



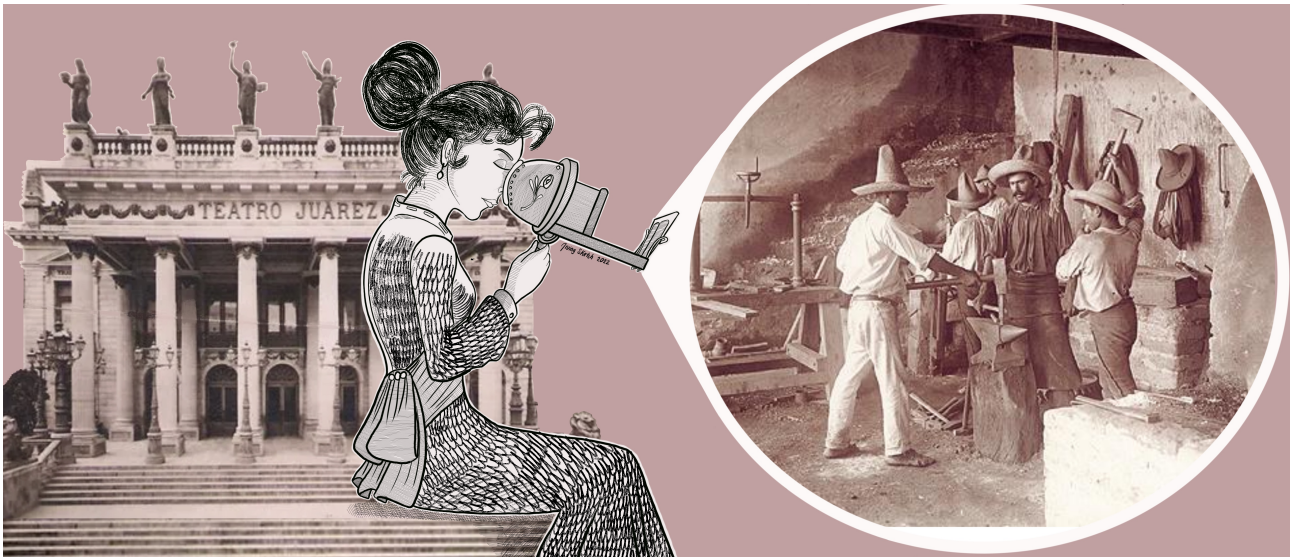
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## **American representations of Mexico in the early 1900s**

Stereographs portraying the other's Modernity and Backwardness

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## Introduction

Individuals are exposed to diverse visual information through different technologies on a daily basis. The single idea of thinking that we are in the midst of an image-saturated society may be considered absurd. Images are ubiquitous, turning into the experience that the mind requires to apprehend the world.

In 19th-century society, photography was regarded as a reliable source to capture reality. Images managed to transcend geographical and ideological borders thanks to their reproducibility. I intend to motivate the reader to think about the late 19th-century observers in a highly visualized society. Moreover, individuals went beyond the flat photography observation, they added depth and solidity to the images. Almost two centuries ago, the stereoscope provided a three-dimensional experience, enabling people to connect with distant places. It was like moving from the ways of seeing, to the ways of feeling seeing. This was like having a TV screen today with its visual experience comparable to virtual reality. The stereoscope rapidly burst into the American visual culture, it was used individually or collectively, in the privacy of the home or in public places.

Hence, attention is directed on addressing a popular visual medium from the mid 19th-century, which even managed to visually educate large numbers of people, according to Lance Speer.<sup>1</sup> Thus, I initially address the forms in which the three-dimensional experience could have been to the observers from this historical period through the use of the stereoscope and the stereographs that comprised a quintessential medium to entertain and educate.

The stereographic industry flourished in the so-called Western countries where American corporations such as Underwood & Underwood, and Keystone View Company obtained a significant role in the visual culture. Judith Babbitts asserts that stereographs represented a prestigious way of attaining knowledge.<sup>2</sup> There was a fascination for remote, exotic, and rare places. This was manifested in the increased popularity of virtual trips as well as the use of stereographs for geography teaching in schools. Individuals were able to know and connect with stranger places that evoked the feeling of not belonging to that place. They perceived it as the opposite of the Western. This manifests the way in which the West portrays the rest, by capturing images of ‘the other’ that circulated throughout the world. Therefore I attempt to examine the way

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<sup>1</sup> In Speer words: “Never in the history of humankind had so many been visually united and educated by a single medium”. Lance, Speer, ‘Before Holography: A Call for Visual Literacy’. *Leonardo*, Vol. 22, Number 3-4, Summer/Autumn, 1989, (pp 299-306), MIT Press, p.302.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Babbitts. ‘Stereographs and the construction of a visual culture in the United States’. *Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture*. Lauren Rabinovitz; Abraham Geil, eds. (Duke University Press, 2004), p.127.

in which the American observer was provided with Non-Western representations of Mexico so that the American society identified themselves as the opposite of them. The material source is the Library of Congress digital collections, where I selected 25 stereographs to perform a visual analysis where images, captions, and text show a social dichotomy of Modernity and backwardness in Mexico. Jonathan Crary describes that with the invention of the stereoscope a new, dynamic 'viewer', a sort of new visual consumer arrived. It is crucial to delve into the visual culture of the 19th-century observer.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Edward Said's Orientalism serves to understand in which ways 'the West' portrays 'the rest' since it makes statements, describes it, and even exert domination over it among other things.<sup>4</sup> The role of stereographic material introduced in American visual culture is remarked by Judith Babbitts who emphasized that the stereoscope was conceived as a way to acquire knowledge of the world.

In summary, I intend to get a broader notion of the 19th-century American observer in the face of the practice of 'viewing' at images portraying Mexico. In a way that raised an identification of the American audience as being 'the opposite of Mexicans'. Understanding the past sheds light on the impact of this material in American visual culture and discloses the presence of stereotyped imagery of Mexico.

### **Aim and research questions**

I attempt to examine 25 samples of stereographs with images of Mexico corresponding to the first decade of 1900s, a period under the dictatorship of President Porfirio Díaz in which Mexican society was in itself quite contrasting. A period of great splendor occurred in the early years of the 20th-century in which General Porfirio Diaz led efforts to bring progress to Mexico, whereas the poor remained marginalized. An impending revolution lurked. This material was produced by American publishers and intended for domestic and international audiences, which was significant for the construction of stereotyped images of Mexico in the American visual culture.

Hence I aim to examine aspects of modernity and backwardness displayed in 25 stereographs of Mexico published in the first decade of the 1900s by the Keystone View Company, Underwood & Underwood, Pan American Photo Art Co., Berry, Kelley & Chadwick Publishers, Standard Scenic Company, directed to an American audience, their part in the construction of stereotypes of nationality, race, and class; as well as in the reinforcement of American imperialist identification.

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Crary, *Las técnicas del observador, Visión y modernidad en el siglo XIX*. (Murcia: Editorial CENDEAC, 2008), p.33.

<sup>4</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.,1978), p.11.

Departing from the aforementioned publishing companies and in order to achieve a comprehension of this, I pose the research question: How is the Porfirian Mexico portrayed in stereoviews produced by the American stereographic companies in the first decade of the 1900s?

### **Theoretical framework**

For the purposes of this research, it is necessary to understand the visuality in the face of the transformations that took place in 19th-century Society, the modernization processes were constructing a distinct type of subject. In this regard, Jonathan Crary stands out, there was a drastic transformation of the observer in the 19th-century that resulted a renewed ‘way of seeing’ in which the stereoscope was crucial.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, its use as an apparatus, popular among other nineteenth-century optical creations brought new modalities of communication and consumption. From Crary’s perspective I obtained broader understanding about the cultural and historical conventions that define the ways of interpreting an image, that is to say, the fluctuations determining the ways of seeing.<sup>6</sup> Viewed from this perspective, I attempt not only to focus on the aesthetics of the images but in their social aspect when used in combination with the stereoscope as a popular visual mass media, as he depicted it. Moreover, I intend to get a broader vision of the discursive frameworks of the time when the stereoscope was used, as well as its peculiar three-dimensional experience and its role in everyday life that set it among the preferred in the American visual culture.

In the stereoscope individuals encountered a technology that improved their way of experiencing and knowing the world, therefore, the contributions on visual culture of Vanessa Schwartz and Jeannene Przyblyski enlighten this work. They richly address the practices of both the ‘seeing’ and the ‘seen’ occurred in the individuals of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> The stereographs were massively produced for the reason that consumers obtained something in change, that is to say, a satisfaction highly connected to the notion of a modern society. Hence, it is essential to understand the meaning attributed to its use so that it turned into a medium of preference to entertain and educate.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Crary, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Crary, p. 33-34.

<sup>7</sup> Vanessa R. Schwartz & Jeannene M. Przyblyski, *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, (New York: London: Routledge, 2004), p.3-7.

<sup>8</sup> John Plunkett, ‘Selling stereoscopy, 1890–1915: Penny arcades, automatic machines and American salesmen’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 6:3, (2008), 239-255, p. 253.

I want to emphasize something, as we already know, stereographs contain more than photographs, and the element of the ‘caption’ comprises a text entered to contextualize (and in some cases re-contextualize) the images, hence, the whole composition also does it. Mexico’s stereoviews contain both images and captions that tend to describe it by making statements about the country, which practically implies a social construction of ‘the other’ in American visual culture. Since this analysis concerns representations of Mexico, I consider it insightful to draw on the critical work of Edward Said who argues that the Western not only constructs the Orient but continues to exercise control over it through images and representations set towards cultural and political appropriation.<sup>9</sup> Said’s perspective has been useful in the way of seeing the Orient. In the relationship between Mexico and the United States, both have been described and apprehend through binary oppositions. Thus, Mexico is portrayed as the contrasting image of the Western. In my perspective, through this gaze it is possible to recognize the underlying structures of hegemony, culture or imperialism related to a colonial discourse. Perhaps the primary interest of the production of stereographs was made in the name of culture, however, it turned into a domination over ‘the other’. Stereographs were used for entertainment and education due to their suitability to show remote places, to connect with the different and stranger. In this regard, I also draw on Lutz and Collins’ study on the influence of National Geographic images to shape the American identity, how they perceive themselves as safe and distant from unknown or dangerous places. They interestingly argue about how third-world realities are portrayed in American culture, claiming objectivity.<sup>10</sup> It can be said that the exposure to this material forged a vision of superiority in the American society in relation to the rest of the world where comparisons on development or lag in aspects of progress were made.<sup>11</sup>

Only by seeing, individuals were able to connect with other sensory experiences, a fact that is fundamental to human learning. The material presented and that I attempt to analyze later is subjected to human interpretation. That is why I emphasize that images are abstractions of a reality that is far from it. In order to understand them, we must address their context. They belong to a time when industrialization began to transform the ways of living and stereographs for entertainment and education became a popular commodity. Stereographs encompass a composition of images, caption (and in some cases a narrative) that maintain their significance within the discursive framework of the time, but which today can vary as they are ‘viewed’ at again. To carry out the analysis, it was

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<sup>9</sup> Said, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine A. Lutz & Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic*, (Chicago: London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Comparisons between ‘The West and the rest’. Lutz & Collins, p. 24-27.



also necessary to take into account some notes from Manghani, who argues that images tend to reveal fragments of a reality which are subjective and claims that a photograph taken in its time and context does not require much interpretation, but the caption element can both place the viewer in context and re-contextualize the image.<sup>12</sup>

## Previous research

While convinced that the stereoscope was more than a toy, Oliver Wendell Holmes remarkably described it as a tool able of communicating and educating since its inception during the second half of the 19th-century.<sup>13</sup> I consider Holmes essay from 1859 ‘The stereoscope and the stereograph’ of overwhelming significance, where he provides rich information about the ways in which this innovative invention was perceived at the end of the 19th-century since he refers to the potential uses of this optical device. A moment in history when the mortals’ hands possessed the power of the light, to capture reality at last. Moreover, Holmes described that humanity was experiencing a prodigious moment in history when separating the form from the matter was already feasible thus, reproducible. Interestingly, he describes a saturation of images to the extent that people perceived them as something quotidian.<sup>14</sup> In my perspective, Holmes reveals two points, first, the mass production of stereographs, and second, that the 19th-century society was highly visual.

On the other hand, Robert J. Silverman provides extensive information on the stereoscope as an apparatus to adhere a sense of depth and solidity to images. There are indications that among the ‘philosophical toys’ used to entertain and instruct science, the stereoscope managed to position itself as the favorite due to its three-dimensional effect.<sup>15</sup> Publications of scientific discussions about its uses in newspapers, magazines, and journals were integrated into the late 19th-century popular culture.

Addressing the embodied experiences of nineteenth-century culture is useful for tracing the impact of industrialization and modernity on everyday life. From this perspective, John Plunkett attempts to highlight the tangible qualities of the stereoscope. Drawing on Brewster and Holmes, he

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<sup>12</sup> Sunil Manghani, *Image Studies. Theory and Practice*, ed. by Natalie Foster (London: New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 128-131.

