Cinematic Gestures: Flows and Disruptions on the Yankee Voyage, 1936-38

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Cinematic Gestures: Flows and Disruptions on the *Yankee* Voyage, 1936-38
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When Eastman Kodak began its ambitious Kodachrome marketing campaign in 1935, the emphasis was on the new stock's vibrancy and unparalleled realism. "When your picture moves, it *lives*," claimed one advertisement, while another declared that Kodachrome could make one's movie experiences, once limited to monochrome stock, finally "come to life" (Eastman Kodak).[1] This chapter looks at rare color film taken on Pacific travels, mostly produced by a committed amateur filmmaker, Edward (Ted) Zacher, who chose the new color process to document an eighteen-month training voyage on the famous clipper *Yankee.* The cruise was organized by the entrepreneurs and sailing instructors Irving and Electa ('Exy') Johnson; together they led a hand-picked crew of about a dozen novice and more experienced sailors.

The Johnsons were popular figures in their time, known for their daring global travels. When Electa died in 2004 at the age of ninety-five, the *Los Angeles Times* remarked that she had circumnavigated the globe with her husband seven times over twenty-five years, always with amateur crews, with their adventures chronicled in books, travelogues, and frequently in *National Geographic* magazine. The "sea-roving" pioneers had logged more miles on global waters "than an astronaut's round trip to the moon" (Oliver). The voyage set out from Gloucester, Massachusetts on 1 November 1936 and returned on 1 May 1938—lasting precisely eighteen months. This was the Johnsons' second circumnavigation. Accompanying them was a crew that included the (soon to be) Hollywood star Sterling Hayden, then in his early twenties, described by the *Boston Post* as a six-feet-five, "blond, blue-eyed Viking beauty" and a highly capable first mate (Johnson and Johnson 26). Zacher, of Hartford, Connecticut, was a banker who left his job for the cruise, taking up what he saw as the opportunity of a lifetime, combining his passions for travel and filmmaking. "Ted claimed [that film] was a hobby," noted the Johnsons, "but which looked to the rest of us more like a profession when we took stock of his seven cameras, his stacks of films, his negative albums, exposure meters, lenses, and tripods" (27).

This essay investigates just a small part of an extensive and largely neglected archive of Pacific travel films, focusing on the documentary and expressive potential that Kodachrome color offered amateurs while considering what this archive might contribute

towards re-evaluating and further engaging with Pacific travel experiences between the wars, and with the wide variety of texts produced in their wake. This visual record, captured in what Kodak referred to as "natural" subtractive (as opposed to filtered or added) color (Tepperman 145) gives us a glimpse of a world where vast unknowns were becoming more widely known, where strangeness and unfamiliarity were coming up against new intimacies and knowledges forged through encounters less structured than those of more rigid practices becoming established in fields such as anthropology and ethnology. At the same time, these films were having an impact on stay-at-home travelers, who could encounter expansive visions of the world through new image-capturing media.

Hence these amateur films might help us to consider anew the shifting grounds, and seas, of the Pacific encounter during the crucial period between the World Wars, when US expansionist politics and networks were advancing towards the 'American Pacific' era. There are three intertwined lines of enquiry I want to trace here. The first relates to what I've elsewhere referred to as the US "imperial imagination" (Geiger, *Facing* 7-12), considering what this rather broad concept might mean more specifically in terms of the travel experiences and encounters documented in these films. The second relates to how we interpret this footage: how do the critical frameworks brought to bear on amateur film differ from those commonly applied to narrative fiction film? I draw here on the work of Giorgio Agamben, who expands on Gilles Deleuze's "movement image" in developing a theory of what Agamben calls cinematic "gesture." "The element of cinema," argues Agamben, "is gesture and not image." Thinking of cinema as gesture, then, "liberates [...] movement from being purposeful," frees it from interpretive frameworks that demand a more narrowly defined usefulness or signifying result in the moving image. Cinema therefore is "the exhibition of a mediality" ("Notes on Gesture" 57)—media in motion—conceived as a process rather than as an object or *thing*.[2]

This stress on gesture and therefore on the mediality of moving images leads towards the third area under consideration: the new medium of Kodachrome. Here I explore how the experience of this "natural" color stock might have inflected perceptions of motion picture realism—indeed, how color film might have affected perceptions of the world itself. As Rudolf Arnheim famously recalled, "after I had seen my first color film and left the cinema, I had a terrible experience—I saw the world as a color film" (21). The intensity of the color experience here threatens to displace direct perception itself; color stock can both reflect and destabilize how we see the world. Color is mobile, both as a perceived phenomenon and in the feelings and meanings it generates, and this very mobility goes hand in hand with

Agamben's notion of the "exhibition of a mediality" in cinema. During its first few years on the market, Kodachrome color provided a medium for experimentation and innovation, and was exclusively marketed to amateurs. As we might see in these Pacific films, color filming could unmoor moving images from more fixed, purposeful contexts and uses, revealing at the same time the travel encounter as dynamic, difficult to pin down: a fluid space of multiple and competing significations.

On the (Pacific) Rim

The United States' "imperial imagination" was grounded both in inherited myths about distant peoples and places and in the ways that American 'mainlanders' sought solace and identification in images and concepts of distant islands.[3] Aligned to these cultural, ideological, and psychic factors was a realpolitik: US policy-makers had begun to understand imperialism as a function of economic protectionism at least as far back as the Spanish-American War and with the annexations of Samoa, Puerto Rico, Hawai'i, and Cuba (in 1898), and the controversial Filipino-American war that followed. The latter "splendid little war," according to US ambassador John Hay, was launched as a defense of the China trade in the midst of increasingly fierce international competition (Bethell), and led to over 200,000 deaths of Filipino so-called insurgents. Indeed, the watershed year of 1898 had seen the founding of groups such as the American Asiatic Association, with its mission of working to "foster and safeguard American trade and commercial interests" (that is, to lobby to protect US trade routes across the Pacific) and to "co-operate with religious, educational, and philanthropic agencies designed to remove existing obstacles to the peaceful progress and wellbeing of Asiatic peoples" (American Asiatic Association 709). In 1899, the Association's secretary pushed aside prevailing messages about an American "civilizing mission" in the Philippines and offered a blunter analysis of annexation: "had we no interests in China," he noted, "possession of the Philippines would be meaningless" (qtd. in LaFeber 410).

