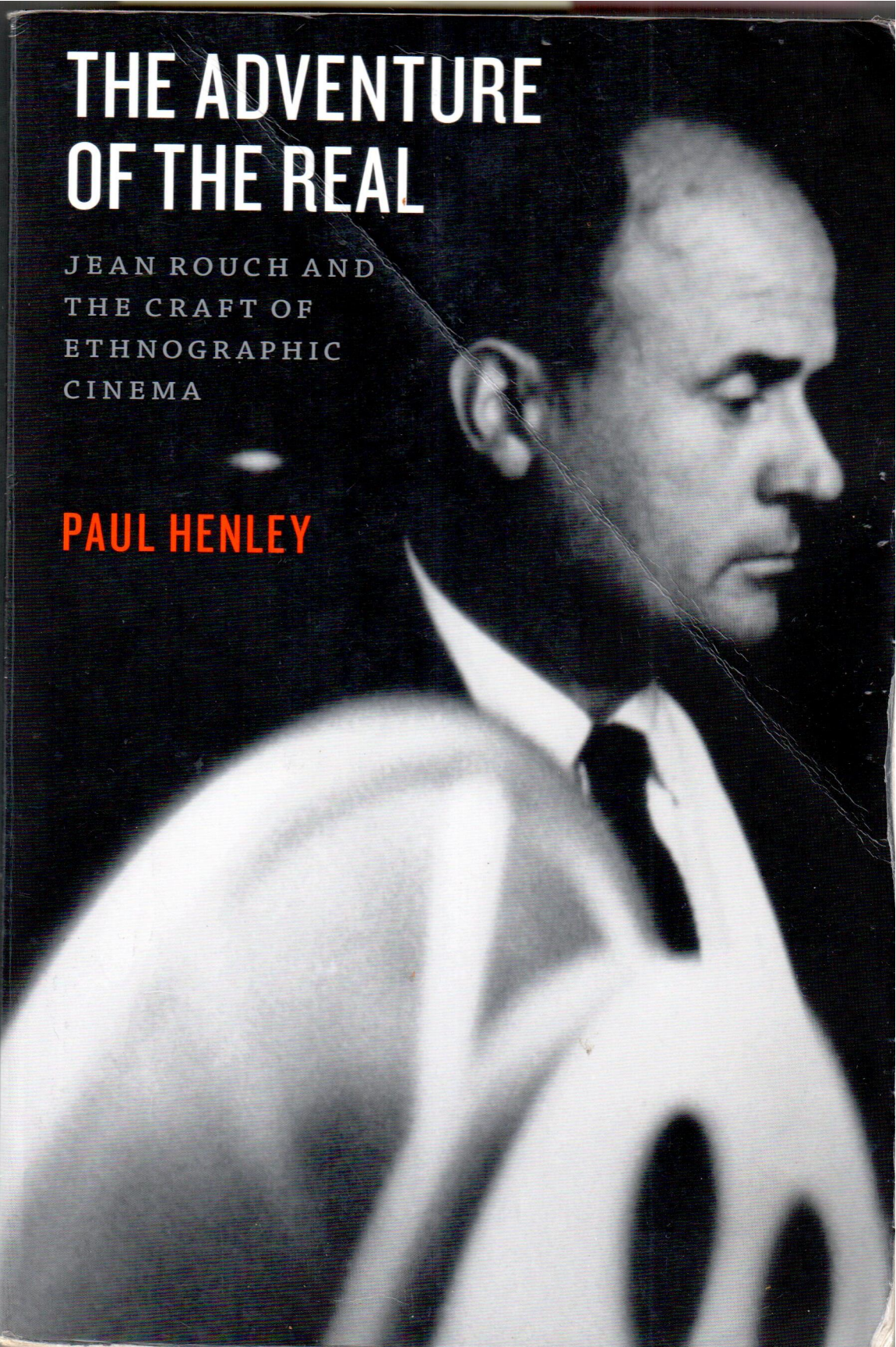


THE ADVENTURE OF THE REAL

JEAN ROUCH AND
THE CRAFT OF
ETHNOGRAPHIC
CINEMA

PAUL HENLEY



8 : Chronicle of a Violent Game

There remains the most difficult, the most moving, the most secret [aspect of social life]: wherever human feelings are at stake, wherever the individual is directly involved, wherever there are interpersonal relationships of authority, subordination, comradeship, love, hate—in other words, everything connected with the emotional fabric of human existence. There lies the great terra incognita of the sociological or ethnological cinema, of cinéma-vérité. There lies its promised land.

EDGAR MORIN, 1962¹

While anthropologists may debate whether *Les Maîtres fous*, *Jaguar*, *The Lion Hunters*, or possibly the Dogon ritual films represent Jean Rouch's most important ethnographic work, and screen studies specialists argue the case between *Moi, un Noir* and *La Pyramide humaine* as the most influential on the development of the French New Wave, as far as documentarists generally are concerned, it would surely be *Chronicle of a Summer*, shot in 1960 and released in 1961, that would be considered the most significant of his films. Indeed, the leading media studies author, Brian Winston, goes so far as to suggest that in the English-speaking world, "*Chronique d'un été* has been, more or less, the Rouch oeuvre in its entirety; and it is pretty meaningless to question the impact of the man (at least on the mainstream of anglophone documentary production over the last half century) in terms that stray much beyond *Chronique d'un été*."²

Somewhat paradoxically, however, in terms of its underlying praxis, *Chronicle of a Summer* is in some ways atypical of Rouch's work as a whole. In large part, this is due to the influence of the codirector, Edgar Morin. A sociologist rather than a practicing filmmaker, Morin is a much more interesting figure than is generally acknowledged in anglophone milieux and certainly in the visual anthropology literature, in which there is a tendency to present him as no more than an over-intellectual stooge who is regularly upstaged by Rouch in the course of the film. Born in Paris in 1921, the son of Greek Sephardic Jewish immigrants, he had changed his

name from Nahum to "Morin" during the Second World War when, as a member of the Resistance, he had to conceal the fact that he was a Jew. After the war, Morin was appointed to a research position in the CNRS and was already a rising figure of Parisian intellectual life by the time he came to make *Chronicle*. Prior to making the film, he was probably best known in intellectual circles for two well-received books on the effect of cinema on the human imaginary, *Le Cinéma ou l'homme imaginaire* (1956) and *Les Stars* (1957). He was also known as the editor of the leading Marxist journal *Arguments* and as the author of *Autocritique*, a personal memoir about his engagement with and subsequent expulsion from the French Communist Party. In subsequent years, Morin would come to be recognized in France as a major multidisciplinary thinker, with publications ranging across a wide range of topics including the nature of nature, consciousness, and complexity. In the many profiles of his career that are available on the Web, his participation in the making of *Chronicle* is generally only mentioned in passing and often not at all, which is symptomatic of the fact that although this film may be widely regarded by documentarists as a milestone of documentary filmmaking, it represents a relatively small part of Morin's personal curriculum vitae.³

Over the course of his career, Rouch shared the direction of a number of other films—notably the *Sigui* films, which he codirected with Germaine Dieterlen, or the research films that he directed with the ethnomusicologist Gilbert Rouget—but in these other cases, the codirectors mostly left the actual filmmaking up to him. However, this was not the case with *Chronicle*, and Rouch clearly found the sharing of directorial co-authorship particularly demanding. Although Morin and Rouch started out in general agreement about the objectives of the film and the methods that they would use, in the process of actually implementing their ideas, a number of major differences of opinion arose between them. Codirection, Rouch discovered, was not a matter of teamwork based on mutual collaboration but, as he put it, "more a violent game where disagreement is the only rule, and the solution lies in the resolution of this disagreement."⁴

The ups and downs of the cat's cradle of relationships involved in the making of *Chronicle*, as well as the many different transformations that the film went through from initial conception to final version, have been wittily recollected by Morin in a memoir written shortly after the release of the film. This "chronicle of a film," as he dubs it, provides unique insight into the process of making a "documentary" (even though he actually denies *Chronicle* that particular label) and, as such, it deserves to be read by any student of documentary filmmaking. In this chapter, I shall be relying particularly on Morin's account, supplemented by commentaries by Rouch and a number of third parties, to discuss the practical

processes whereby *Chronicle* came into being. First, though, we should begin with a brief description of the film as it was finally released:

The film follows a group of young people living in Paris in the summer of 1960, exploring their views about work, love, and happiness but also about the colonial wars then going on in Africa. Over the opening shots of the early morning rush hour in Paris, Rouch's offscreen voice identifies the film as an "experiment in *cinéma-vérité*," to which ordinary men and women have undertaken to give a few moments of their lives. In the first half of the film, the investigation proceeds by means of a variety of verbal devices, including survey-style questions in the street, mealtime discussions and intensive one-on-one interviews conducted by Morin. One of the subjects, Marceline, having been invited to walk through various locations in Paris and give free rein to her thoughts, is moved to talk about her experiences during the war when she and her father were deported to a German concentration camp. These various oral testimonies are interspersed with a few relatively brief sequences of the subjects going about their daily lives at work or home.