<sup>13</sup> According to Robert Silverman, Holmes claimed the stereoscope was not a mere toy, he considered it more as a medium. The stereoscope was regarded as an optical toy in the 19th century. Robert Silverman, ‘The Stereoscope and Photographic Depiction in the 19th Century’. *Technology and Culture*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (1993), 729-756. (p.738).

<sup>14</sup> Holmes in his essay from 1859 asserted that people were rapidly accustomed to obtaining and circulation of images that they had forgotten the ‘miraculous nature’ of this possibility. Oliver Wendell Holmes, ‘The stereoscope and the stereograph’, in *The Atlantic*. (1859), p.1.

<sup>15</sup> Other ‘philosophical toys’ for instance were the kaleidoscope and the zoetrope. Silverman, p.730.

focuses on the material and haptic dimension that the stereoscope yielded to photography. Instead of only approaching the ways of seeing, he presents a perspective on the ways of ‘feeling seeing’, involving the sense of touch in the realistic stereoscopic experience.<sup>16</sup>

Simone Natale is centered on addressing photography as a medium that also played an important role in the so-called communications revolution of the mid-19th century, and that was also interconnected with other media such as telegraphy, the railway, and the postal system. Natale poses an association of the stereographs with the notion of a modern society alluding to the annihilation of space that was mainly attached to technologies of transportation in that time.<sup>17</sup> When the travel set was created to be marketed by the Underwood & Underwood Company, places like Rome received more attention and were seen as tourist destinations. Douglas M. Klahr provided an article based on the collection ‘Rome through the Stereoscope of 1902’ where he asserts that this kind of ‘traveling’ is comparable to a ‘virtual tour’. Klahr also highlights that the use of maps in conjunction with the stereographs enabled the individual to achieve an immersive experience of the trip.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the ways of experiencing traveling, Pauline Stakelon spots the three-dimensionality to enhance the real spaces of the places that were shown in the stereographs. According to Stakelon, foreign landscapes were prevalent in the stereographic collections and represented a source of knowledge and entertainment.<sup>19</sup> When the collections were used as a tourist guide by wealthy users, they move to the places pointed out as important with the use of guide books and maps, whereas the ‘armchair travelers’, exercised the movement of their eyes in different directions of the stereograph, perceiving different depths. Meaning that inside the three-dimensional projection the changes in the focal point enriched the experience.<sup>20</sup> Stakelon asserts that knowing a distant place in this manner was considered a way of acquiring knowledge for the 19th-century society. In this regard, this is also in line with Judith Babbitts who affirms that the latest camera technology managed to enhance the use of the stereoscope, turning it into a resource for obtaining knowledge in the American society, at that historical moment.<sup>21</sup> The massive stereographic material produced by Underwood &

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<sup>16</sup> John Plunkett, ‘Feeling Seeing: Touch, Vision and the Stereoscope’, *History of Photography*, (2013) 37:4, 389-396.

<sup>17</sup> Simone Natale, ‘Photography and Communication Media in the Nineteenth Century’, *History of Photography*, (2012) 36:4, 451-456, (p.454-455).

<sup>18</sup> Douglas M. Klahr. ‘Traveling via Rome through the Stereoscope: Reality, Memory, and Virtual Travel’, *Architectural Histories*, 4(1): (2016) 8, (pp. 1–14).

<sup>19</sup> Pauline Stakelon, ‘Travel through the Stereoscope: Movement and narrative in topological stereo view collections of Europe’, *Media History*, 16:4, 407-422. (2010).

<sup>20</sup> I took the term ‘armchair traveler’ from Douglas Klahr to refer to the individual who uses the stereoscope from home to experience the travel simulation. Klahr, p.1., Stakelon, p. 415.

<sup>21</sup> Babbitts, p.126-129.

Underwood acquired ideological legitimacy in the United States, as it was used in schools.<sup>22</sup>

Babbitts also describes the narrative in some publications made by Underwood and Keystone where they claimed that people could experience two kinds of realities: The physical world and the one experienced through the stereoscope, which still implied a genuine experience.<sup>23</sup> This exemplifies one of the ways in which audiences were induced to connect despite distances.

Studies like Leigh Gleason and Jordan Ritchie's theses broaden the knowledge of Underwood and Keystone companies, providing information about their origins and commercial strategies. They concern the commercial character of the 'travel boxed set' as well as its introduction to the American market, for instance, students were hired as door-to-door sellers in order to project an academic legitimacy. Moreover, the studies include a description of the acquisition of the complete company Underwood & Underwood by Keystone View Company, and they provide details about the current destination of their stereograph collections.<sup>24</sup>

There are studies examining the visual representations of non-Western cultures from the late 19th to the early 20th century. I draw on Jorge Duany which centers on a stereographic collection. He provides an analysis of the way the United States portrayed Puerto Rico in the material produced by Underwood & Underwood at the beginning of the 20th-century. Duany asserts that the Island has been considered as an inferior territory by the Americans, with culturally-degraded inhabitants. According to him, the stereographs reflect the colonial discourse that emerged after the American occupation of Puerto Rico, which coincides with the production of this material.<sup>25</sup> The stereographs' sculptural ability enabled American and British homes to access other cultures and lifestyles from places such as Asia, Africa, South America, and Oceania. Mitchell A. Winter states that the popularity was due to a curiosity for their 'exotic otherness', which gave rise to its great consumption among the Euro-American public so that social and ideological control was also extended in the colonized places.<sup>26</sup>

## **Methodology, method and material**

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<sup>22</sup> Babbitts, p.126.

<sup>23</sup> Babbitts, p. 131.

<sup>24</sup> Leigh Gleason, 'Canvassed and Delivered: Direct Selling at Keystone View Company, 1898-1910'. (Doctoral thesis, Montfort University Leicester, UK., 2018). Jordan Ritchie, 'Underwood and Underwood Company: Early Twentieth Century Pioneers of American Photojournalism' (Master thesis, University of Maryland, 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Jorge Duany, 'Portraying the Other: Puerto Rican Images in Two American Photographic Collections'. *Discourse*, Winter 2001, Vol. 23, No. 1, (pp.119-153).

<sup>26</sup> Mitchell A. Winter, 'Optics of American Empire: James Ricalton and Stereoscopic ethnography in early twentieth century India, 1888-1907'. (Master thesis, University of California, 2018).

As aforementioned, stereographs provided an appearance of solidity as long as it was used in combination with the stereoscope. Moreover, the new camera technology managed in boosting their popularity, stereoviews were abundantly produced and reproduced during this period. In order to contextualize, society in the second half of the 19th-century was a highly visualized society, the modern technologies in transportation and communications made it possible to spread the images around the world. Addressing the socio-cultural impact that the stereoscope usage had on the American society enlightens the way it presented a mediated reality of the outside world. Hence, this analysis is not centered in a historical description of the apparatus, rather it seeks to understand the role of the medium and the images in the American visual culture to construct an American identity consistently in contrast to the Non-Americans.

Seeing through the stereoscope reveals that what is observed is the result of the mind and not precisely of the external world, Jonathan Crary spotlights that the meaning of an image can be subjective.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the reality effect of the stereoscope was highly variable.<sup>28</sup> However, its three-dimensionality feature turned it into an entertainment and education instrument. Judith Babbitts highlights that the stereographic industry presented a convincing argument about the stereographs and the stereoscope as fundamental devices to acquiring knowledge, which introduced them into the American visual culture.<sup>29</sup> As it was used for educating purposes, then Edward Said's Orientalism broader the understanding about the representations that Americans make of Mexico, which served to arise an identification in the North Americans as the opposite of the Mexican.

When analyzing images one must consider the historical and cultural conventions in order to make interpretations. However, there is a degree of complex in dealing with the subjectivity of the images, they are likely to be decontextualized yielding a different significancy. This visual analysis comprises a group of 25 stereographs, with a stereo-image composite each. Interestingly, the analysis has to do with a stereo image that are perceived as a three-dimensional image in the mind of the observer, so I personally experienced this phenomenon using a stereoscope from the year 1895 with prints of the selected samples.<sup>30</sup> As aforementioned, the intention is to glimpse how Mexico is portrayed and described by mainly two American Stereographic publishers to American consumers. As a medium, the stereographs usage on entertainment and education had a profound effect on the American society. When attention is paid to the matter of class, race, culture in visual

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<sup>27</sup> In other words, what an image wants to communicate is subject to the subjectivity that comes from the individual's interpretations when giving it meaning.

<sup>28</sup> Crary, p.164.

<sup>29</sup> Stakelon, p.415.

<sup>30</sup> The apparatus is called 'The Perfecscope', manufactured in USA, in 1895, by H.C. White Co.

material like this, it is possible to elucidate the underlying discourse or significance behind it.<sup>31</sup> In my perspective, analyzing these stereographs widen the information about the sociocultural context where they were created, as well as revealing the conditions of the relationship between Mexico and the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. Hence, the images including aspects of modernity and backwardness became the major focus during my search. The geographical location of the Underwood & Underwood and Keystone View Company's stereographic collections added complexity in consulting this material physically, therefore I opted for digital material. My primary sources are from the Library of Congress' digital collections.<sup>32</sup>

The original material was digitized and available online which I accessed by typing the word 'stereographs' that resulted in a list of collections and resources in different formats, this means that stereographs can be found in private collectors', websites or even in books or newspapers, so it was necessary to narrow the search. I selected 'stereographs' again, and the online format that I choose was 'image'. The results shown were still a great amount, 47,072. Hence, I refine them selecting 'Mexico' in the location category, where I got 778 results available online, but one of them was a website. So, 777 from LOC were shown. Then, I selected the date from 1900 to 1999 where 742 hits were presented. The number of stereographs of Mexico available online and within the decade of 1900 to 1909 amount to 595 with an image format. From Keystone View Company there were 145, while Underwood & Underwood displayed 133 results. When selecting the year 1900, 124 from Keystone View Company turned up, while the year 1901, showed 85 stereoviews from Underwood & Underwood. As of December 22 in 2021, the search path in LOC and the availability of the material were like this.

Despite having this great amount of digitalized stereographs available, I opted to work with 25 where modernity and backwardness are displayed. In my view, the resolution offered in LOC was suitable to carry out the examination of the images in detail. The scanned images are offered in PDF, TIFF and JPEG formats in different sizes (e.g. 108kb, 345kb, TIF 51.8kb, with a pixel size of 1024×533). Some of them include grayscale photocopies. Seemingly, the massive amount of stereographs produced triggered mistakes in the serial numbers as can be seen in Appendices C and D. There were other factors as well, Underwood & Underwood was sold to Keystone View Co., consequently, some images were later reproduced with another caption or description, however this event occurred much later than the production date of the 25 stereographs analyzed here. The ones

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<sup>31</sup> Fernando Hernández, 'De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de Cultura visual?' *Educação & Realidade*, vol. 30, no. 2, (2005), 9-34, (p.11).

<sup>32</sup> From here and onwards I will refer to the Library of Congress as 'LOC'.

from Keystone belonging to the '10000 series' are very rare to find.<sup>33</sup> The stereographs do not display any photographer, only the publisher house with the copyright. The images are seemingly posed or staged, the element of the caption attempts to contextualize the stereograph. I have tried to address the images within their socio-cultural context, even so, I do not pretend to submit these images to an extensive verification of the historical aspects of the relationship between The United States and Porfirian Mexico since the sample is scarce to draw fair conclusions. Aspects of race are described here considering that photography was originally used to capture other cultures and ethnicities in the world, that raised a curiosity of the differences. I rely on studies of representations of 'the other' because it is essential to emphasize that these types of images arouse an identification as the opposite to the 'western' observer, and a material like this, used for education served to construct a stereotypical image of the Mexican people.

Although stereographs were abundantly produced at the end of the 19th-century and the beginning of the 20th, there is an intricacy nowadays in accessing a complete collection. Furthermore, finding a whole 'stereoview travel set' also implies handling a vast amount of images, since they could contain almost 100 pieces. It is understood so far that stereoviews include images and text. Therefore, both elements served as a guide to incorporate or discard material, at the end, I completed a group of 25 stereographs. In order to compile and organize them, I verified that they covered diverse regions of Mexico and that they were consistent in displaying aspects of Modernity and Backwardness. The historical value of the images is highlighted, as well as the usefulness of material like stereographs.<sup>34</sup> Despite photographs often remaining there as time capsules, they reveal important details about how society unfolded. Depending on the observer, images are the source of many interpretations, nevertheless, I attempted to approach them from their historical value regarding the period in which they were produced and the tempo of progress. For instance, some Western countries also had non-urbanized areas at the beginning of the twentieth century. Concerning the term modernity, I encompassed images displaying innovations in infrastructures, urbanized cities, modern transportation, prosperous living standards, upper-class economic activities, advanced technologies in the media, commodities with American or European influence, upper and middle-class people, and their appearance. By backwardness, rural neglected landscapes, rudimentary infrastructures and transportation, adobe houses, pauper dwellings, low-class economic activities, families with a low standard of living, neglected or wild animals, scarcity,

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Rubinstein, 'The Yellowstone Stereoview Page'. < <https://www.yellowstonestereoviews.com/publishers/keystone.html>> [accessed 8 December 2021]

<sup>34</sup> Jordan Ritchie stands that Underwood's stereographic material has an important place in History, and able to enhance research in the field of Photography and Journalism as well. Ritchie, p. 26-27.

humble people, and their clothing. Interestingly, these aspects are associated with natives and individuals with Mexican clothing. Aspects of race are included since they became one of the interesting objectives to photograph during these times where cultural differences aroused curiosity in the American observer.