Cooperation between US military interests and private enterprise—firmly in place when the crew of the *Yankee* commenced their cruise in 1936—might suggest the ways that imperialism in the newer sense of the word was actually the near image of established colonial practices. Indeed, it is worth recalling here what Teresia Teaiwa has called "militourism"—the ways in which travelers are afforded a "smooth" experience through colonial and military networks across the Pacific, even while "that same tourist industry masks the military force behind it" (251). Militourism is most frequently an embedded and not explicit or visible relationship. As Teaiwa argues, "altogether, tourism is able to flatten,

tame, and render benign the culture of militarism. The military, in turn, endorses the industry" (252). For this reason, as detailed further below, recognizing the forces of militourism requires critically unpacking and contextualizing what usually comes across as benign, scenic tourist imagery. As visitors such as the Johnsons were aware, and as noted in their accounts, sights captured in the tourist travelogue such as the former Dutch East Indies, American Samoa, and Papua New Guinea were key links in a colonial and imperial chain of islands. Hence these travelogues can shed light not only on the expectations, observations, and desires of ordinary tourists, but on a mediated *relationship* between tourism, Pacific sites, and an imperial imaginary.

My interest is not, however, to diminish these films' value as historical records. I do aim, though, to position this material within the flows and disruptions—the shifting grounds—of what I would call an emerging and problematic Pacific Rim discourse: a discourse that came into being through mobility, migration, travel, and ongoing exposure to (and media capture of) diverse cultures and landscapes. As Christopher Connery reminds us, the origins of the term Pacific Rim are grounded in geological phenomena, indicating the rim of volcanic and tectonic activity around the Pacific Ocean—that is, the Bering Strait, Japan, China, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Coasts of North and South America. Moreover, "the idea of a Pacific Rim had a further advantage: it centered on an ocean. Water is capital's element" (40). But the Pacific Rim as an idea and discourse since the 1970s has taken on broader and more transnational, fluid cultural associations. As Connery sees it,

> Pacific Rim Discourse [. . .] is a non-othering discourse. Unlike Orientalism, which Edward W. Said delineates genealogically as a discursive formation centered on a fundamental othering—an othering further grounded in the specific histories of colonialism and imperialism, Pacific Rim Discourse presumes a kind of metonymic equivalence. Its world is an interpenetrating complex of interrelationships with no center: neither the center of a hegemonic power nor the imagined fulcrum of a "balance of power." (31-32)

Drawing on this decentered concept of the Rim—while recognizing its problematic focus on a Pacific "frame" or "edge" that conceptually elides what Epeli Hau'ofa has called "our sea of islands"—I want to look at possible rumblings of a "non-othering discourse" taking place along the Rim before the trade liberalizations and economic growth of the 1970s.[4] What were travelers before the Second World War, in their rapidly increasing numbers, seeking in 'other' sights and peoples, and what can the filmic record tell us about what they experienced? Can we discern liminal, "interpenetrating" spaces of the encounter, drifting

somewhere between 'othering' and 'non-othering' discourses of the Pacific? Indeed, do these representations and flows of culture and capital point to a nascent cosmopolitanism, or did they simply re-inscribe an imperial mindset?

As in the cultural encounter itself, even colonial-era texts produced in the encounter's wake can be highly unpredictable and multi-faceted: fraught with reversals, ambiguities, and even resistance to dominant representational modes.[5] Warwick Anderson concisely sums up a critical imperative: we need to "trace the influence of colonial engagements—the complex encounters in these contact zones—[and] we must not ignore coercion and appropriation, dominance and submission, where they occur. But neither should we disregard more ambiguous and complicated interactions in the contact zones; scoff at sympathy and affection, however evanescent; or deny efforts at reciprocity, however unequal and confused" (231). If such an approach begins to disturb clear-cut, us-versus-them constructions of the colonial world and its representations, viewing travel films can nonetheless remind us that western tourists were far from free of the baggage of imperial relations. Indeed, the imperial realm can still be seen as a visible space of regressive fantasy, with conventional cultural associations drawn from official and popular accounts. In one amateur travelogue that has recently come to light, titled *Around the World on the M/Y* [Motor Yacht] *Stella Polaris* (1937),[6] images of Pago Pago in the rain are introduced with a title declaring "Shades of Sadie Thompson!! It rained in Pago Pago!!" Invoking all at once the Gloria Swanson film *Sadie Thompson* (1928), the W. Somerset Maugham story "Rain" (1921), and its play adaptation (1923), the film recalls a colonial tale of an American prostitute who finds temporary security working amidst the 'fallen' moral climate of the South Seas. But the Samoan footage further suggests the seemingly innocuous travelogue's links to militourism: by the late 1930s military installations on key Pacific sites were being substantially expanded, with the construction of a US naval airbase and advanced fortifications at Pago Pago harbor in 1940.

It is precisely these "ambiguous and complicated interactions" of travel and the traveler's exposure to new experiences and sensations that I want to foreground here. Invoking recent discussions of travel and its connections to modern cosmopolitanism, Robert J. Holton observes that, "physical travel has for many centuries been seen as a crucial aspect of inter-cultural engagement relevant to cosmopolitanism" (130). Hence, as Bronislaw Szerszynski and John Urry further outline, both the imaginative and virtual travels found in film, television, and the Internet are at least if not more significant for the development of cosmopolitan perspectives than travel itself (113-31).

Color and Gesture

Yet moving images have not always been afforded this status: Alan D. Kattelle has argued that amateur films, particularly, seem to carry the "stigma of home movies" (6) and hence are frequently underestimated or ignored. Certainly the travel films considered here lack the disciplinary trappings and sense of authority found in anthropological work emerging during the same period.[7] I would suggest that, lacking these structures while also working outside the commercial imperatives of the film industry, amateur work can offer glimpses of a less hierarchical and more fluid approach to who is doing the filming, and of who or what is being filmed. Even while most aimed towards the attainment of 'professional' skills and standards, amateurs also allowed for experimental distance from convention. Charles Tepperman notes that "in the 1930s when color films were still a rarity in commercial theatres, amateurs claimed color filmmaking as their own terrain for aesthetic experimentation and discovery" (147).