About two-thirds of the way through the film, the subjects leave Paris for their summer holidays, and there is a shift in emphasis from static discussions physically anchored in one place to sequences in which the subjects are moving about, though there continues to be a heavy emphasis on dialogue. The general tone of the film also becomes more light-hearted. Several subjects are shown at the beach in the south of France, while others are shown at a picnic in Fontainebleau Forest, close to Paris, teaching their children to climb a small outcrop of rocks.

Eventually, the subjects all return from their holidays and are shown a preliminary assembly of the rushes. The reception is much less positive than Rouch and Morin had been expecting. Some subjects think that the film completely misrepresents their lives, while others think that it is too intrusive, encouraging an immodest degree of self-revelation. Rouch and Morin are left walking up and down amid the ethnographic display cases in the Musée de l'Homme ruminating on the nature of the truth that they have brought to light.

In addition to his disagreements with Morin, Rouch also found himself constrained by the concerns of the producer, Anatole Dauman, the head of Argos Films, who seems to have acted as some sort of arbiter between the two directors but who, like all producers, also had his own agenda, namely, to complete the film "on time and in budget."⁵ The form of the film was also greatly influenced by the succession of distinguished cameramen who worked on it, as well as by the important technological innovations that they and Rouch were introducing even as the film

was being made. Later, in the edit suite, in the hands of several different teams of editors (about whose appointment Rouch was constantly arguing with Dauman), the rushes resulting from the pooling of these various interests and skills at the production stage underwent a further major transformation. For reasons that I shall describe below, in some senses this transformation in postproduction appears to have undermined, if not actually betrayed, the original ambitions of the directors and the cameramen. Yet despite all these different inputs and the fact that the project started out with only the vaguest of script ideas, rather like a medieval cathedral that possesses architectural harmony despite having been built by many different masons over several centuries, the film that eventually emerged from this complex set of relationships possesses a remarkable overall coherence.

"Comment vis-tu?"

Although attributions of the authorship of *Chronicle* invariably put Rouch's name first, in Morin's account it was he who first had the idea to make the film. According to his account, in December 1959, while attending the first Festival dei Popoli in Florence as a member of the jury for the ethnographic section, he was much impressed by John Marshall's early film about the San "bushmen" of southern Africa, *The Hunters*, first released some three years previously, since it had succeeded in communicating the essential humanity of the San despite their exotic appearance and unfamiliar way of life. At the same festival, he also saw a number of films shot in urban locations, including the documentary made in South London by Karel Reisz, *We Are the Lambeth Boys*, released in 1958, which had managed to get beyond what Morin called the "Sunday best" reality of current affairs documentaries and to show what these teenagers were really like when they were simply hanging out at their youth club.

Both these films had employed, at least in part, a handheld camera to achieve their effects. Morin formed the idea of applying this technique to a film about Paris and thought that the best person to do this was Rouch since he had already developed this technique into a fine art in his African films. He had become, as Morin put it, a "filmmaker-diver who plunges into real-life situations," infiltrating communities "as a person and not as the director of a film crew."⁶ Since Rouch was a member of the same jury at Florence, Morin proposed to him then and there that they should collaborate on a film about their own "tribe," the Parisians. As his migration work in Africa was coming to an end and he was looking for a new challenge, Rouch readily agreed. With Rouch on board, Morin later had no difficulty in selling the idea to Anatole Dauman.⁷

On his return to France, Morin published an article in January 1960 in the journal *France Observateur* entitled "For a New *Cinéma-Vérité*," linking the project with the concept of *kino-pravda* or "cinema-truth" first developed by Dziga Vertov, the Polish-Russian Constructivist filmmaker. Best known for his experimental 1929 "city film," *Man with a Movie Camera*, Vertov had later fallen foul of the Stalinist diktat in favor of Socialist Realism, and by the time that he died in 1954, he had become a marginalized and largely forgotten figure in the Soviet Union. In France, however, his ideas had been kept alive by the Marxist cinema historian Georges Sadoul, though his films remained very difficult to see and would not become readily available until the mid-1960s, sometime after *Chronicle* had been made. Indeed, Morin later confessed that at the time that he wrote the article for *France Observateur*, he was more familiar with Vertov's ideas than with his films. As for Rouch, although it seems that he may have previously had some awareness of Vertov's work, it was only after working on *Chronicle* that he began to associate his own way of working with that of Vertov. In various different guises, it was an association that he would continue to make for the rest of his life.⁸

The term *cinéma-vérité* has a checkered history in the literature on documentary filmmaking. For a period, particularly in North America in the 1960s and 1970s, it was understood to denote a documentary practice that aspired to reveal an entirely objective truth about the world and, as such, was associated with the work of the Direct Cinema filmmakers, referred to in the Introduction to this part of the book. However, this understanding is considerably at odds with the original meaning of *kino-pravda* as conceived by Vertov. He coined this term not to refer to some objective truth that could be delivered by cinematic means but rather to the distinctive way of viewing the world that had been made possible by the invention of the "ciné-eye," that is, the cinematographic apparatus. It was clearly in this latter sense that Rouch also understood the term. "For me . . .," he once commented, "'cinema-truth' has a specific meaning in the same way that 'ciné-eye' does, designating not pure truth, but the truth particular to recorded images and sounds: 'ciné-truth.'"⁹

But while at a very general theoretical level Rouch and Vertov may have shared this view about the nature of cinematographic reality, at the level of actual practice, there seems to be very little in common between their respective filmmaking approaches. The visual aesthetic of Rouch's films, throughout his career, remained generally realist and, once the technology allowed, was based on the long take and a "normal," progressive chronology. Vertov's approach, on the other hand, as particularly exemplified by *Man with a Movie Camera*, was based on the flamboyant use of montage and a complete disregard for any conception of realism

or a “normal” chronology. But perhaps even more significant are the differences between Rouch and Vertov with respect to their ideas about the precise nature of the truth made possible by the “ciné-eye.” For Vertov, the term *kino-pravda* referred primarily to the process of perceiving the world: the ciné-eye could go anywhere and see anywhere. It could fly in the air with airplanes, watch from beneath as a train thundered overhead, pry into a lady’s boudoir. In the edit suite, these images captured by the ciné-eye could then be transformed in all manner of ways: they could be juxtaposed in provocative ways, superimposed, speeded up or slowed down, even run backward. In this way, humanity’s vision of the world could be transformed. For Rouch, on the other hand, it was not so much the perception of the world but rather the world itself that was transformed by the cinematographic process as the presence of the camera provoked the subjects into revelatory performances that were different from their normal forms of behavior.

This is a topic that I shall return to again in part 3 when I consider Rouch’s shooting praxis in greater detail. Suffice it to say here that this fundamental difference between Vertov and himself about the nature of the truth made possible by the ciné-eye is something that, in my view, Rouch never fully acknowledged. Morin, on the other hand, even back in 1960, recognized in his article in *France Observateur* that there was a significant difference in the nature of the relationship that the two filmmakers sought to develop with their subjects. Whereas Rouch was the “filmmaker-diver” who “plunged” into the social world that he was filming, Vertov’s strategy often consisted of filming subjects by means of a hidden camera, catching them unawares in a voyeuristic way and sometimes against their will. This aspect of the Vertovian technique, Morin suggested, was not acceptable, and in the article, as flagged even in the title, he emphasized the need to develop a *new* form of *cinéma-vérité*, one that went beyond Vertov’s voyeurism and was built instead on a strategy akin to the classic anthropological fieldwork technique of participant-observation. Indeed, Morin suggested, the “true father” of this new *cinéma-vérité* was “doubtless much more Robert Flaherty than Dziga Vertov.”¹⁰

Curiously, neither Morin in his memoir, nor Rouch—at least as far as I am aware, since he made many pronouncements on the film over the years—drew attention to the feature that, in retrospect, seems to be the most obvious formal similarity between *Man with a Movie Camera* and *Chronicle of a Summer*, namely, the quite unabashed reflexivity. Even if Vertov had sought to hide the fact that he was making a film from his subjects, he constantly reminds his audience about the process, showing not only the eponymous cameraman in shot, but also the editor, and

