ROBERT FLAHERTY'S NANOOQ OF THE NORTH
The Politics of Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography

Nanook of the North (1922), a film that focuses on the daily activities of a family of Itivimuit, a group of Quebec Inuit, is considered by many to be one of the great works of art of independent cinema (Figure 1). It is seen as a point of origin: It has been called the first documentary film, the first ethnographic film, as well as the first art film. The writings about Nanook are inextricably wound up with the image of its director, Robert J. Flaherty. There is an aura around the Flaherty name: he is praised as the father of documentary and ethnographic cinema, as a great storyteller and humanitarian, and as the first maverick independent artist uncorrupted by Hollywood. Unlike other white filmmakers of indigenous peoples, it is claimed that he never exploited his subjects. Flaherty embraced his own myth when he declared: “First I was an explorer; then I was an artist.”

Nanook is also an artifact of popular culture. When it was released and distributed by Pathé in 1922 in both the United States and Europe, it fed upon an already established craze in those countries for the Inuit as a kind of cuddly “primitive” man. The writer Joseph E. Senungetuk, an Innupiat from Northwest Alaska, summarized this stereotype: “a people without technology, without a culture, lacking intelligence, living in igloos, and at best, a sort of simplistic ‘native boy’ type of subhuman arctic being.” Nanook was extremely popular when it was released worldwide, and spawned what ethnographic filmmaker Asen Balikci has called “Nanookmania.” Many writers consider Nanook as the high point of the age d’or of ethnographic cinema, the period from 1922 to 1932, which also saw the release of Flaherty’s Moana (1926) and his collaboration with F. W. Murnau, Tabu (1931). Revived on numerous occasions, Nanook remains a staple for high school and university courses in anthropology and ethnographic film.

The academic discourse on Nanook of the North centers on questions of authenticity. Some have argued that because the scenes of everyday Quebec Inuit life were reconstructed to enhance the film’s visual and narrative impact, it cannot be considered true science. Other anthropologists contend that cinematic representation can never fully be objective—thus both Flaherty’s innovative “flow of life” style, as Siegfried Kracauer termed it, and the purported participation of the Inuit people filmed are hailed as markers of Flaherty’s pioneering genius. Still others add that the documentary value of the film lies in its portrayal of essential humanity. Ethnographic filmmaker Luc De Heusch is representative of this last school of thought. De Heusch exclaimed that Nanook was “a family portrait . . . the epic of a man, of a society frantically struggling to survive . . . Family life, the human condition, are conquests from which animals are excluded. Such, in essence, is the theme of the film. Nanook, the hero of the first ethnographic film, is also the symbol of all civilization.

The focus of this essay will be on an overlooked aspect of the film: what the film and the discourse surrounding it can tell us about the nature of anthropological knowledge and the role of visual media in legitimating that knowledge and other regimes of truth. Nanook was praised as a film of universal reality, and Flaherty was held up to be a “real” filmmaker, untainted by commercial concerns. Conversely the Oedipal slaying of this great father-figure in recent criticism has focused on Flaherty as forger of the reality of the Quebec Inuit. In both cases, what is ignored is how Nanook emerges from a web of discourses which constructed the Inuit as Primitive man, and which considered cinema, and particularly Flaherty’s form of cinema, to be a mode of representation that could only be truthful. I am not so much interested in whether or not Flaherty was an artist or a liar, but in taxidermy, and how the discourse of authenticity has created the film.

I take inspiration from the subtitle of Leprohon’s fine book on the ethnographic cinema of travel and exploration: L’exotisme et le cinéma: Les “chasseurs d’images” à la conquête du monde . . . (1945), and examine Nanook of the North as the product of a hunt for images, as a kind of taxidermic display. First I show how the film represents a paradigm for a mode of representing indigenous peoples that parallels the romantic primitivism of modern anthropology. Second, I examine the discourse around the Inuit, a discourse which has been largely ignored: Nanookmania was preceded by a historical fascination for Inuit performers in
exhibitions, zoos, fairs, museums and early cinema. Finally, I examine the discourse on Flaherty as explorer/artist, a discourse which has painted him as either the great artist, or, like the Wizard of Oz, the Great Humbug or falsifier of reality. There are thus three hunts (and therefore three acts of taxidermy): the history of the hunt for representations of the Inuit for science and popular culture, the hunt for cinematic images of the Inuit for the film Nanook, and cinema’s hunt for Flaherty as great artist and/or great liar.

Taxidermy, Salvage Ethnography, and Slight Narrative

Nanook of the North is often seen as a film without a scripted narrative. Filmed on location at Inuksuk (formerly Port Harrison), at the Inuksuk River in Quebec, Canada, the family of Quebec Inuit represented in the film consists of the hunter Nanook the Bear (played by Allakariallak); the wife and mother of his children Nyla (played by Alice [?] Nuvalinga), who is always shown caring for and carrying the baby Rainbow; another woman Cunayoo; and various children including Nanook’s son Allegoo (played by Phillipoose). The narrative of Flaherty’s film seems to ramble: it begins with the introduction of the family, the repair of kayaks and making of fuel; the family then trades furs at the trading post of the fur company; Nanook fishes and then hunts walrus; the family builds an igloo and goes to sleep; they then wake up and go off in their dog sleds, a scene culminating in the famous seal hunt so beloved by film theorist André Bazin. The film ends with the arrival of a storm and the family taking shelter in an abandoned igloo.

Significantly, although it was not intended as a scientific research film, Franz Boas of Columbia University in New York City, perhaps the leading anthropologist of the period, also praised Nanook. Boas was known as the founder of cultural anthropology in the United States and a proponent of the use of film for recording “isolable actions” of the body. In 1933, Boas wrote a letter to Will Hays, the president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, about the possibility of film collaborations between anthropologists and Hollywood on “the primitive races.” Footage could be used and recycled for films of scientific, educational, as well as entertainment purposes. Boas explained that commercial films like Flaherty’s Moana (1926) and Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack’s Grass (1925) and Chang (1927) (the team who would later direct King Kong [1933]), although of some scientific value, would have been better if a trained anthropologist had been on site in an advisory capacity.

I am interested in Boas’ use of the word “picturesque” in his letter to Hays:

Assuming ... that a man who knows Eskimo life in and out, had been at hand to direct a film like NANOOK, many exceedingly picturesque and interesting features of native life might have been brought in which would not only have improved the quality of the film but would have also made it more attractive to the general audiences. ... most of the material of this kind has to be collected now because each year sees native cultures breaking down and disappearing under the onslaught of White civilization.

Native cultures, Boas contended, were vanishing “from a pictorial point of view,” and the anthropologist’s task was to record as much of the pictorial and the picturesque as possible.

