

studies in

Visual Communication

CAMPAIGN BOOK FOR EXHIBITORS

REVILLON FRÈRES

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"NANOOK of the NORTH"

A STORY OF LIFE AND LOVE
IN THE ACTUAL ARCTIC

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Contents

-
- 2 Introduction: A Reevaluation of Robert J. Flaherty, Photographer and Filmmaker
Jay Ruby
 - 5 Robert Flaherty/Photographer
Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker
 - 33 Nanook and the North
Paul Rotha with the assistance of Basil Wright
 - 61 The Campaign Book for Exhibitors
-

Reviews and Discussion

- 77 **Thompson** African Art in Motion: Icon and Act in the Collection of Katherine Coryton White/**Robert Plant Armstrong**
- 82 **McNaughton** Secret Sculptures of Komo: Art and Power in Bamana (Bambara) Initiation Associations/**Jean M. Borgatti**
- 84 **Greer** The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work
Callen Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement
Bank Anonymous Was a Woman
Review Essay/**Judith E. Stein**
- 88 **Beck** Leonardo's Rules of Painting: An Unconventional Approach to Modern Art/**Dona Schwartz**
- 89 **Spoto** The Art of Alfred Hitchcock: Fifty Years of His Motion Pictures/**Paul Messaris**
- 90 **Collins, de Laguna, Carpenter, and Stone** The Far North: 2000 Years of American Eskimo and Indian Art
Stewart Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast
Review Essay/**Aldona Jonaitis**
- 93 **Alland** The Artistic Animal/**Author's Response and Reviewer's Reply**

Introduction: A Reevaluation of Robert J. Flaherty, Photographer and Filmmaker¹

Jay Ruby

It is fashionable nowadays to be publicly self-conscious about what we know. Styles of inquiry are acknowledged to change through time. What we deem important and how we go about discovering it have themselves become the subject of inquiry. This issue of *Studies* exemplifies the trend. It contains an examination of Robert J. Flaherty's early career as photographer and filmmaker. The articles and photographs are the result of recent "excavations" in archives that contain the "artifacts" of his life. Since nothing was really lost, nothing new was discovered. What is new and what gives significance to the primary materials and the accompanying interpretive articles is the way in which we now regard them. Until now no one has apparently been very interested in Flaherty's Arctic photographs. Fortunately, Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker is, and through her efforts to organize an exhibition at The Vancouver Art Gallery and to edit a catalog (Danzker 1980), the impetus for this renewed interest in Flaherty's early career was created.

Until recently the dominant paradigm in visual research has been to examine the film or photograph as object or text, out of the context of its production and consumption. It was assumed that all important information was contained within the work itself, and only those people interested in gathering psychological tidbits about the author or in constructing a hero would bother to look at the maker's life.

As scholars became interested in examining the sociocultural processes of these cultural artifacts and saw the need for exploring the relationship between the producer, the process of production, the product itself, and its consumption, other data became relevant. The astonishing Arctic photographs of Robert Flaherty that appear here, Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker's essay, the promotional booklet for *Nanook of the North*, and Paul Rotha's study of Flaherty all combine to provide us with a new perspective.

Our interests have shifted from the "text" to the "context" as being of primary importance. We are beginning to realize it is important to understand not only the film or the photograph but the maker, the conditions of production, and the conditions of consumption if we wish to comprehend how meaning is created. Through Danzker's and Rotha's scholarship we are able to see the history and development of Flaherty's life in a new light. His

struggles to discover a creative and economic identity are made clear—from explorer-geologist to explorer-photographer-lecturer to independent filmmaker. We also have some glimpses into the social facts of his life with the people he photographed and filmed. Since many of us believe that a photograph or a film is the record of an interaction between the filmer and the filmed, this information is especially valuable.

It is a privilege to publish Paul Rotha's study, without question the best piece of work on *Nanook*. It comes from his biographical study of Flaherty, completed in 1959 but at that time deemed too sophisticated to be published. Arthur Calder-Marshall obtained the rights to use it as research notes for his biography on Flaherty, *The Innocent Eye* (1963). So while Rotha's work was finished more than 20 years ago, it is appearing in print for the first time here.

Robert Flaherty is a curious figure in film history. He is probably more revered than any other American filmmaker. The construction and perpetuation of the "Flaherty myth" have been the subject of numerous articles (see Barsam 1973; Corlis 1973; Griffith 1953; Van Dongen 1965). Rotha's article places the personage of Flaherty within a context whereby neither hero worship nor iconoclasm is necessary or even very interesting.

Flaherty has for some time enjoyed a reputation as the prototypical independent film artist. The importance of the word "independent" cannot be overly stressed when one compares film to other media. The technology and cost of producing most films cause the filmmaker to have to effect some sort of working relationship with commerce in a way that marks and separates him from other artists (except video makers, who are even more tied to the commercial broadcast industry). Until the recent years of foundation and government support, the filmmaker had only three places to go: the commercial film industry, wealthy patrons (who seldom saw film as an "art" worth supporting), and companies that might be cajoled into thinking that backing a film could be both profitable and good public relations. When Flaherty convinced Revillon Frères to produce *Nanook*, he started the tradition of companies supporting the independent film artist.

As a consequence of the confluence of circumstances and Flaherty's ability to be an excellent advertisement for himself, he is regarded as a paragon of artistic virtue and integrity—admired for his unswerving commitment to his own artistic values—someone unseducible by the money sirens of Hollywood. Flaherty was the object of awe and reverence among Hollywood and New York commercial, intellectual, and artistic circles. Producer-director-actor John Houseman (whose own career spans *Citizen Kane* to *The Paper Chase*) once wrote about Flaherty: "It is the measure of his greatness that after a quarter of a century Flaherty's myth is today more valid, more universal, and

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more significant than ever before. And it is no wonder. For it is rooted in love. And what it tells is a story of the innate decency and fortitude and invincibility of the human spirit" (cited in Taylor 1949:43).

It could be argued that if Flaherty did not exist, Hollywood and New York would have had to invent him. They needed a figure to point to as having sufficient artistic integrity to resist the financial temptations of the commercial film establishment. In his *New Yorker* Profile of Flaherty, written in 1949, Robert Lewis Taylor introduced Flaherty to that magazine's sophisticated readership.

His life to date has been a brilliant demonstration of the axiom that art doesn't pay. . . . From time to time he has been mixed up briefly in the production of a few other films, withdrawing in most cases after some truly memorable wrangles over commercialism vs. artistic integrity. . . . Though unopposed to earning an honest dollar, Flaherty was, and is today, repelled by the gross taint of commercialism; ignoring the Hollywood moneybags, he searched for a private patron . . . he was wholly undismayed by the commercial failure of three movies he had made and the artistic collapse of a fourth, which he had worked on briefly. . . . Flaherty's case, with its slights, rebuffs, hardships, disasters, and general lack of rewards, illustrates the depressing battle that faces an artist relentlessly dedicated to raising the standard of a new cultural medium (emphasis added).

Flaherty was accepted among East Coast artistic and intellectual circles, and in Hollywood as America's native son in a world of art film dominated by Italian Neo-Realism and the newly discovered Russians such as Eisenstein. It must have been easier for these people, who were convinced that all culture and art came across the Atlantic, to accept the vulgar American Flaherty as their own home-grown genius when they discovered that "Serge Eisenstein, the Russian producer, said, 'We Russians learned more from 'Nanook of the North' than from any other foreign film. We wore it out studying it. That was, in a way, our beginning'" (cited in Taylor 1949).

There is, of course, some substance to the image. In addition to obtaining Revillon Frères' sponsorship, Flaherty secured financial backing from Paramount Pictures (*Moana*), Standard Oil (*Louisiana Story*), and the U.S. government (*The Land*). In virtually every case the relationship was mutually unsatisfying. He went over budget almost every time. He even walked out of several productions because of disputes with the management. Now, depending upon one's point of view, these were either the actions of an artist who could not and should not have been burdened by the limitations of a commercial industry or the unjustifiable actions of an unreasonable and undisciplined prima donna.

The tensions and conflicts between the commercial/theatrical and the artistic, educational, and socially concerned interests were certainly endemic to the cinema from the moment of its inception. In addition, there are the problems faced by the filmmaker who wishes to make a living from his films but who needs or wishes to remain outside the commercial industry. All these tensions and problems are to be found within the career of Robert Flaherty. His solution is instructive.

In order to understand Flaherty's choices in these matters, one must first contextualize them in the world of film during the formative period of Flaherty's career, 1914 to 1920. There were virtually no nontheatrical film outlets of any consequence. A handful of people made a living making travelogues. There was a smattering of screenings in schools, churches, union halls, and a few nascent film societies. However, 99 percent of the funds and activities were to be found in the commercial theatrical world. This situation remained virtually unchanged until the 1950s, when film groups such as Amos Vogel's Cinema 16 and the Museum of Modern Art in New York began to create alternative outlets for films.

It is quite clear that Flaherty was torn between his need to make a living, the attraction of big money and its promise of future projects, his desire to have his work seen, and the lure of other, less commercial interests. An examination of Frances Flaherty's diary during the period when she was attempting to sell the 1914 film in New York to a distributor demonstrates the degree of ambivalence they both felt about the work—from delusions of grandeur, assuming that their footage was saleable to Paramount for \$100,000—to wanting to devote their lives to educational films.

When Flaherty's plans for an illustrated travel lecture film went up in smoke, he went back to the North to film *Nanook*. He returned with a feature-length theatrical film, with an investor looking to recoup the investment. Given his decision, he had only one possible outlet—the large theatrical distribution companies. He landed Pathé Pictures, which logically did what it knew how to do—promote *Nanook* as a movie.

Today the "Campaign Book for Exhibitors," published and sent by Pathé to local exhibitors to promote *Nanook*, looks like a tacky ad campaign pandering to the lowest common denominator of public taste. It should serve as a reminder of the socioeconomic realities facing Flaherty. It would be easy to use this booklet as evidence that Flaherty "sold out." Flaherty either actively participated in or was at least a passive supporter of promotional campaigns for several of his other films that were not exactly "uplifting." When *Moana* failed to "test" well in some preview screenings, Paramount released it as "The Love Story of a South Sea Siren." When *Man of Aran* was premiered in England and the United States, Flaherty paraded his "players" on stage as the first documentary pop stars. And, finally, there is the unfortunate story of how Sabu the Elephant Boy took the road to fame and ruin, sparked by Flaherty's discovering him in India.

Before one makes too facile a judgment about Flaherty's decisions to acquiesce to the commercial realities of theatrical cinema, one must realize the complexities of the situation. Flaherty had two viable options: theatrical release or the travelogue circuit. Both outlets promoted their wares in similar fashion, the only real difference being the size of their budgets. It is quite clear from her diary that Frances scoured New York for backers. Short of refusing to release the film, Flaherty had little choice—either accept the commercial realities of the time or cease being a filmmaker.

It is clear that he did not care for these conditions. When they continued with *Moana*, his second film, he tried without success to create an alternative.

Paramount's head distribution executive told Flaherty that if he had had a series of good, modest-budget pictures, he could have built up the sort of specialized distribution Flaherty wanted. But economically it wasn't worthwhile to do it for a single picture. Appreciating that his problem concerned not merely Paramount, but the cinema industry as a whole, not merely himself, but other directors of "off-beat" films, Flaherty approached the Rockefeller Foundation with the suggestion that a special organization should be built up to draw the attention of the "latent audience" to unusual films from any part of the world. A meeting of their board was arranged to discuss the project and a representative agreed that the proposal was interesting, but its implementation ought to come within the province of the Hays Organization rather than of a special foundation. [Calder-Marshall 1963:120]

Flaherty started the battle that is still being fought by independent filmmakers. He wanted his work to be seen by large audiences, and he wanted to earn a living through his films. His decision was to continue to produce films by making the concessions that were necessary at the time, a decision that should be familiar to all filmmakers.

Lest anyone think that this introduction suggests that previously published materials on Flaherty were incorrect or even inadequate and that now we have the definitive word on the man and his films, I wish to disabuse them of that interpretation. The contents of this issue are a reflection of what happens when one asks questions that have not been asked before. What occurs is, of course, the discovery that readily available answers are seldom sufficient. In the future, when other questions are asked about Flaherty and his works, the answers offered here will in turn appear to be less than complete.

Note

- 1 An expanded version of this paper appeared as "The Aggie Must Come First: The Demystification of Robert J. Flaherty" in *Robert J. Flaherty: Photographer and Filmmaker* edited by Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker (1980).

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Robert Flaherty/Photographer

Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker



Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker is curator of The Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, B.C. She arranged the Robert J. Flaherty Photographer/Filmmaker exhibition and compiled the exhibition catalog.

Photograph on preceding page

Figure 1

Cat. No. 29

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (the photogravures had fairly wide distribution and are in a number of private and public collections).

N 150

8¾" × 6½" / 22.4 × 16.3 cm

subject: portrait of woman, 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

identification: *Allegoo (Shining Water) Sikoslingmuit Eskimo Woman, Southern Baffin Land*. Flaherty 9, 12. The photograph was also published in a Toronto newspaper in March 1915 with the caption *Our little lady of the snows at the left makes a most engaging picture* (Flaherty 3), indicating it was taken in 1914 or earlier. The identification however has been disputed.

Peter Pitseolak identified the subject of this photograph for NPA/M and Eber as *Kanajuq (Kanajuk) Aeojiealia**. This was confirmed by Nipisha, her half sister and by Etungat, her half brother.

note: According to Eber's informants Kanajuq (Kanajuk), which means 'devil fish' or sculpin, was the daughter of Ishuhangitok and one of his wives Nipisha (Nipeecha). She married Kootoo of Lake Harbour. Her son is Rev. Timothy Kalai, the Anglican clergyman in Cape Dorset. See also No.45/N 2103; No.55/N 201; No.58/N 203. Eber 2.

"The question is of course one of establishing identity."¹

While the films of Robert Flaherty have been analyzed, and disputed, in great detail, virtually no consideration has been given to a collection of nearly 1,500 photographs which he produced before and during production of *Nanook of the North* (1922). Most of these photographs, taken primarily in the Canadian sub-Arctic between 1910 and 1921, have survived only the form of fragile glass plates, slides, or nitrate negatives, deposited by Flaherty's widow in 1972 with the Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center at the School of Theology, Claremont, California.

Flaherty often gave his photographs to both his subjects and his friends. Most of these vintage prints, however, have been lost. Two almost identical vintage albums have been located, one in the collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto, and the other at the Thunder Bay Historical Museum. Other than six photographs from the Medland Collection in the Public Archives of Canada, National Photography Collection, Ottawa, and some vintage prints reputedly still in the Arctic, virtually all the vintage and modern prints as well as the negatives are to be found at the School of Theology in Claremont.

Examination of these photographs has been facilitated by the extensive work carried out by the Center's director, Dr. Jack Coogan, and his assistant, John Nelson. This work, completed in the spring of 1979, involved rephotographing the images on safety film and providing roughly cataloged contact sheets. These contact sheets were broken down into four groupings: N (*Nanook*) 1–383 and N 2001–2822; C (*Canada*) 1–148; G (*Geology*) 1–55; and OL (*On the Laddie*) 1–153.

In April 1979, the author began working with the contact sheets in preparation for an exhibition at The Vancouver Art Gallery (December 1, 1979 to January 13, 1980). It was realized that most of the photographs predated *Nanook of the North*, some by more than ten years; that some had in fact been taken in British Columbia; and, surprisingly, that hand-written inscriptions on vintage prints were often misdated.

The finest of the photographs were portraits of the Inuit. These striking images demanded to be identified: Who were the subjects, and what was their relationship to Robert Flaherty?

Several attempts to identify the Inuit portraits had already been made by Flaherty's daughter, Monica Flaherty Frassetto. Flaherty Frassetto had previously researched and identified photographs taken by her mother, Frances Hubbard Flaherty, during the production of *Moana* in Samoa. Her attempts to duplicate these efforts with the Inuit portraits proved more difficult. In 1974 Flaherty Frassetto (1979) sent copies of the photographs for circulation in the North. The disappointing response, however, indicated that the gathering of information about the photographs could be carried out only in the Arctic. Flaherty Frassetto therefore enlisted the assist-

Figure 2

Cat. No. 75

modern print, from
original glass plate, by
NPC, on loan from FSCC.
N 344

5" × 7" / 12.7 × 17.8 cm

subject: photograph of
Nastapoka.

identification: *The Wreck of the "Nastapoka": This little 36-foot schooner went aground, bringing Mr. Flaherty's first expedition to the Belcher Islands to a sudden end. She was hauled off and returned to Great Whale River, without reaching the Belchers.* Flaherty 10.
(caption for similar photograph).

note: The *Nastapoka* ran aground off the Gulf Hazard mainland in September, 1911, and the Belcher Islands, July, 1916.



ance of Dorothy Harley Eber, of Montreal, who co-authored *People from Our Side* with the well-known Inuit artist Peter Pitseolak. Pitseolak, who as a young boy met Flaherty on Baffin Island in 1914, identified a number of the Inuit portraits for Eber (Pitseolak and Eber 1975). These identifications, however, conflicted with those assigned by Flaherty.

Eber, during later visits to Baffin Island, collected identifications for a number of the portraits. This research was published in the January 1979 issue of *Natural History* (Eber 1979) and, with additions and corrections, in the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition catalog (Danzker 1979). Although some of the identifications were confirmed by more than one source, the passage of time and family similarities made further corroboration difficult. It became increasingly clear that the preparation of an accurate chronology of Flaherty's travel in the North would become essential not only to identifying but also to locating and dating the images.

For further explanation of abbreviations and sources for identification of these photographs see *Photographic References*, page 31.

Chronology

Comparison of diary entries and unpublished manuscripts stored in the Robert J. Flaherty Papers at Butler Library, Columbia University, with published material revealed that published chronologies were marred by inaccuracies, even when they had been authorized by Robert and/or Frances Flaherty.

One obvious, and surprising, example occurred during the dating of photographs taken in British Columbia. A vintage print in the Claremont collection had been variously inscribed:

Rob—playing his beloved violin into the vastness. Vancouver 10 years ago.

and

Camp—Vancouver Island. Head of Tahsis Canal. c. 1913.

Frances Flaherty had indicated to Arthur Calder-Marshall (1963:16), during the writing of *The Innocent Eye: The Life of Robert J. Flaherty*, that she had visited Flaherty in British Columbia in the summer of 1906. The Butler Library diaries, however, and correspondence in the Claremont Archives between Frances Flaherty and a close friend, Margaret Thurston, indicated that she visited Flaherty in Ontario in 1906 and in British Columbia in 1908.

It was also discovered that much of the information contained in *My Eskimo Friends*, written by Robert and Frances Flaherty (1924), was inconsistent with original source documents. This book had been considered an accurate autobiographical account of Flaherty's travel in the Canadian sub-Arctic from 1910 to 1921, and on a number of occasions excerpts from it were used in the preparation of biographies. It had also been utilized in reviewing his early practice as a filmmaker and in describing his relationship to the Inuit. The image of Flaherty and of the Inuit contained in *My Eskimo Friends*, an essential part of the mythology of Robert Flaherty the filmmaker, was now brought into question.

Figure 3

Cat. No. 81

modern print from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2233

4" × 6¼" / 10.2 × 15.9 cm

subject: photograph of land formation, undated, unlocated.

Flaherty as Photographer

It proved surprisingly difficult to locate published references to Flaherty's photographs. Only one brief mention of photography was made in *My Eskimo Friends* (p. 17), and that referred to geological documentation.

Only a small number of Flaherty's photographs have been published (most of them between 1918 and 1924), to illustrate articles written by Flaherty for geographical journals (1918), or newspapers,² and *My Eskimo Friends*. A portfolio of photogravures, *Camera Studies of the Far North*, was published in 1922 by Revillon Frères to promote *Nanook of the North*.

Once *Nanook* had been released, Flaherty's overwhelming interest was in its distribution and promotion. Probably for this reason, most of the photographs selected for publication (12 of 20 photographs in *Camera Studies of the Far North*,³ 1922, and 9 of 12 photographs in *My Eskimo Friends*, 1924) were unexceptional, though pleasantly theatrical, production shots for *Nanook of the North* rather than photographic studies in their own right.

Later publications, especially biographies of Flaherty—*The World of Robert Flaherty* (Griffith 1953); *The Innocent Eye* (Calder-Marshall 1963); and even *The Odyssey of a Film-Maker* (F. Flaherty 1960)—made no mention of Flaherty's early photographic work, and the only images reproduced were the standard *Nanook* production and promotion shots. During production of Flaherty's later films (*Moana*, *Man of Aran*, *Louisiana Story*) photography



was carried out almost exclusively by Frances Hubbard Flaherty, although the images have often been published under Robert Flaherty's name.

Because of the specific use made of both Robert and Frances Flaherty's photographs (to serve in the production or publicizing of Flaherty's films), they have rarely been considered or maintained as works of art in their own right. Nevertheless, before 1922, some of Flaherty's photographs (especially his portraits of the Inuit) were considered by both Flahertys to be a significant part of his artistic production.

The Early Years

In a recent interview, Frances Ruttan (Flaherty's sister) recalled that Flaherty displayed great interest in photography from an early age:

He took pictures of everybody, his friends, everybody. He would take them downtown [Port Arthur] at the ice cream parlour, or anywhere. It was a big camera on a tripod, which was awkward to carry in those days. He was never without a camera as he grew up and got to be 17, 18, 19 years old. I guess my father got it for him. My father had one, he might have used my father's.⁴

During his early twenties (1904–1908) Flaherty traveled extensively in Canada, gaining experience as explorer, surveyor, and prospector. Probably, like his colleagues, he carried a camera. In fact, some of the earliest surviving photographs form part of a journal kept by Flaherty in the summer and fall of 1906 while he was prospecting around Long Lake and Lake Nipigon, in Ontario.⁵

It is, however, not until the summer of 1908, when Frances Hubbard visited Flaherty on Vancouver Island, that both Robert and Frances Flaherty began to systematically document their travel. In 1910, Sir William Mackenzie commissioned Flaherty to explore the Nastapoka Islands off the east coast of Hudson Bay for iron ore deposits. This expedition was to locate Flaherty squarely within one of the most exciting and politicized areas of expedition and geological research. From 1900 to 1910, Arctic exploration had acquired political significance as Canada attempted to establish its northern boundaries and to settle its Alaska boundary dispute with the United States. Photographic documentation from these expeditions was produced not only for historical records but also as proof of possession.

Arctic exploration had economic as well as political significance. Since the 1880s, prairie governments as well as railway financiers like Sir William Mackenzie had hoped that Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait could be utilized almost year-round to ship Western products to foreign markets. It was also hoped that a Hudson Bay route would result in the expansion and development of mining and resource industries in the Hudson Bay area.

Robert Flaherty was one of a number of geologists and explorers who verified that year-round navigation was impossible and that the mineral deposits were commercially not viable. Two leading geologists had preceded Flaherty into the area—Robert Bell and Albert Peter Low. Flaherty acknowledged his familiarity with their expeditions and their reports on a number of occasions (Flaherty 1918; Flaherty and Flaherty 1924). Both Bell and Low, besides being distinguished geologists, were also important pioneer photographers in the Canadian Arctic. Bell, in particular, as director of the Geological Survey, was committed to publishing photographs from major expeditions as widely as possible. He wrote and lectured extensively, illustrating his topic with glass slides.

It was not until 1903–1904 that an expedition, under the command of A. P. Low, established winter quarters and lived in the North for several months. Increased contact between southern expeditionary personnel and local Inuit communities led to significant change in the photographic documentation brought back by the expedition.

Low in particular succeeds in taking the viewer right into the privacy of the igloos and among their occupants. They took photographs everywhere: on the *Neptune*, aboard the *Era*, in the police post. Not only do these photographs give an idea of the makeup of the native population in the village at the time, but they also portray individual Inuit of the village with special prominence, particularly those distinguished by their social standing or their hunting skill. In fact, being chosen to be photographed was considered a token of esteem that enhanced the image and importance of Inuit associated with the expedition within their own communities. [Burant et al. 1979:74]

When Robert Flaherty arrived at the Hudson's Bay post at Great Whale on Christmas Day, 1910, carrying a Kodak camera (Murphy 1978:4), he was about to follow a well-established tradition of using photography to verify geological formations and to record aspects of life in the North. Within a few weeks his work had begun.

Breaking off rock samples here and there and taking close-up photographs in the acid month of January [1911, on the Nastapoka Islands] were not pleasant tasks. [Flaherty and Flaherty 1924]

Coincidentally, one of Flaherty's Inuit assistants (whom he photographed), was Nero, from Great Whale. Nero had also accompanied Low in 1896 in an unsuccessful attempt to traverse the Ungava Peninsula (successfully completed by Flaherty in March 1912 with an Inuit hunter, Omarolluk).⁶

Initially Flaherty photographed, as had many others, the more superficial aspects of expeditionary life—the boats which transported him north, life in the settlements and fur trading posts, the landscape and animal life, and, of course, his southern and Inuit companions. While

Figure 4

Cat. No. 67

modern print, from
original glass plate, by
NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2300

5" × 7" / 12.7 × 17.8 cm

subject: photograph of
Inuit woman cooking on
modern stove, probably
1913–1914, Baffin Island.note: hair style and dress
would suggest Baffin
Island (MacDonald,
Zimmerly). The cooking
facilities would suggest
either larger settlements
like Cape Dorset or Lake
Harbour or perhaps
Flaherty's own settlement
at Eteenik. (See
Chronology September
27, 1913).**Figure 5**

Cat. No. 70

modern print, from
original glass plate, by
NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2477

7" × 5" / 17.8 × 12.7 cm

subject: photograph of
woman carrying bundles
of wood and basket,
undated, unlocated.

Flaherty did continue to take these more "documentary" photographs, during later expeditions (1911–1916) his camera was increasingly directed toward his Inuit companions.

Flaherty and the Inuit

A large number of Flaherty's photographs of the Inuit are ethnographic and resemble photographs from earlier expeditions. They focus on forms of dress, decoration, and modes of hunting. One photograph of Inuit children (Burant et al. 1979) is similar to another taken during the 1903–1904 expedition under the command of Low.⁷

Flaherty is often described as a Romantic, a naïve idealist who avoided documenting social and political inequalities as well as the conditions of his own time. Both *Nanook of the North* and *Man of Aran* were strongly criticized for emphasizing and romanticizing the past rather than confronting the present. Several photographs, however, serve to demonstrate that Flaherty was acutely aware of the rapid and radical technological and cultural changes which the Inuit were undergoing. One is of an Inuit woman cooking on a large modern stove (Burant et al. 1979); a second is perhaps the only photograph which comes close to an overt political statement by Flaherty (within the documentary tradition defined by Grierson). It records a group of Inuit inside a church with a sign on the wall:

Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand. [Ibid.:2, 88]

Rooted in the social, cultural, and economic condition of the Inuit as Flaherty met them, such photographs shatter any myth of his naïveté.

As Flaherty's intimacy with the Inuit increased, his camera began to locate and isolate the personality of his companions rather than their exotic lifestyle and modes of dress. One such early portrait is that of Omarolluk (ibid.:16, 86), who guided him across the Ungava Peninsula. Simeonie Kopapik, of Cape Dorset, who was a small boy during Flaherty's visit in 1914, recalls the portrait-taking sessions:

They had to take them inside, in Flaherty's house. I don't recall them having flashes with the camera. They used kerosene lanterns; and I remember three lanterns being placed in special places on the wall. I remember a camera with a cloth that had to go over the head. Maybe that was because they had to prevent any light coming to the photographer's vision. It took a long time before the photographer could actually take a picture. They couldn't take a picture of a person as soon as he sat down. They had to relax him first. The man sitting on the chair had to be very relaxed. . . . if he was liable to move at all they couldn't take his picture. That's what I remember. [Eber 1979]

Figure 6

Cat. No. 61

modern print, from original glass slide, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2513

5" × 3½" / 12.7 × 8.9 cm

subject: photograph of man, probably 1915–1916, Belcher Islands.

identification: A Belcher Islander Eskimo in eider duck costume. Feathers outside. Flaherty 4.





Figure 7

Cat. No. 69

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC. N 2734

7" x 5" / 17.8 x 12.7 cm

subject: photograph of Inuit in church.

note: as only a larger community would have a church of this size, MacDonald suggested it could be at Lake Harbour (confirmed by Copland). Bishop Fleming was minister at Lake Harbour and according to Mrs. Fleming, serious disputes arose between Fleming and Flaherty, although this did not emerge in Fleming's autobiography. (Eber).

Rosemary Donegan located a similar photograph attributed to Flaherty in *The Canadian Courier*, Vol.X, No.22, October 28, 1911, p.6, with the caption: "*The Esquimaux are the most northerly citizens of the Dominion and this picture is evidence that*

the missionary finds them willing to learn. This photograph was taken in a little church on the Ungava shore of Hudson Bay."

This would date the photograph from the first Mackenzie expedition of 1910-1911.

This is perhaps the only one of Flaherty's photographs to have political connotations.

The Portraits: Studio-Type and Confrontation

Flaherty's Inuit portraits fall naturally into two categories. The first could be termed "studio-type." These portraits, which tend to be in the minority, closely reflect both painting and photographic conventions of the nineteenth century. The subjects are carefully posed, side-lit, occasionally in profile, and their eyes rarely meet the camera.

While these photographs have an immediate appeal, they never acquire the sheer force of the photographs in the second category, "confrontation." In the confrontation portraits the viewer is literally confronted, through direct eye contact, by the subject. The camera is close, inside the intimate space of the subjects who face us, without the protection of a camera identity, in dignity. It is in these portraits that Flaherty the photographer comes closest to the achievement of Flaherty the filmmaker.

The Portraits: Dating

Flaherty often gave his photographs away, both to his subjects⁸ and to his friends and family.⁹ One such friend was Frances Emily Baubie, who met Flaherty one summer while he was visiting his family in Port Arthur (Thunder Bay). The six photographs (all portraits) given to her by Flaherty were carefully stored, and, after her death, donated by her daughter, Mrs. M. A. Medland, to the National Photography Collection, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

Frances Emily Baubie or Flaherty himself had inscribed several dates on the back of the photographs: 1904 (which is chronologically incorrect), August 1912 corrected to 1913 (the most probable date), and 1914 (again incorrect). The dates suggest that a number of the striking confrontation portraits which make up the core of this exhibition most likely predate Flaherty's first film in 1914 and certainly predate *Nanook of the North* by at least seven years.

The Photographs: Public Presentation

It would appear that the first and possibly only formal public presentation of Robert Flaherty's photographs took place at the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto the week of January 3, 1915.¹⁰ Flaherty had returned triumphantly from his third northern expedition. During the winter of 1914–1915 on Baffin Island, he had taken a number of very fine portraits and produced his first film. On his way south, he had also "rediscovered" the Belcher Islands and brought back a large number of artifacts and drawings for the Eskimo collection of the newly inaugurated Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto.

The first public presentation of his film took place on March 30, 1915, in Convocation Hall at the University of Toronto. The presentation also included some of the Inuit portraits, as can be seen from the outline of the lecture presentation:

Story of N's wife, introducing
D. Dramatis personae: portraits and anecdotes.¹¹

Most of the reviews in the Toronto newspapers focused on the "motion pictures" but one, in *The Evening Telegram*, referred to the portraits:

Besides the moving pictures there were some excellent portraits of artistic excellence depicting types of this remote people.¹²



Figure 8

Cat. No. 73

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2459

5" × 4" / 12.7 × 10.2 cm

subject: photograph of two women and child, probably 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

note: dress would suggest Baffin Island (MacDonald, Zimmerly).

Flaherty in New York: Curtis and Stieglitz

Immediately following the presentation at Convocation Hall, the Flahertys went to New York to find a distributor for the 1914 film. While at the office of Lee Keedick (Sir Douglas Mawson's agent) they decided to visit Edward Curtis. Frances Flaherty recorded the visit in her diary:¹³

Much crest-fallen, to console ourselves, we stopped in at Curtis's studio on the same floor. We were shown the portfolio of photogravures for the 10th volume of Mr. Curtis's colossal work on the North American Indian,—500 sets at \$4200. and \$3500 per set.—his life work and one to stir the imagination. The same thought crossed our minds at once: why not the same for the Eskimo? . . .

We made comparison between his portraits and R's: Indian portraits—flat, toneless quality of drawing, interest decorative, and dependent upon picturesque costumes and other details.

Eskimo portraits—depth and tone quality of painting, interest centering in personality independent of race, costume, or detail of any kind.

On the whole the Eskimo portraits where "bigger"; the question in my mind was whether Curtis was a big enough man to interest himself in R's work.

Curtis was interested, apparently in the 1914 film, and Frances Flaherty's entry in her diary following their meeting makes no mention of the portraits.

A few weeks later the Flahertys visited Alfred Stieglitz at "291." This meeting was obviously an important one for them. The entry in Frances Flaherty's diary reads:¹⁴

Red Letter Day! Visit to "291." While I slept yesterday afternoon R. went to Brentano's and came back with an armful of photography periodicals, filling our room with treasure. Of the lot the pearl of great price, reverently displayed with all the pride of a new discover, was *Camera Work*, edited by Alfred Stieglitz. We forthwith resolved to see Mr. Stieglitz, hence our pilgrimage to "#291", a little old building on Fifth Ave., the ground floor of which was given to the sights and smells of a 3d Ave. back alley, bearing out R's impression that "they were a bohemian lot, anarchists and all that, ultra-modern."

The visit turned out to be a mountain peak experience for me. I look back on it now with worship in my heart. Bare walls and scant furnishing, a few pictures, a few prints—but the place is hallowed, for there is Reality and Truth and Soul, Love and the Labour of Love, and the deep spirit of Rest. And the spirit of the place is the Man: I saw him in a golden aura. It was all so simple; we began immediately talking about *Camera Work*; he beckoned, leading us on into this mind, to see the priceless labor and love he has put into it. It is the record of the birth and development of photography as an art, as a medium for expressing the soul in things, in the work of the great photographers from the time of D. O. Hill. Our eyes were shining with the reflection of this enthusiasm, and I was bursting with impatience to go get our portraits and bring them into the magic of this hour,—I was sure of their welcome. R. went, I staid. We talked of this and that; it was not so much the subject, it was the sympathy. We talked of the City, of our dissipated energies. He too is an apostle of concentration, it

is the motive of his life and work, his message and his mission. How well I understood the way he spoke of his student years in Germany and the utter misery of the first years of his struggle here, against ill-health, with his work, the intense, body-shattering excitement of it: and then, little by little, the gathering of the thirsty about him, himself the spring in that oasis of the great American desert of mediocrity and commercialism. Our conversation became almost as one thought, we took the words from each others mouth.

R. came back. Mr. S. looked over the drawings and the portraits with interest and appreciation and words of kindly encouragement.

Two little shining souls (at least mine was) went back to the city streets, with two large autograph copies of *Camera Work* tucked under their arms. And what had he said to R's expostulation at the gift, but: "You don't know what YOU have done for ME this morning"(!), and wrote: "To Mr. and Mrs. R. J. Flaherty, as a souvenir of a very Real and Live Hour at 291."

Despite the Flahertys' interest in developing and promoting the Inuit portraits in 1915, their attention was turning increasingly toward film. Their aspiration to produce a major portfolio of photogravures on the scale of Curtis's *The North American Indian* was to result in the small and uneven *Camera Studies of the Far North* (1922).

Figure 9

Cat. No. 35

modern print, from original nitrate negative, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2088

6½" × 4½" / 16.5 × 11.4 cm

subject: portrait of man, probably 1911–1912, Ungava Peninsula.

identification: *Omarolluk, the head driver on the sledge expedition*. Flaherty 5.note: Flaherty was the first non-Inuit to successfully traverse and explore the Northern Ungava Peninsula. He was accompanied by Wetunik and Omarolluk, a famous hunter from Hope's Welcome, on whom he was dependent for his survival. The journey was made in March–April, 1912. See *Chronology*.Omarolluk has accompanied Flaherty to the Belcher Islands in 1915. See *Chronology*, Note 53.**Figure 10**

Cat. No. 53

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2512

7" × 5" / 17.8 × 12.7 cm

subject: portrait of woman, probably 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

note: both the hair style and the glass beading would suggest Baffin Island (MacDonald, Zimmerly).



Figure 11

Cat. No. 32

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (see No. 29).

N 205

8½" × 6" / 21.6 × 15.3 cm

subject: portrait of girl, probably 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

identification: *Cunayou (The Sculpin) Sikoslingmuit Eskimo Girl, Southern Baffin Land. Flaherty 9. Narlaq.* Eber 2.*

note: Cunayou is a corruption of Kanajuq ('devil fish' or sculpin). Thus, while Flaherty identified this photograph as Kanajuq/Cunayou, Peter Pitseolak (and Kanajuq's half brother and sister) identified No. 29/N 150 as Kanajuq, and this photograph as Narlaq, who is the daughter of Mai (see Eber 1) and Kovianatok. This identification has been confirmed by Narlaq's adoptive brother, Simeonie Kopapik, Cape Dorset; her daughter, Ooloosie Lyta, Lake Harbour; Pudlo Pudlat, Cape Dorset and Ekidluak (Ikidluak), Lake Harbour.

**Figure 12**

Cat. No. 17

vintage print, on loan from TBHM (also in collection of ROM, and published in *Camera Studies of the Far North*, 1922).

972. 255. 175 I, N 2076

8" × 6" / 20.3 × 15.3 cm

subject: portrait of man, probably 1912, Fort Chimo.

note: portrait of Naskapi Indian. Flaherty met Naskapi Indians at Fort Chimo, 1912.

The same person appears in N 2075.



Figure 13

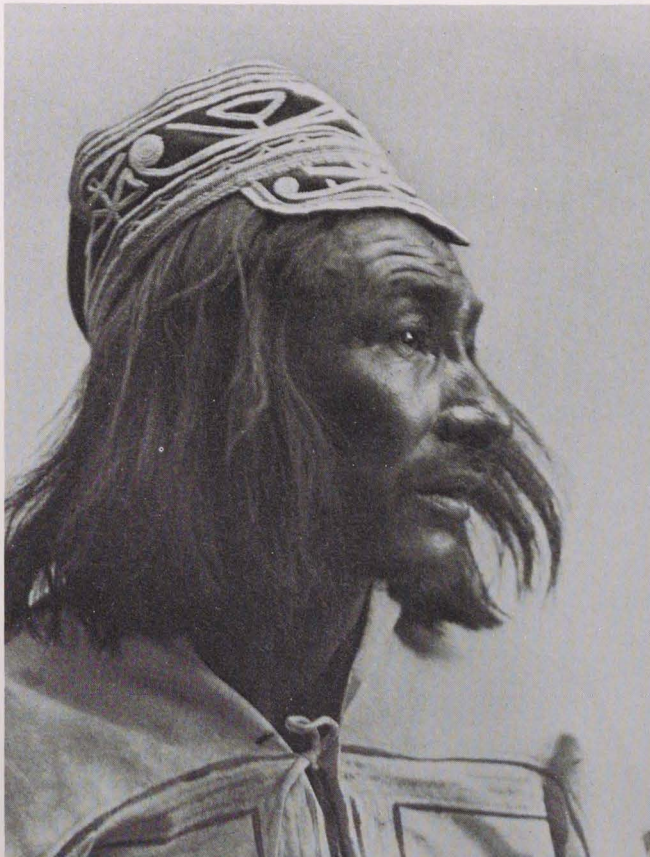
Cat. No. 31

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (see No. 29).