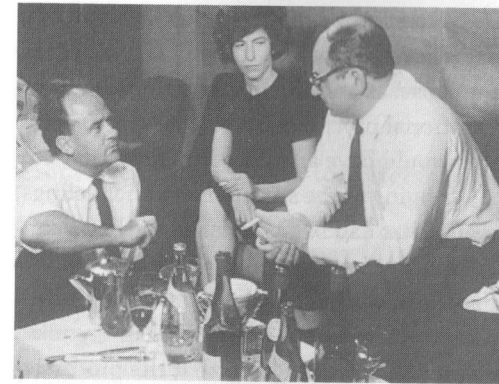


FIGURE 8.1. Reflexivity à la française. Top, Rouch and Morin brief Marceline with the aid of a number of bottles of wine; bottom, Nadine and Marceline conduct interviews in the street: “Are you happy or unhappy?” “That depends . . . have you read Descartes?”

even an audience watching the film within the film. Rouch and Morin take this reflexivity one step further, for not only do they share the process of construction of the film with the audience, but they also share the process of construction with the subjects. For Rouch, this was nothing new, representing merely a further extension of his commitment to the “shared anthropology” that he had been practicing in Africa since 1954, when he first began showing his works to his subjects. But as one might expect, given his left-wing political inclinations, Morin was also entirely sympathetic with this strategy (fig. 8.1).¹¹

In addition to their common commitment to a reflexive mode of enquiry based on principles of participant observation, Morin and Rouch also shared an interest in “psychodrama” or, as Morin sometimes refers to it, “sociodrama,” but which amounted to the same thing, namely, the strategy of encouraging subjects to play out their lives before the camera in order to release otherwise hidden aspects of their imaginations. As we saw in chapter 6, this was a technique that Rouch had already used quite self-consciously in *La Pyramide humaine*. Morin was also interested in the potential of this technique, though he appears to have come to it from a

slightly different angle. Whereas Rouch thought of the subjects' camera-induced performances as drawing on the unconscious conceived, in the Surrealist manner, in a positive sense, as a source of creativity, Morin approached it from a more conventional psychoanalytical perspective, believing that these performances would have an effect similar to that of a psychoanalytical consultation, bringing to the surface ideas and feelings, and not necessarily positive ones, that had been banished to the unconscious by repressive psychological mechanisms. But these were differences of emphasis rather than of kind, since historically both Surrealism and psychoanalysis were drawing on a common inheritance in Freudian ideas. Moreover, both Morin and Rouch were agreed that the process of bringing out what would otherwise remain hidden in the deep recesses of a film subject's mind was, on balance, beneficial for the subject in that it would help to break down the barriers that normally obstruct social relationships.¹²

Morin and Rouch also agreed that the film should be entirely dependent on these performances provoked by the camera and that there could therefore be no script. Instead, as Morin explained in the synopsis that he wrote to obtain filming authorization from the Centre National de la Cinématographie, their aim was to gather together a number of subjects, present them with the simple question, "*Comment vis-tu?*," "How do you live?," and take it from there, letting the subjects' responses determine the direction that the film would then follow.¹³ In an allusion to the famous play by Pirandello, he and Rouch would be "two authors in search of six characters." There would be no artificial narrative, and the film would conclude not with a title indicating "The End" but with a "To Be Continued," in recognition of the fact that the subjects' lives would go on after the filmmaking had ended.

In effect, Morin proposed, the film would not be a documentary at all, but a program of research based on "an experiment lived by its authors and its actors," clearly echoing here the intertitle close to the beginning of *Man with a Movie Camera* that declares that it is "an experiment in visual communication." In the course of this experiment, Morin explained, there would be no "moat" between filmmakers and subjects, since the former would participate directly in the lives of the latter. Even at this proposal stage, Morin envisaged that there would be a screening of a preliminary assembly to the subjects, as in *La Pyramide humaine*, the purpose of which was to attempt "the ultimate psychodrama." That is, after the screening, the subjects would be asked what they thought that they had learned about themselves or their fellow subjects, or about their relationship to the filmmakers and the filmmaking process.¹⁴

In short, when the "experiment" began, Morin and Rouch were largely

agreed both about the objectives of the project and the methods to be employed. But as they set about actually making the film, a number of crucial differences between them soon began to emerge.

From Alienation at Work to Waterskiing

These differences between Rouch and Morin derived to some extent from their respective political postures. Throughout his career, Rouch made every effort to avoid political statements. In postindependence Africa, he argued, it would be "imperialistic" for any European to seek to impose his political values, while in France, he was never publicly associated with any particular political project. Indeed, he was deeply suspicious of those who hoped to change the world through political activism. If he had any sort of political credo, it appears to have been anarchism without militancy.¹⁵ In contrast, Morin was a Marxist of decidedly militant inclinations. He had joined the French Communist Party at the height of the Second World War and had remained a member, albeit a somewhat dissident one, until he was expelled for his criticism of the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. At the time of filming *Chronicle*, he continued to be closely associated with various left-wing political groups, many of which openly supported the Algerians in their war of liberation against the French colony that was still in full flow at the time that *Chronicle* was being made.

Since Rouch had only recently returned from Africa, he initially allowed Morin to select the subjects and without him being fully aware of it, Morin drew almost exclusively on his own left-wing friends and associates.¹⁶ Although the first commentary point refers merely to unspecified "men and women" lending themselves to an "experiment in *cinéma-vérité*," suggesting that they may have been randomly selected in some way, the reality was that many of them came from this very particular segment of the Parisian population. At first, Morin's principal strategy for getting answers to the question, "How do you live?" was to arrange a number of meals at his own apartment or those of his left-wing friends that brought together a few of his old comrades, some workers from the Renault factory at Billancourt and a number of left-wing students. In a series of these mealtime scenes, surrounded by evidence of good food and drink, as well as by clouds of smoke from untipped cigarettes, the subjects, accompanied by both Rouch and Morin in shot, set about discussing such heavy-duty matters as alienation in the workplace, the problems of transport workers' housing, and the Algerian war.

Although Rouch quipped that this idea for collective meals arose from Morin's "demonic greediness," Morin himself believed that the commen-

sal bonhomie would encourage the free flow of conversation and help the subjects overcome any inhibitions that they might have about being filmed. The film crew was also encouraged to participate and in the mealtime scene dedicated to the discussion of the war in Algeria, they take a particularly active part, with the sound recordist Guy Rophé arguing that France should stand up for her rights against the Algerian independence movement while the veteran cameraman Albert Viguier, who had been director of photography on such classic works of French cinema as Marcel Carné's *Le jour se lève* (1939) and Georges Rouquier's *Lourdes et ses miracles* (1954), accuses the students of not being sufficiently engaged in the debate about the war.

Morin later explained that by including a discussion of the Algerian war at this particularly sensitive time, they were running the risk of falling foul of politically motivated censorship, and in order to forestall this, they had to exercise some censorship of their own in the edit suite. Although the mealtime debate is lively and many of the students condemn the war unreservedly, the possibility of Algerian independence is never actually mentioned. They also cut out a passage in which, in response to a direct question from Rouch, two students of military service age said they would not go to fight in Algeria if they were called up. One of these students was Régis Debray, who the following year joined the Communist Party. He would later become a confidant of Fidel Castro and a leading figure of French left-wing politics, though at the time of filming, he was still what Morin calls "an individualist in the Camus mould."¹⁷

The other student in this exchange was Jean-Pierre Sergent. He appears in the scene immediately prior to this mealtime discussion of the Algerian conflict, in which he and Marceline talk about the connection between the difficulties in their personal relationship, Jean-Pierre's sense of despair and their general feeling of political impotence.¹⁸ In fact, this scene is made up of material shot on two different occasions, several months apart, though they are linked through the sound track in such a way as to suggest that both sets of rushes were shot on the same occasion. The set of rushes showing Jean-Pierre and Marceline talking about their relationship, mostly framed in a series of relatively tight close-ups, was one of the first to be shot, while the second set, shot considerably later, show Jean-Pierre on his own, studying hard for his imminent philosophy exam.

In reality, although shot at different times, both sets of rushes were originally informed by political issues directly connected to the Algerian war, though in neither case are these alluded to directly. For the reason why Jean-Pierre was shown studying so intensively—which comes first in the scene in question, though it was actually the material shot later—

was that if he had failed his philosophy exam, he would have been eligible to be called up for military service in Algeria. As for the interview material with Marceline, one of the reasons that Jean-Pierre was so depressed at this time, as he would explain much later in a 1991 interview, was that prior to becoming involved in the filming of *Chronicle*, he had been active in the *réseau Jeanson*, a clandestine network based in France that was committed to aiding the Algerian struggle for independence. Earlier that year, the French police had broken up the network and although Jean-Pierre had not been arrested, he was still feeling anxious about the possible consequences.