The picturesque, as invoked directly by Boas, consists of scenes such as rituals, dance, food preparation, indigenous technology (pottery-making, for example) and so on—all that is replete with “authentic”
detail and without the influence of European culture. Boas' notion of the picturesque went hand in hand with what George W. Stocking, Jr., has described as the "ethnographicization" of anthropology, a process in which the empiricism and epistemological underpinnings of anthropological notions of evolutionary time were overlaid with an increasingly romantic Rousseauesque study of "surviving primitive peoples." During the "classic period" of modern anthropology, the term Stocking uses to label the period from the 1920s to the 1960s, the influence of Franz Boas and the school of American culturalism made ethnographic film and other visual media an increasingly important tool for assembling data for description. If Boas feared the "pictorial breakdown" of "primitive cultures," he chose to defy their "death" through recording and reconstructing them.12

I call the mode of representation of the Ethnographic which emerged from this impulse taxidermy. Taxidermy seeks to make that which is dead look as if it were still living. In order to explain the applicability of the term to early ethnographic cinema, I would like to borrow from Stephen Bann's description of the nineteenth-century practice of taxidermy.13 Bann writes that as "the restoration of the life-like," taxidermy "is itself postulated as a response to a sense of loss. In other words, the Utopia of life-like reproduction depends upon, and reacts to, the fact of death. It is a strenuous attempt to recover, by means which must exceed those of convention, a state which is (and must be) recognized as lost."14 Donna Haraway, in her marvelous article on Carl Akeley's early twentieth-century dioramas, taxidermy, photography, and film at the American Museum of Natural History, likewise speaks of taxidermy as a means to protect against loss, in order that the body may be transcended: "Taxidermy fulfills the fatal desire to represent, to be whole; it is a politics of reproduction."15 Since indigenous peoples were assumed to be already dying if not dead, the ethnographic "taxidermist" turned to artifice, seeking an image more true to the posited original. When Flaherty stated, "One often has to distort a thing to catch its true spirit," he was not just referring to his own artistry, but to the preconditions for the effective, "true" representation of so-called vanishing culture.16

It is a paradox of this cinema of romantic preservationism that the reaction—"That person is alive!"—is most easily elicited if the subjects filmed are represented as existing in a former epoch. As Johannes Fabian has pointed out, the specificity of anthropology is that the subjects of its inquiry are represented as existing in an earlier age. Fabian explains the significance of the use in modern anthropology of the "ethnographic present," the practice of writing in the present tense about the people whom the anthropologist studied. The dominant pronoun/verb form is: "They are (do, have, etc.)." This form of rhetoric presupposes that the people studied are timeless, and establishes the anthropologist as hidden observer, akin to the natural historian—in that he or she stands at the peephole into the distant past.17 As Flaherty himself explained, he did not want to show the Inuit as they were at the time of the making of the film, but as (he thought) they had been. The ethnographic present also obfuscates the dialogue and the encounters that took place between the anthropologist and the people studied. In other words, as Fabian writes, "pronouns and verb forms in the third person mark an Other outside the dialogue."18

The cinema of Flaherty worked in the same way: Nanook and his family were represented in a cinematic "ethnographic present" in which intertitles establish the camera, and thus the filmmaker, as observer. In the trading post sequence, for example, the viewer is posited as objective voyeur, enjoying the erotics of the vanishing race myth.19 Against a wall of the white fur pelts, Nyla sits in the background rocking with her baby, and Nanook, crouched in the left foreground with the trader at the right in a higher position, gazes at the gramophone in the center (Figure 2). Nanook touches the gramophone: intertitles explain that he does not understand where the sound comes from or how it is made. He then is shown biting the record three times while laughing at the camera. This conceit of the indigenous person who does not understand Western technology was and is common to ethnographic cinema. It allows for real voyeuristic pleasure and reassures the viewer of the contrast between the Primitive and the Modern: it engrains the notion that the people are not really acting. Their naivety—they do not understand this foreign technology—is another sign of authenticity. This conceit, of course, obscures the Inuit's own appropriation of new technology: the Inuit, after all, served as Flaherty's film crew.

This scene of abundant furs, puppies, and a constructed primitive naiveté—Nanook biting the record, Inuit women likened to female dogs, and infantile gorging of biscuits—reveals the way that genocide is made erotic, an evolutionary inevitability.20 Furthermore, if the indigenous man, Nanook, is constructed as a being without artifice, as referent, the indigenous woman is there to be uncovered, her body—and this is true of ethnographic cinema in general—to be scopically possessed by the camera/filmmaker and the audience as well. As intended, however, this form of ethnographic film, infused with the notion of death and the
idea of vanishing races, is a cinema of archetypal moments endlessly repeated. In Nanook, the archetypal moment is that of a society ignorant of guns or gramophones: a society of man the hunter, man against nature, man the eater of raw flesh. Nanook of the North was a cinema of origins in many ways: Its appeal was the myth of authentic first man. These themes are prevalent in ethnographic cinema and, until recently, in anthropological discourse in general. Whether one examines photographic images or drawings accompanying the racial typologies of turn-of-the-century medical anthropology, or the more romanticized visual images of mid-twentieth-century anthropology, two characteristics are nearly always present: 1) a focus on the indigenous body (since the subjects of study were seen as being without sophisticated, i.e., written, language abilities, the body became the privileged site of investigation), and 2) a situating of the filmed subject in a displaced temporal realm (as an exemplar of an earlier epoch in evolutionary history). The viewer is conditioned to see these characteristics whenever confronted with an image of the Ethnographic. This is why, borrowing a phrase from the

writer and critic V. Y. Mudimbe, I like to say that the viewer of the ethnographic film is not simply seeing indigenous culture; rather, he or she is “seeing anthropology.”

What has been called Flaherty’s “slight narrative” thus fits perfectly with a racializing representation of the Inuit, which situates indigenous peoples outside modern history. Nanook, however, is structured as a film about the daily life of the Inuit, its novelty deriving from the fact that it was neither a scientific expedition film meant to serve as a positivist record, nor a travelogue of jokey tourism. As mentioned above, Siegfried Kracauer described Flaherty as a filmmaker of the “flow of life.” Kracauer writes, “Flaherty’s ‘slight narratives’ portray or resuscitate modes of existence that obtain among primitive peoples. . . . Most Flaherty films are expressive of his romantic desire to summon, and preserve for posterity, the purity and ‘majesty’ [Flaherty’s word] of a way of life not yet spoiled by the advance of civilization.” Flaherty explained this best when he described film as “a very simple form.” For Flaherty, the medium made simple was well-suited to the subject matter: films are very well-suited to portraying the lives of primitive people whose lives are simply lived and who feel strongly, but whose activities are external and dramatic rather than internal and complicated. I don’t think you can make a good film of the love affairs of the Eskimo . . . because they never show much feeling in their faces, but you can make a very good film of Eskimos spearing a walrus.