N 152

8¾" × 6¾" / 21.4 × 17.1 cm

subject: portrait of man, probably 1912, Fort Chimo.

identification: *Nascaupie, Indian Chief, Northern Labrador*, Flaherty 9, 12.note: Flaherty described meeting Naskapi Indians in Fort Chimo, June, 1912. See *Chronology*.**Figure 14**

Cat. No. 30

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (see No. 29).

N 151

8¾" × 6½" / 21.4 × 16.5 cm

subject: portrait of man, 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

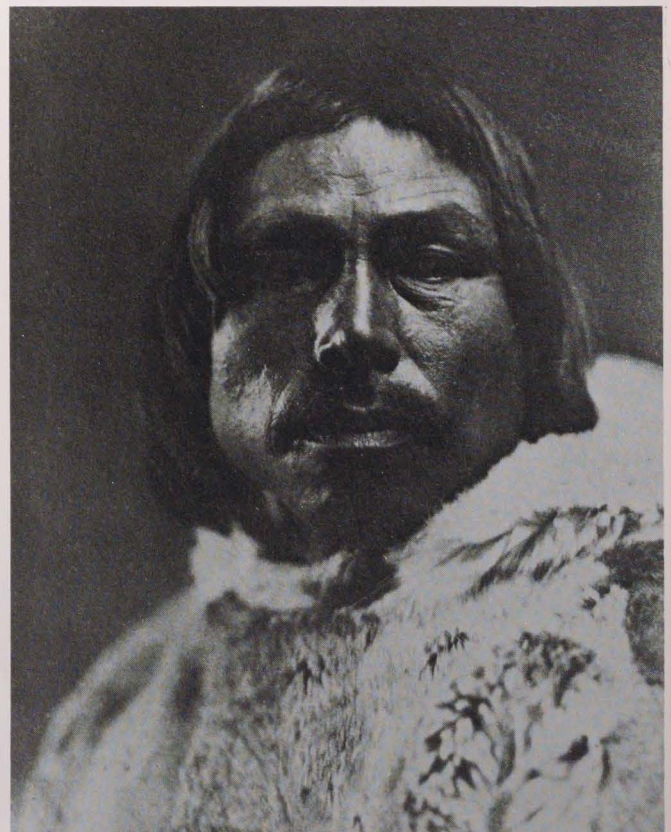
identification: *Tooktoo (The Deer). Chief of Sikoslingmuit Eskimos. Southern Baffin Land*. Flaherty 9, 12. The photograph was also published in a Toronto newspaper in March, 1915, indicating that it was taken in 1914 or earlier. The identification however has been disputed.Peter Pitseolak identified the subject of this photograph as *Anumniuk (Aningmiqu, Arnieniuk) Seegoaigh** for NPA/M and Eber. This was confirmed by his son Peter Aningmiqu and his daughter Anirnik.note: Anumniuk was a famed hunter who made many journeys on the whaler *Active*, and killed three blue whales. In the early 30's he regularly piloted the *Nascaupie* around Amadjuak. Both his daughter Anirnik and son Peter Aningmiqu were born on the *Active*.Peter Pitseolak photographed him (see page 33 of *People from our side*, where he is incorrectly identified as his son in some editions). Eber 2.Flaherty recorded meeting the *Active* in August, 1914 (*My Eskimo Friends*, page 37) and Frances Flaherty travelled on the *Nascaupie* around Amadjuak in October, 1915. It is not known, however, if they met Anumniuk at that time. Flaherty most likely met Anumniuk during his stay in Amadjuak in 1913–1914.It is also likely that Bob Stewart (No. 115, N 378) knew Anumniuk from the time that Stewart sailed on the *Active*.

Figure 15

Cat. No. 21

vintage print, on loan from TBHM (also in collection of ROM).

972. 255. 175 U, N 2096, N 2433

6" × 8" / 15.3 × 20.3 cm

subject: portrait of man, probably 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

identification: the subject of this photograph was identified as *Enutsiak (Innutsiak)** by his son, Amaitok Ipellie, Frobisher Bay. Eber 2.note: Enutsiak came as a boy from Arctic Quebec to Baffin Island in 1908. Peter Pitseolak recalled meeting him on Nottingham Island in *People from our side* (pages 69, 72). Pitseolak photographed him in later life wearing workman's overalls. He died in his eighties, famous for carvings of little groups depicting childbirth, prayer meetings and wrestling. Eber 2.**Figure 16**

Cat. No. 33

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (see No. 29).

N 206

8¾" × 6½" / 22.4 × 16.3 cm

subject: portrait of woman, probably 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

identification: *Allego (glass)** despite the fact that Flaherty identified No. 29/N 150 as Allegoo, Peter Pitseolak identified the subject of this photograph to Eber as Allego. This was confirmed by Pitseolala Kelly, Frobisher Bay. Eber 1, 2. Simeonie Kopapik identified her as Seereseekok although the NPA/M does not regard the identification as positive.note: according to Eber's informants (Ulayu Pingwartok and Mumamee Shaa), Allego was a darkroom assistant for Flaherty. It is recommended in Dorset that in good weather Allego, Kanajuq (see No. 29) and Kingnatchia would sit outside with Flaherty's gramophone. She was probably living with Noogooshoweetok (No. 36/N 176) at the time but later moved away with an older man from a northern region. She returned many years later with very beautiful tattoos, shaman's powers and the fire and seaweed as helping spirits. She married Alariak, another shaman, and they became famous South Baffin shamans. Allego and Alariak also posed for the camera of Peter Pitseolak (see *People from our side*, page 28). Allego eventually left Alariak and went to Churchill where she was trampled to death by intoxicated people around 1957. Eber 1, 2.

Figure 17

Cat. No. 68

modern print, from
original nitrate negative,
by NPC, on loan from
FSCC.

N 2117

5" x 7" / 12.7 x 17.8 cm

subject: photograph of
children, probably
Ungava Peninsula.note: this photograph is
not unlike one by A. P.
Low in 1903-1904, "Inuit
children at Fullerton,
NWT" (PA-53577),
National Photography
Collection, Ottawa.
The dress and use of
shawls would suggest the
Ungava Peninsula.

The Photographs and the Films

A number of the Inuit portraits which Flaherty took after 1913 were related to the production of his films. Noogoo-shweetok (Burant et al. 1979:10, 86), for example, played a major role in the 1914 film, as did Allegoo (ibid.:27, 86), who was also a darkroom assistant (Eber 1979). Both were the subjects of two of Flaherty's finest portraits.

Flaherty used an Inuit drawing in preparing a script for his 1914 film (Burant et al. 1979:9, 60, 61), but it would appear from examination of his photographs that it was not until 1920 and *Nanook of the North* that he began to use his own photographs as a production device.

A considerable number of the photographs taken during the production of *Nanook* are filmic time studies of snow storms, harpooning, and kayaking. It also appears that various aspects of Inuit life were photographed, then considered for a script. (It is also possible that the photographs were staged after shooting, as production and promotion shots.)

Coward, the Canadian manager of Revillon Frères, visited Port Harrison during 1920–1921 and collected a number of Inuit portraits in an album presently stored in the Norman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum, McGill University, Montreal. Monica Flaherty Frassetto has suggested that they are Flaherty's. No negatives or similar prints are cataloged by the Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center in Claremont, the Royal Ontario Museum, or Thunder Bay Historical Museum, which suggests that they were not taken by him. Nevertheless, the photographs are not similar to others taken by Coward, and it is known that Coward (who photographed Flaherty filming *Nanook of the North*) met and probably worked with Flaherty. There is a possibility that the photographs were taken by Bob Stewart. According to Dudley Copland, a former Hudson's Bay post factor who lived in the North for many years:

I believe that Bob Stewart [Revillon Frères factor, Inoucdjouac, 1920–1921] bought the camera from Flaherty and copied Flaherty's technique. There is a striking "sameness" about the studio-type photographs which Flaherty took and those taken by Bob Stewart. [Ibid.:57,90]

If the photographs from this album are by Flaherty, we are able to observe that many of the portraits from 1920–1921 are not so striking as those from earlier expeditions. Certainly the portraits of Nanook and Nyla (definitely taken by Flaherty) are largely undistinguished and convey little of the presence that both project on film. One is also aware in examining the photographs that both Nanook and Nyla have developed camera personalities. Gone is the unself-conscious confrontation with the camera of the early portraits.



Figure 18

Cat. No. 44

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2089

7" × 5" / 17.8 × 12.7 cm

subject: portrait of man, probably 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

identification: see No. 37, N 187, possibly *Ezechiak*,* a son of Anumnuq Seegoaigh, No. 30, N 151, according to Ekidluak, Lake Harbour. Eber 2.

note: *Ezechiak* was the father of Saggiaktok, a craftsman at the printmaking shop in Cape Dorset. Eber 2.

Conclusion

Research into Flaherty's photographs raised several issues which are relevant to consideration of any photographic and indeed filmic documentation of people exotic to ourselves:

- 1 The use and exchange value of the images, for both the photographer and the subject
- 2 The moral responsibility of the photographer to his or her subject
- 3 The "objectivity" or "authenticity" of the image and the intrinsically exclusive rather than inclusive nature of the photographic and filmic frame

The Use and Exchange Value of the Image

We referred earlier to the exchange value of photographic portraits for the Inuit:

... being chosen to be photographed was considered a token of esteem that enhanced the image and importance of Inuit associated with the expedition within their own communities. [Ibid.]

We also referred to the way in which numerous expeditions photographed local Inuit as part of a documenting, mapping process which gave proof of possession over territory. This was particularly important at a time when different nations were laying claim, or disputing claims, to the same territory. Flaherty's more documentary-type photographs clearly lie within this tradition.

While Flaherty did give copies of his portraits to his subjects, his primary audience was the social and political elite in the Southern communities, especially his sponsor, Sir William Mackenzie, and potential sponsors such as C. T. Currelly, Sir Edmund Walker, and the Royal Ontario Museum. This was clearly recognized by Frances Flaherty, who, even prior to seeing his 1914 film, wrote in her diary for December 17, 1914:¹⁵

We hope that they will attract a great deal of attention, be widely shown and gain recognition for R. [Robert] as an explorer, as an artist and interpreter of the Eskimo people, and consequently bring him greater opportunity.

The premiere showing of Flaherty's 1914 film, presented under the auspices of the Royal Ontario Museum and the Archaeological Institute of America at the University of Toronto, was a glittering, prestigious affair which was reviewed in several newspapers as well as in the social columns.

It is interesting to consider the response of the Toronto press to the films and photographs:¹⁶

The picture of the men, women and children shown were exceptionally strong types, not the low, beetling brow or sulky faces one associates with the Eskimo. Happy, sturdy children were pictured with all the curiosity in the world as they faced the camera.

It is evident that Flaherty had managed to convey a sense of the personal, the individual, in his images of the Inuit, at a time when most photographic and filmic documentation stressed their exotic lifestyle and "other"-ness. Nevertheless, the image which Flaherty portrayed was rooted in notions of the Noble Savage, an image in which the Inuit today still find themselves entrenched.

The new countries of Canada, the United States, and Australia have quite distinct histories in terms of the contact between original peoples and the European settlers. These histories are often distinguished by the degree to which the physical territory occupied by the original peoples was required by the new settlers. In both Australia and Canada large areas of land occupied specifically by the aborigines and the Inuit were often remote, difficult of access, and unsuited to traditional European lifestyles.

In recent years, however, the Australian aborigines, the Canadian Inuit, and large numbers of North American Indians have been struggling for legal control over, and compensation for, land which is rich in raw materials. Perhaps more profoundly, they are struggling to shatter paternalistic images of themselves, rooted in unresolved territorial conflict, which were generated in the beginning of this century to suit the political, cultural, and social needs of that time.

Consideration of the photographs of Robert Flaherty must question their use and exchange value not only for his contemporaries but for ours.

Figure 19

Cat. No. 48

Copy print, from vintage print, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.
N 188

5" x 4" / 12.7 x 10.2 cm

subject: portrait of man, probably 1913-1914, Baffin Island.

identification: the subject of this photograph was identified as *Avaleeneatok** by Peter Pitseolak, Ashoona, Pudlo, Kudjuarjuk and others.

note: according to Pitseolak (in *People from our side*, p. 88) *the moving picture boss* [Flaherty] got *Noogooshoweetok*, Joe and *Attachie* as Eskimo guides and helpers. The real worker was Joe's son *Avaleeniatuk*. He was just a young man, *Avaleeniatuk*. He was the adopted son of Joe and Lao (Peter Pitseolak's aunt). Ten years after Flaherty left, according to Pauta and Pitalosie, Cape Dorset, *Avaleeniatuk* and his children starved to death. Eber 1.





Figure 20

Cat. No. 38

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 207

7" × 5" / 17.8 × 12.7 cm

subject: portrait of woman, probably 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

identification: the subject of this photograph was identified as *Guseevie** by Ekidluak (Ikidluak) and Kowjakalook of Lake Harbour. Others disputed this on the basis that the photograph shows no tattoo marks on the face which *Guseevie* was known to bear. Eber 2.

note: *Guseevie* was a well known personality on the South Baffin coast. One of *Elee*'s wives, she played the music box and led the dances in what is known as the "second religious time" (about 1908).

This was the second religious time. When a person was told to do something, he'd do it right away because he'd want to be saved. People danced so much because they had to say yes when they were asked. If they refused, the leaders would think they were not religious like the others. If they danced, they were saved!

Peter Pitseolak, *People from our side*, pp. 59–60, pp. 66–69.

The Moral Responsibility of the Photographer to the Subject

One of the most disturbing elements of the research into Flaherty's photographs is the possibility that Robert and/or Frances Flaherty "renamed" the subjects of the Inuit portraits. As can be seen from the photographs reproduced with this article (and described in depth in The Vancouver Art Gallery catalog), it would appear that at least some of the names which Flaherty ascribed to the subjects of his photographs and films were fictional. "Nanook" was probably Allakariallak, "Nyla" was possibly Alice (?) Nuvalinga, "Allegoo" was probably Kanajuq, "Tooktoo" was possibly Anumnuq, "Cunayou" possibly Narlaq, and "Anunglung," the star of the 1914 film, was possibly Noogooshoweetok.¹⁷

We are familiar with, indeed comfortable with, the process of substitute names in "fictional" films. However, because of the manner in which *Nanook* had been presented to us, as a "real" person, including notices on his subsequent death, renaming the lead character in *Nanook of the North* does seem questionable, even if understandable. Renaming the subjects of Flaherty's photographs seems to be even more questionable. Two important points should be made. The first is the context in which the subjects were identified; the second is the history of naming and identifying the Inuit in the Canadian Arctic.

There are only three published sources in which Flaherty named his subjects: the learned *Geographical Review*, Vol. VI, No. 2 (including a photograph of Omarolluk which is probably correctly ascribed); the publication *Camera Studies of the Far North* (1922), a collection of photogravures; and *My Eskimo Friends* (1924). The latter two, published with the authorization of the French furriers Revillon Frères (who financed *Nanook of the North*), were obviously related to the promotion of the film. It is implied that the photographs named Allegoo, Cunayou, and Tooktoo were taken during the production of *Nanook* and/or in Revillon Frères trading posts. They were in fact probably taken in 1914 or earlier, in or around Hudson Bay posts on Baffin Island or Great Whale post.

Confusion over Inuit names was a problem which had beset various forms of northern administration (clerical, commercial, and governmental) up until the 1970s. The reasons were many and complex: the absence of a written Inuit language; the changing of names by the addition of suffixes to indicate age and seniority; the adoption of baptismal names of biblical origin with the arrival of Christianity, while sometimes still employing an Inuit name; the absence of surnames (or even addresses!) to distinguish people with the same name. These difficulties were compounded by the tendency of southern visitors to assign a new name for convenience. Flaherty himself referred to his assistants as "Little Tommy," "Harry Lauder," "Jack Johnson." Flaherty also used different spellings for the same name; for example, Noahasweetow and Noasweeto for the person whom Pitseolak identified as Noogooshoweetok.

It is possible that in view of these practices in the North, as well as the desire to provide more archetypal and romantic resonances, Flaherty felt justified in reassigning names to the subjects of his photographs. Nevertheless, such a procedure carries with it serious consequences. As recently as 1968 Professor R. J. Williamson expressed his concern to the Northwest Territories Council regarding the "loss of proper family and cultural identity by the Eskimo . . . because of the very widespread and enormous inaccuracy of the spelling of Eskimo names."¹⁸ During the ensuing discussion, Williamson made the following statement:

The importance of the Eskimo name is something I have spoken of before. It is very important for each individual to be properly identified. In the Eskimo tradition it had an even greater significance, and there is a persistence of the attitude derived from those traditional beliefs, whereby the name is the soul and the soul is the name. So if you misuse someone's name, you not only damage his personal identity in the existing society, but you also damage his immortal soul.¹⁹

Figure 21

Cat. No. 42

modern print, from
original glass plate, by
NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2069

4" × 3½" / 10.2 × 8.9 cm

subject: portrait of child
(female).

note: possibly black-bear
fur which would suggest
an area close to the tree
line. Black bear was not a
preferred fur because of
its coarseness which
suggests a scarcity of
other furs. (MacDonald).

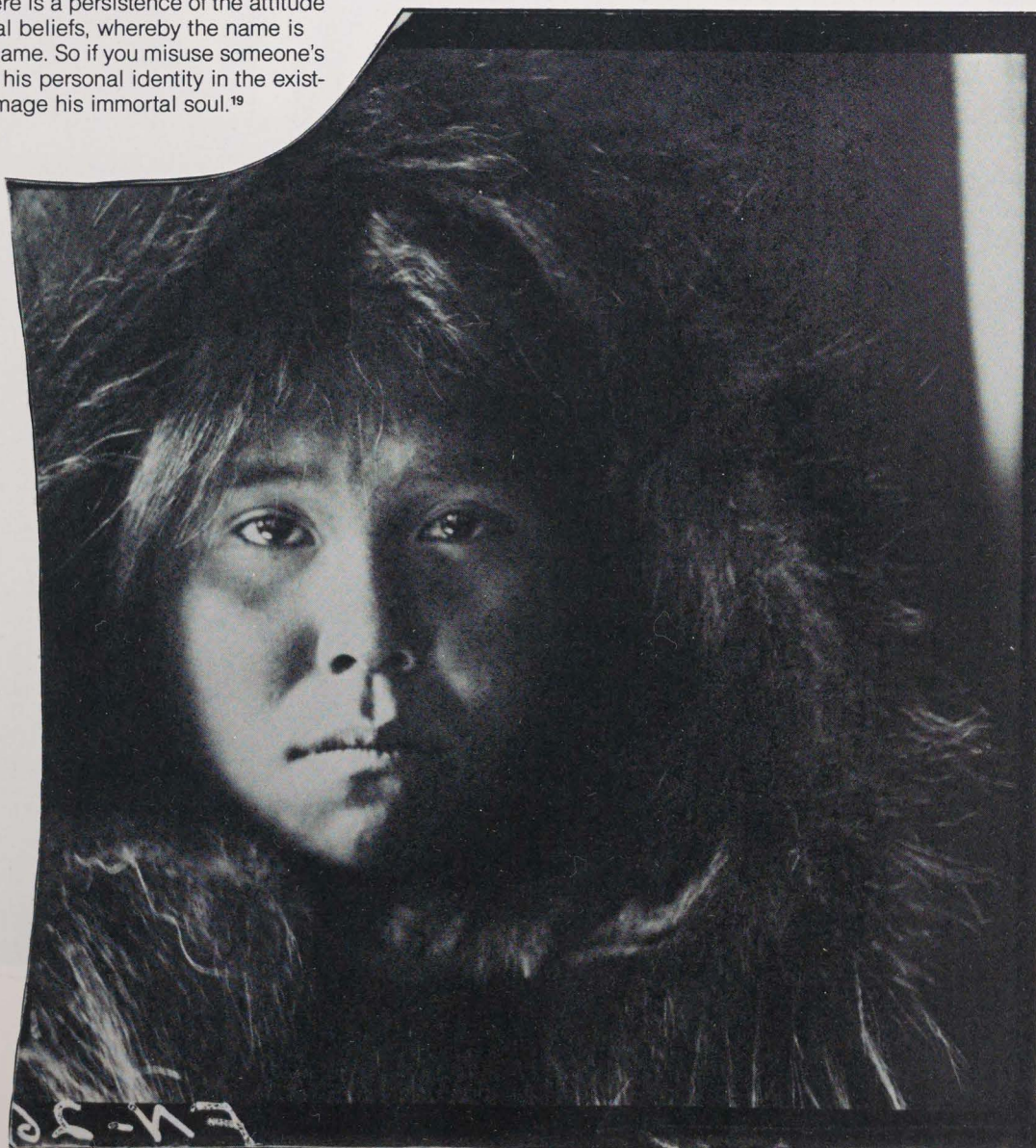


Figure 22

Cat. No. 108

modern print, from
original glass plate, by
NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2452

7" × 5" / 17.8 × 12.7 cm

subject: photograph of
two women (one with
child) with surveying or
filming equipment,
probably 1913–1914,
Baffin Island.

note: hairstyle and dress
would indicate Baffin
Island (MacDonald,
Zimmerly).



Figure 23

Cat. No. 105

three modern prints, from original glass slides, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2132

3¾" × 4¾" / 9.5 × 12.1 cm

N 2135

3¾" × 4¾" / 9.5 × 12.1 cm

N 2128

2½" × 4½" / 6.4 × 11.4 cm

subject: studies of Port Harrison post during winter storm, 1920–1921.

identification: *The Trading Post at Cape Dufferin*. Flaherty 7.

note: probably used as study for film production.

**Figure 24**

Cat. No. 36

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 176

7" × 5" / 17.8 × 12.7 cm

subject: portrait of man, 1913–1914, Baffin Island.

identification: the subject of this photograph was identified as *Noogooshoweetok (Nungusuituq)** by Simeonie Kopapik.note: Noogooshoweetok (Everlasting) was the son of Joe and Lao (Peter Pitseolak's aunt). His adoptive brother was Avaleeneatok, No.48, N 188. According to Peter Pitseolak in *People from our side*, p.88:

The moving picture boss [Flaherty] got Noogooshoweetok, Joe and Attachie as Eskimo guides and helpers . . . Noogooshoweetok was the one they took pictures of—and he also made pictures for them. Noogooshoweetok was the first one to draw; the picture makers made him draw. I have seen Noogooshoweetok's drawings recently in books. He was my close relative. I remember he told me it was tiring to make drawings.

The drawings Pitseolak referred to are included in the exhibition, Nos. 119–139. One of Noogooshoweetok's drawings was used in preparing the script for Flaherty's 1914 film. It is possibly No.135/953.110.1Q—*Esquimaux playing a game*. See *Filmography*.

Flaherty mentions that Noasweeto/Noogooshoweetok captured a live deer for the film (*Early Account of the Film*) as does Simeonie Kopapik. Eber 1. Flaherty wrote that he was married to Luliakame, and had a son Anunglung who was, according to Toronto newspaper reviews, the main subject of the 1914 film. See *Filmography*.

Flaherty described Noasweeto as: *easily first in either sledge driving or hunting amongst the motion picture retainers of the post and more than that he was the eskimo artist par excellence at either drawing or carving on ivory.*



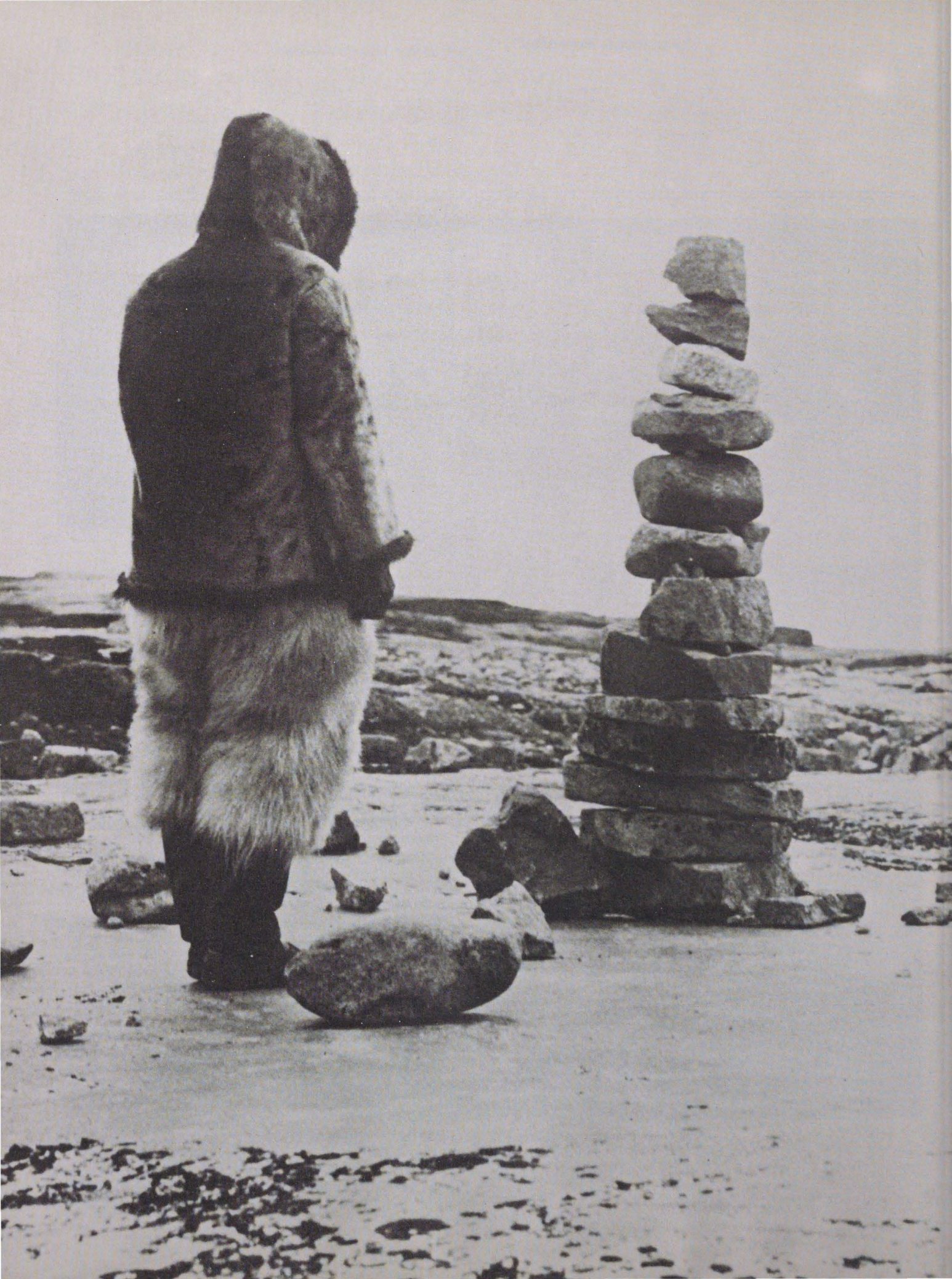


Figure 25

Cat. No. 89

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 2377

5" × 4" / 12.7 × 10.2 cm

subject: photograph of man (from clothing, most likely Allakariallak/Nanook) standing in front of Inukshuk, Inoucdjouac, 1920–1921.

note: the Inukshuk appears to be especially prepared for the camera (MacDonald, Zimmerly).

Almost all photographs of Allakariallak show him wearing this dress, which includes a seal skin jacket with (probably) dog fur trim, bear skin pants and seal skin boots. While Inuit in Canada did wear seal skin jackets, none wore bear skin pants (which were common to colder Arctic regions such as Greenland). Flaherty himself (who travelled only in Canada) would never have met Inuit wearing bear skin pants (MacDonald).

A number of photographs also show Allakariallak in this dress (clearly winter dress) in spring and summer (e.g. N 289).

These photographs would indicate that Flaherty dressed Allakariallak in bear skin pants, called him Nanook (the bear) and attempted to shoot bear hunting sequences in order to conform to preconceived and popularly held notions of the Inuit.

The "Objectivity" or "Authenticity" of the Image

The questionable objectivity which we assign to the mechanically reproduced image has long been debated. It seems, however, that this issue becomes more critical when we consider the documentation of exotic peoples, especially those within our own culture.

Indeed, in this journal, there have been other attempts to consider such issues. One in particular should be mentioned: Joanna Cohan Scherer's "You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Inaccuracies in Photographs of North American Indians" (1975).

With regard to the "authenticity" of Flaherty's photographs, it should be pointed out they fall into three quite distinct categories:

- 1 Documents—documentary-type photographs within the expeditionary tradition
- 2 Inuit portraits
- 3 Photographs taken during the shooting of *Nanook of the North*

Documents. While many of these photographs are obviously prepared for the camera, it would appear that manipulation of their content was minimal. The photographs were considered by three sources: John MacDonald, The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa; Dr. David W. Zimmerly, National Museum of Man, Ottawa; and Dudley Copland. The only apparent inaccuracy was to be found in Exhibition Index No. 63 (N 219) (Burant et al. 1979) and No. 64 (N 217), which shows a woman wearing men's boots.

Inuit portraits. The portraits, as described earlier, shifted focus from the exotic to the individual. To the extent that ethnographic detail is largely removed from the frame (and is therefore not manipulated) they can be termed "authentic." It should be pointed out that those photographs showing women wearing Hudson's Bay Company shawls draped around their heads reflect actual practice in the Ungava Peninsula and were not designed by Flaherty for photographic effect.

Nanook of the North. It is of significance that the photographs which possibly display ethnographic inaccuracies are contained in this section. The most controversial example of this is the clothing worn by Nanook/Allakariallak, specifically his polar bear pants. It was suggested that Canadian Inuit did not wear polar bear pants, which would imply that Flaherty had brought the clothing from the South or commissioned it in order to conform to preconceived notions of the Inuit (ibid.:57,62). It has recently been suggested by Minnie Freeman that the Belcher Islanders wore polar bear pants,²⁰ and Dr. David Zimmerly also located a reference in Diamond Jenness which confirms that such clothing was utilized by the Copper Inuit.

The question remains whether the presence of this clothing implies that the participants in *Nanook of the North* were Belcher Islanders or Port Harrison Inuit who themselves wore such clothing or were familiar with it. It would appear, regardless of the identity of the participants, that such clothing was probably not the norm. Another photograph showing Nanook standing in front of an Inukshuk (landmark of stones), Exhibition Index No. 89 (N2377), has also been questioned (ibid.:60,88). While it has been suggested that the Inukshuk looks specially prepared for the camera, this has also been subsequently disputed.

Perhaps the only photographs which are undisputedly ethnographically incorrect show Nyla and Nanook wearing winter dress in spring or summer (evident from the absence of snow on the ground) (ibid.:54,89). As these photographs were obviously taken during the production of the film, such posing or "acting" could be considered functional if not "authentic."

Postscript

The photographs of Robert Flaherty are presently touring the Ungava Peninsula under the auspices of an Inuit organization, La Fédération des Co-opératives du Nouveau-Québec. During the tour oral histories associated with Flaherty will be collected, and if possible, more information on the photographs will be obtained. Such a tour furthers the goal of repatriating these images for and by the Inuit, whose families shared their lives and collaborated with Robert Flaherty in producing these photographs and the films *1914*, *1916*, and *Nanook of the North*.

Notes

- 1 A. Barry Roberts, *Eskimo Identification and Disc Numbers: A Brief History*, unpublished paper prepared for the Social Development Division, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa, June 1975, page 28. Proposal for standardized spelling of Inuit names by F. H. Murphy, Administrator of Ordinances to the Deputy Commissioner, Government of the North West Territories, January 31, 1968.
- 2 "Fellow Citizens 1500 Miles Away," *The Toronto Sunday World*, March 28, 1915. "How I Filmed Nanook of the North," *The World's Work*, September 1922. "Indomitable Children of the North," *Travel*, 39(4), August 1922. "Life among the Eskimos," *The World's Work*, October 1922. "Wetalltook's Islands," *The World's Work*, February 1923. "Winter on Wetalltook's Islands," *The World's Work*, March 1923.
- 3 *Camera Studies of the Far North*, New York, Putnam, 1922. Note: Although Revillon Frères state that the portraits were taken and developed in their trading posts, a number of them were from earlier expeditions.
- 4 Interview with Susan Boyd-Bowman, Thunder Bay, July 23, 1979, for The Vancouver Art Gallery.
- 5 Currently stored with *The Robert J. Flaherty Papers*, Rare Books and Manuscript Library, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, Box 16.
- 6 See Danzker 1979:17-20, Chronology, for a full description of the Mackenzie expeditions.
- 7 Currently in the collection of the National Photography Collection, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Reference No. PA 53577.
- 8 Dorothy Harley Eber found a number of photographs in Cape Dorset and Lake Harbour. Ibid.
- 9 Presently located in the Claremont Archives, Thunder Bay Historical Museum, Royal Ontario Museum and National Photography Collection, Public Archives of Canada.
- 10 Frances Flaherty's diary, Sunday, January 3, 1915, in *The Robert J. Flaherty Papers*, Butler Library, Columbia University, Box 22.
- 11 *The Robert J. Flaherty Papers*, Butler Library, Columbia University, Box 22.
- 12 Toronto newspaper clippings, *The Robert J. Flaherty Papers*, Butler Library, Columbia University, Box 16. See also Danzker 1979:63, 64, "Filmography."
- 13 Frances Flaherty's diary, April 9, 1915, *The Robert J. Flaherty Papers*, Butler Library, Columbia University, Box 22.
- 14 Ibid., April 30, 1915.
- 15 *The Robert J. Flaherty Papers*, Butler Library, Columbia University, Box 22.
- 16 Review in *The Mail and Empire*, Thursday, April 1, 1915, in *The Robert J. Flaherty Papers*, Butler Library, Columbia University, Box 16.
- 17 Research into the identification of Flaherty's photographs is in its initial stages, and conflicting evidence is beginning to emerge. In some cases, the same subject has been identified by different sources as a member of different Inuit communities. For example, the man whom Flaherty identified as Tooktoo, from Baffin Island, was identified by Baffin Islanders as Anumiuk, and by Minne Freeman (granddaughter of Wetalltok) as Tooktoo from the Belcher Islands.
- 18 See Note 1: Roberts (1975).
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Interview with the author, Ottawa, March 13, 1980.

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1918 The Belcher Islands of Hudson Bay. *The Geographical Review* V(6).
1918 Two Traverses across Ungava Peninsula Labrador. *The Geographical Review* VI(2).
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1924 My Eskimo Friends. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday.
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1975 People from Our Side. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers.
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1975 You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Inaccuracies in Photographs of North American Indians. *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* 2(2).

Photographic References from the Exhibition Index

The accession or catalogue number assigned by the lending institution, as well as that assigned by The Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center, Claremont, California, have been indicated where applicable.

The dimensions of the photographs are expressed in both inches and centimetres: height before width.

The term "vintage" print means that produced by Robert Flaherty, or during his lifetime. The term "modern" print refers to that produced specifically for this exhibition by Jose Byloos, Senior Photographer at the National Photography Collection, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa from the original glass plates, slides and nitrate negatives in the collection of The Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center, Claremont, California.

In the case of a small number of photographs for which no negative survived, copy prints were made from the vintage print. This has been indicated in the catalogue entry.

Identifications of the photographs have been included where possible. Published captions or hand inscriptions by Robert and Frances Flaherty have been placed first, followed by other sources in alphabetical order. The order of these identifications does not indicate either preference or probability.

A number of photographs in the Flaherty collection showing sledges or clothing utilized only in Greenland (which Flaherty never visited) could not have been taken by him and therefore have not been included in the exhibition (N2438, N2538, N2743). Photographs of Allakariallak (Nanook) showing him wearing Greenland clothing have been included as these were obviously taken during the filming of *Nanook of the North*.

Two other photographs in the collection of Christopher Chapman, Toronto, attributed to Flaherty, were identified as those of A.P. Low and V. Stefansson. The presence of these and the Greenland photographs would suggest that Flaherty collected as well as took photographs.

Photographic Archives

FSCC

Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center, School of Theology, Claremont, California.

NPC

National Photography Collection, Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

NPA/M

Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum, McGill University, Montreal.

ROM

Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto.

TBHM

Thunder Bay Historical Museum.

Sources for Identifications of, and Captions for, the Photographs

Flaherty 1

Handwritten inscriptions by Robert Flaherty.

Flaherty 2

Captions for recommendation for Bell & Howell Camera by Robert Flaherty. "The Sir William Mackenzie Expeditions to Hudson's Bay, Toronto, Canada", March 24, 1915. Probably provided by Robert Flaherty.

Flaherty 3

Captions for "Fellow Citizens 1500 Miles Away", *Toronto Sunday World*, March 28, 1915. Probably provided by newspaper rather than Flaherty.

Flaherty 4

Captions for "The Belcher Islands of Hudson Bay: Their Discovery and Exploration". *Geographical Review*, Vol. V, No. 6, pp. 433-458. 1918. Probably provided by Robert Flaherty.

Flaherty 5

Captions for "Two Traverses Across Ungava Peninsula, Labrador". *Geographical Review*, Vol. VI, No. 2, pp. 116-132. 1918. Probably provided by Robert Flaherty.

Flaherty 6

Captions for "Indomitable Children of the North". *Travel*, Vol. 39, No. 4, pp. 16-20. August, 1922. Probably provided by Robert and Frances Flaherty.

Flaherty 7

Captions for "How I Filmed Nanook of the North". *The World's Work*, pp. 553-560. September, 1922. Probably provided by Robert and Frances Flaherty.

Flaherty 8

Captions for "Life Among the Eskimos". *The World's Work*, pp. 632-640. October, 1922. Probably provided by Robert and Frances Flaherty.

Flaherty 9

Captions for photogravures published in *Camera Studies of the Far North*. New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1922. Probably provided by Robert and Frances Flaherty.

**Figure 26**

Cat. No. 109

modern print, from original nitrate negative, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 379

5" × 4½" / 12.7 × 11.4 cm

subject: photograph of man with tripod, possibly 1913–1914, Baffin Island or 1915–1916, Belcher Islands.

Flaherty 10

Captions for "Wetalltok's Islands". *The World's Work*, pp. 422-433. February, 1923. Probably provided by Robert and Frances Flaherty.

Flaherty 11

Captions for "Winter on Wetalltok's Islands". *The World's Work*, pp. 538-553. March, 1923. Probably provided by Robert and Frances Flaherty.

Flaherty 12

Captions for *My Eskimo Friends*, Robert and Frances Flaherty. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page and Co. 1924. Probably provided by Robert and Frances Flaherty.

Flaherty 13

Captions for "In Baffin Land" by Alan Sullivan. It is unlikely that these captions are correct.

Frances Flaherty

Handwritten inscriptions by Frances Flaherty on photographs stored at The Robert and Frances Flaherty Study Center, Claremont, California.

Ruttan

Identifications supplied by Frances Ruttan (nee Flaherty), Robert Flaherty's sister, to Thunder Bay Historical Museum, 1979.

Eber 1

Identifications supplied from various sources through interviews conducted by Dorothy Harley Eber in Cape Dorset and Lake Harbour, Baffin Island. Published in "On Koodjuk's Trail", *Natural History*, Vol. 88, No. 1, January, 1979.