With these observations in mind, the following breaks down some key characteristics of amateur travel films, taking into account contexts of both production and reception:

a) filming is geared towards personal more than commercial interests;

b) films are structured as episodic 'slight narratives' rather than bound to a plot;

c) audiences would be aware that the film's actions and entire *fabula* are completed and safely in the past; engagement therefore tends to be more self-aware and participatory;

d) filming frequently lingers on gesture: on the essence of motion and movement;

e) place and location are foregrounded rather than serving as background;

f) stylistically, films frequently feature experimentation and play.

What this outlines are properties of amateur travel films that might be seen to distinguish them from commercial products, suggesting a need to adopt strategies that differ from those brought to analysis of popular cinema. Amateur filmmaking provides a viewing experience unlike any other. As Heather Norris Nicholson suggests, amateur work negotiates between public and private, one not only "captures" sights from behind the camera but screens these personal observations to friends, relatives, and a wider public. She further notes that, "contrasting with the more private role occupied during shooting, [. . .] public presentation invites interrogation and response." Differing in these respects from commercial practices—which would include professional newsreels—amateur filmmaking establishes a "personal

connection" between viewers and filmmakers that forms a central component of a shared cinema experience (Norris Nicholson 96, 103).

The personal connection or intimacy of the amateur film further suggests a need to think differently about the kinds of power relations in cinema spectacle that have preoccupied postcolonial discussions of institutional cinema practices. We might start by considering amateur work in terms of cinematic gesture, and gesture for Agamben is the "the process of making a means visible as such. It allows the emergence of the being-in-a-medium of human beings and thus it opens the ethical dimension for them" ("Notes on Gesture" 57). This ethical dimension involves a release from commodification and epistemophilia, and a gesturing towards what Agamben elsewhere calls "potentiality" ("On Potentiality" 177-8). Cinematic gesture, then, "is not the sphere of an end in itself but rather the sphere of a pure and endless mediality. It is only in this way that the obscure Kantian expression 'purposiveness without purpose' acquires a concrete meaning" ("Notes on Gesture" 58).[8] Narrative cinema tends to embed gesture within structures of intentionality, through which meaning is ultimately determined. Drawing on Agamben's observations we might get closer to the more de-essentializing practices of amateur filmmaking, where filming becomes less invested in producing meaningful stories and offers instead a "being-in-a-medium of human beings" through emphases on display, movement, and atemporal flow.

As mentioned above, the case of Kodachrome adds to this the destabilizing impact of color perception. As the Amateur Cinema League's (ACL) flagship publication *Movie Makers* argued in 1937, the human eye "might be compared to a camera, for it has a lens, an iris diaphragm and color sensitive area on the retina" (Tuttle, "Seeing Color (part 2)" 552). But in terms of color this is as far as the analogy goes: the camera loaded with Kodachrome might provide a technically accurate and reproducible color rendering, but humans frequently fail "to train the eye and brain to interpret conditions of light and mixtures of color accurately" (Tuttle, "Seeing Color (part 1)" 482). Color perception is prone to the ephemeral properties of light: a slippery or liminal rather than fixed phenomenon. As demonstrated by the much-shared internet sensation of 2015—the ambiguous photo of a blue and gold dress—color's impact is rarely systematic or predictable.[9]

Among professionals, the dominant cinematic color system during the 1930s was Technicolor, and according to the company's chief consultant Natalie Kalmus, Technicolor was meant to bring an "enhanced realism" into being (Kalmus 140). But as Edward Buscombe has argued, color in mainstream film was still considered a *problem* for realism because, it was argued, color could "tire and distract the eye," taking attention away from

elements of film content, form, and narrative (qtd. in Neale, "Color and Film" 85).[10] Moreover, Technicolor was complicated, expensive, and time-consuming. Cameras were extremely heavy, while the need for intense bright light (with sets becoming so hot that workers sometimes fainted, and fire was always a danger) meant a reliance on electricity, adding large costs to budgets. Such complexities meant that outdoor shooting was usually out of the question.

Though Hollywood largely avoided color, Kodak's "natural" color process attempted to minimize these problems. Kodachrome was characterized as "truer" to natural colors than the perception of the naked eye: "Kodachrome makes no mental adjustments for the colors of light and subject and, therefore, can be trusted under many conditions where our eyes and brain are only too willing to deceive us" (Tuttle, "Seeing Color (part 2)" 562). Kodachrome was also flexible, easy to use, and more affordable than previous products. Still, even "natural" color could associate travel to distant places with escapist, sensational—even otherworldly—spectacle.[11] Tom Gunning has stressed the importance of attending to the ways color was apprehended at specific moments in cinema's history, in particular to the sort of intricate dance "orchestrated between realistic motives and metaphorical or spectacular effects" in color applications ("Colorful" 249). Early uses of color could heighten realism yet also evoke dangerous sensations, often in the context of travel to the unknown. This might be seen in the coloring of films such as Georges Méliès' *An Impossible Voyage* (*Le voyage à travers l'impossible*, 1904) or Pathé's and Ferdinand Zecca's *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (*Ali Baba et les quarante voleurs*, 1902).