The “ethnographic” is without intellect: He or she is best represented as merely existing. It is the camera of the explorer/artist who will capture the reality of their “simply lived” lives. Hence the notion (and myth) that the actors in Nanook were “non-actors.”

The desire of Euro-American audiences and critics to perceive Nanook as authentic Primitive man, as an unmediated referent, is evident in the fact that until the 1970s, no one bothered to ask members of the Inuit community in which the film was made for their opinions of the film. Only then was it learned that the name of the actor who played Nanook was Allakariallak. The same applies to all the other characters in the film. Although it was typical for explorers to “nickname” the Inuit they encountered, Flaherty’s innovation was in giving the Inuit nicknames that sounded Inuit. Hence Nanook (the Bear) was a better and more easily marketable name than Allakariallak, because of its seeming genuineness and its dual connotations of cuddly like a teddy bear, and wild like a savage beast.
At the end of the film there is a haunting shot of Nanook sleeping, a close-up of his head. He appears to be asleep, but his absolute stillness reminds us of a waxwork or a corpse. Taxidermy is also deeply religious: When Bazin writes that the mummy complex is the impulsion behind the evolution of technologies of realism—"To preserve, artificially, his bodily appearance is to snatch it from the flow of time, to stow it away neatly, so to speak, in the hold of life"—one is reminded of the image of the sleeping Nanook. In ethnographic cinema, the narrative of the film hinges upon the body of the native—plugged into the narrative of evolution and the myth of vanishing races. It is this body, and not that of an Oedipal father or mother which must be slain and upon which the narrative rests. That Allakariallak died two years after the film was released, of either starvation or disease, only enhanced the film's status as a work of authenticity.

The Hunt for the Inuit and the Alaskan Eskimo: Explorers, Museums, Fairs, and Films

The trail of contact between Arctic peoples and whites was already littered with corpses by the time of Nanook. The appetite for the Inuit—specifically for images of their bodies—by both scientists and the public began in 1577 when the explorer Martin Frobisher presented Queen Elizabeth I with a man, woman, and child from Baffinland. The representation of the Inuit began with explorers' accounts: the belief that the word "Eskimo" means "eater of raw meat" reveals what the public found most interesting about them. Because of their diet of raw meat, they were described as animal-like, savage and cannibalistic. They also would be repeatedly compared to their sled dogs, and this canine metaphor was most interesting about them. Because of their diet of raw meat, they were described as animal-like, savage and cannibalistic. They also would be repeatedly compared to their sled dogs, and this canine metaphor was used in Nanook.

Arctic explorers brought back more than just maps, furs, and ivory. It was common for explorers to bring back Inuit. It was also a "tradition" that these Inuit rarely returned to their homelands: they frequently died from diseases for which they had no immunity. Like the West Africans and Malagasy whom Félix-Louis Regnault filmed in exhibitions, the Inuit were extremely popular performers in exhibitions, zoos, and museums. They were treated as specimens and objects of curiosity.

Some of the Inuit left behind written records of their experiences as performers. One such account is that of a man named Abraham, one of eight Labrador Inuit brought over by J. Adrian Jacobsen to perform in the Hagenbeck Zoo in Berlin. Abraham kept a diary where he described how one member of the group was beaten by a dog whip and how they performed at the zoo in freezing conditions. Like the climax of Nanook, the climax of these performers' acts at the zoo was a seal hunt. Within three months, however, all had died from smallpox. Their bones immediately were used for anthropological research.

Explorers like Robert Peary were dependent on the good will and money of industrialists and museum philanthropists to fund their expeditions. To increase their own fame, and to make some profit, explorers brought back Inuit and Alaskan Eskimo to be exhibited. Peary was notorious for his cruelty and arrogance toward the Inuit who worked for him, often treating them no better than dogs. When they died, often from diseases which his ships inadvertently brought, he would exhume their bodies and sell them to museums. Explorers also made most of their fortunes through the furs and ivory they received from the Inuit.

In 1896, Franz Boas, who was then assistant curator of the American Museum of Natural History, pleaded with Peary to bring back an Inuit for the museum. It is surprising that Boas, who in 1893 had worked on anthropological exhibits at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago where many performers, including Inuit, had died (their bodies were later used in the Field Museum), apparently did not consider the danger of exposing the Inuit to disease as an obstacle. Of the six Inuit from Smith Sound who were brought by Peary and housed in the American Museum of Natural History, only one did not immediately die of pneumonia, a little boy known as Minik Wallace. Abandoned by Peary and by Boas and the museum scientists who had brought him to the United States, Wallace was adopted and grew up in New York, only to discover as a teenager that when his father had died the scientists had staged a fake burial, and that indeed his father's bones were at the museum. As Wallace explained in a letter to a friend:

You can't know the sad feelings I have... No one can know unless they have been taken from their home and had their father die and put on exhibition, and be left to starve in a strange land where the men insult you when you ask for your own dear father's body to bury or to be sent home.

These are the civilized men who steal, and murder, and torture, and pray and say "Science."

Not surprisingly, the Inuit were popular subjects for museum models in dioramas. For example, the first museum models at the Smithsonian Institution's United States National Museum (now the National Museum...
In the nineteenth century, the image of the Eskimo acquired nuances in addition to that of "wild Savage." As Ann Fienup-Riordan notes, the Eskimo were made into the mirror image of the explorers. Like the explorers, the Eskimo were represented as noble, brave, independent, persevering, and incorruptible. But ideas about the relatively lofty status of the Eskimo did not mean that the Eskimo were perceived as able to undergo their own "independent progress" without white intervention. In a sense, the Eskimo were seen as Primitive success stories of an Arctic "survival of the fittest." Fienup-Riordan explains:

The publicity these arctic representatives received marked the progressive transformation of the image of Eskimos from subhuman to superhuman. Displayed along with their sophisticated hunting tools and wearing polar bear skins, these living specimens came to represent the ultimate survivors, intrepid and courageous individualists who through sheer cunning were able to best their rivals in the free market place of the arctic world. Happy, peaceful, hardworking, independent, and adaptable—these were the images most often used to clothe the Eskimos in the twentieth century. The nuances of Eskimo reality dimmed in comparison to this dramatically staged representation, an image increasingly acceptable because of its incorporation of traits Westerners valued in themselves.

