THE CORPOREAL IMAGE

FILM, ETHNOGRAPHY,
AND THE SENSES

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In Memory of
Jean Rouch 1917–2004
John Marshall 1932–2005

INTRODUCTION

MEANING AND BEING

THE ESSAYS in this book address the corporeal aspects of images and image-making. This is not to say that they are indifferent to the meanings and associations that images awaken in us—far from it—but they are concerned with the moment at which those meanings emerge from experience, before they become separated from physical encounters. At that point thought is still undifferentiated and bound up with matter and feeling in a complex relation that it often later loses in abstraction. I am concerned with this microsecond of discovery, of knowledge at the birth of knowledge.

Our consciousness of our own being is not primarily an image, it is a feeling. But our consciousness of the being, the autonomous existence, of nearly everything else in the world involves vision. We assume that the things we see have the properties of being, but our grasp of this depends upon extending our own feeling of being into our seeing. In the process, something quintessential of what we are becomes generalized in the world. Seeing not only makes us alive to the appearance of things but to being itself.

One of the functions of art, and often of science, is to help us understand the being of others in the world. However, art and science are only part of this; it depends as much on how we go about the daily practice of seeing. In this, the meaning we find in what we see is always both a necessity and an obstacle. Meaning guides our seeing. Meaning allows us to categorize objects. Meaning is what imbues the image of a person with all we know about them. It is what makes them familiar, bringing them to life each time we see them. But meaning, when we force it on things, can also blind us, causing us to see only what we expect to see or distracting us from seeing very much at all.

My reasons for writing about this come from a background of trying to use images in an academic discipline. Images reflect thought, and they may lead to thought, but they are much more than thought. We are accustomed to regarding thought as something resembling language—the mind speaking to itself or, as dictionaries put it, a process of reasoning. But our conscious experience involves much more than this kind of thought. It is

made up of ideas, emotions, sensory responses, and the pictures of our imagination. The way we use words all too often becomes a mistaken recipe for how to make, use, and understand visual images. By treating images—in paintings, photographs, and films—as a product of language, or even a language in themselves, we ally them to a concept of thought that neglects many of the ways in which they create our knowledge. It is important to recognize this, not in order to restrict images to nonlinguistic purposes—this merely subordinates them further to words—but in order to reexamine the relation between seeing, thinking, and knowing, and the complex nature of thought itself.

The chapters in this book are essays in the strict sense of the term—attempts to find words for observations that, in the present case, have resulted from varied experiences with photographs, films, and texts. Ultimately, all concern the human subject—as material presence, as thinking being, as child and adult; in still photographs, in ethnography, and in cinema. The book moves in part I from questions of embodiment, in and around film, to filmic representation itself; in part II to the representation of childhood, and my own attempts to film children's lives; in part III to photography in colonial and postcolonial settings; and lastly in part IV to the history and possible future of visual anthropology. If these essays have a common theme, it is that the encounter with visual images demands more of us than the mental facility that language has given us. There is a specificity and obduracy to images that defies our accustomed habits of translation and summation. In considering our use of images, it is no good simply insisting that we must do a better job of adapting them to the rules of scholarly writing. This will lead only to bad compromises. If we are to gain new knowledge from using images, it will come in other forms and by different means.

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Our seeing is already deeply predetermined. Much of the knowledge we gain through vision and our other senses, and the way we direct our seeing, is highly organized. To a large extent this is not a matter of choice but of our cultural and even our neural conditioning.[1] We see conceptually, metaphorically, linguistically. But whatever our culture, we also see to some extent literally. There is always a tension between these two ways of seeing, and between our consciousness of meaning and of being. As we look at things, our perception is guided by cultural and personal interests, but perception is also the mechanism by which these interests are altered and added to. There is thus an interdependency between perception and meaning. Meaning shapes perception, but in the end perception can refigure meaning, so that at the next stage this may alter perception once again.

This applies as much to making images as to our seeing, and to seeing images made by others. Meaning is produced by our whole bodies, not just by conscious thought. We see with our bodies, and any image we make carries the imprint of our bodies; that is to say, of our being as well as the meanings we intend to convey. As a product of human vision, image-making might be regarded by some as little more than secondhand or surrogate seeing. But when we look purposefully, and when we think, we complicate the process of seeing enormously.[2] We invest it with desires and heightened responses. The images we make become artifacts of this. They are, in a sense, mirrors of our bodies, replicating the whole of the body's activity, with its physical movements, its shifting attention, and its conflicting impulses toward order and disorder. A complex construction such as a film or photograph has an animal origin. Corporeal images are not just the images of other bodies; they are also images of the body behind the camera and its relations with the world.

Photographic images are inherently reflexive, in that they refer back to the photographer at the moment of their creation, at the moment of an encounter. In films this is extended by a kind of triangulation, in which each successive scene further locates the author in relation to the subjects. There may be other signs of who and where the author is in the responses of the people being filmed. These signs are often difficult to interpret individually, but they gain direction and significance through the course of a film. Viewers cannot avoid interpreting these signs, however unconsciously, any more than they can in the exchanges of daily life.

Despite the parallels between seeing and image-making, looking with and without a camera can never be the same. However much it may be directed, a camera (or a photographic emulsion) produces an image that is independent of our bodies. This material image has not passed through us, even though the camera that produced it mimics many of the characteristics of human vision. There is thus an irreducible part of a photographic image that escapes from us. It is an intimation of something uncontrolled and uncontrollable. A literary view can take us only so far in understanding this. "Film is about something," Dai Vaughan once wrote, "whereas reality is not."[3] Despite the imprint of our minds and bodies, films and photographs remind us that in the end life is not "about" something—life is not like that.

Framing people, objects, and events with a camera is always "about" something. It is a way of pointing out, of describing, of judging. It domesticates and organizes vision. It both enlarges and diminishes. It diminishes by leaving out those connections in life to which the photographer is blind, as when it imposes an explanation on events that we know to be more complex. Or it does this as a deliberate sacrifice to some seemingly more important argument or dramatic effect. Framing enlarges through

a similar process. It is what lifts something out of its background in order to look at it more closely, as we might pick up a leaf in the forest.

Through selection, framing also distills and concentrates experience. By isolating observations, it reveals commonalities and connections that may have gone unnoticed before. These may be the characteristic mannerisms of a person, or how a particular cultural theme emerges repeatedly in different contexts. Such intensifications and reinforcements of perception may make us, as viewers, more observant in our daily lives, but they can also dull our responses through overuse. Picture editors may wonder if there is much point in publishing yet another photograph of a maimed body or a starving child. Framing often reveals the sensibilities of the author by focusing on certain subjects or displaying a distinctive way of looking. Conversely, framing sometimes shows the author rebelling against framing, with a roughness that expresses impatience with all elegance, art, and artifice.[4] Successive generations of photographers and filmmakers have allowed accident and chance into their work in a calculated way. Framing thus has two intertwined impulses—to frame but also to show what lies beyond or in spite of framing.

Framing in a more general sense produces different modes of looking with a camera. One may, for example, distinguish between a purely responsive camera, an interactive camera, and a constructive camera. These approaches reflect different stances toward the subject. The differences are not so much a matter of degree as of kind. One approach is not necessarily more or less objective than another, or more or less personally engaged. They represent different temperaments and aims, not different moralities. In a single film, several approaches may be employed for separate purposes. Thus, a responsive camera observes and interprets its subject without provoking or disturbing it. It responds rather than interferes. An interactive camera, on the contrary, records its own interchanges with the subject. A constructive camera interprets its subject by breaking it down and reassembling it according to some external logic.