However, all the references to politics made by Jean-Pierre and Marceline in the edited version of this scene remain steadfastly in the domain of the general. Indeed, just as it seems that one or other of them might be about to move to the particular, there is often a blatant cutaway to Morin looking on, suggesting that a passage from the sound track has been excised at this point. In the absence of this specific political context, one is left with the vague sense that their interpersonal problems are due to some kind of existential crisis that impacts on their relationship, possibly due to the fact that Marceline is considerably older than Jean-Pierre. If this existential crisis has any link to politics, the way this scene is edited suggests that rather than having anything to do with contemporary affairs, it may be a throwback to the war years since in the last shot in the scene, the camera pans down to reveal some numbers tattooed on Marceline's forearm. Although these are not explained, they would probably be recognized by most viewers, certainly in the early 1960s, as evidence that Marceline had been a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp.

In the early part of the shoot, these mealtime scenes alternated with intensive interrogatory interviews conducted by Morin. The most dramatic of these, conserved in the final version, was with another of Morin's friends, Marilou Parolini, who was then working as a secretary at the *Cahiers du Cinéma* office. In response to Morin's probing questions, Marilou struggles to find the words to explain her existential dilemmas, on the verge of tears and her face a constant ripple of anguish. At one point, she even talks about killing herself, though concludes that she does not even have the right to do this. This scene was shot by Rouch himself from a camera on a tripod, mostly in very tight close-up on Marilou's tortured visage. In both respects, this was diametrically opposed to his normal camera praxis. But when asked about this many years later, he did not have any very elaborate explanation for this other than that Marilou was talking very nervously and that he had shot the big close-ups "to try to get inside" (fig. 8.2).¹⁹

As the shooting proceeded, Rouch began to tire of this way of work-



FIGURE 8.2. While Morin interrogates, Rouch tries “to get inside” Marilou with a close-up: “I feel trapped . . . I want to free myself from alibis . . . I don’t even have the right to kill myself. That would be false, completely false.”

ing. He did not want to deal only in serious topics. Filming endless discussions of social problems had no interest for him—he wanted joy and gaiety. He also wanted the film to have two or three leading protagonists with whom the audience could identify. He even suggested that Morin could be one of these protagonists, the hero in search of the Holy Grail of Truth, but Morin flatly rejected this idea. On the other hand, Rouch did manage to introduce his own friends into the “cast,” including Nadine Ballot, the European who had played a leading role as the *débarquée* in *La Pyramide humaine* (and who would later star in his Paris-based New Wave films) as well as Landry and Raymond, two of the Black Ivoirian *lycéens* who had also appeared in that film. Although the mealtime discussions continued, they no longer took place in Marceline’s house, but outside at *Le Totem*, the restaurant on the terrace of the Musée de l’Homme. Under Rouch’s influence, the main themes of the conversation also moved from alienation at the workplace and the political intricacies of the Algerian war to the more conventionally anthropological issues of Black-White sexual relationships, racism and anti-Semitism, and to the issues raised by the independence struggle going on in the Congo, which although also a delicate political subject, was much less so than the Algerian war since it was Belgian rather than French colonialism that was under attack there (fig. 8.3).

But what concerned Rouch more than anything else at this time was the development of a new technique of handheld shooting. This represented a major point of difference between the two codirectors. For Rouch was far more interested in conducting technical experiments than in any political significance that the film might have, while Morin had no interest whatsoever in technical matters.²⁰ But if Morin was indifferent to the technical experiments, the cameramen whom Dauman had hired for the film were positively hostile to them and they refused to shoot

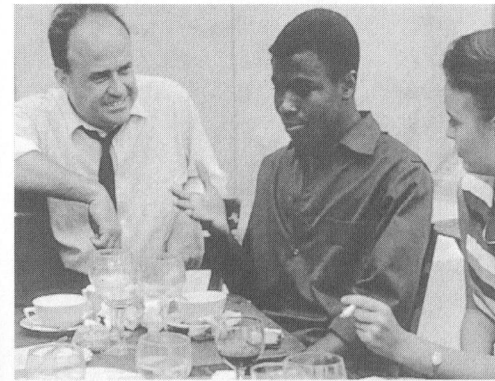


FIGURE 8.3. Outside at *Le Totem* restaurant: Landry explains his views about the interracial conflicts in Africa (see also fig. 0.1 above).

handheld because they feared that the loss of technical quality would be too great. The principal cameraman, the distinguished Albert Viguier, withdrew from the shoot and insisted that his name should not be included in the final credits since he feared that this would seriously damage his reputation. For a short period, Rouch was able to employ Raoul Coutard, who had shot the handheld sequences of Jean-Luc Godard’s *À bout de souffle* (which in themselves had been inspired by Rouch’s own handheld shooting in *Moi, un Noir*) with the 35mm Éclair Cameflex CM3 designed by innovative camera engineer André Coutant (fig. 8.4). But when Coutard had to return to other commitments, Rouch was able to persuade Dauman, despite the latter’s serious reservations about the technical experimentation, to bring over Michel Brault, who together with his colleagues at the National Film Board of Canada had been developing the technique of the handheld “walking camera.”

The strategy of the “walking camera” radically transformed the shooting praxis of the film. Initially, it involved the use of a small 16mm Arriflex camera in conjunction with a newly developed wide-angle lens, which, in contrast to previous models, did not distort the image. This lens allowed the operator to minimize camera shake while at the same time maximizing the depth of field. However, the motor of the Arriflex was too noisy to use in conjunction with simultaneous sound recording, so the scenes in which it was used had to be shot mute and the sound added afterward. This was the case, for example, with the scene of Jean-Pierre Sergent studying for his philosophy exams described above. But even while the shooting of *Chronicle* was going on, Rouch and Brault were simultaneously working with André Coutant to develop an even more compact but also quieter camera based on a prototype developed for military purposes. This was the KMT Coutant-Mathot Éclair, which weighed only 1.5 kilograms but still could carry a 400-ft magazine with a ten-



FIGURE 8.4. Jean-Luc Godard's cameraman, Raoul Coutard, and his 35mm Éclair Cameflex CM3 camera, with Rouch in the Renault factory at Billancourt. Reproduced in the journal *Studies in Visual Communication* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1985): 12.

minute running time. Instead of looking through the viewfinder, the operator held the camera at chest level, relying on the wide-angle lens to achieve an acceptable degree of accuracy in the framing. The new camera remained rather bulky on account of the "blimp," a soundproofing housing that was necessary to suppress the noise of the motor so that it would not be picked up on the microphones, but it greatly improved mobility. "We could film in the middle of the street, and no one knew we were shooting except the technicians and the actors," Rouch enthused. Although the extent of the operation might seem absurdly large to us now, living as we do in an era of sound-synchronous documentaries shot by a single person on a mobile phone, in 1960, this innovation represented a major technical advance (fig. 8.5).²¹

However, at this stage, the sound track was still being recorded on an independent tape recorder that had no direct connection with the camera and was not entirely synchronous. Although the Nagra tape recorder used on *Chronicle* was genuinely portable and was a great improvement on the Sgubbi that Rouch had used earlier in his career, full synchronicity of speech could only be achieved by much careful cutting and splicing in the edit suite.²² In order to avoid getting the sound recordist in shot while using the wide-angle lens that was an integral aspect of Brault's method of "walking with the camera," the subjects themselves often carried the tape recorder hidden in a bag slung over their shoulder—which explains

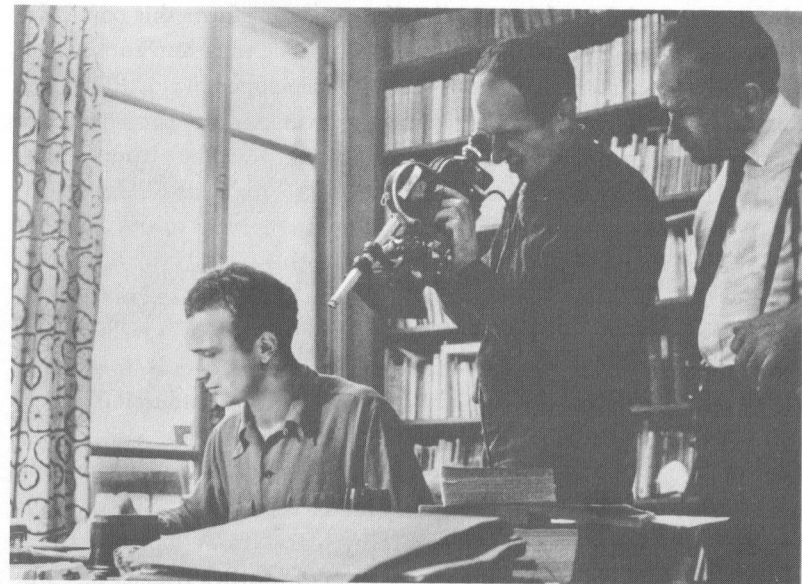


FIGURE 8.5. The "walking camera" in action. *Top*, watched by Rouch, Brault shoots mute with the Arriflex (from *Studies in Visual Communication* 11, no. 1 [Winter 1985]: 54). *Bottom*, he shoots with the KMT Coutant in its blimp. The camera assistant (*right*) carries the battery, while the tape recorder is hidden in a shoulder bag, the strap just visible on the left shoulder of Régis Debray, the subject to Brault's right. Debray was also miked up with a lavalier microphone, visible just below his right shirt collar, a shining sphere dragging down his V-neck sweater. Meanwhile, Rouch, obscured by Brault, and Morin (*far right*) direct from behind. © Argos Films.

