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Tracing the Individual Body: Photography, Detectives, and Early Cinema

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Circulation, Mobility, Modernity, and the Body

A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body.

Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller"

It could be argued that techniques of circulation define the intersecting transformations in technology and industry that we call modernity. By "modernity" I refer less to a demarcated historical period than to a change in experience. This new configuration of experience was shaped by a large number of factors, which were clearly dependent on the change in production marked by the Industrial Revolution. It was also, however, equally characterized by the transformation in daily life wrought by the growth of capitalism and advances in technology: the growth of urban traffic, the distribution of mass-produced goods, and successive new technologies of transportation and communication. While the nineteenth century witnessed the principal conjunction of these transformations in Europe and America, with a particular crisis coming towards the turn of the century, modernity has not yet exhausted its transformations and has a different pace in different areas of the globe.

The earliest fully developed image of this transformation of experience comes, I believe, with the railway, which embodies the complex realignment of practices which modern circulation entails. As Wolfgang Schivelbusch has demonstrated, the railway not only depended upon but also allowed expansion of industrial production, with broad networks for transportation of both raw materials and commodities, as well as the restructuring of

both rural and urban space as the site of circulation. This new landscape, which was organized according to circulatory needs, exemplifies the perceptual and environmental changes which define the experience of modernity: a new mastery of the incremental instants of time; a collapsing of distances; and a new experience of the human body and perception shaped by traveling at new rates of speed and inviting new potentials of danger. ¹

Any number of the *topoi* of modernity that cluster around the second half of the nineteenth century can be approached as instances of circulation: the boulevard system in the Haussmannization of Paris, which allowed a previously unimaginable expansion of traffic; the new modes of production of goods in the work process of the "new factory system," which demanded that individual workers perform simple and repetitive tasks as material passed before them; or innovations in systems of rapid transportation, such as the moving sidewalks unveiled at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the Paris Exposition of 1900. In all of these new systems of circulation, the drama of modernity sketches itself: a collapsing of previous experiences of space and time through speed; an extension of the power and productivity of the human body; and a consequent transformation of the body through new thresholds of demand and danger, creating new regimes of bodily discipline and regulation based upon a new observation of (and knowledge about) the body.

Cinema nestles into this network of circulation as both technology and industry, but also as a new form of experience. As a mass-produced entertainment industry with a national system of distribution by 1909, film distribution and exhibition exploited railway networks pioneered by vaudeville circuits and circus trains. The early genres of cinema, especially such seemingly diverse forms as travel actualities and trick films, visualized a modern experience of rapid alteration, whether by presenting foreign views from far-flung international locations or by creating through trick photography a succession of transformations which unmoored the stable identity of both objects and performers. Early actuality films frequently presented a simulacrum of travel not only by presenting foreign views but also through "phantom rides" films, which were shot from the front of trains or prows of boats and which gave seated, stationary spectators a palpable sensation of motion. This contradictory experience was as much the attraction of these films as was the representation of foreign tourism.

While actuality films depended directly on the new technology of both cinema and transportation to image the collapse of the space and time formerly required for an experience of global tourism, the phantasmagoria of the trick film with its magical metamorphoses echoes the transformation of raw material into products achieved nearly instantaneously through the rapid succession of tasks in the new factory system. The amazement experienced by Upton Sinclair's Lithuanian worker Jurgis Rudkus in

The Jungle, as he watched hogs transformed into hams and other products by the concatenation of actions of a score of workers in a few minutes of time, recalls the astonishment of a gawker at a magic show spellbound by an unbelievable succession of transformative wonders.² Peter Finley Dunne's Irish dialect character "Mr. Dooley" echoed this wonder when he ironically described the process: "A cow goes lowin' softly into Armour's and comes out glue, gelatine, fertylizer, celooloid, joolry, sofy cushions, hair restorer, washin' sody, soap, lithrachoer, and bed springs, so quick that while aft she's still cow for'ard she may be anything fr'm buttons to pannyma hats."³

The speed of such industrial transformation made it appear magical, occluding the unskilled labor regulated by the factory system to perform repetitive and limited tasks. Skill seemed to be absorbed by the circulatory logic of the factory itself, as each task took place within a chain of rationalized labor. This new arrangement of production seemed able to make anything out of anything, without the laborious effort of skilled handicraft. **In such new systems of labor, objects were transformed rapidly before one's eyes, and the stable identity of things became as uncertain as a panoply of magician's props.**

Although the technical innovation of *motion* pictures introduced the literal possibility of portraying speed and movement, cinema's place in a new logic of circulation had been anticipated by the commodification of still photographs, especially the postcard and the stereoscope. As Jonathan Crary has indicated, we must rethink the history of photography by not focusing solely on the mode of new technological representation that it introduced but by considering its role in "the reshaping of an entire territory on which signs and images, each effectively **severed from a referent**, circulate and proliferate."⁴ While the debate on the ontology of the photographic image has centered on the indexical tie a photograph maintains with its referent, Crary directs our attention to the actual use of photographs, in which this connection to a referent interrelates with the image's detachable nature, with its ability to gain a mobility its referent never possessed and to circulate separately.

Images of the Sphinx or the Wall of China could thus be viewed through a stereoscope in middle-class parlors, sent through the international mail as postcards, and projected on walls and screens as lantern slides in schools and churches throughout the Western world. In his famous essay on the stereoscope, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., speculated in 1859 on the dissolving power of this new traffic in images. With deliberate irony, he claimed:

Form is henceforth divorced from matter. In fact, matter as a visible object is of no great use any longer, except as the mould on which form is shaped. Give us a few negatives of a thing worth seeing, taken from different

points of view, and that is all we want of it. Pull it down or burn it up, if you please. . . .

There is only one Colosseum or Pantheon; but how many millions of potential negatives have they shed—representatives of billions of pictures—since they were erected. Matter in large masses must always be fixed and dear; form is cheap and transportable. . . .

. . . There may grow up something like a universal currency of these bank-notes, or promises to pay in solid substance, which the sun has engraved for the great Bank of Nature. ⁵

Holmes's description of photographs as a new universal currency is more than a clever metaphor. It recognizes in photography the dominant characteristics of the modern capitalist economy, the role of money in ever increasing the pace of circulation. As Georg Simmel has indicated, "The modern view of life rests upon money whose nature is fluctuating and which presents the identity of essence in the greatest and most changing variety of equivalents."⁶ Like the modern circulation of currency, photography abolished spatial barriers and transformed objects into transportable simulacra, a new form of the universal equivalent.

As Holmes's discussion demonstrates, photography could be understood in the nineteenth century not simply as the latest stage in realistic representation but also as part of a new system of exchange which could radically transform traditional beliefs in solidity and unique identity. Such fixed ideas could disintegrate in the solvents circulating through the modern networks of exchange and transportation. The body itself appeared to be abolished, rendered immaterial, through the phantasmagoria of both still and motion photography. This transformation of the physical did not occur through the sublimation of an ethereal idealism. The body, rather, became a transportable image fully adaptable to the systems of circulation and mobility that modernity demanded.

Dramas of Identity: Rationalizing Photography's Indiscretion

Then I fail to follow your Majesty. If this young person should produce her letters for blackmailing or other purposes, how is she to prove their authenticity?

There is the writing.

Pooh, pooh. Forgery.

My private note-paper.

Stolen.

My own seal.

Imitated.

My photograph.

Bought.

We were both in the photograph.

"Oh dear. That is very bad. Your Majesty has indeed committed an indiscretion."

Conversation Between Sherlock Holmes and the
Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein in A. Conan Doyle,
"A Scandal in Bohemia"

In this delightful exchange, Sherlock Holmes makes it clear that the Grand Duke's indiscretion lies in having been photographed with his mistress, rather than in having had a love affair. Holmes claims more here than the old saw that a criminal's only crime lies in getting caught. As a mode of evidence that cannot be denied, photography is indeed indiscreet, capturing information that could otherwise be hushed up or explained away. The photograph mediates between the public and the private, attesting to an intimacy of bodies that has now become a matter of record. The only recourse Holmes and his royal client have is discovering and suppressing the photograph before it is made public.