In making films, we are constantly advancing our own ideas about a world whose existence owes nothing to us. In fiction films as well as nonfiction films, we use "found" materials from this world. We fashion them into webs of signification, but within these webs are caught glimpses of being more unexpected and powerful than anything we could create. These may be qualities we discover in human beings or in the plenitude of the inanimate world. A good film reflects the interplay of meaning and being, and its meanings take into account the autonomy of being. Meaning can easily overpower being. We see this in the effect of the picturesque on portraiture and landscapes in nineteenth-century painting and photography. In making films, wise filmmakers create structures in which being is allowed to live, not only in isolated glimpses but in moments of revelation

throughout the whole work. These form their own connections above and beyond our intentions as filmmakers. This is why knowing when to desist in our interpretations is so important, to allow these moments to connect and resonate.

In social science and the humanities, images have had an uneven career, depending upon the degree to which seeing has been accorded the status of knowledge. As photography has spread across the world, visual images have gone from being prized in the nineteenth century to being increasingly regarded as instruments rather than constituents of knowledge.

As writers, we articulate thoughts and experiences, but as photographers and filmmakers we articulate images of looking and being. What is thought is only implied, unless it is appended in writing or speech. Some would say that images, then, are not in any sense knowledge. They simply make knowledge possible, as data from observations. But in another sense they *are* what we know, or have known, prior to any comparison, judgment, or explanation. There is a perceptual as well as a conceptual kind of knowledge. This knowledge has no propositional status (of generality, of explanation) except the proposition of its own existence. It remains to a large extent inert, untapped. Only in the will to declare it do we detect the stirrings of thought.

A filmmaker's knowledge is often believed to lie in a film's conclusions, expressed through a visual rhetoric that juxtaposes shots and scenes, or at a more general level explains behavior through narratives of power, exchange, belief, and emotion. These are the "messages" that the film communicates. A kind of visual reasoning has taken place. Yet the filmmaker has seen and knows much more than can be communicated in this way. Is it possible to transmit this knowledge—which cannot be conceptualized—to others? In academic writing this question is generally dealt with by setting aside such knowledge as superfluous, or inaccessible, or outside the domain of the discipline or the problem at hand. But in films and photographs, it is far more difficult to cordon off statements about reality from the immediacy of the reality shown. The kinds of knowledge we gain from images and texts may have to be approached in quite different ways.

My image of you, or my many images of you in different situations, forms much of what I know about you. Appearance *is* knowledge, of a kind. Showing becomes a way of saying the unsayable. Visual knowledge (as well as other forms of sensory knowledge) provides one of our primary means of comprehending the experience of other people. Unlike the knowledge communicated by words, what we show in images has no

transparency or volition—it is a different knowledge, stubborn and opaque, but with a capacity for the finest detail. How we reconcile this with other forms of knowledge—of explanation, metaphor, analogy—is one of the great themes of film itself, which more explicitly than writing pits being against meaning.

Through their stubbornness, photographic images dispute their consecrated meanings (what Barthes called the *studium*) or at least have the potential to undercut them. In films the complexity of people and objects implicitly resists the theories and explanations in which the film enlists them, sometimes suggesting other explanations or no explanations at all. In this sense, then, film is always a discourse of risk and indeterminacy. This puts it at odds with most academic writing, which, despite its caution and qualifications, is a discourse that advances always toward conclusions. For all the ways in which photographic images oversimplify and aggressively impose their messages (as they often do in advertising, for example), they are intrinsically tentative, oscillating between meaning and the self-sufficiency of their subjects.

In an effort to accommodate this alien knowledge, disciplines such as history and anthropology tend to find a place for it within the knowledge systems of the people they study rather than within the discipline itself. It can then be viewed through the filter of established principles, without challenging the premises of belief (of rational thought) from which these disciplines draw their authority. Seeing, hearing, and other forms of sensory knowledge are accordingly located in individual experience or in cultural and historical collectivities. They are seen as extending the reach of the discipline without fundamentally altering it. Methods that directly address the senses, such as photography and film, tend to be treated similarly—that is, chiefly as adjuncts to formulating knowledge at a higher level of abstraction. In accepting this, historians and anthropologists preserve the value of knowledge as meaning, but they miss an opportunity to embrace the knowledge of being.

Filmmakers compose images into a form for others to see and then are frequently asked, "What were you trying to say?" They have tried to say or mean certain things, but that is perhaps the least of their intentions. Most of their effort has gone into putting the viewer into a particular relation to a subject and creating a progression of images and scenes for understanding it, much as a musician produces a progression of notes and sequences. But before filmmakers can compose images in this way, they have had to film them, and this has required looking. Thus, before films are a form of representing or communicating, they are a form of looking.

Before they express ideas, they are a form of looking. Before they describe anything, they are a form of looking. In many respects filming, unlike writing, precedes thinking. It registers the process of looking with a certain interest, a certain will.

When we look, we are doing something more deliberate than seeing and yet more unguarded than thinking. We are putting ourselves in a sensory state that is at once one of vacancy and of heightened awareness. Our imitative faculties take precedence over judgment and categorization, preparing us for a different kind of knowledge. We learn to inhabit what we see. Conversely, thinking about what we see, projecting our ideas upon it, turns us back upon ourselves. So, simply to look, and look carefully, is a way of knowing that is different from thinking. This is not necessarily a matter of greater concentration, for often the more we concentrate, the more we see only ourselves. Concentration is not at all the same thing as being attentive and free of distractions. Sartre makes the point that consciousness cannot exist devoid of content; it is given shape by things-in-themselves in the world. But if the act of looking is what occupies our consciousness, we cannot be fully attentive to what we are seeing. Paying attention is not a matter of projecting oneself onto things-in-themselves but of freeing one's consciousness to perceive them.

It is therefore important to examine closely our own patterns of observation, undiverted by the conventions and interpretations that we receive from society and that constantly crowd upon us. This is particularly important for filmmakers, who are trained in a very restricted range of methods for seeing and recording experience. It is a difficult thing to do—to understand how one looks at things. It is made more difficult because it is apparently so simple, for we tend to forget how cursory looking can be. To look carefully requires strength, calmness, and affection. The affection cannot be in the abstract; it must be an affection of the senses.

A camera can be quite blind. Surveillance cameras in warehouses or apartment buildings are quite blind. Looking at the recordings they make, one can sense that there is no one behind these cameras. Or when, in a film, a camera pans over a landscape, again one can sense that no one is really looking. Anything that might be seen is in the process of disappearing off the screen. When young filmmakers start out, you often notice that they are looking at nothing but hoping that by moving the camera over the surface of a subject something will be gathered up. The camera never comes to rest, or if it should chance to do so for a moment it immediately moves away again. This is a camera that is hunting, searching for something to see and never finding it. It is constantly dissatisfied, as though nothing were worth looking at.

It is therefore quite possible to see without looking. Can one learn to look more attentively? From birth, some people seem to do so. You some-

times recognize this in the work of new photographers and filmmakers. Others, however intelligent and perceptive they may be, live in a world so dominated by concepts that they find it difficult to look at anything attentively. When they see a film they worry about what they are supposed to think about it. Their thinking keeps interfering with the process of looking. You may have known such people. They cannot give themselves to the images of a film, and afterward all that is left in their minds is a series of judgments, or a set of questions, or a list of items they believe have been left out. They may even find the images chaotic, as if they have been asked to follow an incomprehensible language.

This is not only a problem among viewers. Many filmmakers have little respect for images or for their audiences. One sign of this is that the images they use are wholly imitative, not valued in themselves but used as a cheap coinage. Another is that the images are changed as quickly as possible, out of a constant fear that we, the audience, will lose interest in the film. In the end, it is only the changes that keep us watching, since we are never allowed to pay attention to anything. There is perhaps a deeper fear as well. One has the impression that many filmmakers are afraid of looking. What is it in ordinary things that they fear to see? Is it a fear of their own feelings, that they should dare to engage so directly with the world? Is it the delicacy, fragility, and beauty of things that they fear—or the skull beneath the skin, the horror?