why so many of the subjects in the film appear to favor this particular fashion accessory! Brault had also brought over with him some small Electro-voice lavalier microphones recently developed in North America that could be discreetly hung around the subject's neck or clipped on to a lapel, where they would not be readily visible to the camera (though they were still very large by present-day standards). From these hidden positions, the lavaliers could be linked to the tape recorder in the shoulder bag by a cable running under the subject's clothes.

Another innovative sound-recording technique was used in the penultimate sequence of the film, in which Rouch and Morin walk up and down amid the display cases of the Musée de l'Homme, reflecting on the significance of their "experiment." In a well-known production photograph, Rouch and Morin are shown deep in conversation with, on the left, Brault with his heavily blimped camera, seated on a makeshift dolly, apparently being pulled backward by an assistant, while in the background one can see the sound-recording team. If one looks carefully, there is a cable emerging from the bottom of Morin's trouser leg. This runs toward the sound-recording team behind, suggesting that he was miked up, and possibly Rouch as well, with a lavalier physically attached to the tape recorder by a cable. However, this photograph was taken during first take of this sequence rather than during the take that was actually used in the film. This second take was shot a few weeks later and not only are Morin's clothes noticeably different, but there is no evidence of any cables emerging from trouser legs, nor of the ubiquitous shoulder bag. Instead, there is a large microphone very obviously strapped across Rouch's midriff, angled toward Morin. This, Morin reports, was a wireless radio microphone. Presumably, it was attached to a transmitter hidden under Rouch's clothing, from whence it would have sent a signal to the out-of-shot sound recordist (fig. 8.6).²³ I suspect that this represents the first time that a radio microphone was used in an ethnographic documentary, if not in documentary filmmaking generally.

Following the transformation of the shooting praxis of the film by Brault's "walking camera" method, static interviews and sit-down meals were largely abandoned and mobility became the order of the day. One of the first triumphs of the new method was the scene of Marceline walking through Place de la Concorde recollecting the experience of being deported with her father to a German concentration camp during the Second World War. For this shot, the tape recorder was hidden underneath her raincoat and she talks down into her chest, presumably to maximize the quality of the sound picked up by the lavalier around her neck. In the immediately following scene, set in the empty Les Halles marketplace and in which she continues her *sotto voce* recollections, she is carrying a large bag

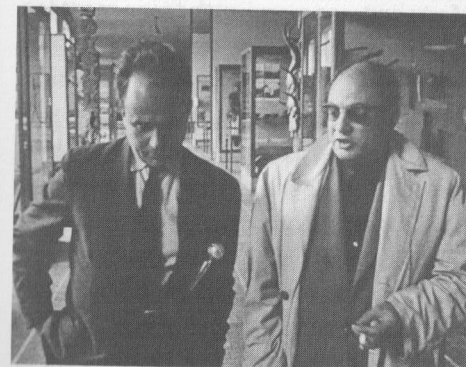
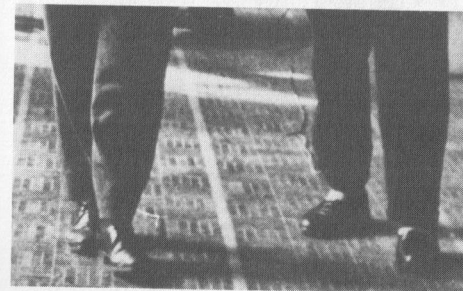


FIGURE 8.6. Technical innovations in sound recording. In the first take of the discussion scene in the Musée de l'Homme (top, shown on the cover of *Studies in Visual Communication* 11, no. 1 [Winter 1985]), Morin's right trouser leg is visibly hoisted up by a cable running down from a microphone, probably hidden on his jacket lapel, to the sound-recording team behind. Middle, a close-up view reveals that there is also apparently some cabling around Rouch's right leg and on the floor behind him. Bottom, by the time of the second take, shot some weeks later, which is the one used in the film, they were using a radio microphone, clearly sticking out from Rouch's midriff.

in her left hand, suggesting that for some reason it was decided to transfer the location of tape recorder. In actual fact, in neither of these shots was Brault actually walking as he filmed. Instead, with Rouch at his side, he was standing up inside Rouch's Citroën 2CV and shooting through the sunroof. The engine was turned off so that its sound would not be picked



FIGURE 8.7. Marceline recollecting her deportation to Birkenau. *Top*, at the Place de la Concorde, the shape of the tape recorder, on her left shoulder, is just visible beneath her raincoat. *Bottom*, in Les Halles marketplace, it appears to have been transferred to a bag in her left hand.

up by the microphone and the car was simply pushed along in neutral in front of Marceline by other members of the crew, including Morin, as if it were a dolly on a film set. As Marceline was carrying the tape recorder, none of the crew could actually hear what she was saying. But when they played the recording back, and heard her heartfelt story about her experiences in Birkenau, they were all reduced to tears (fig. 8.7).²⁴

Shortly after the shooting of this sequence, in order to introduce some more gaiety into the subject matter, Rouch went with Brault and a number of the subjects to Saint-Tropez, a glamorous holiday destination on the Mediterranean coast of France. On the way, they shot sequences in an airplane, on a train, and in a crowd, each of which, Rouch claimed, were some sort of “first” in documentary history. None of these “firsts” actually made it into the final version, but a dramatic shot of water-skiing certainly did. All of these things are now commonplaces of documentary practice, but audiences at that time had never before seen this sort of movement in documentaries. Suddenly it seemed that the mobile camera could boldly go anywhere and film anything, and by ingenious placing of microphone and tape recorders, coupled with hard labor in the edit suite, it could deliver fully synchronous rushes (fig. 8.8).²⁵

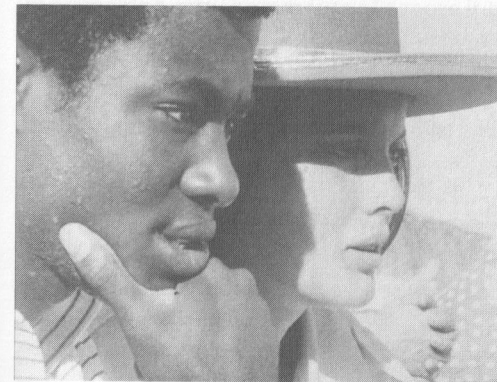


FIGURE 8.8. Catherine goes waterskiing: a first in documentary cinema? On the right, Landry, “the Black explorer of the South of France,” watches a bullfight with Nadine Ballot.

Initially, Morin did not want to go to Saint-Tropez, and though Rouch finally persuaded him, further disagreements soon arose. Rouch wanted to film a Surrealist dream sequence in which Marilou, wandering alone in a cemetery at night, meets a Black man wearing a mask. She runs off and the man pursues her, but then unmask himself only to reveal that he is Landry. The mask that Rouch wanted Landry to wear would have represented Eddie Constantine, the North American actor who featured in many French B movies in the 1950s as Lemmy Caution, US federal agent. This character was also the alter ego of Petit Touré, the costar, with Oumarou Ganda, of *Moi, un Noir*.²⁶ Morin was strongly against this idea as he felt that this self-evident fictionalization would undermine the credibility of the documentary footage that they had already filmed. On the other hand, he was ready to go along with another of Rouch's ideas, namely to present the Saint-Tropez material as if Landry were a Black “explorer” discovering the South of France, an idea that both links back to the central theme of *Jaguar* and anticipates that of *Petit à Petit*. Landry is shown emerging out of the sea and then attending a bullfight with Nadine (actually in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, near Biarritz, rather than in



FIGURE 8.9. Sophie, the “cover-girl,” demonstrates how to walk with a *soutien gorge balcon* and how to pose for photographers on a pitching yacht. To Morin’s chagrin, both she and the “snap-pers” were extras recruited by Argos Films.