Eber 2

Identifications supplied by Dorothy Harley Eber in letters to the editor, dated July 15 and August 4, 1979.

NPA/M

Notman Photographic Archives, identifications made by Peter Pitseolak and Simeonie Kopapik.

MacDonald

Information supplied by John MacDonald, Head, Cultural and Linguistics Section, The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Ottawa.

Zimmerly

Information supplied by Dr. David W. Zimmerly, Arctic Ethnologist, The National Museum of Man, Ottawa.

Copland

Information supplied by Dudley Copland, Ottawa.

Hodgson

Information supplied in a letter from S. M. Hodgson, former Commissioner of the North West Territories to Dudley Copland, dated April 24, 1978.

Editor's note:

*Identification of the subjects of these photographs with descendants in Baffin Island has proved difficult, because of strong family resemblances and the passage of time. Although many of the identifications are difficult to verify, they have been included to assist in further research.

Nanook and the North

Paul Rotha with the assistance of Basil Wright

PART I*

Let a giant among men and a sultan of storytellers speak first:

Odysseus made his journeys and then Homer wrote about them. To discover and to reveal—that is the way every artist sets about his business. All art is, I suppose, a kind of exploring. Whether or not it's true of art, that's the way I started filmmaking. I was an explorer first and a filmmaker a long way after.

Even in my youth I was always exploring new country. My father was a mining-engineer and, in a manner of speaking, we were a nomad family. We moved from one gold-mining camp to another in various parts of Canada. I was then about 12 years of age. I learnt to track and hunt rabbits from the Indians and I had an Indian dog-team and toboggan. It was a frontier country where the Indians were much more primitive than they are now. There used to be Indian dances near our camp. I also used to trade with the Indians in a small way. I couldn't speak Indian but knew a few words of a sort of patois.

They taught me many things. Hunting, for example. Hunting rabbits in the tamarack swamps. If you picked up the trails, you put your dog on one. He begins following the trail and chases the rabbit. All you had to do was to stand on another part of the same trail. The rabbit would come around to where you were because the trail was always in a circle. You had to be patient and wait, and then the rabbit would come loping along and you got him. This was in the depths of the cold winter, when there was deep snow on the ground and the rabbits couldn't burrow.

As I grew up, even in my teens, I went on prospecting expeditions with my father, or with his men, often for months at a time, travelling by canoe in summer and by snow-shoe in winter. It was sometimes new country, country that hadn't been seen before, the then little-known hinterland of Northern Ontario. We mapped it and explored it, or at least my father and his men did. I was just an extra.

Most of this country was to the west and north of Lake Superior, forest land with a great many lakes. More water than land, really. The lakes were interconnected by streams, so that you could canoe for hundreds and hundreds of miles. Sometimes I went on prospecting expeditions with just one Indian in a birch-bark canoe for as long as two months at a time.

On one expedition, I remember, we went north of Lake Superior and were away for two months. The expedition was headed by an English mining-engineer, Mr. H. E. Knobel¹.

*Paul Rotha is a filmmaker, journalist, and author of many books on film such as *Documentary Diary*, *The Film Till Now*, and *Rotha on Film*. He is a pioneer in the British documentary film movement.*

*Basil Wright, concerned, along with John Grierson, since 1929 with the development of the documentary film, is the director of *Song of Ceylon* and many other films. He also is the author of *The Long View*, an international study of the film.*

He had been one of the Jameson raiders in South Africa. We went up north of Lake Nipigon, wonderful lake about a hundred miles long, then up one of the rivers running into it to the Height of Land, where the water divides roughly going south into the St. Lawrence and north into Hudson Bay. As we were crossing this Height of Land, the stream was very small—the beginnings of these streams were mere trickles—and we finally came into a lake called Little Long Lake. It was about twenty miles long. Knobel was in his usual position in the bow of the canoe. He'd do his mapping as we went along with a cross-section book and a little compass—a sort of mariner's paper compass.

Suddenly his compass began to turn around very quickly, more and more furiously as we went on. Then it stopped dead. We knew at once what was happening. We were passing over a body of magnetic iron-ore under us in the lake. So with that little compass, we located a large range of iron-ore. We staked out about five thousand acres of land covering several veins of this ore. They were not opened up until many years later. They were very far away and were simply held as a reserve. Thirty-five years later someone else went there and found gold.

There is a saying among prospectors—"Go out looking for one thing, that's all you'll ever find." We were exploring only for iron-ore at that time.²

Robert Flaherty was born in 1884. He was the eldest of a family of seven children of Robert Henry Flaherty and Susan Kloeckner Flaherty. Robert Henry's father had emigrated from Ireland by way of Quebec in the mid-nineteenth century. Both father and son were Irish Protestants. Susan Kloeckner was a German Catholic from Coblenz.

In 1957 David Flaherty recalled how his mother, known as the Angel of Port Arthur, went to mass each day at six in the morning. "Maybe," says David, "my mother didn't know about music and such things, as my father did, but she loved people dearly and had a great and deep compassion."³

Flaherty himself remembers the "poverty stricken country in which we lived" in Michigan, and how his father left the family to explore the little-known frontier country where gold had been discovered (Griffith 1953:xvii-xviii).

Several attempts were made to give the young Flaherty a formal education. "The boy learned with ease," writes Robert Lewis Taylor in a *New Yorker* Profile (June 11, 1949), "far outstripping his tractable colleagues, but he refused to observe the rules. His visits to the classroom were spasmodic. When the humor was upon him, he would turn up every day for a week or so, but he was likely to lounge in around eleven o'clock smoking a cigar. He would verify that the capital of South Dakota was Pierre rather than Bismarck, parse a sentence, exhibit a working knowledge of long division, and leave for the mid-afternoon fishing."

We should note here that although Mr. Taylor's *Profile of Flaherty* is both amusing and readable, it is not to be taken too seriously. It is fanciful and, in places, inaccurate. Nevertheless, at the time it was published Flaherty did not refute anything it said, even if it did tend to picture him as something of a clown and playboy, which he certainly was not.

In 1896, when Bob was 12, his father took a job as manager at the Golden Star Mine, in the Rainy Lake area of Canada, and the boy went along too. Mrs. Flaherty remained in Michigan to take care of the three younger children, two sons and a daughter. The population at the mine was a tough assortment of some 2,000 miners from all parts of the world—South Africa, Australia, the United States, and Canada itself. Schooling of the orthodox kind was unknown. Bob and his father lived in a cabin but ate at a boardinghouse. And it was here that Flaherty's love for the primitive, the unsophisticated, and the rough ways of "uncivilized" life began to ripen. Also, somewhere during his youth, he was taught to play the violin, maybe by his father; it was an accomplishment he retained all through his life and from which he derived great satisfaction.

They stayed at Rainy Lake for almost two years. Then the ore gave out and they moved to Burleigh Mine, in the Lake of the Woods country, where they were joined by the rest of the family. Here young Flaherty's education was given serious attention. His parents decided to send him to Upper Canada College, in Toronto. There is a firsthand memory of him there: About the year 1897 Sir Edward Peacock, then a master at the College, was one of those who attempted to educate this "tousle-headed boy who had little idea of the ways of civilisation."⁴ He noted that this strong, healthy, self-reliant child found a knife by itself easier to use at table than a knife and fork. He was popular with the other boys.

Flaherty's own memories were of a public school, "something like English public schools with English masters. They played cricket and football. I never learnt cricket. We also played lacrosse, which is a Canadian game, and this I liked very much. It was originally an Indian game" (BBC Talks, June 14, 1949).

But at 14 Bob went back with his father—"to the frontier, to the magic land of Indians, unknown lakes, tangled forests and mysteriously winding streams" (Griffith 1953:xviii). This was how it was for the next two years.

In 1900, Robert Flaherty, Sr., joined the U.S. Steel Corporation. He and his family moved to Port Arthur, which was to be their home for a number of years. In a final attempt to educate their self-educated youngster, they sent him to the Michigan College of Mines, thus bringing him again into the United States. But he did not stay there long enough even to graduate. Griffith tells us that the college authorities soon made up their minds that Flaherty had none of the qualifications considered necessary for an academic mineralogist and "bluntly fired him" (Griffith 1953:xvii). Actually, his stay there lasted just over

seven months, during which time, according to some reports, he took to sleeping out in the woods. When he was expelled, his father wrote wishing him the best of luck in whatever he elected to do on his own in the future (Taylor 1949, June 11).

Flaherty's brief education at the Michigan College of Mines may not have enriched his intellect but it did enable him to meet the girl who was to be his wife and lifelong collaborator, Frances J. Hubbard. Her father, Dr. Lucius L. Hubbard, was a man of academic distinction: philatelist, bibliophile, ornithologist, mineralogist, and geologist. In those days Boston, where he lived, was the main financial source for Middle Western mining operations. Dr. Hubbard was State Geologist of Michigan; when he retired he began the development of new copper mines in the Upper Peninsula, and here he and his family settled down.

Although Frances had a normal middle-class education, including Bryn Mawr and "finishing" in Europe, she also had the unusual advantage when still very young of going with her father on a number of expeditions in which he charted for the first time great areas of the forests of Maine. This profoundly influenced her, and when they settled in Michigan, she took to wandering again.

"I used to go off alone every day on my horse," she remembers, "following the faint, overgrown trails of the old logging days. I would pick out on the map one of the tiny lakes or ponds hidden in the woods and set off to find it. Sometimes I got lost, or darkness fell before I could reach home and I would spend the night in one of the deserted lumber camps that the forests had swallowed up. What I liked best was to wander all night on the shore by the lake by moonlight. I thought no one cared about these things but me" (Griffith 1953: xix-xx).

But young Bob Flaherty came in one day for Sunday dinner, and everything he said seemed to her an answer to all she wanted to know about the wilds. He was without formal education while she had had the best; his upbringing and experience were at the opposite pole from hers; but she quickly realized that he represented all she wanted from life. "I thought, when we were married, we would go and live in the woods," she said.

But a very great deal was to happen before these two young people were to be married. It seems that young Flaherty elected to go and work for a time with some Finns in a Michigan copper mine. After this, his father, now with U.S. Steel, took him off on several explorations for iron ore, and he linked up with Mr. Knobel, as he has already told us. Later, it is said, he was taken on by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, which wanted a survey made of its territory, as it was expanding in competition with the Canadian Pacific. He took the commission of a wide survey literally, and once, when the railroad officials believed him to be in the vicinity of Winnipeg, he contacted them from British Columbia, giving them the reason that he wanted to see what the west side of Vancouver Island was like.

Mrs. Frances Flaherty, however, in later years did not remember Bob's ever working for the Grand Trunk Pacific, but she did confirm his prospecting for marble along the west coast of Vancouver Island in 1906. She did, in fact, spend a couple of months with him there on the Tahsish Inlet in the Rupert District. A Mr. H. T. Curtis, a retired mining engineer, later remembered meeting Flaherty fortuitously about November 1906 at the Balmoral Hotel, Victoria. Curtis, who was assistant to the resident engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Island Division), found the young man "a most likeable soul, kind-hearted, generous, but improvident."⁵ He appears to have had some sort of allowance from his mother, but although he paid the hotel bills, he spent all the rest on things like books, fancy ties, and socks. He and Curtis used to go on canoeing trips, in which Bob was expert and altogether in his element, though he showed no enthusiasm for fishing.

Curtis introduced him to various people in Victoria, among them a well-known local architect, Sam MacClure, whose wife was musical. As Flaherty already had his famous violin, he often went to the MacClure house, and as a result he and Curtis got to know the conductor of the local Musical Society, a Mr. Russell. This acquaintanceship resulted in Flaherty and Curtis's sharing a house with Russell and his brother. "We more or less mucked in together," said Curtis, "and Bob filled the role of house-boy."

On Christmas Day, 1906, Bob and Curtis went canoeing toward the Indian settlement on the other side of Victoria Inlet. Flaherty was captivated by the Indians' music and songs. Mr. Curtis added, "He talked at one time of going to Alaska when the spring set in, but to do what I don't remember. He never needed to have any specific aims as to occupation or employment. In fact, work in my idea and experience was right out of his ken. However, I learned in later years of his success as a film-maker, etc. I left British Columbia at Easter, 1907, to follow my profession and had the occasional breezy note from Bob but finally lost contact."

Between 1907 and 1910, Flaherty worked as a prospector for a small mining syndicate above Lake Huron. Then he switched his services to a bigger concern and headed north to the Mattagami River over a route that had not been used for 150 years. He may have been, in Mr. Curtis's word, "improvident," but for a young man in his early twenties he certainly knew how to find his way about the wilderness. He discovered some iron ore deposits, staked a claim for his employers, and went south to Toronto. There an event took place which was to shape the remainder of his life:

A turning point in my life came when I first met up with Sir William Mackenzie, who in his life-time was the Cecil Rhodes of Canada. He was building a great railway across Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It was to be the Canadian Northern, now the Canadian National Railway. Mackenzie had heard that there might be iron-ore and other mineral deposits along the sub-Arctic east coast of Hudson Bay on a little-known group of islands called the Nast of Gulf Hazard. He asked me if I'd like to go up there and explore and then make a report to him. That was in August, 1910. [BBC Talks, July 24, 1949]

Flaherty first met Mackenzie through his father who, after 10 years with U.S. Steel, had switched his services as a consulting engineer to the firm of Mackenzie and Mann, in Toronto. It is not for us here to describe the tremendous part played by this firm in general and Sir William Mackenzie in particular in developing Canada at that time; we will only note that it was Mackenzie's judgment of men which helped to launch Bob Flaherty on his career. Nor do we propose to give detailed accounts of each of Flaherty's several expeditions for Mackenzie because they can be found better written in his own words in his book *My Eskimo Friends* (1924), his articles in the *Geographical Review* (1918), and in his diaries⁶ now in the Robert Flaherty Papers housed at the Butler Library of Columbia University. But the simple account he himself made at a later date must not be omitted (BBC Talks, June 14 and July 24, 1949):

I jumped off with one companion named Crundell, an Englishman, from the temporary railway frontier at Ground Hog in Northern Ontario. By small canoe we paddled down the Ground Hog River, the big Mattagami and the swift Moose to the great fur stronghold of the North, two-and-a-half centuries old, Moose Factory, at the southern end of James Bay. From Moose Factory we travelled by open "York" sailing-boat some 70 miles to Charlton Island, and from Charlton took a schooner to Fort George, a little post on the east coast of James Bay. Because of the head-winds, the journey of less than 200 miles from Charlton to Fort George took ten days. At Fort George, hardly half-way to our final destination, the Nastapoke Island, we were caught by winter.

My companion returned south. When the sea-ice had formed, I went on by sledge with a party of Indians as far as the last northern trees, at Cape Jones. The Indian country always ends where the trees end, and there is the beginning of the Eskimo country. The Indians left me at Cape Jones, from whence I was at the Eskimo camp at Great Whale, the last northern post. I spent the night in a tent. All the Eskimos were in *igloos*. During the night a terrific storm came up and in the morning I found my tent had collapsed. I was covered with canvas and an awful lot of snow, but I was able to breathe. The Eskimos came around and with much laughter they pulled off the canvas and took me into one of their *igloos*. I could speak only a few words of their language, about a hundred words or so out of a vocabulary: Is it cold? Is it far? I am hungry—that sort of thing.

Their language is not a very extensive one but it is very difficult to learn, much more difficult than the Northern In-

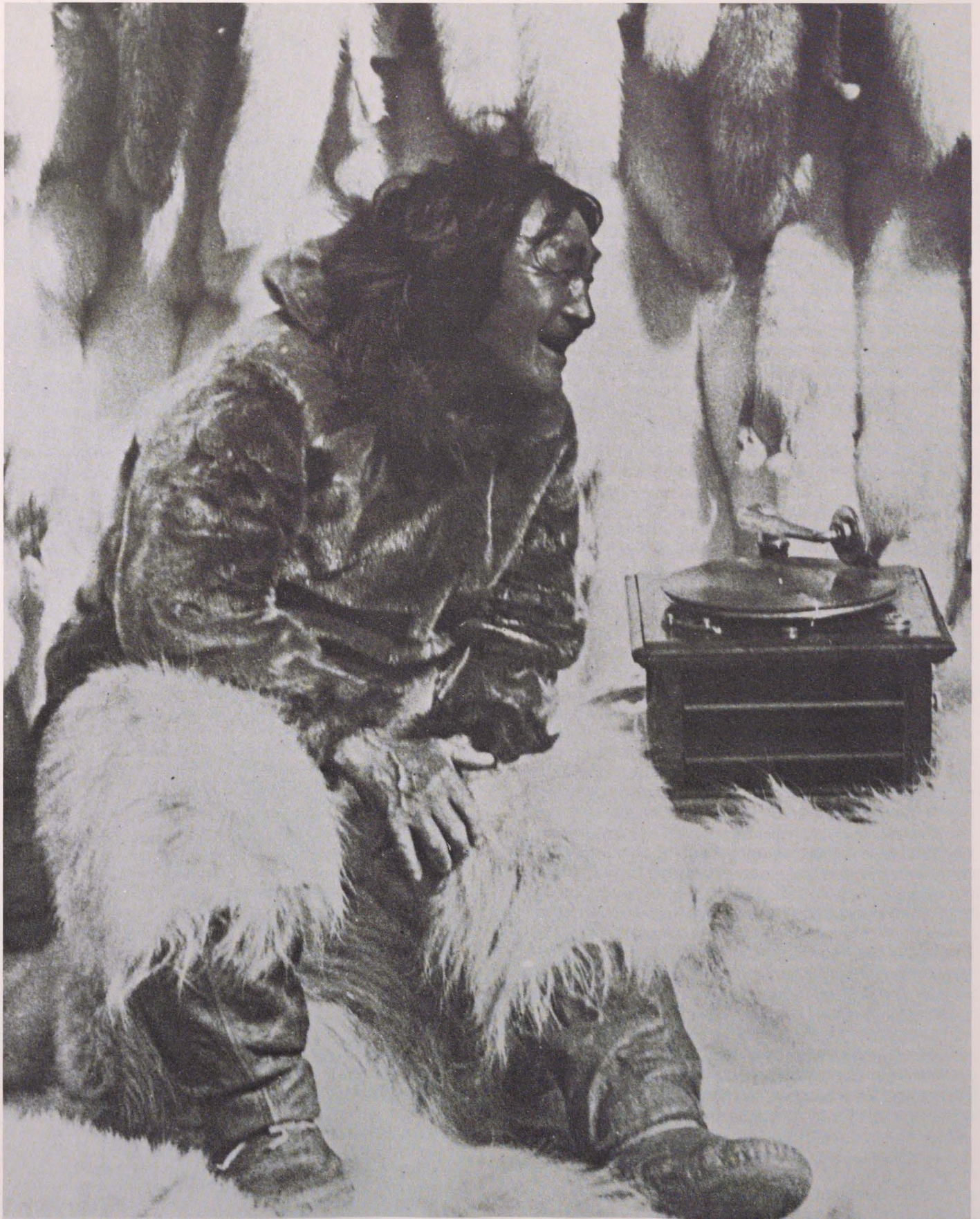


Figure 1

Cat. No. 100

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (see No. 29).

N 370

8½" × 5½" / 21.5 × 14.2 cm

subject: photograph of Allakariallak (Nanook) at Port Harrison post, with record player, 1920–1921, Inoucdjouac.

identification: *Nanook. The Grammophone*. Flaherty 9.

A VOICE FROM A STRANGE WORLD: Nanook, "The Bear," Chief of the Ikivimuits, is famous throughout Ungava as a great hunter, skilled in the ways of the North, and learned in all the lore of the Arctic wilds; but the white man's box in which singing and talking is so miraculously imprisoned is a greater mystery than any of which he has ever dreamed. Fascinated by its strangeness he studies it with eager curiosity in a vain attempt to discover the origin of the voice. Accustomed to the traders' canned goods, he suspects that this music is canned also. Flaherty 6.

note: the above caption contradicts even Flaherty's own writings on the sophisticated response of the Inuit to new technologies. Flaherty apparently relied on the Inuits' technical expertise to repair his photographic equipment.

dian languages. But I could always make myself understood. One can do a great many signs. And the white man has a way of expression. His face reveals so much to a native. He can read your face like a book, while his face remains impassive.

It was a long haul with a 12-dog team over 250 miles but at last I reached the Nastopone Islands with my Eskimo companion, whose name was Nero. He could speak a little pidgin-English.

When I surveyed the islands (Taylor and Gillies) which Sir William Mackenzie had sent me to examine, I found there was iron-ore there all right but it wasn't very important—not economically important. It was what we call "lean" ore. The island which had the largest deposits was only about 12 miles long and about half-a-mile wide. It lay along parallel to and about a mile off the coast. It was crested with snow-covered rocks. We were in the sub-Arctic in the middle of winter. It was bitterly cold. A complete desolation. And I had to face the fact that the long journey had been for nothing.

At the south end of the island I saw a monument sticking up near some slabs of rock. It was about 6 ft. high, what they call an American Man in that country, for what reason I don't know. I think it is an old raider term. I noticed how the moss was encrusted in fractures of the stone, apparently very old, and it had obviously been up there a long, long time.

To show how different is the Eskimo idea of figures from our own, when I said to Nero, "This is very old, isn't it?," he said, "Oh, yes, very." "How old would you think it would be?" I asked him. "Oh," he says, "maybe a t'ousand years." "How would you know it's a thousand years old?" "Oh," he says, "I see it when I am small boy." A thousand years doesn't mean anything to an Eskimo. . . .

It was on this trip, my first for Mackenzie, that Nero, my Eskimo friend, told me something that greatly interested me. He saw that far out to sea, perhaps a hundred miles out to the west, there was another group of islands which was very big. I had noted these islands dotted in tentatively on the Admiralty charts. They were called the Belcher Islands. No white man had ever landed there. They had been put on the map by a Captain W. Coates, a shipmaster of the Hudson's Bay Company in the early eighteenth century. The company had established its first post in the Bay in 1670. They've had ships coming in once a year from England ever since.

When the Eskimos told me that this was "big land," I could hardly believe it. They were only little bits of dots on the map. However, when I saw more Eskimos along the coast, they told me the same story. I asked them to make sketch-maps for me, and they all more or less coincided although drawn by different Eskimos.⁷

I asked Nero how far off the islands were. He said something like a hundred miles but I mistrusted his idea of figures. So in order to find out the size of the largest of the islands, I asked him, "How many sleeps would it take to sledge from this end of the island to that end of the island?" He said, "Two sleeps." So I knew that, if he spoke the truth, it was a big piece of land. He added also that there was a long narrow lake on the biggest island, so long that it was like the sea. What he meant was that looking from one end of it to the other, you could not see land. And he also told me that the cliffs of these islands looked as if they were bleeding when you scratched them.

Now one of the most important types of iron-ore, hematite, looks blue but when it is scratched, it leaves a blood-red streak. So at this point I became really interested in the Belcher Islands. I had by now picked up so much information about them from so many Eskimos that I felt sure there must be something in the story. And when I finally returned to Lower Canada from this expedition in the autumn of 1910 and reported my findings to Sir William Mackenzie, he became as excited about the idea as I was. He asked me to make up another expedition and go back.

The second trip in 1911 took nineteen months and we got wrecked on the way trying to get out to the Belchers.⁸ So I waited many, many months at Great Whale River Post until the winter came. When we were about to cross over the sea-ice, it broke the evening before our departure. It had been frozen 125 miles right across to the islands but now it began to drift. Sometimes the Eskimos got caught on big floes of ice this way. They may be adrift at large on the sea for a year or more. They may drift as far as a thousand miles. The ice doesn't melt. As the summer gets on, the ice works north and begins to go through Hudson Strait, which is the discharge of Hudson Bay into the North Atlantic Ocean. Hudson Bay itself is 1200 miles long—an inland sea connected with the North Atlantic by a strait that is 500 miles long and over 100 miles wide. So the ice that gets through into the ocean doesn't begin to melt until it reaches down towards the Gulf Stream away east of Newfoundland.

When Eskimos have been caught like this, maybe a family has been separated and they have not met up again for years afterwards and then perhaps hundreds of miles away. There have been cases of an Eskimo family camping on the sea-ice when it has broken during the night. The igloo has been cut in half just as you'd slice an orange. One part of the family went one way on the drifting ice and the other half went the other, not to meet up again maybe for many months.⁹

So, after the ice had broken, I decided not to wait and make another attempt to reach the Belcher Islands because almost a year had gone by. Instead, I made a survey of the Ungava Peninsula by sledge with an Eskimo. Also during this next summer (1912), I made two equidistant cross-sections of an area almost the size of Germany in the Barren Lands, about 125,000 square miles.¹⁰

This modest statement gives no indication of the hazards of these journeys or the degree of the achievement. Two previous attempts had been made to cross the Barren of Ungava, one by A. P. Low and the other by the Reverend E. J. Peck. Both had failed because of the failure to discover game to supplement the rations carried by sledge.

Flaherty's expedition was not better supplied. But whereas Peck had turned back with a heavy heart after 11 days rather than face starvation, Flaherty took the risk and won through after a journey lasting over a month. He took with him four Eskimos. His favorite was Nero, a celebrated Great Whale hunter with a smattering of English, who engaged to take them as far as Lake Minto and then return. Omarolluk and Charlie came for the deer they hoped to slay on the journey, and Wetunik was supposed to know the country between Lake Minto and Fort Chimo on the Atlantic coast of the Ungava Peninsula. Extracts from Flaherty's diary of the journey give a graphic account of the traveling conditions (see Griffith 1953:8-15).

Flaherty ended the journey across the Barrens of Fort Chimo with his Eskimo companions. But when he returned to Lower Canada in the autumn of 1912 and reported his findings to Mackenzie, he found what he himself had feared, that from the geological or mineral point of view his surveys were not important. By the fifties, however, the big iron ore deposits he discovered in both Ungava and the Belchers were being very gainfully worked by the Cyrus Eaton Company, "bringing in untold wealth to the New World."¹¹

Despite Flaherty's failure to find deposits which at the time would have been economical to work, Sir William Mackenzie insisted that he go north again to the Belcher Islands, this time by proper ship. He was still impressed by Flaherty's report of what the Eskimos had told him about the size of these islands and by the maps that had been drawn. So he bought for Flaherty a topsail schooner called *The Laddie*, 83-ton register, from an uncle of the famous Captain Bob Bartlett, who had been Admiral Peary's skipper on his North Polar expeditions.

The Laddie, which had been built in 1893 at Fogo, Newfoundland, was rigged at St. John's, and a crew of eight Newfoundland seamen was engaged under the command of Captain H. Bartlett. She was specially equipped for ice-breaking and was outfitted for an 18-month expedition. All was set for departure on August 14, 1913. But there was as yet one very important piece of equipment missing.

Whether it was Flaherty's own idea to take a motion picture camera with him on this, his third, expedition or whether it was Sir William Mackenzie's suggestion is difficult to determine. Richard Griffith, whose book was written mainly under the eye of Flaherty and the bulk of it read by him before his death, gives the impression that it was his own idea. "When Flaherty excitedly declaimed his enthusiasm for Eskimo life to his employer, the ever-receptive Sir William agreed [our italics] that he should take a movie-camera along with him on his next expedition" (Griffith 1953:36). Flaherty himself, on the other hand, says:

Just as I was leaving, Sir William said to me casually, "Why don't you get one of these new-fangled things called a motion picture camera?" So I bought one but with no other thought really than of taking notes on our exploration. We were going into interesting country, we'd see interesting people. I had no thought of making a film for the theatres. I knew nothing whatsoever about films. [BBC Talks, June 14 and July 24, 1949]

The fact remains that Flaherty went down to Rochester, took a three-week course in motion picture photography from the Eastman Company, bought one of the earliest models of the Bell and Howell movie camera, and made some tests which were not very successful. He also bought a portable developing and printing machine, some modest lighting equipment, and, presumably, a fair amount of film.¹²

They sailed *The Laddie* a thousand miles northward round the Labrador Coast through the Hudson Strait to Baffin Land. Too late to have a winter base in the Bay itself, they put into Adadjuak Bay and with the help of some forty Eskimos set up a winter camp. In the last week of September *The Laddie* sailed back south, just before the ice began to form, so that she could be wintered in Newfoundland. Flaherty and three of the crew settled in for the 10 months of winter. There were 2,000 miles of sledging to be done along the coast and island to the great lake of Adadjuak—and there was the filming. But Flaherty did not get around to using his new possession until early the next year, 1914. He tells us:

February came, cold but glowingly clear and calm. Then we began our films. We did not want for cooperation. The women vied with one another to be starred. Igloo building, conjuring, dances, sledging and seal-hunting were run off as the sunlit days of February and March wore on. Of course there was occasional bickering, but only among the women—jealousy, usually, of what they thought was the over-prominence of some rival in the film. . . . On June 10, I prepared for our long-planned deer-filming expedition, and on the following day, with camera and retorts of film¹³ and food for 20 days, Annunglung and I left for the deer-grounds of the interior. Through those long June days we travelled far. . . .

We were picking out a course when Annunglung pointed to what seemed to be so many boulders in a valley far below. The boulders moved. "Tooktoo!" Annunglung whispered. We mounted camera and tripped on the sledge. Dragging his six-fathom [sic] whip ready to cow the dogs before they gave tongue, Annunglung went on before the team. He swung in behind the shoulder of an intervening hill. When we rounded it we were almost among them. The team lunged. The deer, all but three, galloped to right and left up the slope. The three kept to the valley. On we sped, the camera rocking like the mast of a ship at sea. From the galloping dogs to the deer not 200 ft. beyond, I filmed and filmed and filmed. Yard by yard we began closing in. The dogs, sure of victory, gave tongue. Then something happened. All that I know is that I fell headlong into a deep drift of snow. The sledge was belly-up. And across the traces of the bitterly disappointed dog-team Annunglung was doubled up with laughter. Within two days we swung back for camp, jubilant over what I was sure was the film of films. But within 12 miles of the journey's end, crossing the rotten ice of a stream, the sledge broke through. Exit film. [Flaherty 1924:124-125]

Thus Flaherty describes with characteristic understatement the total loss of some of his first efforts at filmmaking.

The summer of 1914 was nearly over when the *The Laddie* sailed back from the south. Flaherty and his men were ready to leave within a week, bound at long last for the elusive Belcher Islands.

This time the expedition was a complete success. They discovered—or rather rediscovered—the islands and mapped them. They proved to be even larger than Flaherty had imagined. The Eskimo maps, moreover, were wonderfully accurate. A rectangle drawn around them would have enclosed an area of some 5,000 square miles. The longest island was over 70 miles in length. It had a fresh-water lake on it, as the Eskimos had said. There, too, were the blood-red cliffs, just as Nero had forecast. But when Flaherty reported on the area later, it was with the same result: he did not consider them of sufficiently high grade to warrant their operation at so remote a latitude.

Flaherty did, nevertheless, have two rewards for his expedition. The Canadian government subsequently decided to name the largest of the Belcher Islands after him. He had also in his possession a certain amount of exposed cinematograph film.

While at Great Whale River Post, on the way back, Flaherty first learned that war had broken out in Europe. It was October 1914. His father had been sent up to the Belchers to verify Bob's findings, and Bob records the meeting:

When we landed I glimpsed several forms flitting past the window lights and dissolving in the darkness. Puzzled, we climbed to the cabin and strode into a lighted but deserted room. Nearly half-an-hour we waited there, our surprise and curiosity mounting the while, when at last the familiar, long, lanky form of old Harold (the Post's half-Indian, half-Swedish interpreter) stood halting in the doorway. Recognising me in a moment, his fear-beclouded face became wreathed in smiles. He reached out for my hand, exclaiming, "My God, sir, I t'ote you was the Germans!" And so it was that we first heard of the great World War. [Flaherty 1924:43]

Flaherty's expeditions to the North had by now lengthened his engagement to Frances Hubbard to 10 years—and it was an engagement conducted, by force of circumstances, mainly by correspondence. But at last, on November 12, 1914, they were married. The ceremony took place at the home of one of the bride's cousins in New York City. Flaherty was not, it seems, too flush with money at the time; Frances bought the wedding ring and also took him round to City Hall to get the license.

But it would seem—and after so many years these things can be told—that Miss Hubbard was not the only young lady to whom the young explorer had been paying attention. Mrs. Evelyn Lyon-Fellowes, of Toronto, writes:

I met Mr. Robert J. Flaherty a number of times when he appeared to be courting my chum, Miss Olive Caven. It was between his Arctic trips and his marriage. I chaperoned them once at lunch at the old Queen's Hotel [now demolished]. On this occasion he gave me a wonderful photo of a husky dog, taken I understand in an igloo. He gave Miss Caven many beautiful presents including a white-fox fur, and numerous photos of Eskimos which she accepted as she admired him very much. On his last return from Hudson Bay, he spent the first evening with her and left that night for the United States. A few days later he arrived back in Toronto with his bride, Frances, and asked poor surprised Olive to help them find a house to live in—which she did. She had not known of his engagement. She eventually recovered from the shock and married most happily and well. She died over a year ago.¹⁴

When the Flahertys were married, remembers Ernestine Evans, a very old friend of theirs, the Hubbard family announced that they were seeking a Ford agency post for the bridegroom, assuming naturally that he would now settle down (Evans 1951). But the newly married explorer was to disappoint them.

During that winter of 1914–1915, Flaherty put his film into some sort of shape. It was too crude to be interesting. But he was planning to go north again in the spring, this time to explore and winter on the Belcher Islands; and he was determined to attempt a better film (Flaherty 1924:126). Thus, even at this early stage, Flaherty expressed himself dissatisfied with his work as a cinematographer although he was still no more than an amateur.

So in the summer of 1915, Bob and his new wife, together with Mr. Flaherty, Sr., Margaret Thurston, a Bryn Mawr schoolmate of Frances, and David Flaherty, journeyed by canoe with Indian guides from the railhead in Northern Ontario down the Ground Hog, Mattagami, and Moose Rivers to Moose Factory on James Bay. There they boarded *The Laddie*. At Charlton Island, in James Bay, all the party camped for several weeks except Bob, who, with *The Laddie* and her crew, headed for the Belcher Islands once more. The others stayed on the island which David Flaherty described as being "carpeted with springy white moss covered with delicious wild currants and cranberries. We caught trout in the streams and shot yellow-legs along the shore. Frost was already in the air when in late September the once-a-year Hudson's Bay Company steamer *Nascopie* picked us up."¹⁵

Meanwhile, now on his fourth expedition, Flaherty had reached his destination and had set about more filming. This included a sequence of Mukpollo, an Eskimo, harpooning a big bull-walrus which Flaherty "filmed and filmed and filmed until the last inch was ground away." He wrote:

During the winter, we compiled a series of motion pictures showing the primitive life, crafts, and modes of hunting and travelling of the islanders—an improved version of the film we had previously made on the Baffin Island expedition. With a portable projector bought for the purpose, we showed the islanders a copy of the Baffin Island film, purposing in this way to inspire them with that spirit of emulation so necessary to the success of our filming. Nor were we disappointed. Enthusiastic audiences crowded the hut. Their "Ayee's" and "Ah's" at the ways of these their kindred that were strange to them were such as none of the strange and wonderful ways of the *kablunak* (white man) ever called forth. The deer especially (*Tooktoo!* they cried), mythical to all but the eldest among them, held them spellbound. [Flaherty 1918:456]

Many years later Flaherty was to tell a story of how he was taught the rudiments of motion picture photography by a missionary whom he met on one of his expeditions and how later the missionary was found hanging by his neck in a hut that Flaherty had converted into a darkroom. We regard this story as almost certainly apocryphal, but Flaherty told it to at least three people.¹⁶

This expedition was also an adventurous experience. *The Laddie* had to be abandoned during the winter and its timbers used for fuel piece by piece. "Everything had to be left behind," Flaherty wrote, "saving the clothes we

wore, some three week's food, notes, maps, specimens and the film—two boxes covered by the Eskimos with water-proofing of sealskin carefully sewn" (Flaherty 1924:132).¹⁷ Eventually they reached Lower Canada again.

Flaherty now had in all some 70,000 feet of film in Toronto which had been taken during two expeditions. Encouraged by his wife, he spent some months in 1916 putting a print (taken from the negative) into some kind of continuity order. For an unexplained reason, fortunate in the light of what was to happen, this assembled print was sent to Harvard, presumably to be screened by someone there. Later, while Flaherty was packing the 70,000 feet of negative in his cutting room in Toronto, ready for dispatch to New York, "much to my shame and sorrow I dropped a cigarette-end in it." The complete negative, of course, went up in a sheet of flame and Flaherty, having tried to put out the fire without success, narrowly escaped losing his life; he was hospitalized for several weeks. Grierson refers to Flaherty's having carried scars on his hands from this fire all his life, but others, including the authors, do not remember them.

There remained, however, the positive print which had been sent to Harvard. Flaherty hopefully sent this to New York to a laboratory which might be able to make a new negative from the print, but it seems that this process, so common today, was not possible at that time. Thus he had only one copy of his film, which would, of course, get scratched and deteriorate every time it was screened. He did show it a good deal, nevertheless—at the American Geographic Society, at the Explorers' Club in New York, and to sundry friends at his home in New Canaan, Connecticut.

"People were polite!" he said, "but I could see that what interest they took in the film was the friendly one of wanting to see where I had been and what I had done. That wasn't what I wanted at all. I wanted to show the *Innu*it (Eskimo). And I wanted to show them, not from the civilised point of view, but as they saw themselves, as 'we, the people.' I realised then that I must go to work in an entirely different way." [Griffith 1953:36]

And later he added, "It was utterly inept, simply a scene of this and a scene of that, no relation, no thread of a story or continuity whatever, and it must have bored the audience to distraction. Certainly it bored me."¹⁸

Thus the "Harvard print," as we might call it, the only example of Flaherty's first efforts with a film camera, no longer exists. There is no doubt that he himself was only too glad to have it forgotten. His close friend and admirer

Figure 2

Cat. No. 93

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 158

10" × 8" / 25.4 × 20.3 cm

subject: portrait of Allakariallak, who played the title role of Nanook, 1920–1921, Inoucdjouac.

John Grierson, who later described himself as his "self-appointed attorney,"¹⁹ saw a good part of the print, and confirms Flaherty's poor opinion of it. He never mentioned it to him because "it was not in his thought or memory that anything survived." Grierson felt, however, that this first effort was important historically, for it meant that Flaherty was struggling to evolve what eventually became *Nanook of the North* over a period of eight solid years (1913–1921).

It would be fair to state that Flaherty had no intention of making a film which would professionally stand comparison with other films of the period. He stressed all along that he merely took the movie camera with him to make visual notes, so to speak, of what he saw. We do not even know if he was familiar with the cinema of that time, let alone with the numerous travel films that had been routine fare almost since the motion picture was born. But there is no doubt that his dissatisfaction with the results of his first attempt opened his eyes to the possibilities of the movie camera as an instrument of expression and not merely as a means of recording. He could very understandably have put aside all thought of future filmmaking. He was an explorer and mineralogist by profession, not a cinematographer. Yet, as we have seen, correcting his early mistakes in filmmaking became an obsession. In his own words:

My wife and I thought it over for a long time. At last we realised why the film was bad, and we began to get a glimmer that perhaps if I went back to the North, where I had lived for eight years and knew the people intimately, I could make a film that this time would go. Why not take, we said to each other, a typical Eskimo and his family and make a biography of their lives through the year? What biography of any man could be more interesting? Here is a man who has less resources than any other man in the world. He lives in a desolation that no other race could possibly survive. His life is a constant fight against starvation. Nothing grows; he must depend utterly on what he can kill; and all of this against the most terrifying of tyrants—the bitter climate of the North, the bitterest climate in the world. Surely this story could be interesting. [Flaherty 1950]

**PART II**

At this time, it should be remembered, most of the world was occupied with what was, until then, the biggest and bloodiest war in history. It was hardly a good time to find financing for a filmmaking expedition into the Canadian North. After the 70,000 feet of film had gone up in flames, Sir William Mackenzie was unlikely to sponsor yet another film adventure.

