

the theories, methods, and circumstances lying beneath the remarkable work. Its discursive form provides the very sense of "spontaneity and gravity" that the filmmakers see in the individuals they follow. They honestly and, hence, hesitantly remember the time spent filming *Forest of Bliss*; reflecting on their respective intentions; discerning and discussing detail and significance they would later perceive in the rushes but that escaped them at the time; interrogating the ethics of their unsparing depiction of the Dom Raja, the Untouchable King of the Burning Ground; and considering how they refused the temptation to provide "portraits" of their three main characters. As Gardner notes at some point, without in any way belaboring the withering implications for conventional documentary style, "The very idea of finding a way to reproduce some reality that can be called another person is, on its face, a total absurdity."

In short, their discussion evokes the tension between serendipity and scripting, and between happenstance and inevitability, that lies at the heart of nonfiction filmmaking. However purposeful, the open-mindedness of the filmmakers allows them to make discoveries in their process, as well as to have chosen an editing style befitting the physical, moral, and ethnographic intensity of their experience. It is a style that reinvests their profilmic experience with the kind of ambiguities that open images up to diverse interpretations rather than grounding them within the linear stories or points of view so often imposed by voice and narration. With *Forest of Bliss*, learning to see is a process of finding one's way through the potential signifiers of the image, deriving clues to meaning through repeated encounters and detailed inspection.


While reflecting on this process, Gardner stops for a moment to consider a shot of a blind man walking, "Life is very problematic, but we develop incredible strategies despite the most daunting handicaps. This is not the best of all possible worlds, as I have already quoted from Buñuel. It has all kinds of difficulties, and not the least of them is finding one's way." Through detailed examination, Gardner finds a route to understand the image he recorded, shifting its meaning:

I remember when I shot this scene that what attracted me to it had nothing at all to do with what we are now discussing. It was what he was wearing. He had on the more beautifully laundered and pressed *kurta*. . . . It was the starkness of the contrast between his dress and the mess through which he was navigating so delicately that caught my eye. I finally realized by the way he was holding his left hand that he was blind. His hand was like a magic wand or antenna that informed him and his surroundings of his coming.

This attention to details—and, above all, the sensitivity to the embodied nature of experience and to experience as the ground of selfhood, so rare in contemporary anthropology—continually reveals connections and stories that become defining of the cultural moment; in watching the elegance with which the blind man finds his way, one learns about both the individual and the space he inhabits

and negotiates. The surprise of the individual's actual blindness returns to comment on the apparent blindness of a filmmaker or viewer learning to see in a new way.

One wonders if there might not be further applications of hypermedia practice to the revelations of a film like *Forest of Bliss*. While one is grateful for the substantial technical improvements of the DVD, as well as the new facility to view and review discrete shots, it does not begin to exhaust the fecund hypertextuality of the film itself. There is still immense potential here for a more ambitious DVD that would in itself integrate and juxtapose imagery and language—from the film, the outtakes, and the sound track, as well as from verbal reflections and critical writing on the film, or even on Benares or Hinduism more generally. Yet, in an age of fast-evolving media, *Making "Forest of Bliss"* already goes a long way not only to assuring enduring access to the original work but also to providing us with a heightened means of apprehending and comprehending it on new levels.

The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Modern Anthropology. Anna Grimshaw. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2001. 222 pp.

Visual Methods in Social Research. Marcus Banks. New York City: Sage Publications, 2001. 201 pp.

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In 1962, the Belgian Africanist Luc de Heusch remarked that on occasion "an ethnographer goes so far as to publish pictures of men he has known and liked, but does so with considerable reluctance as if the emotive power of the picture, being foreign to his purpose embarrasses him." One symptom of the extent of this iconophobia—of the extent to which both the pictorial and the emotional remain foreign to anthropological purposes—is the concept of "visualism" (Fabian 1983). Reductively identifying observation with vision, the rhetoric of visualism has since become common currency for disparaging the fashion in which earlier generations of anthropologists are alleged to have stood above the fray, as if both observation is exclusively visual and visual experience is altogether nonparticipatory.

Anna Grimshaw and Marcus Banks, two of the leading figures in visual anthropology in Britain, have recently authored books that are very different from one another, but which are both at a definite angle to the discipline's iconophobia. Grimshaw's *The Ethnographer's Eye* deploys an aesthetic that is "self-consciously cinematic" (p. xi) and is conceived as a "manifesto" that argues for a "new agenda" for visual anthropology (p. 172)—not by making a case for it as a legitimate subdiscipline but, rather, by contending that the visual, even as it may be disavowed, is in fact central to 20th-century anthropology as a whole.

Various "ways of seeing" have structured anthropological sensibilities over the years and, although her book contains no discourse analysis of visual, or indeed any other, tropification in anthropological writing, Grimshaw teases out their epistemological and political implications.