Saint-Tropez). Later, he meets Sophie Destrade, a Brigitte Bardot look-alike, hired by Dauman specifically for the purpose. She and Landry walk alongside the harbor before she is shown on a yacht posing in front of a crowd of photographers. To the chagrin of Morin, who was uncomfortable about all this staging, even the photographers were extras recruited by Dauman (fig. 8.9).

After filming a few other scenes, some of which did not make it into the definitive version of the film, the filmmakers returned to Paris.²⁷ Here they continued to film for a few more weeks, despite pressure from Dauman to finish. In an attempt to tie things up, Rouch and Morin filmed the first take of themselves walking up and down amid the display cases of the Musée de l’Homme, drawing various conclusions. Finally, as foreseen in Morin’s proposal, a selection of the rushes was then screened to the subjects in the cinema of the Studio Publicis, and their reactions to this material were also filmed.

These reactions turn out to be highly diverse. Some subjects say that they found the film to be false because their fellow subjects were clearly acting up for the camera, while others say that it was almost too true

to life in the sense that some of the subjects had bared their innermost selves to the camera to an extent that they found indecent. Marceline claims that her moving soliloquy about her deportation to Birkenau, which had reduced the filmmakers to tears when they finally married up sound and image, had merely been playacting. One of the protagonists claims that having seen the film, there are certain people in the room whom she hopes never to meet again, but this is immediately contradicted by others who claim, on the contrary, that having seen those same characters, they are looking forward to getting to know them better. In the midst of this exchange of views, Morin seems shocked, almost angered, by the nature of this reaction. It is left to Régis Debray to tie things up by making some comments of a more intellectual character about the aesthetic merits of the film.

The Endgame: Transforming Real Time into Cinema Time

The shoot at the Publicis cinema brought to an end some six months of filming that, in total, had generated around twenty-five hours of rushes, which in the early 1960s was a vast amount for a documentary. But having worked very hard to achieve a high degree of authenticity in terms of the content, and of fidelity to the real in terms of technique, once in the edit suite, Rouch and Morin were required by the producer, Anatole Dauman, to reduce this large corpus of material to a maximum running time of no more than ninety minutes. This represented a cutting ratio of about 16:1, which is not high by present-day standards, when documentaries shot on digital video are commonly cut at a ratio of 50:1 or more, nor even by the standards of the Direct Cinema filmmakers working in North America somewhat later in the 1960s, some of whom were cutting at ratios of up to 200:1. But it was very much higher than the ratio that Rouch himself had used on his earlier documentaries.

As Morin points out in the section of his memoir dealing with the editing phase, in fact this process of reduction involved two different problems.²⁸ One was the matter of transforming real time into cinema time, the other was refining the meaning of the film. With regard to the latter, Morin was keen to retain hold of his original idea of basing the film on an exploration of the subjects’ responses to the question “How do you live?” He therefore wanted to structure the entire film on a sequence of themes such as work, the difficulties of living, interpersonal relationships and the summer vacation. Although he shared with Rouch a concern to show how these aspects of contemporary life were experienced subjectively by the protagonists, he did not want the film to be reduced to a series of individual stories. Instead, Morin felt “there should

be a dimension, not so much of the crowd, but of the global problem of life in Paris, of civilization, and so forth." He wanted the film to end with a message in the form of a montage of the subjects expressing some form of resistance, culminating in a shot of Angelo, a disaffected Renault car factory worker, striking a tree as he does his kick-boxing training in his small garden.

Rouch, on the other hand, wanted the film to be structured entirely on chronological and biographical principles. For him, the main interest of the material was not in the responses that the subjects offered to the question of how they lived, since these were almost invariably the same, namely, that they were bored with their jobs. Much more interesting, in his view, was the development of the subjects over the course of the summer. He had been hoping that events in Algeria or the Congo would reach some sort of critical climax, producing interesting effects on the subjects. But even in the absence of this, he felt that all the subjects should be introduced at the beginning of the film and that the gradual elicitation of their characters and views thereafter should provide the narrative thread of the film. For this reason, he wanted to abandon Morin's original working title, "How Do You Live?" and replace it with "Chronicle of a Summer."

There were also arguments between Rouch and Dauman, the producer. According to Morin, sometimes Dauman considered Rouch no more than "a clumsy *bricoleur*" while at other times, he thought him "an inspired improviser." Dauman wavered similarly in his opinion of Morin, sometimes considering him an effective, if neophyte, editor, while at other times "an abstract theoretician" who was "massacring the film." Dauman wanted to impose "an editor-in-chief" whose responsibility it would be to rethink the material completely so as to ensure that it would have "an incontestable technical and artistic quality." But Rouch successfully resisted this and suggested that instead he and Morin should work alternately with the editors for a period of several weeks, thereby bringing the material down to the required length by what he called—invoking the memory of his engineering teacher, Albert Caquot—a series of "successive approximations." This involved a sort of dialectic between their respective views: as each took over, he restored some of the material that had been eliminated by the other, but respected some of his excisions, while also alternately excising or respecting the other's additions.

This method eventually produced the desired result, but Rouch experienced great anguish in the edit suite, comparing it to the amputation of a limb.²⁹ For him, the original material derived much of its authenticity—and hence its value—from all the hesitations and awkwardnesses that are a normal part of human interaction and that, with the newly

developed synchronous-sound equipment, they had so triumphantly managed to capture in the rushes. He believed that these seemingly redundant moments in fact lent value to the most essential, important moments in the material, since once they were removed and the important moments were presented without this *bavardage* as he termed it (literally, "chattering"), they somehow seemed less significant.³⁰ Yet as the rushes were ruthlessly pared down in the edit suite to the ninety-minute running time that Dauman insisted upon, it was precisely these aspects of the material that were among the first to go.

Rouch also resented the sheer reduction of material in and of itself: in the production phase, they had spent a great deal of time filming a day-in-the-life of Angelo, the Renault worker, with what Rouch considered wonderful results, only for this to be reduced to no more than three minutes in the final film. For Rouch, this day could have been the subject of a complete film in itself. He admitted to being deeply perplexed by what he would later call "the devil of editing": he simply could not bring himself to accept the idea that editing should consist of isolating little moments of reality from the surrounding rushes and sticking them together with other such moments to produce some meaningful representation of the world.³¹

In the end, the final version of the film represented a compromise between the respective positions of all the main parties. Rouch's title was chosen ("How Do You Live?" was considered "too television" by Dauman anyway) as was his preference for a chronologically based narrative. But the real chronology of the summer was radically manipulated so as conform, on the one hand, to Morin's concern to identify themes that went beyond individual stories and, on the other, to Dauman's concern to have a clear beginning-middle-end structure. Initially, this tripartite structure was to have been represented by the sequence proposed by Morin: "before the vacation," "the vacation," and "after the vacation." But the "after the vacation" part was later deemed too weak to end the film and it was eliminated, with the best parts being moved into the "before the vacation" part. Although it is scarcely credible, among these relocated scenes was the famous Marceline-Nadine "vox pop" sequence with which the film now begins and in which they go round asking random people in the street the same question, "Are you happy?"³² All parties agreed that by moving this sequence to the beginning, the agenda of the "experiment in *cinéma-vérité*" would be immediately established and it would serve as an effective introduction to the series of mealtime discussions that make up a large proportion of the remainder of the prevacation part of the film. Also contrary to what one might imagine, given Rouch's supposed preoccupation with gaiety, the framing of the "vox pop" question was actu-

ally Morin's idea, though one suspects that he would have been satisfied with the answers, which were mostly in the negative. The only correspondents to declare their happiness at any length were not people randomly encountered in the street but a young couple who were actually friends of Rouch. These were the Cuénets, whom Marceline and Nadine visit in their apartment overlooking the Eiffel Tower and where they listen to the melodious sounds of a remarkable mechanical music box.

Other scenes that were moved from the post- to the prevacation part included the similarly celebrated scene of Angelo discussing racism in France with Landry, the Ivoirian student, on a staircase, in what was actually Morin's house. This comes at the end of the sequence purporting to be a day-in-the-life of Angelo. The beginning of this "day," which shows Angelo getting up and going to work, and the end, which shows him returning home up some steep steps (tape recorder in shoulder bag) were both shot after the vacation. But in the film, they frame a sequence of workers in the Renault factory that was actually shot just prior to the vacation. Both the shooting style and the visual resolution of the image in this middle part of the day-in-the-life—from which Angelo is actually absent because the filmmakers did not want to get him into trouble with the factory management by drawing too much attention to him—reflect the fact while the going and coming from work was shot by Brault in 16mm, the scene in the Renault factory was shot by Coutard in 35mm on a completely different occasion.³³

Meanwhile, in the definitive version of the film, the original "after the vacation" part was replaced by a completely new part consisting primarily of the scene in the Studio Publicis cinema in which the subjects respond to a preliminary assembly of the film. In a first print of the film, shown at Cannes, the Musée de l'Homme and elsewhere, this was not included, despite the provision for it in Morin's original proposal, since it had been found impossible to edit. But after the screenings of the first print, when it was generally agreed that a stronger ending was required, Rouch returned to the edit suite with the material and managed to make it work. Morin and he then reshot their discussion pacing up and down among the display cases in the Musée. Before doing so, they looked at the Publicis cinema scene again so that they could appear to be responding directly to the issues raised by the subjects.