Similarly, amateur travel films of the 1930s often exhibit this double coding in color affects. On the one hand color still was tied to the unreal or spectacular in the mainstream cinema experience, on the other, Kodachrome was being marketed to assert color realism as the new normal, with black and white to be consigned to obsolescence.[12] Filming at the edges of the familiar, amateurs were the first to make extensive use of color film stock and begin a process of naturalizing color aesthetics. *Movie Makers*, well aware of the novelty, noted: "we of the amateur and non-theatrical 16mm field are fortunate in being the first to be able to experiment with this new film and to apply it to its many possible uses" (Tuttle, "The How of Kodachrome" 265). Amateurs were pioneers in rendering these Pacific travel encounters in natural color stock, filming against the grain at a time when both color and travel images were still marked by associations with strangeness and exoticism.[13]

Flows and Disruptions

Recent scholarly work has contributed much to our understanding of the historical and analogical relations between travel and the moving image.[14] Through the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, new motion picture developments corresponded with advances in air, sea, rail, and automobile travel, while the tourist experience was itself becoming almost seamlessly delivered and preserved for posterity. In articles such as "What Shall I Take Abroad?" amateur magazines regularly offered advice on "vacation accessories" for amateur filmmakers to help ease their planning, and "tips from movie travelers" for how best to package and present film footage from voyages abroad (Gunnell 336; Moore 338). The travelogue could construct a smooth sense of journeying around global sites, with a series of shooting and editing conventions helping to iron out the trip's bumps and disruptions and deliver it to the realms virtual experience.

By the mid-1930s, as seen in the widely-distributed FitzPatrick's *Traveltalks* newsreels, color imagery was bringing enhanced sensation to the virtual travel experience. Recalling the conventions of imperial-era militourism, FitzPatrick's *Glimpses of Java and Ceylon* (1937, MGM) establishes location by defining Java as Dutch territory, with the voiceover calling it "the most important colonial development under the flag of the Netherlands." Shades of cosmopolitan consumerism accent the colonial spectacle without ever threatening to dismantle it: the film highlights the sampling of cultural difference, such as trying a *rijsttafel* for the first time and encountering new forms of music, dance, and architecture. *Glimpses of Java and Ceylon* closes by self-consciously marking the impact of its color technology, reinforcing and bringing home the sensations of colonial-era cosmopolitan travels with a stunning sunset view, the voiceover stating: "off the golden coast of Mount Lavinia, the great orb of day, resplendent in an aura of tropical colors, is descending into a tropical sea, forming a glorious setting."

Commercial travelogues such as *Traveltalks* usually followed an established set of formal strategies: what might be called picture-postcards-in-motion shooting and editing techniques. Such films in many ways tried to duplicate touristic conventions in cinematic form. Departure, harbors, seascapes, and picturesque landscapes thus dominate the scenography, with a title card or voiceover marking the location, anchored by one or more arrival and establishing shots. These are often accompanied by a camera pan intended to spatially situate the viewer, followed by closer shots, often brief, of local sights, people, and distinctive objects (for example food, souvenirs, or local commodities). In spite of constant motion, changeable weather, embarking and disembarking, travelogue scenography becomes

less a disruptive and interactive experience than a well-organized flow of intertitles and picturesque moving images.

Amateurs were not always instructed to avoid mainstream conventions; indeed 1930s articles in magazines like *Movie Makers* professed a need for professional standards ("keep vacation movies free from wobble!" advised one advertisement [Da-lite Unipod 309]) right along with innovation. Travel pictures were characterized as "essentially scenic" (Gunnell 336) and hence it was seen as crucial to invest one's films with "carefully composed views" (Moore 359). Yet the more palpable experimentalism of amateurs such as Ted Zacher reveals as well a sort of undertow flowing beneath mainstream travelogue approaches. Zacher's footage was shot on a circumnavigation, though unlike the well-appointed luxuries offered by a growing number of cruise ships plying the seas—such as the *Stella Polaris*, the *Belgenland*, and the *Empress of Britain*—the *Yankee* and its small crew were on an eighteen-month training adventure (figure 1). The Johnsons would later write that this journey was intended to "debunk or substantiate Hollywood's version of the South Seas to our own satisfaction" (101). They were determined to unmask the mysteries and myths of the South Seas:

> When we planned our second cruise around the world we decided that [. . .] the South Seas would be our main objective. We would explore them and examine for ourselves the meaning of the magic in those two words. We would follow the trail of those inspiring names of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Cook, Carteret, Quiros and Magellan. (101)

Perhaps aimed at invoking more their readers' than their own preconceptions, it is nonetheless striking here that centuries after the era of Pacific exploration and during a time of 'high' colonial administration and rapidly increasing tourism, the main reference points are still Enlightenment evocations of undiscovered islands. The idea of the South Seas seems still to conjure up an embodiment of both Christian and neo-classical myths of Eden, of "magic" spaces of pastoral ease and tranquility. As the explorer Louis-Antoine de Bougainville described it, Tahiti was "la Nouvelle Cythère" and he likened it to the Elysian fields, believing he and his crew had been "transported into the garden of Eden" (63).

Figure 1: The *Yankee* (from Johnson and Johnson, *Sailing to See*)

Zacher, with his seven cameras and stockpile of Kodak stock, was also aiming to debunk or substantiate the Hollywood version—and with Kodachrome, he might exceed it (Zacher, "Yankee Crew"). A cinema enthusiast and well-respected member of the ACL, he frequently contributed to publications such as *Movie Makers*. His *Yankee* footage was designed for the Johnsons' lecture tours promoting the sailing business (the film discussed here, screened for the 1938 tour, is titled *Around Again in the Yankee*).[15] The lecture presentation with Zacher's film was extremely well received. The Johnsons were already becoming famous, and Zacher's series of articles for the Hartford (Connecticut) *Times*, *Movie Makers*, and other publications had further "excited interest" in the journey even before it was completed (Anon., "Zacher's Film"). The film presentation played to thousands, moving from venues in Connecticut to Boston, Philadelphia, Rochester (New York), and Washington, D.C.

Most reviews focused on what was agreed to be the film's two most appealing factors: the crowd-pleasing exploits of the Johnsons' son, Arthur (only eleven months old when the

ship embarked from Gloucester) and the many wonders of the color cinematography. Adopting Kodak's emphasis on Kodachrome as "natural" color, the Hartford *Times* reported:

> [I]t is safe to say none of [the audience] has seen a marine picture surpassing this film, and time after time the audience drowned out the skipper's words during the two-hour showing to applaud a breath-taking 'shot' of the vessel swimming through a bed of indigo [. . .] and the throwing upon the screen of the harvest of natural colors gathered from the primitive island colonies of the world. (Anon., "Zacher's Film")

Zacher's color filming apparently upstaged even the Captain's personal testimony. Further underlining the novelties of color, the *Times* went on to describe the film as "a new departure in the motion picture world which Hollywood has not yet come within a cable's length of." The yawning gap between small gauge color innovation and Hollywood practice was quite widely recognized at the time, with *Movie Makers* arguing in 1935 that "amateurs [can] extend their professional friends a helping hand in this new color field which will rapidly engage Hollywood's interest" (qtd. in Askari 157).