This notion of the Eskimo as an uncorrupt example of all the values of the West—inducence and perseverance and patriarchy—reached its epitome in the cinematic character of Nanook. In both the United States and Europe, the 1920s were characterized by a pervasive fear of racial mixing: the white was constructed as the Nordic—pale, blond, blue-eyed, from the North. The term "Nordic" was used in popular culture to refer to whites of Northern European descent. The fear was that the Nordic was being annihilated by racial mixing. At best, the Inuit or Alaskan Eskimo was the primitive Nordic, or as Asen Balikci termed it, a "primitive Protestant." I would like to suggest that the character Nanook was thus something of a mirror for the white audience: he too was from the North, and, as Balikci's comment suggests, like the Nordic, was seen as embodying the Protestant values of patriarchy, industriousness, independence and courage. But the character Nanook is still the subject of voyeuristic observation, not acknowledged as coequal of the adventurer/anthropologist.

As I have argued elsewhere, cinema took over from the world's fair many of the functions of the native village exhibition. Indeed one of the earliest cinematic depictions of the Inuit is a body of film by Thomas Edison in 1901 of the "Esquimaux Village" at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. Edison produced footage of the Inuit as happy gamblers in dog sleds amidst papier maché igloo environments with painted backdrops of snowy mountains and fake ice floes.

But the appetite for the "real" and the "unexplored" was insatiable, and numerous films about Arctic exploration that include footage of or relating to the Inuit and Alaskan Eskimo were made before Nanook. In almost all these films, the narrative centers on a whaling expedition or arctic exploration. Footage of Inuit and Alaskan Eskimo hunting polar bear and paddling in kayaks were "picturesque" details, which lent an air of authenticity to these filmed journeys.

The use of film to enhance lectures on expeditions and Arctic peoples was also common. The indigenous people served as "picturesque," elements of the landscape, marking the exotic and primitive past through which the modern white explorers were passing. In William Van Valin's films of Point Barrow, Alaska (1912–1918) there is a comparatively interesting seal hunting scene, by now a staple of films relating to the Inuit or Alaskan Eskimo. The style of the scene approaches that of the seal hunting in Nanook: one lone Alaskan Eskimo in an empty landscape seal Hunts a long time, the intertitles explaining "thought of hungry wife and kiddies urges weary hunter on." Because this title is followed by a pan of the landscape, it allows the viewer for a moment to see with the hunter's eyes.

As in Nanook, the emphasis in Van Valin's footage is on the hunt and the ensuing butchering of the carcass. But whereas Flaherty used intercutting shots of howling hungry dogs as a metaphor for Nanook's family's struggle, Van Valin uses catchy kitsch-y rifles like "Dog eat dog" for a scene in which a dog eats raw meat. In Van Valin's films, the Alaskan Eskimo are portrayed as carefree, playful, dancing, and instinctive: "old Eskimo smell whale through twelve feet of ice." The Alaskan Eskimo filmed tend to line up and stare, laughing at the camera; similarly, in Nanook, the actors often look up at the camera and laugh after they have performed a particular act.

Like most arctic exploration films, death suffuses Van Valin's film. There is a tremendous amount of footage of the bones of Alaskan Es-
kimo, skeletons scattered everywhere in an empty landscape, with the accompanying intertitle: "Where solitude now reigns supreme, except when the wind whistles through the eye orbits and nasal cavities of these empties."43

There are several aspects that Nanook shares with its predecessors. In both, there is an emphasis on hunting and the eating of raw meat by people and dogs. As I have suggested, the seal hunt scene is all but obligatory. To the extent that Western contact is portrayed, it is as benign, even amusing trade—the Inuit get novelties and the Euro-Americans get fur. In both Nanook of the North and the expedition film, moreover, the Inuit and Alaskan Eskimo are portrayed as playful, with the use of nicknames common, but in both death is always lurking.44 The close-ups in Nanook also borrow from the expedition genre: the laughing Inuit holds up the fish for the camera; other portraits in Flaherty's film are infused with the dreamlike Pictorialist style akin to Edward Sheriff Curtis's work.45

Despite these many similarities, Flaherty's film stands out. As I argue in the next section, the innovation is not only in Flaherty's distinctive film style as in the creation of the myth that Flaherty had produced for the first time a form of cinema paralleling participant observation.

Nanook of the North and Salvage Ethnography

In the same year that Nanook was released, the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski wrote his pioneering ethnography, Argonauts of the Western Pacific (1922) about the inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands, off the coast of what is now Papua New Guinea. If Nanook is the archetypal documentary/ethnographic/art film, Argonauts is without a doubt the archetypal written ethnography. The many common aspects of Malinowski's new conception of the anthropologist as fieldworker and Flaherty's notion of the filmmaker as "explorer/artist" show that the film and the book were made and received in a similar climate of ideas about indigenous peoples and truthful representation. Malinowski wrote, "The final goal, of which an Ethnographer should never lose sight...is, briefly, to grasp the natives' point of view, his relation to life, to realize his vision of his world."46 The product of this ideal of the anthropologist entering the "field" as a solitary observer was to be a written ethnography, a cultural description of "a people," rather than an historical account of an encounter, a description meant to convince the reader that the anthropologist "had been there" as both all-knowing insider and as scrupulous objective observer.

But participant observation, notes Fabian, "was not canonized to promote participation but to improve observation." Like the time machine of cinema, anthropology as participant observation involved an oscillation between the positions of distance and closeness, subject and object. Anthropology's visualism, its "ideological bias toward vision," meant that knowledge was "based upon, and validated by, observation."47

Part of the appeal of participant observation is that it purportedly enables the Ethnographer, to show not how the anthropologist sees the native, but how the native sees himself. Flaherty encouraged the belief that he was doing just that. He explained, "I wanted to show the Innuit [sic]. And I wanted to show them, not from the civilized point of view, but as they saw themselves, as 'we the people.'"48

Nanook is perhaps the first example in film of a mode of representation which incorporates the participant observation ideal. Flaherty claimed to be a long-time explorer in the area, and his admirers even said that he had been adopted by Nanook and his family (this point was never proven). Because Flaherty showed rushes to his Inuit crew, and because Inuit contributed to all aspects of filmmaking (from acting, to the repair of his cameras, to the printing and developing of the film, to the suggestion of scenes to film), critics from the art world as well as anthropology have claimed that Nanook represents true collaboration, the native acting out his or her own self-conception (Figure 3).49

As James Clifford and Clifford Geertz have pointed out, the myth of "participant observation" was fashioned out of rhetorical devices creating the impression of "being there." Although Flaherty wanted to create this impression, it would be hasty to assume that Nanook was the product of collaboration. The very fact that we do not have any Inuit accounts of the filmmaking process would appear to deny the "collaborative" nature of the film. Since we do not know to what degree Flaherty was intimate with the actors (his writings boast of an intimacy which Inuit eyewitnesses do not seem to recall), since we do not know whether he asked them to play themselves, and since we do not have an indigenous point of view to compare the film against, it is more fruitful to view the claims of collaboration as evidence of the "romantic" ideal of the ethnographer/artist than as an essential aspect of the film.50

In Nanook of the North, participant observation is achieved by the ensure of almost all signs of white contact. Thus the spectator views the
landscape with Nanook; but he also views Nanook. The spectator becomes both participant (seeing with the eyes of Nanook) and observer (an omnipotent eye viewing Nanook). The viewers of Nanook thus become participant observers themselves: the audience participates in the hunt for the seal and the walrus along with Nanook. A white viewer may identify with the Nordic qualities of Nanook, but still participate in the "hunt" for the body of Nanook, as vanishing race, as First Man. The issue then is not "whether Flaherty was a legitimate anthropologist" but how the public was led to believe that they were seeing anthropology in a manner that allowed them to play with the boundary between viewer and viewed as vicarious participant observers, while reaffirming the boundaries between representation and reality.