So for the next four years Flaherty and his wife spent some time with her parents in Houghton, Michigan, and later moved east to Connecticut, living for the most part in Silvermine and New Canaan. During this period Flaherty began to write. He labored on his two detailed articles for the *Geographical Review*, and he also (in 1923) wrote a series for the magazine *World's Work*. Flaherty never found writing easy, but with the help of his wife he began on his book *My Eskimo Friends*, which was not published until 1924. For this he drew on the very full diaries which he had kept on his various expeditions. All this time he was trying to raise money for the film he was determined to make, but he had no success. The Flahertys' three daughters—Barbara, Frances, and Monica—were born during these years.

It was not until well after the war (in which he took no part) had ended that Flaherty came upon a source of financing which would enable him to realize his cherished film expedition. In 1920, and by now he was 36, he chanced to meet a Captain Thierry Mallett, of Revillon Frères, the well-known French firm of furriers which at that time was extending its trade in the North. They met, so the story goes, at a cocktail party, and Flaherty so inspired Captain Mallett with his enthralling tales of the Arctic that a day or two later the Revillon Company agreed to finance him to make his film at one of their trading posts, Port Harrison, on Cape Dufferin, on the northeastern coast of Hudson Bay. This was actually in the sub-Arctic, but to get there would take two months by schooner and canoe.

In return for backing the venture, Captain Mallett and Mr. John Revillon required that the opening titles of the film carry the phrase "Revillon Frères presents," to which Flaherty readily agreed. He was quite unaware that the film trade generally was strongly opposed to such gratuitous screen advertizing. The actual reported cost of the film varies, but we do not believe it to have exceeded \$53,000, an exceedingly small sum even in those days.

That entertaining but not too reliable reporter of early movie years, Terry Ramsaye, comments about the venture: "The expedition was underwritten by Revillon Frères, the great fur-house, which coincidentally was an important advertiser in the smart traffic of Fifth Avenue. So it came that Mr. Flaherty became a frequent guest at the Coffee House Club, frequented also by such as Frank Crowninshield of Conde Nast slick-class magazine affiliations" (Ramsaye 1951). This was presumably Flaherty's first introduction to the haunt with which in later years he was to be so closely associated. It lies near Times Square, and its atmosphere and furnishings have for an English visitor the Olde Worlde quality which is more English than the English.

Flaherty selected his equipment with care. "I took two Akeley motion picture cameras. The Akeley then was the best camera to operate in extreme cold, since it required graphite, instead of oil or grease, for lubrication. These cameras fascinated me," he said, "because they were the first cameras ever made to have a gyro-movement in the tripod-head whereby one could tilt and pan the camera without the slightest distracting jar or jerk or vibration" [Flaherty 1950:13].

Camera movements are today so commonplace that it is worth emphasizing how little they were used in those early days of cinema. D. W. Griffiths had pioneered the pan (sideways movement of the camera on its own axis) and had used other daring camera movements, but panning and at the same time tilting the camera (a tilt being a vertical up or down pan) was a great problem because the two movements had to be carried out by winding two separate geared handles; this not only restricted speed of movement but also tended to become so jerky that the

scene would be unusable. The invention of the gyro movement, operated by one single arm, was therefore an important technical innovation.

Flaherty could rightly claim to be a pioneer in the use of the gyro tripod, and although *Nanook* does not in fact contain many examples of pans or tilts, they are an important, indeed a vital, feature of all his subsequent work. He continues:

I also took the materials and chemicals to develop the film, and equipment to print and project it. My lighting equipment had to be extremely light because I had to go by canoe nearly 200 miles down river before I got to Hudson Bay. This meant portages, and portages meant packing the equipment on my back and on those of the Indians I took along for the river trip. And God knows, there were some long portages on that route—one of them took us two days to pack across. [Flaherty, 1950:13]

Still conscious of his slight knowledge about making motion pictures, he is alleged to have made at least one tentative inquiry before leaving New York. According to Terry Ramsaye, he went to the Craftsman Laboratories in midtown where Ramsaye and Martin Johnson were "trying to sort out an adventure feature from several miles of Martin's often unrelated film recordings. Bob wanted some advice. He said he wanted to do in the Arctic what Martin was doing in the tropics. I rked with problems, I puzzled one and offended the other by saying, 'Please don't!' "20

Happily, Flaherty did not take this inane advice. Instead he departed for the North:

On August 15, 1920, we let go anchor in the mouth of the Innusuk River, and the five gaunt and melancholy-looking buildings which make up the post at Port Harrison stood out on a boulder-ridden slope less than half-a-mile away. Of the Eskimos who were known to the post, a dozen all told were selected for the film. Of these Nanook (The Bear), a character famous in the country, I chose as my chief man. Besides him, and much to his approval, I took on three younger men as helpers. This also meant their wives and families, and dogs to the number of 25, sledges, kayaks and hunting implements." [Flaherty 1924:133]

As in 1913, the Eastman Kodak Company had supplied the processing equipment and had taught Flaherty the rudiments of its use. The printing machine was an old English Williamson, which he screwed to the wall of the hut. He soon found that when printing the film by the printer, the light from his little electric plant fluctuated so much that he had to abandon it. Instead, he used daylight by letting in an inlet of light just the size of a motion picture frame (in those days, approximately 1 by $\frac{3}{4}$ inches) through the window. He controlled this daylight by adding or removing pieces of muslin from the front of the printing aperture of the printer.

The biggest problem, however, was not printing the film or developing it, but washing and drying it. The enemy was the freezing cold. Flaherty had to erect an annex to the hut in which he spent the winter to make a drying room. The only heating he could obtain for drying the film was a coal-burning stove. Film in those days, as Flaherty knew to his cost, was highly inflammable, but this time no catastrophe took place. When he ran short of fuel before a reel of film had dried, he had to send his Eskimos out to scour the seacoast for driftwood to keep his stove alight.

Washing the film presented an even worse problem. The Eskimos had to keep a hole chiseled through 6 feet of ice all through the winter without its freezing up and then haul the water in barrels on a sledge with a dog team up to the hut. Once there, they all used their hands to clear the ice out of the water before it could be poured for the required washes over the film. The deer hair falling off the Eskimos' clothes into the water worried Flaherty almost as much as the ice did.

This setting-up and operating of his own laboratory equipment, and especially his training of the Eskimos to help him, are a very important part of the whole story of Flaherty's approach to his medium. He laid emphasis on the fact that such participation by his film subjects, so to speak, in the actual making of the film itself was a contributory factor to its ultimate success and sincerity. It is historically as well as technically significant to recognize that Flaherty was never just a director-cameraman who dispatched his negative back to civilization for processing under ideal conditions. Flaherty, and we say it strongly and at the risk of repetition, made his films, or at least his early films, the hard way:

It has always been most important for me to see my rushes—it is the only way I can make a film.²¹ But another reason for developing the film in the north was to project it to the Eskimos so that they would accept and understand what I was doing and work together with me as partners.

They were amazed when I first came with all this equipment, and they would ask me what I was going to do. When I told them that I had come to spend a year among them to make a film of them—pictures in which they moved—they roared with laughter. To begin with, some of my Eskimos could not even read a still-photograph. I made stills of several of them as preliminary tests.²² When I showed them the photograph as often as not they would look at it upside down. I'd have to take the photograph out of their hands and lead them to the mirror in my hut, then have them look at themselves and the photograph beside their heads before, suddenly with a smile that spread from ear to ear, they would understand.²³

Among the equipment Flaherty had taken was a portable gramophone—the old wooden square type with a horn—and this he kept playing continuously with such records as Harry Lauder's "Stop Your Ticklin' Jock" and examples of Caruso, Farrar, Riccardo Martin, McCormack, Al Jolson, and the Jazz King Orchestra. Caruso's

rendering of the *Pagliacci* prologue with its tragic finale was the comedy success of the selection. Nanook on one occasion tried to eat one of the records, an incident which Flaherty filmed and included in the picture. Oddly enough, in his *New Yorker* Profile, Mr. Taylor makes the unfortunate error of saying that Flaherty stopped filming just before Nanook bit the record; he had no doubt not seen the film.

In this way the little hut became a rendezvous for all the Eskimos, and Flaherty was able to command their complete friendship and understanding. There was always a 5-gallon pail of tea brewing on the stove and sea-biscuit in a barrel when the weather conditions prevented filming. He also had his violin with him, and he frequently played it to his Eskimo audience.

The first sequence to be shot for the film was one of the most ambitious—the walrus hunt. From Nanook, Flaherty had heard of Walrus Island, a rock, surf-bound island 25 miles out in the bay. On its south end there were, Nanook had been told by other Eskimos, many walrus in the summer months. The surf round the island made it dangerous for landing kayaks, but Nanook believed that, if the seas were smooth, Flaherty's whaleboat could make the crossing and a safe landing. Some weeks later, Nanook brought to Flaherty the Eskimo who knew at firsthand about the walrus on the island. "Suppose we go," Flaherty said to him. "Do you know that you and your men may have to give up making a kill if it interferes with my filming? Will you remember that it is the picture of you hunting the *iviuk* (walrus) that I want, and not their meat?"

"Yes, yes, the *aggie* [picture] will come first," the man assured him. "Not a man will stir, not a harpoon will be thrown until you give the sign. It is my word" (Flaherty 1924:126). They shook hands and agreed to start in the morning. What happened is best told in Flaherty's own diary entry:

But for three days we lay along the coast, before the big seas died down. The wind began blowing off the land. We broke out our leg o'mutton. Before the day was half-done, a film of gray far out in the west told us we were in sight of Walrus Island. We looked about for a landing. Just beyond the shoulder of a little cove, "*Iviuk! Iviuk!*" called Nanook, and sure enough, on the gleaming black surf-worn rocks lay a great herd sprawled out asleep.

Down wind we went, careful as to muffled oars, and landed waist deep in the surf. Nanook went off alone toward the sleeping herd; he returned, saying they were undisturbed. However, it was much too dark for pictures; we would have to wait until morning.

"Yes," said Nanook, in answer to my fears, "if the wind holds in the same quarter they will not get our scent." Not daring to build a drift-wood fire, we made our evening meal on raw bacon, sea-biscuit and cold water.

As luck would have it, the wind did hold. With harpoon set and a stout seal-line carefully coiled, and my motion picture camera and film retorts in hand, off we crawled for the walrus

ground. The herd lay sleeping—20 great hulks guarded by two big bulls. At about minute intervals they raised their heads over the snoring and swinishly grunting herd and slowly looked round, then sank to sleep again. Slowly I snaked up to the sheltering screen of a big boulder, and Nanook, the end of his harpoon-line lashed round the boulder, snaked more slowly still out towards them. Once in the open he could move only when the sentinels dropped their heads in sleep.

Hours passed, it seemed, but finally he had crawled close in. The sentinels became suspicious and stupidly started toward him. Slowly they turned their slobbering heads to and fro; Nanook swung his own head in lugubrious unison. They rolled on their sides to scratch themselves; Nanook grotesquely did the same. Finally, the sentinels seemed satisfied; their heads drooped in sleep once more. Now only a dozen feet intervened; quickly Nanook closed in. As I signalled, he rose to his feet, and with his harpoon held high, like lightning he struck down at the nearest bull. A bellow and a roar, and 20 great walrus rolled with incredible speed down the wave-washed slope of rocks to the sea.

By night all my stock of film was exposed. The whaleboat was full of walrus-meat and ivory. Nanook had never had such walrus hunting and never had I such filming as that on Walrus Island.²⁴

The postscript to the walrus hunt is told better elsewhere than in the diaries:

When I developed and printed the scenes and was ready to project them, I wondered if the Eskimos would be able to understand them. What would these flickering scenes projected on a Hudson Bay blanket hung up on the wall of the hut mean to them? When at last I told them I was ready to begin the show, they crammed my little 15 by 20 hut to the point of suffocation. I started up the little electric-light plant, turned out the lights in the room, and turned on the switch of the projector. A beam of light shot out, filled the blanket and the show began. At first they kept looking back at the source of light in the projector as much as they did at the screen. I was sure the show would flop. Suddenly someone shouted, "*Iviuk!*" There they were—the school of them—lying backing on the beach. In the foreground could be seen Nanook and his crew, harpoons in hand, stalking on their bellies towards them. Suddenly the walrus take alarm; they begin to tumble into the water. There was one agonising shriek from the audience, until Nanook leaping to his feet thrust his harpoon. In the ensuing tug-of-war between the walrus now in the water and Nanook and his men holding desperately to the harpoon-line, pandemonium broke loose; every last man, woman and child in the room was fighting that walrus, no surer than Nanook was at the time that the walrus would not get away. "Hold him!" they yelled, "Hold him!" [Flaherty 1950:14–15]

"The fame of the film spread far up and down the coast," writes Flaherty in his book. "Every strange Eskimo that came into the post Nanook brought before me and begged that he be shown the *iviuk aggie* (walrus pictures). . . ." He continues:

One of Nanook's problems was to construct an *igloo* large enough for the filming of the interior scenes. The average Eskimo *igloo*, about 12 ft. in diameter, was much too small. On the dimensions I laid out for him, a diameter of 25 ft. Nanook and his companions started in to build the biggest *igloo* of their lives. For two days they worked, the women and children helping them. Then came the hard part—to cut insets for the five large slab-ice windows without weakening the dome. They had hardly begun when the dome fell in pieces to the ground. "Never mind," said Nanook, "I can do it next time."

For two more days they worked, but again with the same result; as soon as they began setting in the ice-windows their structure fell to the ground. It was a huge joke by this time, and holding their sides they laughed their misfortune away. Again Nanook began on the "big *aggie igloo*," but this time the women and children hauled barrels of water on sledges from the water-hole and iced the walls as they went up. Finally the *igloo* was finished and they stood eyeing it as satisfied as so many children over a house of blocks. The light from the ice-windows proved inadequate, however, and when the interiors were finally filmed the dome's half just over the camera had to be cut away, so Nanook and his family went to sleep and awakened with all the cold of out-of-doors pouring in.

To "Harry Lauder" [one of the Eskimos christened after the gramophone record] I deputed the care of my camera. Bringing them from the cold outside into contact with the warm air of the base often frosted them inside and out, which necessitated taking them apart and carefully drying them piece by piece. With the motion picture camera there was no difficulty, but with my Graflex, a still-camera, I found to my sorrow such a complication of parts that I could not get it together again. For several days its "innards" lay strewn on my work-table. "Harry Lauder" finally volunteered for the task of putting it together, and through a long evening before a flickering candle and with a crowd of Eskimos around ejaculating their "Aye's" and "Ah's," he managed to succeed where I had failed.²⁵

The walrus-hunting having proved successful, Nanook aspired to bigger game—a bear-hunt, no less, at Cape Sir Thomas Smith, some 200 miles northward. "Here," said Nanook, "is where the she-bear den in the winter, and it seems to me that we might get the big, big *aggie* there."

He went on to describe how in early December the she-bear dens in huge drift-banks of snow. There is nothing to mark the den save a tiny vent, or airhole, which is melted open by the animal's body heat. Nanook's companions would remain at either side of me, rifles in hand, whilst he with his snow-knife would open the den, block by block. The dogs in the meantime would all be unleashed and like wolves circle the opening. Mrs. Bear's door opened, Nanook, with nothing but his harpoon, would be poised and waiting. The dogs baiting the quarry—some of them with her lightning paws the bear would send hurtling through the air; himself dancing here and there—he pantomimed the scene on my cabin floor, using my fiddle-bow for a harpoon—waiting to dart in for a close-up throw; this, he felt sure, would be a big, big picture (*aggie pauerulluk*). I agreed with him. "With good going, ten days will see us there. Ten days for hunting on the Cape, ten days for coming home again. But throw in another ten days for bad weather, and let's see (counting on his fingers) that makes four times my finger—more than enough to see us through."

"All right," I said, "We'll go." And Nanook, his eyes shining, went off to spread the news. [Flaherty 1924:136 ff]

On January 17, 1921, Flaherty, "Harry Lauder," and Nanook set out on their bear hunt for the big scene of the film. They were away for 8 weeks and traveled 600 miles. The going was tough. Two dogs were lost through starvation.

We were breaking camp before the sun had cleared the horizon. The dogs fought like wolves as they wedged in through the door of the *igloo* we had just vacated; the crew tried vainly by grasping legs and tails to drag them out for harnessing; Nanook, his arms round the master-dog, carried him bodily to the sledge. I unlimbered the Akeley, hoping to get a few feet of it all on film. But, to my dismay, as soon as I started grinding, so brittle was the film that it broke into bits, like so much wafer-glass. The thermometer read 37 degrees below. . . . We went back into camp.

By keeping the film retorts in the *igloo*, I found that within the hour they took on its temperature. The film regained its ductility. I told Nanook to bury the film retorts and camera in his deerskin robe henceforth when we broke camp in the morning. The crew were convulsed over what they called the "babies" for which he had to care.

But still no bear. They were getting near the limits of endurance.

For the next three days what food sustained the dog-team was the *igloo* scraps and crumbs. When night came, crossbars from the sledge and four 200 ft. rolls of film was the makeshift that boiled our tea.

Finally, they reached Port Harrison, their base. "What, no bear?" said Stewart, the post trader; "Too bad, too bad, an' just to think that a week come Friday two huskies got a she-bear an' two cubs in a cave. 'Twould have made a fine *aggie*, they said, what with the fightin' an' all—throwin' the dogs through the air an' chargin' here an' chargin' there, an' all this less'n a day away" (Flaherty 1924:136ff).

Flaherty remained on his location until August 1921. He had been at it for 16 months. He used up his last few feet of film on a whale hunt made by the Eskimos in a fleet of *kayaks*, but nothing of this appears in the final film. It was Nanook's last big *aggie*, although he tried hard to persuade Flaherty to stay on for another year, talking of the wonderful things that could be filmed. Eventually the once-a-year little schooner arrived and Flaherty "was aboard and the *Annie's* nose was headed south. Nanook followed in his *kayak* until the ship gathered speed and gradually drew away."

"Less than two years later," says Flaherty, "I received word by the once-a-year mail that comes out of the north that Nanook was dead. He died from starvation on a hunting-trip."

By that time the film *Nanook of the North* had been shown in many parts of the world. Ten years later, Mrs. Flaherty bought an "Eskimo Pie" in the Tiergarten in Berlin. It was called a "Nauk," and Nanook's face smiled at her from the paper wrapper.²⁶

PART III

"Films," said Flaherty many years later, "are a very simple form and a very narrow form in many ways. You can't say as much in a film as you can in writing, but what you can say, you can say with great conviction. For this reason, they 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 could make a good film of the love affairs of an Eskimo . . . because they never show much feeling in their faces, but you can make a very good film of Eskimos spearing a walrus."

"*Nanook*," he went on, "is the story of a man living in a place where no other kind of people would want to live. The tyrant is the climate, the natural protagonist in the film. It's a dramatic country and there are dramatic ingredients in it—snow, wind, ice and starvation. The life there is a constant hunt for food so that among all Eskimos all food is common. It has to be—an Eskimo family on its own would starve. If I went into an Eskimo *igloo*, whatever food they had would be mine. They have no word in their vocabulary for Thank You. That is something that never arose between us. . . . These people, with less resources than any other people on the earth, are the happiest people I have ever known" (BBC Talks, July 24, 1949).

The subtitles of the film, written by Carl Stearns Clancy, presumably in close association with Flaherty, are simple and informative. At the start we are told that the film was made at Hopewell Sound, northern Ungava. We are introduced at once to Nanook, the hunter, and his family emerging in surprising numbers from their *kayak*. We are told they use moss for fuel. They carry a large boat down to the water (the launching is not shown). They go to a trading post. Nanook, a title tells us, kills polar bears with his harpoon only. He hangs out his fox and bear skins, which are bartered for beads and knives (the trading post itself is not seen except in the far distance). While there, Nanook plays the old wooden gramophone and tries to bite the record. One of the children is given castor oil and swallows it with relish.

Nanook then goes off on the floating ice to catch fish. For bait he uses two pieces of ivory on a seal-string line. He also spears salmon with a three-pronged weapon and kills them with his teeth. News is then brought of walrus, and Nanook joins the hunters in their fleet of *kayaks*. They meet with rough seas. The walrus are sighted. One of them is harpooned by Nanook and dragged in by line from the sea to the shore. There is a great struggle. It weighs, a title says, 2 tons. After it has been killed, the hunters carve it up and begin eating it on the spot, using their ivory knives. The flesh is shown in close-up.

Winter sets in and a snow-blizzard envelops the trading post. Nanook now goes hunting with his family. The dog team drags the sledge with difficulty over the rough ice crags. Nanook stalks and traps a white fox. There follows



Figure 3

Cat. No. 102

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (see No. 29).

N 153

6½" × 8½" / 16.7 × 21.5 cm

subject: photograph of man (probably Allakariallak/Nanook) with boy (probably Phillipposie), 1920–1921, Inoucdjouac.

identification: *Youthful Hunter*. Flaherty 9, 12.

note: a letter written by S. M. Hodgson (former Commissioner of the North West Territories) to Dudley Copland, dated April 24, 1978 states:

I should tell you that Phillipposie, who was a little boy in the film, is still living at Grise Fiord. Phillipposie's father was teaching him how to shoot a bow and arrow.

Further research is presently under way to confirm this statement.

the building of an igloo, Nanook carving it out of the blocks of frozen snow with his walrus-ivory knife, licking its blade so that it will freeze and make a cutting edge. The children play at sliding, and one of them has a miniature sledge. Everyone is gay and smiling. Nanook makes the window for the igloo with great care and skill out of a block of ice. He fixes a wedge of snow to reflect the light through the window. The family then occupies the *igloo* with their meager belongings. Nanook later shows his small child how to use a bow and arrow with a small bear made out of snow as the target.

Morning comes and the family gets up. Nanook's wife, Nyla, chews his boots to soften the leather while Nanook rubs his bare toes. Then he eats his breakfast, smiling all the time. Nyla washes the smallest child with saliva. Presently they all prepare to set off for the seal grounds. They glaze the runners of the sledge with ice. There is some savage scrapping among the dogs before the family finally departs across the snowfield.

Nanook finds a hole in the ice and down it thrusts his spear. Then ensues a long struggle between Nanook, hauling on his line, and the unseen seal under the ice in the water. At one point Nanook loses his balance and falls, head over heels. Finally the other members of the family arrive on the scene and help their father to pull out the seal. (It is obviously dead.) They cut it up, and scraps are flung to the dogs, who fight among themselves over them. The dog traces get tangled, and this causes a delay in the departure for home.

They come upon a deserted igloo and take refuge in it. The snow drifts round outside, and the dogs become covered and hardly recognizable. Some small pups have had a special miniature igloo made for them. Inside, the family beds down for the night, naked inside their furs and hide blanket bags. Outside the blizzard rages. And the film ends on a close-up of the sleeping Nanook.

Described thus bluntly, the film sounds naive and disjointed, and in some ways it is both. Its continuity is rough and there are many unexplained interruptions. The passing of time is either clumsily handled or deliberately ignored. Technically, it is almost an amateur's work. These, however, are minor flaws when compared with the overall conception that the film gives of this Eskimo family living what we are told is its normal everyday existence. Some sequences, such as the now-famous, carefully depicted building of the igloo and the carving of its window, and the howling dogs being covered by the drifting snow, will always be memorable in the history of the cinema.

It is also important to note that the spearing of the seal is the first example of Flaherty's use of the "suspense element" in his work: Nanook struggles to drag the creature up through the ice hole out of the water for a seemingly endless time, but not until he finally succeeds can the audience see that it is a seal. This element of suspense—keeping the audience guessing, and revealing the secret only at the last moment—was to play a significant part in Flaherty's future films.

The photography, made on the long-since obsolete orthochromatic film stock, has to this day some lovely moments, such as the sledge scenes across the vast snowscapes, and here and there appears a hint of Flaherty's skill for moving his camera on the gyro-head tripod of which he was so fond.²⁷ There is a tilt-shot down on to Nanook in his kayak, for example, and a left-to-right pan-shot along the walrus heads peering up from the waves. The dragging of the dead walrus up the beach is shown in greater detail than would have been found in any other film of the period; that is to say, it is broken down into several shots from different angles, and the same is true, of course, of the igloo-building.

But more important than these technical points is the fact that the film conveys the sheer struggle for existence of these people and their carefree acceptance of their fight for survival. It is true, no doubt, that Flaherty does not show any of the amenities of the trading post. Neither is any reference made to the fact that the use of guns and traps for hunting was common long before the time when the film was made, nor is any reference made to such things as the sexual life or marriage customs of the Eskimo. It can be said that the film has little real anthropological value.

This raises an issue which has come up many times in regard to all Flaherty's films and will recur when we examine the many criticisms of his work: Did he intend us to accept *Nanook* as an accurate picture of Eskimo life at the time when he made the film, or did he intend it to be a picture of Eskimo life as *it used to be*, as seen through his—Flaherty's—eyes? Was he concerned with creating the living present in terms of the film medium, or was he trying to create an impression of life as it was lived by the father or grandfather of Nanook? What concerns us now is that in *Nanook*, for the first time in film history, a motion picture camera was used to do more than just record what it finds before its lens. This is the larger significance of *Nanook*.

In 1913, Flaherty had not been the first explorer to equip himself with a film camera. Travel films, or "scenics" as the trade called them, had been popular since the turn of the century, beginning with what might best be described as moving picture postcards of familiar places in one's own or a neighboring country, which gave way in time to scenes in more distant and exotic lands. The word "travelogue" was actually in use as early as 1907 by Burton Holmes in the United States. In her absorbing history of early British cinema, Rachel Low tells us:

The fashion whereby explorers and big-game hunters took cinematographers with them on their expeditions seems to have begun when Cherry Kearton left England in 1908 to accompany Theodore Roosevelt on his African hunting-trip, and spent the next five years travelling in India, Africa, Borneo and America. . . . In the summer of 1909, Lieutenant Shackleton showed some of the 4000 ft. of film exposed during his

recent expedition in the Antarctic. Probably the most important of the big-game films was the 6000 ft. record of the Carnegie Museum Expedition in Alaska and Siberia, led by Captain F. E. Kleinschmidt. The expedition was organised in 1909, and during the two years it took to make the film some 10,000 ft. were exposed. . . . Soon a cinematographer was regarded as a normal part of an explorer's equipment, although his films were not always originally intended for commercial distribution. [Low 1949:153–155]

Of all these travel and exploration films, Rachel Low very rightly claims that Herbert G. Ponting's record of Captain Scott's expedition to the Antarctic in 1910–1911 was quite the most important.²⁸ She calls it, in fact, "one of the really great achievements, if not the greatest, of British cinematography during this unhappy period."

But there were certain vital differences between Flaherty and these other early cinematographers. First, he combined the talents of trained explorer and mineralogist with those of a filmmaker. He learned the technique of cinematography for himself, the hard way, in order to express what he himself found among the people on his expedition. Second, he was familiar with and had had 8 years' knowledge of the Eskimos and the land where they lived and where he was going to make his film. He knew his subject at first-hand, a tenet that was to become an integral part of every Flaherty film. And third, perhaps most important of all, his abortive first attempts at filming, in 1913 and again in 1915, had shown him clearly that just to set up his camera and record scenes in a strange country was not sufficient to dramatize the struggle for survival of his friends the Eskimo. Flaherty knew that something fundamental was lacking in his early efforts; he knew when he went north again in 1920 that it was not just to remake what he had lost in the flames at Toronto.

As Walker Evans, the distinguished American photographer, puts it: ". . . you learn that he [Flaherty] shot a lot of movie footage on exploration trips previous to the time of *Nanook*. You find that this led him to one of the best experiences a young artist can have: he got sore at himself for his own lack of originality. These first reels of his evidently looked just like the asphyxiating stuff ground out by any ass who's seen an Indian squaw or some mountain goats. Anger, almost certainly, gave Flaherty his first artistic drive" (Evans 1953). This evaluation is totally confirmed by Grierson's description of the first Harvard print of the abortive *Nanook*.

In *Nanook*, as Flaherty gave it to the world in 1922, there were the seeds of what was described later as "the creative treatment of actuality," John Grierson's often-quoted definition of the documentary approach to filmmaking (Grierson 1946:11). And here is Grierson's own assessment of Flaherty's film:

Nanook of the North took the theme of hunger and the fight for food and built its drama from the actual event, and, as it turned out, from actual hunger. The blizzards were real and the gestures of human exhaustion came from life. Many years before, Ponting had made his famous picture of the Scott expedition to the South Pole, with just such material; but here the sketch came to life and the journalistic survey turned to drama. Flaherty's theory that the camera has an affection for the spontaneous and the traditional, and all that time has worn smooth, stands the test of twenty years, and *Nanook*, of all the films that I have ever seen—I wish I could say the same for my own—is least dated today. The bubble is in it and it is, plain to see, a true bubble. This film, which had to find its finance from a fur company and was turned down by every renter on Broadway, has outlived them all. [Davy 1937:146]

To quote Walker Evans again:

No one will ever forget the stunning freshness of *Nanook of the North*. The mere sight of a few stills from the production has the power to bring it all back. Here is happy, feral little Nanook, seated beside the hole he has cut in the ice; his face hidden in fur; his bent-over figure shielded by that cunningly built ice-block shelter; waiting, with that steady ready knife; waiting for his seal. Here is the harpoon picture. Nanook drawing back for the throw: just the deadliness of these half-lowered eyes on the aim can drain the lining of your stomach again as it did in the theatre. Add to this the sheer line of that particular photograph: the diagonal shaft of the weapon, the sweep of the cord looping to Nanook's raised hand, then coiling in black calligraphy against the sky. . . . The core of Flaherty's whole career is in the solitary, passionate filming of *Nanook of the North*. [Evans 1953]

In a survey in 1923 of the best films of the previous year, Robert E. Sherwood, the critic and playwright, wrote:

There are few surprises, few revolutionary stars and directors of established reputation. *Nanook of the North* was the one notable exception. It came from a hitherto unheard-of source, and it was entirely original in form. . . . There have been many fine travel pictures, many gorgeous "scenics," but there has been only one that deserves to be called great. That one is *Nanook of the North*. It stands alone, literally in a class by itself. Indeed, no list of the best pictures of this year or of all years in the brief history of the movies, could be considered complete without it. . . . Here was drama rendered far more vital than any trumped-up drama could ever be by the fact that it was all *real*. *Nanook* was no playboy enacting a part which could be forgotten as soon as the greasepaint had been rubbed off; he was himself an Eskimo struggling to survive. The North was no mechanical affair of wind-machines and paper snow; it was the North, cruel and incredibly strong. [Sherwood 1923]

On the other hand, that usually discerning critic of the arts Gilbert Seldes, in his book *The Seven Lively Arts*, dismisses the film: ". . . what can you make of the circumstances that one of the very greatest successes, in America and abroad, was *Nanook of the North*, a spectacle film to which the producer and the artistic director

contributed nothing (*sic!*), for it was a picture of actualities, made, according to rumor, in the interests of a fur-trading company?" (Seldes 1924:332). Flaherty is not mentioned by name anywhere in the book, which purports to be a survey of the American arts in the early 1920s.

The first suggestion that *Nanook* was not authentic, so far as we can trace, appeared briefly in Iris Barry's book *Let's Go to the Pictures* (1926:185), in which she quoted Professor Stefansson as saying that it "is a most inexact picture of the Eskimo's life. . . ." She did not, however, give a reference for the source of her quotation.²⁹ Many years later, when *Nanook* was reissued (with sound track and narration) in 1947, this accusation, again involving Professor Stefansson, was once more ventilated.

Under the heading "Is Nanook a Fake?" the late Campbell Dixon, who had received the film a day or so before, contributed the following column:

Is Flaherty's *Nanook* the classic documentary it has passed for this quarter of a century, or is it an elaborate fake, as Mr. Geoffrey D. M. Block, M.A., quoting Stefansson's *The Standardisation of Error*, invites me to believe? He writes: "To put it mildly, *Nanook* is a phoney. As Stefansson is a pretty well-known explorer, his view can be accepted as final. I can still remember with what delight I came across Stefansson's exposure of the impostor. . . . I am prepared to accept your

judgment of Flaherty's poetic vision—yes, he showed plenty of that—but 'integrity?' No, I am afraid I can no more swallow that than I could swallow the bucketfuls of blubber that old fabricator Nanook allegedly gulped down for breakfast." [Dixon 1947]

Campbell Dixon goes on:

Stefansson is an accepted authority; but his favourite line—The Friendly Arctic and so forth—is dismissed by many others as a Technicolor dream, an expression of he-man rejoicing that he can flourish where weaklings go under. . . . Mr. Block ridicules the shot showing Eskimos eating blubber. Dr. Stefansson flatly declares that no human-being can contain oil—this apropos of a shot of a child swallowing castor oil with relish. The film does not suggest that the child so tipped all day long. . . .

. . . *Nanook*, I would add, is not a White Paper. I daresay Flaherty took liberties with his material, arranging, foreshortening and colouring, as every artist must do. This, surely, hardly justifies a charge of wholesale faking against a man whose honesty in *Man of Aran* and other classics has never been seriously challenged, and who parted company on just such issues with his fellow-director of *White Shadows in the South Seas*. [Dixon 1947]³⁰



Figure 4

Cat. No. 103

vintage photogravure, on loan from FSCC (see No. 29).

N 262

6½" × 8½" / 16.7 × 21.5 cm

subject: photograph of Allakariallak (Nanook), 1920–1921, Inoucdjouac.

identification: *Nanook The Harpooner*. Flaherty 9, 12.

This challenge by Stefansson to Flaherty's authenticity in *Nanook* cannot be lightly disregarded. We will give in full, therefore, exactly what he did write, and it will be found that it does not add up to quite the denigration that Mr. Block suggested.

Under the subheading "Teaching through Educational Movies" in his book *The Standardisation of Error* (1928:86-92) Stefansson writes:

While our love for children makes us conceal from them anything that may be injurious to their welfare, the same affection leads us to strive for their instruction in whatever we consider beneficial. But in this field we are sometimes misled. I have in mind a special case—parents who were greatly incensed at a movie called *Nanook of the North* which, although not true to the native life of the Eskimos, had been shown in their children's school and recommended as true. But these parents were quite in the wrong, as will appear.

To begin with, the *Nanook* story was at least as true as that of Santa Claus which those parents approved. It was the same sort of partial truthfulness, only greater. Real as well as Santa reindeer have horns, four legs and are driven before sleighs in harness, though not such sleighs, quite, nor in such harness as the ordinary Christmas pictures show. . . . Thus the Santa story, while fiction in a way, does represent truths.

Similarly, with the movie *Nanook*. There are Eskimos in Hudson Bay where the picture was taken, and the people you see on the screen are Eskimos, which is more realism right from the start than you ever had in a Santa Claus picture. The country you see, too, is the real Hudson Bay. True enough, not even the coldest month up there averages as cold as *Nanook* tells you the whole year averages (35 degrees below zero) but then you must have something exceptional in a movie or it would not impress. You are told, too, that the Hudson Bay Eskimos still hunt with their primitive weapons, and this is justified. For it would spoil the unity of the picture to tell the truth about the weapons, though it is an interesting fact in itself that the forefathers of the Eskimos shown on the screen have had guns for generations, as the Hudson Bay Company has been trading in the Bay since 1670. Moreover, the titles do not actually say that the Bay Eskimos hunt with primitive weapons *only*, so you can take it any way you like. Doubtless the producer meant nothing more than to say that the children (who are certainly Eskimos) still play at hunting (which would be hunting of a sort) with bows and arrows.

No real Eskimos, in my belief, ever hunted seals through the ice in the manner shown in the picture, nor do I think that a seal could be killed by that method unless he were a defective. But it is true that certain Eskimos in other parts of the Arctic (about half of all there are) do know how seals can be killed through ice. That the Hudson Bay Eskimos with whom our producer had to deal did not know such methods was no fault of his, and he would have been deficient in resource if he had allowed that to stop him. Neither are there libraries in Hudson Bay where he might have borrowed a book that described the method so that he could have studied it up and taught it to the local natives. There they were, the picture had to be taken, and audiences in the South would demand to be shown what they had heard of—Eskimos sealing through ice. And so a method was developed (perhaps by the Eskimos themselves along lines roughly indicated by the director)

which photographs beautifully and gives as much feeling of enlightenment to an audience as if it showed the real technique that does secure seals.

I have gone to *Nanook* many times for the purpose of observing the audiences. In several cases some movie-fan has noticed that the seal ostensibly speared in the picture is stiff and dead, clearly planted there. But that, it seems to me, is all the realism you could expect in a play. You would not demand that Fairbanks really kill all his adversaries, though you do appreciate seeing a bit of good swordsmanship. And in *Nanook*, what seal but a dead one could possibly be expected to allow himself to be speared in the manner shown?

Another thing I have overheard *Nanook* audiences complain about is that they have heard somewhere that Eskimo snowhouses are warm and comfortable inside, while the *Nanook* picture shows the occupants shivering as they strip for going to bed, and there are clouds of steam puffing from their mouths and nostrils. These erudite fans are still more troubled when they see the movie title which says that the Eskimos must always keep their snowhouse interiors below freezing to prevent them from melting, for they have read a book by someone who has lived in a snowhouse and who has explained the principles of physics by which, when the weather is cold enough outside (and no weather was ever quite so cold as the *Nanook* country was supposed to be), the snow does not melt though it is comfortably warm inside—say, as warm as the average British or Continental living-room in winter. But the answer is simple, and the producer is quite justified by it. An Eskimo snowhouse is too small for the inside photography and the light might not be good enough. So to get the best light and plenty of room for the cameraman, half the house was cut away (like the 'sets' you see in the movie studios) and the poor Eskimos were disrobing and going to bed out-of-doors. But it would have spoiled the picture to have introduced such technical details. Hence the producer had to explain the shivering people and their visible breathing by the harmless pretence that snowhouse interiors have to be colder than freezing to prevent the roof and walls from thawing.³¹

And so on for the whole picture.

It was the very fact just stated and others like them which made my friends angry. That many have been because the realities of the picture were not so charitably interpreted to them as we have done above. It is possible to make the same fact look a deal worse if you try.

This criticism of Flaherty's deliberate falsification of material things as he found them was not ignored by Flaherty. His brother David records him as saying on more than one occasion, "Sometimes you have to lie to get over the truth,"³² and in *The New Yorker* Profile, Robert Lewis Taylor (1949) quoted Flaherty's own words: "One often has to distort a thing in order to catch its true spirit," he says, voicing one of his main tenets of artistic creation.