When the *Yankee* film was screened at the Eastman Theatre in Rochester, local news described it as an experience where "the incredible becomes real." The following perhaps best sums up the energizing mix of color realism and spectacular travel imagery:

> Whatever has seemed incredible of rumors from the South Seas—lakes of ruby red, dragons with flashing tongues, white men who wed daughters of head hunter chieftains—was beheld last night by Rochester's very own eyes. [The film] dispelled all doubts of the South Seas' magic in a manner that left the audience a trifle dizzy from more scenes of exquisite wonder than seems good for the complacency of a land dweller. The film, in color, was guided by the eye of an artist, Edmund Zacher, ship's photographer. Scene upon scene was washed with a different hue like the rows of water colors in the kind of art gallery a sailor might dream of owning someday. (J. W.)

Further emphasizing this "trifle dizzy" mixture of fact and fantasy, the Johnsons' pre-publicity noted that the show would be "replete with the magic and lure of all that is the South Seas," while this magic was produced through "natural colored movies"—an integration of seeming opposites that marked the sheer originality of the production and promised a cinema-going experience Hollywood had not yet matched (Green 15).

Zacher had been experimenting with color for some time, beginning with Kodacolor and quickly adapting to Kodachrome (Zacher, "Winter Kodacolor" 69). He was no novice: in 1934 two of his films appeared on the ACL's "10 best films" list (a prestigious accolade), and

he was duly rewarded with an honor at the League's annual meeting (Kattelle 8). The following year Zacher's short film *A Christmas at Home* (1935) experimented with color in a largely monochromatic winter landscape, and he was again on the ACL "10 best" list while advocating in published articles for the use color film in unexpected situations in order to "enhance perception" and present visual "surprises" (Askari 157). This notion of enhanced perception, Kaveh Askari explains, "accompanied the development of instantaneous photography in the 1880s, [and] adherents to this tradition held that natural colour processes helped the amateur begin to see those colours otherwise obscured by the habits of perception. Articles on Kodacolor advocated the counterintuitive practice of shooting the more expensive stock in a seemingly monochromatic winter landscape where the 'chromatic range [. . .] presents surprises'" (157). In this sense, color filming might impart new and unexpected ways of seeing, confronting normalized visual perception through the aesthetic and technical skills of a counterintuitive amateur.

Around Again in the Yankee draws on principles of enhanced perception in a number of ways, but perhaps most vividly in the juxtaposition of black and white with color footage. The choice of black and white or color was partly determined by weather, light, and other filming conditions. But through further decisions (probably made in the cutting room) seen in scenes such as arrival at the Society Islands (announced by an intertitle as "the romantic islands of the South Seas"), intense color follows black and white in exhibitionist fashion. This technique reinforces conventional expectations of South Seas exoticism while also gesturing towards an enhanced realism that complements and reinvents, if not precisely displaces, the black and white technology of the previous sequence. Color thus seems new, and readjusts our perceptual habits; but we also might see color in these moments in a process of development from cinematic novelty into something integral to representing reality. Color drifts from inbuilt expectations of fantasy towards a rendering of the real as colorful spectacle. As *Movie Makers* argued, natural color was the inevitable next step in cinematic realism: even seemingly "colorless" scenes such as "dark, grayish days" could afford "delightful pastel shades of color [. . .] far more natural and lifelike than would be possible on monochrome" (Tuttle, "The How of" 264).

Stops on the cruise highlighted in *Around Again in the Yankee* include the Galapagos, Easter Island (Rapa Nui), the Pitcairns, Tahiti, Christmas Island (Kiritimati), Samoa, Niuafo'ou, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), Solomon Islands (with extended scenes on Owariki [Santa Catalina] and Owaraha [Santa Ana]), Wallis Island (Uvea), and Rabaul in New Britain, where a volcanic eruption created a new land mass and covered the harbor in ash.

Other highlighted stops include Papua New Guinea, Flores (then part of the Dutch East Indies colony), Komodo, Bali, and Semarang. In all, the *Yankee* made over one hundred landings at islands across the Pacific alone.[16] While on the one hand simply documenting a long and diverse journey, the *Yankee* footage also shows off Zacher's technophilia and interest in formal innovation. The camerawork is far closer to what Bill Nichols has labelled the "interactive" mode than simply striving for "observational" documentation (Nichols 33). Zacher's restless style experiments with shooting angles, changing cameras, lenses, and film stock, thus taking advantage of the relative ease of using stocks like Kodachrome that needed little adjustment from black and white lighting conditions.

Along with these innovations, however, conventions of the classic adventure narrative hold sway in many sequences. We see the crew "shooting" animals and sights with both guns and cameras. Even the presence of a baby and several women crewmembers fails to prevent the *Yankee* footage from at times resembling a colonial "Boys' Own" story, or one of the popular interwar travel adventures produced by the 'other' Johnsons—Osa and Martin.[17] The corralling of a dozen now-endangered sea turtles in the Galapagos—teased by crewmembers, piled up and kept alive on deck as a supply of meat—today makes for painful viewing. The Johnsons' writings about their encounters profess conventional views, untroubled by concerns about cultural and imperial chauvinism. Reflecting the embeddedness of networks of militourism, the Johnsons observe with approval Flag Raising Day during their visit to American Samoa. In *Sailing to See*, they write: "it might be called Declaration of Dependence Day for it celebrates the taking over of the islands by the United States" (102). Watching the ceremonial events, they reflect on the US-Samoan relationship as one of paternal care that safeguards Samoan 'purity'. They declare themselves "proud of the one American possession among so many British colonies in the Pacific. There is a genuine attempt to understand the Samoans, to help them tactfully, to preserve all that is good in their customs, and to protect them from outside exploitation, corruption, and miscegenation" (102). Such comments simply reinscribe American exceptionalist sentiments while eliding or ignoring the problems of imperial rule; in particular here the operations of the US Navy, who a few years earlier had helped suppress a "Samoa mo Samoa" Mau independence movement in American Samoa and forced its leader, Samuel Ripley, into exile. In 1929, in response to Samoan pressures, the US government finally changed the status of the territory from that of an "illegal" to a "legal" colony (Droessler 62).

