section has suggested that there are superficial similarities but also differences. Such a comparison, nonetheless, helps both to valorise amateur holiday footage as visual evidence and to contextualise its place within tourism history.

Most written texts - whether diary, journal, letters or other literary form - and many amateur travel films, notwithstanding Zimmerman's American findings (1996) usually display narrative and elements of a journey. Film, like written texts, contrasts with an individual photograph's stillness and fragmentary moment of recollection. Narrative time and the successive stages of movement evoke a sense of 'being there' that differs from the 'having been there' quality inscribed in a photographic memory. At its most simple, amateur holiday footage logs memorable moments. Successive images denote particular occasions, attractions and responses. Its sequential form approximates to the daily entries of a conscientious diarist. Both, like photographs, are deliberate strategies of safekeeping memories for future recollection. Inter-titles add textual detail to film in the silent era. For the observant cine camera-user, like an attentive writer such as Patrick Leigh Fermor (Cocker, 1992:194-206), details describe and evoke moods or atmospheres. The camera's attention to externalities has a Proustian quality. Through film, travel stories build using close up, medium range and panning shots and from varied combinations of images, links and framing devices. These are visual approximations for the phrases, paragraphs or metaphors of verbal prose. Chapters often define bounded regional or national space in written travel texts: in film, inter-titles or visual contrasts usually demarcate areal differences.

It is tempting to assume that films, unlike verbal accounts, were made during relatively short visits overseas but by the 1920s and 1930s, travel writing could also derive from quite brief periods of time abroad. Silent travel footage lacks the intimacy or reflective tone often evident in written form. Yet, there may be clues to a contemporary aesthetic

appreciation that extends beyond mere observation. Fussell (1992:71-72) suggests, 'the idea of travel is practically equivalent to the idea of ships' (see also, Tomlinson, 1936:3, 22-25) and the recurrence of sailing and sea-related images found in literary references is similarly evident in much amateur footage (Norris Nicholson, 2007/8). On cruise holidays, filmmakers often record surging waves breaking under a ship's bows: D.H. Lawrence was similarly fascinated. His sea crossing from Palermo in *Sea and Sardinia* (1921:11) prompts him to comment on 'the motion of freedom', 'the sound of the smashing of waters' and 'the magic gallop of elemental space'. There may be hints of a metaphysical interest too even if amateur footage tends to become repetitive and usually does not attain Lawrence's erotic intensity.

Amateur travel footage rarely reveals journeys in search of the self unlike the emphasis on self-realisation in much writing. It deals with outer rather than inner journeys even if relationships and emotions may be inferred sometimes from expressions, body language and who is in or out of a shot. A filmmaker's holiday memories disclose individualised visual responses and personalised meanings (Norris Nicholson, 2006c). As with writing, authorial control selects content, directs focus and shapes meaning. Directorial decisions about what to include and exclude, for whatever reason, mediate actuality. The process of documentation through prose or film implies detachment and being an onlooker or outsider (Norris Nicholson, 2006b). Recorded scenes and encounters produce - and reproduce - a different reality to that of the insider. However realistic they represent a re-telling or re-showing of actuality.

Recorded travel perceptions usually derive from the politics of privilege and from being able, however briefly, to step aside from daily preoccupations and take stock of being in the world. Clearly, prevailing assumptions and prejudices frame how observers contemplate the people and places around them. Their touristic voyeurism, however apparently benign, is imbricated with notions of superiority shaped by gender, class, education, race, culture and geography. Unlike the writer, however, the lens shields the cinematographer from those that look back whilst extending the observer's visual intrusion. Camera apparatus concentrates the power of Urry's 'tourist gaze' (2002). The filmmaker is not just the tourist spectator or playgoer attracted by the 'Mediterranean theatricality' evoked by Henry James in *Italian Hours* (cited in Dodd, 1982:92): arguably, cinematic framing converts and reduces - quite literally - everyday lives into images less than full size. The filmmaker

manipulates space to produce filmic or imaginative geographies. The camera gaze objectifies too, compressing people, places and processes into cine reel as opposed to real time.