It is important to understand this fear, for none of us is completely free of it. It is the fear of giving ourselves unconditionally to what we see. It seems to me that this fear is allied to our fear of abandoning the protection of conceptual thought, which screens us from a world that might otherwise consume our consciousness. For to be fully attentive is to risk giving up something of ourselves. To lose this fear, we must examine it and try to understand it. If we are afraid to look honestly, and are afraid of our own responses, or of what others may think of us, our looking will always be evasive. It is this kind of dishonest looking that does immeasurable harm to others and to society. We see it everywhere around us. We have seen it in every age—that which may not be seen or be acknowledged to be seen. To overcome this fear we need to find our own kind of freedom. It is a freedom that we can only learn by accepting that we are alone, that no one will help us, that we must make it ourselves.

Notes

1. See Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 41–42, 49–56.
2. By the same token, mental images frequently complicate (and interrupt) the train of "linguistic" thought.

3. Vaughan 1999: 21.
4. Susan Sontag notes the equivalence of artistry and chance in producing memorable photographs: "Photography is the only major art in which professional training and years of experience do not confer an insuperable advantage over the untrained and inexperienced—this for many reasons, among them the large role that chance (or luck) plays in the taking of pictures, and the bias toward the spontaneous, the rough, the imperfect" (Sontag 2003: 28). This would seem to apply, however, only to the single photograph. The principle would not hold if one compared the collected works of either professionals or amateurs.

PART I

MATTER AND IMAGE

1

THE BODY IN CINEMA

I N A BRITISH "anthology" film of the 1950s made up of three separate ghost stories, a museum guide becomes obsessed with a painting that hangs in one of the museum galleries.[1] It shows a house on a hill and the lonely road leading up to it. One day the guide finds himself crossing the line between life and art as he is drawn into the painting, which proves to be another self-sufficient, three-dimensional world. There he discovers the artist, trapped in his own painting. Do they escape back to the real world? The answer to that forms the rest of the story.

This story is neither so eerie nor so silly as it might sound, for many of us have had the experience of being lost in a work of art. Indeed, it is the purpose of art to reach out and claim us. Music, pictures, and films do this again and again. Alfred Gell, in his last book, *Art and Agency*, argued that art is made to capture us—to fascinate and even confuse us. Our minds and bodies are not the passive receptors of art, they are the targets of it.

Films, like ghost stories, are littered with bodies, and although these bodies are in one sense ghostly and evanescent, they are also in many ways, to our senses, corporeal. In his book on cinema titled *The Material Ghost*, Gilberto Perez takes the view that "presence is not an illusion in the movies," but rather (adopting André Bazin's expression) a "hallucination that is true" in its effects.[2] There are always links between works of art and life, even if the worlds presented are imaginary, for, as Bazin suggests, art is a lifeline between the physical world and our physical selves. The technologies of art also ensure a connection between ourselves and something physical. Many works have a material basis—another work that inspired them, or a living subject, or simply the physical matter out of which they are made. Music is produced from pieces of wood and metal, or from human throats and mouths—what Roland Barthes called the body's animal "muzzle."[3] Films, for their part, testify to bodies that were present before the camera. These may be the bodies of movie stars or people on the street or decomposing bodies in a morgue.

What these bodies mean to us, and how they are linked to our own bodies, has been a matter of fascination since the invention of film, but all too often the disturbances they create become sidetracked in the byways of aesthetic, psychoanalytic, and political theory. It is important to
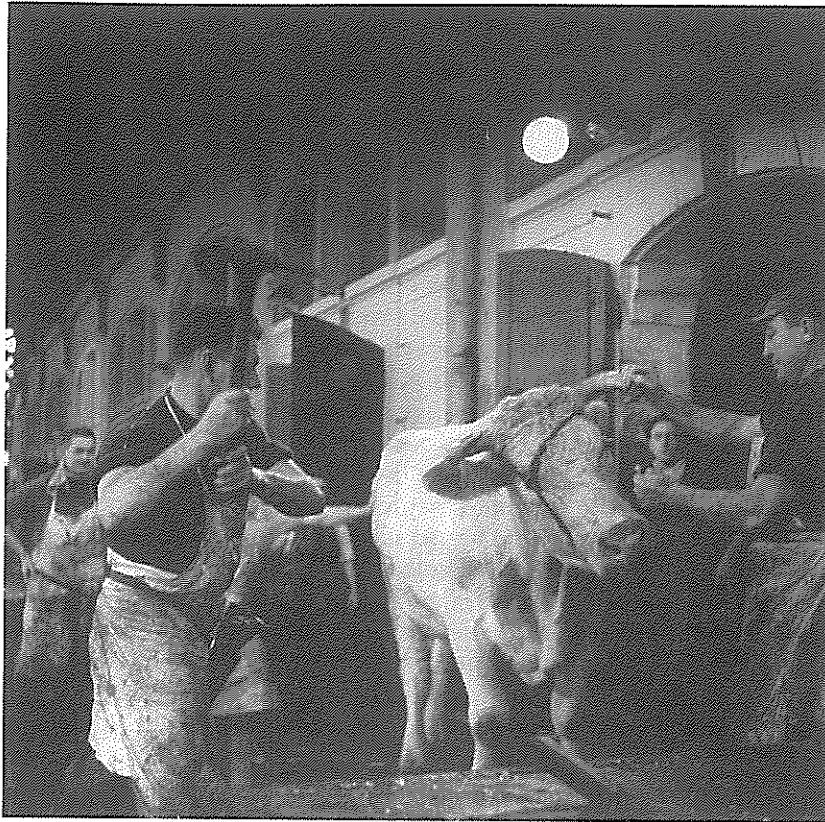
1.1. From *Le sang des bêtes* (1949). Courtesy of The British Film Isanstitute.
Copyright Estate of Georges Franju.

reclaim this disturbance if we are not to reduce films to signs, symbols, and other domesticated meanings. Some films do not allow us to do so. In Georges Franju's *Le sang des bêtes* (1949), the camera wanders not so innocently into a Paris abattoir, where it discovers bodies collapsing from life into death (figure 1.1). The audience is implicated as much by the photographed beauty of the animals as by the horror of what is being done to them. In Franju's later feature film *Les yeux sans visage* (1959), Dr Genessier peels off the faces of a succession of young women murdered for him by his assistant, Louise, in an attempt to graft these onto the face of his daughter, who has been disfigured in an accident (figure 1.2). The banality of everyday life surrounds these proceedings. Here the viewer is also implicated, drawn closer to the bodies by the doctor's fumbling attempts and failures. The agency of this film is like a contagion.
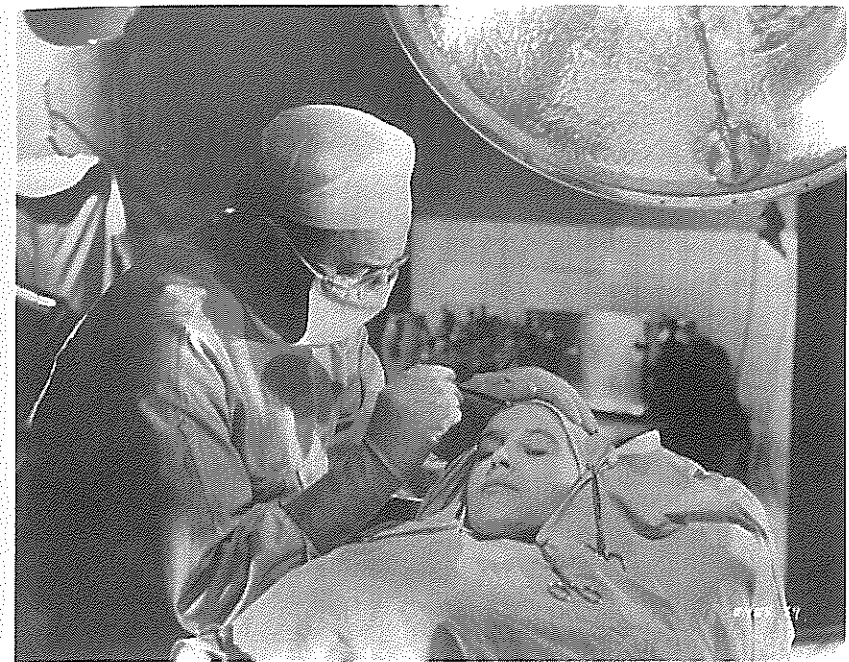
1.2. From *Les yeux sans visage* (1959). Courtesy of The British Film Institute.
Copyright Gaumont.