Zacher's published accounts follow a similar pattern, drawing on well-worn South Seas myths and even elements of derision: his series for the Hartford *Times* mentions "lazy

natives," "man-eaters," and "filthy, warring cannibals" (Zacher, "Yankee Crew"; "Tree Drums"). Yet the *Yankee* motion picture material is arguably more playful and freer of such clichés; the travel filmmaker here comes across less as a static recorder of scenic views than as part of a mobile group dynamic. While stopping short of the radical self-reflexivity seen in films such as Dziga Vertov's *Man With a Movie Camera* (1929), the film does frequently impart a self-conscious awareness of the filming process, with virtuosic shooting that evidences what Tepperman calls the ACL's foundational belief in "pragmatic experimentation" (148). Several slow-motion shots trace the arc of crewmembers' diving against blue sky, into clear water (figures 2 and 3). Amateur magazines frequently encouraged the use of such "trick" and experimental effects as part of developing and enhancing the new color film aesthetics:

> [S]low motion and all types of trick photography are excellent in Kodachrome. A slow motion shot of a diver doing a two and a half twist from a ten foot board makes a thrilling picture in Kodachrome. The coloring of sky and water, the tanned skin of the diver, the splash of the greenish blue water into milky white foam, all slowed down to show every detail in color, are delightful on the screen" (Tuttle, "The How of" 241).

Zacher was something of an expert in diving studies, having already presented a Kodacolor work entitled "Slow Motion Diving Studies in Color" to the Atlantic Coast section of the ACL in April 1934 (Anon. "Society Announcements" 331). The photo-image of the diver, as Askari has shown, goes back earlier to chronophotographic motion studies. For the illustrated lecturer Alexander Black, the diver offered the "perfect fusion of pictorial beauty and the [...] technical possibilities of instantaneous photography" (Aksari 158). Black's earliest color films also frequently featured studies of divers.

Figures 2a-2d: *Around Again in the Yankee* (Zacher 1938)

Arguably the slow motion study of the diver (figures 2a-2d) succinctly embodies the idea of cinematic gesture I been have highlighting here: a mediality, in Agamben's terms, freed from purposeful intent, allowing the camera gaze to linger on what Stephen Crocker calls a "sheer taking place, or the 'means' of human embodiment" (Crocker). For Agamben, gesture also points to a politics of cinema, opposed to just an aesthetic apprehension: "the sphere of pure means, that is, of the absolute and complete gesturality of human beings"

("Notes on Gesture" 59). The processes and ongoing *means* of cinematic media are accentuated and lingered over in such moments, rather than aiming towards the establishment of stable meanings. Crocker lucidly puts these ideas into perspective:

> The effect of [Eadweard] Muybridge's photographic and filmic experiments such as *Man Walking at Normal Speed* was to take recognized gestures and, through the technical capacity of film, to remove them from the sensory motor schemas and purposes in which they are usually embedded. Early film and photography revealed the sheer taking place, or the "means" of human embodiment. The arm swinging is no longer part of a march. It is simply an arm swinging, arrested in its being toward some completed activity. If it were allowed to continue in its stride, the swing would be a means to carrying out some ambulatory goal. Removed from its terminal point, however, it is simply a gesture, a means of moving the human body in a yet to be determined pattern. This decontextualization of movement allowed a new understanding of human embodiment, which spread into psychology, physiology and other sciences. For Agamben, it suggests that cinema is not defined by the image and the dialectic of reality/representation, so much as its ability to display the "pure mediality" of our actions. (Crocker)

Narrative cinema tends to embed the gesture and its potentiality within a broader web of intentionality—as Hampus Hagman puts it, in these cases the gesture becomes "goal-oriented and causal in nature" (Hagman).[18] The slow-motion lingering on movement articulated in a dive, however, becomes both decontextualized and purely cinematic: a display of "endless mediality" in Agamben's terms ("Notes on Gesture" 58).

These diving shots further set up a visual dialogue that echoes across the film, the shots invoked in later footage shot in Papua New Guinea, where close-ups of feathers in headdresses wafting against a blue background during dance ceremonies isolate and extend the dancers' undulations as abstracted pure motion, suspended in time and space. This intricate dialogue of images and techniques across the film creates criss-crossing visual patterns while deferring any sense of the journey as simple, linear narrative. Such shots, at times discrete and at others juxtaposed, create an impact that might be described as "purposiveness without purpose," not unlike the imagist dialogues and new ways of seeing constructed by experiments of the modernist avant-garde. Films such as Fernand Léger's and Dudley Murphey's *Ballet Mécanique* (1923) and Murphy's earlier *Soul of the Cypress* (1921) used the distinctive potential of cinematic aesthetics and technology to articulate the abstract

choreographies of everyday modern life, dissecting human and machine movement, suspending logical or purposive diegesis.

Zacher had no ethnographic training, but frequently his enthusiastic color experiments, particularly when filming in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, unexpectedly might be seen to anticipate handheld innovations that appeared over twenty years later in the ethnographic color work of Jean Rouch, Robert Gardner, or John Marshall. Scenes shot in the Eastern Solomons (Makira Ulawa Province) are particularly striking, with lengthy sequences set on Owaraha ("Big Island," or Santa Ana) and Owariki (Santa Catalina). The footage is highlighted through Zacher's color shooting and choice in editing to let the scene run, and focuses on the Ai-Matawa-Aifono-Fono or "mud dance" (figure 4).[19] As the review of the Rochester showing described it: "among the other unusual sequences was one of a head hunting tribe enacting on an island shore a pageant depicting the history of the tribes beyond the era remembered by white men. It was on that island that the lone white man had married the cannibal chief's daughter" (J. W.). Ai-Matawa-Aifono-Fono is a dramatic and at times tongue-in-cheek display of conflict between islanders and outsiders, respectively marked by the darker charcoal and lighter-colored mud that covers the players' bodies. Opposed to the darker players (Aifonofono), the lighter figures (Aimatawa) variously can signify outsiders, Polynesians, invading "spirits", white men, or slave traders.[20] In Zacher's film, the invaders sport large artificial heads with exaggerated features; later in the performance they are determined to animate remnants of western technology, including a phonograph, a sewing machine, and a magic lantern (figure 4).