The images and the text enable to make rich interpretations, which triggers vulnerability and decontextualization. There is a lack of information about the photographer responsible for the shot. But the collections present a bigger difficulty caused by the texts. Their large-scale production triggered problems in the serial numbering, there are lots of different images with the same caption or the same images with different captions. Stereoviews can also be found accompanied by texts unrelated to the topic.<sup>35</sup> In this material, I interestingly found that some Mexican places are misspelled, however, publications intended for American audiences from the late 1800s displayed the same spelling. Which in my view leads to rising stereotypes when used in education.<sup>36</sup>

I thoroughly examined the elements and appearance of the stereographs to cluster them as part of the same collection, whether Underwood or Keystone. Underwood & Underwood stereographs do not display a serial number. They show the same year of publication and the same typeface on the edge prints, as well as a light color cardboard frame. These stereoviews seemingly belong to the same series, they do not contain a describing text in the back part but they show the caption translated into several languages. Landscapes, rural sectors, urban cities, and people seem to be the major targets in the shots. On the other hand, Keystone View Co. added a serial number. They have the same typeface on the edges and the year of publication. Besides, Keystone images tend to look more artistic, showing many landscapes with natural wealth, they present more province areas, homes, churches and vestiges of Mesoamerican towns. Showing both the countryside and the modern cities.

It has not been possible to find both sides of the stereographs in other digital collections, but a Google search by 'image' led me to websites like E-bay where they were for sale. There I realized that this kind of series from Keystone presented a longer text behind. This reveals that the series was meant to serve educational purposes, either for schools or to integrate a visual encyclopedia. As I understand, Keystone View Co. integrated a classification years later when the company bought Underwood's inventories. These stereoviews from the year 1900 belong to the Keystone 10,000

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<sup>35</sup> Private stereograph collectors seemingly complain about this issues. Some collections have up to eight or ten different images with the same number, others are not related with the original theme. Rubinstein.

<sup>36</sup> Marie Robinson Wright was an American travel writer from late 19th century. Marie Robinson Wright, *Picturesque Mexico*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1897).

series, which are the least common.<sup>37</sup>

As aforementioned, I selected 25 stereographs that were mainly published by Underwood & Underwood and Keystone View Company. However, my analysis also includes the participation of three more companies at the end. Hence, there were 5 publishers involved: ‘Keystone View Company’ (9), ‘Underwood & Underwood’ (12), and in the final part: ‘Pan American Photo Art Co.’ (1), ‘Standard Scenic Co.’ (1), and ‘Berry, Kelley & Chadwick Publishers’ (1). The analysis comprises 19 stereograph subjects, whereas the last 2 present different versions of the same subject that were issued by different publishers. Certainly, one must allocate time and take a tour through these images since I will show how some were repeated, and therefore decontextualized, as well as errors in the repeated serial numbers that illustrate other images. This undoubtedly proves that they were mass-produced and perhaps without paying attention to their distribution as they only focused on completing consumer demand, I think it is a fragile form to represent ‘the other’. Trying to understand the intentions behind these text changes is up to the observer.

All images show their geographic location except for one. The locations encompass North to South and mostly to Central Mexico. The regions included are: Nuevo León in the Northeast with 2 from Monterrey, the Central North with 2 from Zacatecas, 5 from Guanajuato, Aguascalientes 1, Jalisco with 1 from Guadalajara and 3 from Juanacatlan in the Western. Thus, in the Center, 3 from Mexico City and 1 from Puebla. From the Eastern part, towards the Gulf of Mexico, Veracruz with 6 from Córdoba, Orizaba, Río Blanco and Veracruz Port. Although these stereoviews were used as veritable knowledge-imparting material, some places are misspelled. The ones from Keystone with serial number are: ‘On the aqueduct, Guadalupe, Mexico’ (10824), ‘Peon silver miners loitering on the mountain side, Zacatecas, Mexico’ (10861), ‘Mexican types, near Monterey [Monterrey], Mexico’ (10875), ‘An adobe house. Here contentedly dwells the humble Mexican’ (10894), ‘Among the palms, coffee hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico’ (10913), a repeated one: ‘Among the palms, coffee hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico’ (10913), ‘Avenue, coffee and banana hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico’ (10918), ‘Water peddler with loaded burro leaving fountain, Guadalajara [Guadalajara], Mexico’ (10920), ‘Castle of Chapultepec (President's mansion), City of Mexico’ (10924). Underwood does not have a serial number, but the titles are: ‘A prototype of the orient, a street in Monterey [Monterrey], Mexico’, ‘Guanajuato, amidst the most richly silver-laden mountains in the world, Mexico’, ‘Vultures around the meat market, the scavengers of Vera Cruz [Veracruz], Mexico’, ‘Where men seem cheaper than wind — water-wheel for irrigation near Aguas Calientes,

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<sup>37</sup> Keystone 10,000 series are less common, their production was minor since they were included in boxed sets. Rubinstein.



Mexico’, ‘Zacatecas, showing cathedral with one tower destroyed by cannon-shot during revolution, Mexico.’, ‘Where 100 bananas are sold for 8 cents, Cordoba, hot lands of Mexico’, ‘Cool and refreshing—native Indians on the rocks in Rio Blanco, hot lands of Mexico’, ‘In the beautiful gardens of Chapultepec, the home of Mexico's President’, ‘The beautiful home and family of a high official of Mexico - Sr. Gonzalez, Governor of Guanajuato.’, ‘Luxurious parlor in the home of a silver king, Guanajuato, Mexico.’, ‘One of the modern streets of Puebla, Mexico’, and ‘Magnificent entrance to the theater “Juarez”, Guanajuato - the finest theater in Mexico’.

On the other hand, Pan American Photo Art Co. presents a handwritten caption, and no serial number, titled: ‘Finest of theater in western hemisphere, Guanajuato, Mexico’. The scenes with the Juanacatlan Falls are: ““The Niagara of Mexico” - Juanacatlan Falls, Mexico’, number 10867 from Keystone, ““The Niagara of Mexico” - Juanacatlan Falls, Mexico’, number 906 from Standard Scenic Company, publisher, and ‘The beautiful falls of Juanacatlan, the Mexican Niagara, harnessed for electric power, Guadalajara, Mexico’ number 26 from Berry, Kelley & Chadwick Publishers.

### **Thesis outline**

In the forthcoming chapters, there is a description of the stereoscope as a medium separated from photography that creates a three-dimensional experience. Hence, I include its origins and functioning, its ability to connect people with distant places, and its incorporation into the American visual culture. I close the chapter by describing how it was used to obtain knowledge and portray the rest of the world. The next chapter briefly describes the relationship between Mexico and the United States in the early 20th-century and some aspects of the Porfirian Mexico. Subsequently comes the analysis of the visual representations of Mexico, where I describe the text and images in the stereographs and how they display contrasting aspects of modernity and backwardness. In the conclusion, I discuss the role of the stereograph images and the construction of the stereotyped image of Mexico in the American visual culture.

## **Stereoscope**

### **Stereoscope inception: a reality semblance misleading human senses**

The 19th-century was marked by great scientific and technological advances leading to exceptional inventions. Innovations were rapidly spreading and emulating in a more interconnected world

where Industrialization was associated with Modernity and was decisive for the nations' progress. It is in this historical moment when individuals discovered exposure effects of the sun to capture the reality: The power to obtain lasting images which would come to transform the passivity of the observer in the face of reality. The great potential of photography relied on still images.

Nevertheless, stereoscopy came to transform the form of seeing of the observer. Cary states that the observer's visual experience changed during the first half of the 19th-century, granting mobility from the uprooting of the fixed embodied vision that the dark camera implied.<sup>38</sup> The physicist Sir Charles Wheatstone first described the phenomenon of stereoscopy in 1832, and presented his invention the next year using his own drawings in the first experiments.<sup>39</sup> These were improved in 1849 with the invention of the lenticular stereoscope by the Scottish physicist Sir David Brewster who also invented the popular kaleidoscope.<sup>40</sup> Brewster then succeeded in developing the first portable three-dimensional display device. Despite its portability, the device lost practicality due to its large dimensions and presented a defect in the optical adjustment, so that some consumers suffered from headaches as a result of straining their eyes with use. By 1859, Oliver Wendell Holmes, an American physician worked on the optical corrections and invented a more simplified version of the stereoscope, (See figure 1).<sup>41</sup> The invention of the stereoscope was concomitant to a period of glass prosper in the 19th-century in which optical devices transformed the visual experience of their viewers and impacted various aspects of the visual culture. Isobel Armstrong claims that people's interactions with these technologies raised interrogations about the knowledge of the world.<sup>42</sup> Cary adds that this abstraction of vision was decisive for the implementation of the stereoscope into the visual culture of the 19th-century.<sup>43</sup> The tangibility of stereoscopy made it popular in the midst of a time when there was an attraction for an embodied visuality. It distinguished itself among other optical devices for its peculiar way of offering a three-dimensional experience, hence, widely used as a form of entertainment.

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<sup>38</sup> Cary, p.32.

<sup>39</sup> Wheatstone invented the stereoscope in 1833. Sarah Dellmann, 'Images of Dutchness. Popular Visual Culture', in *Early Cinema, and the Emergence of a National Cliché, 1800-1914*. Amsterdam University Press, 2018. p78.

<sup>40</sup> Cary, p.151.

<sup>41</sup> Stakelon, p.410.

<sup>42</sup> Chris Otter, 'Victorian, Ways of Seeing?' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, Volume 14, Issue 1, (2009), 95–102, p.95.

<sup>43</sup> Cary, p.25-26.



**Figure 1.** Vintage reproduction of Holmes' stereoscope.

Retrieved from: <https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/vintage-stereoscope-viewer-stand-12-1830050821>

### **The functioning: three-dimensionality is perceived in the mind**

The 19th-century observers saw images that only existed in the mind, that merely through the stereoscope was practicable. Human eyes make binocular vision possible, inside the individual both physiological and psychological experiences occurred, in a way that both the sight and the brain participate to create the three-dimensionality.<sup>44</sup> In order to produce adequate images for a stereograph it was necessary to emulate the position of the human eyes. Hence, they were captured with the aid of a special camera that took the shots with two lenses placed at a distance of 2.5 inches or 6 cm. Vividness was achieved with the use of the stereoscope, a seeming tangibility by the observer's apparent approach of the object, producing depth and perspective. The absence of the stereoscope's technology turns stereoviews' images into simple miniature still photographs, impossible to see their appealing details. Hence, Pietrobruno points out the effect on large objects able to be reduced and through the stereoscope will provide a virtual experience.<sup>45</sup> Plunkett referring to Armstrong suggests that with the physiological and psychological effects involved, the

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<sup>44</sup> Stakelon, p.408.

<sup>45</sup> Sheenagh, Pietrobruno, 'The stereoscope and the miniature', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 9:3, (2011), 171-190, p.188.

observer gained freedom in the act of seeing.<sup>46</sup> Even in its early days, both Holmes and Brewster yielded stereoscopy a sculptural quality, he asserts. John Plunkett develops the idea that the act of viewing stereographic photographs reveals their haptic quality, to which he adds: ‘This association between sculpture and stereography is perhaps the strongest expression of the way that the phenomenal realism of the device augmented the indexical realism of photography: the stereoscope gave photography a new haptic, material dimension’.<sup>47</sup> The three-dimensional visual experience induced bodies’ attachment to visual and media technologies. Jussi Parikka presents the idea that we tend to think of media interactivity as something recent, however, already in the nineteenth century, moving images had an influence and a part in the manners in which the bodies of individuals were activated and shaped by media technologies.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Stereographs and the Underwood Traveling Boxed Set**

Simply put, the stereographs comprised two nearly identical images which seen through the stereoscope resulted in one non-existing image in reality. The pairing produced the illusion of a single image. Despite different publishers added various elements making them distinguishable from each other, it can be said that stereoviews shared a standardized size with some variations of the height. Holmes stereoviews were usually 3.5 x 7 inches (89 x 178mm).<sup>49</sup> Stereographs are composed of images and text, that is to say, two images assembled on a cardboard frame, a caption to contextualize the image, and occasionally, a narrative in the back part. The cardboard frame was in different colors depending the publisher house whose name is also indicated within the frame along with the copyright and date. Evidently, they had presence and influence in different places and cultures, this attribute comes into light when paying attention to its translations in distinct languages as seen in Appendices C and D. In addition, some emulated other producers’ storytelling, they reproduced copies or in some cases, they modified the images framing the observer’s interpretation, for instance, the stereoviews from the Juanacatlan Falls in Appendix M displaying three versions of the same landscape.