Prior knowledge and associations are of crucial importance in shaping perceptions. The world is 'fully labelled', to use Evelyn Waugh's phrase (1930:16). Everywhere, cultural, literary and political meanings are attached to people and places. Travel experiences have long been a means to sanction and confirm those meanings. Zweder von Martels, the editor of *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction*, observes that 'Travel writers often borrowed much of their material from their predecessors. They read avidly but hardly looked around for themselves' (1994). Recent travel fiction maintains the convention. On approaching Gibraltar, Simon Winchester, in *Outposts: Journeys to surviving relics of the British Empire* (2003) evokes Laurie Lee, just as many eighteenth century Grand Tourers relied on earlier works in their own cultural consumption of European scenic wonders and sites of great antiquity (Chard, 1999; Towner, 1996). Authorial guidance repeatedly validates travel experience and offers an intellectual prop in making the unfamiliar familiar.

Amateur film enthusiasts were as susceptible as were their prose-influenced counterparts. By the mid 1930s, colour reproductions, advertisements, newsreels, feature films and documentaries offered the public a wide repertoire of Mediterranean imagery. Wartime associations were significant for some people too. Travel services expanded and borders were relatively easy to cross in the inter-war years. Publication of travel writing flourished in the 1930s and includes such authors as Norman Douglas (1930), Aldous Huxley (1936), Graham Greene (1932; 1936), Robert Byron (1937) and as already mentioned, D. H. Lawrence (1921) and Evelyn Waugh (1930) In contrast to much of their predecessors' condescension, this post-war generation's literary quest for exoticism (Dodd, 1982:92) was often tinged by new uncertainties about self, society and historical inevitabilities. Adventure, novelty and political scepticism combined into literary styles that offered a sophisticated alternative to the armchair escapism made possible by Hollywood. This was part of the cultural context for those middle class and professional cine enthusiasts who set out to document their own travels for subsequent homing viewing with family, friends and wider audiences in the inter-war years.

Pursuing such links too far would be misleading in the absence of information about amateur filmmakers' reading habits but abundant references to travel guides and filmmaking

certainly do exist through the pages of *Amateur Cine World* and other contemporary specialist publications. Hobbyists were repeatedly advised to film imaginatively. They were urged to avoid predictable shots and familiar sequences of sightseeing based merely on published travel guides. Alex Strassser, author of *Amateur Films. Planning, Directing and Cutting* (1936:46) instructed: "In the first place, the less shots they bring back that remind one of Cook's or Baedeker's travel "Guides," the better. The most celebrated example which should *not* be put down on record is that of the doves being fed in St. Mark's Square, Venice". Technical tips on how to plan, combine different shots, compose images and edit recur through essays and critical reviews on amateur holiday and travel productions. Advice also included being thoughtful to family members and how to foster their on-screen involvement and co-operation. Filmmakers were encouraged to avoid excessive rehearsals of apparent spontaneity! Inevitably, such reminders were sometimes forgotten but some amateurs were both proficient and imaginative in their camera use.

As most of the filming was by men, guidebooks usually are held and read by women on camera even though inter-titles may contain factual details culled from print or an accompanying local guide. Uncluttered by camera technology and child-care responsibilities, women seem to assume the role of reading and passing on sightseeing information. Meanwhile, the filmmaker's gaze is often attracted as much by chance encounters as by the set pieces of guided touristic experience. Some of the most interesting footage results from filming the unexpected. Antiquities and monuments offer vantage points for more whimsical records of being somewhere else. In a 1934 film, a woman drawing up water at a well on the slopes of the Acropolis features for longer than does the Parthenon itself.<sup>3</sup>