Figure 4: Owaraha, *Around Again in the Yankee* (Zacher 1938)

In this isolated part of the Solomons, the German trader Henry (Heinrich) Kuper was a dominant force in local business and culture. Referred to by the Johnsons as "the champion of the natives and their customs," his ties to the Owarahan community were reinforced by his marriage to a local woman, Kanana (Johnson and Johnson 128).[21] Other accounts refer to Kuper as a "virtual tyrant," with power and authority reinforced by association with the rights gained by his wife's lineage. The ethnologist Hugo Adolf Bernatzik stated he was impelled to stay with Kuper while preparing his photographic research on the island in the early 1930s and much of his work, according to Bernatzik's daughter Doris Byer, was restricted and filtered through Kuper (Buschmann 278-79).[22] Much of the material shot on Owaraha and Owariki was thus likely managed by Kuper.

In spite of probable interventions the "mud dance" sequence, with its highly mobile and interactive camerawork, stands out in its still-vivid color realism: a testament to natural color's claims to immediacy. Zacher's footage is likely the first of its kind, with Kodachrome showing up tonal subtleties of costumes and forest landscape that black and white would not have registered. One gesture particularly stands out, as the Johnsons noted: "Then with an old magic lantern they parodied our busy cameras" (130). As a spectacle staged for white visitors, the mock revival of the magic lantern is particularly inspired: the machine's luminous, magical properties acted upon with a bicycle pump in the face of the *Yankee* camera's technological gaze.

The presence of the magic lantern, parodied at this remote locale in the Pacific, imbues Zacher's film with a different sort of magic from the "magic in those two words"—South Seas—that the Johnsons wanted to explore at the outset of their journey. The lantern, as Tom Gunning describes it, embodies a technology where magic and science meet, where,

> an extraordinary confluence of an ancient magical imagistic tradition and a nascent scientific enlightenment seesaws between a desire to produce thaumaturgic wonder and an equally novel interest in dissolving the superstitious mystification of charlatans via the demonstrations of science. [. . .] The magic lantern [. . .] derives from the tradition of Natural Magic, an intersection between earlier occult traditions and the new spirit of the late Renaissance and dawning Enlightenment. For Giambatista Porta, whose *Magiae naturalis sive de miraculis rerum naturalium* was published in Naples in 1589, the realm of natural magic included not only the magical powers of images, stones, and plants, and descriptions of the celestial influences which bathe our planet, but also chemical and optical experiments. ("Animated Pictures" 469-70)

As a technology that seesaws between science and wonder, between desires to verify natural phenomena through measurable evidence, and appetites for unreal spectacle, here the lantern—as true of so many "pre-cinema" technologies—is revealed as a key precursor to color motion pictures. The lantern once fulfilled desires for witnessing wonders from faraway places while at the same time making—as the Rochester reporter noted of Zacher's color footage—"the incredible become real." It was a pioneering apparatus capable of dissolving views and striking color effects, the stock in trade of the travel lecturers who came before the Johnsons such as Alexander Black, John L. Stoddard, and Elias Burton Holmes. And the film careening through Zacher's camera on Owaraha might be said not just to be capturing but reanimating the vision of that lantern, then not just an old but already effectively "dead" medium in the face new media, such as Kodachrome.[23]

Conclusion

Further, the Owaraha footage might speak to brewing shifts in colonial and imperial power relations. Neat divisions between us and them, filmer and filmed, the technologically "modern" and the "primitive" seem subtly undermined not only by the visible parody of western technology, but by the ways in which an Owarahan performance takes over processes of making meaning in Zacher's film, suspending purpose by creating a sort of cinematic and technological *mise-en-abyme*. Whose camera is filming whom? Who is on display in this performance? At the start of this chapter I queried whether there was any scope for perceiving in these amateur travelogues the emergence of a "non-othering" discourse amid the ongoing cultural tectonics along the Pacific Rim; or even of locating a sort of discursive drift moving between the customary othering and potential non-othering of the Pacific encounter. Could these travelers and their direct experience of wondrous difference point to a nascent cosmopolitanism; might their testimonies, texts, and especially color film documents of these experiences invite an intercultural perspective "relevant to cosmopolitanism" (Holton 130)? Much of Zacher's film seems prescient, and promises an interactive breakdown of hierarchical relations in the midst of imperial-era travels; certainly the experience now of watching Zacher's film invites quite different responses compared to the overt ethnocentrism evident in other contemporary popular travelogues and Hollywood fictions of the South Seas. But accompanying texts that document the *Yankee* voyage such as letters, articles, and the book *Sailing to See*—the latter with references to "primitive natives" and "stone age conditions" (101), the dangers of "miscegenation" (102), Pacific peoples of "little emotional stability" (105), and visions of "hostile headhunters" (107) that excite fear and fascination—

indicate the embeddedness of cultural chauvinism and the distance that lies between these texts an any future imagining of a "non-othering" discourse.

Still, Zacher's Kodachrome film offers a challenge to a range of unwritten, or yet to be written, cinema histories. The history of amateur film is only beginning to be studied in any depth, while questions of Kodachrome's impact on audience relations to cinematic realism remain underexplored or elided in histories of color cinema.[24] In amateur practice, it is clear, color was becoming naturalized long before it became the standard for realism on the big screen, testifying to the complexities of how of "new" media gradually come to replace the "old."