It is relevant that in writing about restaging and reenactment in his famous film *Potemkin*, Eisenstein also defended such acts of contrivance, summoning up Goethe: "For the sake of truthfulness one can afford to defy the truth" (Eisenstein 1959:23). It is the divergence in ways of defining and serving "truthfulness" that matters, and that is where, of course, Eisenstein, Flaherty, and some of the other great realist filmmakers part company with the world's commercial producers in Hollywood,



Figure 5

Cat. No. 92
modern print, from
original glass plate, by
NPC, on loan from FSCC.
N 2385
5" × 4" / 12.7 × 10.2 cm
subject: portrait of Alice
(?) Nuvalinga (Nyla) and
child, 1920–1921,
Inoucdjouac.

England, and elsewhere. Of *Nanook*, Eisenstein himself said, "We Russians learned more from *Nanook of the North* than from any other foreign film. We wore it out, studying it. That was in a way our beginning."³³

But Flaherty's conception in *Nanook* has been challenged on other and more important grounds than whether its material content was falsified and contrived. Flaherty, it was said, ignored the social problems and realities of the people among whom he made his films. In regard to *Nanook*, the following comment has its rightful place here:

When Flaherty tells you that it is a devilish noble thing to fight for food in a wilderness, you may, with some justice, observe that you are more concerned with the problem of people fighting for food in the midst of plenty. When he draws your atten-

tion to the fact that *Nanook's* spear is grave in its upheld angle, and finely rigid in its downpointing bravery, you may, with some justice, observe that no spear, held however bravely by the individual, will master the crazy walrus of international finance. Indeed, you may feel that in individualism is a yahoo tradition largely responsible for our present anarchy, and deny at once both the hero of decent heroics (Flaherty) and the hero of indecent ones (the studios). [Hardy 1946:82]

The fact is, of course, that the social-realist documentary movement which Grierson founded in Britain in 1929 represented a wholly different conception of the use of the cinema from that held by Flaherty, although the British group was deeply indebted for all it learned from Flaherty's method of filmmaking and always acknowledged the fact. They always respected his superb visual sense.



Figure 6

Cat. No. 97

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 309

4" × 5" / 10.2 × 12.7 cm

subject: the personages of *Nanook of the North* in omiak, 1920–1921, Inoucdjouac.

identification: *AN ESKIMO UMIK*: These boats, built, as are the kayacks, of skins stretched over a framework, are much larger than their smaller cousins and are capable of carrying a whole family and many hundredweight of freight. Flaherty 7. (caption for long distance photograph of same subject).

note: see also No.99, N 304.

PART IV

To have made the film *Nanook* singlehanded was in itself a heroic achievement. To get it shown to the public, however, called for another struggle of a different kind. As before, Flaherty tells the story in his own words:

When I got back to New York, it took the better part of a winter to edit the film. [He hired a technician to help him called Charlie Gelb, who, Frances Flaherty recalls, "Bob picked up around the place."] When it was ready to be shown I started to make the rounds of the distributors in New York with the hope that one of them would be kind enough to give it distribution. Naturally I took it to the biggest of the distributors first. This was Paramount. The projection-room was filled with their staff and it was blue with smoke before the film was over. When the film ended they all pulled themselves together and got up in a rather dull way, I thought, and silently left the room. The manager came up to me and very kindly put his arm round my shoulders and told me that he was terribly sorry, but it was a film that just couldn't be shown to the public. [Flaherty 1950:16, 17]

Only slightly discouraged, Flaherty proceeded to show it to First National, another big distributor, and ". . . they didn't even answer the phone to me after seeing the film." He had to go round to the projection room and apologetically ask to take the film away. Finally, after more setbacks, *Nanook of the North* found a distributor more by coincidence than by its own merits, a not uncommon event in the film industry.

Flaherty screened it to the Pathé Company in New York, which in those days was an important distribution organization and was still controlled by the parent Pathé Company in Paris. He hoped that, as both Revillon Frères and Pathé were French in origin, some magic might arise and they'd get together on the film. At first Pathé thought it was, at any rate, an "interesting" picture but that it could not be put out into the public theaters as a feature on its own account. (It was actually 5 reels, approximately 75 minutes long.) They suggested that it be broken down into a series of short educational films.

A day or two later, however, when Flaherty was running his film again at the Pathé projection room, Madame Brunet, the wife of the president of the company, was present, as well as an old friend of Flaherty's, a journalist who was with Pathé and was the only member of the company who asked to see the picture a second time. "They caught fire," explains Flaherty. And it was their enthusiasm for the film which finally induced Pathé to take it and, moreover, to put it out in its original uncut form to the general public. Flaherty recalls:

The problem then was to get one of the big theatres to show it. Now the biggest theatre in New York then was the Capitol, run by a great film exhibitor, Roxy.³⁴ But we knew very well that to show it to Roxy cold was to invite failure. Said Pathé, "We'll have to salt it." The sister of the publicity head of Pathé was a great friend of Roxy's. So it was arranged to show it first to her and some of her friends and tell them where to applaud through the picture, and then they would come along to the showing to Roxy in his very elaborate projection-room at the Capitol. We also told them never to talk directly to Roxy about the film but to talk to each other across him as if he were not in the room. Well, by the time the film was over, Roxy was tearing his hair. He used such words as "epic," "masterpiece," and the like. He booked it. But even then Pathé were not too trusting, and they decided to "tin-can" it (block book was the common trade phrase)—that is to tie it to *Grandma's Boy*, Harold Lloyd's first big feature film which every theatre in New York was scrambling for. Roxy could have *Grandma's Boy*, but he'd have to take *Nanook* too!

A few days later when Major Bowes, the managing-director of the Capitol, saw the film he threatened to throw Roxy out. His rage knew no bounds. Desperately, poor Roxy tried to get out of the contract, but no—No *Nanook*, no *Grandma's Boy*. [Flaherty 1950:17]

So *Nanook* opened as a second feature on Broadway, during a hot spell, where it did only middling business. Robert Sherwood records it as playing one week and taking in \$43,000, but he does not say if this was *Nanook's* share of the double bill with *Grandma's Boy* or if it was the gross for the two pictures (Sherwood 1929). Terry Ramsaye records that its total gross was about \$350,000, which, if correct, represented at least a modest profit eventually to Revillon Frères on what really had been an advertising investment (Ramsaye 1951).

In spite of the account by Flaherty himself, David Flaherty went on record with the following statement: "*Nanook* did not share a double-bill with *Grandma's Boy* at the Capitol. It opened there on Sunday, June 11, 1922, as the sole feature, ran a week, like other pictures, and, according to *Variety*, did 36,000 dollars business, which was considered good. It was a 7,000 dollar increase on the previous week's 29,000 dollars take" (notes to the authors, January 4, 1960).

This inauspicious beginning, accompanied as it was by lukewarm or cautious reviews by the critics, was in fact no guide to what the final impact of the film would be. As time went on, *Nanook* began to attract press com-

ments very different from those of the trade or fan papers whose interest was only in Hollywood. Editors and columnists drew attention to it as something new in films, as something which was doing what the movies ought to do but never did. Similarly, it attracted a different sort of audience to the cinemas in which it was shown—often people who were not filmgoers but were attracted by the idea of a realistic yet tender approach to far-off places and people.

In Europe, too, it had a wide success. The New Gallery, in London, opened with it in September 1922, and it ran for 6 months. It had a Royal Command performance at Balmoral. It ran for 6 months at the Gaumont in Paris. In Rome, Berlin, Copenhagen, and other capitals it was similarly successful. In Germany especially it had long runs everywhere and was frequently revived in subsequent years. These reactions slowly filtered back to America and must to some degree have affected the attitude of the film business toward it, though it must be admitted that few of the serious writers on film paid it much attention. This, however, may be due to the fact that film itself had hardly yet been recognized as an art form. Later generations of writers were to make amends.

If Flaherty was to learn anything from his experience with *Nanook*, and he learned much and afterward stated, it was that it is one thing to overcome all the obstacles to making a film but quite another to get the finished film shown. All through his life, with the exception of the hybrid *Elephant Boy*, Flaherty had to fight and fight hard to get adequate distribution for his films. He came to grasp that to put a film across showmanship was essential, not to the public itself but to the film-trade machinery that stands between the completed film and the public which goes in millions to the cinema theaters. It is also clear that Flaherty had sensible and imaginative ideas of his own about film distribution methods, ideas that in subsequent years proved practicable and shrewd.

Nanook's release date in the United States was June 11, 1922. It may be of interest to note what other American films were being made and shown about the same time. D. W. Griffith, one of the great masters, had made a spectacular of the French Revolution in *Orphans of the Storm*, Chaplin had recently shown *The Kid*, and Rudolph Valentino had burst upon the public in Rex Ingram's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*. In the same year as *Nanook*, Fairbanks presented *Robin Hood*, Nazimova appeared in *Salome*, and Cecil B. De Mille gave us his "Swimming Pool Masked Ball" in *Saturday Night*. One remembers with affection that another Arctic film also appeared that year: Buster Keaton's *The Frozen North*. It would have made a wonderful double bill with *Nanook*. Thus Flaherty's film predated *The Covered Wagon*, *Down to the Sea in Ships*, and *The Iron Horse*, all films with a minimum of studio fabrication.

In Europe, the German cinema was entering its famous Golden Period of studio craftsmanship. The year 1922 saw *Warning Shadows*, *Vanina*, and *Nosferatu* (*Dracula*).

In France, Delluc had made *Fièvre* and Gance his locomotive film, *La Roué*. In England, Bruce Woolfe and produced a reenactment of the war exploit, *Zeebrugge*. In the U.S.S.R. Dziga-Vertov was issuing a monthly newsfilm called *Kino-Truth* and thinking up his theories about "catching life unawares"; Eisenstein was still working in the theater.

None of these films can be compared in any way with what Flaherty tried to do in *Nanook*. Yet of all those we have mentioned, only Chaplin and Flaherty have stood the test of time. Only *Nanook* was to stand a reissue, 25 years after its first release, in July 1947. It was reissued by United Artists and ran 50 minutes, with a narration written by Ralph Schoolman and spoken by Berny Kroeger and music composed by Rudolph Schramen. Its title was displayed in 20-foot-high neon letters above the canopy of the London Pavilion, one the West End's main theaters, in Piccadilly Circus, sometimes called the Hub of the World. It was generally acclaimed by the London critics as the "film of the week." In New York, it played at the Sutton Theatre shortly before the premiere of *Louisiana Story* in the late summer of 1948. In 1950-1951 this sound version was made available for 16 mm distribution, and it is still being shown widely in several foreign-language versions as well as in its original English. It has been televised in both the United States and Great Britain, with considerable success, as well as in West Germany, Italy, and Scandinavia.

Figure 7

Cat. No. 115

modern print, from original glass plate, by NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 378

5" × 4" / 12.7 × 10.7 cm

subject: photograph of Allakariallak (Nanook), Alice (?) Nuvalinga (Nyla) and Bob Stewart, factor of the Revillon Frères post, 1920-1921, Inoucdjouac.

note: Stewart is securely identified by Copland who met him in 1925-1926. Stewart was originally a sailor on the whaler *Active* from Dundee, Scotland. He sailed with Captains John and Alex Murray during the notorious voyage of the *Active* when they were forced to winter in Murray Harbour, the Ottawa Islands, where Alex Murray died. Flaherty noted meeting the *Active* September 1-4, 1914.

Although he does not mention Stewart by name, it is probable that they met at this time. Soon after, Stewart was recruited by Revillon Frères and became factor at the Port Harrison (Inoucdjouac) post where Flaherty filmed *Nanook of the North*. Stewart both assisted Flaherty in the production and starred in the film, playing himself (post factor). See *Filmography*. Stewart developed great interest in photography and owned a Graflex (possibly Flaherty's) in 1925-1926. It is possible that he took the photographs attributed to Flaherty in the Coward album. (See No.28).



The timeless quality of *Nanook* has many times been stressed, but these undisputed facts about its reissue after so many years are the great tribute to its maker. Yet, at the time of its premiere in 1922, the reviews by the New York critics were not remarkable. "The notices were mixed," records Flaherty himself; "One critic damned it with faint praise, but then wrote a better review a few weeks later." Richard Griffith says, "They had nothing but their own tastes to guide them, and those whose mouths were set for romantic make-believe called it a 'novelty' and let it go at that. Some others cautiously opined that it was more than a novelty in the usual sense, that *Nanook* was indeed something new under the sun: a dramatic and human pattern, not contrived from paint and plaster and machinery, but elicited from life itself" [Griffith 1953:49].

More importantly, Griffith rightly points out that "the picture began to gather itself a Press entirely different from the trade and fan publications which attend feverishly upon the phenomena of Hollywood. Columnists and editorial writers praised it as the sort of thing people had always thought the movies ought to do, and now it was plain they could. And as it made its way through the theatres, it seemed to draw an unusual audience, an audience of people who didn't often go to ordinary movies but who liked adventure, or travel, or just simple beauty" [Griffith 1953:49].

Because of *Nanook*'s wide success in Europe, positive reactions slowly filtered back to America, and perhaps some people looked at the film differently as a result. And yet, when it comes to research, it is odd to find that neither Flaherty nor *Nanook* occupies much space in the serious literature that was growing up around the cinema in the 1920s and early 1930s. Among English-language books, for example, no reference whatsoever to the film occurs in Elliott's *Anatomy of Motion Picture Art* (1928), Messel's *This Film Business* (1928), L'Estrange Fawcett's *Films: Facts, Facts and Forecasts* (1927), or Arnheim's *Film* (1933), nor is it included in the German edition of *Der sichtbare Mensch* (1924) by Bela Balazs, the distinguished Hungarian critic. In the two massive volumes of Terry Ramsaye's well-known *A Million and One Nights* (1926), *Nanook* is given one line (p. 600) as against a luscious build-up of Martin Johnson and his lurid adventure films.

From its first issue in July 1927 until August 1928, in that little mine of information and theory *Close-Up*, the only significant reference to *Nanook* was as a substitute (*sic!*) for *Under Arctic Skies* ("which gives a good idea of northern life and links up, via Siberia, with Asia") in a suggested list of films for children. Bryher, the associate editor of the journal, adds, "I have always missed this picture," meaning *Nanook* [*Close-up* 3(2):20].

But Caroline Lejeune at least pays tribute. In a eulogy for *The Covered Wagon*, she adds, "There had been earlier films with an impersonal theme—Flaherty's *Nanook*—the greatest of them all, with a sheer statement of drama that has never been equalled to this day. But *Nanook* did not impinge closely enough on emotion to win the suffrage of the public; its theme was too pure, too remote from audience psychology. It had successors; it was not sterile. . . . But it was *The Covered Wagon* that opened the picture-houses to the impersonal film" (1931:179–180). Even in Lewis Jacobs's commodious and valuable work, *The Rise of the American Film* (1939), *Nanook* scores only a bare half page, with a brief mention elsewhere. It was, in truth, left to those of the British documentary group who were writers as well as filmmakers in the late 1920s and the 1930s to make a full assessment of accord and recognition to Flaherty and his *Nanook* (Rotha 1930, 1931, 1936). In France, too, Flaherty made a deep impact on critics like Moussinac and Delluc, who were quick to point out what they called the *purité* of *Nanook*.

In 1925, a book appeared with the title *Nanook of the North*, in which a Publisher's Note stated:

For several years the name "Nanook" (The Bear), as that of an Eskimo hunter, has been widely familiar in England and America, since *Nanook of the North* was the title of a cinematograph film produced by Mr. R. G. (sic) Flaherty, and exhibited by Messrs. Revillon Frères and Messrs. Pathé. In that film was told the life-story of a certain Eskimo who chanced to bear the common Eskimo name—Nanook. Mr. Flaherty, in a chapter in his book *My Eskimo Friends*, has described how these pictures were taken. The present volume gives in words the life-story of a typical Eskimo—as the cinematography film gave it in pictures; but it makes no claim that this is the history of the Eskimo named Nanook who was known to Mr. Flaherty. On the other hand, the illustrations in this volume are reproduced, some from the film (by kind permission of Messrs. Revillon Frères and Messrs. Pathé) and others from photographs taken at the same time as the film; so that many of them contain portraits of the most celebrated bearer of the name. [Bilby 1925]

Of 29 illustrations, 18 are credited to the film; they are not "stills" from it in the accepted sense but photographs taken at the same time, presumably by Flaherty. Some of them show incidents which are not in the film.

PART V

In writing about *The World of Robert Flaherty*, Walker Evans reminds us that Flaherty was roughly of Sherwood Anderson's generation and not Hemingway's. "He certainly had one foot in an age of innocence," wrote Evans (1953). He was, above all, as we have seen, self-educated and self-discovered as an artist. Moreover, he was an artist who had found for himself a new medium. At that time, film was only beginning to be recognized as a new art form.

But if Flaherty belonged to Sherwood Anderson's generation, he was not creatively a part of it. Nor was he ever a part of the new spirit of revolt that flared up when Greenwich Village was established as the new Bohemia around 1913 or so, in the days of the birth of the *New Masses*, the *New Republic*, and *The Seven Arts*. At that time, Flaherty was getting himself wrecked on the Belchers, or wintering among his Eskimo friends at Amadjuak Bay. While the Socialist writer John Macy was saying in his *Spirit of American Literature* (1913) that "the whole country is crying out for those who will record it, satirize it, chant it" (quoted in Kazin, 1943:178), Flaherty was in fact doing just the first and last of these tasks. While Sherwood Anderson and Sinclair Lewis were becoming the new realists with *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919) and *Main Street* (1920)—very soon to be challenged by, on the one hand, the bitterly cynical writing of Cummings, Hemingway, and Dos Passos, and on the other, by the new decadents and smart stylists like Van Vechten, Thomas Beer, and the middle-aged Cabell—Robert Flaherty, a poet with a new visual perception, had produced and placed on Broadway for all to see who cared to see one of the first masterpieces in a new medium which was revolutionizing all media of expression. And he had done it, we repeat, singlehanded. His first work, born out of anger and frustration at his early failure, was destined to live a good deal longer and be understood by a great many more people throughout the world than all but a handful of the literary products of the early postwar years in America.

Out of the tangled wilderness of Northern Canada and out of the barren ice of Hudson Bay had come a man who, on the one hand, challenged the whole art of the cinema as it had been gropingly developed up until then, and on the other, struggled against the whole industrially organized machinery of the film trade. It is impossible to overrate the magnitude of this challenge and the courage of the man who made it. But it would be wrong to think that Flaherty was part of the American cultural tradition.

The span of years spent by Flaherty in the Canadian North were not only to find consummation in his film in 1922, but they were to have a profound and indelible effect on his outlook for the rest of his life. It may have been emptiness, the expanse, the cold—the very loneliness of this barren snow-and-ice world where the wind seems never to cease—that gave him time to con-

template and compose his thoughts. The small black figures on a vast white landscape, the drift snow in the wind, the huge distances to be traversed with a minimum of equipment and comfort, all these bit deeply into a man whose very eyes—an intense sort of china blue—reflected his experience.

The truth of the North that Flaherty found out was that when people were liable at any moment to suffer disaster, they depended absolutely on each other. Thus there existed "an atmosphere of loving kindness and forgiveness of sins"—the words are Grierson's—which was quite extraordinary. Whatever was to happen later—in the South Seas, in the Aran Islands, in Mysore, and in the United States itself—Flaherty the artist and poet and explorer was already developed and mature at the age of 38, the year in which he finished *Nanook*.

In his book *Eskimo* (1959), Edmund Carpenter writes of the acuteness of observation of the Eskimo, of their ability to recognize the identity of objects or animals at great distances. He does not suggest that their eyes are optically superior to ours but that supersensitive observation is vitally important to those who live in such barren surroundings. Over years they have unconsciously trained their eyes to observe accurately and meaningfully. "Moreover," he adds, "they enter into an experience, not as an observer but as a participant."

Writing about their art—a word which does not occur in their language—he makes the significant point that the carver of a piece of ivory will hold it unworked in his hand, turning it around and saying to himself, "Who are you?" and "Who hides there?" Only after some thought will he decide to carve out of it a seal or a fox. He tries to discover its hidden form from within, and if that is not forthcoming, he will carve at the ivory cautiously until a form suggests itself. "Seal, hidden, emerges. It was always there, he didn't create it; he released it. . . . The carver never attempts to force the ivory into uncharacteristic forms, but responds to the material as it tries to be itself, and thus the carving is continually modified as the ivory has its say." This attitude is reached only by long experience and contemplation.

It is our belief that in these two Eskimo qualities—the acute power of observation and the allowing of material to shape its own meaning—there is something which is also an integral part of Flaherty's art as a filmmaker. His training from early youth as an explorer and mining surveyor must have taught him to use his eyes more acutely than most men, but his many years of living in close contact with the Eskimo people and his love of them must also in turn have taught him even more about keenness of observation. We know, too, that he made a close study of their carvings and took many fine examples back home with him. He must have fully understood their attitude toward such craftsmanship.

Figure 8

Cat. No. 96

modern print, from
original glass plate, by
NPC, on loan from FSCC.

N 313

4" × 5" / 10.2 × 12.7 cm

subject: photograph of
the personages of the
film *Nanook of the North*
on the horizon,
1920–1921.

Professor Carpenter confirms this belief. He writes:

I am sure you understand that what I said [in the book *Eskimo*] about discovering the form within the ivory is just a minor illustration of an attitude towards life that pervades Eskimo thought and especially Eskimo human relations. Flaherty must have been very close to these people, as few Westerners have been; there are insights, observations in his writings that could only have come from the most intimate contact. His writings are so casual in style that someone unfamiliar with the Eskimo might regard them as happy travel stories, nothing more, and conclude that his relations with the Eskimo were fleeting. This could not be the case: one tale alone refutes it: that short story about the family marooned on an island and finally escaping via a crude craft. So it may not be unreasonable to suppose that Flaherty was influenced by the Eskimo, or at least found their attitudes understandable and congenial to his own temperament. His writing might mislead readers into also supposing that his northern trips were without grim ordeals. Actually, he must have had some rough times. [Carpenter 1959]

We discuss elsewhere an important side of Flaherty's filmmaking—the actual filming of raw material in real surroundings, then the subsequent assembling of such material into a shape or form fit to be presented to spectators—and it is apparent that an analogy can be found with the method of the Eskimo carvers. Both these points are brought up and emphasized here because they may well emerge from Flaherty's close association with the Eskimo people and their environment over almost a decade.

"Bob was forever always telling me," said Frances Flaherty, "that he wanted to go back to the North. 'I go to come back' he would say. He wanted to go back to dwell in his mind, to find a refuge. The memory of the North never left him. But Bob never did go back."³⁵

As Flaherty himself began this paper, so let him end it:

You ask me what I think the film can do to make large audiences feel intimate with distant peoples? Well, *Nanook* is an instance of this. People who read books on the north are, after all, not many, but millions of people have seen this film in the last 26 years—it has gone round the world. And what they have seen is not a freak, but a real person after all, facing the perils of a desperate life and yet always happy. When Nanook died of starvation two years later, the news of his death came out in the Press all over the world—even as far away as China.

The urge that I had to make *Nanook* came from the way I felt about these people, my admiration for them; I wanted to tell others about them. This was my whole reason for making the film. In so many travelogues you see, the film-maker looks down on and never up to his subject. He is always the big man from New York or from London.

But I had been dependent on these people, alone with them for months at a time, travelling with them and living with them. They had warmed my feet when they were cold, lit my cigarette when my hands were too numb to do it myself; they had taken care of me on three or four expeditions over a period of eight years. My work had been built up along with them; I couldn't have done anything without them. In the end it is all a question of human relationship. [Flaherty 1950:18, 19]

Notes

- 1 "Knobel had studied at Heidelberg and was now a recluse who loved to live alone in the wilds. Wherever he lived, he took his piano with him into the wilderness and was particularly fond of playing Chopin. He died years ago of pneumonia. He was in his 80s." David Flaherty, in a letter to the authors, August 21, 1959.
- 2 This account is a synthesis of two prerecorded radio talks (transcribed from telediphone records) made for the BBC in London, on June 14 and July 24, 1949, in which Flaherty was interviewed by Eileen Molony. Referred to hereafter as BBC Talks.
- 3 In an interview, August 15, 1957.
- 4 Transcribed from *Portrait of Robert Flaherty*, a radio program comprising the recorded memories of his friends, devised and written by Oliver Lawson Dick, produced by W. R. Rogers, broadcast by the BBC on September 2, 1952.
- 5 Excerpts from letters to the author, dated April 5 and 10, 1958.
- 6 Extracts from these diaries can be found in Griffith (1953).
- 7 Eskimos have a reputation for remarkably accurate mapmaking. When compared with modern maps prepared as a result of aerial survey, the old Eskimo ones are astonishingly correct. Professor Edmund Carpenter lays special emphasis on this in his fascinating book *Eskimo* (1959). Thus, when Flaherty eventually reached the Belcher Islands, he found that the maps given him earlier were far more accurate than the vague dots on the Admiralty maps, especially those drawn by the Eskimo named Wetalltok (Flaherty 1918:44).
- 8 He had been provided with a 36-foot sailing craft quite unsuitable for this type of navigation. It is in keeping with Flaherty's ideas about art to find a dramatic event like being wrecked thrown away in a single sentence.
- 9 This kind of incident is elaborated at length in Flaherty's *The Captain's Chair* (1938).
- 10 A fascinating detailed account of these two hardy and remarkable Eskimo expeditions by Flaherty will be found in *My Arctic Friends* and in two articles in the *Geographic Review* already mentioned. They are also described by Mr. W. E. Greening, of Montreal, in an unpublished manuscript of the life of Sir William Mackenzie to which we have kindly been given access by the author.
- 11 Professor Edmund Carpenter, of the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, in a letter to the authors, May 24, 1959.
- 12 David Flaherty, in a letter to the authors, June 29, 1959.
- 13 Presumably what would now be called camera-magazines.
- 14 Evelyn Lyon-Fellows, in a letter to the authors, January 27, 1958.
- 15 David Flaherty, in a letter to the authors, August 21, 1959.
- 16 John Taylor and John Goldman, who worked as assistant and editor respectively on the film *Man of Aran* in 1932–1934. Richard Griffith also recalls the story.
- 17 By specimens we presume that he refers to the examples of Eskimo carving and drawing which he brought back from his journeys. His collection of 360 pieces, said to be one of the best in existence, was acquired by Sir William Mackenzie and donated to the Royal Ontario Museum in 1933. Some photographs of them appeared in Professor Edmund Carpenter's book *Eskimo* (1959). Flaherty himself published in 1915 *The Drawings of Enooesweetok of the Sikoslingmint Tribe of the Eskimo, Fox Land, Baffin Island*, subtitled "These Drawings were Made at Amadjuak Bay, Fox Land, the Winter Quarters of Sir William Mackenzie's Expedition to Baffin Land and Hudson Bay, 1913–14." These drawings were donated by Mrs. Flaherty to join the carvings in the Royal Ontario Museum. A half-hour film was made by Lawrence Productions (Canada) in 1959.
- 18 In "Robert Flaherty Talking," an article in *The Cinema*, 1950, edited by Roger Manvell (Pelican Books). It also appeared in *Theatre Arts* magazine (New York, May 1951), and a slightly different version was printed in the magazine of the Screen Directors Guild (January 1951) under the title "Film: Language of the Eye."
- 19 Grierson (1951) gives the information that, when in Toronto in 1930, he was invited to the house of an old ex-film distributor who had turned furrier. He had his own private projection room. There he screened for Grierson what can only have been the Harvard print of the original *Nanook*. (In an interview by the authors, January 13, 1960.)
- 20 (Ramsaye 1951). Martin Johnson was a big-game and adventure filmmaker, whose approach to the cinema was the exact antithesis to that developed by Flaherty over the years.
- 21 The "rushes" are the first print made from the developed negative so that the filmmaker can see the result of his work projected onto a screen. In the United States they are called "dailies." Every filmmaker naturally wants to screen his rushes as soon as they are available.
- 22 Flaherty pursued this method of taking preliminary, still photographs of types, architecture, landscapes, etc., on all his subsequent films. Often they were made by his wife. They have sometimes at a later date been confused with stills from the actual films.
- 23 (Flaherty 1950:13, 14). Taylor in his *New Yorker* Profile (1949) says that Flaherty explained the reason for an Eskimo's holding a photograph upside down was that previously he had only seen his reflection in a pool of water.
- 24 For this and subsequent diary extracts we are indebted to Richard Griffith, who included them fully in *The World of Robert Flaherty* (1953) by permission of Mrs. Frances Flaherty. The complete diaries have not been published but we have noted that extracts used by Griffith coincide exactly, word for word, with the accounts in *My Eskimo Friends* (1924), which must therefore have been partly transcribed from the original diaries although the book does not state this.
- 25 "The Aivilik Eskimos are first-class mechanics. They delight in stripping down and reassembling engines, watches, all machinery. I have watched them repair instruments which American mechanics, flown into the Arctic for this purpose, have abandoned in despair." Professor Edmund Carpenter in *Eskimo* (1950).
- 26 In lecture notes by Frances Flaherty, used on many occasions by her in North America and Europe, accompanied by extracts from her husband's films. (The lectures became a book, *Odyssey of a Filmmaker*, in 1960.)
- 27 The copy screened for us by the National Film Archive, London, was black-and-white, but our memories tell us that when first seen the final night sequence, at least, was printed on blue-tinted stock. This was a common practice at the time; sequences were often printed on amber, red, or blue stock as thought appropriate to the story.
- 28 *With Captain Scott to the South Pole* was directed and photographed by Ponting and issued in two parts by the Gaumont Company in Britain, 1911–12. In the early 1930s it was reedited, a sound track was added, and it was given the title *Ninety Degrees South*. A copy of this version is preserved in the National Film Archive, London, which also has the negative of the original films. An instructive comparison in method can also be made between *Nanook* with its primitive methods of production and the later Ealing Studios film, *Scott of the Antarctic* (1948), with its elaborate studio fabrication.
- 29 Miss Barry, later to become the Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library (1935–1951), was at that time film critic of the London *Daily Mail*, and she also performed some secretarial duties for the distinguished expert on Arctic matters Professor Vilhjalmur Stefansson, then Director of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire.
- 30 We are surprised that in the last sentence Mr. Dixon shows no knowledge of the much-publicized arguments over the authenticity and integrity of *Man of Aran*. They took place some 13 years before he wrote the above.
- 31 Flaherty had himself already described how the igloo was specially built in *My Eskimo Friends*, which was published in 1924, four years before Professor Stefansson's above-quoted remarks.
- 32 David Flaherty, in a letter to the authors, June 29, 1959.
- 33 Quoted by Ernestine Evans in "New Movies," *National Board of Review Magazine* (New York, January 1943) in an issue published as a Salute to Robert Flaherty. Miss Evans had met Eisenstein in Moscow, in the summer of 1928.

- 34 Geboren, Rothapfel, anglicized to Rothafel. Roxy, as he was known, was one of the great early showmen in the United States. He introduced the 3-console electric organ to cinemas, and when he re-vamped the Victoria Cinema in New York into the Rialto, he announced it as "A Temple of Motion Pictures: A Shrine of Music and the Allied Arts." He died in 1936.
- 35 Frances Flaherty, in an interview at Black Mountain Farm, Brattleboro, Vermont, August 17-23, 1957.

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* This article is excerpted from *Robert Flaherty: A Biography* by Paul Rotha and Basil Wright, to be published by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

CAMPAIGN BOOK FOR EXHIBITORS

REVILLON FRÈRES
present

"NANOOK of the NORTH"

A STORY OF LIFE AND LOVE
IN THE ACTUAL ARCTIC

PRODUCED BY ROBERT J. FLAHERTY, F.R.G.S.

Pathépicture



This Four-column Ad. Available in Cut or Mat Form

What to Play Up in Exploiting **“NANOOK of the NORTH”**

An Epic of the Snowlands

The marvel drama of the fearless, lovable happy-go-lucky Eskimo.

The truest and most thrilling story of how they live, love, battle and dream at the top of the world.

Sensational Thrills

Salmon Fishing!
 Walrus Hunting!
 Seal Catch!
 Igloo Building!
 Dog Fight!
 Icebergs!
 Eskimo Kiss,
 and Mother Love!

Novelty Spectacular

Newer than New,
 Greater than Great,
 More Dramatic than Drama,
 More Human than Humanity,
 More Spellbinding than
 Hypnotism,
 More Beautiful than Dream
 Paintings.

Pathépicture
TRADE MARK

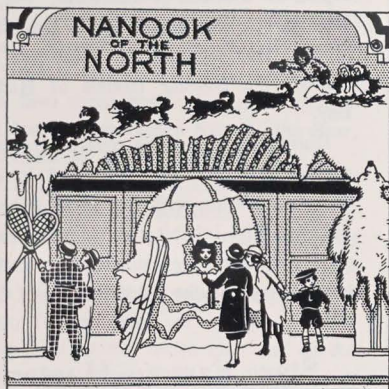
Pathépicture
TRADE MARK

Distinctive!

Different!

They'll see it again and again!
 They'll talk about it forever!

Ideas, Stunts and Bally-hoo for "NANOOK of the NORTH"



Igloo and Atmosphere Lobby

PLAY this up as a story of the ice-locked Arctic. Give attention to Nanook, the star-hero and hunter extraordinary. Emphasize the human angle, life, love, battle, mother love and dreams. Make your big play on its distinctiveness, its novelty, its rare appeal, its vital throb, its sure-fire thrill and the fact that patrons will talk about it forever.

Shop Tie-Ups

Here's a big chance to get every shop in town that sells goods either with an Eskimo trade mark or Arctic supplies, to bally-hoo your show.

Suggest window displays with your theatre displays. Suggest co-operative full

page advertising of these shops with your advertisement in the center. Sell the idea to the advertising manager of your local newspapers.

Furs, rubbers, ice cream, ginger ale, refrigerators, sleds, snow shoes, thermos bottles, etc., are all prospects for this big drive.

Thrills

List your thrills and play them up. The ads contain the sensations. Intrigue them by stressing the fact that here are different thrills, sensational and spectacular.

Lobby

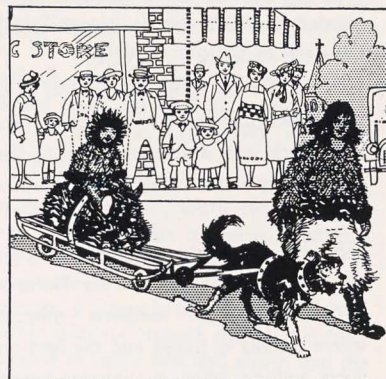
Use your poster cut-outs in your lobby. Get the Eskimo atmosphere. Build an igloo over your box-office. Hang cotton batting around to give the snow effect. Get polar bear skins, sleds, snow shoes, etc. to complete the idea.

Street Bally-Hoo

Dress a man like an Eskimo—put a sled on wheels and have them go around town. A sign urging the town to see "Nanook of the North" if placed on the sled or on the men, will bring the patrons to your house.

Special Window Card

The window card was especially designed for this commercial tie-up. By adding the local shop's sales talk, you can get a wider and bigger distribution of

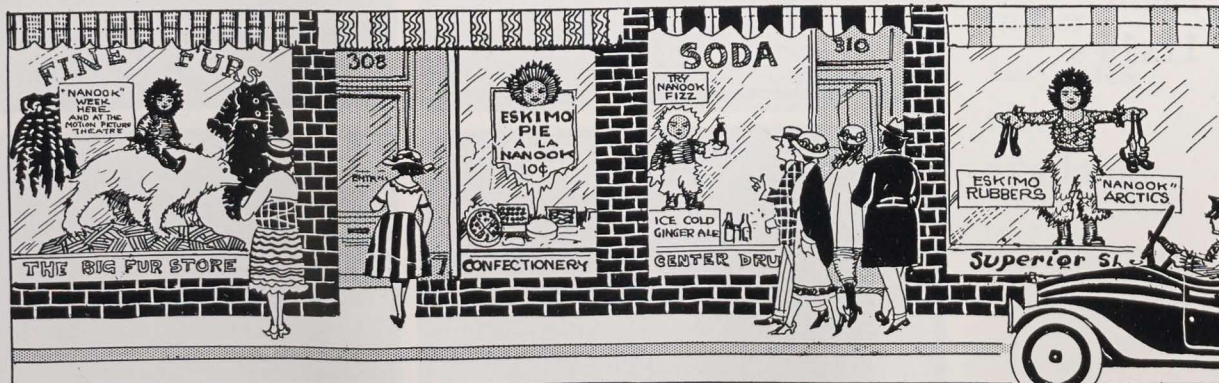


Street Dog-Sled Bally-hoo

these cards, than in any way possible. (See page 6.) Use them in connection with the window displays and co-operative newspaper ads.

Exploitation

Get the stories in the papers. Each one has an unique slant. Advertise in big space and use the four column ad of the front cover of the campaign book and repeat and repeat. Repetition makes reputation. Put across one big stunt to get the town excited. Make your shop tie-ups. Send out letters! Telephone! Tell the world! Once they see this picture they'll talk about it forever. Get them coming! They'll do the talking!



Window display tie-ups linked with co-operative newspaper advertising

Snowland Epic of Life and Love

Genuine and Unique

There is no film, anywhere in the world, on any subject, so absolutely unique in several respects, as is "Nanook of the North," produced for Revillon Freres by Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S.

First, its story is not the product of the fertile imagination of a scenarist. It is life—stark and dramatic—as it is lived day by day in a barren and uncivilized land.

Second, it was photographed entirely in the frozen North, 800 miles North of civilization's most northerly outposts, where the sea is frozen and the land produces nothing; where the average temperature is 35 degrees below zero!

Third, it was developed and printed in the North, with the assistance of Eskimos, who were taught how to develop. To do this, coal, costing \$120 a ton had to be brought over a thousand miles from Winnipeg!

Cast of Characters

By themselves:

NANOOK, *the Bear*
 NYLA, *the Smiling One*
 ALLEE
 CUNAYOU
 COMOCK

*Huskies, walruses, seals,
 white foxes and salmon*

Produced by

ROBERT J. FLAHERTY, F.R.G.S.

Presented by

REVILLON FRERES

Distributed by

PATHE FILM EXCHANGE, INC.

Length, Six Reels

About R. J. Flaherty

Mr. Flaherty, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, producer and photographer of "Nanook of the North," led five William Mackenzie expeditions into North Hudson Bay regions. He discovered and charted the Belcher Islands of Hudson Bay.

During the ten years covered by these explorations, Mr. Flaherty lived in intimate association with the small tribe of Eskimos who inhabit the Ungava Peninsula, one of the regions least accessible to white men on the North American Continent.

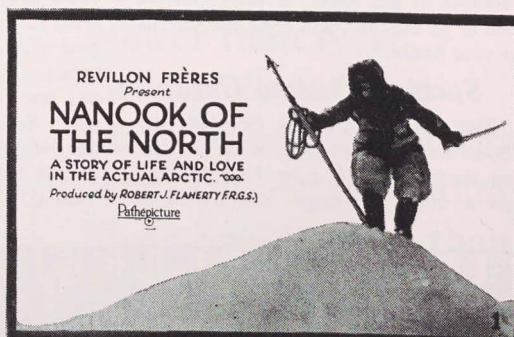
Stars Famous Hunter

Nanook, the hero of the story, is a real-life hero. He is Chief of the "Itivimuits" and famous through all Ungava as a great hunter. The score or so of native families constituting the tribe are peculiarly isolated and therefore faithful to their racial traditions and mode of life, and entirely independent of civilization.