Photography operates as one of the most ambiguous emblems of modern experience. Modernity (and particularly modern capitalism) contains a tension between forces which undo older forms of stability in order to increase the ease and rapidity of circulation and of those forces which seek to control and make such circulation predictable and, therefore, profitable.⁷ Photography participates dramatically in both of these often-opposed impulses. While the mechanical reproduction and multiplication of photographic images undermined traditional understandings of identity, within the practice of criminology and detective fiction the photograph could also be used as a guarantor of identity and as a means of establishing guilt or innocence. Within systems of power and authority, the circulatory possibilities of photography could also play a regulatory role, maintaining a sense of the unique and recognizable, tying the separable image back to its bodily source. In both the legal process of detection and its fantasy elaborations in detective fiction, the body reemerges as something to grab hold of, and the photograph supplies one means of gaining a purchase on a fugitive physicality. But the grasp afforded by this new technology of the image relied on new systems of knowledge and a modern concern with classification which could convert the image into effective information.

Photography stands at the intersection of a number of aspects of modernity, and this convergence makes it a uniquely modern means of representation. As the product of modern technology, photography evokes both admiration and opprobrium as an objective mechanical means of making an image with only minimal human intervention. The practical application of the accurate and detailed quality of this machine-made image was immediately recognized. Photography could, in Baudelaire's phrase, serve as "the secretary and clerk of whoever needs an absolute factual exactitude

in his profession." ⁸ And this record-keeping accuracy depended on the photograph's unique bond with its referent, on its indexicality.

Photography became the ideal tool of the process of detection, the ultimate modern clue, due to three interlocking aspects: its indexical aspect, which comes from the fact that since a photograph results from exposure to a preexisting entity, it directly bears the entity's imprint and can therefore supply evidence about the object it depicts; its iconic aspect, by which it produces a direct resemblance to its object which allows immediate recognition;⁹ and its detachable nature, which allows it to refer to an absent object separated from it in space and time. As a clue, the photograph entered into a new discourse of power and control.

In criminology, the photograph worked in two directions. One staked out the photograph's ability to capture evidence of a crime, the deviant act itself. The other practice (less direct, but much more common) used the photograph to mark and keep track of the criminal, serving as an essential element in new systems of identification. We will find both directions pursued not only in criminology but also in the mythmaking processes of detective fiction.

The narrative form of the detective story, rather than serve simply as an exercise in puzzle-solving, depends explicitly upon the modern experience of circulation. While circulation relies on an evolving process of rationalization of time and space, the very intricacy and speed of these routes of transfer and exchange create a counterthrust in which stability and predictability can be threatened. The detective story maps out two positions in this dialectical drama of modernity: the criminal, who preys on the very complexity of the system of circulation; and the detective, whose intelligence, knowledge, and perspicacity allow him to discover the dark corners of the circulatory system, uncover crime, and restore order.

Walter Benjamin located the origin of the modern detective story in the mobile transformation of identity, in the "the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big city crowd"¹⁰ allowed by the modern environment. Attempts to reestablish the traces of individual identity beneath the obscurity of a new mobility were central to both the actual processes of police detection and the genesis of detective fiction. Techniques for identifying criminals became a central preoccupation for nineteenth-century police. In new systems of mobility and circulation, the criminal who could hide beneath an assumed identity functioned like a forged banknote, exploiting the rapid exchange of modern currency while undermining the confidence on which it depended. In the modern drama of detection, photography, through its indexicality, iconic accuracy, and mobility of circulation, provides the ultimate means of tying identity to a specific and unique body. In this way the process of criminal identification represents a new aspect of the disciplining of the body which typifies modernity. Sys-

tems of power were thus able to channel the free-floating insubstantiality of the photograph at which Oliver Wendell Holmes had so marveled into the orderly grooves of maintaining identity through surveillance.

Previously, the identification of criminals had frequently depended upon a direct and visible mark applied by legal authorities to the criminal's body, the equivalent of the scriptural mark of Cain. Many early nineteenth-century adventure novels turn on the discovery of the scar of the branding iron which in France had been used to mark malefactors for life (for example, the brand of Milady's shoulder in Dumas's *Three Musketeers* which reveals her criminal past). Such branding and marking of the flesh was countered on the criminal side by extreme physical disfiguration, such as the brigand's carving of his own nose and treating his face with acid to render himself unidentifiable in Eugène Sue's *Mysteries of Paris*. Law and outlaw thus fought a battle over legibility and culpability upon the body itself.

But the nature of the marks of criminality change in the nineteenth century. Michel Foucault describes the transformation of punishment from a prolonged public spectacle that violently demonstrates power and sovereignty on the criminal body to the surreptitious practice of embodying power in the disciplined body and in the creation of information archives.¹¹ Although Foucault traces the beginnings of this transformation to an earlier era, the nineteenth century sees its final achievement, at least in the West, with the mark of the branding iron officially suppressed in France in 1832.¹² Likewise, in the later nineteenth century, actual detection and detective fiction both witnessed an increased complexity and rarefication in the play of identification and disguise. The body at issue was traced and measured rather than marked, as the criminal employed means of evasion more subtle than disfiguration.

As Benjamin indicates, photography played an important role in both reality and fiction in this new regime of identity and concealment:

The invention of photography was a turning point in the history of this process. It is no less significant for criminology than the inventing of the printing press is for literature. Photography made it possible for the first time to preserve permanent and unmistakable traces of a human being. The detective story came into being when this most decisive of all conquests of a person's incognito had been accomplished. Since then the end of efforts to capture a man in his speech and actions has not been in sight.¹³

The early proponents of police photography recognized that the new procedure both mimicked the earlier application of the branding iron and improved upon it technologically. In 1854 the inspector general of French prisons, Louis-Mathurin Moreau-Christophe, promoted the adoption of photographing the prison population as the "infliction of a new *mark*."¹⁴ The apparent lack of violence involved in photography led Yves Guyot, a

later proponent of police photography, to contrast the new method with the brutal procedures associated with the legendary head of the Sûreté at the beginning of the century, François Vidocq. Writing in 1887, Guyot declared: "In place of a police that is irritable, brutal, theatrical and dramatic, seeking publicity, there would appear a calm and stable police force, working in silence, proceeding by gentle strokes, noiselessly, but with the precision of a well-designed machine precisely assembled and made of first-class material."¹⁵ Photography helped a new regime of control to emerge, armed with modern techniques.

While photography supplied the most powerful form of modern identification, the attempt to read the signs of identity in a new manner did not derive entirely from the introduction of new technology, nor was new technology sufficient for a new system of identification. Rather, we can see a **modern concept of evidence appearing in criminology and detective fiction which embraced both photography and the method of detection.** The nineteenth century witnessed a rearrangement of the hierarchy of judicial proof, as the value previously accorded to witness testimony was replaced by the scientific reputation of the analysis of indices.¹⁶ As Ernst Bloch has pointed out, the *sine qua non* of a hunt for clues, a trial based on evidence as opposed to testimony and confession, dates only from the middle of the eighteenth century.¹⁷ This new concept of evidence transformed both the narrative logic of signs of guilt and the methods of recognition. Instead of reading conventional signs imprinted on the criminal body with the force of sovereign power, **detection was approached as a science, employing careful measurement and observation, privileging regimes of knowledge over brute force.**

For example, in the famous late-nineteenth-century melodrama *The Ticket of Leave Man*, the paroled convict, Bob Brierly, is no longer recognized by an actual mark burned or cut into his flesh but by the fact that his prison haircut has not yet grown out completely.¹⁸ Detection follows a fading trail of cause and effect rather than exposing an indelible mark. While such signs are more circumstantial and less overtly visible, they may also betray a man without his knowing it. The modern detective thus finds his or her model in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, who, as the semiotician Thomas Sebeok has emphasized, founded his method upon "the observation of trifles."¹⁹

The reading of these all-important trifles does more than demonstrate the detective's eye for details. Holmes's method opens onto a peculiarly modern world in which the forces of everyday life can mark people as deeply as an officially applied branding iron. While the complex maze of urban circulation provides a thicket in which individual identity can be concealed, it also marshals a range of factors which imprint the bodies of individuals with their own history. As Sebeok and others have pointed out.