*The Ethnographer's Eye* has two parts. The first, "Visualizing Anthropology," proceeds by way of a series of suggestive alliances and oppositions and is organized around the cinematic principle of montage. Grimshaw recuperates the figure of W. H. R. Rivers as a subversive modernist whose graphic genealogical method and later ruminations on the primitive "protopathic" aspects of human personality, that come to be eclipsed by the cognitive "epicritic" dimensions, are conceived as a dynamic, multiperspectival "Cubism" with affinities to the cinematic innovations of D. W. Griffith (of *Birth of a Nation* infamy), specifically his placement of the camera in the middle of the action to shoot close-ups and cutaways, evoking a world of complexity and conflict—in short, of modernity. Whereas Rivers, who died in 1922, is extolled for his epistemological anxieties, Bronislaw Malinowski and Robert Flaherty, whose most significant works both appeared in 1922, are characterized as romantic visionaries who cultivated the image of proceeding intuitively through revelation. (While Rivers was in the thick of the "Great War," Malinowski spent most of it marooned on a Pacific Island.) Malinowski's prose is strikingly visual, even "painterly," while Flaherty's static camera and repudiation of montage expresses his "universal humanism" (p. 51). If the visibility of Rivers's early anthropological modernism (she uses the term in a sense quite unlike Marilyn Strathern) was fragmented, multiperspectival, and anxious, Malinowski's visibility appears as one above all of innocence. Both Flaherty and Malinowski urged a return to the vagaries of experience, took the conceptualization or perception of the "native's point of view" as their end, and recoiled from industrial civilization. Paradoxically, Grimshaw argues that it was the particular form of visibility animating Malinowski's prose that rendered the camera and other scopic technologies unnecessary. However, Flaherty and Malinowski were both succeeded in their respective domains by an era of professionalization and consolidation, which she associates with two figures in particular, John Grierson and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown. Their work is infused with an Enlightenment vision of the world, one emphasizing order, integration, and rationality, and, finally, complicitous with governmental surveillance, and political control both at home and abroad. She suggests that both figures achieved "closure" through a specious holism which denied "subjectivity, agency, and history" (p. 66).

Some of the details of Grimshaw's argument strike me at least as improbable. Flaherty did experiment with sound and was not as resolutely a silent—or indeed as immobile—a filmmaker as she implies. Notwithstanding the state sponsorship of his work, Grierson was set on using cinema to expand democratic participation rather than as a means of surveillance. Moreover, many of the films with

which Grierson was involved, such as *Night Mail*, *Song of Ceylon*, and even *Drifters*, however stylistically synthetic they may have been, did seek to evoke the subjectivities and histories of their (romanticized, to be sure) subjects. And the *succès de scandale* of surrealism, and such journals as *Documents* and *Minotaure*, as well as the work of filmmakers such as Cavalcanti, Ruttmann, Buñuel, Vertov, Deren, and Jennings are hard to reconcile with her contention that by the late 1920s, "the revolutionary moment in art, science, politics, and intellectual life had been effectively extinguished" (p. 58). Nonetheless, Grimshaw's overall template, with its reciprocal provocations and unanticipated affinities between cinema and anthropology—encapsulated in her coupling of Rivers and Griffith, Malinowski and Flaherty, and Radcliffe-Brown and Grierson—is highly original and replete with suggestive implications.

The second half of *The Ethnographer's Eye*, "Anthropological Visions," is animated by a contrary aesthetic of *mise-en-scène* and takes as its subject some of the most significant ethnographic filmmakers since the War: Jean Rouch, David and Judith MacDougall, and Melissa Llewelyn-Davies. Whereas nonfiction filmmakers engaged anew with the world, Grimshaw sees anthropologists as enscencing themselves all the more in an insular academy, content with reifying the ideas and methods of the forebears. While Evans-Pritchard, Rodney Needham, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and her own mentor Edmund Leach were surely all in their own ways exceptions to this trend, it is hard to quibble with her overall observation that the discipline has become progressively less public, less *engagé*, less relevant to the wider world. Of these chapters, the best by far is on Jean Rouch, whom she characterizes as a modern-day seer, incarnating a new, expansive humanism (p. 91). Whereas the American Direct Cinema was born during the Civil Rights struggle (although very few of its practitioners were, in fact, minorities or, for that matter, women), Grimshaw notes that Rouch's *cinéma vérité* emerged in the context of the revolutionary struggle for Independence in West Africa. Analysing in turn *Les maîtres fous*, *Jaguar*, *Moi, un noir*, and *Chronique d'un été*, she depicts Rouch as a trickster figure, a capricious spirit hovering in the shadows, appealing more to the body than the mind, subverting topologies of cultural difference, and generally disordering our senses and habitual ways of knowing—creating in his cinema a new site of possession and transformation. In a brilliant comparison between the two films, she notes that while the narrative of a journey functions as a shared structural principle in *Les maîtres fous* and *Jaguar*, each ends up a mirror image of the other, with the city confining the Hauka migrants in *Les maîtres fous* but liberating Lam, Illo, and Damouré as historicized subjects in *Jaguar*.