Those who have praised Flaherty see him as a great artist and observer, or as Calder-Marshall called him, "an innocent eye," a man who filmed out of love not greed. As Richard Corliss said, Flaherty "simply saw the truth and brought it home." Many have complained, however, that Nanook of the North did not present a true representation of Inuit life. Only seven years after Nanook was released, the explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson claimed that Nanook was as authentic as Santa Claus. But there were many rebuttals to the critics' denunciations of Nanook as staged. Flaherty's statement, "One often has to distort a thing to catch its true spirit," was seen to prove that Flaherty was an artist who portrayed "felt experience," and so was not a mere mechanical recorder. Forty years after Nanook, ethnographic filmmakers Luc de Heusch and Jean Rouch, as well as Asen Balikci, praised Nanook as the first example of participatory cinema. Unlike early ethnographic filmmakers like Baldwin Spencer, or later filmmakers like Boas and Mead, de Heusch and Rouch did not believe that cinema is objective, that one can take "cinematographic notes." De Heusch in particular pointed out that films of everyday life in real time are usually quite boring and only of interest for the anthropologist. The irony—and this irony is at the heart of taxidermy as well—is that "reality" filmed does not appear real. The filmmaker must use artifice to convey truth. One way he or she can do this is by inviting the indigenous people who are the subjects in the film to act out their lives.

The image of Flaherty was that of the ideal Ethnographic Filmmaker: one who produces his work only after having lived in an area for a long time, observed the people and then collaborated with them. Luc de Heusch explained that the Inuit actors willingly play-acted for the camera, a technique which he emphasized is ethnographically sound, using French anthropologist Marcel Griaule's use of role-play as an example. De Heusch wrote:

The authenticity of this sort of "documentary" ultimately depends entirely on the honesty of the director, who, through his work, asserts that "This is what I saw." In fact he has not seen exactly this or that aspect of what he shows, he has not always seen these things in the way he shows them, since that way is a language which he invents in cooperation with actors whose roles are authentic. The documentary is a work of art imbued with rationality and truth.

De Heusch continued:

Flaherty, more than anyone, had the gift of entering into conversation, on our behalf, with the Stranger. Through "Nanook" we "grasp" to the fullest extent, that is emotionally and rationally, the essential condition of Eskimo man left to himself: he is no longer a phantasmal shadow moving across the snow, an anonymous creature whose body and real presence can only be imperfectly imagined from the reading of learned treatises.

In a sense, then, what Flaherty was doing was opposing mere inscription (the objective of early ethnographic footage) to that which I term taxi-
dermy, and which Bazin praised as ontological realism. Much has been written and lauded about Flaherty's innovative cinematography and editing. Flaherty's use of long takes, re-framing, and depth-of-field cinematography using deep-focus lenses constituted a new style which Bazin describes as more moving, more realistic than what had gone before:

The camera cannot see everything at once but it makes sure not to lose any part of what it chooses to see. What matters to Flaherty, confronted with Nanook hunting the seal, is the relation between Nanook and the animal; the actual length of the waiting period. Montage could suggest the time involved. Flaherty however confines himself to showing the actual waiting period; the length of the hunt is the very substance of the image, its true object.\(^5^8\)

I do not contest the great influence of Flaherty's film style on documentary and realist forms of filmmaking. However, I am interested here in how his style is coded as closer to the real. Intrinsic to this coding of Nanook as a work of truth, a work of great art, was the construction of the image of Flaherty as explorer/artist, an image which Flaherty himself helped to construct through his various writings. It is to Flaherty's self-fashioned self that I will now turn.

**Flaherty as Explorer: Heart of Whiteness**

Ethnographic filmmaker Asen Balikci has summed up the image of the explorer/ethnographic filmmaker from the time of Nanook:

> the ethnographer from Paris, London or New York, had usually gone to an extremely remote and exotic place where he studied the people and wrote books about them. The literature of exploration in exotic regions had further contributed to the popular perception of the ethnographer as hero. Building upon this reputation, the ethnocinematographer had the added advantage of showing to a large audience a film about strange and fascinating peoples—this was a demonstration that he was actually there, that the strange people liked him and that he liked them, otherwise how could the film have been made? His was a lonely and daring adventure, an exploration into the unknown, and so on.\(^5^9\)

Because of the idea that the ethnographic filmmaker must have been friends with the natives—the film being the proof of the relationship—Flaherty's image as authentic communicator of the life of the natives was always intact, even as critics complained of inaccuracies in the film.

Like Malinowski, who constructed "the Ethnographer" through rhe-

Flaherty's Nanook of the North

torical devices like the ethnographic present, Flaherty contributed to the notion that his film was authentic through his own writings. Flaherty's self-image was that of the explorer penetrating the wilderness, meeting "primitive" natives and finding treasures to take back home. In his autobiographical *My Eskimo Friends: "Nanook of the North"* (1924), the treasures he describes include his mineral discoveries and maps, as well as the film and photographs shot.\(^6^0\)

My *Eskimo Friends* is an account of Flaherty's career as explorer and filmmaker in the Arctic. Like all great explorers, he attributes the "discovery" of an island archipelago to himself. The Inuit he meets are depicted as grateful natives, although foul-smelling, and often "primitive looking"; he, on the other hand, is a kind of explorer Santa Claus who at Christmas gives them tobacco, needles, and candy. Tellingly, he claims they call him Angarooka, "the white master."\(^6^1\) He calls them "my Eskimos," and often uses animal-metaphors to describe them.\(^6^2\)

The story constitutive of the relationship between Nanook (never referred to by his real name) and Flaherty is that of Nanook's devotion to the "aggie" (film). Flaherty asks Nanook if he understands that in filling the walrus hunt, the film is more important than the hunt. Nanook replies, "Yes, yes, the aggie will come first... Not a man will stir, not a harpoon will be thrown until you give the sign. It is my word." Flaherty recalls, "We shook hands and agreed to start the next day."\(^6^3\)