Conan Doyle patterned Holmes on his professor of medicine, Dr. Joseph Bell of the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, who astonished students and patients with his ability not only to diagnose diseases from symptoms but also to read a person's occupation and background from details of body, gait, and clothing. In 1893 Bell described his method in terms that parallel Holmes:

Racial peculiarities, hereditary tricks of manner, accent, occupation or the want of it, education, environment of every kind, by their little trivial impressions gradually mold or carve the individual, and leave finger marks or chisel scores which the expert can detect.²⁰

This method of reading persons opens onto the new world of mobility and rapid circulation which we have been tracing, in which signs of class and occupation have moved below the threshold of immediately recognized conventional signs to reach the level of unintentional—and often unrecognized—symptoms. Thomas Brynes, chief of detectives in New York City, emphasized in 1886 that "there is nothing to mark people of that stamp [criminals] as a class"²¹ and added that it was useless to construct a general physiognomic criminal type since there were no consistent physical features specific to criminals. Only the unique body imprinted with its particular, inherited physiology and, especially, its unconscious habits and adaptations to the life it has led could betray an identity which has become the product and residue of a life history. The role of the modern detective did not correspond to the earlier "physiologies" which subsumed criminals under ideal physical types. Identification, rather, relied on the absolute and ineradicable individuality (and unique culpability) of a specific criminal. As Gallus Muller, an American proponent of Alphonse Bertillon's method for identifying criminals, stated, the goal of such identification was "to fix the human personality, to give each human being an identity, an individuality, certain, durable, invariable, always recognizable, and always capable of being proven."²²

Christian Phéline, in his brilliant study *L'Image accusatrice*, relates the emergence of criminal photography to other uses of photography within the modern world of anonymous crowds which devised bureaucratic means to trace and identify, such as **medical documentation and the growing use of photographs in identity cards and passports, all of which demarcate a person as a unique entity**. Phéline declares that "the photographic image contributes to the very *constitution* of such identity as social identity and therefore participates in the emergence of the *individual* in the modern sense of the term."²³ Such techniques of identification became necessary in the new world of rapid circulation and facilitated the circulation of the newly constituted individual through its circuits with a traceable accountability.

The detective story structures itself around two essential moments: one

plays on the possibility of exploiting the loss of the immediate signs of identity and place in society, while the second tries to restore and establish identity and social status beyond a shadow of a doubt. The criminal can use disguise and alias to elude recognition. However, the detective can identify the criminal precisely by focusing on marks that the criminal might not be aware of or would find difficult or impossible to conceal. The drama of this new form of evidence lies less in stripping the criminal of his disguise (like the chief of the Sûreté who knocks off Vautrin's wig and reveals his shock of red hair in Balzac's *Père Goriot*) than in capturing the criminal in an **act of unconscious revelation**.

While the clearest and ultimately most successful example of new systems of criminal identification was the gradual adoption of the fingerprint,²⁴ throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century (and into the twentieth) photography was used both as a means of identification and as a means of gathering evidence of crime. The collection of photographs of criminals under arrest began soon after the invention of photography. Phéline cites examples from Brussels in 1843 and 1844, Birmingham in 1850, and the use of a photograph as legal evidence in Lausanne in 1854.²⁵ The Paris prefecture created an official photographic service department in 1873.²⁶

Rogues' galleries (as these collections of photographs were called) were quickly instituted by modern city police departments and immediately caught the public imagination (figs. 1.1, 1.2). The public display of portraits of professional criminals (who sought anonymity and concealment) became one of the most popular forms of photographic galleries, with tourists flocking to them as an urban sight and Barnum displaying them in his museum.²⁷ Apprehension of criminals, both in reality and in detective fiction, often hinged on recognizing them from these photographs; *Le Pickpocket mystifié*, a Pathé film from 1911, for instance, shows detective Nick Winter trailing a pickpocket he has identified from a book of criminal photos he carries with him.

However, the very nature of the photograph, its detailed accuracy and instantaneity, created both organizational and procedural problems. Rogues' galleries were assembled by police departments around the world before a theory was devised to underpin their organization and method. Such photographic collections demanded regulation by systems of knowledge and classification. This new medium, so rich in indexical and iconic information, had to be systematized in order actually to supply the identifications they seemed to promise. How could this new method for producing an accurate image that could be made quickly and circulated widely fulfill its promise of universal surveillance?

An initial problem came from criminal **resistance to the process**. Criminals posed by police for such portraits would distort their facial expres-



Fig. 1.1.
Male mug shots from a rogues' gallery, reproduced in Brynes's 1886 Professional Criminals of America.



Fig. 1.2.
Female mug shots from a rogues' gallery, reproduced
in Brynes's 1886 Professional Criminals of America.

sions in the hope of rendering their photographs unidentifiable. The slow speeds of early photography made possible this painless equivalent of the self-disfiguration of Sue's brigand. The face needed only to be contorted briefly in order to create a grotesque photograph.²⁸ A famous caricature (which also appeared as a comic photograph) captured the scene of guards holding a grimacing and struggling prisoner as a photographer takes his picture (figs. 1.3, 1.4). Although some commentators claimed that this image was purely fictional, a number of photographs included in Gustave Macé's "criminal museum" (a collection of mug shots published in 1890) show criminals similarly restrained or making bizarre grimaces.²⁹ However, the practice, made more difficult by even greater camera speeds, seems to have been short-lived. In 1886 Inspector Brynes declared:

The very cleverest hands at preparing a false physiognomy for the camera have made their grimaces in vain. The sun has been too quick for them, and has imprisoned the lines of the profile and the features and caught the expression before it could be disguised. There is not a portrait here but has some marked characteristic by which you can identify the man who sat for it. That is what has to be studied in the Rogues' Gallery—detail . . . the skilled detective knows all this and looks for distinguishing marks peculiar to his subject.³⁰

The caricature of prisoner resistance to photographic methods of fixing identity received a cinematic treatment (with some fascinating transformations) in an early film produced by the American Biograph Company. The single shot of *A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery* (1904) shows a woman criminal held (as in the caricature prototype) by a pair of cops as her photo is taken. The woman contorts her face comically, attempting to render any likeness unrecognizable. However, as she attempts to subvert the fixing of her image, the Biograph camera closes in on her, tracking forward, its gradually closer framing seeming to underscore the ineffectiveness of her attempt. As the film ends, the frustrated woman weeps, framed in medium close-up.

This early masterpiece marshals the device of camera movement in what can only be seen as a self-reflective moment, dramatizing both the film viewer's growing curiosity about this female spectacle and the oppressive power of the diegetic camera as it relentlessly sees through the woman's performance. Instead of a single contortion, the film presents a gamut of grimaces, until the prisoner gives up in exhaustion before the unblinking cinema camera. Perhaps more eloquently than any still photograph, this brief film acts out the drama implicit in all police photography which Phéline describes as "the exercise of political power on the individual's body and image."³¹

If the criminal's attempt to evade the photographic lens supplied only



Fig. 1.3
Police photographing a recalcitrant criminal. Staged photograph
from Brynes's 1886 Professional Criminals of America.