For many amateurs, each location is a chance to capture vignettes of another world, discussed more fully elsewhere (see bibliography). For one visitor to Barcelona, Gaudi's unfinished spires of his Sagrada Familia elicit less filmic interest than do their different outlooks over adjacent avenidas and open spaces.<sup>4</sup> Rooftops and balconies offer endless opportunities to glimpse the incidental details of men, women and children involved in ordinary aspects of city life - the errands, meetings and journeys, missed trams, transactions, fleeting emotions and moments of reflection, purposeful action and play (Norris Nicholson, 2003a). In holiday footage, cinematic interest may sometimes focus also upon these unexpected visual pleasures and not simply replicate already sanctioned ways of seeing.

Street level chance encounters may likewise eclipse more sustained interest in official photo opportunities. On-shore visits during holidays afloat disclose cinematic flânerie (Clarke, 1996:30; Norris Nicholson, 2004:324). and opportunities to wander limited only by a pre-given pick-up time and rendez vous. Churches, castles, and gateways in Yugoslavia, Ibiza, Gibraltar, Malta or Sicily, for instance, feature less than the recording of glimpses into local life at a public tap, around a gate or doorway. Market and harbour scenes abound everywhere. Laden donkeys disappear through archways and along alleyways. North African imagery rarely includes a focused shot on a mosque or minaret tower, unlike the slightly later images of *Through the Balkan States*, and concentrates instead on the receding figures of veiled women and men in kaftans (Norris Nicholson, 2003a). Lace, textile and jewellery sellers as well as coffee grinders and musicians similarly combine human interest and Mediterranean exoticism. These seem to be the preferred holiday images.

Animals, children and incidental moments of irreverence provide some of the least expected visual asides. They lift amateur holiday footage beyond dreary repetition of overworked travel imagery: a soldier's surreptitious draw on a cigarette during regimental movement in Gibraltar<sup>5</sup>, the wafted smoke rings from a parked driver briefly off-duty or a flirtatious exchange with a posing dancer or street performer (Norris Nicholson, 2003a). Such details prompt amusement and interest for viewers on camera and at later screenings: they typify the incidentals recorded by those with time to observe others around them. Perhaps they also acknowledge social relations and hint at the faintly transgressive nature of genteel family leisure when briefly escaping the protective cocoon of middle class travel by car or cruise in the inter-war years.

In many respects, inter-war amateur holiday footage exhibits as much variety as do travel responses in written form. According to individual interests and the purposes of making the film - for family or wider audiences - footage combines varying amounts of observational and more idiosyncratically selected subject matter. The films may be analysed in different ways: some travel footage resembles documentaries or newsreels in its reporting style. It is a visual history and captures material cultural evidence of social and economic activity in contrasting rural and urban locations. Its wide panoramic gaze encompasses civic, historic and vernacular architectural styles that attest to phases of growth, modernisation, environmental conditions and the overall quality and maintenance of buildings and structures. Waterwheel, village wash house, stand pipe or town oven may be intriguing anachronisms for

middle class Northern European outsiders but they were still essential feature of everyday life in many parts of the Mediterranean without locally recognised aesthetic value. The cine-touting walkabouts within walled medinas in Tangier, Sfax, Algiers and elsewhere similarly disclose the fabric of traditional urban living that would be unlikely to feature in the domestic footage of a camera-owning Francophone North African or member of the French colonial elite. Outsiders' crude attempts at documentary provide visual testimony during decades of profound change.

Facets of tourism history are disclosed too: tourist behaviour and local responses, as well as site management. Sightseers carried in sedan chairs at Pompeii in 1932<sup>6</sup>, kiosks and charabancs high amidst lava and cinders on Vesuvius,<sup>7</sup> road side stalls in Mallorca<sup>8</sup>, signs in different languages in Sarajevo and children diving for coins tossed from cruise ships off the quayside at Barcelona<sup>9</sup> hint at relationships, enterprise and infrastructure at different stages of tourism development. Visual experiments capture some of the holiday mood: for instance, occasional night-time filming as at Nice<sup>10</sup>, dissolves and wipes that add mystery to ruined French chateaux<sup>11</sup> or the jollity associated with posing alongside local people<sup>12</sup>. These personal details of specific holiday moments hint at tourist behaviour, interactions and perceptions. They are also valuable ingredients for showing holiday footage back home.