To my mind, the least satisfactory chapter in the book is that on the films of David and Judith MacDougall, pioneers of a participatory form of observational filmmaking in anthropology. In analyzing their Turkana and Jie films, those shot with various Aboriginal Australian communities,

and finally the Indian *Photo Wallahs* and David's Sardinian *Tempus de Baristas*, she opposes their cinema to Rouch's, seeing it as exemplifying a disembodied (yet romantic) Enlightenment will to reason and clarity, one running "counter to the intrinsic properties of the site itself" (p. 123), an outmoded exemplification of salvage anthropology, reinscribing, even reifying, cultural difference. Whereas she perceives their classic *To Live with Herds* as "predicated on the integrity of pastoralist life," most viewers see the film as an extraordinarily subtle and delicate evocation of the fragility of pastoralist life in a newly independent nation, and one that, far from artificially reifying distinctions between colony and postcolony, or tradition and modernity, relativizes them in displaying how such terms retain their reconfigured valency as generative, structuring principles for the film's postcolonial pastoralists. One senses here a rather unfortunate embarrassment on the part of the author in the presence of nondemonstrative evidence of a hybrid lifeworld and structure of feeling that cannot be neatly accommodated within a postmodernist narrative—one that in the final instance remains, albeit despite itself, a fundamentally Western project.

The final chapter, on the remarkable television work of Melissa Llewelyn-Davies, traces a trajectory in her 25-year oeuvre on the Maasai from a holistic and knowledge-based Enlightenment project, deploying an expository (and, paradoxically, "visualist") aesthetic of "telling" in *Maasai Women* and *Maasai Manhood*, toward a dialogical orientation to informal experience and open-ended subjectivity, marked by a revelatory (yet, paradoxically, "discursive") aesthetic of "showing," in *The Women's Olamal*, *Diary of a Maasai Village*, and *Memories and Dreams*. Grimshaw shows very convincingly how the refraction of Llewelyn-Davies's evolving ethnographic interests through the "prism" of feminism and, by way of the very public medium of television, makes her "a critical figure in the creation of a different kind of anthropology. It is based on dalliness, interpersonal exchange, and informality—the fundamental groundedness of ethnographic practice. It is a feminist anthropology" (p. 170).

While *The Ethnographer's Eye* comes across as an impassioned cry against the growing puritanism of academic anthropology and a plea for the "open, eclectic spirit" (p. 173) that marked an earlier era of anthropology, but which has been lost outside the extraordinary, and largely overlooked, work of these ethnographic filmmakers, Marcus Banks' *Visual Methods in Social Research* is a valuable handbook on both the use and analysis of visual media of all kinds, and, particularly, still photography, television, film, and digital images on the internet. Contrary to Michel Foucault and other theorists of an inherently "objectifying" gaze, Banks persuasively presents visual research as "an actively, and perhaps inherently, collaborative project between image maker and image subjects" (p. 112). This wide-ranging book addresses everything from indigenous media and Third World television (including the reception of the Indian soap opera *Hum Log* studied by

Veena Das, and the Egyptian *Hilmiyya Nights* studied by Lila Abu-Lughod), and the display of family photographs and exchange of imagery, both in India and Euro-America; photo-elicitation with still and moving images (including Patsy and Tim Asch and Linda Connor's *Jero on Jero* [1980], Yannick Geroy's work in the south of France, Paolo Chiozzi's in Tuscany, and Stephen Gold's more controlled experiments with Vietnamese refugees in California), to the presentation of results of image-based research in multimedia projects and digital databases—including the author's own Alfred C. Haddon Catalogue ([www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/isca/haddon/](http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/isca/haddon/)), which contains digital information on an astonishing 1,600 ethnographic films (or lengths of film) lodged in museums and archives around the world. The most fascinating section of the book, however, is Banks's account of his own research on mirror-work and embroidered textiles in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

*Visual Methods in Social Research* is limited, in my view unduly so, to a consideration of what the author calls an image's "external" rather than its "internal" narratives, which he sees as the proper object of literary criticism and cultural studies rather than empirical sociology. Internal narratives are an image's "content," the story it communicates, while external narratives are constituted in and by its production and viewing. The problem is not simply that the form itself always has a content, and that the story communicated by imagery is always in part a function of its social and cultural context, but that justifying inattention to "internal" narratives on the grounds that their study is somehow unempirical or unsociological is tantamount to arguing that we should shun symbolic, structuralist, or poststructuralist analyses of myths, folk tales, and text and discourse of all kinds, which is rightly inconceivable. This said, the book is the first of its kind and will be of considerable use to anyone engaged in sociological research either with or on a multitude of different kinds of analogue and digital imagery. It is also accompanied by an original website, which is being continually updated, and contains a host of useful references and links ([www.rsl.ox.ac.uk/isca/vismeth](http://www.rsl.ox.ac.uk/isca/vismeth)).

In sum, while critics continue to denounce anthropology's putative visualism when the discipline is in fact striking above all for its antivisualism, and pervasive iconophobia, both books here under review herald a novel moment, one when anthropologists are beginning to engage anew with visual aspects of social experience, and not only consider visual media legitimate objects of anthropological study but actually incorporate them integrally into the fabric of their own research.