Fourth, Mr. Flaherty shows us the Eskimo, not as a freak or a curiosity, but as a Superman—a man who has nothing; a man whose whole life is a struggle for a mere existence, and yet he is happy, content and peace-loving.

Colored
 Lobby
 Display
 Photos
 Set of
 Eight
 11x14's

Nanook, Brother of the Bear, and famed as a hunter.



When a starving husky "scents" fresh blood.



A mother is a mother the world over.



A dimpled bud of the frozen North.

Battle for Existence in Arctic

Food Eskimo's Wealth

Nanook, his wife and children, wear their sole wardrobe on their back, carry all their belongings on a dog-sledge and live wherever the search for food takes them. Nanook's hunting ground is nearly as large as England, yet it is occupied by less than three hundred souls. Throughout that Ungava region Nanook, the Bear, is famous as a great hunter.

Traveling first in his quaint and fragile kayak, covered with sealskins, and then in his omiak, of driftwood frame covered with the hides of seal and walrus, in Summer Nanook and his family go down the river, full of layers of ice floes, to the trade post of the white man and to the salmon and walrus fishing grounds at sea.

Harpooning the Walrus

Nanook lures the salmon with two pieces of ivory on a seal-hide line, then spears them and bites them to death. When the sea is free of ice and the salmon gone, they face starvation, but when walruses are found on a far off island,

Synopsis

Where food is to be found there goes Nanook and his family, from his wife to his naked little baby, carried in the fur "parka" on her shoulders. In summer they go down the river to the salmon and walrus fishing grounds at sea. In winter they are oftentimes actually starving before they catch a seal and appease their hunger on its raw meat.

When night comes every member of the family helps build the ice igloo. In an hour it is ready for occupancy and they take off their fur clothes, use them for pillows and crawl under fur robes. In the morning the Eskimo mother washes her baby, the dog sledges are packed and they are off, for the search for food furnishes the motive for everything they do and necessitates their nomadic life.

Stark, Barren Winter

Then comes Winter—long nights; short, bitter days; the mercury near bottom and staying there for days and days! Then Nanook has only the seal for food, and his air hole in the ice is small and hard to detect. When Nanook's sharp, trained eyes do find it, spearing the "Ogjuk" is a task requiring skill and strength.

In an hour Nanook, with the aid of his family and his ivory knife, cuts blocks of snow and erects his ice igloo, even putting in an ice window. Within, where the temperature must never be warmer than freezing, a corner is built for the puppies. Before bedtime Nanook teaches his little son how to use a bow and arrow, and the children slide down the ice hills on their little sleds of driftwood.

When sleep calls them to rest they take off their fur clothes, roll them up for pillows, and a naked baby snuggled against a warm, naked back, they huddle under heavy fur robes. Outside the gale blows the stinging snow about, burying the huskies until only the black tips of their noses show.

excitement reigns, for a two-ton walrus means a lot of food and therefore, to the Eskimo, wealth. But they are dangerous animals to catch, and the men have a tough struggle before one is harpooned, dragged out of the surf and his raw meat eaten by all, from dogs to nursing babies.

Where the "building shortage" holds no terror.

He carefully steered the kayak among the ice flows.



Fur baby plans to go coasting.

His breath warmed the cold, small hands.

Ten
Black and
White
Photos
for News-
paper
Layouts
also
available

Interest-Creating Catch Lines and Phrases

on

"NANOOK of the NORTH"

Something you've never seen, read, or heard about before.

Real life, love, struggle, laughter and drama of the Arctic.

Bringing the heart of the snowlands to your door-step.

"NANOOK OF THE NORTH"

—o—

It lifts you out of your everyday routine.

It carries you to the top of the world.

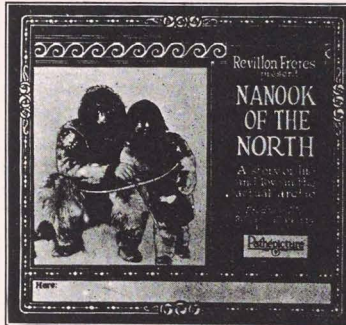
It depicts life of those people who need but fur and food, who see but snow and sky.

The greatest story of the Eskimo ever filmed. The one distinctive achievement of the screen.

"NANOOK OF THE NORTH"

—o—

A North Pole masterpiece—beautiful in conception—thrilling



Slide

in unfoldment—sensational in its clutch at your heart.

"NANOOK OF THE NORTH"

—o—

See Nanook, the star hero, and Nyla, his help and heart mate, as they go through life's drama

amid the snow and ice of the bleak Arctic. A revelation in human appeal.

"NANOOK OF THE NORTH"

—o—

Are Eskimos human?

How and what do they eat?

How do they sleep?

Do they get any joy out of life?

Do they believe in God?

See "Nanook of the North"—the greatest example of what motion pictures can do for your entertainment.

—o—

Pa Eskimo, Ma Eskimo, all the Eskimo kids, Eskimo dogs, Eskimo hunting, Eskimo life, love, action and thrills, in that great picture of the fearless, lovable, happy-go-lucky Eskimo.

"NANOOK OF THE NORTH"

A story of reality up in the frozen land.



CAPITOL THEATRE
All This Week

I Wear
Eskimo Arctics
Why Don't You?

Special Tie-up Window Card

THIS window card enables you to tie-up with your local dealers, by placing one of these cards in his display window and thereby having more people know what your theatre is playing.

At the bottom of the card there is plenty of space for your imprint. Below that there is room for the imprint of the local dealer who handles merchandise that comes from the North or goods that have an Eskimo trade mark. (See illustration.)

The following articles will

make fine tie-up material, advertise your show and help the local dealer.

Eskimo Pie
Arctic Rubbers
Thermos Bottles
Sleds
Ice Cream
Electric Fans
Cliquot Club Ginger Ale
Fur Shops
Rubber Boots
Ice Skates
Refrigerators
Ivory, etc.

Display Advertisements on "NANOOK of the NORTH"

Cuts or Mats are separate from the "Copy."—Get them at your Pathe Exchange

Ad No. 1—1 col. wide, 9 in. deep
Line cut with title, 3 in. deep

Ad No. 2—2 cols. wide, 9 in. deep
Scene Cut, 2 cols. by 4½ in. deep
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RIALTO

Now Playing

The Screen's Greatest
Novelty

NANOOK OF THE NORTH



Mother-Heart

Is mother love any different in the Arctic than in your own home town?

Do you know how they live, love, fight and dream on the top of the world?

Have you ever seen "The Eskimo Kiss"?

Here's a new thrill, the greatest sensation of your life time, it's the most dramatic story you ever read, saw or heard about.

It's newer than new.

It's greater than great.

You'll see it twice and talk about it forever.

NOW

JOY

NOW

Unusual! Thrilling! Dramatic!

NANOOK OF THE NORTH

A Story of the Snowlands

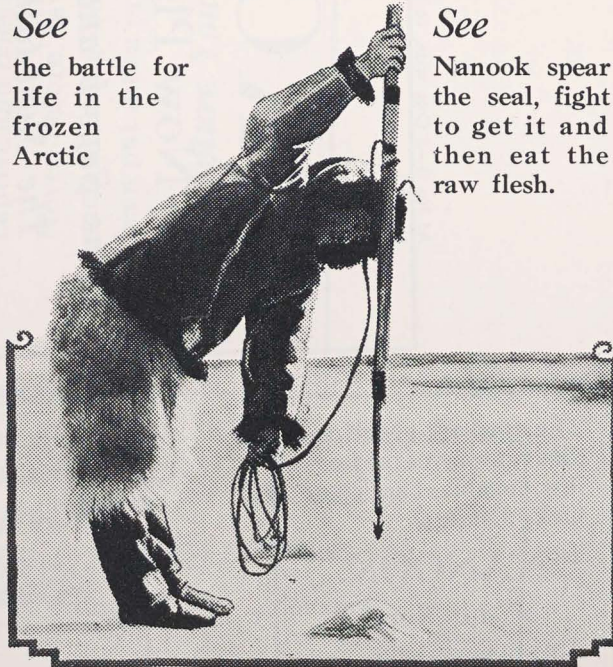


See

the battle for
life in the
frozen
Arctic

See

Nanook spear
the seal, fight
to get it and
then eat the
raw flesh.



You'll not even wink your eyes

So much interest, so much heart-throb, so many pulse-quickenings sensations, you'll sit as if you were hypnotized.

It's rare drama, great story, thrill action with a stupendous human punch.

You'll see it twice and talk about it forever

Line cut with Title, 6 in. wide 6 in. deep

Ad No. 3—3 Cols. wide, 14 in. deep

BROADWAY

Now Playing—Two Weeks

*The Superb and Supreme Screen Achievement
The Most-talked-of-Photoplay in Filmdom*



Ad No. 4—1 col. wide, 2 in. deep. Type set

The most out-of-the ordinary story of the fearless, lovable, happy-go-lucky Eskimo

"NANOOK
of the North"
will hold you spellbound

Ad No. 5—1 col. wide, 2 in. deep. Type set

It brings the North to the South

"NANOOK
of the North"

A stirring photoplay of life and love amid the Ice-packed Arctic.

Ad No. 6—2 cols. wide, 2 in. deep. Type Set

What Shakespeare is to literature.
What Rembrandt is to painting.

"NANOOK of the NORTH"

Is to the screen

Lofty in accomplishment.

Marvelous in beauty.

An Epic of the Snowlands.

Ad No. 7—2 cols. wide, 2 in. deep. Type set. Title slug cut, 2 cols. wide

DRAMATIC
As a hand to hand fight
SENSATIONAL
As a flight in the clouds

HUMAN
As a woman's heart
BEAUTIFUL
As a dream picture

NANOOK OF THE NORTH
A Story of the Snowlands



NANOOK OF THE NORTH

A Story of the Snowlands

*Does your life battle
compare with his?*

See the drama of his life, his love, his family!
See our hero of the Arctic with hand and spear,
attack the walrus who plunges at him, tusks
agileam, sounding his battle cry!
See how the walrus's mate locks tusks with the
captive and tries to pull her free!
Never before have so many spellbinding thrills,
such amazing beauty, such heart-pulling appeal
been put into a production.

A Picture You will Positively Applaud!

s. wide, 4 in. deep. Type set ad.

Slug cut, 2 cols. wide

The Drama of
life in the
Arctic

NANOOK OF THE NORTH

A Story of the Snowlands



The Epic of
the
Eskimo

Something New!

See real life, real drama, real climax in
the story of Nanook.
See him lay on the ice and fish for
walmon with two pieces of ivory and a
real-hide line!
See him build his "igloo" and go to
bed all naked!

Something Different!

See Nanook spear the seal, battle with
it and eat its raw flesh.
See the famous "Eskimo Kiss."
See the thrilling dog fight as the blood
lust urges them on for kingship of
the pack.
See the screen's greatest novelty drama.

TWO WEEKS
See it twice!

REGENT

You'll talk about
this film forever!

Advertising Material Available

Posters

One Sheet (2 styles)
Three Sheet (2 styles)
Six Sheet
Twenty-four Sheet
Window Card
Campaign Book
Thematic Music Score

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Eight 11x14's Colored
Two 22x28's Colored
Ten Black and White
Press Photos
One Slide
Music Cue Sheet

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1, 2, 3 and 4 Column
Line Ads.
Title Slug
Scene Cut
Special Press Sheet
Novelty Fox Trot

Ad No. 9—3 cols. wide, 8 in. deep

Line cut with title, 2 cols. wide, 5 in. deep

Now Playing **CAPITOL**

A Two Week Special



NANOOK OF THE NORTH

A Story of the Snowlands

Pathépicture
THEATRE

The Screen's Most Magnetic Novelty
The Marvel Picture of the Age.
You'll See it Twice.
And Talk About it Forever.

*You'll love
these Kids*

Cute and happy-
hearted, they go
"belly-wopping"
down an iceberg.

They play with the
puppies. They eat
raw meat.

Nanook teaches
them how to use the
bow and arrow.

Nanook's wife
bathes them in Es-
kimo fashion.

You'll laugh!

You'll thrill!

You'll see the
world's greatest
drama depicted near
the North Pole.

Novelty Fox Trot

*Ask your music dealer
for*

"NANOOK"

The newest thing in
Polar Fox Trots

By the writers of the
Oriental Fox Trot
"Isle of Zorda"

*Just the music
for your prologue*

Circular Letter

Dear Madam:

Consider the Eskimo Mother?
Is she warm blooded? Has God given
her the same sensitive feelings as
you have?

How does she care for her chil-
dren? How does she bathe them?
What is the Eskimo kiss?

If you want to know how they
live, love, battle and dream on
top of the world - if you want
thrills of the ice-locked Arctic, -
if you want novelty, originality
and sensations in a pulse-quickening
story, - if you want to see the
latest style in Eskimo furs -

You will want to see "Nanook
of the North" - the Pathepicture
taken far up near the North Pole.

This picture is greater than
great, newer than new, more beau-
tiful than your own dream-paint-
ings, more human than a woman's
heart, and more spectacular than
flight in the skies.

See it once, at once, and
you'll see it again and again. Yes,
you'll talk about it to your grand-
children. With great pride, we
announce "Nanook of the North" at
theTheatre for two weeks
starting.....

Cordially yours,
The Management

Two 22x28 Colored Lobby Scene Photos

A—A Madonna of the Arctic.



B—Nanook, poised to harpoon a two-ton walrus.

Run BEFORE play date

"Nanook of the North"

Was First Shown in Frozen Arctic to Eskimos Seen in Pathe Play

When you will see "Nanook of the North" creep upon the mighty and dangerous walrus, spear him, slay him, and Nanook, his wife and tiny children eat him raw, you will be surrounded by the comfort and luxury of the Theatre, where this marvelous, true life story of the barren snowlands will be shown.

But the first time this thrilling episode in the story of "Nanook of the North" was ever projected on a screen and witnessed by an audience was 800 miles North of civilization, on the East coast of Hudson Bay. The theatre was a shed belonging to a fur post. It was about forty feet long. On the walls and rafters hung bear and fox skins to dry; deer horns and dog harness. The odor would nauseate the unaccustomed.

On the rough wooden floor squatted Eskimos—men, women and children. The projection machine was not in a fireproof booth—it was a portable machine set upon a table. It was run by a gasoline engine. The noise was ear-splitting.

It was the first time the Eskimos had ever seen a motion picture. But it was not the fact that they were witnessing anything so novel as a reproduction of themselves in action that interested them most, as it was the walrus hunt itself. They forgot it wasn't real, and shouted directions and warnings to their pictured selves.

"Nanook of the North" is a Pathe feature picture, photographed in the frozen land of Hudson Bay by Robert J. Flaherty, mining engineer and explorer. It is a real and true drama of the life and love of the Eskimo.

Eskimo Never Swears or Loses Temper

Of the Eskimo, whose life drama is unfolded in the Pathe feature, "Nanook of the North," showing at the Theatre, its producer and photographer, Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., has many interesting things to say in regard to his temperament and disposition.

Mr. Flaherty, and his opinion is corroborated by other explorers familiar with the Eskimo, finds the primitive, nomadic people who live at the top of the world fearless, lovable and happy-go-lucky. He can teach the white man many lessons in patience, kindness, faithfulness and skill.

The Eskimo never displays temper. It is a weakness to show anger, and the white man who gets along best with the Eskimo is the man who never displays a bad disposition. If an Eskimo displays temper, he is dangerous—he has run amuck.

He is a stoic and can stand a tremendous amount of pain. Cuts and wounds are nothing to him, but let him get an internal illness or fever, and it attacks him mentally. He gives up and dies. Measles is fatal to an Eskimo.

"Nanook of the North" depicts the dramatic life story of an Eskimo family. It was produced by Mr. Flaherty for Revillon Freres in the actual Arctic, where the thermometer drops to 54 below and stays there for days and days and where lives a marvelous race free from the influence of civilization.

Eskimo Life Primitive

"Nanook of the North," the Pathe feature coming to the Theatre produced for Revillon Freres by the noted explorer and engineer, Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., is the real, true story of a great Eskimo hunter and his family.

The huge and very dangerous walrus, the polar bear and the seal Nanook catches in hand to hand encounters, killing with nothing more formidable than his harpoon on the end of a seal-hide line. He fishes without bait, luring the fish within range of his spear with two small pieces of ivory dangling on seal-hide cords.

His knife is of shining ivory from the tusks of the walrus. So as to cut more easily, Nanook licks it and it is instantly glazed with ice. It is his only tool used in the building of his Winter dwelling—his igloo of snow and ice.

The household belongings of Nanook, his wife and three children consist of a few robes of bear and deer skin, a stone pot and stone lamps. These he carries wherever the search for food takes him on his dog-sledge, made of wood, which is very precious to Nanook. He sometimes walks miles along the beach to find a log that has drifted, perhaps, from Winnipeg, a thousand miles away! For light he uses moss for wicking and seal oil for fuel.

Yet, in spite of the hardships of life and its single purpose—food—the Eskimo is the happiest, most content and kindest creature in the world.

Eskimo's Life is Fight for Animal Food

Picture the top of the world—illimitable spaces of barren land, desolate, boulder-strewn, windswept. In what little sterile soil there is, nothing grows, except for a few short Summer months, a moss which is used for fuel. No other race could survive the rigor of the climate. Yet there, utterly dependent upon animal life, which is their sole source of food, live the most cheerful people in all the world—the fearless, lovable, happy-go-lucky Eskimo.

Life, love and the unending struggle for existence by the Eskimo in the icy wastes of the actual Arctic is depicted in "Nanook of the North," the Pathe feature coming to the Theatre It was produced for Revillon Freres by Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., who led five Sir William Mackenzie expeditions into North Hudson Bay regions, and who discovered and charted the Belcher Islands on Hudson Bay. Everyone who has had the good fortune to preview "Nanook of the North" has pronounced it a film masterpiece from the standpoint of true life drama, novelty, beauty, power, photography and interest.

Run O

White Man Lived With Eskimos and Made Arctic Film

"Nanook of the North," the remarkable Pathe feature showing at the Theatre is the first motion picture to depict the actual life of the Eskimo, it being a truthful and vivid story of Father and Mother Eskimo and all the little Eskimos at home.

It was made for Revillon Freres by Robert J. Flaherty, engineer and explorer on the Sir William Mackenzie expeditions in the barren lands of the northeast coast of Hudson Bay, and described by him in published records of the American Geographical Society.

Between 1912 and 1918, Mr. Flaherty made five expeditions, covering the Ungava Peninsula and parts of Baffin's Land, guided by Eskimos. He accompanied them as they traveled with their families, Winter and Summer, subsisting wholly upon their catches of fish, seals and walrus; sheltered by their tents of skins in Summer and their snow igloos in Winter, built at the end of a day of dog-sledge travel, the spirit thermometers registering 54 degrees below zero, Fahrenheit.

All these activities are shown in "Nanook of the North," which Mr. Flaherty photographed, developed, printed and projected in the frozen, barren North. Despite the hardships and handicaps of having no laboratory in which to work, "Nanook of the North" is said to be a veritable gem of photography, with none of the glare and blur that so frequently mar pictures photographed in the snow country.

Life Drama of Happiest Human Race

According to Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., explorer, discoverer and engineer, and producer and photographer of the Pathe novelty feature, "Nanook of the North," showing at the Theatre, the Eskimo is the happiest human being in the world.

Up there, at the top of the world, where man has nothing that he does not risk his life to catch with his naked hands, lives a race whose sole life is the pursuit of food. And his only food is the raw meat of the walrus, seal and deer; the salmon and wild birds.

Yet the Eskimo is happy, content and peace-loving. He never displays temper nor impatience nor anger. He never punishes his children. He speaks in a low voice, and his language is musical, and contains no swear words! He is wealthy only in the amount of food he has. Food is wealth, health, happiness—life itself!

Nanook, the hero of "Nanook of the North," is famous throughout all Ungava as a great hunter. In Nanook's language, his name means the bear. Nanook's wife and children share honors in "Nanook of the North."

lay date

Eskimos, Fur and Beans

Ladies, imagine never having to put your furs away in mothballs in the Spring and taking them out in the Fall and airing them in the sun! Of mothballs the Eskimo knows nothing. As they are seen in the marvelous Pathe feature, "Nanook of the North," showing at the Theatre they wear costumes of reindeer fur Summer and Winter.

The fur of the deer sheds easily and much, and Robert J. Flaherty, F.R.G.S., producer and photographer of "Nanook of the North" and leader of five Sir William Mackenzie expeditions into the Hudson Bay regions of the Far North, tells of how, on a fifty-five day dog-sledge trip he ate deer hair with his baked beans.

The Eskimos lived on raw seal meat, which they caught en route, but Mr. Flaherty provided himself with a huge bag of baked beans. These would freeze hard and have to be broken off in chunks and thawed over a small oil stove he carried.

Service Means Nothing

We who order our food from the butcher, the baker and the grocer and have it delivered to our door will face a striking contrast in existence when "Nanook of the North," the much-talked-of Pathe feature produced for Revillon Freres by Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., will be shown at the Theatre

Nanook is a real Eskimo, famed throughout the Barren Lands in the far north regions of Hudson Bay, as a great hunter. He is seen with his wife and children in their year round existence of food hunting. For the Eskimo eats only when he has food, and he has food only when he catches it, and he catches it when he can, which is not always when he needs it. The Eskimo dies more frequently of starvation or accident, than of sickness.

And his dogs—his huskies whose forebears were the wolf—get so hungry that they will eat the seal-hide thongs of their harness, or will attack the litter and eat the puppies.

The Eskimo's Curiosity

"The Eskimo has no curiosity about anything strange to him except animals," says Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., producer and photographer of the marvelous Pathe feature, "Nanook of the North," showing at the Theatre.

On one of his expeditions into the Ungava Peninsula, in the Hudson Bay regions for Sir William Shackleton, Mr. Flaherty took a monkey. This queer animal brought forth many questions, and they never tired of studying his habits.

But of the white man—his different language, his white skin and fair coloring; his different clothes, and where he came from, the Eskimo has no curiosity. The Eskimo's life is centered around animals, for it on them that he subsists, and, in the frozen north food is wealth, life, pleasure, everything!

AFTER play date criticisms

Arctic Film Surpasses Expectations

It does not seem possible that any film can live up to its advance press notices, but "Nanook of the North," the Pathe feature shown yesterday at the Theatre and continuing until, surpasses the praise of its press agent. Words are too feeble to do credit to this marvelous film, which stamps itself indelibly on your memory and tugs mightily at your emotions.

"Nanook of the North" is a true, living story of a life that is stark and dramatic; a life that is tragic to civilization but happy and peaceful to the Eskimo, that wonderful race that lives in the frozen vastness at the top of the world. While this film, produced on the East Coast of Hudson Bay by Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., is a story of the life of an Eskimo family, in some subtle way it unfolds a story full of love and fidelity; danger, thrills and suspense; humor and pathos, and great pictorial beauty.

Mr. Flaherty is an engineer and an explorer; "Nanook of the North" proves him also an artist and a lover of human nature. He makes you love the Eskimos as he does, after years of living with them. The photography is free from the glare and blur that characterizes snow scenes, and a remarkable point is the fact that the film was developed in the Arctic by Mr. Flaherty, in spite of the low temperature and lack of a fully equipped laboratory. Yet it puts to shame other films in its perfection. Some of the Eskimos in the picture learned to assist in the developing and printing. By all means see "Nanook of the North"—you can't afford not to.

Film of Frozen North Awees and Inspires

For dramatic interest, genuine thrills and real heart feeling, nothing that has come out of a motion picture studio has ever equalled "Nanook of the North," photographed 800 miles North of civilization in a land of perpetual frozen snows.

"Nanook of the North" has been eagerly awaited at the Theatre, where yesterday's audience was swept out of itself by the heroics of Nanook, famed throughout the Hudson Bay regions as a mighty hunter, and by the tremendous courage that the Eskimo innately possesses, or he could not keep alive.

Robert J. Flaherty, producer of this Pathe feature for Revillon Freres, has not taken the attitude toward the Eskimo that civilized people usually take toward a less fortunate race. From his years of living with the Eskimo as an engineer and explorer, knowing his language, his habits and his tremendous struggle for a mere existence, Mr. Flaherty has learned to know, appreciate and love this man who has nothing that he does not get for himself and his family in hand to hand encounters with animals and elements more powerful than he is. He does not present the Eskimo as a freak, but as a Superman.

"Nanook of the North" remains at the Theatre until

Tense, Thrilling Drama in Eskimo Film

Robert J. Flaherty, F. R. G. S., did not produce "Nanook of the North," the Pathe feature shown yesterday at the Theatre where it remains until, with an object lesson in view. Nevertheless, in addition to its many unique points of interest, it contains a tremendous lesson. Civilized people should blush with shame after witnessing how the Eskimo, with a minimum of life's necessities and none of its luxuries, enjoys the state of perfect happiness and content.

In "Nanook of the North" we become acquainted with the life of the Eskimo the year round in illimitable spaces of frozen snow at the top of the world. We see how his whole life is centered on a search for food; we see what his clothes are made of; how he builds his snow house; how he goes to bed, gets up, dresses; how the baby is washed; how they love; how they harpoon a battling two-ton walrus; how they catch seals and salmon, and how they eat them. Everything that life holds for the Eskimo is shown in these six awe-inspiring and photographically beautiful reels.

In addition to the merits of dramatic interest, heart throbs and thrills, "Nanook of the North" has that rare virtue of truth, it having been entirely filmed in the actual Arctic, 800 miles North of civilization, on the East Coast of Hudson Bay.

"Nanook of North" is Wonder Film

Here is a picture that defies classification and beggars description! "Nanook of the North" is to the jaded photoplaygoer what water is to parched, feverish lips. It can revive the stalest interest, so full is it of vitality, beauty and truth.

Shown at the Theatre for the first time yesterday and continuing, "Nanook of the North" is a story from life, not the hectic nightmare of a scenario writer. It was not made in the glare of calcium lights against a background of studio sets. There are no artificialities and no untruths, for "Nanook of the North" was produced and photographed by Robert J. Flaherty, explorer, discoverer and engineer, at the top of the world, or more exactly, 800 miles North of the last road, on the East Coast of Hudson Bay.

It is a stark, staring disclosure of the only life and love known to the Eskimo, a race of people that endures the greatest hardships, knows only the most rigorous climate and has the least of any in the world—and yet is the happiest!

Added to the interest that is compelled by the fortitude and skill of the Eskimo and the real drama in their life, is awe of and admiration for the beauty of the scenery and Mr. Flaherty's remarkable snow photography. "Nanook of the North" is not one of those films that is seen and forgotten. It can be seen twice and remembered always. Don't let this Pathe feature get away from the Theatre without seeing it.

Music Plot of "Nanook of the North"

By ERNST LUZ

<i>Desc. of Music</i>	<i>Number Suggested</i>	<i>Cue to Stop Number</i>
1. S. Hy. Ensemble XXX (Esquimo)	"An Eskimo Lullaby (Witmark & Son) (Subject to Tax)	
2. Light Desc. XXX	"The Dog Train" (Witmark & Son) (Subject to Tax)	
3. S. Hy. Con Moto XXX	"Spring Blossoms" (G. Schirmer)	Connects 1 and 2
PART II		"A Wandering Icefield," etc.
4. Ens. and Waltz XXX	"Sparkling Cascade" (Carl Fischer)	
5. Light Desc. XXX	"Song of the Brook" (Belwin)	
6. S. Hy. Desc. XXX	"Springtime" (G. Schirmer)	Connects 2 and 3
PART III		"Winter, Long Nights," etc.
7. Dr. Con Moto XXX (Snow Storm and Ice)	"Rustle of Spring" (Carl Fischer)	
8. Light Desc. XXX	"On the Mountains" (Carl Fischer)	
9. Valse XXX	"Sunshine and Flowers" (Photo Play Mu. Co.)	Connects 3 and 4
PART IV		
10. S. Hy. Desc. XXX	"An Eskimo Wedding" (Witmark & Sons Subject to Tax)	"It is Cold Sport," etc.
11. Light Desc. XXX	"Playful Polar Bears" (Witmark & Sons Subject to Tax)	
12. Lullaby XXX	Same as No. 1	Connects 4 and 5
PART V		"Breaking Camp," etc.
13. Light Desc. XXX	"Mignonette-Friml" (G. Schirmer)	
14. S. Hy. Con Moto XXX	"Two Preludes" (G. Schirmer)	
15. Long Ens. and Waltz XXX	"Carmen Sylva" (Carl Fischer)	Connects 5 and 6
PART VI		"Gee It's Cold"
16. Light Con Moto XX	"Norwegian Episode" (Witmark) (Subject to Tax)	"It is Now Getting Dark," etc.
17. Long Hurr. and Dr. Intro and Waltz XXXX	"Morning Journals" (Fischer)	
18. Semi Light Nocturne XXX	"Nocturne-Karganoff" (G. Schirmer)	TO END

NOTE: Music selected should maintain and never disturb the Arctic Zone or Eskimo atmosphere

How to Make the Best Use of the Music Plot

OPERATOR'S CUES FOR DISSOLVING REELS

End of Reel 1—Close-up of Eskimo child after mother gives it Castor Oil.

End of Reel 2—After Nanook begins to cut walrus.

End of Reel 3—After child Eskimo off on little sled.

End of Reel 4—After Eskimo mother rubbing naked child.

End of Reel 5—After Nanook has seal meat in mouth and cuts off with knife.

End of Reel 6—Close-up of heads of sleeping Eskimos.

MUSIC NOTES

This picture is an illustrative story of an Eskimo, Nanook by name, and his family. The entire story and scenic effects have been photographed in the Arctic Zone. Eskimo or quaint melodious music of Scandinavian character should be selected. An excellent opportunity is afforded to arrange a program entirely different from the usual photoplay requirements. Note that there are very few cues. Consequently, most of the numbers may be played in concert style, but must not be overplayed.

Nos. 1, 2 and 3 suggest first, the serious, then the light and for No. 3, the slightly se-

rious played in moving tempo. For the second reel, No. 4, a light ensemble and waltz is suggested.

No. 5 is a lighter number and No. 6, a slightly more serious number.

No. 7—A melodious number, played in moving tempo, slightly suggesting the dramatic is permissible.

No. 8—A light number and No. 9—A decidedly light valse.

No. 10—A slightly serious number followed by No. 11, which should again be a light number.

Note that up to this point, the plot analysis simply suggests moving of program.

For No. 12—An Eskimo Lullaby will be very effective.

For No. 13, 14 and 15, again the thought of programing is all that is necessary.

No. 16 should be a light number.

No. 17—A long concert waltz with a long introduction in hurried tempo, suggesting the dramatic. The picture ends with a Nocturne of the lighter character. At no time select heavy numbers as the picture can only benefit by character illustration and like musical interpretation.

When organ is used for orchestral rest period, such period should be Nos. 8, 9, 10 and 11.

NOTE: "LUZ" music plots read like a book. No. 1 must be played before or with the screening of the picture and continues until the cue to stop in last column. Leaders should write the cues to stop in light pencil on each number together with any prompt or effect notations. This will make the annoying use of the cue sheet in the pit unnecessary.

In music plots each reel of film is divided into 10 units of time, each unit denoted by one X representing 1¼ minutes. Consequently when a number is designated by XX, it plays about 2 minutes. XXXX slightly more than 5 minutes, etc. When no X appears after description of number, it plays only a minute or less. When CUE TO STOP NUMBERS is in quotations " " it means that the cue is reading matter or subtitle. All other cues are action on screen. All segues should be made quietly and clean. Segues should never be made hurriedly or excitedly, thereby making good musical interpretation impossible. When very quick segues or abrupt stops are necessary it will be mentioned in music plots or notes.

For further information regarding Music Plot or Score address Photo Play Music Company, 1520 Broadway, New York City.

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6 The Deadlier Sex
6 Fighting Cressy
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7 Rio Grande
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6 The Gay Old Dog
6 The Thirteenth Chair
7 Common Clay

FRANK KEENAN PRODUCTIONS

5 Dollar for Dollar
6 Smoldering Embers
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6 The World Aflame

BRUNTON PRODUCTIONS

6 The Devil to Pay

Reviews and Discussion

Robert Farris Thompson. *African Art in Motion: Icon and Act in the Collection of Katherine Coryton White.* Published under the sponsorship of the UCLA Art Council by the University of California Press, 1974. \$30.00 (cloth). \$14.95 (paper). \$95 (dance videotape available from publisher; 16 mins., b&w).

Review Essay by Robert Plant Armstrong
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In the decades prior to 1970, the more optimistic students anticipated that the enlarging scope of anthropological study might yield such significant address to the study of the aesthetic that at long last we might approach basic insight into the nature of that universal human phenomenon which so often serves to unite man with the gods, which has for millennia been one of the chief prizes of war, whose international exchange has given rise to touchy questions of polity, and whose illicit trade alone ranks it second only to traffic in drugs in economic value. Alas, we were to be disappointed. The proper questions were never asked, and from the point of view of the aesthetic as a distinctive human phenomenon, reports were dutiful, unrevealing, and negligible. This is not to say there were no important studies—models, indeed, of careful ethnographic, structural-functional examinations of “works of art.” But the methods of their examination were little (if, indeed, at all) different from those employed in the study of the basest objects of material culture or the simplest items in the social inventory. To those of us who had hoped for more from the study of man, it stood to reason that if an ancestor figure be in some significant respect (let us say other than in its mere shape) different from a hoe or an act of barter, then the methods directed toward its study must be devised upon the character of such differences. To study the work as but an object is to subject it to materialistic reduction, and to inquire into nothing but the social roles and functions of piece or maker is a sociological reduction. There was also some tendency to see the work as a mere substitute for thought or communication, or else to treat it as a kind of peg from which beliefs might be strung. Even the most sympathetic of us held that the work of art was everywhere and at all times the same, which is to say involved somehow with beauty, truth, virtue, rhythm, and other virtuosities. Thus was it presumed, with conspicuous naïveté, that the field informant could readily sort out aesthetic subtleties and complexities which have baffled several centuries of Western, and several more of Eastern, philosophers. This, I suppose, might be called the ethnographic reduction.

So it is that at no time during the optimistic fifties and the pretentious sixties did we come close to understanding what the work *is* in human experience—what its on-

tology might be discerned to be, what its relationship to perception is, how it holds value, or even what light might be shed upon this most undisclosed of human phenomena by virtue of man's membership in the biological orders. Thus irrespective of the contributions to our understanding of *Homo sapiens* the study of anthropology had made along social, economic, linguistic, and other dimensions, as far as art was concerned, anthropology might as well not have existed. It made a negligible contribution to our understanding of the aesthetic in human affairs. Inquiry was inadequate because models were inadequate. In the seventies it was finally seen that the work of art is to be approached as that sort of state of affairs that is more nearly like a person—a subject—than an object, and that, accordingly, its appropriate and distinctive study must proceed after psychological rather than physical, social, communicational, or merely structural models. The work of art is a configuration of being conscious of the world and/or the self within it. The aesthetic (because unlike agriculture, for instance, or politics it exists inextricable from one's consciousness of it) can be studied in its own and appropriate terms only if we turn our attention to the psyche, recognizing that the work is a *vital* formulation.

The studies which hold promise in this regard are but few and tentative, deriving from a few older academicians and, encouragingly, from a few young scholars still in or relatively recently emerged from graduate studies. So I cannot mean to suggest an upwelling of inspired thought which resolves age-old questions into simple and exciting clarities. Skinny pedantries and reductivistic obscurities continue to hold the day, and tender shoots of fresh thought must struggle if they are to rise through thickets of orthodoxies into the sunlight where they might flourish. Thus, anthropologists notwithstanding, it would appear, we are approaching an anthropology of art. James W. Fernandez, of Princeton, is an anthropologist; although my title is in anthropology, I teach in a program of aesthetic studies. But mostly these few workers come from more humanistic inquiry: David Wilson, of the University of California at Davis, is in American studies, as is Charles Keil, of the State University of New York at Buffalo; Henry Glassie, of the University of Pennsylvania, is in folklore studies, as is John Vlach, of the University of Texas, Austin.

Certainly Robert Farris Thompson, of the Department of the History of Art at Yale, ranks very high among these pioneers. His book-catalog *African Art in Motion: Icon and Act*, indeed, must be placed in an eminent position among the works of a defining genre whose distinguishing characteristic is neither mere description nor simple exegesis (the explanation of a cultural datum by referring it to its cultural context) but rather hermeneutic: the revelation of the true character of a human act brought about by showing how it is lit from within, revealing existential radiances in which the work abides as a cultural and human phenomenon. Working with the excellent collec-

tion of Katherine Coryton White (whose brief poetic note touching upon the theme of "Africa as a verb" reveals her to be a sympathetic and discerning collector), Professor Thompson, in the phrase of Walt Whitman, unleashes "aching, pent-up" energies so that, even if only by ever so little (for we have so far to go), he might cause some of the works in her collection to *stand* forth as culturally specific acts of being, acts ever in the processes of their culturally specific enactments: as flexions flexing, and as postures being held, according to the transcendent time of art. He achieves this remarkable illumination by way of wide and deep learning, and through a remarkable sensitivity employed always in the service of expanding our appropriate perception-in-experience of the work. He has learned—as Katherine White has also learned—that the African piece is not static, not merely a visual piece, but kinetic—a perpetual and perpetuating volumetric (in sculpture) configuration of the very processes of culturally enacting perceptions and values of being conscious-of. In such a view of the work, there is no informant as satisfactory as the work itself.

Professor Thompson begins his work in intellectual irony. His hidden premise is that truism at which many observers stop: the commonplace intelligence that when we transfer an African mask from the vital context of its own culture to the very different one of our own, removing it from the ecstasies of dance to the placidities of museum walls, we fail to "see" the mask as it was intended to be seen, which is to say, *in movement*. Thompson, however, sees that just so much and no more, while pointing us in the proper direction, merely brushes the real truth, namely, that there is a far more important sense in which African art is to be seen *sub specie* motion. So he sees that the cliché, rather than orienting us toward the critical aesthetic problem concerning the "reality" of the work of African sculpture, vulgarizes it by shifting the locus of the problem from the metaphysical and the existential to the merely visual (an ethnocentric fault, for in so doing we presume it to be the essence of the work).

Now it is self-evident that the various visual properties of the mask are not to be seen "properly" at rest. One thinks, for instance, of the gelede mask of the Yoruba, wall-mounted at fashionable eye level. From this perspective, the prognathic foreshortening of the mask, which, when one peers down upon the witness, achieves a visual believability, is lost when the mask is at the same level as the witness. (I must also note in passing a point I have not previously had the opportunity to make—an enactment in the subtler sense of *movement* to which we shall shortly come: namely, that those who so narrowly construe motion fail to see in this low placement of the facial features a more general African plastic motif. One observes this placement also among both the Ashanti—the akwaba—and the Mende—the Bundu helmet mask. In fact, this is an enactment of an infantile physiognomy, and therewith of a dynamic expressing the estate of being babe-like, essential in works creating the estate of

being desirous of babies or of their well-being.) The trouble with a cliché is not that it is well known and so perhaps tiresome but rather that under its compelling comfort we are deceived, thereby forfeiting richer understanding. Thus if we stopped to consider motion as no more than dancing the mask, we would miss profounder enacted states.