Fig. 1.4
Frame enlargement from Biograph's 1904 film A Subject for
the Rogue's Gallery, shot by the cameraman A. E. Weed.

a temporary and largely ineffectual check on the use of photography in criminal identification, a more serious obstacle came from the nature of photography itself. Constructing a method which could use photography and other means of physical description and measurement in order to permanently fix an identity and individualize a subject depended on overcoming photography's tendency to capture the contingent and ephemeral, on substituting some core of identity for the mobile play of features. As Phéline phrases it, the photograph was simultaneously too poor and too rich a form of evidence to supply the easy means of identity a modern police department required.³² The French police statistician Alphonse Bertillon introduced the most thorough and influential nineteenth-century systematization of photographic identification of criminals. As Alan Sekula puts it:

Bertillon sought to break the professional criminal's mastery of disguises, false identities, multiple identities, and alibis. He did this by yoking anthropometrics [the precise measurement of body parts], the optical precision of the camera, a refined physiognomic vocabulary and statistics.³³

Bertillon directly confronted the information chaos that an ever-expanding rogues' gallery of photographs presented for modern detective bureaus:

During the last ten years the Parisian police have collected over 100,000 photographs. Do you suppose it possible to compare successively each of these 100,000 photographs with each of the 100 individuals who are arrested daily in Paris? . . .

There was need of a method of elimination analogous to that employed in the sciences of botany and zoology; that is to say, taking as its basis the characteristic elements of the individuality, and not the name, which is liable to falsification.³⁴

As Carlo Ginsburg, Alan Sekula, and John Tagg have shown,³⁵ the use of photography as a means of establishing identity depended on placing it within an archive of information on individuals which became the basic tool for the assertion of control in modern society. Such indexical signs as the fingerprint and the photograph played a key role in relating this archive of information to an actual individual body, but such indices could be effective only within a system that had already been rationalized in such a way that a match between indices and individuals could be made quickly and effectively. As Sekula deftly states, the "central artifact of this system is not the camera but the filing cabinet."³⁶

The mere possession of a criminal's image could be useless, or at least unwieldy, Bertillon maintained. First, Bertillon systematized the process of police photography. He standardized the distance of subject from camera; created a special chair on which the subject would sit and which would

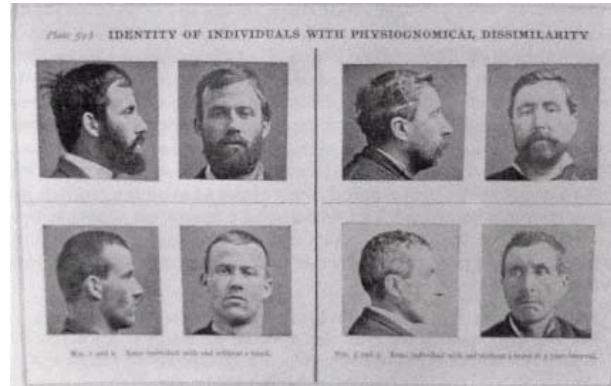


Fig. 1.5.

Bertillon's use of photographic comparison to demonstrate the difficulties of an identification based on a general visual similarity, from his *Signalétique Instructions*.

control physical position and posture; determined the type of lens, thereby introducing a closer and unvarying framing; and established the directly frontal and profile angles of the now-familiar mug shot (fig. 1.5).³⁷ These procedures gave criminal photography a consistency that facilitated its use as information and evidence. Further, it established the process of photography as a disciplinary process, asserting the system's power over the criminal's body and image. The system determined the look and posture within the photograph; the criminal simply delivered up the facticity of his or her body.

But the photographic session was only one aspect of the rationalizing of the body which the Bertillon method entailed. The file of photographs had to be supplemented by the process of **anthropometric measurement, a system of measurements of different body parts which allowed a statistical classification of the criminal which the mere resemblance of the photographic image could not deliver**. By creating a system based on norms and deviations of separate parts of the body, Bertillon supplied the means of organizing and filing which the rogues' gallery could not supply in itself.

To fit into this schema, the body had to be broken down into comparable parts. Bertillon's measurement system tackles precisely the paradox of photography within modern systems of circulation. Photography serves

the purposes of surveillance and identification necessary to a bureaucratic police system by establishing identity through its mesh of iconic resemblance and indexical reference. However, the photograph remains *too* individual, too specific, to be processed as thoroughly as rapid modes of information circulation demanded. Therefore, the analogic photograph needs, in effect, to become digitalized, supplemented by quantifiable data that assign each photograph a unique position within a rationalized system of information. Even the photograph itself had to be analyzed and rationalized:

The photographic portrait would become a much more efficacious instrument of *search* and *recognition* if detectives were more familiar with the manner of using it; of *analyzing* it, *describing* it, *learning it by heart*, and, in a word, of drawing from it all that it is possible to draw from it; for it is necessary in order to see well, or rather to *perceive* what one *sees*, to know beforehand what are the points to be looked at.³⁸

Bertillon rationalized the photograph's iconicity by supplementing it with a battery of bodily measurements and by dissecting the body into a series of features which would allow paradigmatic comparison. The photograph and the body it portrayed became, in Bertillon's system, a text that is articulated into morphological features and which can be "learned by heart." Central to this method was the "verbal portrait," in which the detective did not depend on visual recall but translated the bodily into linguistic signs. A series of preestablished physical traits would be described in a standardized vocabulary. The troubling mass and variety of the physical body so faithfully transcribed by a photograph was thus reduced and translated through a limited code—simple, unvarying, and precise.³⁹

Bertillon called his system "signaletics" and called the process "signalizing," indicating that the body of the apprehended person underwent a process by which his or her body was transposed into a series of signs. The chaos of individual bodies was resolved in a truly structuralist manner as an interplay between an articulated system of oppositional elements (the parts of the body chosen for specific measurement) and their actualization in specific individual bodies. Not only could the measurement and morphological description of the different bodily elements be cross-referenced but they could also be arranged against a curve of statistical norms. Bertillon's American disciple Muller explained the method:

Suppose, again, that a criminal is arrested under an assumed name, and we wish to ascertain whether he has been measured and photographed before. We take an exact measurement of the length of his head and will know at once in which of the main divisions we can find his name. The width of his head will lead us more specifically to the place his photograph can be found. The length of his middle finger, or his foot, forearm, height, little finger,

ear, etc., will enable us to arrive at the exact place where his photograph and description have been filed—if at all.⁴⁰

Bertillon's comparative photographic charts of physical features (with rows upon rows of ear shapes, for instance) seem at first to further dissolve any sense of a unified identity rather than to confirm it (fig. 1.6). But this impression confuses the apparatus with its application. The range of possible ear formations shown on a Bertillon chart remains a fund of paradigmatic possibilities within the investigator's filing system, paradigms to be actualized in a syntagm of a particular body in order to catch within their intersection the guilty individual. Under the Bertillon system, the photograph finds its place within a logic of analysis into paradigmatic components, which are separated from a specific singular body in order to be circulated, compared, and then combined in order to point the finger of guilt. While a criminal possessing the sangfroid of Sue's brigand might alter ear shape, the complex interlocking specifications of a Bertillon chart would be beyond reach, short of total mutilation. The body has become a sort of unwilling speech, an utterance whose code is in the possession of a figure of authority rather than controlled by its enunciator. Although the criminal may assume an alias or seek to camouflage his or her identity through changing hair color or through other disguises, the specialist guided by the Bertillon code sees through this false body language and uncovers an indelible identity residing in a fixed arrangement of bodily elements.