The initial stereographs were drawings that later evolved with the integration of photographic technology during this period, in this regard, photography considerably improved the visual

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<sup>46</sup> John Plunkett, ‘Victorian Glass worlds: Glass culture and the imagination 1830-1880’, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 10:1, (2012), 93-95.

<sup>47</sup> Plunkett, 2013. p.389.

<sup>48</sup> Jussi Parikka, *What is Media Archaeology?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p.28- 29.

<sup>49</sup> Holmes stereographs’ measures. <<http://www.leisureandculturedundee.com/introduction-stereoscopy>>

experience. Daguerreotype stereographs practically represented a remediation of Wheatstone's illustrated cardboard ones, which was later developed in photographic stereographs.<sup>50</sup> During the London International Exhibition in 1851 stereographs were presented and rapidly became popular, by 1860 they were produced in several countries.<sup>51</sup> The mechanized printing techniques of the 1850s facilitated large-scale production to meet the consumer demand, their high popularity lasted until 1920s.<sup>52</sup> Whereas stereographs were associated with a modern way of recreation inside homes in industrialized cities, rural sectors were also reached when sold door-to-door to consumers in the peripheries. Underwood & Underwood was founded in 1882 by the brothers Bert and Elmer who started by selling stereographs from other producers, subsequently, they ventured into the sale of stereoscopes, achieving their full potential.<sup>53</sup>

Underwood & Underwood patented a travel system that was sold internationally. By 1899, some traveling sets contained images from places like Austria, Italy, Greece, Russia, and Japan. The set included the respective stereographs, a travel guide, and maps describing the routes, as seen in Figure 2.<sup>54</sup> The Underwood brothers managed to reach homes, schools, and tourism agencies with peculiar strategies such as hiring college students who projected a more cultivated image in the eyes of the common person.<sup>55</sup>

There is no single medium operating in isolation, hence, the complete travel experience came to integrate guidebooks, accompanying books, and maps. The assistance of maps added precision, a remarkable idea that placed Underwood & Underwood above the competitors. The geolocation of the exact point where the stereographic image had been taken would enhance the experience, convincing the observer about being there. The map served as a scientific validation to stereographs, which prompted them into the world of science.<sup>56</sup>

There was a massive number of stereographs produced from the late 19th century along with the early 20th century. According to Pietrobruno, 'almost every imaginable view possible' were captured.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Stereo daguerreotypes, being a single image plate, were not reproducible. Dellmann, p.78.

<sup>51</sup> Plunkett, 2008, p.239.

<sup>52</sup> Pietrobruno, P.171.

<sup>53</sup> Plunkett, 2008, p.240.

<sup>54</sup> Plunkett, 2008, p.241.

<sup>55</sup> Ritchie, p.10.

<sup>56</sup> Klahr, p.4.

<sup>57</sup> Pietrobruno, p.180.



**Figure 2.** A complete boxed set of Underwood & Underwood from 1904.  
*Retrieved from: <https://www.storyltd.com/auction/item.aspx?eid=4127&lotno=10>*

In the United States, Underwood & Underwood, and Keystone View Co. were the most important producers. The image production followed the consumer demand, displaying distant places, exotic cultures, buildings, constructions, natural landscapes, or even humorous scenes that they mounted.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Stereographs, an explosion of visual culture**

Queen Victoria was captivated by Brewster's invention brought to the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. It was the lenticular stereoscope and the favor of the royalty provoked more than 250,000 stereoscopes to be sold along with more than a million stereoscopic impressions in only three months.<sup>59</sup> They rapidly placed themselves as British and American consumer favorites due to their ability to bring the distant world into their homes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.<sup>60</sup> Natale asserts that being one of the first forms of photography commercialized on large scale it became a commodity, driven by industrialization that enabled its mass production.<sup>61</sup> The London Stereoscopic Company targeted upper and middle-class households and managed to sell 500,000 stereoscopes by 1857, only two years later, its catalog would offer more than 100,000 stereographs, whereas in the US, Underwood & Underwood were already producing 35,000 stereographic cards a day and 10

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<sup>58</sup> Pietrobruno, p.180.

<sup>59</sup> The term 'lenticular' means lens-based. The production numbers are from Dellmann, p.78.

<sup>60</sup> Pietrobruno, p.171.

<sup>61</sup> Natale, p.455.

million a year by 1900.<sup>62</sup> People were constantly exposed to a stream of astonishing images of the world. Stereographs were an explosion of visual culture.<sup>63</sup>

The arrival of the new medium brought new activities incorporated into the routine of the consumers. The stereographs impact in the visual culture of this period must begin with the understanding of the stereograph as a medium itself, although it uses images to create a three-dimensional experience, it must be approached as a medium separated from photography. They were used individually or in collective readings.<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, people who could not afford a physical trip could access distant places through the virtual experience as expressed by Sheenagh Pietrobruno, a stereoscope could be purchased for about \$1.50, and a dozen stereographs would cost around \$94 and up at the time.<sup>65</sup> In comparison with the cost of a real trip with the complete family, the stereoscope offered more affordable traveling. The product was designed to middle-class American and western European consumers, nevertheless was not easily affordable.<sup>66</sup> Even with this commercial promise, the poor class was excluded of this virtual experience. Plunkett argues that the price of the Underwood's travel set was still around two-thirds of a week's salary for the middle class.<sup>67</sup> Despite the consolidated presence of other publisher houses as well as the increase of competence in the stereographic industry, Underwood stood out for inducing the idea that stereographic material was the preeminent way of knowing the world.

### **Knowing the world: 'ways of seeing' The West and the rest**

Stereoviews collections mostly contain geographic elements, landscapes, and city views. Dellmann asserts that the stereoscope was used in public schools, and people without their own device could access them in public places.<sup>68</sup> People developed a curiosity to see distant and distinct worlds, and stereographs gave them the opportunity to construct their own impressions of remote cultures as seen in figure 3. This exposure to distant worlds through images seemingly unleashed a sense of strangeness since they were entering the realism of strange worlds or exotic cultures for the first time. In other cases, aspects of progress and class differences were vivid before them to compare

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<sup>62</sup> Pietrobruno, p.180.

<sup>63</sup> Speer, p.302.

<sup>64</sup> Pietrobruno asserts that the texts with stereographs fostered collective readings. Pietrobruno, p.180.

<sup>65</sup> Pietrobruno p.180-181.

<sup>66</sup> Dellmann, p.79.

<sup>67</sup> Plunkett, 2008, p.241.

<sup>68</sup> Dellmann, p.80.

differences. The extraordinary and realistic exercise of exploring foreign landscapes was a popular theme of the time that enabled constructing a widespread Western worldview.<sup>69</sup> Industrialization undoubtedly brought large-scale urbanization processes with it, however they were manifested in contrasting intensities in different cities of the world. The aspects of modernity and backwardness were likely perceptible in all countries. Lutz and Collins still maintain that these aspects serve to make comparisons of progress between the West and the Rest.<sup>70</sup>



**Figure 3.** Portraying inhabitants of Greenland, presenting remote places and cultures.  
 Retrieved from: <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/stereographs.htm>

Regarding the way in which the non-Western is portrayed, for instance, some images shown in the stereographs tend to be framed in a way that only shows the parts that arouse curiosity from the Western. Pietrobruno provides the case of Istanbul's collection, where European-influenced buildings were omitted from the shots, possibly to induce the idea of remoteness and strangeness to the modern world.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, there was a tendency of including images displaying marginal sectors, such as people immersed in poverty, dwells, and ways of subsistence, with special interest to display ethnic groups. Lutz and Collins assert that these images are usually posed or staged in rural settings, displaying poverty.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Duany's standpoint is in line with them, he aggregates that the images of Latin Americans from the nineteenth and early twentieth century were directed to show dark-skinned passive people, immersed in poverty.<sup>73</sup> This aspect enabled the

<sup>69</sup> Stakelon, p.408.

<sup>70</sup> Lutz and Collins, p. 24-27.

<sup>71</sup> Pietrobruno, p.187.

<sup>72</sup> Lutz and Collins, p.24-27.

<sup>73</sup> Duany, p.125.



construction of ‘the other’ as well as the massive dissemination of stereotypes through the stereoviews.

## Porfirian Mexico

Understanding the relationship between the United States and Mexico implies a compound task. Is not easy to look at the past putting aside the imperialist position that the United States exerts over the rest of Latin America. In spite of that, I consider that the relationship did not occur in an isolated context because both countries are influenced by each other due to the interconnections between both societies that relate them to each other.

The Porfiriato alludes to the period in which General Porfirio Díaz was the head of the country that became a dictatorship running from 1877 to 1911.<sup>74</sup> This period is considered by Daniel Cosío Villegas as the beginning of Modern History in Mexico in which the Republic triumphed over the Empire, resulting in a lasting political balance.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, in Porfirian Mexico, an anti-American sentiment emerged and remained constant. The relationship was greatly affected by the border problems, Mexico was constantly accused for not providing diplomatic solutions nor taking action on border irregularities, which affected foreign investments enhancing military presence.<sup>76</sup> Mexico was distrustful of the relationship after the great loss of territory to the United States. Since the Río Grande was not the real border the invasions increased. Roberta Lajous asserts that the settlements along its flow triggered criminality and chaos, in consequence, Americans complained about their safety, whereas, Mexicans claimed protection from the plundering suffered mainly by the Apaches.<sup>77</sup> Agreements could be achieved in 1898 when The United States needed Mexico’s support in the war with Spain.<sup>78</sup> The relationship was hostile, as Lajous expressed: ‘In the 19th century, as today, Mexicans considered that their northern neighbors saw the splinter in another’s eye and not the beam in their own’.<sup>79</sup> President Díaz would no longer favor relations with the

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<sup>74</sup> According to Elisa Cárdenas, other expressions for this period are: “la época Porfirista” (the time of Porfirio Díaz), “Régimen Porfirista” (Porfirian regime). Porfirio Díaz was President of the Republic from 1877 to 1880 and then, without interruption, from 1884 to 1911. Elisa Cárdenas Ayala, ‘El porfiriato: una etiqueta historiográfica’. *Historia Mexicana*, (2016), 1405-1433, p.1406.

<sup>75</sup> Cárdenas relates that the historian Cosío Villegas established a distinction between two periods that he considers Mexico’s ‘modern history’, characterized by a political balance that lasted for forty-four years. Cárdenas, p.1417.

<sup>76</sup> The complaints were concerning invasions by Indians, or criminals and cattle theft, the US requested Mexico to end these irregularities. Roberta Lajous, *La Política Exterior Del Porfiriato*. (El Colegio México, 2010), p.46.

<sup>77</sup> Lajous, p.56.

<sup>78</sup> Lajous, p.41.

<sup>79</sup> Lajous, p.47.

United States, hence he promoted European investment to refrain the American influence over Mexico.<sup>80</sup>

The railroads have been a determining factor for the arrival of modernity in several countries of the world, the routes between both countries served to increase Mexican migration. It is estimated that in 1900, there were more than 103,000 Mexicans in the United States.<sup>81</sup> Clearly, the intention was to lead Mexico towards modernization, the policy was centered on following the models of the progress of Western countries such as England, Germany, the US and France.<sup>82</sup> Hence the French architectural influence in large parks, monuments, kiosks, and fountains, also attracted foreign investors that endeavored to develop electrified colonies and large gardens.<sup>83</sup> Porfirio focused on urbanization in Mexico to move away from backwardness at an international level. Those were times when the construction of impressive buildings such as Bellas Artes, the Correo Mayor, the General Hospital was given impetus, as well as other accessible hospitals in other parts of the country since urban sanitation was prioritized.<sup>84</sup> Whereas some cities in Mexico appeared similar to any European metropolis, the places were contrasted by street vendors, people from the marginal sectors.<sup>85</sup>

Mexico was immersed in inequality as a consequence of the Colony period, the majority of the population lacked education, Alejandro Martínez describes that the figures of illiterate people were 99.38% in contrast to the 0.6% literate.<sup>86</sup> In the Porfiriato, higher schools and even the National University began to be opened and the sciences received an impulse. However, these were times of numerous strikes, in some cases, with violence. The discontent of the labor sector mainly occurred in the textile, railway, and cigarette industries.<sup>87</sup> Some Spanish elites continued to maintain their privileged positions, having strong presence in sectors of the Mexican economy. Some Mexicans from the popular sector, or even the Mexican press manifested an Hispanophobic attitude when complaining about these conditions.<sup>88</sup> Cárdenas expressed that Porfirio's continuous re-elections

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<sup>80</sup> Lajous highlights the context: Henry Lane Wilson (the US ambassador in Mexico from 1910-1913), suspected that Mexico had concessions in the Pacific or agreements with Japan, hence the contentions with Porfirio Díaz. Lajous, p.82.