Thus Professor Thompson, transcending the obvious, is challenged to ascertain in what ways the motion of the African work might be subtler than, different from, and even more critical to appropriate encounter than our habitual perceptions of it might reveal. In this sense, the cover illustration of a cloth-radiating egungun dancer is most appropriate, establishing as it does the self-evident as point of departure, for it is perfectly clear that motion delivers the cloth panels into a vitality they could not have in a museum case. (Indeed, it is interesting to speculate in passing whether the general failure of the museum as an African institution—from small support, pilferage, decay—is not in some measure due to the fact that Western techniques and concepts used by the curators tend to rob the works of their motions, so that they are stilled or aborted. Certainly the motions of the rites and sacrifices necessary to keep it alive are wanting.) Professor Thompson therefore probes the African work only to discover that the verb Katherine White perceives is the copulative infinitive "to be." It is to an existential parsing of this infinitive that Thompson addresses his discourse; certainly it is to this aspect of a rich and complex book that I wish to address my remarks.

The Two Times of African Works

The African work exists in two times. The first time is that of the *piece seen* but not witnessed (much as we "see" it in a museum), the work subject to attenuation and decay. This is the time of the mask seen-as-danced and of the carved figure in procession; this is perceived time. The second time is that of *time witnessed*; now the particular is suspended and the work (carving, dance, musical performance, costume) prevails as myth, not irrespective of but mightily transcendent of the material particularity. There are, he writes, "two kinds of time, the real time of individual variation . . . and mythic time" (p. 43). The aesthetic problem is not first to show how to incarnate mythic time in "real" time, but rather to recognize simply that such is the case: that the work is misperceived if we witness it as a function of no more than "real" time. We might rather perceive the work as *act* in the ineffably slow time process of mythic *acting*.

In the reciprocal of relationship between these two times is fixed the African reality of time's lived passing, which we know in African sculpture (and other arts as well) as motion. Motion thus becomes a metaphor, one time's being enacted within another, distilling myth, in-

carinating it *in the process of being enacted*. So is it that in three-dimensional space the fourth dimension is made into presence (as in Christian rite the Word becomes flesh), abundant with the reality of living myth.

The chief lesson to be learned (if the reader will forgive the repetition of an important point) is that, because the art of Africa is ineluctably a time art, we ethnocentrically misconstrue it when we "see" it only spatially. Nor must we simplistically construe motion to be only the motion of the dance. Rather, we must discern how it is that the whole sculptural work before us incarnates motion as the very condition of its being—that the work of African art, after Katherine White, is a verb. In this connection, consider some of the topic-headings under which Professor Thompson approaches volumetric motion in his first chapter:

"Swing" every note and every color strong (most dancers in Africa step inside rhythms which are young and strong, and to this extent their bodies are generalized by vital rhythmic impulse.) . . . It is precisely an "attack impulse," in the staccato of handling solid and void, that distinguishes the "African-ness" of the Wum carved head from the north of the Cameroon Grasslands. . . .

Vital aliveness: playing the body parts with percussive strength. . . . Intensity in African color is paralleled by percussive attack in African musical and choreographic performance principles. . . . But the body parts are not only independently rhythmized and lent strength in African presentation, they are coherently realized within a larger dimension. The dynamic aspects are couched in a flexibly buoyant manner. . . .

Simultaneous suspending and preserving of the beat. . . . in some African styles art and music forms are enlivened by off-beat phrasing of the accents. . . . The regularity of striped patterning in Upper Volta weaving is sometimes spectacularly complicated by vibrant suspensions of expected placement of the patterns. . . .

The 'get-down quality': descending direction in melody, sculpture, dance. . . .

Multiple meter: dancing many drums. . . . [quoting Laura Bohannon, *Return to Laughter*] 'Duly she and the other senior women began my instruction: my hands and my feet were to keep time with the gongs, my hips with the first drum, my back and shoulders with the second.' [pp. 5–27, passim]

Thompson writes, "sculpture deepens motion by condensation of several actions into one" (p. xii). "Deepening" and "condensing" are to be seen as intensifiers in the conjugations of the existential infinitive. Further, "to be" predicatively inventories the existences of the world's things, states, and persons, attributing them with being—or at least with existence—or else denying them so much. Proposition after proposition heap together, constituting the experienced world. The heaped connectednesses of the world's phenomena exists

syndetically—through the assertion of simple copulative relationships. This is the way in which the world is in large measure known to us—as things causelessly, concatenatedly abutting one upon the other. Thus the accreted wholeness of the work prevails with the force of ancient familiarities, and so the work is a "condensation of various different actions into one."

What are deepened, condensed, and accreted into fullnesses are motions—predications of mythic time. We are not concerned with mere synesthesia here—in which one kind of sense phenomenon is interpreted in terms of the characteristics of another. We encounter here, Thompson tells us, the actual condensation and spatialization of time according to the infinite present of myth. The motions of art occur in deep, existential spaces in which time intrudes, pulsing being into them. These temporalities orchestrate the whole cultural work into that which the initiate properly perceives as a temporal collage—rather than after the fashion of the highly dialectical and resolutive musical dynamic to which we Westerners are most accustomed. (I draw the reader's attentions to the discussion under "Correct Entrance and Exit," pp. 19–21.)

Thompson's work is at base a poetics of time, and its key signature is executed in the additivity of relationships—at base, those between the general and the particular, the mythic and the "real."

. . . the real time of individual variation and the mythic time of choral enactment. . . . We guess at their mutual interpenetration each time the call-and-response form seems to appear. This overlap situation combines innovative calls (or innovative steps, of the leader) with tradition (the choral round, by definition blurring individuality). Solo-ensemble work, among the many things it seems to accomplish, is the presentation of the individual on the ground of custom. It is the very perception of real and mythic time. [p. 43]

This poetic obtains not only in sculpture, we see, but also in music and dance—and in dance not only in the respect Thompson indicates but also in the relationship between the upper and lower parts of the body, by means of which balletic and sculptural multimetricity is enacted: the legs flexing one beat, the shoulders thrusting a second, the head asserting a third.

The space-eventuating poetic, Thompson observes with great insight, is the motif of the serrated edge. In his last chapter, he makes a point of the saw-toothed edge of the egungun costume's cloth panels which whirl in the act of dance. These cloths "have power in themselves" (p. 219); elsewhere he cites A. M. Jones' observation that African music is like the "teeth of a rip saw" (p. 13). These two observations constitute a most important image. For it is to be seen as revealing the "pinked" edge of the seam that will not ravel, binding together the powerful fabrics of the immortal and the mortal, the general and the particular. Thus is the individual "sewn" to eternity—the gods and the ancestors. The reality of man's time

zigzags between two times and two worlds. Those who would trace lineal patterns in African experience must do so through apparent indirections. What we might perceive as lacunae in the beats which one lives (and so, we might conclude, "nonlineal") are but interstices where, interpositionally and in another time, the counter-beat eventuates. This motif is dramatically enlarged when we think of all the instances in figural sculpture in which the legs are treated as zigzags. Indeed, there is one famous Lega ivory figure in which the entire body (forward-thrust shoulders, swung pelvis, bent-knees) is abstracted into a zigzag continuum (this figure is sometimes called a "serpent," but I think this present reading more compelling).

Indeed, the pattern of two-dimension (or two-plane, two-time, two-phase) syndetism informs the work either with propriety of enactment, under which circumstance it enriches the work, or else with impropriety, in which event it impoverishes it: "The arrogant dancer . . . may find that he dances to drums and handclaps of decreasing strength and fervor"; one who "starts a tale without proper preparation or refinement will find the choral answering . . . progressively weaker." In visual art, "visual motif (e.g., of master and entourage—RPA) seems an analogue . . . to the musical and choreographic solo-chorus theme" (pp. 27–28).

These syndetically complementary movements, "percussively" brought to articulate one upon another, exist in a larger context of total organization which Thompson calls "attitude"—standing, sitting, riding, kneeling, supporting (as an offertory bowl) and balancing (e.g., the relationship between the halves of a Janus-figure). Professor Thompson here (as indeed elsewhere in his conceptualization) comes close to the formulation of affecting presence, for these postures are to be seen not as symbols but as incarnations—as presentations of various existential states. These he explores somewhat after the fashion of the phenomenologist, suspending the truism and discovering the inner power of the work. Of this series of illuminations, the one devoted to *standing* is the one I shall note:

To stand is to intervene in a decisive way, attesting the power to compensate for perturbation, to maintain balance. It is a form of strength which engages the whole of a person. It is different from a single species of immobilization, such as the fixing of an iron bar within the earth. Human standing is a mode of affect and expression. The way a person stands communicates personality and lived relation with the world. Emphasis upon this mode in sculpture introduces an icon of vitalized persistence. . . . Horizontal positions correlate with darkness and death. Standing thus embodies light and life; it is the stance of day, the time of morality . . . Witches and thieves generally travel by night. [p. 49]

Thus we commence a hermeneutical implosion into the universe of standing things and the modes of their standingful existence among the various other sorts of things that comprise the factitiously attitudinal world. We proceed through ancient myth-tales of Sundiata, the ancient emperor of Mali; past the standingfulness of twins, which stand "either to hear a prayer or to act" (p. 51) and whose standing "might be . . . defined as the stabilizing of bright inquiring eyes of divinity within the upright position of spiritual readiness" (p. 52); beyond the forests of mighty standing (Kongo nail fetishes) and the fantastic landscapes of standing spoons, harps, and altars (Yoruba opa Osanyin)—past all these, I repeat, to the conclusion:

Man contests, successfully, laws of mass and gravity, and thus establishes a cosmic principle of action. The quality is inherently heroic and rational, associated with the continuing presence of minds of chiefs and departed rulers. Standing images ideally are distinguished by an immortality-conferring, extra-temporal power that splendidly suggests a sphere of pure achievement. [p. 66]

But standing (and each of the other postural attitudes) is an enactment of vertical time, mythic time (the saw-toothed interpenetration of the mortal and the immortal is vertical time). Running at right-angle-complementarity to this—and aslant of it—is the horizontal world of death and witchcraft. This is mortal time, and every moment lived is an intersection of the two. This awesomely inevitable fact also defines a parsing point in the existential poetics of being-in-time. These enact the syndesis of real and mythic time. The vertical motion is the warp of our being human (mythic), the horizontal the weft of our particularity ("real"). Together they weave a cloth, serrated at the edge (how appropriate that the toothed edge seams against the immaterial space of nothingness), of whirling personhood. Thus they are complements in the time of our being. The warp is the long eternal, the continuities of life, the cultural . . . the verticals of the sun's light . . . the time of the gods and of our own rebirth; the warp is life's contingencies, the transitory, the vicissitudinous, ravelled up in texture and color. Together they shape a tapestry, as of people in dance—the primary metaphor of the existential of being in spaced-time.

Nigeria, Montol,
standing female,
wood, 12"



The Icon

While the poetics of time is of the greatest possible import to the study of art, persuading us to an *appropriate* view of the African work in particular (but also of all syndetic art and even of synthetic art in general), it is to the nature of the work itself that Professor Thompson devotes most of his attention. Still, he speaks not of the "work" as such but rather of the "icon," which, as we shall see, is a different sort of phenomenon. An icon is an act (one gleans from here and there, since no extended definition of icon is provided), an act that is the authoritative condensation of vital grace. This condensation is a syndetic configuration—or constellation—of things done (sculpture and costume) and of things happening (music and dance) (p. 117, *vide*). To these two categories we shall see that we ought also to add "attitudes assumed," "states achieved," and "cultural dynamics enacted."

I shall touch upon the several critical terms which occur in this collaged description of the icon:

- 1 The *manifestation* of an icon is an act in which things are copulatively predicated (syndetized) upon other things. These predications may be either between members of the same class ("things done" upon "things done," for example, as costume enriches mask through the metaphor of addition) or of different classes of things ("things done" upon "things happening," as mask and costume metaphorically enrich dance and music).
- 2 *Authoritative* suggests that factor of cultural consent and validation characteristic of the condition under which the work of art in any culture might be perpetuated as such.
- 3 *Vital grace* goes undefined in the text. Therefore I shall assume that "grace" means what it ordinarily denotes in Christian teaching; namely, that spiritual gift which leads to salvation. "Vital" is, of course, an inevitable energy when one confronts African aesthetic phenomena which tend to be established in terms of their immanent, subjectivizing powers rather than visual ones. "Vital grace," therefore, may be seen as the power incarnate within the icon which derives from the confluence of beneficent energies, and which, realized, redeems. Indeed, this vital grace may under some circumstances be construed to exercise the force of "cooling moral aphorisms" (p. 203), an inevitable eventuation, given the profound import of the values thus established in presentation.

Yet all these attributives fail to reveal what at base an icon *is*. It *is* poeticized motion, which is to say, motion that exists in the enactment of slow, mythic time—either (we have learned) corporeal (vertical or horizontal, and in various rhythms) or attitudinal. We know that icon is not equivalent to "work" because Professor Thompson writes of attitude (sitting, riding, etc.) as "postural" icons (p. 112), an assertion that tends to modify our notion of the icon in such a way as to cause us to see that the icon's authority derives from certain mythic movements (movements of mythic time) incarnated. These are general African energies that may move independently among works

and cultures, and they too may syndetically accrete within a work—thus a sculptural array may have all these postural icons present, either flanking or surmounting one another. Thus postural icons are no less real than “ephebeism,” “mid-plane mimesis,” “percussive attack,” or, for that matter, than ancestors, divinatory instruments, flexed knees, hornedness, or horizontal masks. Whether one wishes to argue from the wide distribution of such icons the existence of a strongly Africanized version of the collective unconscious or, alternatively, to think in historical terms is a matter of individual preference that has little to do with the present discussion.

Icon, in brief, seems not to be precisely the same sort of phenomenon I have in mind when I write of “work of affecting presence,” which is, rather, an iconic complex. *Icon* seems rather to denominate aesthemic motifs of marked, immanent power which constellate into works as culturally validated concatenations. Icons exist primarily in the aesthetic of invocation—a syndetic aesthetic—rather than in the aesthetic of perception.

If there are both motional and postural icons which travel independently from one African culture to another, syndetically accreting into aesthetic traditions, one might wonder why it is that other dynamics which are also so characterized ought not to be thought icons as well. Thus we might see (in addition to the corporeal and attitudinal icons I have already mentioned) thematic icons (e.g., witchcraft), substantive icons (e.g., ancestors), stylistic icons (“cool,” percussive), and processive icons (syndetism, “suspending and preserving the beat,” etc.).

I wish to take this discussion of the iconic one step further, hoping Professor Thompson will forgive me, for one reads and merely “reviews” only the ordinary book; a good book one co-thinks. Thus my variations upon his themes are intended to compliment—and perhaps to complement as well. Icon, he says, is act; act, we see, is motion; and motion (we note especially in his excursion into masking and dancing in his last chapter) is performance. Performance, in its turn, is on the one hand enactment—as when dancer enacts gelede (antiwitchcraft) or egungun (ancestors) masks—and on the other invocation; sometimes, syndetically, it is both. In this latter sense of invocation, performance escapes the boundaries of particularity and becomes released into mythic time. Invocation is bent knees and thrust shoulders; it is dancing; it is also the summoning of the piece into presence through sacrifice, cosmetics, praise-names, music, costume, personality displacement—the *toute ensemble*. We thus, I believe, perceive here another and quintessential African icon (indeed, is it not an icon of much of man’s art, the world over?)—the icon of invocation itself.

Invocation is metaphor. It posits the immortal upon the mortal—the timeless upon the temporal, the temporal upon the spatial. For the metaphoric is of necessity the bondage (in a culture of synthesis) or the linkage (in a syndetic culture) of two or more sources of power. The icon of invocation is a temporal icon, for the urgency of the syndetic work is to become time just as the urgency

of the synthetic one is to become space (a mask in invocation transfiguring versus a Monet in a gallery—or a Berlioz in a music hall—making architectures in the eye and in the ear). Thus, wherever one seeks his point of departure in inquiry, he is bound to end up facing *time*. “Tiv multi-metric dancing restores music to muscular notation in which ‘notes’ are written in flesh . . .” (p. 16). Space is a distillation of time in the arts of sub-Saharan Africa, and the icon is the spatial distillate mythicized. The drum’s soul is its sound. Beating, it is soul metaphorized upon body. If one studies the body of space deeply, therefore, one cuts to the quick where the blood of time wells. What we approach with Professor Thompson are the premetaphoric fonts—the icons—of power under which time-beating and time-living root the experienced world.

Patrick R. McNaughton. *Secret Sculptures of Komo: Art and Power in Bamana (Bambara) Initiation Associations. Working Papers in the Traditional Arts: 4 ISHI, 1979.* 56 pp., 1 map, 12 black-and-white illustrations. \$3.95.

Reviewed by Jean M. Borgatti
Boston University

In an authoritative study of Komo and its associated sculpture, Patrick McNaughton indicates that the Komo mask, fraught with ambiguous visual references, remains the least understood of Bamana art forms, its manufacture and use shrouded in secrecy. The mask, an accumulation of animal and vegetal materials around a carved wooden core, functions as an instrument of divination and justice. It is worn by a high-ranking Komo association official—a sculptor-smith by right of birth and often the maker of the mask—who has spent the greater part of his life developing the capability to dance the mask and harness its energy on behalf of the community.

The study is divided into two main sections: the context of the sculpture, focusing on Bamana initiation associations, and the sculpture of the Komo association specifically, with emphasis resting on the mask, its construction, symbolism, and aesthetic. The author begins with a clear description of the initiation associations and a brief review of the literature, which attempts to rationalize the

discrepancies in the data reported by Monteil and Tauxier writing in the first decades of this century, the Griaule school of anthropologists active in the 1940s and 1950s, and the independent French scholar, D. Zahan, whose most recent publication on Bamana religion appeared in 1974. Both description and review are most valuable for the non-Bamana specialist who seeks to use Bamana cultural data in other contexts.

Within the group of initiation associations maintained by the Bamana, McNaughton distinguishes four—Nya, Nama, Kono, and Komo—on the basis of their members' possession and use of power. The power associations utilize sculpture as tools, the types differing in both form and meaning from that sculpture used by other initiation associations and deriving its impact from a transgression of Bamana aesthetic canons. Significantly, sculpture falls into the generic category covering all constructions of supernatural import and includes the vaguely animal-shaped accumulative sculpture called Boli(w), horns which carry charged materials, and masks with costumes. The author reviews the sculptural forms of each association, subject to the limitations of the data, and looks at the structure, function, and distribution of the power societies—commenting specifically on their overlapping functions—as a background for his consideration of the Komo association.

Komo has the largest membership and the most complex structure of the four power associations. It is widely distributed among the Bamana and others in Mali and elsewhere under the name of Komo, and it further bears structural similarities to the comprehensive and pervasive initiation societies among the Senufo and a number of peripheral Mande groups. The long history implied by its distribution is reinforced by oral traditions which suggest that it predates Sunjata, the Mandinka leader who founded the Mali empire in A.D. 1230. The association's structure, the hierarchy of its leadership, the patterns of membership, its functions and associated ceremonial, and its penetration into community life are detailed by the author as a preface to his examining Komo sculpture.

Komo sculpture is multimedia in construction and based on the belief that materials can be orchestrated via secret techniques of assemblage to generate energy. McNaughton discusses the concepts which underlie Komo sculpture—knowledge, power/energy, and darkness—to explicate the forms. He suggests that Komo masks in particular embody as well as portray the concept of power and proceeds to do an exegesis of the mask in terms of Bamana beliefs, discussing the significance of horns, birds, hyenas, and the notions of "mouth" and "speech" specifically. He interprets the image as one of generalized animality—potent, dangerous, and evasive—and controlled energy created for the Bamana by "discordant organic elements assembled in a

body of visual non-sequiturs" (p. 35). The author utilizes performance structure, drawing on elements of ritual, drama, song, and dance as well as oral tradition to support his interpretation.

Of particular interest to the readers of this journal is McNaughton's discussion placing Komo masks in the context of other Bamana sculpture and Bamana aesthetics. He notes that the Bamana value clarity, purity, straightforwardness, and discernability. Classic Bamana sculpture reflects these values in the rendition of forms as geometric elements, in balanced and harmonious composition, in vertical orientation, and in the crisp shapes and clear volumes which lend monumentality to the smallest sculpture. In Bamana terms, to be a good sculptor is to convey what is essential about a subject, to exercise the greatest economy of means. Decoration for its own sake or excessive decoration is described by the word "commerce"—and it is interesting to note that excessive decoration is a key feature of Bamana sculpture made for sale to tourists.

Excess is the key to Komo masquerade sculpture as well, for Komo sculpture constitutes a deliberate transgression of the aesthetic canons for expressive purposes. The aesthetic of Komo is linked to power; power takes on a visual form as the sculptural form becomes increasingly obscured by the addition of animal and vegetal elements over time.

These masks convey cross-culturally a message of danger in their bristling forms and coated surfaces which resist casual handling. In providing us with an excellent study of Komo masks in context, Patrick McNaughton adds both depth and cultural credence to our Western response.

I would like to conclude with a comment about the reproduction of images in the working paper series. Good illustrations are essential in the discussion of artworks. Illustrations here are poorly reproduced, unnecessarily it seems, since other organizations offer comparable series at the same prices as the working papers and still provide excellent photographic reproduction (UCLA's Museum of Cultural History pamphlet series, for example). A better solution to what is a technical problem would improve the series considerably.

Germaine Greer. *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work.* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979. 373 pp. \$25.00.

Anthea Callen. *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement.* New York: Pantheon, 1979. 232 pp. \$10.95.

Mirra Bank. *Anonymous Was a Woman.* New York: St. Martin's, 1979. 128 pp. \$9.95.

Review Essay by Judith E. Stein

In February 1875 the author of a short article on women artists began by noting: "It is still, we believe, an open question with a good many intellectual people whether women can be artists at all, unless in a few exceptional cases." One hundred years later, in the enlightened age of the feminist movement, this once popular opinion has by no means disappeared. Indeed, we may even be denied our few exceptions: The 1977 edition of H. W. Janson's standard *History of Art* mentions not one woman artist in its lengthy chronicle of 5,000 years of art. To counter such retardataire attitudes, growing numbers of feminist art historians have been addressing themselves to the open question of women artists.

Linda Nochlin's pioneering essay, with the tongue-in-cheek title "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" (1971), provided an answer by exposing the underlying bias of the question. The inquiry about great women artists is like the issue of great Eskimo tennis players: the answer is not to be found in genetic potential but in social history. In her recent book, *The Obstacle Race*, feminist theorist Germaine Greer eschews what she terms the "philistine" issue of greatness and instead chooses to answer such questions as what is the contribution of women to the visual arts? If there were any women artists, why were there not more? If we can find one good painting by a woman, where is the rest of her work? How good were the women who earned a living by painting?

From the onset, Germaine Greer sets her answers to these questions within the context of the new sociology of art:

The intention is to show women artists not as a string of over-rated individuals but as members of a group having much in common, tormented by the same conflicts of motivation and the same practical difficulties, the obstacles both external and surmountable, internal and insurmountable of the race for achievement.

To demonstrate her thesis that women artists have more in common in their minority status as women in Western society than in their minority affiliation as artists, Greer imposes a unique principle of organization on her material. Under the heading "The Obstacles," the first half of the book presents evidence of commonality in the areas of family, love, the illusion of success, humiliation, dimension, primitivism, and the disappearing oeuvre. While we gain a strong sense of recurring injustice from this format, we lose the gestalt of many careers.

This is less true in the second half, entitled "How They Ran," in which Greer discusses the genres of Western art most accessible to women: still life, flower painting, and portraiture. In chronological sequence she traces the contributions of women artists from the medieval cloister to the nineteenth century. One special chapter, "The Magnificent Exception," is devoted to luminary Artemisia Gentileschi, and another treats the modern phenomenon of amateurism, which was particularly applicable to women of the leisure class who were prohibited from undertaking professional careers. Following her goal to "re-people the historical artscape," Greer periodically packs in virtual lists of women about whom little is known beyond their names. This evidence makes for tedious going and more properly fits the context of a biographical dictionary, Greer's original conception for her book. In the present format, we pass from these lifeless inventories to energetic and often brilliant passages of descriptive prose, sparkling with a lush and patrician vocabulary.

During the decade it took Greer to research and write her text, many excellent art historical studies were published, the most rigorous and complete to date being Linda Nochlin's and Ann Sutherland Harris's *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (1976). Her debt to this scholarly exhibition catalog is clear and acknowledged. Not an art historian by training (her doctorate was in literature), Greer is nonetheless a thoughtful scholar whose ample footnotes refer to hard-to-locate primary sources as well as to recent feminist-periodical articles. Readers interested in iconographic problems will miss mention of such innovative studies on the subjects chosen by women artists as Robert Rosenblum's "The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism" (1957), which discussed the theme of Dibutade, the legendary female inventor of drawing (to whom Greer refers as "Kora").

Many black-and-white photographs and several fine color reproductions document *The Obstacle Race*. Yet except for the grouped color plates, there are no references within the text itself to figure numbers. Thus the reader never knows, while in the midst of a description of a particular painting, whether it will be reproduced at the turning of a page or not at all. Information contained in the idiosyncratic captions is in no way consistent: a uniform system of dating, even a most general "circa" or "flourished" together with the present location of the work, would have helped us to better coordinate text with illustration.

Although Greer states at the beginning her desire "to avoid duplicating information which may easily be come by in other places," it is occasionally unclear why certain data are missing. Except in the wording of the book's subtitle, "The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work," she offers no explanation for her exclusion of sculptors, unlike Nochlin and Harris. Yet she included a discussion of Properzia de' Rossi's *Crucifixion*, which was sculpted on a cherrystone. An important aspect of the sociology of women artists is thus neglected by her exclusion of that stellar group of women sculptors, termed "The White Marmorean Flock" by Henry James, which flourished in Rome in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹

The inclusion of some material—omitted because it was no doubt unfamiliar to Greer—would have served to strengthen her thesis of the commonality of women's experiences. To the case of Rosa Bonheur's nurturing family, we can add that of Cecilia Beaux'; to the examples of Paula Modersohn-Becker and Ida Nettleship, who died of childbirth complications, we can add the sad case of Louisa May Alcott's artist sister, May Alcott Niericker; and to Greer's recitation of nineteenth-century professors who married their younger art students, we can name the well-known academic painter William Bouguereau and his longtime romance with and marriage to Yankee Elizabeth Gardner. Indeed Gardner is another example, to supplement Greer's mention of Rosa Bonheur's donning of cross-sexual clothes, of a woman who chose to dress as a man in order to gain entrance to a Paris art school in the 1860s, when women were not accepted as students.

As a feminist theorist, Greer has liberated herself from many of the received values of the history of art. We benefit specifically by her inclusion of folk art, a subject not normally included in art historical surveys. In her chapter entitled "Primitivism" she offers a cogent feminist analysis of women's high visibility in the diverse folk genres of the art of eccentrics, religious visionaries, and the mentally ill. After musing about "what female genius might be like if it could emancipate itself from the cultural institutions of men" (which is what folk art does as a result of genuine ignorance or indifference), she observes a special correlation between women's socialized personalities and the form of much naïve and *faux-naïf* art. For Greer, women demonstrate the "timidity of oppressed peoples," as a result of subjection to a lifetime of enforced infanthood.

Her arguments are less incisive when, within the same chapter, she discusses "the enduring archaism" and the "arch-conservatism" of women's art work in general. Although her insight that "it comes of the very insecurity that these women felt upon entering into competition with the men who seemed to have made all the running so far" is relevant, she neglects to consider the whole issue of deviance. By definition, a professional woman artist was a social deviant, regardless of how she was admired for being one. Thus if her very life's activity broke with ex-

pected behavior norms, a woman artist would hardly be tempted to go further against the grain and adopt or evolve a painting style at radical odds with prevailing taste.

Tucked here and there in several chapters is evidence of two of the special problems attending women artists: we can call one the "Since it's not important let the women handle it" attitude and the other, the recurring "It's now too important to be left to the women" syndrome. For example, one can argue that women artists are abundantly represented in various folk genres because they are not tied to the vagaries of the high-art marketplace, with its systems of patronage and commissions. Free of official support, women were also free of the active forces of discrimination and suppression. That we can infer societal values from the presence or absence of women working in a particular area Greer attributes to the following kind of explanation:

The absence of good English female portraitists at the time when France was producing a group of brilliant women in the field is simply that in England portrait painting was not a secondary medium. . . . Women portraitists in England were competing for room at the top.

A corollary to the high percentage of women in the traditional "minor" and low-prestige arts is the situation of an entirely new field. Media in their earliest stages of development were frequently pioneered by women. Only when the field caught on were women pushed aside. As Greer noted in relation to still life painting: "The conspicuous activities of the [women] pioneers were buried in the explosion of the baroque still life; nevertheless women continued to work, if less independently than before."

In the twentieth century, there is often near-parity in the gender of the artists who introduce new media. This is true today in the areas of holography, project and performance art, and video. Yet as soon as any one of these media begins to be viewed as more significant and essential, and no longer tangential to the mainstream, we will see the percentage of women working and exhibiting drop, given the past experience in some of the analogous situations described by Greer.

Leaps of descriptive fancy, arguable psychoanalytic interpretations, and the periodic slight of relevant material make *The Obstacle Race* an idiosyncratic piece of scholarship. Yet it is a provocative treatise on the history of women artists by a generalist who amassed little-known material from her own scholarly gumshoe work and from a multitude of secondary sources. Most of its value lies in its appeal to a broad readership curious to investigate the most recent project of a well-known feminist. Greer's impassioned presentation is already sparking discussions of feminism and art history in quarters that the less controversial Nochlin and Harris catalog never reached.²

Another significant work of recent feminist art history is Anthea Callen's *Women Artists of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (1979). If Greer's scholarly ire was roused to muster whole armies of women to combat public ignorance and misunderstanding, then Callen's was prompted to focus on one period and issue. Better organized than Greer's, Callen's study of British and American craftswomen from 1870 to 1914 is a richly researched response to the sexist attitudes inherited by the nineteenth century, which held both women and the decorative or minor arts in similar low esteem.

The recounting of these still viable stereotypes is offered within the context of the nineteenth-century revival of interest in handicrafts. Repugnance toward the mechanized aesthetics of the Industrial Revolution had set in early in Great Britain. Philosophers like Carlyle and Ruskin looked back with admiration to the medieval period when each craftsman took pride in designing, executing, and selling his own work. William Morris, the best-known exponent of what came to be called the Arts and Crafts Movement, is responsible for the popularization of these largely socialist ideals. The split in socialist thinking, in which concern for the worker was divorced from an awareness of the subjugation of women, has, in Callen's view, never been resolved. Thus many of the craftswomen in her study felt an abiding sense of "otherness" in the literal brotherhood of art.

As Callen shows, this enlightened movement, which brought us Morris chairs, Liberty silks, and Doulton pottery, never focused its social conscience on the debilitating restrictions on women's lives. With few exceptions, it perpetuated the traditionally rigid sexual division of labor. Even in the areas normally viewed as women's work, such as embroidery, the high-status job of designing was often the sole prerogative of men. Females fortunate enough to be employed in the arts were relegated to the most menial of tasks, and in Callen's analysis, "rarely reached a sufficiently elevated position in the hierarchy to receive recognition for their work," a situation which reinforced a prevailing prejudice that "men can create, women only appreciate."

"Superfluous women," or those hapless females who failed to be supported by fathers or husbands, were a source of embarrassment to the Victorians, horrified by the thought of middle- and upper-class women earning independent wages. Reluctantly they acknowledged the grim truth that without any vocational training, destitute women or "decayed gentlewomen" had few means other than prostitution with which to earn a livelihood. Yet so widespread was the fear that trained women would push men out of jobs, that an early British class in China Painting (thought particularly suitable for women) tried to handicap the women students by not permitting them to use armrests, as the men did.

Callen's excellent account of the founding and manipulated floundering of the British Female School of Design is a horror story of thwarted intention and cruel suppression of opportunities for women's vocational training.³ Or,

for another cautionary tale, consider the case of the feminist bookbinder L. M. Wilkinson in the 1890s. In a classic Catch-22 situation, classes in bookbinding at the Central School of Arts and Crafts were open only to those already employed in the trade. But while classes were not specifically closed to women, Wilkinson was effectively barred from the necessary training because no women were then employed in the trade.

In chapters devoted to the crafts of ceramics, embroidery and needlework, lacemaking, jewelry and metalwork, woodcarving, furniture and interior design, and hand-printing, bookbinding, and illustration, Callen investigates the numerous examples of women who worked despite (and occasionally because of) the restrictive stereotypes for appropriate gender and class behavior. For example, rural working-class women were encouraged in cottage crafts by middle- and upper-class ladies whose management of the philanthropic craft organizations afforded them new opportunities for power and fame. Given such a clear understanding of the roadblocks, we follow with great attention Callen's unfolding of the careers of such successful artists as May Morris, Margaret Macdonald, Candace Wheeler, and Kate Greenaway.

Obscurity and anonymity are manipulated phenomena of history. Callen shows that, like May Morris of the Morris clan, many of the women who were in the vanguard of the movement and who achieved widespread acclaim during their lifetimes are not mentioned in recent histories of the period. Important exceptions are the Americans Louise McLaughlin, founder of the Cincinnati Pottery Club, and Maria Nichols, founder of Rookwood Pottery, who have received sustained attention as the pioneers of the American art pottery industry.⁴

It's a good bet that your first examination of Callen's book will take the form of a leisurely browse, looking at the pictures and reading the richly informative captions, before settling into the text. Not only are we given plentiful images of the craft objects themselves, but whenever possible Callen reproduces portraits of the artists and views of studio interiors.

Excellent picture research is also the hallmark of Mirra Bank's recent book, *Anonymous Was a Woman*. Luscious color photographs of samplers, quilts, and needle pictures make this a glorious album; we move slowly through it as if at the elbow of the author, who shares her collection, one beautiful piece at a time. Filmmaker Banks has worked on the book's layout as carefully as she had organized her film of the same name which preceded it.

As in the movie she did for NET, Banks uses a patchwork of such published and archival sources as sermons, diaries, and letters as a foil for the visual images. Apart from a brief introduction, there is no text per se. Excerpts of didactic literature, offering vintage definitions of "true womanhood," are interspersed with pictures in the four chapters reflecting the life cycle divisions of childhood, marriage, family, and death.

Interest in folk art in general and women's crafts in particular has been increasing in the last decade. Feminists searching for a womanly heritage have come to the decorative arts and found an ancient and continuing tradition of women's handiwork. New York's Museum of American Folk Art last year organized an excellent display of folk art by American women called *Artists in Aprons*. Readers interested in a scholarly text and extensive bibliography should first consult that exhibition catalog before turning to Bank's work, which has minimal references (Dewhurst and MacDowells 1979).

Anonymous Was a Woman permits brief glimpses of vivid personalities, not all of whom are anonymous. There are the colorful watercolors by Mary Ann Willson, the original artist on whom Isabel Miller based her novel on early American lesbianism, *Patience and Sarah*; the dramatic quilts designed and executed by former slave Harriet Powers; and the clear vision of Shaker Hannah Cohoon's Spirit Drawing of a basket of apples.

The persistence of opinions holding that women are inherently incapable of creating art of significance have sparked the three authors under review into action. To alter these abiding prejudices they have taken many interdisciplinary tacks. To help explain the dearth of known artists in one-half of the population they have strayed into social history, anathema to the conservative discipline of art history. Of necessity feminist art historians turn to sociology to document the history of prejudice, discrimination, and suppression which accompanied the careers of even the most successful women artists.

Feminists bring a fresh vision to the definition of historical "significance." In refusing to accept the received hierarchical values which enshrine easel painting at the top of the list of subjects worthy of study, they mine the decorative arts and encounter a remarkable wealth of material to substantially enrich our general knowledge of the history of art. Too, they illuminate the sexist bias of much connoisseurship which has traditionally attributed "strong" unsigned work to the men under study and the "weak" to the women.

Yet it is not only overt sexism which has worked against the inclusion of women artists in our standard art history texts. For example, changing definitions of good taste have only recently validated the study of nineteenth-century academic painting, a field rich in previously unstudied artists, many of whom were women. Greer's concluding remarks, a public call for greater knowledge of the contributions of women artists and a plea for this new awareness to be manifested in higher market prices for women's art, sound the proper note of action for the general reader interested in ameliorating past injustices:

It is to our advantage to become the women artists' audience, not in a foolishly partisan way so that anything a woman does is good in our eyes, but to offer the kind of constructive criticism and financial, intellectual and emotional support that men have given the artists in the past.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, the essay by William H. Gerdts, "The White Marmorean Flock," in catalog of exhibition, April 4-30, 1972, Vassar College Art Gallery, Poughkeepsie, New York.
- 2 It has not been uncommon for Greer's reviewers to tackle one another while themselves discussing her book: Hilton Kramer's "Does Feminism Conflict with Artistic Standards?" *Sunday New York Times*, 28 January 1980 drew the immediate response "Kramer vs. Women," from critic John Perreault in *The Soho Weekly News* 31 January 1980; Brigid Brophy's vitriolic review, "The One-Eyed World of Germaine Greer," *The London Review of Books* (reprinted in the *New York Review of Books* 6 December 1979) has drawn response from several quarters, among them Jane Marcus's in her review "Their Signatures Were Painted Over," for *In These Times*, January 16-22, 1980. Joining the connected train of Marcus and Brophy tugging at Greer's stubborn turnip, Maureen Mullarkey wrote, "Obstacle Race is a hard book to swallow," *In These Times*, March 12-25, 1980, p. 22. The end is not yet in sight.
- 3 Such was not the case with the American equivalent of this British model, which Callen did not investigate as thoroughly. As I demonstrate in my unpublished study, "The Genesis of the Philadelphia School of Design for Women," the American school's early success was assured when the enlightened self-interest of Philadelphia's philanthropic industrialists coincided with founder Sarah Peter's high-minded intentions for morally elevating careers and practical job training for needy young women. The school survives today as Moore College of Art, still devoted to women's art education.
- 4 See, for example, Robert Judson Clark, ed., *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America 1876-1916* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) and *The Ladies, God Bless Them* (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Museum of Art, 1976).

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James Beck. *Leonardo's Rules of Painting: An Unconventional Approach to Modern Art.* New York: Viking, 1979. 104 pp., illustrations. \$10.95.

Reviewed by Dona Schwartz
University of Pennsylvania

In the first paragraph of the preface to his book Professor Beck reveals his intention:

Leonardo da Vinci's ideas about painting have significance for modern and contemporary art, although the statement may seem improbable. My purpose in this book is to demonstrate the connection by selecting a number of Leonardo's statements about art and setting them beside paintings and drawings by modern artists. The juxtapositions, which essentially speak for themselves, confirm for me the premise that the observations Leonardo made at the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth have relevance and validity today.

The volume, however, is not primarily about Leonardo's art theory. Instead it points to a broader topic of interest to those concerned with visual communication. As Beck's argument unfolds, the reader can discern a range of problems which the painter must solve as he translates three-dimensional reality into two-dimensional representation. The book demonstrates the historical continuity of these problems and the evolution of pictorial solutions.