Documentary films add the authority of "found" objects to the artist's inventions. *Duka's Dilemma* (2001), by Jean Lydall and Kaira Strecker, shows the production of a human body in a manner quite unlike the fashionable childbirth films of the 1960s and 1970s, with their obstetric camera angles and shots of radiant parents. The birth—in this case of a Hamar child in southern Ethiopia—appears almost as a group effort by the mother, her co-wife, and other female relatives. Although there is pain and danger, there is also humor and an acceptance of the shared subjectivity of bodily experience. This same spirit infuses the rest of the film. Not only do the women seem close to one another physically but the images of the film bring us into a similar closeness to them. Through the birth the film crosses the threshold into a different sensory relationship between the film subjects and the film audience in which the human body is allowed to "speak" more eloquently.

These last two films lie at opposite ends of a spectrum of involvement, but they underline the centrality of the human body in almost all films. However, there are other bodies to be considered, as well—those of the spectator and the filmmaker, and even the body of the film itself.

The Body in the Film

The boundaries between our firsthand experiences and the ways in which we recall and recreate them are often unclear. These may be the boundaries between sensory perception and memory (or dreaming); between what we designate as life and art; or between the corporeal and incorporeal. In the end, these categories are so unreliable that we may be tempted to give them up. After all, a person seen in a dream or on television may be as vivid as a person seen across the room, and works of art may be as concrete as clumps of earth. Representations of experience immediately create new experiences in their own right.

Societies draw such boundaries at different points and endow them with different degrees of importance, but nearly everywhere some effort is made to maintain them. As Mary Douglas observes, the difference between spirit and matter continues to matter, but the ways in which the social body governs the corporeal body vary widely.[4] Changing circumstances such as the introduction of new fashions and new technologies constantly test this governance, and it is at the very borders of the borders, so to speak, that the principles regulating them stand revealed most clearly. Challenges to political authority may evoke fierce repression in a different quarter—in the area of morals, for example.

Film is among the newer technologies to create disturbances at the boundaries of art and everyday experience, along with its more recent and powerful offshoots of television, video recording, satellite transmission, and Internet streaming. Here, too, the extremes often reveal most clearly our fundamental biological and cultural responses. Linda Williams has taken a close look at the "body genres" of pornography, horror, and melodrama to see how their excesses challenge mechanisms of bodily control, and how they revive (but never actually close) the gaps between primal experiences and cinematically manufactured hallucinations of them.[5] In a similar vein, Klaus Theweleit discusses the excesses of brutality and torture as expressions of the psycho-sexual fantasies of the "armored" body engendered by German military training.[6] Barbara Creed sees the "body-monstrous" of horror films as at once the threatened body of the spectator, exploded or invaded or defiled by abject substances, and sometimes, too, as a reaffirmation of the spectator's purity and bodily integrity.[7] However, all films and not only these "gross" genres are potentially disturbing to the corporeal equanimity of the viewer, and indeed this is part of their appeal. Williams maintains that viewing other people's experiences in films is not simply a matter of sharing them but of discovering autonomous bodily responses in ourselves that may differ from those we witness.[8] Films allow us to go beyond culturally prescribed limits and glimpse the

possibility of being more than we are. They stretch the boundaries of our consciousness and create affinities with bodies other than our own.

Conversely, the inability of art (or its technologies) to represent the body has often been noted. In 1556 Abu'l-Fazl, the chronicler of the Mughal emperor Akbar's reign, wrote of a charge of 1,500 military elephants, "How can the attributes of these rushing mountains be strung on the slender thread of words?"[9] In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, James Agee laments the weakness of words and would substitute for them photographs and "fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odors, plates of food and excrement."[10] He nevertheless devotes hundreds of pages to the description of physical objects. A similar incommensurability of images and human bodies, and of film and history, is the theme of Bill Nichols's writing on "questions of magnitude."[11] Like Susan Stewart, he holds that films and other works of art are always the products of reduction and miniaturization.[12] Although one could argue, as Nichols in fact does, that it is precisely the inadequacies and gaps in works of art that serve to restore the mystery and plenitude of the real, I wish first to argue here for the enhanced material presence of film—sometimes expressed by early avant-garde writers of the last century as *photogénie*.

Among the many references to photogénie that concern magic, poetry, and the fantastic, at least two others are relevant here. The first is that photogénie is a technological phenomenon. Photogénie, wrote the French film critic Léon Moussinac, is "that which is revealed to us solely by the cinematograph."[13] What is extraordinary about it is not its transmission of reality but its creation of a new mechanical image of reality. If we simply wanted to see reality, it is all around us, but seeing a film presents us with a strange apparition, a photochemical imprint of the world.[14] Although this image may extend normal optical vision through magnification, slow motion, and so on, these are secondary effects. Its primary value is its triumph over actual, direct vision. The resulting image does not so much transcend reality as produce an alien perception of reality, sensitive to unknown qualities. The surrealism of the film image lies precisely in making us aware of a reality beyond our knowledge.

This view of photogenie, however, tends to ignore its other salient feature, the "blocked" responses of the spectator. Superimposed on the "empirical" view of photography—its photochemical precision—is what Edgar Morin calls the "oneiric" view, a private perspective suspended somewhere between privilege and paralysis, with all the power to see but an incapacity to act.[15] This may account for the horrific experience of seeing certain film images. People who have witnessed disturbing events often report that they find them much more disturbing when they see them on film. The mechanical vision of the camera is more inhuman, more

unrelenting. Sensory deprivation in one area tends to isolate and heighten the other senses. Nichols notes that the absence of sound in the aptly titled *The Act of Seeing with one's own eyes* (Brakhage 1971) helps make that film (about autopsies in a Pittsburgh morgue) "one of the most unwatchable films ever made."[16] It leaves the viewer more helpless than usual, without an avenue of escape into the "realist" conventions of cinema. The notion of photogénie may also be seen as a heightening of cinematic "excess"—that physical residue in the image that resists absorption into symbol, narrative, or expository discourse. As excess, the by-products of mechanical vision defy the containment of the work and are more capable of touching the exposed sensibilities of the viewer.

More formal and melancholy than *The Act of Seeing* is the contemplation of bodies in Peter Greenaway's *Death in the Seine* (1988). In this fictional reconstruction, we see a succession of corpses fished out of the river Seine between 1796 and 1800 as they are registered and prepared for burial by two mortuary attendants. The camera passes gently over each body. In their naked state they form a catalogue of human types— male and female, weak and robust, fat and thin, adults, adolescents, children. We learn the few details recorded about them: a name, an occupation, sometimes the contents of their pockets. These people had witnessed the French Revolution and the events that followed. The film suggests that each body was the vessel of a largely private, unknown life, and even the little known about them was soon to be forgotten. The bodies seem cleansed of the pretensions and desires of the living. In viewing the film our experience is complicated by the knowledge that its "actors" are only pretending to be dead. They have entrusted their bodies to us with a kind of innocence. The film may be fiction, but the bodies are not.