In short, amateur travel film is a visual representation of a mobile world. Much of its appeal lies in capturing observable flows of actions and movements. Its sequential record offers a chance to gaze beyond the edges of a static image. Through linking holiday movies with travel writing, this discussion has set a cultural and social context for aspects of Mediterranean tourism during the inter-war years. Inevitably, much fascinating footage uncovered during the present research is omitted, for instance, scenes of Rome including Mussolini's headquarters<sup>13</sup>, a school party visiting Barcelona in 1936<sup>14</sup>, armed officials patrolling Moroccan stations amidst people down from the Rif Mountains where nationalism was then emerging<sup>15</sup> and much more. This discussion has sought to explore the nuanced meanings found in amateur filmmakers' travel narratives. Perhaps today's compulsive camcorder activity, as well as the continuing popularity of travel writing (increasingly based upon sometimes quirky forms of ex-patriate activity somewhere else), in an era when media representations and cheap travel opportunities abound, are reminders of how stories fulfil very fundamental needs. Early amateur travel films are but part of that much longer narrative.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Serbian ethnic cleansing, *Guardian Archive* 8 February 1993. Available at [www.guardian.co.uk/yugo/article/0%2C2763%2C712895%2C00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/yugo/article/0%2C2763%2C712895%2C00.html) (accessed 29 June 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Long, *The Bridge - Mostar* (NHK Japan and H.D.Thames, September 1994). Film notes for a commission that documented the effects of Serb and Croat bombardments 1992-1994 in the former Yugoslavia. Available at <http://www.christopherlong.co.uk/tvf.bridge.html>. (accessed 29 June 2004). See also reporting on post conflict reconstruction efforts available at <http://www.unesco.org/bpi/en/unescopress/2002/02-avis20e.shtml> (accessed 29 June 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Barker Scarr Collection, *Mediterranean Cruise SS Arandora Star May 1934* NWFA Accession nos. 3805-3809

<sup>4</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, *Barcelona*, NWFA Accession no. 1967D

<sup>5</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, NWFA Accession no. 1956

<sup>6</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, *Preston Family Visit to Naples and Pompeii, (c.1932/33)* NWFA Accession no. 1944D

<sup>7</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, *Preston Family Visit to Naples and Pompeii, (c.1932/33)* NWFA Accession no. 1944D

<sup>8</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, *Orient Sea Liner SS Orama at Sea*, NWFA Accession no.1938D

<sup>9</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, *Royal Mail Line Cruise M.V. Asturias (22500) to Spain, Madeira and the Canaries*, NWFA Accession nos. 1964D and 1187D

<sup>10</sup> John Barker Scarr, *Mediterranean Cruise: SS Arandora Star, May 1933* NWFA Accession no. 3804-5

<sup>11</sup> *On the Banks of the River Aude*, made in ca.1928 by an unknown member of the Preston Scientific Society photographic section. Accession no. 2069, NWFA. Personal communication with another member's daughter, September 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, *Orient Line Cruise*, NWFA Accession no. 1956

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<sup>13</sup> John Barker Scarr, *Mediterranean Cruise SS Arandora Star June 1935*, NWFA Accession no. 3808

<sup>14</sup> *Scholars' Cruise on RMS Lancastria Easter 1936*, NWFA Accession no.684

<sup>15</sup> Harold and Sidney Preston, *Peninsula and Orient Steam Navigation Co. Mediterranean Cruise by the Turbo-Electric Ship Vice Roy of India, May/June 1932*, NWFA, Accession no. 1943D