The use of photography in detection in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries turned primarily upon this regulation of the body through close observation founded on systematic classification. In addition to its actual use for the identification of repeat offenders (political radicals as well as criminals—one of Bertillon's first successes was the use of signaletics to capture the anarchist Ravachol in 1892),⁴¹ these new methods were elaborated in modern detective fiction. Bertillon himself recognized the congruence between his method and the plot mechanism of nineteenth-century melodrama. "Is it not a problem of this sort," he asked, "which forms the basis of the everlasting popular melodrama about lost, exchanged, and recovered children?"⁴²

The photographic charts of the Bertillon method (with their rows of body parts arranged for observation, comparison, matching, and final identification) provide an emblematic image of the body of modernity, a body resolved into paradigmatic elements, parsed and arranged into an order that the teeming mass of individual bodies could never possess. The truth of the body, its confession of guilt, no longer lies simply in the "indiscretion" of allowing itself to be photographed but in its processing by experts and authorities. The individual body now appears simply as the realization

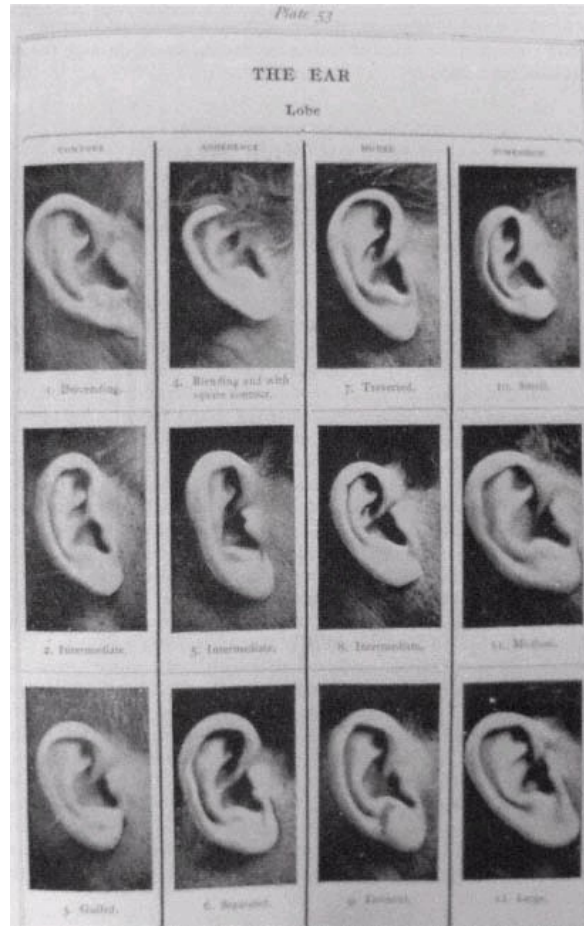


Fig. 1.6.

Bertillon photographic chart of ear types, from his *Signaletic Instructions Including the Theory and Practice of Anthropometric Identification*.

of a limited number of measurable types. This systematization brings order and control to the chaos of circulating bodies, tamed through the circulation of information.

Fixing an Image of Guilt: The Body Caught in the Act

He doesn't know the sentence that has been passed on him?

"No," said the officer again, pausing a moment as if to let the explorer elaborate his question, and then said: "There would be no point in telling him. He'll learn it upon his body."

Franz Kafka, "in the Penal Colony"

Phéline argues that photography became encoded in the nineteenth century as a ritual of power in which the body of the deviant (including, in addition to criminals, such troubling populations as the invalid, the mad, and the politically suspect) was subjected to a gaze and a recording apparatus possessed by authority.⁴³ As we have seen in Bertillon's method, this camera trained on the deviant body does not simply record it but also filters it through a new standardized vocabulary of description and classification. In this way the gaze of the law may know the criminal's body more thoroughly than the criminal does. The photograph acted as a "new mark," one which inscribed the deviant body with a socially defined individuality, an individuality which rested ultimately on its structural differentiation from all other recorded individual bodies. Through photography each body was stamped with this ineradicable individuality, but the marks of this difference also had to be rationalized, made systematic, to allow comparisons and identifications. Modern individuality was fashioned as the unique intersection of a limited (and therefore knowable) series of variables.

Systems of classification made the photograph responsive within this modern method of identification, marking each body through a regulated process of classification so thorough that Bertillon even downplayed the necessity of photography to the process.⁴⁴ However, the indexical nature of the photograph, its role in actually connecting an individual to his or her own image, still underpinned the whole system. The photograph remained the imprint of the individual body it imaged. Maintaining its identity as a clue, it pointed back to the body that caused it. Reversing the process of the branding iron imprinted directly on the flesh, the "new mark" of the photograph imprinted the sensitive emulsion with the image of the body.

In the modern process of ascertaining guilt and identity, the body thus unconsciously betrays itself by leaving its unalterable and already classified aspects of individuality (an ear of *this* shape, a nose of *that* sort of profile) in the hands of those with power and knowledge. The photograph reveals

to the trained eye of the specialist the imprint of individuality upon the criminal body. In a sense, by falling under the regime of photography, the criminal became a *corpus delicti*, his own body supplying evidence of his guilt. The vulnerability of one's body to recording and classification developed into fantasies of universal observation not only through being photographed while under arrest but also through being caught in the act by photography.

Beyond photography's ability to present the likeness of a culprit when the actual culprit might still be at large, the camera could play an essential role as the mute yet unassailable witness of a crime. The camera recording the very act of malefaction appears in drama, literature, and early film before it was really an important process of criminal detection. While the perfection of video has now made the recording of a crime a pervasive and effective form of surveillance (as well as a form of media entertainment), a fascination with photographic evidence of misdeeds seems to predate considerably its widespread application in reality. The element of fantasy involved here leads less to the filing cabinet of governmental power than towards narratives of righteous vindication as well as paranoid plots of entrapment and blackmail.

The photograph as witness did not have to wait long to appear in melodramatic fiction. In 1859 Dion Boucicault, the master of melodramatic theater in England and the United States, used the device of a camera capturing a murderer in the act in *The Octoroon*. At the trial of the wrongly accused innocent, a photographic plate accidentally exposed at the instant of the crime overturns the case and is greeted with the exclamation, "'Tis true. The apparatus cannot lie."⁴⁵ While the use of photographs for recognition or for the preservation of evidence (the scene of the crime or elements difficult to transport or preserve, such as fingerprints or corpses)⁴⁶ became standard police procedure, capturing the instant of guilt on film remained more the stuff of fiction-making fantasy. But even as fantasy, the photographing of guilty acts reveals central aspects of the mythology of detection or the apparent powers of photography in a world of shifting identities and increased surveillance.

Many early films rework the climax of *The Octoroon*. Biograph's *Falsely Accused* (1908) deals with the murder of an inventor of a motion picture apparatus whose daughter is "falsely accused." At her trial, it is discovered that the murder was filmed by the inventor's camera, and the film is projected, absolving the daughter and condemning the true villain.⁴⁷ A more intentional device can be found in *Zigomar vs. Nick Carter*, produced by the French company Eclair in 1912. A banker concerned about theft rigs his safe with a photographic device which will snap the picture of anyone who tries to rob it. The photo thus obtained of Zigomar, the mysterious bandit and master of disguise, when he attempts to rifle the safe, allows detective

Nick Carter not only to establish Zigomar's guilt but also to become aware of his whereabouts and to obtain a clear image of his undisguised face.⁴⁸

Perhaps the most frequent use of photography as evidence of criminal action in early cinema (as well as in real life) deals with sexual rather than violent behavior. Numerous early films, such as Edison's *Getting Evidence* (1906), detail a divorce detective's attempt to photograph a couple's illicit behavior. Although still photography undoubtedly served real-life divorce detectives as well as simple blackmailers, this scenario taps into a deep fascination with the recording of guilt, whose potential for fantasy outruns its actual use. In 1915 Freud analyzed a case of paranoia in which a woman was sure that her meetings with a lover were being photographed.⁴⁹ Although early motion picture cameras would hardly seem the optimal tool for capturing evidence of adultery (given their relative bulk, complexity, and noise), Stephen Bottomore has shown that the turn of the century produced dozens of works (short stories and plays as well as films) in which moments of private and surreptitious lovemaking were filmed and then shown publicly, resulting in embarrassment or worse.⁵⁰ Frequently, as with Biograph's *Story the Biograph Told* (1904), the filming results from a prank rather than from a detective's surveillance.