It is this anecdote that is so treasured by the critics, for it meant that the film was a real ethnographic film, a film without voyeurism, the product of complete collaboration. The image of the devoted native is underlined by another anecdote about how the Inuit who worked for Flaherty gave up food so that Flaherty could eat. This prepares us for Flaherty's final words of reminiscence on Nanook's death. According to Flaherty, on his departure from Inukjuak, Nanook was sad to see him go and begged him to stay.\(^6^4\) "The kablunaks' movie igloo, into which thousands came, was utterly beyond his comprehension. They were many, I used to say, like the little stones along the shore. 'And will all these kablunaks see our "big aggie!"' he would ask. There was never need to answer, for incredulity was written large upon his face."\(^6^5\)

My *Eskimo Friends* was a celebration of Flaherty as great humanist explorer, beloved by the natives, privy to the essence of native life. The book is dedicated to Flaherty's father, also an explorer. Flaherty's later novel *The Captain's Chair* (1938) provides us with an even greater understanding of what being an explorer meant to him. Told in first person, it is the story of a young man like himself who goes to look for minerals in
the Hudson Bay area of Canada, but who throughout his years of travels in Northern Canada is searching above all for the great explorer and trader Captain Grant, the first man to trade with the Inuit. The narrator explains that it is a story of a captain and a ship penetrating into the heart of the Hudson's Bay Company's domain on Hudson Bay. It is also a search for a "father" hero by a young explorer.66

During his exploration expeditions the narrator learns of the terrible disaster that had befallen Grant. He had left England on top of the world. The Company had given him all the means in their power to let him go ahead and open up the north . . . rich not only in furs but perhaps in gold, silver, copper, and who knew what other ores? They had given him also this wonderful new ship.67

The book is thus an Arctic Heart of Darkness, or perhaps Heart of Whiteness is the better term. For where Joseph Conrad revealed the dark and evil side of colonialism, Flaherty only writes about its good side. Like Marlow who in The Heart of Darkness hears stories about Kurtz's exploits, Flaherty hears stories about Grant's hardships, his noble sacrifices, how he had to lash himself to the crow's nest to fight storms. Like Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, Grant has confronted "the horror." The narrator muses: "I thought of the hardship, the horror, the strain of it."68 The horror here, however, is not the heart of darkness within, but the horror of Nature's tide rips, blinding squalls, and burning cold.

Much has been written about how the anthropologist Malinowski identified with Kurtz, the mad company officer in Heart of Darkness, who the narrator Marlow sets out to find. In one section of his diary, Malinowski explicitly invokes Kurtz when he describes his anger at the people he is studying—the Trobrianders—for not posing long enough for adequate time exposures for his photographs, even after his bribe of tobacco: "On the whole my feelings toward the natives are decidedly tending to 'Exterminate the brutes.'"69 When Malinowski's diary was published, it destroyed some of the most cherished conceptions of the empathetic, value-neutral anthropologist.70 Unlike Conrad's novel in which Kurtz's "heart of darkness" can be linked to the horror of colonialism and the desire to "exterminate the brutes," Flaherty's character of Grant remains a hero explorer who "penetrates" and opens up the North for the good of the company. The Inuit are again portrayed as faithful guides, and the Indians of the region are seen as crafty. Moreover, the Indians and the Inuit are in awe of the great Explorer: "To the Indians . . . Captain Grant was a fabulous figure—chief of the biggest canoe that surely was ever in the world. Among the Eskimos in the north, too, he was a legend, he with his monster omiak [boat] with its long black tall and a voice that re-echoed among the hills."71 Like Kurtz, Grant's nerves are frayed after his harrowing experience aboard his ship (tellingly named the "Eskimo"), but he is no Kurz, for the novel ends when the narrator finally meets Grant in person and discovers: "He looked more like a scholar than a seaman."72 As Frances Flaherty commented, those who decry Flaherty's films for being too romantic do not realize how much Flaherty was really interested in the machine, in the emergence therefore of the Historical Same, the Civilized Self; in The Captain's Chair, the young explorer is not really looking for adventure and material treasure but for a mirror of his own masculine self in Grant, the Great White Explorer, his father surrogate.73 And later ethnographic filmmakers like Rouch and De Heusch will find the mirror of their own selves in the myth of the father-figure Flaherty. In the history of documentary and ethnographic film, it is Flaherty who is kept reverently alive, the mode of taxidermy here serving the filmmaker, through the aura preserved around his name.

Conclusion: Nanook Revisited

In Claude Massot's documentary film Nanook Revisited (1988), a few of the Inuit residents of Inukjuak and of the Belcher Islands—including descendents of one of the Inuit sons fathered and left behind by Flaherty—are interviewed about their memories of Robert Flaherty and the making of Nanook.74 The interviews reveal a remarkable tension between the Western reception of the film as a great work of art and the desire of the local Inuit to see records of their ancestors and their land, their recognition of the fictional quality of many of the scenes, a number of which they find ludicrous. At a screening of Nanook, the audience of Inuit community members of Inukjuak is shown convulsed with laughter over the famous seal hunting scene so beloved by Bazin and usually received with solemnity by Western audiences.

The inaccuracies in Flaherty's Nanook of the North are pointed out by Moses Nowkawalk (sp.), the manager of the local television station, and Charles Nayoumealuk (sp.), whose father was a friend of Allakariallak's. Flaherty, explained Nowkawalk, "doctored" scenes, including costuming the Inuit actors in polar bear skins, using an igloo set, and falsifying to a ridiculous extent (in the locals' eyes) the seal hunt, "so that the image would fit the Southern [i.e., non-Inuit or white] imagination." The
scene with the gramophone was staged. As Nowkawalk succinctly phrases his reaction as he watches the film, "This scene [the gramophone scene] here is sort of . . . I'm not so crazy about this scene."

Explaining that Nanook's real name was Allakariallak, Nayoumealuk comments, "Nanook seemed to suit the whites better." He also points out that the two women in Nanook—Nyla (Alice (?) Nuvalinga) and Cunayoo (whose name we do not know)—were not Allakariallak's wives, but were in fact common-law wives of Flaherty. The intended audience, as Nayoumealuk explains, was meant to be white. Nayoumealuk declares, "It was a film for white people, Inuit customs alone were to be shown. It was forbidden to see white men's tools. Flaherty wanted only Inuit objects." The reception of a film as "authentic" is dependent upon the audience and its already established notions of the characteristics of "real" people. The smile of Allakariallak/Nanook is almost an icon of ethnographic cinema, and it is frequently described as unforgettable, yet Charlie Nayoumealuk explains that part of the reason for the smile is that Allakariallak found what he was told to do in front of the camera quite funny: "each time a scene was shot, as soon as the camera was starting to shoot, he would burst out laughing. He couldn't help it. Flaherty would tell him—'Be serious.' He couldn't do it. He laughed each time."