<sup>81</sup> Lajous, p.61.

<sup>82</sup> Josefina Mac Gregor, *Del porfiriato a la Revolución: Antología*, (El Colegio de México, 2015), p.40.

<sup>83</sup> Mac Gregor, p.45.

<sup>84</sup> Mac Gregor, p49.

<sup>85</sup> Mac Gregor p56.

<sup>86</sup> Alejandro Martínez Jiménez. *La educación elemental en el Porfiriato*, (El Colegio de Mexico,1973), p.105.

<sup>87</sup> Moisés González Navarro, 'Las huelgas textiles en el Porfiriato'. *Historia Mexicana*, 6(2),(1956) 201–216. p.201.

<sup>88</sup> José Rodrigo Moreno Elizondo, *El nacimiento de la tragedia. Criminalidad, desorden público y protesta popular en las fiestas de independencia. Ciudad de México, 1887-1900*, (México: Instituto Mora: CONACYT, 2015), p.24.

exceeded the limit of what was bearable, the Mexican Revolution of 1910 ended his seventh term in office, Diaz fled with his family to France.<sup>89</sup> However, from exile he continued to point out the United States as responsible for the fall of his government.<sup>90</sup> There were many social and economic circumstances that influenced the opposition to the Porfirian regime to grow; people were tired of the increasing poverty.<sup>91</sup> Josefina MacGregor relates that Porfirio received a country with a greatly affected economy, with its people divided and in rebellion due to the lack of credibility in the government, nevertheless, he handed over a more integrated pacific country, with an economic vision.<sup>92</sup>

## Analysis. Representations of Mexico in the American stereographic material in the early 1900s

### **Portraying the other's Modernity and Backwardness**

I would like to emphasize that the analyzed stereographs below differ in publishing houses, publication year, and in the production itself. This sample is small in comparison with the number of stereographs that a single collection used to have. The unknown existence of a complete collection might be constraining. Moreover, there is no certainty that these stereoviews belonged to the same collection, nor sold singly. Some were placed and sold in thematic sets.

What brought the 25 stereoviews here is that they portray Mexico, since I intend to analyze visual representations of non-western cultures. It is unknown if the photographers followed a specific geographic order or how they decided what to include or discard to construct Mexico's imagery. There is no information about the photographers' motives to consider a place, building, or person to be shown through three-dimensionality. Since I wanted to get a broader perspective, I looked at the images through a stereoscope to see what stood out in the images.

I find it necessary to orient the reader about the interpretations given in this analysis. First, I grouped them by publishing companies and placed them according to the year of publication (1900, 1901). The ones with a serial number appear in chronological order. The rest are assorted but following a line where aspects of late progress are shown, to end with the ones displaying

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<sup>89</sup> Cárdenas, p.1406.

<sup>90</sup> Lajous, p.82-83.

<sup>91</sup> Mac Gregor argues that marginalized groups needs were practically ignored. MacGregor, p.43.

<sup>92</sup> Mac Gregor, p. 38-42.

modernity. The last 5 do not follow a specific order. They are placed as exemplifications when images and text are framing Modernity.

My selection of the 25 stereographs is due to that they display a social dichotomy of Porfirian Mexico, they exemplify how Modernity and backwardness are represented in the 'other'. Social inequalities in Mexico are also highlighted in the material. The images are inevitably subject to interpretation. Stereographs add the peculiarity of having a text intended to convey meaning to the observer. Therefore, the combination of their images and text brought them here. I consider that also Western countries could have contrasting aspects of modernity during the time this material was produced. These images raised curiosity for the different other. They enabled the construction of the stereotyped Mexican. This prompted comparisons that reinforced the feeling of superiority in American society.

The photographs are in sepia or black and white. Most of the images include individuals integrated into rural landscapes, urbanized areas nearby constructions, and open places. The rest display panoramic shots or lonely landscapes. The majority of the persons are unidentifiable. This raises the issue that by not identifying the subjects, they can appear as general human types, thus they will be considered as representatives of the Mexican culture and race. Seemingly the upper class can be identified by family name. Some images display animals like donkeys, horses, vultures, poultry, and a dog. Contrasting types of transportation can be detected, both modern and modest: railroads, street cars, horse-carts, horses and donkeys. Panoramic shots exhibit constructions and streets ranging from the sumptuous to the most wretched. The landscapes appear to be picturesque. Some photographs are seemingly posed, like if people were directed to strike a pose. Some individuals are looking at the lens of the camera, whereas others are not, however they seem to be aware of the camera presence. This can also be yielded by a curiosity for the device. The upper class seemed to relax when their picture was taken as if they were familiar with the camera. In some images, individuals are wearing typical Mexican clothing with a clean appearance, even though they are supposed to be workers, which implies that they could have been prepared. In other cases, the clothes appear genuinely used, like if they have been caught doing their daily activities. Subjects appear standing or sitting, riding a donkey, performing tasks, or poses of everyday life. Dark skin individuals with a condition of poverty stand out, portrayed with so-called Mexican garments. While most men wear hats, women cover their heads with shawls. The lower-class is shown barefoot or with severely worn sandals (known as huaraches), as well as with torn, soiled clothes. Conversely, the upper class is shown with lighter skin and European-influenced clothing. Women

wear sophisticated dresses accompanied by fancy hats instead of shawls. Men wear suits, hats, and closed shoes.

The images tend to reveal a social and economic disparity when portraying impoverished people not only in rustic settings but in the midst of the urban ones to induce the idea of the backwardness still incrustated into modern environments. As aforementioned, this research approaches the representations of Mexico that display a social dichotomy between modernity and backwardness, the contrasting Western society opposing the Non-western. The analysis of the images will follow a chronological order, starting with Keystone (from the year 1900), they will appear according to their serial number. Later comes Underwood & Underwood (from 1901).

The Keystone View Company's collection from 1900 have a light color cardboard frame. On the left they have the name of the producer house, on the right the names of the venues: Meadville, Pennsylvania, St. Louis, Missouri. On the right side they also display the copyright and at the bottom right they have the caption. They present caption and text translated into several languages which suggest a worldwide circulation.

The first is titled: 'On the aqueduct, Guadalupe, Mexico', No. 10824 (Appendix A). A man and a boy are shown in the central focus, and a couple can be seen on the right side walking away, they are seemingly wearing 'peon' clothes, with Mexican hats, and shawls. They remained anonymous. Their dark skin and hair are contrasting the lighter tones around them. Man and child stand on the Aqueduct, a very important water supply system built during the 18th century.<sup>93</sup> The image has a depth of field where the immense structure is seen. In the three-dimensional view, the aqueduct contrasts a lot with the arid ground in light tones since it is a tall structure. They are not wearing shoes which indicates that they could have been poor people. The path of water appears infinite, losing itself in the distance. The couple below appear to be walking down railway tracks. The aqueduct brought drinking water to the public fountains in the cities. The mountain and the arid landscape frame the shot. The aqueduct is a great ancient and expensive architectural work, nevertheless is displayed as a picturesque addition to the landscape. Portraying a modest glance.

The aqueducts in Mexico are inherited from the Colony and can be found in the center of the country due to the scarcity of water supply. Their beauty turns them into an aesthetic eye-catcher. As seen in the following image, 'Peon silver miners loitering on the mountain side, Zacatecas, Mexico.' No. 10861 (Appendix A), were a group of six men are in front of the Zacatecas Aqueduct.

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<sup>93</sup> The Guadalupe Aqueduct was built from 1743 to 1751, its original length was 10700 meters. Gobierno de la Ciudad de México. 'The Guadalupe Aqueduct', <https://thecity.mx/venues/guadalupe-aqueduct/>.

The men are identified as peons from the silver mines, showing their backs to the camera lens. Seemingly Mexicans considering their hats and clothing. They are in front of the Aqueduct, which is simulating a barrier between them and the modern city with solid housing constructions.<sup>94</sup> This city is today the second largest silver producer in Mexico, hence important to the national economy since then.<sup>95</sup> They look towards the city as if they were outsiders. Despite the aridness of the landscape, the natural wealthiness in silver is in front, that seems to be far, out of reach for them. The caption describes that they are resting, which implies that mining is harsh labor. The pejorative term “loitering” depicts them as lazy. This also reflects the exploitation of the locals to satisfy the demand of the modern consumer. The workers' worn dirty clothes are even transferred to how Mexican people, in general, are portrayed, what they describe as Mexican types in the next image. ‘Mexican types, near Monterey [Monterrey], Mexico’ No. 10875 (Appendix B) is one of the most interesting stereotyped images. It shows a group of adults with children, likely a large family, a notion greatly embedded in non-Western countries. Individuals without names appear in pauper conditions, in a scene where adults are portrayed as failed providers since the children are neglected, barefoot, and appearing malnourished. The boy in the center is smiling and holding a rifle, since there were plenty of bandits in the late nineteenth century Mexico this can induce the idea that it might be their way to subsist, or perhaps their way of defending themselves against intruders from the other side of the border. Children are seemingly playing which reaffirms the stereotype of the poor people who are happy in the midst of their misery. The adult woman is turning away from the camera. It is a precarious scene, the limits between the wretched constructions is undefined. The words ‘Mexican types’ automatically serve as biased conception of a Mexican family.

Regarding the happy Mexican despite his poverty, the following stereograph shows an exemplification, titled: ‘An adobe house. Here contentedly dwells the humble Mexican’ No. 10894 (Appendix B). A scene from the outskirts of the city is displayed, evidenced by the type of dirt floor. The characters remain anonymous, seemingly mother and son, they are ignoring the camera capture. There is an absence of any adult male, perhaps the breadwinner. The woman is on the move, towards the child, or perhaps doing housework. The house is very small, with patched parts and a thatched roof, and is not distinguishable if it is the front or the back of the dwelling. They do not appear to be peasants since the soil does not look like a plantation but dirty and neglected. There are

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<sup>94</sup> This is another Aqueduct, also known as “The Cube” and places in Zacatecas, Mexico.<<https://sonorastar.com/2021/03/01/el-acueducto-de-zacatecas-es-la-obra-hidraulica-mas-importante-del-irreinato-en-mexico/>>

<sup>95</sup> Zacatecas state. <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Zacatecas-state-Mexico>>

clothes sun drying, hanging on a line. On the right side of the shot there are poultries. Animals living together with people are elements integrated in non-western representations. Beyond their house are concrete constructions. As the child is doing his normal life, the caption ensures that he lives here happily. However, by not giving a precise location of the scene, and only referring to an adobe house, it can be interpreted as a type again. Like implying that all Mexican houses are built with adobe. In this case, it was about showing how ‘the other’ lives. Indeed, displaying dwellings like this aroused the curiosity of Americans, Keystone produced in 1930 a set called “Homes” where a Mexican Adobe house is portrayed.<sup>96</sup>

Examples of the contrasting inequalities are displayed in comparison with the next image where a magnificent garden shows the unreachable for the ‘humble Mexican’ with a simple home. ‘Among the palms, coffee hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico’ No. 10913 (Appendix C) portrays the garden of a ‘Hacienda’ in the Southeast of Mexico. It presents obverse and reverse and its caption was translated into 6 languages: German, Italian, French, Spanish, English, and Swedish respectively. Curiously, the German translation is presented with a different typeface, of a Gothic type. There are more decorative palm trees, tall and of different types. The images display a prune garden with fine cared grass. A metal bench implies space to relax in the middle of a variety of flowers and shrubs. The back describes that ‘Haciendas’ are beautiful and luxurious places owned by wealthy men, they usually comprise many thousands of acres of land. The caption mentions ‘among the palms’, which in this scene are garden palms, that is to say, less wild. The backside description attaches the term ‘beautiful’ to the luxurious and places of wealth.

Interestingly, the following stereoview has the same caption and serial number: ‘Among the palms, coffee hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico’ No. 10913 (Appendix D), where two rows of banana trees, coffee bushes, and wild abundant grass are shown. A child in peon clothing appears in the shot as if those are his gardens, the rural infinite environment. He is unidentified. The word ‘beautiful’ is not used here to refer to the natural wealth in the plantations, and the economic currency they represented. The next stereocard contains the same stereo-image as above, but with a changed caption: ‘Avenue, coffee and banana hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico’ No. 10918 (Appendix D). It also presents obverse and reverse in the LOC digital collection. The obverse image displays a depth of field shot. The word ‘avenue’ used in the caption, refers to the endless formation of the plantations, which seems infinite. There is an illusion of the banana trees framing the shot, like projecting an abundance of natural resources, which characterizes the Southern part of Mexico. The

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<sup>96</sup> Keystone Home Set. Collectibles on E-bay: <<https://www.ebay.com/itm/203717531287?hash=item2f6e82d697:g:6TwAAOSw7E5ctsd>>

nameless little boy is in the center, like adding contrast in the middle of the prosperous natural resources which were pivotal for the Mexican economy. This image portrays a Mexican stereotype. There is a description of the coffee harvest on the reverse side, it was possibly used education purposes. Like in the previous, the caption is translated into the 6 languages aforementioned.