In all these cases, however, photographic evidence bears certain recurrent features that define its modernity. First, since the witnessing is technological rather than human, its evidence has a correspondingly greater claim to truth, since the "apparatus cannot lie." The sense of the camera as the nonhuman agent of truth is emphasized by the fact that the filming of certain scenes is often accidental (as in *Falsely Accused*) or unwittingly triggered by the guilty party (as with the camera/safe device in *Zigomar vs. Nick Carter*). The lack of human intention in the operation of the camera mirrors an equally important aspect of the photography of guilt which connects it to the detective's other techniques of evidence and identification. In most cases, the camera takes the culprit's photo when he is caught unawares. Therefore, like Holmes's keenly perceived trifles, the camera captures the guilty one in a moment of unconscious self-betrayal. As an index of guilt, the camera penetrates behind conscious concealment and uncovers a guilty image that the criminal cannot obfuscate, not only because of its indexicality and iconicity but also because the criminal remains unaware that a photo was being taken. As Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon establishes, the regime of the visible as the instrument of power is partly founded on concealing the apparatus of the gaze from view.⁵¹ The photographed party, on the other hand, is inflicted with an ineradicable visibility, betrayed by a body he or she cannot conceal but which is available and readable to the detection specialist.

If the common denominator linking the use of photographic evidence in fantasies and fictional narratives with the regimen of the Bertillon

method lies in the fixing of the body as sign of guilt, we also find a fantastic merging of the body with the apparatus, so that the *corpus delicti* becomes identified with the production of an image. In the case of female paranoia, analyzed by Freud, the young woman was convinced she was being photographed largely because she heard a knock or click that she believed came from the snapping of a camera shutter. In analyzing this aural hallucination, Freud identified its likely source as the woman's body, the click being an aural displacement of the throb of her excited clitoris.⁵²

Freud does not dwell on this extraordinary bodily identification with the camera apparatus. Certainly, most claims of "I am a camera" rest primarily on the visual rather than the sexual organs. However, when photographs are approached as evidence, the issue rests less on a simulacrum of perception than on the act of recording, the retaining of the indexical trace. The body as the repository of evidence shifts from the body of the criminal to that of the victim which holds evidence of the violence done against it.

The conflation of the body with the processes of the camera are not limited to paranoid fantasies or Freudian interpretations. The most fantastic of such identifications appeared not in the annals of psychoanalysis but from within medical criminology, although the fascination it exerted soon spread to fiction, where it continued to appear after it was scientifically discredited. In 1870 a certain Dr. Vernois, a member of the Society for Legal Medicine of Paris, published his theory of the *optogramme*. Surgically removing the retinas of murder victims and scrutinizing them under a microscope, Doctors Vernois and Bourion claimed to have discovered the imprint of the victims' last sight—an image of their murderers.

As Philippe Dubois has pointed out, the optogramme produced a fantasy scenario of guilt involving a number of powerful condensations.⁵³ The body of the victim becomes a photographic apparatus at the moment of death. For the murderer, the act of being seen collapses into the act of being identified by producing ineradicable evidence, both indexical and iconic, of his guilt. The very act of murder produces its own record. And the instant of death fixes a final, latent image as a mute testimony, one which only modern science and medical technology can bring to light, analyze, and circulate.

We find here an extraordinarily modern transformation of the mark of guilt. The mark is imprinted indexically on the body of the victim rather than symbolically branded on the criminal body by state power. Without even being processed by the Bertillon method, the body itself becomes the source of information, transformed into an iconic index of its own murder. But the information the victim holds hides deeply within the body, which, as Dubois emphasizes, must be surgically opened to obtain it.⁵³ The murderer, unawares, has left his image behind through a physical reaction

that modern science can trace. Once extracted from what Foucault calls "the dark coffer of the body."⁵⁴ this physiological photograph can be placed by the technicians of detection within a broader system of classification in order to identify and convict. In actual fact, as Dubois points out, the images Vernois and Bourion claimed as optogrammes were incredibly obscure and never officially recognized by legal systems.⁵⁶ **But the fantasy of the murderer leaving behind his image like a wound in the victim's body continued to grab the public imagination.** Retina images appeared in the tales of the popular French detective Rocambole in the late nineteenth century, and played a key role in such early twentieth-century works of popular fiction as Thomas Dixon's 1905 novel *The Clansman* (the source for *The Birth of a Nation*), and such films as Pathé's *La Decouverte du docteur Mitchoff* (1911).⁵⁷

In 1867 Villiers de l'Isle-Adam⁵⁸ used the concept of the optogramme for the climax of his fantastic tale "Claire Lenoir," inspired apparently by claims made a few years before Venois's publications that an English photographer had discovered an image of their final glance imprinted on the retina of slaughtered cattle.⁵⁹ In the tale's final scene, this pseudoscientific theory combines with occult and spiritualist theories to produce an image of Claire Lenoir's reincarnated husband on her retina at the moment of her death, the imprint of a supernatural vision. Her husband's phantom appears to Claire to terrorize her to her death and thus avenge her suspected marital infidelity.

The description given by the story's narrator, a rationalist doctor named Tribulat Bonhomet, as he makes his examination of her retina, evokes an uncomfortable physicality with overtones of necrophilia. It also reveals a highly gendered encounter, as the female body is probed for evidence by a masculine eye. The conflation of photographic evidence with the body merges here with the motif (discussed by Ludmilla Jordanova and Giuliana Bruno)⁶⁰ of the "sexual vision" of medical knowledge, the dissection of a woman's body by a male physician. Photography, autopsy, evidence of female guilt, and occult theories collapse into a delirium of condensations to form this morbid and uncanny tableau. As the female crook in *A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery* becomes subjected to the onslaught of the advancing camera, here a woman is probed to yield up photographic evidence of her own guilt.

Although Bonhomet uses an ophthalmoscope to examine directly the recently deceased woman's retina rather than extract it surgically, an atmosphere of physical violation overwhelms the description of this investigation of the woman's body. Bonhomet confesses to discomfort as he approaches the cadaver, even though he knows that the corpses of thousands of women (although belonging to the lower classes, he admits) are

explored in European surgery amphitheatres, morgues, and hospitals each day. Overcoming his sense of indiscretion, he picks up the corpse of Claire Lenoir and wanders about her death chamber until he conceives of placing her across her bed with her head hanging down. This position facilitates his examination and reverses the upside-down retinal image. Declaring "I must see, I must see," he performs his examination, feeling as if he were "peering at the infinite through a keyhole." The supernatural vision he sees, the image of Claire's dead husband reincarnated as a vengeful savage, nearly drives him mad with fright.

In this imaginative and decadent tale Villiers weaves together elements of a modern obsession composed of visual curiosity and the desire for knowledge.⁶¹ Bonhomet gazes into the darkness of the female body and discovers evidence of a supernatural he had previously scorned. More than the eccentric evidence of survival after death that this vision presents, this final scene brings together a peculiarly modern conjunction between the image of female dissection discussed by Jordanova and Bruno and the fantasy of the image as evidence, captured here within the ultimate camera obscura, a corpse.