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Endnotes

[1] Eastman Kodak, "When your picture moves, it *lives*"; "Black and white home movies come to life."
[2] For further takes on cinema as a medium of mobility see Giuliana Bruno's notion of "*transito*" in *Atlas of Emotion* (71, 137-40); also Deleuze, in particular 1-11.
[3] See Geiger, *Facing* 7, 14; see also Lyons, and Eperjesi on "the imperialist imaginary." Neil Rennie's *Far-Fetched Facts* offers a very helpful overview of the "South Seas" as a space of imaginative exploration.
[4] See for example Jolly 524. The Pacific Rim is generally understood as a post-1970s phenomenon due to trade liberalization (as US trade policy became more aligned with global trading frameworks like the World Trade Organization, with economic bargaining power of Pacific Rim nations substantially increased) and the relative stability (political and economic) of large nations such as China, as well as 'Tiger Economies' such as South Korea and Singapore. See for example Ye, "U.S. Trade Policy."
[5] See for example Lowe, *Critical Terrains*; Clifford, *Routes*.
[6] Parts of this film appeared in the BBC documentary series *The Thirties in Colour* (2008); see Geiger, "The Voyager's Sublime."
[7] For example, the film work of Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson in Bali, 1936-39; see Bateson and Mead.
[8] For Kant, purpose [*Zweck*] is "the object of a concept in so far as this concept is regarded as the cause of the object"; purposiveness [*Zweckmässigkeit*] is "the causality of a concept in respect of its object" (§10, 51).
[9] See Szczepaniak-Gillece 106. There are numerous discussions of Cecilia Bleasdale's photo of "the dress": see Devichand.
[10] Technicolor was highly expensive and its employment was monitored by its parent corporation, which held a virtual monopoly over color processing in features. Well into the 1940s color was "still overwhelmingly associated, aesthetically, with spectacle and fantasy" (Neale, "Technicolor" 17-19).
[11] Color had long been used to enhance spectacle in the imperial travelogue, as seen for example in *The Durbar at Delhi* (1911-12) featuring Charles Urban's Kinemacolor process. See Brown, "Colouring the Nation" (143).
[12] According to Jean-Louis Comolli, there is a danger in interpreting a history of technical change in cinema purely in technocentric terms: this history and its relationship to perceptions of the "natural" are intimately tied to commercial and ideological forces (Comolli 437).
[13] It is worth noting the significance of these innovations in color technology taking place in the Pacific. Henry Adams, writing from Samoa in 1890, criticized photography for not being able to capture "the softness of lights and colors, the motion of the palms, the delicacy and tenderness of the mornings and evenings [. . .] and all the other qualities which charm one here" (431). Pacific tropicality had long been held up as a distinct challenge for photographic technology. It was in Western Samoa that Robert Flaherty found it necessary transfer from orthochromatic to panchromatic stock, normally reserved for color and special effects. The more subtle gradations of panchromatic seemed to respond to a desire to render textures and sensations, to create a cinematic perception of 'touching' the tropics. A few years later, working on what would become *Tabu* (1931) with F. W. Murnau, Flaherty was determined to take the high-tech rendering of the South Pacific further, into color. Had their finance company Colorart Productions not gone bankrupt, one of the first US color features would have been *Turia*, shot in the Pacific by Flaherty and Murnau. After Colorart collapsed the two

parted ways, and Murnau eventually produced *Tabu* in black and white. In 1933, Henry de la Falaise's *Legong: Dance of the Virgins* (1935) was shot in Bali with a Balinese cast, using the two-strip Technicolor process.

[14] See for example Strain, *Public Places, Private Journeys*; Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference*; Friedberg, *Window Shopping*; Ruoff (ed.), *Virtual Voyages*.

[15] The titles read: "*Around Again in the Yankee*, presented by Captain Irving Johnson, photography by Edmund Zacher," archived in the Irving and Electa Johnson Collection, Mystic Seaport Research Library and Archives, Mystic, Connecticut. All references are to AV 107: 36-1; rolls 1-3.

[16] This number is mentioned by crew member Leverett ("Lev") Davis. Audio in Mystic Research Library and Archives.

[17] In spite of their sometimes exploitive content, Osa and Martin Johnson earned accolades from the likes of Carl Akeley. Among their surviving films are *Simba: King of the Beasts* (1928) and *Congorilla* (1932).

[18] See also Grillo, especially 123-7.

[19] In letters written on board, Exy notes: "Yesterday and today we saw the movies—I didn't see them all but they looked swell. Irving and I both thought Ted ought to run the scenes a little longer, but they are interesting and varied." Electa Johnson, 28 November 1936, p.7. Box 7, folder 4, Johnson collection, Mystic Seaport Research Library.

[20] Allan Villiers near-contemporary account in *The Cruise of the Conrad* describes the "Dance of the Tree Men" as a representation of the whole history of the island (216-33). He notes "in a satiric finale the two extraordinarily capable performers did the dance of the queer strangers taking photographs" (228). See also Sidney M. Mead. For a useful overview of colonial contexts in the region see Bennett.

[21] According to the Johnsons' account, items such as the sewing machine had once belonged to Kuper. Kuper's ethnographic work included a study of female tattooing published in *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. See Kuper, "Tapitapi."

[22] See also Byer. Kuper was interviewed by *Time* magazine in 1947, flying the Union Jack in the face of local islanders' "Marxist" revolts. See "Solomon Islands: Martin Lo."

[23] See for example the online thread: "Dead Medium: The Magic Lantern." *The Dead Media Project* (no date), <http://www.deadmedia.org/index.html> (accessed 12 December 2015).

[24] Useful studies of amateur cinema include Zimmermann's *Reel Families*, Zimmermann and Ishizuka's *Mining the Home Movie*, Craven's *Movies on Home Ground*, Kattelle's *Home Movies*. In terms of Kodachrome, collections such as Brown, Street, and Watkins' *Color and the Moving Image* have begun the task with the inclusion of Tepperman's work, though a number of recent studies including Richard Misek's *Chromatic Cinema*, Paul Coates's *Cinema and Colour*, and Dalle Vacche and Price's *Color, The Film Reader* contain only passing references to Kodachrome.