Like Williams, Nichols cites various examples of human bodies in films at the extremes of exposure and destruction and their peculiar resonance with bodies outside it—in the Hindenberg disaster, the explosion of the NASA Challenger space vehicle, pornographic films, the exhumation of murder victims in El Salvador, the Pittsburgh morgue, and so on. Viewers are known to have strong physical responses to such images—of shock, flinching, faintness, sexual arousal, and even vomiting.[17] These responses underline Williams's point that in film viewing we do not necessarily feel for others, we feel for and in ourselves. It is also a fallacy to assume that vision is simply a way of possessing an "absent other" (as in much "gaze" theory) or to interpret the technologies of film as a one-way extension of the senses. This, in Williams's view, perpetuates the "lingering Cartesianism" of the disconnected voyeur, when in fact vision is much more directly connected to our own bodily processes.[18]

Well-mannered films, unlike the extreme genres of pornography and horror, mirror the kinds of bias and reticence about the body to be found

in the social body more generally. Mary Douglas has described the ways in which societies view the human body and relate its functions to material and spiritual life.[19] These involve hierarchies based on the physical position of body parts (e.g., high and low), their perceived or metaphorical role in cognition and emotion (the head, the "heart," the "bowels"), and their organic function (sensation, respiration, excretion, etc.). Douglas observes that excretion, while it is sometimes viewed matter-of-factly and sometimes as impure and dangerous, is virtually never associated with spirituality. In the Judeo-Christian tradition "the organs of nutrition are never attributed to God; they are at once recognized as signs of imperfection."[20] In other traditions the gods are fed, but they are not considered to excrete. Douglas is less forthcoming about the connections between sexuality and spirituality, perhaps because these show a wider range of cultural variation.

Symbolic hierarchies reveal themselves in the cinema by regulating what can and cannot be seen. They may also chart cultural changes, as in the gradual introduction of kissing in Indian and Indonesian cinema. "Realism" is thus quite clearly a relative term, for some of the most familiar bodily experiences are either completely absent in the cinema or are treated with exaggerated caution. These include, as might be expected, nudity, excretion, and sexual relations, but also other commonplace bodily experiences such as menstruation and masturbation, and more mundane acts such as spitting, scratching, shaving, cutting the nails, bathing, and so on. Robert Gardner observes that fiction films, despite their frequent claims to realism, "never show anything as ordinary or as innocent as someone taking a pee."[21] In *Le fantôme de la liberté* (1974), Buñuel mocks this anomaly by inverting it, making eating the disgusting private act and excretion the open, sociable one. Nonfiction films are not immune to these taboos, despite their commitment to actuality. In many respects they are even more limited because they are more constrained by their portrayal of real people and the need to respect their privacy. Both fiction and nonfiction, however—even including pornography—steer well clear of the ordinariness of our actual daily experiences, particularly in relation to our own bodies. The most frank films often reveal these constraints more clearly (in the coyness of their filming and editing) than films that avoid the taboo areas entirely.

The experienced, functioning body is routinely countered and contradicted in films by the sanitized body, the heroic body, and the beautiful body, as determined by the culture and social practices of the societies in which they are made. However, the homogeneity of the audience cannot be taken for granted, and this is increasingly true as film producers aim for multicultural audiences. The sex or age or background of the viewer does not necessarily guarantee a predictable response. Moreover, the char-

acteristics of the viewer's own body may have only a limited influence on how he or she sees the gendered, aging, or growing bodies of others in films. Assumptions about gendered ways of seeing, in particular, posit a polarized rather than a more complex and variable response, and they deny the possibility of both a nongendered sensibility and a more all-embracing sexuality. Attraction to (and identification with) the bodies of others in the cinema remains a more multi-faceted matter than one of gender, or even of age, physique, nationality, sexuality, or class. There are many gradations in how we respond, influenced as much by the narratives in which people appear as by their appearance. In the right context, the most loathsome character can be appealing and the plainest face beautiful.

The Body of the Spectator

Although Nichols's and Williams's extreme examples bring certain issues vividly (or morbidly) to light, it is important to remember that all films are designed to generate a continuous interplay of stimulus and bodily response between screen and spectator. This is exercised first at the dynamic and plastic levels of light, form, and editing, next at the level of representation, and finally in the imaginative spaces created by cinematic convention.

Williams characterizes the ideal response to the "gross" genres as jerks or spasms of various kinds—shudders, sobs, and orgasms.[22] It is no accident that Eisenstein chose the word "collision" to express the effect of juxtaposing two shots, and it is this concept of dynamic energy that permeates much of his writing on the various forms of montage—rhythmic, metric, graphic, planar, spatial, tonal, overtonal, contrapuntal, and so on. At one point he describes the "psycho-physiological" effect of a series of shots of farmers mowing with scythes, causing the audience to rock "from side to side."[23] Pudovkin, too, suggests that manipulating the editing tempo can affect the viewer physically and emotionally, although there is some confusion in his writing about whether this mimics or actually directs the viewer's psychological processes.[24] More generally in early Soviet cinema, editing is not a reflection of either the characters' or the viewer's psychology but a constant stream of authorial interventions designed to shock, make comparisons, and force complex connections.

The viewer's ability to recognize objects and persons is essential to most of these effects, which rely on conditioned responses. When we recognize an object we are, at the same time, attributing to it the physical qualities that we associate with it in our own lives. In viewing a person, or a face, we apply both our own prior experiences and the cultural associations prevalent in our society. There may also be a degree of idiosyncratic re-

sponse to items with very personal associations—the triumph of the *punctum*, as it were, over the *studium*. Apart from these responses, further variations of response are likely whenever there is cultural ambiguity, unfamiliarity with the subject, or an excess that cannot easily be assimilated to prior experience. This is perhaps most apparent in the borderline cases of horror and pornography.

Neuroscientists, art theorists, and phenomenologists have all observed that we do not perceive objects in any complete or unitary way. We do not in fact see them as whole but (unless we move around them) only one face of them at a time, from one precise perspective. For the rest, we make inferences about them drawn from the probabilities involved, and from the fragmentary stimuli of shading, position, and size in relation to other objects.[25] This means we actively construct objects in a manner that suggests they are as much projections of our own bodies as independent of them. Thus, if other bodies influence ours, we also reach out and enrich them with our own responses.

In films the close-up creates a proximity to the faces and bodies of others that we experience much less commonly in daily life. The conventions of social distance normally restrict proximity except in moments of intimacy. The cinema thus combines the private view with the public spectacle, creating a sharp sense of intimate exposure of the film subject and a secondary sense in the film viewer of being personally exposed by witnessing the other's exposure. The face is for most of us the locus of another person's being, perhaps reflecting our own feelings of how we are constructed as a person in other people's eyes. The face has been one of the constant preoccupations of filmmakers and film theorists. In an essay published in 1923, Béla Balázs stated his belief that the cinema would restore to humanity a language of facial expression rendered "illegible" by literacy and the printed word.[26]

Attraction to the human face, so evident in films, can be traced back through European portraiture to the point at which it vanishes in the early classical period, when the whole body was the object of attention. In much Greek sculpture and vase painting the face was formulaic, the body less so. But by the late Roman period, portrait sculpture had reached a high point that remains unsurpassed today, and at about the same time the portraits painted in wax on Egyptian mummies gave astonishingly lifelike faces to the heavily wrapped bodies within. The reciprocal relationship of body and face reemerges in the unclothed body of High Renaissance Italian painting where, except in portraiture, the treatment of faces was often routine. Here the body continually "robs" the face of importance. In northern Europe, where the body remained more often clothed, clothing and faces were rendered in finer detail and the body

remained at best a correct armature, at worst a lumpish form without articulation, movement, or grace.