This climax crystallizes gender relations of the female body and the masculine gaze through its invocation of the dissecting room and operating theater. But it also brings the unique evidence of the photographic imprint into alignment with the new importance accorded the autopsy (and the anatomic pathological knowledge that resulted from it) in nineteenth-century medicine. Like photography, when subjected to the Bertillon method of analysis, this process focused on the analysis of individuals. As Foucault has phrased it, this new medical perception lifted "the old Aristotelian law, which prohibited the application of scientific discourse to the individual," revealing its true locus precisely in "the differentiated form of the individual."⁶² As the method of observing "trifles" described by Sherlock Holmes's prototype, Dr. Joseph Bell, had already shown, the modern concepts of guilt and disease rested on constructing a differentiated individual. **Photography could provide a technology uniquely capable of constructing the image of this new unit of society (as the extension of Bertillon's photographs to identity cards demonstrates).⁶³ And the power of photography could range from the mapping of the surface physical characteristic to fantasies of invading the body's depth in order to fix an image of guilt.**

Villiers's decadent symbolist tale may not fall precisely within the detective genre (although its frequent references to Poe signals its debt to one of the fathers of the detective story), but a similar conjunction of themes does appear in what I consider the most complex instance of an early film engaging the ambiguities of photographic evidence—Louis Feuillade's *Une*

erreur tragique (1913). This two-reel film replays and complicates the scenario of the camera's accidental exposure of marital infidelity which Bottomore isolated. But here the masculine scrutiny of the image of female guilt becomes displaced onto the actual body of a film, on still images on a celluloid strip which repeatedly appear in close-up.

Watching a comic film ⁶⁴ while on a business trip, a newlywed recognizes his wife, who, caught in the scene on the screen, is shown passing by in the street, arm in arm with a man the husband does not recognize. This possibility of an illicit affair caught unawares comes from an era in which a film shot in the street could still capture a random passerby rather than carefully arranged film extras, and in which a viewer's gaze might linger over such subsidiary action rather than simply attend to the narrative thread and main character.

Obsessed with this photographic evidence of an intrigue, the husband buys a print of the film from the exhibitor. Feuillade cuts to a close-up of the celluloid strip as the husband frantically examines with a magnifying glass the frames of film which bear his wife's image. Although it is his wife's body (and its possible waywardness) that is at issue here, the husband, unlike Tribulat Bonhomet, performs his examination only on the body of the film. Nonetheless, the frantic way he handles and scrutinizes the frames of film (referring to them several times) provides another tableau of a man examining and manhandling the visual evidence of female misconduct.

Feuillade's narrative of jealousy and apparent betrayal follows a different path of development from the earlier infidelity farces (or Villiers's tale of supernatural revenge) by revealing that the unidentified man photographed with the man's wife is, in fact, her brother, something the husband discovers only after he has set in motion his revenge and punishment of his wife. The arrival of the man who announces himself as his wife's brother forces the husband to scrutinize the film frame one more time, finally matching this image of an unknown man with an actual person, who only now is identified as a legitimate family member. Not only does this discovery raise the essential question of the need to interpret properly the evidence offered by a photograph, it also reveals the ease with which an image can be pushed inappropriately into a scenario of guilt. The image of the husband obsessively scrutinizing the frame of the film reveals him mistaking a process of recognition for actual evidence of wrongdoing. It is not surprising that Jean-Luc Godard has in recent years frequently referred to this film, which seems to anticipate his crucial maxim about the cinema: "This is not a just image—it is just an image."⁶⁵

Still photography's ability to arrest an image served several purposes within both the process of criminal detection and its fictional representations. As *A Subject for the Rogue's Gallery* shows, **police photography could**

stem the flow of transformation a criminal might use to elude legal recognition. To the mobility of the urban crowd and the phantasmagoria of false identities and aliases, the legal system opposed a regulated circulation of information and imagery. Such regulation rested upon a classification and disciplining of the body which photography aided but did not, by itself, determine. The photograph must be processed in order to become usable information.

Just as cinema itself developed from technology designed to analyze the flow of bodily motion into calculable segments and observable poses in the early motion studies of Muybridge and Marey, *Une erreur tragique* shows that the motion picture's succession of images can also be stilled, fixing an image of guilt. The image of the body in motion can become that of the body arrested and analyzed, available for comparison and identification. But if cinema is truth twenty-four (or sixteen) frames per second, it is also just a bunch of images. Still and motion photography's most frequent use as evidence lies less in establishing veracity than in regulating the flow of recognition and the assignment of blame, so that it moves in the predetermined circuits of power, as we—and Rodney King—discovered all too recently.

Notes

A version of this essay was presented at the 1993 Society for Cinema Studies conference in New Orleans. I would like to thank Robert Ray, Miriam Hansen, Mark Sandberg, Roberta Pearson, and Phil Rosen for their comments to me.

1. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: Trains and Travel in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Urizen Books, 1979). The concept of circulation is discussed on pp. 180-188. On the transformation of space and time in modernity, see also Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Space and Time, 1880-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).
2. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: New American Library, 1963), pp. 39-45. The routing of material and work processes within the "new factory system" at the turn of the century is described by Daniel Nelson in *Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the United States, 1880-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), pp. 19-25.
3. Quoted in Harold M. Mayer and Richard C. Wade, *Chicago: Growth of a Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 52.
4. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), p. 13. Crary's exciting new conception of the role of photography and of the modern body has been highly influential on my essay.

5. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), pp. 80-81.
6. Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, ed. David Frisby, trans. Tom Bottomore and David Frisby, 2d ed., rev. and enl. (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 234.
7. This aspect of capitalism and modernity is treated in Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), especially pp. 87-129.
8. Charles Baudelaire, "The Salon of 1859," in *Art in Paris, 1845-1862*, ed. and trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1965), p. 154.
9. The semiotic terms "index" and "icon" come from the work of the philosopher C. S. Peirce. They have been applied to photography by numerous scholars, including Peter Wollen in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), pp. 120-126.
10. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1983), p. 43. In addition to the many tales of criminals as masters of disguise (from Eugène Sue to *Fantômas*), one could also point to the role disguise plays in a number of Sherlock Holmes tales, such as "The Man with the Twisted Lip," in which a change of identity allows a different relation to city life.
11. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).
12. Christian Phéline, *L'Image accusatrice* (Paris: Cahiers de la Photographie, 1985), p. 10. All translations from Phéline are my own.
13. Benjamin, *Baudelaire*, p. 48.
14. Phéline, op. cit., p. 17.
15. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 37.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58. Phéline refers to Edouard Bonnier's *Traité théorique et pratique des preuves*, which was commonly used as an authority in the second half of the eighteenth century.
17. Ernst Bloch, "A Philosophical View of the Detective Novel," in *The Utopian Function of Arts and Literature* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), p. 246.
18. Tom Taylor, *The Ticket of Leave Man*, in *Nineteenth-Century Plays*, ed. George Rowell (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 318.
19. Holmes's statement is quoted and discussed by Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok in "'You Know My Method': A Juxtaposition of Charles S. Peirce and Sherlock Holmes," in *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Peirce*, ed. Thomas Sebeok (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1983), p. 23. An extremely interesting treatment of the issues of photography and the detective story appears in Robert Ray, "Snapshots: The Beginnings of Photography," in *The Image*, ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin: University of Texas Press, forthcoming).
20. Bell is quoted in Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok, op. cit., p. 35.
21. Thomas Byrnes, *1886 Professional Criminals of America* (1886; reprint, New York: Chelsea House, 1969), p. 55. I would like to thank James Swoch for making this work available to me.
22. Alphonse Bertillon, *Instructions for Taking Descriptions for the Identification of*

Criminals and Others by Means of Anthropometric Indications, trans. Gallus Muller (Chicago: American Bertillon Prison Bureau, 1889), p. 15. This quote comes from Muller's introduction. Alan Sekula also stresses the individualizing intention of the Bertillon method (in contrast to theorists of the "criminal type," such as Galton and Lombroso) in "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (winter 1986): 3-64. In "Snapshots," Ray explores the relations among photography, the detective story, and *physiologies*, although I find the modern practice of identifying a unique individual rather different from the earlier tradition of defining character *type* through physical characteristics.