The Inuit who Flaherty encountered became quite adept at all aspects of filmmaking; their descendents also have a passion and a command for visual media. Contemporary Inuit have embraced video, realizing that the power of white media can only be combated with Inuit media. In 1981, the Inuit began the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation, the first native broadcasting corporation in North America. Inuit media producers believe that knowing the history of how they were represented by whites and understanding the image-making processes themselves will serve to empower their own communities. As the Inukjuak television station manager, Nowkawalk, said about Nanook: "Despite all the faults that I pointed out about this film this movie is a very important movie and the photographs that Robert [Flaherty] took, because they're . . . these pictures and the still shots are the only pictures of that time in this region . . . Cause it's everybody else proclaiming it as a great film." Both Nowkawalk and Nayoumealuk's comments reveal how early ethnographic cinema is not always received by the indigenous audience in the same manner as it is received by a Western audience. Neither art nor empirical document, it is nevertheless of value because it evokes history and memory.

Canadian Inuit videomaker Zacharias Kunuk uses reconstruction practices which, though on the surface similar to Flaherty's, are not used to further the kind of redemptive narrative or the taxidermic salvage ethnography of Flaherty. With his actors—members of his own community—Kunuk collaborated to make video reconstructions of Inuit life before World War II in Qaggiq/the Gathering Place (1988) (Figure 4), depicting the building of a community house or qaggiq, and Nunaaqpal/Going Inland (1991), which depicts a hunt. Like Flaherty, Kunuk shot on location, with the actors wearing traditional seal-skin clothes. However, unlike Allakariallak in Nanook of the North, these Inuit actors are shown hunting with guns and using tea kettles. Outsiders to the culture are given no taxonomic devices such as a map with which to situate the events portrayed in the video: Many culturally specific details will only be understandable to members of the community themselves. Made from an insider's point of view, without the conceit of any "ethnographic present," Qaggiq and Nunaaqpal have no subtitles, no voice-over narrative, just the voices of the people themselves and their laughter at their own rustiness in trying to use old equipment. Older actors recount the games they used to play and chide younger actors on their clumsiness in performing...
tasks—Kunuk does not camouflage the fact that the actors are present-day community members reconstructing a remembered past.

Reconstruction can be used to different ends: Kunuk collaboratively reconstructs the recent past across generations in order to foreground the vital importance of collective history, whereas Flaherty removed signs of Inuit encounter with whites in order to sustain the myth of the Inuit as archetypal Primitive man. My purpose has not been to prove whether Nanook was a truthful document of Quebec Inuit life in the 1920s or whether Flaherty staged scenes. Instead, my goal has been to excavate the levels of discourse around the notion of authenticity, salvage ethnography, the history of the media cannibalism of the Inuit, the film’s historical and intellectual context, and the style and content of the film. I have also attempted to show how a reading of the film is inextricably connected with the cult of the Ethnographic Filmmaker in ways that other film genres are not. Flaherty’s awe for the figure of the great explorer and his own similar self-fashioning reveal the underlying narrative around his persona: Flaherty is the father of a men’s club of explorer/artists. Like his fictional character Grant, Flaherty was the first to “penetrate” and open up ethnographic cinema for other chasseurs d’images, those many independent U.S. and European filmmakers like Jean Rouch and Richard Leacock who admire him. The awe that he is granted emerges from the myth of his relationship with Nanook: it is an ideal relationship between ethnographer and his faithful, loyal, simple subject. Unlike the Trobrianders who were resistant at times to Malinowski’s image-making, the Inuit who worked for Flaherty did so out of love, so the myth goes.

This is why Nanook of the North is seen as a point of origin for art film, documentary film, and ethnographic film: it represents the Garden of Eden, the perfect relationship between filmmaker and subject, the “innocent eye,” a search for realism that was not just inscription, but which made the dead look alive and the living look dead.

Notes
6. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker writes: “Research with Inuit participants in Nanook of the North is in its initial stages. It would appear, however, that none of the leading characters were identified by their actual names; that Allakariallak’s (Nanook’s) clothing was not indigenous to the region; that the contrived sequences were highly amusing to the Inuit; that the seal hunt was contrived. It is also possible that the walrus hunting sequence had been shot in 1914 or 1916 as part of Flaherty’s earlier films, either in the Ottawa or Belcher Islands. It was from all available accounts, an authentic record of a walrus hunt” (Danzker, ed., Robert Flaherty Photographer/Filmmaker: The Inuit 1910–1922 [Vancouver: The Vancouver Art Gallery, 1980], p. 62).
9. Ibid., 61.
10. Ibid.
13. The nineteenth-century British taxidermist Charles Waterton, Barn explains, complained that the reality of dead beasts was “a mere dried specimen, shrunk too much in this part, or too bloated in that; a mummy, a distortion, an hideous spectacle.” Waterton explains that in order to reconstruct life, the taxidermist must accept the fact of death, and use art as well as artifice: “It now depends upon the skill and anatomical knowledge of the operator (perhaps I ought to call him artist at this stage of the process), to do such complete justice to the skin before him, that, when a visitor shall gaze upon it afterwards, he will exclaim, ‘That animal is alive!’” (Charles Waterton, Essays on Natural History Chiefly Ornithology [London, 1838], pp. 300–304, quoted in Stephen Barn, The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], pp. 16–17.)
18. Ibid., p. 85.
19. Even though Allakariallak is shown repeatedly smiling for the camera, an act which may appear to preclude voyeurism, the fact that he is shown ignorant of technology such as the gramophone encourages the viewer to believe that he is ignorant of moving picture technology as well.


21. I am borrowing here Naomi Greene’s insight on Mircea Eliade’s description of the mythic for her analysis of Pier Paolo Pasolfini’s films of the 1960s. She quotes Eliade on the sacrifice which “repeats the initial sacrifice and coincides with it . . . . And the same holds true for all repetitions, i.e. all imitations of archetypes; through such imitations, man is projected into the mythical epoch in which the archetypes were first revealed. Thus we perceive a second aspect of primitive ontology: insofar as an act (or an object) acquires a certain reality through the repetition of certain paradigmatic gestures, and acquires it through that alone, there is an implicit abolition of profane time, of duration, of ‘history’; and he who reproduces the exemplary gesture thus finds himself transported into the mythical epoch in which its revelation took place” (The Myth of the Eternal Return, trans. Willard Trask [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955], p. 35, quoted in Naomi Greene, Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992], p. 167).


26. I am referring here to Teresa de Lauretis’ description of the Oedipal logic of narrative in “Desire in Narrative,” Alice Doesn’t: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 103–157. De Lauretis writes, “what is femininity, acts precisely as the impulse, the desire that will generate a narrative” (111). It is, of course, not only the female body which must be slain, but that of the indigenous person, male or female.