Sculpture and photography give permanence to the human body and allow a perusal of it that film, with its closed time frame, denies the viewer. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the face has taken on such importance in the cinema. Although the camera can move around the body and show it in action (the ultimate promise of pornography), there is something unattainable and unsatisfying about its transience. The body's movements are glimpsed only in their passing, without the coherent framework that they have, for example, in dance. The film viewer is far more constrained than an observer in daily life, who can pause for as long as desired to watch workers at work, athletes practicing, children playing, or people sitting at a café. The face in films, although also seen in passing, becomes a more stable object of attention and a receptacle for many of our feelings about the body as a whole. As the most prominent part of the body not covered by clothing, it has tended to become this in any case.

Films linger on faces to such an extent that some (such as Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc* [1928], Bergman's *Persona* [1966], and Johan van der Keuken's *Beppie* [1965]) become choreographed studies of facial expressions. The face becomes an extension of the lines and surfaces of the body as a whole. Filmmakers look for faces in which the sensitivities and tactile qualities of the body are concentrated in the eyes, the mouth, the cheekbones, the textures of hair and skin. The face thus serves as an emblem for the body, but also as its point of emergence from the clothed body. The revelatory power of human faces resembles the revelatory power of film itself, which successively reveals new surfaces. Like the uncovering of the body and the release from social constraints that often accompanies it, film provides a sense of liberation that is fundamental to the magic, photogénie, and underlying eroticism of the cinema.

In exaggerating proximity, the close-up brings to the cinema a quasi-tactility absent in ordinary human relations. When we meet others in day-to-day exchanges we do not explore their faces with our fingertips, but in the cinema we come close to doing this, becoming especially alive to the liquidity of the eyes and mouth and, at a more interpretive level, the flickering signs of emotions. Perez cites Ortega y Gasset's observation that proximity also emphasizes volume, or three-dimensionality. This applies as much to objects as to faces or other parts of the human body: "If we take up an object, an earthen jar, for example, and bring it near enough to the eyes, these converge on it . . . and seem to embrace it, to take possession of it, to emphasize its rotundity. Thus the object seen at close range acquires the indefinable corporeality and solidity of filled volume."[27] In this way, the cinema allows us to grasp the corporeality of inanimate objects with what might be called a "prehensile" vision. It alters our relation

to the material world in terms of volume, weight, textures, colors, and detail. It allows us to incorporate objects into our own experience in ways that may reflect more directly the experience of those who handle them intimately, whether they be makers of pottery or farmers or industrial workers. Many films explore the possibilities of a special relationship to the material world. Shinsuke Ogawa's final (posthumous) film *Manzan Benigaki* (2001), for example, concerns a village's intensive involvement with growing, preparing, and packing the red persimmon. Clément Perron's *Day After Day* (1962) shows the way in which machines and products dominate the senses in a paper mill. Robert Gardner's films, such as *Rivers of Sand* (1975) and *Forest of Bliss* (1985), explore how human bodies and material objects oscillate between fluid life, dead matter, and symbol.

A related phenomenon is the involuntary mimicry involved in seeing others' bodies, a mimicry that may even extend to inanimate objects. This response is observable in earliest infancy, when babies imitate their mothers' facial expressions and cry upon hearing others cry, and it has probably evolved as part of the structuring of the human nervous system. It has both a motor and emotional dimension, affecting how we hold our bodies, often in a state of tension and unconsummated action. Merleau-Ponty described the experience as one of "a postural 'impregnation' of my own body by the conducts I witness."[28] The notion of impregnation suggests a deeper response than empathy, as if the body had been struck, or had taken on the physical qualities of the other body.

In discussing mimicry, the psychologist Martin Hoffman notes Adam Smith's observation of 1759 that spectators watching someone perform a high-wire act "naturally writhe and twist and balance their own bodies as they see him do."[29] A similar response can be observed in people watching a football match or even a game of snooker. Hoffman, citing an essay by Theodor Lipps of 1906, divides this response into two phases, the first a motor response, the second an emotional response, although the two occur in close succession. In the first, the spectator involuntarily and unconsciously imitates the expressions and postures of the other person and tends to move in synchrony with them. In the second, there is feedback from these expressions and postures to the emotions, creating feelings appropriate to them.[30] As evidence of this, if one artificially adopts a particular facial expression such as a smile, it tends to generate the related feelings of happiness. Darwin, who made a study of facial expressions, was the first to state the feedback hypothesis, and William James adopted it as a central tenet, writing that "we feel sorry because we cry."[31] Thus, at one level, the ability of filmmakers to create corporeal responses in viewers may be as basic as showing them certain facial expressions, and this may be transmitted across the technologies of recording and projec-

tion, as though by an actual personal contact. As Morin puts it, "the universal word of photography—'smile'—implies a subjective communication from person to person through the intermediacy of film, which becomes the bearer of a message of the soul."[32] Gell makes a related point when he says that we approach art objects as if they had "physiognomies." "When we see a picture of a smiling person, we attribute an attitude of friendliness to 'the person in the picture.' " We have access to a "depicted mind."[33]

Our relationship to images involves not only looking across boundaries but undergoing effects from across them, much as we undergo effects from looking at people in daily life and being looked at by them. In this sense, the artwork acquires a body, or as Gell puts it, "to all intents and purposes it becomes a person, or at least a partial person . . . a congealed residue of performance and agency in object-form."[34] Chris Pinney has described the "corpothetic" effect of Indian religious images, with which worshippers establish a relationship that differs markedly from the more disconnected perusal of images prevailing in Western and Westernized countries. Indeed, he regards this latter cooler, "Kantian" relationship with images as more the exception than the rule.[35] In India it was associated only with the new "naturalistic" school of art introduced from Europe, in which there was no direct address to the viewer. By contrast, in traditional Hindu iconography (as well as much modern religious and calendar art) the deity looks at the beholder and the beholder experiences this being-looked-at (or *darshan*) as *akarshan*. In some cases the image merges with a living person, as is the case with all photographs. (This is also the destiny of all movie stars.) Gell notes that in the custom of worshipping young girls as the goddess Durga in Nepal, the girl is perceived at once as the living goddess and the image of the goddess, or *murti*.[36] Such fluid interchanges can be perceived as dangerous. One might predict that disapproval of "corpothetic" responses to art would emanate from those authorities that, in Douglas's terms, seek to impose order through control of the body. And indeed, Indian popular movies, with their extravagant use of visual effects, color, and dance numbers, are often dismissed by critics and contrasted unfavorably with Satyajit Ray's "neorealist austerity" because of their "superfluity of corporeal affectivity."[37]

The cinema operates in yet another way to affect the spectator corporeally through its construction of imaginary spaces and its evocation of real ones. As we have seen, film viewing is far from a passive experience. Recognition of objects and persons involves a constant testing of hypotheses about what we see, drawn from our learned and automatic habits of perception (interpreting clues about shape, volume, arrangement in depth, etc.) and from our prior experience. Our sense of space in the cinema relies upon recognition, but also upon piecing together the shots into a

larger imaginative structure. In participating in this construction, we are drawn further into the film in mind and body.