23. Phéline, op. cit., p. 24.
24. On the adoption of the fingerprint as the sign of identity, see Carlo Ginsburg, "Clues: Morelli, Freud, and Sherlock Holmes," in Sebeok, op. cit., pp. 106-109. Resistance to fingerprints as a standard means of identification (he preferred using the shape of the ear as a distinguishing characteristic), combined with his dubious testimony as a handwriting analyst as a witness for the army at the Dreyfus trial, led to Bertillon's later loss of status as a leader in criminal identification. See Phéline, op. cit., pp. 38-42.
25. Phéline, op. cit., p. 15.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
27. Maren Stange quotes Jacob Riis on the popularity of the rogues' gallery as a tourist attraction, in *Symbols of Ideal Life: Social Documentary Photography in America, 1890-1950* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 19. For their display by Barnum, see the *Hartford Daily Courant*, 29 March 1858, P. T. Barnum file, Billy Rose Theater Collection, New York Public Library. I thank Iris Cahn for this reference.
28. One version of this caricature is reproduced in Phéline, op. cit., p. 106. It appears as an obviously staged photograph on p. 53 of *Professional Criminals*. Ben Singer has indicated to me in conversation that there is a long tradition of such caricatures, and I thank him for first alerting me to this.
29. Phéline quotes Ernest Lacan denying the veracity of this caricature in 1877, but reproduces the grimacing photographs from Macé. (Phéline, op. cit., pp. 106-107.)
30. Brynes, op. cit., p. 53.
31. Phéline, op. cit., p. 115.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
33. Sekula, op. cit., p. 27.
34. Alphonse Bertillon, *Signaletic Instructions, Including the Theory and Practice of Anthropometric Identification*, ed. R. W. McClaughry (Chicago: The Werner Company, 1896), pp. 12-13.
35. See Ginsburg, op. cit., p. 106; Sekula, op. cit.; and John Tagg, "Power and Photography: Part One, A Means of Surveillance: The Photograph as Evidence in Law," *Screen Education* 36 (winter 1980): 17-55.
36. Sekula, op. cit., p. 17.
37. Phéline, op. cit., pp. 12-13, 95.
38. Bertillon, op. cit., p. 4. Emphasis in original. It is interesting to note Sherlock Holmes's comment to Dr. Watson concerning his method: "You see, but

you do not observe" ("A Scandal in Bohemia," in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* [Garden City: Doubleday and Co.], p. 162).

39. Phéline, op. cit., p. 118.

40. Bertillon, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

41. Phéline, op. cit., p. 38. Phéline also stresses the importance of photography in the suppression of the Commune (pp. 28-32).

42. Bertillon is quoted in Sekula, op. cit., p. 34. One can't help but see his sentiment fulfilled in the contemporary circulation of photographs and descriptions of missing children on milk cartons. In a period of late capitalism, only the containers of commodities circulate as widely and are as easily disposable as children.

43. Phéline, op. cit., p. 20.

44. Ibid., p. 130.

45. In *Plays by Dion Boucicault*, ed. Peter Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 163. It is worth noting that this play also turns on the difficulty of determining racial identity.

46. See Tagg, op. cit., pp. 23-24. The unclaimed dead in the morgue began to be photographed in France in 1874, to preserve evidence that decay might render unrecognizable (Phéline, op. cit., p. 103).

47. For a treatment of *Falsely Accused* in relation to early point-of-view films and several of the issues raised in this paper, see Tom Gunning, "What I Saw from the Rear Window of the Hôtel des Folies-Dramatiques, or, The Story Point of View Films Told," in *Ce que je vois de mon ciné*, ed. André Gaudreault (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1988), pp. 39-41. As Eileen Bowser points out in her discussion of the film, the police officer who hangs the screen for the courtroom showing of the film is played by D. W. Griffith in his screen debut ("Griffith's Film Career before *The Adventures of Dollie*," in *Film Before Griffith*, ed. John Fell [Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983], p. 367).

48. For a discussion of this scene in the context of the detective and criminal's use of disguise, see Tom Gunning, "Attractions, Detection, Disguise: Zigomar, Jasset and the History of Film Genres," *Griffithiana* 47 (May 1993): 137-156.

49. Sigmund Freud, "A Case of Paranoia Running Counter to the Psycho-Analytic Theory of the Disease," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1966), 14: 261-272.

50. Stephen Bottomore, "Les Thèmes du témoignage dans le cinéma primitif," *Les Premiers ans du cinéma français*, ed. Pierre Guibbert (Perpignan: Institute Jean Vigo, 1985), pp. 155-161.

51. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 195-228.

52. "A Case of Paranoia," in Freud, op. cit., pp. 268-271.

53. Philippe Dubois, "Le Corps et ses fantômes: Notes sur quelques fictions photographiques dans l'iconographie scientifique de la seconde moitié du XIX^{ème} siècle," in *L'Acte photographique et autres essais* (Paris: Nathan, 1991), pp. 212-216.

54. Ibid., p. 215.

55. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 166.

56. Dubois op. cit., pp. 214-215.

57. See A. E. Murch, *The Development of the Detective Novel* (London: Peter Owen,

1958), p. 120. The poster for the Pathé film shows a bizarre apparatus for the obtaining of the retinal image, consisting of a camera and a magnifying glass focused on a dead man's eye. I would like to thank Yuri Tsvivan for pointing this out to me.

58. Villier's 1886 novel *L'Ève future* prophetically envisioned Thomas Edison's invention of motion pictures as preparation for the creation of a female android. For an extraordinary discussion of Villiers's novel as well as the female body as object of scientific curiosity and the cinematic apparatus, see Annette Michelson, "On the Eve of the Future: The Reasonable Facsimile and the Philosophical Toy," *October* 29 (summer 1984): 3-20.
59. "Claire Lenoir," in Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Alain Raitt et al. (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1986), 2: 145-221. The sources for Villiers's use of the retinal image are discussed on p. 1,129 of this critical edition. Samuel Weber discusses "Claire Lenoir" in relation to Freud's notion of the uncanny in "The Sideshow, or Remarks on a Canny Moment," *MLA* 88 (1973): 1,124-1,131. I would like to thank Mikhail Yampolski for first directing me to Villiers's tale.
60. These tableaux are analyzed by Ludmilla Jordanova in *Sexual Visions: Images of Gender in Science and Medicine between the Eighteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1989), pp. 98-110. This theme is further explored through a discussion of silent film and other narrative traditions in Giuliana Bruno's extraordinary *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 58-78.
61. For a discussion of a similar obsession, in the nearly contemporaneous theater work of André de Lorde, with the knowledge a woman's body can yield, see my essay "The Horror of Opacity: The Melodrama of Sensation in the Plays of André de Lorde," in *Melodrama Stage, Picture, Screen*, ed. J. S. Bratton, Jim Cook, and Christine Gledhill (London: British Film Institute, 1994).
62. Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*, p. 170.
63. For a discussion of the origin and growth of the photographic identity card, see Phéline, op. cit., pp. 22-23, 135-138. The most insightful treatment of the use of motion photography in medicine is offered in Lisa Cartwright, "Experiments of Destruction: Cinematic Inscriptions of Physiology," *Representations* 40 (fall 1992): 51-70.
64. Richard Abel has identified this film as Gaumont's *Onésime vagabond*, in "An Economy of Framing: Photographs and Films in Early French Melodrama, 1909-1913" (Paper delivered at conference of the British Film Institute, "Melodrama: Stage, Picture, Screen," London, July 1992). Besides its analysis of *Une erreur tragique*, this paper includes extremely interesting discussions of the use of photographs in other early French films.
65. See *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image, 1974-1991*, ed. Colin McCabe and Mary Lea Bandy (New York: Museum of Modern Art/Harry Abrams, 1992), pp. 149, 162. Godard, in an interview with Serge Daney, speculates--with his usual synchronic sense of chronology--that Mallarmé wrote of the blank page after having just seen *Une erreur tragique*. Gilles Deleuze quotes Godard's maxim ("Pas une image juste, juste une image") on p. 35 of this volume.