The principle issue that they consider as they walk up and down in the Musée is the claim made by some of the subjects that, throughout the production, the camera had encouraged playacting rather than showing real life. Having had some time to consider it, Rouch and Morin are at least able to put a somewhat more positive construction on this claim than Morin had been able to manage in the actual moment of filming in

the Publicis cinema, when he had appeared to become angry. For what Rouch and Morin conclude is that although the subjects might question or disclaim the authenticity of the behavior provoked by the camera, perhaps these "acted" performances in fact revealed the most genuine part of themselves. Marceline might claim that she was merely playacting when speaking about her experiences of being deported with her father to Birkenau, but as witnesses to the event, they could testify that it was certainly no mere game that she was playing. And yet, there is an element of bravado about this discussion, masking what seems to be an uncertainty on the part of Rouch and Morin about what their final conclusions should be. They had hoped to make a film about love, which would encourage the audience to like those whom they had filmed, but they had discovered that even when made with sympathy, a documentary film cannot guarantee such a positive reaction.

The discussion in the Musée finally concludes on this uncertain note with a cut to Rouch and Morin saying farewell on the rain-soaked pavement of the Champs Élysées, a shot that had actually been filmed some weeks earlier, immediately after the Publicis cinema scene. As Brault follows Morin's departing back in the classical valedictory manner and the credits come up, the sound track takes us back to the Cuénets' mechanical music box and the voices of Nadine and Marceline asking, "Are you happy?" from the beginning of the film, another classical editorial device aimed at achieving a sense of narrative closure. This is finally brought about—contrary to Morin's original proposal that the film should conclude with a "To Be Continued"—with a discreet but quite unambiguous "Fin" (fig. 8.10).

From *Cinéma-vérité* to *Cinéma direct*

What then are we to make of this "experiment in *cinéma-vérité*" almost half a century after it was made? Among historians of documentary cinema, it is widely hailed as a ground-breaking work that played a pioneering role in defining a particular genre of documentary based on a mobile, handheld camera and synchronous sound. For almost the first time, a documentary film had shown ordinary people, from all walks of life, speaking spontaneously, in synch and in their own voices, about their everyday experiences. "The first time I heard a worker speak in a film," commented Jean-Luc Godard in 1962, "was in *Chronicle of a Summer*."³⁴

Meanwhile, in the visual anthropology literature, even if Rouch and Morin themselves did not think about the film in quite this way at the time, *Chronicle* is widely and justifiably celebrated for its self-reflexive method that anticipates by the best part of twenty years the adoption of

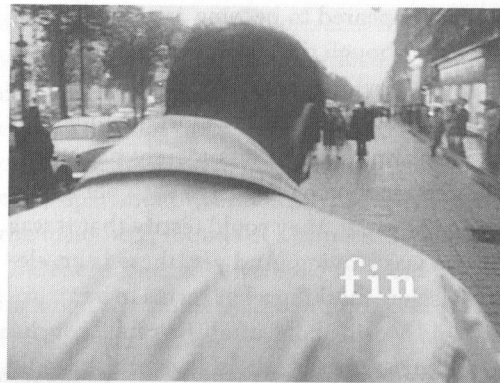


FIGURE 8.10. Narrative closure. *Top*, contrary to Morin's original proposal, the film has a formal ending while sound effects remind the viewer of the beginning of the film. *Bottom*, the credits evoke the Surrealist notion of the *rencontre* with unknown strangers.

similar approaches in the production of textual anthropology. Not only do Rouch and Morin show themselves on the screen, thereby revealing the constructed nature of the representation, but they also engage the subjects actively in the process of making of the film, thereby making them its protagonists in the broadest sense of the word.³⁵ One might also point to the film's purely ethnographic value, which increases with the passing of the years as the world it represents approaches the horizon when it will pass out of the living memory.

But for all its many merits, *Chronicle* is a film that is positively awash with contradictions and ambiguities, many of which continue to trouble documentarists inspired by its example to this day. There is, first of all, the striking contrast between the principles governing the process of production and those applied in the postproduction phase. During the former, great efforts were made by both Rouch and Morin, albeit in their different ways, to achieve a direct representation of the real that overcame the obstacles that had previously inhibited documentarists. While Rouch sought to overcome the technical obstacles, Morin sought to overcome the more methodological impediments that resulted in most docu-

mentaries of the day presenting reality in its "Sunday best." Whatever their differences, they shared a commitment to the idea of making the film on the basis of spontaneity, without a formal script, following their own or their subjects' inspirations. But in the edit suite, under pressure from Dauman, all this was cast aside, and, as I have described, the material was radically manipulated to make it conform to highly conventional editorial procedures and to a pseudo-chronological overall structure.

In the view of some French authors commentating on the film at the time of its release, including the distinguished sociologist Lucien Goldman, the differences between Rouch and Morin were never successfully reconciled and as a result, the film must be considered a failure since both of their agendas were compromised. From an ethnographic or filmic point of view, such as these critics suggest Rouch might have adopted, the development of character is insufficient to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjects beyond their stereotypical social roles, while from a sociological perspective, as it is alleged Morin would have assumed, the analysis of Parisian society at that particular conjuncture in French history remains superficial and insufficiently contextualized.³⁶ While Rouch declined to respond directly to the critics, claiming (somewhat dubiously) that he always allowed his films to speak for themselves, Morin defended the film against the criticism that it lacked sociological profundity by pointing out that neither Rouch nor he had ever claimed that the film was formally "sociological." Moreover, if the film did have some sociological import, it was certainly not the sort of superficial sociological understanding that arises from conducting an opinion poll. Rather, Morin reiterated, their concern was simply to determine how such general problems as alienation at work and the difficulties of interpersonal relationships impacted on certain individuals. Nor did it matter in his view that these individuals were not statistically representative of all Parisians at the time the film was made. Just as Marx had looked to political crises, Weber to ideal-types, and Freud to pathological cases to reflect on the nature of normality, so too, Morin argued, one could look to the subjects of *Chronicle*, however atypical, to provide insights into the nature of broader social processes at the time.³⁷

Chronicle continues to confound and intrigue film critics to this day. In a recent article, the French studies scholar Sam DiIorio describes the film as "both a window and a brick wall." On the one hand, he proposes, the film went further than any previous work of cinema in seeking to put into practice a particular set of ideas about realism that were widespread in French film criticism in the postwar period but which were associated particularly with the *Cahiers du Cinéma* essayist André Bazin. This set of ideas was itself inspired by the proposition central to phenomenol-

ogy, the philosophical movement at the heart of French intellectual life at the time, whereby the essential truths governing existence can only be grasped through the direct experience of things in themselves. What films should be aspiring to do, therefore, in the view of these critics, was to give audiences direct access to experience, even if necessarily in a vicarious manner, so that they could achieve an understanding of the essential underlying truths implicit in that experience. In that *Chronicle*, through a combination of technological innovation and participatory research methods, moved cinema closer to a direct representation of everyday experience in the world of ordinary people, DiIorio suggests that it also moved closer to the Bazinian ideal of "Total Cinema."