Fatimah Tobing Rony


30. J. Garth Taylor, “An Eskimo Abroad, 1880: His Diary and Death,” Canadian Geographic 101, no. 5 (October/November 1981): 38–43. The intersection between anthropology and popular culture is quite interesting in the case of Franz Boas. Jacobsen’s collection of ethnographic artifacts would become the core of the collections at the Berlin Royal Ethnographic Museum, where Franz Boas later worked. In 1881, Jacobsen collected Kwakiutl artifacts in the same part of Canada where Boas studied. In 1883, Boas went to Baffinland himself to collect Inuit artifacts and exhume bones from graves surreptitiously. In 1886, Jacobsen brought a group of Bella Coola Indians to Berlin, an occasion which sparked Boas’ own interest in Northwest Coast Indians.


33. Minik Wallace, quoted in Ibid., p. 132.


35. Stocking points out that the anthropologist John Lubbock in his Origin of Civilization (1870) suggested that Eskimos fended well for themselves considering the environment, but that they could not achieve progress without civilized intervention (Stocking, Victorian Anthropology, p. 154).

36. Fienup-Riordan, Eskimo Essays, p. 16.

37. It is a characterization which may be found in anthropological literature as well. In 1982, the French anthropologist Jean Malaurie explained that going to study the Inuit of Thule, Greenland “a return to the Stone Age” (Jean Malaurie, The Last Kings of Thule, trans. Adrienne Foulke [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982], p. 19, quoted in Ibid., p. 21).


40. These films are Esquimaux Game of Snap-the-Whip, Esquimaux Leapfrog, and Esquimaux Village, and are at the Library of Congress. The camera operators were Edwin S. Porter and Arthur White.

To give an example of what the Alaskan Eskimo image at the exhibition fair was like, at the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition in Seattle, the promotion blurb read: “These strange people, existing only on the products of the icy North, half civilized in their nature, knowing no god, having no laws, no government, unable to read or write, with no history of their antecedents, give continuous performances of skill, marksmanship, canoeing, dancing, singing and seal catching never before seen.” (“The Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909: Photographs by Frank Howell,” Alaska Journal, Summer 1984, p. 14, as quoted in Fienup-Riordan, Eskimo Essays, pp. 16–17).

41. Films with Inuit of U.S., British, Italian, German, and French origin include: Wellman Polar Expedition. The Nordpol Expedition (Charles Urban Trading Co., 1906), A
Dash to the North Pole (Kineto, 1909), Fangen Junger Eisbären (Hunting for Young Polar Bears) (Imperium Film, 1914), Eine Forschungsreise durch das Nördliche Eismeer Nach Grönland (Mefster, 1911), and Islands of New Zealnd (Gaumont, 1913). The above films are located at the National Film Archives in London.

42. At the Human Studies Film Archives at the National Museum of Natural History. For information on the film I consulted the correspondence file of the Human Studies Film Archives.

43. These bones said to be prehistoric Eskimo were taken to the Wistar Institute of Anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

44. Flaherty was said to have admired Jack London in the South Seas by Martin Johnson (1912), which was also an expedition film. (Richard Barsam, The Vision of Robert Flaherty: The Artist as Myth and Filmmaker [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988], p. 16).


Two famous expedition films to the South Pole are that of Sir Ernest Shackleton's 1914–1917 polar expedition, South, Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic (1919), filmed by Frank Hurley, which focuses on the expedition members and their camp life as well as their rescue, and Herbert G. Ponting's With Captian Scott to the South Pole (1911–12, British Gaumont), released later as The Great White Silence (1924), of Captain Robert Falcon Scott's expedition to the South Pole. Both films are at the National Film Archives, London. For more on polar expeditions see Lisa Bloom, Gender on Ice: American Identities of Polar Expeditions (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).


47. Fabian, Time and the Other, p. 95, 106.


49. See Danzker, for attribution. Thanks to the vision of the Arctic environment of the artist Noogoooshweetok, and of later Inuit camera operators who worked for Flaherty, Nanook has some of the most beautiful landscape scenes ever filmed. Flaherty's use of drawings shows that he learned from the art of the Inuit (Danzker, Robert Flaherty, pp. 53–54). See also Peter Pittscokak, People From Our Side: An Inuit Record of Seekoosee珑k, the Land of the People of Cape Dorset, Baffin Land, a Life Story with Photographs (Edmonton: Hurtig Press, 1975), pp. 87–88.


52. Vilhjalmur Stefansson argued that the Inuit used guns, did not hunt seals through the ice, and that the seal in the film was obviously already dead. He also decried the fake igloo and the accompanying intertitle which explained that the igloo must be colder than freezing. (Vilhjalmur Stefansson, The Standardization of Error [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1929], pp. 86–92, quoted in Paul Rotha, with assistance of Basil Wright, "Nanook and the North," Studies in Visual Communication 6, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 50).


56. De Heusch, Cinema and Social Science, p. 35.

57. Ibid., p. 64.

58. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," p. 27.


61. Charlie Nayoumealuk (sp?) in the documentary Nanook Revisited (directed by Claude Massot, 1988) remembers the filming of Nanook, and that the Inuit called Flaherty "Songneoluk" (sp?) meaning "tall, left-handed man."

In Frances Flaherty's account of the filming of Elephant Boy, she refers to Flaherty as Borah Sahib or "Great White Chief" (Barsam, Vision, p. 131).


63. Ibid., p. 134.

64. Danzker points out the section in which Nanook protests all the bother of making the "big aggie" of him is almost identical to that attributed to another man, "Old Archawek," concerning Flaherty's 1914 film in Flaherty's Early Account of the Film (Danzker, Robert Flaherty, p. 57).


66. Another book by Flaherty about a great explorer in the Arctic who is helped by the Inuit was conspicuously titled White Master (London: George Routledge & Sons, LTD., 1939).


68. Ibid., p. 291.


71. Flaherty, *The Captain’s Chair*, p. 15.

72. Ibid., p. 312.


74. *Nanook Revisited* contains interviews of Inuit from the areas in which Flaherty filmed and photographed, but it quickly becomes a film about a man portrayed as a kind of latter-day Flaherty, John Johnson, the white school principal. It is his voice which dominates the second half of the film, as he discusses the erosion of Inuit values and the need to build up these values. Unlike the interview of Mary, the wife of one of Flaherty’s Inuit sons, in which Mary quite tellingly answers their questions about Flaherty and *Nanook* with non-answers, Johnson is eager to explain Inuit culture to the camera. The other Inuit whom Johnson encounters in the course of the film—such as his Inuit hunting partner, or the Inuit schoolteacher—are neither named nor interviewed. *Nanook Revisited* is aptly titled: It becomes a film dominated by a white point of view.