The earliest films, made from 1895 onward, tended to emphasize their own picturelike qualities—framed images to be regarded as objects—although occasionally, as in some of the Lumière brothers' films, this to-be-looked-at quality was overwhelmed by the unexpected autonomy of the images.[38] Exhibitors presented films as short, self-contained spectacles that created wonder and amusement but did not invite much audience identification. Recognition was essential to their effectiveness, and mimicry was often an element as well. Although these films sometimes addressed the spectator directly (as in the famous scene in *The Great Train Robbery* [1903] of a pistol fired at the audience), they did not attempt to construct a filmic space *around* the spectator.

With the further development of cinema, filmmakers discovered new ways of creating bodily sensations, exploiting the kinesthetic potential of images through camera work but even more profoundly through narrative. Another important discovery was that by means of editing the spectator could be made to "inhabit" the three-dimensional space of the characters. The formal and psychological principles involved in this have been explored in considerable detail from the time of Hugo Munsterberg's writings on film in 1916, to Pudovkin's in the 1920s, to later studies by Balázs, Arnheim, Burch, Oudart, Bordwell, Deleuze, and others. Whatever their particular bias—psychological, formalist, historicist—these theories all attempt to account for the way in which the consciousness of the spectator is altered and guided by the cinema, in both its perceptual and cognitive responses. Whether one characterizes the spectator as an ideologically determined subject, or an "imaginary observer," or the filmmaker's surrogate, it is clear that the cinema has powerful ways of "incorporating" the spectator into the film. As the word suggests, this involvement is as much corporeal as psychological. By providing a series of perceptual clues, films construct spaces analogous to those we experience in everyday life, as we sample visual and other sensory information and construct a seemingly smooth and complete picture of our surroundings. As in everyday life, this information is far from complete, and we fill in the gaps with suppositions. Films create the information and gaps in stylistically varied ways, and in film viewing this very stylistic nonconformity, or distinctiveness, acts as a further stimulus to our creative response. The cinematic account may in fact be far from "smooth"—it is often deliberately unsmooth and oblique—but we still feel the urgency of completion, even of abstract and "impossible" connections. As David Bordwell points out, "The act of filling in must then include our willingness to accept, in the name of perceptibility, very great violations of conventional or internally inconsistent space and time."[39]

This interpreting and filling in is the spectator's version of the cinematic imagination at work. It creates an almost continuous impetus toward convergence with the objects and bodies on the screen. In this and its withholding can be found the attraction and many of the "photogenic" qualities of film images. Films exceed normal observation and yet throw up huge barriers to it. They give us the privileged viewpoints of the close-up, the enclosing frame, the photographic "look" of things—their lighted textures, their extended focal lengths, their monochrome range in black and white—indeed, everything that heightens or defamiliarizes everyday perception—yet at the same time they confine us to limited frames, give us limited time to inspect them, and in other ways deprive us of our will. This becomes a gap on a larger scale, of a different order. It can create a compulsion to see, even to see something terrible.

The receptive, dreamlike state of film viewing adds a sense of inevitability to one's perceptions of how people behave on the screen, a sensation that seems to increase with the repeated viewing of a film. The mythic status of film stars derives partly from this accumulated exposure and redundancy. The effect may be better understood if one observes what happens when a filmmaker sees his or her own film. At various points along the way the filmmaker has actively controlled the images of the people in the film, but this disappears once the images have become fixed. Viewing the film can then become almost insupportable, for there is a renewed sense of responsibility for images that have by now assumed a life of their own, often in what seems an arbitrary fashion. A process that was thought to be completed returns with an intimation of its original indeterminacy, leaving the filmmaker powerless, with the sense of being stranded in the present.

The Body of the Filmmaker

Film viewing involves the conjunction of two acts of looking and two bodies, at the very least. The spectator views the objects on the screen—objects that have already been seen and selected with the camera. It thus goes without saying that whatever is seen has already been mediated by the filmmaker's vision, but this is more than a process of thought: it is as much a physical act. The presence of the filmmaker's body becomes a "residue" in the work of the kind alluded to by Gell. The human beings in the film create another residue that is not so different from the filmmaker's own, for both are imprinted in the film's images as equivalent facts. This is perhaps most evident when the filmmaker is holding the camera, for the camera then records the filmmaker's movements and

those of the film's subjects in parallel. The image is affected as much by the body behind the camera as those before it.

Like other artists, filmmakers see many transient events that they would like to show to others. In effect, they want these events to repeat themselves for others to see. It seems an unattainable dream, and yet with a camera it is almost possible. The mimetic longings of the filmmaker are satisfied by the camera with an immediacy quite unprecedented in previous times in the production of poems, novels, and paintings.

Exactly why one should wish to show others what one has seen is another matter. Is it an affirmation of the thing itself, or of one's own vision, or a desire to command the consciousness of others? Or is it perhaps to transcend oneself, to overflow one's self-containment? Sometimes the descriptions of the filmmaking process sound rather like the last. For all the avant-gardists' descriptions of the camera's mechanical autonomy, they sound suspiciously like the experiencing body of the filmmaker. This begins historically with still photography and is not merely an expression of male *jouissance*. Julia Margaret Cameron, who began making photographs in 1863, wrote: "I longed to arrest all beauty that came before me, and at length the longing has been satisfied."[40] In Vertov's celebrations of the mobile camera, the camera is not so much anthropomorphized as that Vertov himself becomes a flying object. Basil Wright is mesmerized by the flight of kingfishers, the movements of a fisherman's arms, the legs of children in a dance. While filming, Rouch experiences *ciné-transe*. "Filmmaking for me is to write with one's eyes, one's ears, with one's body; it's to enter into something. . . . I am a ciné-Rouch in ciné-trance in the act of ciné-filming. . . . It's the joy of filming, the 'ciné-plaisir.' "[41] Rouch notes the synchrony of himself with his subject, the "harmony . . . which is in perfect balance with the movements of the subjects."[42] The ecstasy of the filming-body is captured in John Marshall's description: "You have this feeling, 'I'm on; I'm on.' You know, 'I'm getting it. It's happening; it's happening.' "[43] Here it is definitely Marshall who is "on," not the camera. The sensation, for Robert Gardner, is "as close to cinematic orgasm as I'll get."[44]

We must conclude that for many filmmakers there is an ecstatic, even erotic pleasure in filming others. This resembles the creative process in other arts but differs from it in its relation to its materials, which are almost always "found" objects, even if prepared to be discovered by the film. Perhaps a maker of collages or life-masks feels something equivalent, even though not responding so directly to the living human body and its fleeting expressions. The filmmaker "makes" nothing in an obvious sense but conducts an activity in conjunction with the living world. The pleasure of filming erodes the boundaries between filmmaker and subject, between the bodies filmmakers see and the images they make. Filming is

fundamentally acquisitive in "incorporating" the bodies of others. The filmmaker's consciousness must also expand to accommodate these other bodies, but it cannot hold them all; they must be given to others—or at least returned to the world. In achieving this, the bodies of the subject, the filmmaker, and the viewer become interconnected and in some ways undifferentiated.