The child's clothing does not appear worn out, perhaps he was instructed to stand and pose, with typical clothing. This could be intentional to portray a typical Mexican making a normal life. This is disclosed in the way they wear tidy and clean clothes as in the following stereograph, which also shows a Mexican stereotype. The image displays one of the largest cities and important economic centers of Mexico, the caption says: 'Water peddler with loaded burro leaving fountain, Guadalajara [Guadalajara], Mexico' No. 10920 (Appendix E). It shows mostly male characters smiling at the camera. The spotlight is a modest man wearing a Mexican hat and sandals who uses a 'burro' as a comfortable manner to move through the cobbled streets selling water. Appearing as an element of backwardness in the urbanized surroundings. Men around him wear middle-class clothes which is evident from the shape of their hats. They are all unidentified individuals. The dark donkey contrasts in the scene, the peddler is seemingly smiling and poses, the hat's shadow covers his eyes. This adds mysticism to the person, remaining as a Mexican type in this staged capture. The social and class distance can be perceived between the man and the people around. Furthermore, his appearance is ambiguous since he is wearing clean clothes whereas a peddler usually shows dirty clothes after hard labor. His donkey is far from being neglected. The use of the Spanish word 'burro' instead of donkey is noteworthy in the caption, which amplifies 'the otherness'. The man on his 'burro' represent the humbleness breaking with the urbanized context. This is seemingly a recurring feature among the analyzed stereoviews. As seen in the next stereoview, where the presence of a peon is breaking with the surroundings. 'Castle of Chapultepec (President's mansion), City of Mexico' No. 10924 (Appendix E). The caption points out the President's residence, but the shot leads the attention towards a nameless man walking by, carrying a large bundle on his back, wearing humble clothes as a peon. The fountain and the lamp evidence that it is a place not only luxurious but electrified and urbanized with European influenced constructions. In Porfirian Mexico, the improvements of the streets in the capital city had a great economic impulse. The Castle of Chapultepec was not precisely President Díaz's mansion.<sup>97</sup> It is a scene created to insert backwardness into modernity to reveal the inequalities in non-western countries, like in the

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<sup>97</sup> The Castle of Chapultepec was sometimes used for representation purposes, not as a private residence. <<https://mymodernmet.com/es/castillo-de-chapultepec/>>



rest of Latin America. Here Mexico is portrayed as a distant place from the prosperous American society.

The next group of stereographs corresponds to the Underwood & Underwood collection published in 1901. They particularly have a light orange cardboard frame with the name of the publishing house and the venues New York, London, Toronto-Canada, Ottawa-Kansas on the left side. This suggests a lot about the production and circulation of the visual material both in the US and throughout the world. In the lower right part are the caption, the copyright, and the date.

The first one, 'Zacatecas, showing cathedral with one tower destroyed by cannon-shot during revolution, Mexico.' (Appendix F). It includes a panoramic shot of the city, from a high place. There are four men, both standing and sitting, who are seemingly young. The buildings behind are solid, it is a colonial city. The clear contrasts of the buildings make the streets and buildings appear almost symmetrical, as impeccable. The middle garden or park stands out for showing lush trees as if the cathedral were covered and protected by the city. The young men are unidentified. Their clothing seems to be selected for this staged shot since they all wear Mexican serapes, and hats. Moreover, the tidy white color of their pants implies that they were not pawns. This arid summit works optically as a horizontal barrier that highlights the picturesque characters as a spotlight above the city. They are the symbol in this shot, they are the Mexican type. The young men function as the humble part in contrast with modernity. There is statements of 'the other' in the next image 'A prototype of the orient, a street in Monterey [Monterrey], Mexico' (Appendix F). In this case, the caption uses the term 'a street in Monterrey' as a generalization. When there is no name or specific location the viewers would perceive it as a type, a typical street. In addition, it portrays a Mexican type, raising the stereotyped idea of a pauper man riding a donkey, in the spotlight. He looks exhausted with a sunburned face. In fact, his very dark face is in a contrast to the white construction behind. The unpaved streets are seemingly not illuminated, the subjects are nameless and wear 'peon clothing'. On the left, there is an embedded tree in a mud basement that could be a wood-dwelling. The dry soil, the sparse plant life, and large stones obstructing the roads are exemplifications of the rural. The caption leads to the stereotypical image of the Mexican as non-western people.

Whereas this man regarded as a Mexican type is riding a donkey, the transportation of the poor, horses are used by another class. Like the man in the stereocard 'Guanajuato, amidst the most richly silver-laden mountains in the world, Mexico' (Appendix G). It shows a countryside landscape with a Mexican posing but not looking at the camera. The unnamed man wears a sort of stereotyped Mexican clothing and is displayed on a horse in a still position. There are hills in the background

and the terrain features dry soil and scarce vegetation. The city stands out with the help of the contrast coming from the darker tones of the mountains. The man is portrayed as the Mexican type, an individual with an average status who stands in between the hills wealthiness, but remains indifferent and with a glance towards the back left, towards the backwardness, framed at the left side as well. This composition reveals a contrasting Mexico. The image depicts the remarkable richness in silver, still framed by a rural landscape.

Another form to integrate the rural element in the urbanized cities are wild animals in close proximity with people. Like in 'Vultures around the meat market, the scavengers of Vera Cruz [Veracruz], Mexico' (Appendix G). It displays a long shot where the central focus seems to be an unidentified street vendor, posing, and looking at the camera. The market is in a major port, a commercial point, hence an urbanized city by that time. In this image, both transport and animals are crucial to show modernity/modesty. There is a two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle whereas the donkey is the peon's loading transportation. The vultures' presence in the image, even described as 'scavengers', points to this place with rural, wild characteristics as they are close to the humans. Male crowd with mostly dark skin is displayed. They appear to be peons with humble clothing. This composition is an insertion of the wild within an urbanized context. Another way to present the countryside is the use of pejorative words to describe the people living there as seen in the title: 'Where men seem cheaper than wind-water-wheel for irrigation near Aguas Calientes, Mexico' (Appendix H). It shows a rural landscape, where the central focus is a precarious hydraulic system, a water wheel. The unknown individual operating it seems young, perhaps a boy, posing for the shot. In the late 1800s, Aguascalientes was considered a modern city with remarkable buildings and a railroad station. Thus the shot presented here corresponds to the country, where evidently pumping water is an agricultural activity. The caption uses the plural term 'men' like an all-encompassing expression that Mexicans equal cheap labor force.

Representing Mexico as a cheap place to live, induce comparisons between the nations, like reinforcing an economic advantage of the American level of life. The following stereoview presents a group of women as fruit vendors on the street in Córdoba. The caption says: 'Where 100 bananas are sold for 8 cents, Cordoba, hot lands of Mexico' (Appendix H). The unidentified women wear humble clothing covering their heads with shawls as natives do. In the South-central part of Mexico an abundance of natural resources begins which benefit the market and lower prices. The caption connotes that Mexico has a cheap standard of living. Whereas this activity is represented as exclusive for women, men are at the back. There is a stray dog, a frequent element in non-western cultures images. During this time, American photographers were interested in showing other

cultures and races, this image does not seem to be posed, it merely shows the natives' way of earning a living, and the role of women selling products.

Another way how native women are portrayed is that they are seemingly uncomfortable, judging by their facial expression. It appears that they dislike the intruder with the rare device since the cameras were likely unknown to them. As seen in 'Cool and refreshing--native Indians on the rocks in Rio Blanco, hot lands of Mexico' (Appendix I). It portrays a group of people, mostly women, identified as 'native Indians'. The 'Indians' are on big rocks, in front of a rapid flowing river. It is a picturesque landscape. It is not perceivable if they have consented to the shot, however, at least 3 of the women appear to be staring at the camera. Their dark skin stands out with the clear tones of the rocks and the cloths that partially cover their nudity. The women are seemingly covering themselves by the presence of the photographer, while the man is the only one behind a rock. Partial nudity in native people is something that is displayed as a part of the customs of the natives in Non-Western countries. Their awkward semblance reflects the interruption and intrusion of the photographer. Whereas this collective was captured refreshing together in the river, in the midst of what could have been a practice of social cohesion, they were interrupted and look uncomfortable.

The contrary can be seen in how upper-class women are portrayed in the following stereoview. Despite the subjects are unidentified here, they evidently represent the high society. The caption says: 'In the beautiful gardens of Chapultepec, the home of Mexico's President' (Appendix I). The two women are dressed in European-influenced clothing, they comfortably look at the camera which indicates concession. Their light skin allows to distinguish the facial features. The garden abundant in bushes and flowers is framing them. It is a well-conditioned, relaxing place with paved roads. Gender distinctions are also revealed here since these two women remain anonymous although they could belong to the Mexican elites. It uses the term 'beautiful' in the caption to refer to the garden of the Castle.

Next is a posed stereograph that shows the home interior of a wealthy family. Subjects are identified and looking at the camera. 'The beautiful home and family of a high official of Mexico - Mr. Gonzalez, Governor of Guanajuato' (Appendix J). The room is full decorated with a touch of European influence. The caption denominates 'beautiful' to a scene that approaches opulence. The lighter-skinned family is posing with familiarity for the camera device, the only animal shown here corresponds to a bearskin rug that must come from abroad. Their clothes correspond to an upper-class family. Seemingly, this official is portrayed with a much superior living standard than the rest of the Mexicans. This highlights inequalities in the Mexican Society. They present a wealthy man's way of life comparable with royalty.

As seen in ‘Luxurious parlor in the home of a silver king, Guanajuato, Mexico’ (Appendix J) where the image shows a middle-aged man with two young children whose clothes reveal themselves to be upper-class. Interestingly, they are not the central focus of the image, but their parlor, so in the foreground is the luxurious chairs. The chairs hold exotic fur linings, in those times there was no faux-fur, hence very expensive. The subjects seem to be behind the opulent furniture, like yielding priority to what they have, like meaning that their trust relies on their richness. The room decoration shows a great European influence on the sculptures, floor, walls, tables, carpet, plants, vases, tapestry, and curtains. It appears to be a wealthy mining entrepreneur with two young relatives. He is not identified but is pointed out as ‘a silver King’, like giving emphasis on the class inequalities in Mexico.

European influence can also be seen in the constructions. There was an input of economic resources during the Porfirian era that brought modernization to Mexico. The next stereograph is titled: ‘One of the modern streets of Puebla, Mexico’ (Appendix K). It is a panoramic shot of the ‘Zócalo’, that is the main square. It displays public transportation and several cables crossing the streets which connotes modernity. The depth shot evidence the extent of an ideally mapped street, a feature attributed to this capital. The tones in the photograph enhance this great avenue. The advertisements in the background are highly attached to the notion that European commodities are ‘the modern’, to mention: ‘City of Paris clothing store’ and ‘France factories’. When saying ‘one of the modern streets’ it can be interpreted that they are scarce.

The following two stereographs were produced by different companies: Underwood & Underwood in 1901 and Pan American Photo Art Co. in 1902 respectively (Appendix L). Frames are quite similar, the last one has a handwritten caption, it is from Salt Lake City, Utah. What made me select them is that they display the same subject, but are framed differently. This is an opulent building with fine lamps and a lightened entrance. Street lights can be seen and natives are also displayed here. Underwood & Underwood inserts the rustic feature of peddlers on donkeys and their caption acknowledged this building to be ‘the finest theater in Mexico’. Meaning like ‘solely in Mexico’, since a non-Western country cannot possess such a magnificent structure. The other publishing house does not add animals in the image and provides another caption: ‘Finest of theater in the western hemisphere’, which would place Mexico among the countries that also have beautiful and modern structures as in the Western world.

The next group comprises 3 stereographs, Keystone from 1900: “‘The Niagara of Mexico’” - Juanacatlan Falls, Mexico’, No. 10867, Standard Scenic Company, 1906: “‘The Niagara of Mexico’” - Juanacatlan Falls, Mexico’, No. 906, and Berry, Kelley & Chadwick Publishers, publisher 1906:

'The beautiful falls of Juanacatlan, the Mexican Niagara, harnessed for electric power, Guadalajara, Mexico' No. 26, (Appendix M). From the captions, this shot is worth attention since the Mexican waterfalls are named from an American/Canadian perspective, which means that they portray non-Western countries through their own identity. The way Americans portrayed Mexico indicates more about themselves as a nation. The first two stereographs present a narrow shot excluding modernity. They only display the waterfalls, vegetation, and hills in the background. It is a picturesque rural landscape where the power and beauty of the falls erupt. A driving natural force that remains passive, without an active part in Mexico's economy, it is just another picturesque landscape. Nevertheless, the last stereograph from Berry, Kelley & Chadwick Publishers, displays a different shot including a Mexican man with native clothing and a hat. There is a remarkable contrast between light and dark and the silhouette of the Mexican stands out a lot. The angle of the fall evidence that it is a more open shot. The caption yields reference to the hydroelectric power already present in Mexico. Hence, this last stereograph shows a more revealing infrastructure of a hydroelectric plant, showing a more modern Mexico. It is a captivating shot that portrays the Mexican man looking towards the right side, which could be interpreted as towards the future, towards modernity. Despite being a still image, the force of the waterfalls through the stereoscope is breathtaking. The three-dimensionality surely activated the realistic experience. But once more, this last scene portrays the rustic element embedded within the modernness.