In the introduction Beck briefly characterizes Leonardo and places him in historical context. Those who influenced Leonardo, his "intellectual sources," are suggested, and Leonardo's own sphere of influence is sketched, particularly with regard to three other Renaissance luminaries: Giorgione, Raphael, and Michelangelo. According to Beck's thesis, Leonardo's work, both painted and written, continues to influence painters. Obvious visual references to Leonardo's art made by modern painters are cited as partial evidence. The author notes that the direct influence of Leonardo's *ideas* is "less easy to ascertain" (p. 23), although this is to be the thrust of his argument. Each chapter focuses upon a topic of concern to picture makers. Beck presents Leonardo's views and his advice to painters, and the juxtapositions follow, providing the link between Leonardo and the modern era. In general one set of juxtapositions consists of a quotation from Leonardo which addresses a topic broached in the text, one sketch by Leonardo, and one or two modern drawings or paintings.

At the outset Beck discusses "creative invention," the means and conditions by which the artist is inspired. Here we find that Leonardo has suggested a method for stimulating the imagination: the artist is to contemplate stained walls, clouds, and the like, discovering therein missing or problematic components of pictorial compositions. The idea is not novel. Beck notes references made by Pliny (concerning Protogenes) and by Botticelli to similar practices. This method is contrasted with the more traditional approach in which the artist (exemplified by Michelangelo) has "the final compositional entity in mind from the start" (p. 30). One wonders whether Professor Beck wishes to exclude Leonardo from the latter approach to pictorial conceptualization, if indeed the two are separate. Leonardo's views concerning the working conditions of the painter are presented here as well. A question is posed: In which situation is the artist more productive—working alone or in the company of others? We encounter no conclusive answer. Beck quotes responses recommending both. We do learn that Leonardo's advice instructing painters to work among others may derive from suggestions made by Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise *On Painting*, which in turn draws upon the work of Pliny the Elder.

Painters continue to contemplate the picture-making process, as Beck demonstrates visually in two of the more intriguing juxtapositions. Paired with Leonardo's statement that the artist must work alone, we find Édouard Vuillard's *Self-Portrait of the Artist in His Studio*. The painting is private, introspective: the painter, seen reflected in a mirror, studies himself as he works. On the opposite page, Picasso's version of Velazquez' *Las Meninas* appears with a quotation suggesting that artists work in the company of others. This image has significance, reminding us that artists *a/ways* work with others because each new picture issues from a tradition of image making. As a painter works, he is accompanied by all the painters who precede him; they serve as his "reference group."

Other chapters touch upon specific problems that painters must address: how to portray the human figure, what subjects are appropriate to represent, and how color and perspective are used to depict nature accurately. The juxtapositions enable us to compare the array of solutions which the history of art affords us. We find Matisse's study of figures in motion, *Dance*, accompanied by a Leonardo sketch of the twisting torso of a man; a van Gogh landscape neighboring one by Dali; a Leonardo sketch of a battle scene adjacent to Picasso's *Guernica*. Readers discover a dynamic expansion of the artist's pictorial vocabulary.

Even though Beck has chosen to spotlight Leonardo, emphasizing his legacy, the reader must see Leonardo as one in a procession of artistic inventors. Readers can readily accept Beck's thesis because Leonardo's observations emanated from an artistic tradition within which painters continue to operate. Leonardo's advice has relevance today because the problems which concerned him

are fundamental to picture making. Beck's volume seems most meaningful when we consider Leonardo as a point of entry, leading us to a broader subject, the evolution of pictorial language.

A final point remains. Beck attempts to argue his thesis by visual means. However, no consistent principle structuring the presentation of the juxtapositions is presented. The illustrations enhance the text; often they vividly illuminate points made elsewhere verbally. But the juxtapositions do not demonstrate Beck's premise because he has not made them do so. An argument presented visually demands the same attention to structure as one presented verbally. Beck has failed his audience in this respect.



Donald Spoto. *The Art of Alfred Hitchcock: Fifty Years of His Motion Pictures.* New York: Doubleday, 1979. 523 pp. + xv illustrations. \$8.95.

Reviewed by Paul Messaris
University of Pennsylvania

Aside from descriptions of the physical appearance of performers, the writing of many film critics rarely contains any evidence that the medium they are dealing with has a visual component. With most commercial movies, this critical blindness is of little consequence, since camerawork and editing are typically nothing more than devices for recording performances. The movies of Alfred Hitchcock, however, are so prominent an exception to this rule that any book about them which is at all discerning is bound to be of interest to an audience concerned with the specific characteristics of the visual mode of communication. Donald Spoto's analysis of Hitchcock's films is more than simply adequate in this respect, and the recent appearance of his book in paperback is a good opportunity for readers whose primary interest may not be in film itself to become acquainted with his writing.

The Art of Alfred Hitchcock is a chronologically arranged analysis of almost every one of Hitchcock's more than fifty theatrical motion pictures. Although there is no overview of Hitchcock's work apart from these discussions of individual films, cross-referencing abounds throughout the text, and the reader is treated to detailed expositions of the development of various Hitchcockian devices or "themes"—such as Hitchcock's almost obsessive repetition, over a series of many films, of the association between birds and chaos which finally erupted into feature length in *The Birds*. Throughout the book, Spoto's discussion of the films is intelligent, appropriately eru-

dite, and in impeccable taste. Most important—from the perspective of this review—there is evidence throughout the book of analysis based on repeated close viewing of the films, and in these passages the reader is confronted with illuminating examples of the working of visual intelligence—both the filmmaker's and the critic's.

A good example of the nature of Spoto's concern with visuals is his practice of tracing the use of a single device over the course of a film's entire structure. He does this with image brightness, in the case of the black-and-white film *Rebecca*, for instance, in which the progression in the heroine's emotional condition is carefully matched by changes in lighting, the color of costumes, and so on. In the case of *Rope*, Hitchcock's celebrated experiment in no-cut cinematography, Spoto notes that the film's sense of increasing "psychic" confinement and isolation is accompanied by corresponding reductions in the sweep and speed of camera movement. Camera movement is also a prominent subject in Spoto's very long analysis of *Vertigo*, his favorite Hitchcock film. He points out that, for example, the direction of movements in this film's second half reverses the directions of the first half, as the motive force behind the film's events reverses direction. Spoto also lists in detail the impressive variety of visual manifestations which Hitchcock was able to give to the film's central metaphoric image of the spiral: It appears, according to Spoto, in various aspects of *Vertigo* such as camera movements, the apparent direction of action in the camera frame, and architectural forms.

As these examples may make clear, what matters to Spoto in a film's visuals is rarely the presence of pretty pictures—and the same goes for Hitchcock. In fact, Spoto convincingly demonstrates that one of Hitchcock's prettiest sequences is actually a satire on that kind of filmmaking: It occurs in *I Confess*, in an overly gorgeous flashback of reminiscences by a character who would be expected to think of the past in lushly overdone images. Even in the case of authentically exquisite visuals, such as the overhead shot in *Topaz* in which a collapsing woman's long gown spreads out about her body like an opening flower, Spoto is careful to point out the narrative integrity of the image—in this case, its emphasis on the fact that the woman, doomed to die, has been spared the disfiguring tortures which accompanied the deaths of her comrades. In fact, there are times when Spoto may seem to be trying a little too hard to fit one or another feature of the film's visual devices into an integrated, rationalized pattern. This is particularly true of some of his claims about Hitchcock's colors; for example, he maintains that the on-screen presence of red objects, such as clothes, books, and flowers, in *Torn Curtain* is a deliberate suggestion of the fires of hell, with which the film's heroes are faced behind the Iron Curtain. In fairness to Spoto, however, it should be said that there is abundant support, in accounts of Hitchcock's working methods as well as in the films themselves, for this kind of assumption about

total deliberation and control. For example, in an interview with Spoto, Tippi Hedren, star of *The Birds*, points out that in planning that film Hitchcock had used charts of rising and falling action, to regulate tension and avoid predictability.

In general, then, Spoto's book is a good example of meticulous visual analysis in response to deserving cinematic material, and in this respect it is relatively unusual as film criticism goes. Spoto is not completely free, however, of all the typical weaknesses of the "serious" critic. The one of which he shows symptoms at times is the undue emphasis on broad thematic interpretation at the expense of attention to the mode of narration itself. What this means is that high-level metaphorical interpretations—like the ones in most of the examples cited here—consistently squeeze out the possibilities of dissecting Hitchcock's method of presenting to the audience the film's actions, in their literal sense. This overemphasis on Spoto's part is a pity: As Hitchcock himself demonstrates in the extended interviews in François Truffaut's *Hitchcock*, what makes his films an endless source of fascination for the careful viewer is not simply the masterful orchestration of thematic vehicles. It is also the extraordinary care lavished on such problems as—in *Psycho*—how to go into an overhead shot without signaling to the audience that the murderer's face and identity are thus being concealed. This kind of analysis is just as important as that of visual metaphors in leading viewers to a better understanding of the conventional expectations about form and meaning held by Hollywood's filmmakers and audiences.

To point out his relative lack of attention to such narrative devices is not to demean or derogate Spoto, however. In terms of his own aims, the author's book is flawless. In fact, the exemplary analysis of visual metaphor emphasized in this review is only one part of the very rich and many-layered immersion into Hitchcock's artistry that Spoto's book makes possible for the reader. Spoto himself hopes that his book will become a compelling impetus to see Hitchcock's films again. It is, in this reviewer's estimate, and provides, in addition, an important new key to their appreciation.

Henry B. Collins, Frederica de Laguna, Edmund Carpenter, and Peter Stone. *The Far North: 2000 Years of American Eskimo and Indian Art.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977. 289 pp., photographs. \$22.50 (cloth), \$14.95 (paper).

Hilary Stewart. *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979. 112 pp. \$6.95.

Review Essay by Aldona Jonaitis
SUNY at Stony Brook

The Far North: 2000 Years of American Eskimo and Indian Art, a catalog of the exhibition presented in 1973 at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., is among the best books of its kind. Its value lies both in the large number of illustrated objects from museums all over the world and in the informative essays about Eskimo, Athapaskan, and Tlingit art written by the noted scholars of Alaskan cultures Henry B. Collins, Frederica de Laguna, Edmund Carpenter, and Peter Stone. It is thus with great pleasure that I report the reissue of this catalog by Indiana University Press.

The book contains 365 excellent photographs of archeological and ethnographic art of Alaska. In addition to the familiar Eskimo masks and Northwest Coast Chilkat blankets, less well known prehistoric ivory carvings from St. Lawrence Island, stone lamps from Kodiak Island, and wooden masks from the Aleutians are presented. Especially valuable for the scholar are the early nineteenth-century pieces from the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Leningrad, as well as other rarely seen artworks from museums in Finland, Denmark, and Germany. The documentation accompanying each object includes the usual information about dimensions, media, and acquisition dates, in addition to valuable summaries of field notes by collectors and informative comment by the catalog's authors. One's understanding and appreciation of, for example, the Tlingit raven hat from Sitka (Pl. 259) is increased by de Laguna's discussion of the hat's social significance, an explanation based on Louis Shotridge's collection notes and Carpenter's discourse of the hat's mythological connotations.

Three clear but detailed maps provide the reader with a geographic context for this art. The first, a map of the circumpolar region, illustrates the relative distances between Alaska, Siberia, and Kamchatka; the second, a map of tribal distributions, shows the relationships of groups to one another; the third, a place map, gives the precise locations of each ethnographic village and archeological site mentioned in the book.

The essays in *The Far North* increase its value as an informative text on the art and cultures of the Alaskan groups. In "Athapaskan Art," de Laguna gives us insight into the artistic debt the Ingalik owe to the Eskimo; in "Tlingit Shamans," she summarizes the powers and functions of these Northwest Coast doctors. Peter Stone suggests, in "Tlingit Art," that this style illustrates both the complex social order and the profound mythic system of these people. Because they pose aesthetic questions as well as offer ethnographic information, the essays by Collins and Carpenter prove the most valuable for the reader interested in anthropological art.

In "Eskimo Art," Collins examines the history, technology, and art styles of the various archeological Eskimo cultures: Okvik, Old Bering Sea, Punuk, Birnik, Thule, Ipiutak, and South Alaska. He also discusses the masks, ivory and wood carvings, clothing and weaving, and pictographic art of the historical Eskimo. Throughout this detailed and thorough essay, Collins provides insightful aesthetic evaluations of individual pieces. For example, his reaction to an Okvik female figure (Pl. 4) is negative, since the piece "lacks the structural control and sensitivity" of other carvings of the same period (p. 5). He has great admiration, however, for the artworks of the Old Bering Sea III style and asserts that they have a "more balanced and harmonious arrangement of the overall design" than do the earlier Old Bering Sea II pieces (p. 6). Throughout this essay, Collins clearly defines the influences of each style on the one that followed, providing a valuable history of Eskimo art.

Edmund Carpenter, in "Some Notes on the Separate Realities of Eskimo and Indian Art," offers us, as we expect from him, interesting and fresh insights into the art of the North. Using the example of the typical Eskimo mask that represents two beings—one which predominates when the mask is held one way, the other when it is turned around—Carpenter proposes that the Eskimo artist's main interest is to depict simultaneously a host of characteristics, qualities, and meanings. Aesthetics for the Eskimo is "not a concept of becoming, not even a concept of metamorphosis of coming to be, but rather a sense of being where every form contains multitudes" (p. 284). If the reader is intrigued by this notion, he or she can turn back to the illustrations and enjoy the experience of turning Eskimo artworks around to see what different images emerge. For example, the Ipiutak comb (Pl. 21), right side up, illustrates a bear flanked by seals; when turned upside down, an anthropomorphic face appears: its eyes are the same as those of the bear; its nose and mouth are wrinkles in the bear's brow.

Carpenter also compares the significance of borders in Eskimo and Northwest Coast art. The Eskimo artist, who makes mobile-like masks with projecting elements that move gracefully with any motion of the wearer, seems to disregard borders, letting each mask "assert its own dimensions" (p. 284). In contrast, it is the border itself that determines the composition of the Northwest Coast artist's creation. The interplay between the borders, accented with "color, or copper, or abalone," and the representational images and abstract designs that those borders tightly restrain, creates a rhythm, tension, and energy unique to Northwest Coast art. After reading Carpenter's essay, one can gain a clear sense of the aesthetic qualities and unique characteristics of the art of each Alaskan group.

However, by concentrating on the uniqueness of each style, Carpenter and the other scholars who have contributed to this book say little about the similarities between those styles. This is unfortunate, since the particular assortment of objects illustrated here lends itself to interesting cross-cultural comparisons. While it is obviously important to understand the meaning of isolated objects and to define the elements that distinguish one style from another, it is equally valuable to speculate on the historical, and therefore aesthetic, connections between the groups who have created those separate styles.

For example, study of the various plates in *The Far North* reveals intriguing symbolic and stylistic connections between Northwest Coast and Eskimo-Aleut art. Several motifs we associate with Northwest Coast art also occur on archeological Eskimo pieces. A face or faces on the belly of some being, common in Northwest Coast art (see Pl. 279), appear on an Okvik female figure (Pl. 4). The image of one being ingesting an object or another being—the "devouring motif" (Pl. 322)—can be seen on the Ipiutak ivory chain (Pl. 26). And the "simultaneous image," in which two profiles constitute a frontal representation, is not unique to the Tlingit art illustrated in this catalog (Pl. 326) but occurs on the Ipiutak comb (Pl. 21) and the Ipiutak ornamental band (Pl. 19).

In addition to iconographic similarities, stylistic similarities occur between various Alaskan artworks. A "costume ornament in the form of a human head" (Pl. 47), excavated in 1931 on Kodiak Island, illustrates a relatively naturalistic anthropomorphic face surmounted by rectangular earlike forms. This type of animal-eared human face occurs with great frequency in Northwest Coast art. Two Tlingit masks (Pls. 312 and 131) represent such composite beings. All the Aleut wooden masks illustrated (Pls. 48–51) have typically Northwest Coast formline eyebrows; the mask in Plate 48 also has the equally characteristic pinched-eye form. It would have been most interesting had the authors of this catalog—specialists in different aspects of Alaskan cultures—engaged in a dialogue on these iconographic and stylistic similarities.

The Far North contains little art produced after the beginning of this century. Hilary Stewart's *Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast* might thus be considered a companion piece, presenting as it does more recent Northwest Coast art. It must be pointed out here that Stewart's title is misleading; her book is not about how to look at all Northwest Coast art, but, primarily, how to look at the silkscreen prints currently being produced on the Coast. This book focuses on how these contemporary Indian printmakers incorporate traditional Northwest Coast stylistic rules and principles into their artworks.

In this regard, the chapter "Cultural Styles" is particularly interesting. Here Stewart points out how the printmakers in the 1970s, dissatisfied with the "rather general Northwest Coast style based largely on northern art" that had been in vogue in the 1960s and anxious to rediscover their tribal roots, tried to incorporate elements of their particular traditions into their artworks. Thus, Kwakiutl printmakers, heirs to an "exuberant," "flamboyant," and "dramatic" tradition, create similarly exciting prints of flying birds, writhing sisiutls, and scintillating suns (p. 97). Haida art, in contrast, had always been "monumental" and "classical"; modern Haida prints are accordingly restrained and understated.

Since her concern is with how tradition is expressed in art, Stewart unfortunately pays little attention to one school of Northwest Coast artists, which, by diverging somewhat from the past, has created an interesting and innovative style: the school of 'Ksan. Although Stewart briefly mentions certain characteristics of works by members of this group of Tsimshian artists, she fails to elaborate adequately on the significant changes from the controlled, sophisticated, and elegant traditional Tsimshian style to the personal, exciting, dynamic, and emotional contemporary 'Ksan style. In a book about modern printmaking, the significance of some of the most original modern printmakers should not be disregarded.

In the chapter "Structural Variations" Stewart brings up the same tendency of the Northwest Coast artist to fill up borders with designs that Carpenter mentions. Since the artist must sometimes disassemble the body parts of the illustrated being to make them fit into the prescribed border, his final artistic product is often almost totally abstract. Both the traditional artist, discussed by Carpenter, and the contemporary printmaker, discussed by Stewart, are fascinated by the possibilities of such distorting and squeezing. Plates 47 to 50 in Stewart's book present an interesting progression of the stylized renditions of a killer whale placed into a variety of borders. The first illustration shows a naturalistic whale in a rectangular border. The second killer whale, squeezed into a square border, becomes more distorted and angular. In the third plate, the animal's head has become enormous, while its body has been reduced to a blowhole and pectoral fin to fit into a narrow vertical frame. Finally, in the fourth illustration, a killer whale placed into a

circular border becomes a virtually unrecognizable but aesthetically appealing two-dimensional design.

As we have seen, Stewart has several interesting ideas to present; it is therefore unfortunate that she devotes so much space in this book to the ideas of others. For example, much of the longest section in this book, "Identification of Design Motifs," a description of the distinguishing features of animals and other beings illustrated on Northwest Coast art, is taken from Franz Boas's *Primitive Art*. Since many books and catalogs on Northwest Coast art have included this kind of how-to-tell-what-kind-of-animal-it-is information, Stewart need not have given it so much importance here. In her chapter "The Basic Components," Stewart describes stylistic elements of Northwest Coast art, such as the formline, ovoid, and u-form, correctly crediting Bill Holm for inventing this terminology. The reader would do much better to consult Holm's book, *Northwest Coast Indian Art* (1965), itself. Since Stewart's subject is new art, one wishes that she had offered us more new information on it.

Both Stewart and Carpenter raise the same difficult philosophical issue: the problem of evaluating the aesthetic and historical merits of contemporary Native American art made for the white art market. Carpenter criticizes this type of art as "spurious" and "spiritually meaningless" (p. 286). Stewart, in contrast, praises it because it continues the tradition of Northwest Coast art. As evidence for its validity, Stewart quotes Haida artist Robert Davidson: "the only way to keep a tradition alive is to keep inventing new things" (p. 12). She points out that silkscreen prints are offered as gifts at potlatches and "even invitations to attend the ceremonial events are specially designed and printed" (p. 16).

The question of the aesthetic validity of such "contemporary" art really tests the romanticism of one's attitudes toward the Indian. The noble savage, living in an enviably socially enclosed and spiritually meaningful universe, creating an art that integrally relates to his daily and religious life, no longer exists on the Northwest Coast. The natives of this area are trying to integrate their traditions with modern life; their creation of "contemporary Indian art" is both an expression of renewed ethnic pride and connection with their past (points stressed by Stewart) and a means of economic survival in a capitalist world. One must, of course, always dispassionately evaluate the aesthetic merit of any native art, traditional or modern. If, however, this art does have artistic worth, as do the prints illustrated in Stewart's book, it is sheer romanticizing to criticize it for being "inauthentically Indian" simply because it was made for a market in the modern world that the Northwest Coast Indians now inhabit.

Alland. The Artistic Animal: An Inquiry into the Biological Roots of Art.

Author's Response

Flora S. Kaplan's review of my book *The Artistic Animal* in *Studies* [5(2):132-135] is so full of distortions, misreadings, and errors that I cannot let it go unanswered. It should be as ludicrous to others as it is painful to me to equate my work on art with sociobiology, yet I stand accused by Professor Kaplan of having written a sociobiological explanation of artistic behavior. Clearly Professor Kaplan is unable to distinguish between attempts to investigate the biological roots of specific *cultural* behaviors and sociobiology, which offers biological explanations not only of origins but of *differences* in behavior among contemporary individuals and social groups. Furthermore, sociobiologists claim to find specific continuities between what they pretend is genetically based instinctive behavior in lower animals and analogous behavior in humans. In my book I am careful to distinguish between the behavior of lower animals as it might relate to the emergence of artistic behavior in humans and artistic behavior *per se*. For example, on page 24 I say: "Not even a hint of it [artistic behavior] occurs in the natural behavior of other species." And, as I point out, my major argument about the emergence of art as a uniquely human capacity is that in the biological sense artistic behavior is not adaptive and thus not a product of selection. Instead I suggest that it is an artifact of other adaptive traits, some of which occur in nonhumans.

Although I list a series of traits that are undoubtedly adaptive in any environment for most if not all primates (play and exploratory behavior, fine-grain perceptual discrimination and good memory storage, sensitivity to certain kinds of form or gestalts in the environment), I reserve one trait for the human species alone: This is what I call *transformation-representation*. It is based on the ability of humans to symbol and use metaphor, but its content is purely cultural. Without this trait art as such cannot exist, and it is for this reason that it is useless to talk about artistic behavior in lower animals. As I say in the book, "It is for these reasons that art, as part of culture, can only be understood from the point of view of culture. If art has a strong biological base, that base is manifested only in the context of a particular history. Art does not stand alone as a biological process, because one of its most important aspects, *transformation-representation*, takes its content from the specific moment. Art and transformation-representation are only realizable historically" (pp. 120-121).

I do not believe nor do I claim that artistic behavior is in any way instinctive. I do believe that art as part of sym-

bolic behavior of a special and uniquely human kind has its roots in human evolution. I state clearly in the book, and in several places, that the art of any particular culture at any particular historical period is purely a cultural question. My statement on page xi that "genetic potentialities, built into our brains, can generate artistic behavior in the sense of both creation and appreciation" has been seized upon by Kaplan and can only be misunderstood when quoted out of context, for I go on to say in the next sentence: "This exclusively human pattern determines an *infinite* space within which individual creativity can achieve its full expression."

I never extrapolate from, nor do I believe that one can extrapolate from, a hereditary predisposition "to genes and from genes to specific behavior as complex and varied as expressive behavior in the visual arts, music, dance, theatre, and ritual" (Kaplan 1977:132). Her misunderstanding of my point of view is blatant when she cites pages 32 and 63 of my book as evidence for the above interpretation. On page 32, I stress that lower animals that either respond to form (not art) or play with form *are in no way* engaging in artistic behavior. On that page I say in an italicized sentence, "*painting apes are not artists.*" Kaplan also questions my discussion of ape "painting" on the ground that apes are not our ancestors (which, of course, they are not) and because their painting may simply result from pleasurable motor activities. I agree that it is dangerous to extrapolate from apes to humans, but as close genetic relatives they can tell us something about primate capacities in general, especially when these are shared capacities. As for pleasure in motor activity, I can only agree that this is probably the major, if not the only, reason apes "paint," but one ingredient of artistic pleasure is just that: motor pleasure. Clearly, however, the illustration in my book of Nim Chimsky's copy of a square, a circle, and a triangle is more than simple motor pleasure, if less than art.

On page 63 of *The Artistic Animal* my discussion of brain function refers specifically to possible right- versus left-hemisphere control of visual art and music. I am surprised that Kaplan finds these suggestions unsupported by the evidence, since there is a large literature on lateralization. I also cite Howard Gardner's book *The Shattered Mind* (Knopf, 1975) to indicate certain differences between human linguistic behavior which is transformative and communication (not language) in lower animals. Gardner points out that damage to the right hemisphere may leave ordinary syntax and vocabulary intact but disturb the ability of humans to use and understand metaphor. Furthermore, while I do not attempt to locate artistic behavior in a specific part of the brain (I fully agree with Kaplan that such behavior is complex and must be diffuse), we do know that certain perceptual inputs (such as line angles) are decoded not only in particular regions of the brain, but in specific cells! Fine-grain perceptual discrimination is *one* of the pre-

adaptations for artistic behavior that I cite in my book, and this kind of perception *is* closely linked to the kind of specific cell activity noted here.

Professor Kaplan suffers from that disease of scholarship known as reference mongering. She cites a long string of references to indicate that "The present study of hominid evolution encompasses a series of competing models and interpretations based on the same fossil record: seed-eaters as opposed to hunters as opposed to hunters and scavengers" (Kaplan 1977:132). I do not deny the complex issues Kaplan raises, but they have absolutely nothing to do with the arguments in my book, since I make no attempt to discuss the stages of human evolution as they apply to the emergence of art. Rather I point out that, whatever the route taken, the traits that are pre-adaptations for artistic behavior must have occurred for human evolution to have occurred as it did, and for art to have emerged as a specifically human trait. The adaptations I dwell on fit *all* the models of human evolution, and they are not in any way related to specific stages of that evolution.

The goals of anthropology are to explain both the similarities and differences that occur among human groups. Most anthropologists concentrate on the differences. My book, in the tradition of searching for what is known as the *psychic unity of humankind*, attempts to understand the basis for one important area of similarity: the capacity for artistic behavior. Therefore, it is outrageous to accuse me of ignoring differences: "These kinds of differences and much ethnographic detail are lost in studies which focus on the underlying similarities" (Kaplan 1977:133). Who can deny this statement? But a study of differences, as wide as they are and as important as they are (as I myself point out), will never yield information on what we have in common as a species. Kaplan demands that I play the wrong game according to *her* rules!

The same problem arises when Kaplan accuses me of circular reasoning. " 'Good form' produces an aesthetic response in 'sensitive individuals.' " This is one of the many examples of circular reasoning found in the book: aesthetic response is defined by the very individuals who respond to aesthetics, and good form is later distinguished from bad form by these same sensitive individuals" (Kaplan 1977:134). My statement is based on empirical findings and not on definitions. When random subjects in different cultures are asked to make aesthetic judgments from the same sample of art, there is high agreement *within* cultures but no significant agreement *between* cultures. When the same samples are shown to people interested and involved in art, the agreement becomes significant *between* cultures even when the subjects have no familiarity with the art used in the experiment. What we are apparently getting at here is response to "good form," *an* element (not the only one; I speak of convention and structure as well) in art appreciation.

In an attempt to bury me under her own erudition Kaplan indulges in a long exegesis of an erased de Kooning by Robert Rauschenberg and criticizes my equating it with subway graffiti. Everything she says about the Rauschenberg work is true. It does, as she states, have its *art history*. Kaplan is also correct when she points out that subway graffiti are not action paintings, at least not in the sense that the term has meaning in recent modern art. But in all that rhetoric Kaplan totally loses sight of the simple point I was trying to make in an introductory chapter. The point of Chapter I in *The Artistic Animal* is merely to convince those who need convincing that the net of art is spread wide and goes beyond what many laymen consider art to be. When I said that subway graffiti are an example of life imitating art (a very small point in the book, by the way), I meant that the erased de Kooning and erased subway graffiti share certain *formal* elements that exist apart from art history and interpretation. The more one becomes open to art in life, the more one can make the transformations necessary to (in a real sense) create one's own art. Wrapped buildings (wrapped in the winter to keep construction workers out of the cold) remind me of Cristo's work, even though I know (but how many laymen know?) that all of Cristo's wrappings have both aesthetic and political points to make. The whole nature of the game of art is such that *formally* similar phenomena can produce transformative reverberations of an aesthetic sort when connections are made between them. For me, at least, to say that "life imitates art" is to say that art often provides a means for seeing the mundane in new, exciting, and aesthetic ways.

Also, for the record, when I say that subway graffiti are action paintings, I mean this in the same sense as their artists do: they tell me that they enjoy seeing their graffiti speed through the city. The actual graffiti *are* planned in advance, but their artistic life is enhanced by the motion of the subway cars that bear them.

Alexander Alland

Reviewer's Reply

Let me begin my reply to Alland's emotional and wild-swinging attacks in response to my review of his book, *The Artistic Animal*, by saying that such attacks do not elevate either the discussion or his stature. I might add that it is a little difficult, and even humorous, to take seriously his attempt, in a parting attack, to strike a humble pose. He is, after all, the author who has attempted to give us an illustrated, worldwide, cross-cultural, and evolutionary theory of the origins of art in some 140 pages.

I can appreciate Alland's distress if he thinks he is being classed as a sociobiologist. He obviously sees himself on the side of culture, and as a humanist. The review referred only to the book's potential for extending the "sociobiological debate," into areas of expressive culture. Nowhere in the review did I suggest that Alland consciously supports sociobiology. What is obvious, like it or not, is that the book itself will be identified, certainly in the public mind, with a sociobiological approach, presenting as it does an organic, genetic, and evolutionary basis for the origins of art. Here I would remind readers that the subtitle of this popular paperback is *An Inquiry into the Biological Roots of Art*. Note, too, that the cover illustration is a painter's palette with the head of a "gorilla" (quotes mine) substituted at one end for a color, as a kind of subtle visual surprise. It is a surprise which shows very graphically the kind of linkage which I have pointed to in my review, and which is pointed at the public. Alland could have indicated in his reply that he had, perhaps, argued with his publishers and regretted any confusion caused by the subtitle and choice of cover, but he does not. The association set in motion by the book's title, subtitle, and cover are carried forward immediately in the opening paragraph of the preface, which asserts the existence of "genetic potentialities, built into our brains" (regardless of the stated "infinite space" they are supposed to create) (p. xi).

Alland makes a distinction between investigating the biological roots of specific cultural behaviors and biological explanations by sociobiologists of origins and differences among contemporary individuals and social groups; and he oversimplifies the sociobiological approach, which does not exclude culture. In fact, if we listen to Wilson's remarks in the course of a debate on sociobiology with Marvin Harris, much of what he says is compatible with what Alland is saying through much of his book. That is not to say this makes Alland a sociobiologist; it simply means that his book and its implications lend support to this approach.

Wilson sees sociobiology as concerned with social behavior; although "it is not a specific theory about human behavior . . . it allows for any of a wide array of possibilities" (*The New York Times*:18E, p. 3). Both Wilson and Harris agree, generally, that human behavior is on a genetic leash. It appears in their discussion that it is Harris, the anthropologist, who wishes to focus on the study of differences and Wilson, the sociobiologist, who is interested in similarities. But this is as much a matter of personal choice as epistemology, not inherent in the respective disciplines.

Wilson freely admits that from the biological point of view "the human being is unique; that culture is overriding, and that therefore with reference to sociobiological theory the human species is a wild card," and he leaves the question open to empirical investigation. What is interesting about Wilson's remarks in this debate are his convictions about the hard understructure in the form of

emotional predisposition in learning rules that channel cultural evolution and make biological investigation well worthwhile.

Wilson feels that human beings are on a dual track of evolution with their fastest track being cultural evolution; and yet they have gotten up to this point by conventional genetic evolution. These statements by the leading proponent of sociobiology, including his emphasis on the existence of "programmed learning rules" and "understructure," do not seem wildly apart from Alland's blend of biology and culture, structure, and genetic blueprints. Even Harris, not noted for taking mild positions, sees the interrelationship between their differences mainly in terms of emphasis and the focus they would give to research efforts.

I have simply called attention to the implications contained in *The Artistic Animal* and made them explicit. It seems Alland is shocked by this. I would urge him then to reread his book as carefully as I have, several times, and to consider the implications of what he writes before release and not complain about them afterward. Alland wants to have it both ways, and all ways: biology and culture—separate but together, rooted but apart, adaptive but then nonadaptive. Is it that Alland means to say that art is symbolic behavior?

The review I wrote focused on the book as written, not on the intent of the author. I was careful to point out on the very first page that the reader's view of the book will "depend on your theoretical preference for dealing with macroanalysis or microanalysis, for similarities or differences in human behavior" (p. 132). Alland declares I wanted him to write it my way, to have been concerned with differences, not similarities. Not so. The main problems with this book come from contradictory concepts and circular definitions that preclude meaningful *macroanalysis*. True, Alland includes culture, history, ecology, game theory, biology, and genetics in the origins of art. But in not telling us what, where, how, and why—in including everything so as not to be found wanting in anything—Alland ends by giving us nothing to measure, weigh, or test empirically or logically. My criticisms are directed not to the fact that he fails to deal with "differences" but that he does not enable us to understand much about "similarities" either.

Alland misinterprets the seriousness with which I examined his biological claims for art, calling it "reference mongering," a presumably perjorative description. However, in his response he hastens to assure everyone that he has read most of the same sources. It seems obvious in this context that the converse of such "mongering" is nonmongering, or sloppy scholarship. I gave only a few examples of the latter from his book in my review (p. 135). I did not dwell on them since the book was directed to a general audience. Nonetheless, the half-references and nonreferencing of quotes and sources, and the absence of translations of foreign-language passages, will

be frustrating for those who read his book. Indeed, it is nearly impossible to tell what Alland has read and used in the book from the inadequate bibliography provided, sparsity of notes, and other such problems. His response to my review will be useful for filling these gaps in the book.

In discussing my remarks on the graffiti/de Kooning-Rauschenberg analogy, Alland again assures us that he has read all the same sources and knows the same things I do. In fact he supports my points about graffiti and their makers in all regards except in the conclusions drawn. He then attempts to extend the discussion in his response to the review by saying it is the "formal principles" which underlie both the erased subway car and the erased de Kooning drawing that are alike. Here he repeats his original errors in a new form. And I confess I am at a loss even to guess what formal principles he could possibly mean or to detect them in such disparate subject matter, materials, and contexts.

In his closing comments on graffiti as "action painting," after acknowledging my points that graffiti are pre-planned and outside the mainstream of art historical tradition, he insists that their motion on subway cars speeding by make them "action painting." While the young men who paint graffiti unquestionably enjoy seeing their handiwork speed by, it does not alter the facts that for the New York action painters it was the *act* of painting itself which engaged them; it was not the end product or the speed with which it was perceived, by them or anyone else. If Alland sees a connection between the two, it must remain his own form of myopia: the analogy remains superficial at best.

Similar errors recur in his protest of my characterization of his definition of "good form" as circular. At the very least he begs the question on this notion, which is central to his thesis, when he writes, "My statement is based on empirical findings and not on definitions" (p. 5). To say that we have the answers before the question is framed is to invite intellectual confusion.

Art, like "good form," is everywhere, according to Alland, its formal principles and aesthetic appeal just waiting to be discovered in natural and manmade phenomena by "sensitive individuals." He modestly offers himself as a model of such sensitivity, illustrating his response with an example of plastic-enclosed buildings on a construction site in bad weather. These, he notes, remind him of the "wrapped buildings" of Cristo: Such "formally similar phenomena can produce transformative reverberations of an aesthetic sort when connections are made between them." Cristo's work serves as an example of art enriching the "mundane," though Alland confides that few laymen know that Cristo's wrappings have "aesthetic and political points to make." Here we go again. Though I am glad that Cristo has added to Alland's heightened sensitivity in the vicinity of construction sites in bad weather—is that the point of art? Is it not the aesthetic and political points Cristo makes in the act of

wrapping? Western and other literary traditions have been filled with recognition of the capacity to appreciate nature and other phenomena unmodified by artists. Jane Goodall long ago observed that even chimpanzees enjoyed the sunset.

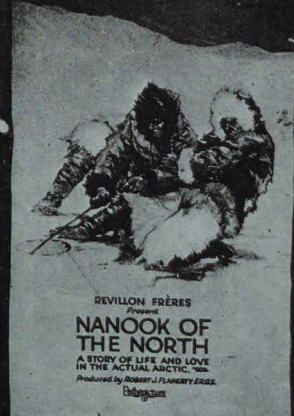
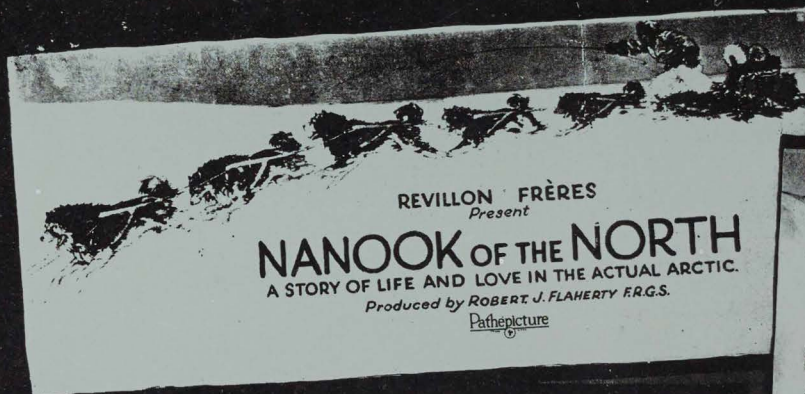
Alland does in the Cristo example what he did in the graffiti/de Kooning-Rauschenberg example; he obliterates the significance of the acts and their place in an art historical context. This is justified, apparently, because of undefined, but underlying formal principles, which escape most laymen though not sensitive individuals like himself.

In his response to my review, Alland gives a far more lucid and closely reasoned account of some of the ideas which underly *The Artistic Animal*. Regrettably, this account is not in the book. My basic criticisms stand: inadequate methods and data to support the theory proffered; theory which is incapable of generating testable hypotheses; generalizations and conclusions that exceed the data and theory.

Alland protests that his grand conception in the tradition of the psychic unity of mankind has been misinterpreted. The burden of proof, however, is on the author. It is Alland who chooses to put his grand conception on the psychic unity of mankind, the origins of art, its biological roots, evolutionary development, profusion, and cross-cultural expression from the paleolithic to airport and modern art—and everything in between, including theater, ritual, dance, and music—into a paperback designed for the general public, compressing and juxtaposing complex ideas which are not developed. As I originally noted in my review, a slight volume can succeed with a closely reasoned and elegant argument, which is difficult to achieve. Darwin, Freud, and Lévi-Strauss, to mention others who have been concerned with macroanalysis and theory, elaborated their grand conceptions, based on empirical data which they collected, in scholarly books of a length needed to develop cogent and convincing arguments. Perhaps, Alland will eventually favor us with such a volume.

I agree essentially with Alland that there is a predisposition for art in man, and that it is genetically based, being part of our evolutionary heritage. As I stated in the review, our differences concern the extent of the conclusions to be drawn at this time, and in the absence of much-needed empirical studies in biology and art.

Flora S. Kaplan



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