To speak of the dissolution of boundaries in this way is really to speak of the often fragile identity of the filmmaker at the moment of filming and, later, when viewing a film. Sometimes indifferent, sometimes obsessed, filmmakers experience a wide range of feelings toward their subjects. Occasionally another person's physical presence overpowers the filmmaker's consciousness. This results partly from the synchrony that Hoffman and Rouch both note, and from an internal mimicry of the other person's gestures, postures, voice, and emotional states. It can produce a sensation of power and expectancy, a willing of others to be precisely what they are, and to do precisely what they are doing, as they appear in the view-finder. This becomes a spiritual synchrony, perhaps best expressed in Marshall's words: *It's happening. I'm on.*

The Body of the Film

The human body has often been pictured as a machine. Early in the twentieth century it began to be described as a factory consuming and processing raw materials.[45] Well before this, however, the dissection of bodies by Leonardo and Vesalius had established the mechanical principles governing the joints and the circulation of blood. In the sixteenth century, human vision was often equated with the *camera obscura*, the principle of which had been known since antiquity. As well, the camera obscura was taken to reflect the physical structure of the human eye and, at a more abstract level, the relation of the eye to the mind. Soon after its invention, the camera became a mechanical extension of the body, to be enlisted in surveillance, initially for police "mug shots" and later in prisons, banks, shopping malls, and offices.[46] The interplay of body and machine subsequently became a recurrent theme in discussions of films and what they do. As in the idea of photogénie, photographic images were held to transcend normal vision. For Louis Delluc, the camera took on the characteristics of a body, but a body liberated from previous physical, cultural, and psychological constraints. For Fernand Léger and the Futurists the film camera produced a new "machine aesthetic." Jean Epstein called it "a standardized metal brain, manufactured and sold in thousands of copies, which transforms the external world into art."[47] In Vertov's rapturous imagining, the camera was the "kino-eye," capable of a vision freed for-

ever from "human immobility." Such conceptions of the camera as an autonomous body are partly signs of rebellion against academic art, but they are also a paradoxical way of acknowledging the camera's connection with the bodies it touches, including that of the filmmaker. Vertov went on to imagine the camera as a body fused with his own. "I am in constant motion. I draw near, then away, from objects. I crawl under, I climb onto them. I move apace with the muzzle of a galloping horse. I plunge full speed into a crowd."[48] Nineteenth-century novelists had already produced a mobile eye, sometimes anonymous, sometimes associated with an identifiable narrator. The focus on the senses, often dissociated from one another and yet creating a heightened sensory awareness, continued apace in the modern novel. Joyce conceived of *Ulysses* (1922) as an "encyclopaedia of the body," with fifteen of its eighteen chapters corresponding to separate bodily organs.[49] In novels and in many films (especially in the silent era), there is a shifting hypertrophy of one sense or another, brought about by their separation. As in *The Act of Seeing with one's own eyes*, lack of sound is capable of producing an almost unbearable acuity of vision. Equally, a dark or severely limited screen makes sounds more evocative, an effect explored as soon as the sound film was invented by Hitchcock, Lang, and, later, Bresson.

Unlike Joyce's procedure in *Ulysses*, it is unusual for filmmakers to relate their films so closely to the human body and its organs, perhaps because a film is already so closely identified with the eye and ear. (A very few fiction films, such as *The Last Laugh* [1924], *Lady in the Lake* [1946], and *Sunset Boulevard* [1950], do, however, turn the camera into a living or dead character.) Yet filmmakers have inherited from classical thought certain notions about the body of the work as well as the "corpus" of works of an artist. Aristotle compared the plots of tragedies to living organisms compounded of specific parts. Similarly, filmmakers often conceive of a film as an organic whole with a beginning, middle, and end, corresponding roughly to exposition, conflict, and resolution. These, in turn, can be seen in a more corporeal light, corresponding first to cognition and sensory perception, then the muscle of action, and finally the emotional or organic processes of release. Filmmakers are known to refer to the skeleton and flesh of a film, its intellectual framework versus its "heart" or "guts," and so on. Films are also seen to have a life of their own in the public domain, a time span not unlike the stages of life of an organism. And although far in spirit from the mechanical-body notions of the avant-gardists, the psychoanalytical film criticism of the 1970s linked film to many of the attributes of the (mostly male) body—its desires, its "gaze," its self-reflection.

Films are thus seen in several different contexts as symbolic bodies—but to whose body do they correspond? Is it the body of the subject? Is it

the body of the spectator or the filmmaker? Or is it an "open" body capable of receiving all of these?

Alfred Gell insisted that art was more a matter of agency than aesthetics, of power than of meaning. Art operates in a field of desires and conventions, as a technology of influence and "enchantment."[50] And yet, this potential of art has its own material being. It draws those around it to it—to its own body. It acquires a physical force of its own. A film's power is as much gravitational as outwardly directed—toward a place that W.J.T. Mitchell has described as a "black hole" in the discourses of verbal culture.[51] Much has been said about what the filmmaker and film viewer want. But one might ask, taking a cue from Sontag and, later, Mitchell, "What does a film want?"[52] Beyond influence or aesthetics or meaning, films are made to become objects in the world, to exist in their own right—as Sontag puts it, in the "luminousness of the thing in itself."[53] If a film wants anything, it is to preserve its immediacy each time it is seen, undimmed by age or fashion or reputation. In this, of course, it can never be satisfied. A film wants more power, more autonomy than it is ever granted by historians or critics or even by the filmmaker, whom everyone expects to know what "it is trying to say." A film knows its own weaknesses. At the height of its power, even the best film gives an intimation of what it has lost and what, if perfected, it might have been.

Notes

1. *Three Cases of Murder* (1953), Wendy Toye, David Eady, and George More O'Ferrall (directors), Wessex Films for British Lion Films, Ltd, 99 minutes. The segment referred to is "In the Picture" based on a story by Roderick Wilkinson, with a script by Donald B. Wilson, directed by Wendy Toye.

2. Perez 1998: 26–28, Bazin 1967: 16. Perez has somewhat modified Hugh Gray's translation, which is: "an hallucination that is also a fact."

3. Barthes 1975: 66–67.

4. Douglas 1973: 12.

5. Williams 1991.

6. Theweleit 1989.

7. Creed 1995.

8. Williams 1995: 15.

9. Keay 2000: 310.

10. Agee & Evans 1960: 13.

11. See Nichols 1986, 1991.

12. See Susan Stewart 1984.

13. Cited in Morin 1956: 23.

14. Garry Winogrand has said, "I photograph to find out what something will look like photographed" (Sontag 1977: 197).

15. Morin 1956: 24.

16. Nichols 1991: 144.

17. Nichols 1994: 76.

18. Williams 1995: 14–15.

19. See M. Douglas 1966, 1970.

20. M. Douglas 1973: 13.

21. Gardner & Östör 2001: 41.

22. Williams 1991: 4–5.

23. Eisenstein 1957: 80.

24. Pudovkin 1960: 73.

25. For an introduction to many of these principles, see E. H. Gombrich's classic *Art and Illusion* (1960). See also *The Perceptual World* (1990), edited by Irvin Rock.

26. Balázs 1952: 39–42.

27. Cited in Perez 1998: 135.

28. Merleau-Ponty 1964: 118.

29. Cited in Hoffman 2000: 37.

30. Ibid., pp. 39–45.

31. Ibid., p. 40.

32. "Le maître mot de la photographie 'Souriez' implique une communication subjective de personne à personne par le truchement de la pellicule, porteuse du message d'âme" (Morin 1956: 25–26).

33. Gell 1998: 15.

34. Ibid., p. 68.

35. Pinney 2001.

36. Gell 1998: 67.

37. Pinney 2000: 20.

38. Vaughan 1999: 3.

39. Bordwell 1985: 247.

40. Cited in Sontag 1977: 183.

41. Fulchignoni 1981: 7–8.

42. Rouch 1975: 94.

43. Anderson & Benson 1993: 144.

44. Gardner & Östör 2001: 37.

45. In an unpublished paper, Jakob Tanner has discussed in some detail the illustrations of "human machines" in Fritz Kahn's popular anatomy of the human body *Das Leben des Menschen*, which first appeared in the 1920s.

46. Tagg 1988.

47. Epstein 1974: 92.

48. Vertov 1984: 17.

49. Danius 2002: 150.

50. See Gell 1992, 1998.

51. Mitchell 1995: 543.

52. Sontag 1966; Mitchell 1996, in an essay entitled "What Do Pictures Really Want?"

53. Sontag 1966: 13.