In sum, as a manner to spotlight remarkable aspects observed in the 25 stereo images, I consider that: 1) If the modernity, progress, or wealthiness of Mexico is shown, then a picturesque element is inserted in the image or the caption denoting that it is not yet achievable for them, the non-modern other. 2) Most images are staged, and some people present interesting poses. For instance, there are people turning their back, or leaning and turning to the left like inducing the idea that Mexicans look backward as if they intentionally move away from prosperity. 3) Certainly, the clothing style pertains to the time, but there is a noticeable role of the Mexican hats projecting a shadow over the faces. Photographers surely master the lights and shadows on the black and white images. I consider that the shadows were used to hinder identifying the subjects, turning them into Mexican types. 4) When wealthiness is displayed, then image and caption point out social inequalities. Furthermore, the term 'beautiful' is used where opulence is shown, whereas pauper rural landscapes are not depicted like so. 5) In some cases, Modernity is framed. Images and text in the last stereographs (shown in Appendices L and M) seem to cut progress. The images of Theater Juárez (Appendix L) contrast each other for the reason that Underwood seemingly leaves Mexico out of the Western countries which have luxurious structures. The case of the Juanacatlan waterfalls (Appendix M),

also describes the other as compared to their own natural resources, while the last publisher reveals the complete modern infrastructure in the shot. The matter is that individuals cannot ensure if they are 'seeing' the complete image, which turns the interpretation even more subjective.

## Final discussion

### **Mexico, not so distant, nor a stranger to the United States**

Photography was in its origins considered as the approximation to the veritable, prone to reproduce perfect copies of nature with indisputable precision. The images containing geographic places, landscapes, or produced with ethnographic purposes were perceived as discharged from any ideological influence.<sup>98</sup> Although ancient photographs may endorse the existence of an entity that once existed, yet they cannot be detached from subjectivity when they are 'viewed' again at a different time. The instant of the photographic exposure is something that only the photographer was able to decide. In my perspective, the attributes of solidity and depth that stereographs supplied further influenced 19th-century observers to experience a connection to distant and stranger places. To a certain extent, I concur that some people learned by connecting from a distance through what was considered a virtual journey.

The travel set was very complete, it contained: Maps, a guidebook, and stereoviews. In some social networks today it is possible to post a panoramic image in 3D, with its caption, narrative, and location on a map, all in digital. This could have been the sensation of the 19th-century observer, about something novel, indispensable yet quotidian.

Stereographs played a prominent role in American visual culture as well as in many other countries. As a medium, it represented a source of visual delight. Individuals were captivated by the narratives presented that served as recreation and education, hence its legitimization in obtaining knowledge. Certainly, the stereoscope provided an apparent realism to the viewer, I would add that in some cases it served to present an apparent knowledge.

Through this analysis, some aspects came to light where the large-scale production of stereographs triggered errors in the series or in other cases, the content in the text was not veritable. Since they aimed to meet the consumer's demand, the numbering of the collection was neglected. It resulted in a careless inventory, the big collections are still incomplete today. The translation of the

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<sup>98</sup> Steven Hoelscher, 'The Photographic Construction of Tourist Space in Victorian America'. *Geographical Review*, Oct., 1998, Vol. 88, No. 4, J. B. Jackson and Geography (1998), pp. 548-570.

caption into several languages is noteworthy to show the way in which they managed to permeate other cultures. It may serve as a double-edged sword: individuals may learn or ‘unlearn’. When errors are made in the caption, it increases the image’s vulnerability to decontextualization

The way of acquiring culture depends on the relationship between the viewer and the image, which in this case was mediated by the stereoscope. The stereographs were produced from an American imperialist gaze, which fostered the constructions of stereotyped images of Mexico in the American visual culture. The images are portraying Mexico’s contrasting inequalities, or framing Modernity. Manghani admits that photographs can be produced for ideological purposes.<sup>99</sup> People can learn from distant worlds by seeing. The forged ideas about the Mexican type managed to be maintained over time. Hence the importance of examining the representations of the other, in their historical context. The portrays of Mexico as ‘the other’ served to extend the American ideological dominance over them, they are presented in binary opposition to the US. Yet Mexico is not so distant, nor a stranger to the United States.

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<sup>99</sup> Manghani, p.129

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Underwood & Underwood, 'The beautiful home and family of a high official of Mexico - Sr. Gonzalez, Governor of Guanajuato', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s32725 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32725](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32725), cph 3b22248 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b22248](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b22248)

Underwood & Underwood, 'Cool and refreshing—native Indians on the rocks in Rio Blanco, hot lands of Mexico', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s32558 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32558](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32558)

Underwood & Underwood, 'Guanajuato, amidst the most richly silver-laden mountains in the world, Mexico', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s32731 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32731](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32731), cph 3c19670 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c19670](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c19670)

Underwood & Underwood, 'In the beautiful gardens of Chapultepec, the home of Mexico's President', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s32583 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32583](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32583)

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Underwood & Underwood, 'Magnificent entrance to the theater Juarez, Guanajuato - the finest theater in Mexico', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s32738 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32738](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32738)

Underwood & Underwood, 'One of the modern streets of Puebla, Mexico', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s33062 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33062](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33062)

Underwood & Underwood, 'A prototype of the orient, a street in Monterey [Monterrey], Mexico', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s32978 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32978](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32978)

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- Underwood & Underwood, 'Where 100 bananas are sold for 8 cents, Cordoba, hot lands of Mexico', 1901. [online] Digital id: stereo 1s32622 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32622](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32622), cph 3c19675 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c19675](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c19675)
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# Appendices

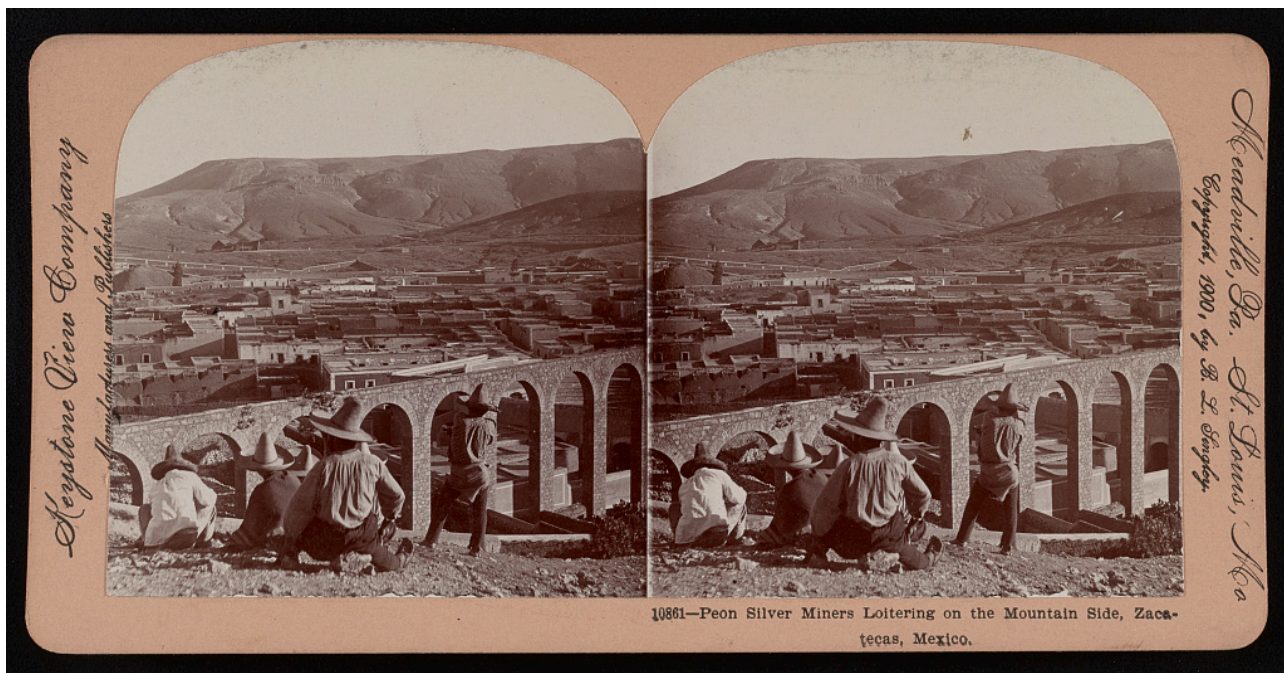
## Appendix A. Stereoviews from Keystone View Company, publisher



Title: On the aqueduct, Guadalupe, Mexico. No. 10824.

Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher

Created / Published: 1900. Digital id: stereo 1s32723 // [hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32723](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32723)



Title: Peon silver miners loitering on the mountain side, Zacatecas, Mexico. No. 10861.  
Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher  
Created / Published: 1900. Digital id: [stereo 1s33211 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33211](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33211)

**Appendix B. Stereoviews from Keystone View Company, publisher**



Title: Mexican types, near Monterey [Monterrey], Mexico. No. 10875.  
Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher  
Created / Published: 1900. Digital id: [stereo 1s32974 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32974](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32974)



Title: An adobe house. Here contentedly dwells the humble Mexican. No. 10894.  
Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher  
Created / Published: 1900. Digital id: [stereo 1s33244 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33244](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33244)

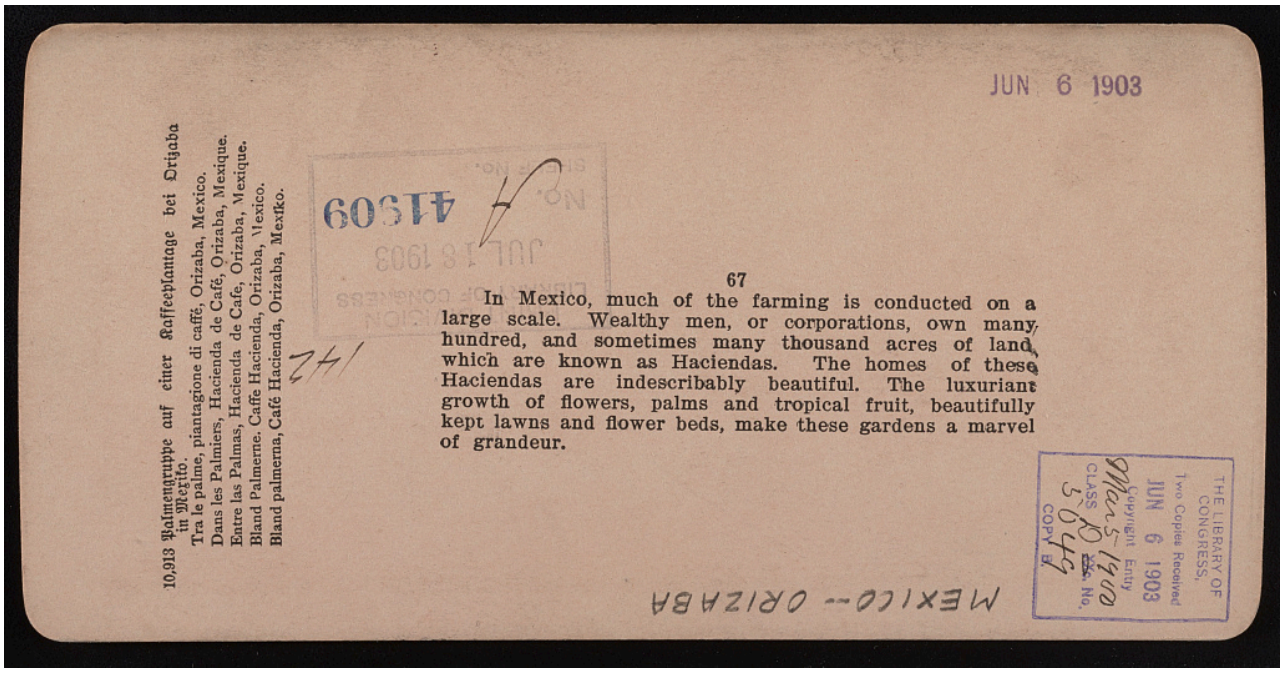
Appendix C. Stereoview from Keystone View Company, publisher



Keystone View Company,  
Manufacturers and Publishers.

Copyright 1900, by W. S. Sawyer  
Meadville, Pa. St. Louis, Mo.

10913—Among the Palms, Coffee Hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico.



10.913 Kolmenkappi auf einer Koffeeplantage bei Drijaba in Yucatan.  
Tra le palme, piantagione di caffè, Orizaba, Mexico.  
Dans les Palmiers, Hacienda de Café, Orizaba, Mexique.  
Entre las Palmas, Hacienda de Café, Orizaba, Mexico.  
Bland Palmerna, Kaffe Hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico.  
Bland palmerna, Café Hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico.

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JUL 18 1903  
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67  
In Mexico, much of the farming is conducted on a large scale. Wealthy men, or corporations, own many hundred, and sometimes many thousand acres of land, which are known as Haciendas. The homes of these Haciendas are indescribably beautiful. The luxuriant growth of flowers, palms and tropical fruit, beautifully kept lawns and flower beds, make these gardens a marvel of grandeur.

JUN 6 1903

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MEXICO--ORIZABA

Title: Among the palms, coffee hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico. No. 10913.

Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher.

Created / Published: 1900. Digital id:stereo 1s33032 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33032, stereo 2s33032 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.2s33032



Appendix D. Stereoviews from Keystone View Company, publisher



Title: Among the palms, coffee hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico. No. 10913. Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher. Created / Published: 1900. Digital id: [stereo.1s33019 // hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33019](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33019)



JUN 20 1903

61

Coffee trees in Mexico are grown in the shade, for there they are more vigorous and produce a better and more abundant harvest; so the Mexican coffee grower plants a field of bananas which yields its fruit in abundance, and its shade protects the coffee trees which are also here planted. The bushes growing between the banana palm, shown in this view, are two year old coffee trees. At that age the tree yields its first berries. Coffee begins ripening about mid-summer—August—and for four or five months the berries are ripening and being picked. Then comes the banana harvest, about mid-winter—January. It would be more intelligible, in Mexico at least, to term these seasons the "dry" and the "rainy" season, for the temperature in the coffee growing regions is that of one eternal summer.

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CLASS OF 1870  
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**DUPLICATE**

MEXICO - ORIZABA

10918 Rifle, Alice and Bonaventura bei Orizaba in Mexico. Avenue, plantations of coffee, banana, Orizaba, Mexico. Avenue, plantations of coffee, banana, Orizaba, Mexico. Avenida, Hacienda de Café y Plátanos, Orizaba, Mexico. Avenue, Café and Banana Hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico. Landväg Kaffe och banan plantation, Orizaba, Mexico.

Title: Avenue, coffee and banana hacienda, Orizaba, Mexico. No. 10918. Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher. Created / Published: 1900. Digital id: [stereo.1s33033 // hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33033](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33033), [stereo.2s33033 // hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.2s33033](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.2s33033)

Appendix E. Stereoviews from Keystone View Company, publisher

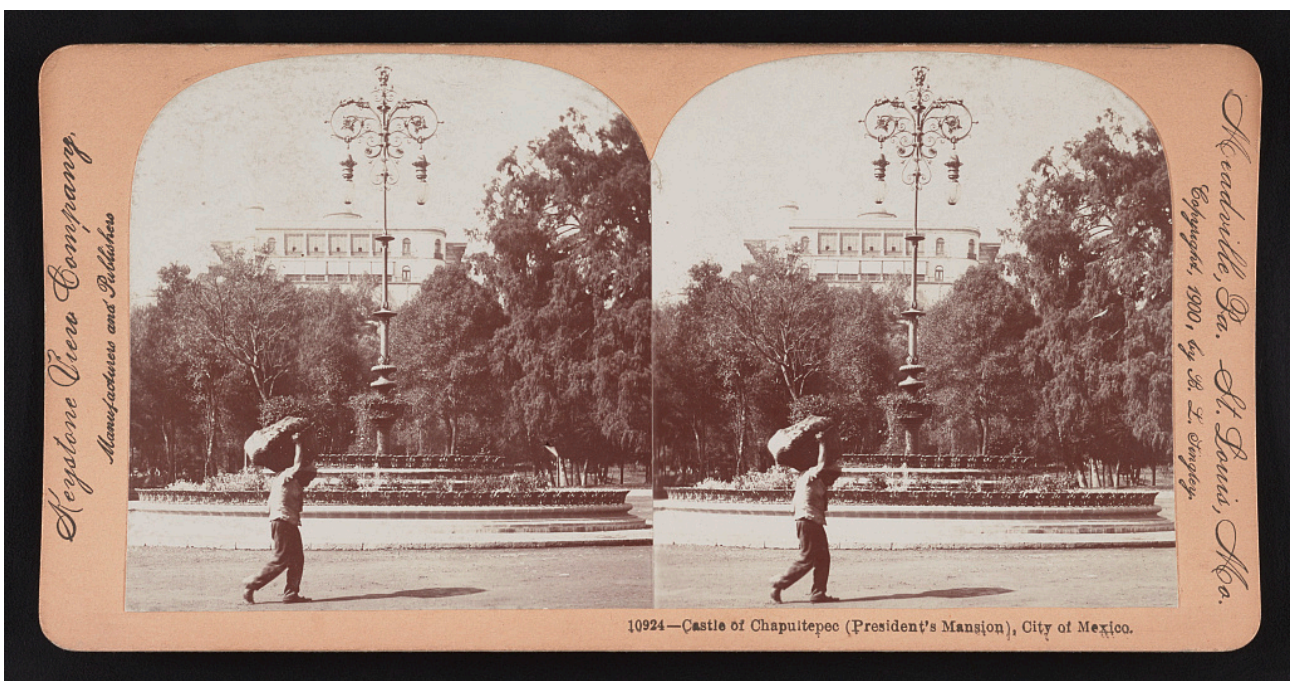


Keystone View Company,  
Manufacturers and Publishers

Mendocville, Pa. St. Louis, Mo.  
Copyright, 1900, by W. F. Sengstack

10920—Water Peddler with Loaded Burro Leaving Fountain, Guadalajara, Mexico.

Title: Water peddler with loaded burro leaving fountain, Guadalajara [sic], Mexico. No. 10920.  
Contributor Names: Keystone View Company. Created / Published 1900  
Digital id: stereo 1s32676 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32676



Keystone View Company,  
Manufacturers and Publishers

Mendocville, Pa. St. Louis, Mo.  
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10924—Castle of Chapultepec (President's Mansion), City of Mexico.

Title: Castle of Chapultepec (President's mansion), City of Mexico. No. 10924  
Contributor Names: Keystone View Company, publisher  
Created / Published: 1900. Digital id: stereo 1s32567 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32567

Appendix F. Stereoviews from Underwood & Underwood Publishers



Title: Zacatecas, showing cathedral with one tower destroyed by cannon-shot during revolution, Mexico. Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher  
Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s33219 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33219](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33219)



Title: A prototype of the orient, a street in Monterey [Monterrey], Mexico  
Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher  
Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32978 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32978](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32978)

Appendix G. Stereoviews from Underwood & Underwood Publishers

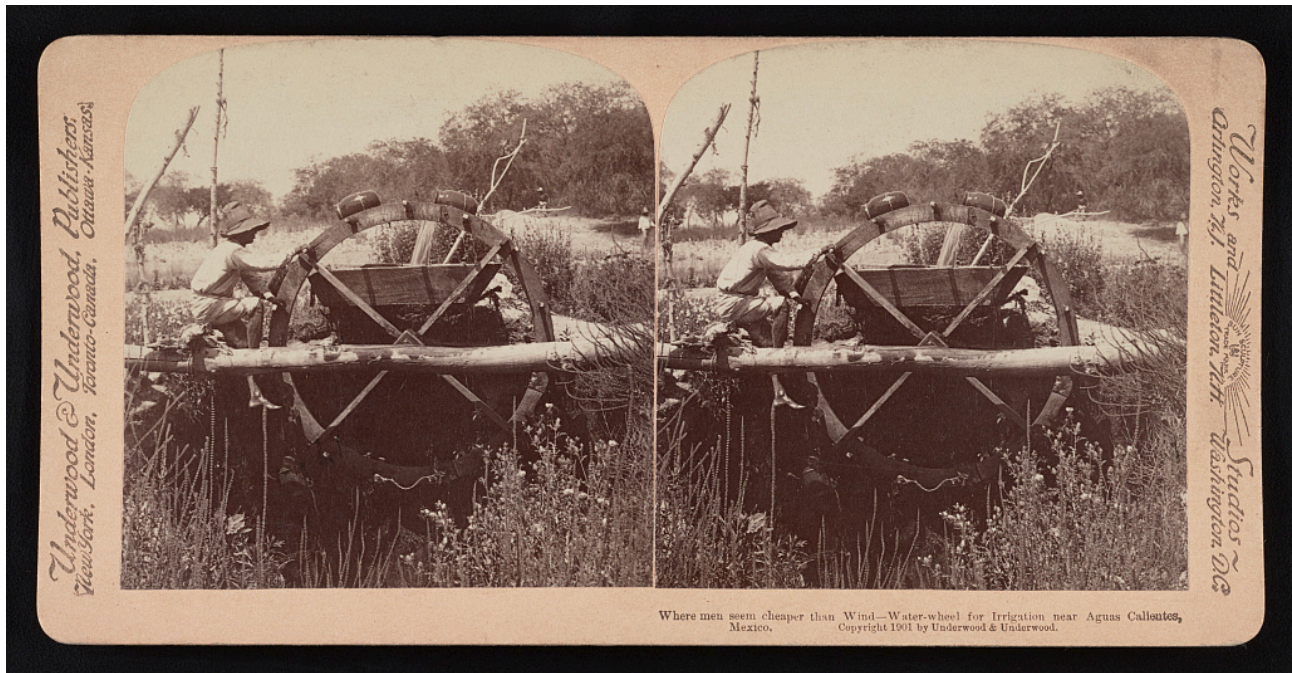


Title: Guanajuato, amidst the most richly silver-laden mountains in the world, Mexico  
Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood.  
Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32731 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32731](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32731)



Title: Vultures around the meat market, the scavengers of Vera Cruz [Veracruz], Mexico  
Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher. Created / Published: 1901.  
Digital id: [stereo 1s33190 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33190](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33190)

Appendix H. Stereoviews from Underwood & Underwood Publishers



Title: Where men seem cheaper than wind—water-wheel for irrigation near Aguas Calientes, Mexico. Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher  
Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32529 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32529](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32529)



Title: Where 100 bananas are sold for 8 cents, Cordoba, hot lands of Mexico  
Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood. Created / Published: New York : Underwood & Underwood, c1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32622 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32622](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32622), [cph 3c19675 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c19675](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c19675)

Appendix I. Stereoviews from Underwood & Underwood Publishers



Title: Cool and refreshing—native Indians on the rocks in Rio Blanco, hot lands of Mexico

Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher

Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32558 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32558](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32558)



Title: In the beautiful gardens of Chapultepec, the home of Mexico's President

Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher

Created / Published 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32583 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32583](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32583)

Appendix J. Stereoviews from Underwood & Underwood Publishers



Title: The beautiful home and family of a high official of Mexico - Sr. Gonzalez, Governor of Guanajuato. Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher  
Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32725 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32725](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32725)



Title: Luxurious parlor in the home of a silver king, Guanajuato, Mexico.  
Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher  
Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32732 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32732](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32732)

Appendix K. Stereoview from Underwood & Underwood Publishers



Title: One of the modern streets of Puebla, Mexico

Contributor Names: Underwood & Underwood, publisher

Created / Published: 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s33062 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33062](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s33062)



Appendix L. Perspectives of the theater 'Juárez'



Title: Magnificent entrance to the theater 'Juarez', Guanajuato - the finest theater in Mexico  
 Contributor Names: Underwood and Underwood, publisher  
 Created / Published 1901. Digital id: [stereo 1s32738 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32738](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32738)



Title: Finest of theater in western hemisphere, Guanajuato, Mexico  
 Contributor Names: Pan American Photo Art Co., publisher  
 Created / Published: 1902. Digital id: [stereo 1s32730 //hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32730](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32730)

Appendix M. 'The Mexican Niagara'



Title: 'The Niagara of Mexico'-  
Juanacatlan Falls, Mexico. No.  
10867. Contributor Names:  
Keystone View Company,  
publisher  
Created / Published: 1900.  
Digital id: stereo 1s32790 //  
[hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/  
stereo.1s32790](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32790)



Title: 'The Niagara of Mexico'-  
Juanacatlan Falls, Mexico. No.  
906. Contributor Names:  
Standard Scenic Company,  
publisher  
Created / Published: 1906.  
Digital id: stereo 1s32797 //  
[hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/  
stereo.1s32797](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32797)



Title: The beautiful falls of  
Juanacatlan, the Mexican  
Niagara, harnessed for electric  
power, Guadalajara, Mexico.  
No. 26. Contributor Names:  
Berry, Kelley & Chadwick  
Publishers, publisher  
Created / Published: 1906.  
Digital id: stereo 1s32799 //  
[hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/  
stereo.1s32799](https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/stereo.1s32799)