But if *Chronicle* offered a window onto the world in this sense, as recommended by Bazin, DiIorio argues that it also presaged the end of the line for Bazin's particular take on phenomenological realism. For having got closer to Total Cinema than any previous exponents of the seventh art, Rouch and Morin discovered that what this threw up was not just one particular truth but many, about the significance of which even the protagonists themselves could not agree, as was so clearly demonstrated by their reactions to the screening of the film in the Publicis cinema. Moreover, in editing the film, for a mixture of political and presentational reasons, the filmmakers had been obliged to transform and, in some senses, even traduce the direct experience captured in the rushes. On these grounds, DiIorio argues that although *Chronicle* "harks back to Bazin" in its aspiration to show the world as it really exists in an unmediated, experiential fashion, "its inability to confirm a consensual real underscores the necessary artificiality of filmic realism and. . . indirectly announces the turn away from the ideal of cinema as transparency which takes place in French film and French film criticism over the course of the 1960s." By 1968, DiIorio adds, "the enthusiasm for representational illusion had given way to the awareness of the cinematic image as a construct that can support, mirror or resist dominant ideologies."³⁸

It should be said that Morin makes no mention of Bazin in his personal memoir about the making of *Chronicle*, while if Rouch was directly inspired by any specific body of theory to use film to show the world as it really is then this would probably have been Marcel Mauss's rather positivist methodological injunction to collect "documents" in as objective a manner as possible.³⁹ But if we accept that these phenomenological ideas would have been part of the general intellectual *zeitgeist* of Paris in the 1950s and as such are likely to have influenced Morin and possibly also Rouch, at least indirectly, then DiIorio's analysis allows one to make sense of what, in retrospect, seems an almost painfully naïve belief on

the part of the filmmakers that their direct, participatory methods could somehow provide access to an undefined great Truth with a capital T.

DiIorio's analysis also helps one to make sense of the filmmakers' frustrated and uncertain soul-searching, particularly in Morin's case, about what to make of the fact that the film had failed to deliver this ultimate Truth. Although Morin energetically defended the film from its critics at the time of its release, he also somewhat dolefully recognized that his original aim—to explore the question of how individuals worked out their lives at a particular social and historical conjuncture—had been sidelined. Instead, the principal question of the film had ended up being about the nature of the truth revealed by the performances that all individuals put on as social actors, whether or not a camera is present. In this sense, one might draw a parallel, though not one made by Morin himself, with the way in which *La Pyramide humaine* also drew away from the social and the historical to focus instead on questions of truth, fantasy, and performance.

Morin had begun by assuming that cinema would reveal truths about the subjective experience of the subjects of the film that lay beyond the spectacle of everyday life. But he discovered that although the camera did indeed provoke the subjects into revealing aspects of their experience that were not ordinarily visible—as in Marceline's recollection of her traumatic wartime experiences or Marilou's confession of her existential dilemmas—there was no guarantee that these testimonies were any more true than those that they might have given under normal circumstances. Although Morin felt that this question about the nature of truth was a valuable one to have posed, he felt disappointed that the film had not delivered something closer to what he had been aiming for when they started out. By 1963, he had begun to be openly critical of the film and its deviation from his conception of its original goal, observing that "*Comment vis-tu*, misnamed *Chronique d'un été*, was, under the name *ciné-vérité*, an unsuccessful draft of a *ciné-dialogue*, of a *ciné-communication*, that revealed to me the difficulties and superficialities, the traps and the diversions of such an undertaking." Twenty years later, in the early 1980s, his views seem to have mellowed somewhat, but he was still confessing to an interviewer that although Rouch and Dauman had ended up reasonably content with the film, he remained "in a state of perplexity" about it.⁴⁰

But of all the ambiguities about *Chronicle* that remained unresolved, perhaps the one with the most significant consequences, at least for the praxis of documentary cinema, concerned the denotatum of the term *cinéma-vérité*, which this film played a large part in putting into general

circulation. Here too, although there was some common ground between Rouch and Morin, there were also some very significant differences. Where they agreed was that *cinéma-vérité* consisted of the truths brought to light through the interactions between filmmakers and subjects that take place in the course of making a film. As a result of these interactions, the subjects are inspired or provoked to express thoughts and feelings that they normally keep hidden and may be only partially aware of themselves. However, as I noted above, this interpretation of the meaning of the term *cinéma-vérité* was considerably at variance both with Vertov's original concept as well as with the most conventional understanding of the term among North American authors and filmmakers. In this sense, Rouch and Morin were indeed practicing a "new *cinéma-vérité*" as proclaimed not only in the title of Morin's original article but also on the posters for the film when it was first shown at Cannes.

Where Morin differed from Rouch was in the connection between "walking with the camera" in the Brault manner and the achievement of *cinéma-vérité*. Morin recognized that this way of working could indeed result in the revelatory epiphanies that they both regarded as the hallmark of *cinéma-vérité*, as in the case of Marceline's walk through Place de la Concorde and Les Halles. But as far as Morin was concerned, they could equally well arise through the interrogational interviews of the kind that he conducted with Marilou or through the mealtime conversations that he orchestrated with his left-wing comrades, both of which were shot and recorded in a conventional manner with the camera on a tripod in a single, static position. For Rouch, on the other hand, *cinéma-vérité* and "walking with the camera" were directly and necessarily connected. Although this technology had not been available in Vertov's day, he credited him with having "magisterially prophesied" the development of a fully mobile ciné-eye operating in tandem with a fully operational "radio-eye," that is, a microphone recording sound.⁴¹

Two years after the release of *Chronicle*, the documentarist Mario Ruspoli proposed that the term "*cinéma direct*" should henceforth be used instead of *cinéma-vérité* so as to avoid the widespread mistaken association of the latter with a claim to some absolute ontological truth.⁴² Subsequently, some French authors have used the two terms to distinguish between the technique of "walking with the camera," which they refer to as *cinéma direct*, and the distinctive form of knowledge of the world produced by cinema, which they continue to refer to as *cinéma-vérité*. These authors include Edgar Morin, who uses this distinction to refer to *Chronicle* as a "hodgepodge" of *cinéma direct* and *cinéma-vérité*.⁴³ In contrast, for Rouch, in common with many other authors both in France and the English-speaking world, the new term *cinéma direct* merely referred to

the technical-strategic process whereby the "theory of *cinéma-vérité*" was to be realized, and as such, there was a necessary connection between them that, for all practical intents and purposes, made them synonymous. This failure to distinguish between a technique and an epistemology has continued to bedevil a great deal of thinking and writing about this approach to documentary filmmaking ever since.

7. See Fulchignoni (1981), 19 and (2003), 168.

8. Rouget (1965).

9. Rouch (1995a), 94.

Chapter Eight

1. Morin (1962), 5.

2. Winston (2007), 298.

3. DiIorio (2007), 27.

4. Morin (2003), 265n.

5. Of Polish origin, Anatole Dauman (1925–1998) produced the early films of many directors who would later become leading figures of French cinema, including Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, and Robert Bresson (see Gerber 1992).

6. Morin (2003), 229–231. It is interesting that Morin should choose the metaphor of the diver “plunging” into real-life situations to describe this way of working with a combination of participant observation and the new technology. There may be a reference here, even if unconscious, to Bronislaw Malinowski’s comment in his famous methodological preface to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* that it was from his “plunges into the life of the natives” that he discovered that “the behaviour, their manner of being . . . became more transparent and easily understandable than it had been before” (1932, 22).

7. See Morin (2003), 232. Marceline Loridan, one of the leading protagonists of the film gives a somewhat different account. According to her, it was Dauman who introduced Rouch and Morin to one another and suggested that they should work together (ten Brink 2007c, 146).

8. See Sadoul (1963), (1971); Rouch (1968), (1995a), 82–83; Fulchignoni (1981), 8, also (2003), 150; Ben Salama (1996), 127; DiIorio (2007), 30. See also the introduction to part 3 of this book, pp 244–254.

9. Rouch (1997e), 224.

10. Morin (2003), 231.

11. Just as the presence of the cameraman and his tripod had served to distinguish *Man with a Movie Camera* from Walther Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* in the 1920s, so does the presence in front of the lens of Rouch and Morin in *Chronicle* serve to distinguish it from Chris Marker’s “city film” about 1960s Paris, *Le Joli Mai*. For an interesting comparison of the representational strategies adopted respectively by Rouch and Marker, see Christie (2007).

12. Morin (2003), 232. See chapter 6, p. 92, especially note 13, for a discussion of “psychodrama.” See also Sjöberg (2008a), 166–172, (2008b).

13. In an insightful recent article, Michael Uwemedimo has linked the use of this mode of enquiry reminiscent of a sociological questionnaire to a great enthusiasm among the mass media in France in the late 1950s for social surveys, polls, and *études psycho-sociales* that served to plot the emerging modernity of the country (Uwemedimo 2007).

14. Morin (2003), 232–234.

15. Georgakas et al. (2003), 215; Taylor (2003), 139.

16. See Georgakas et al. (2003), 210–211. In this interview, Rouch claims that all the subjects were members of a group called “Socialism or Barbarism,” to which Morin himself also belonged. However, although some of the subjects were members of this group and there is also no doubt about Morin’s left-wing sentiments at the time, Morin specifically distances himself from this group’s views in his memoir (Morin 2003, 235).

17. Ben Salama (1996), 127. At this time, according to Marceline, Morin himself was “more to the left than the communists” and was particularly critical of the party’s position on the independence struggle going on in Algeria (ten Brink 2007c, 146).

18. I rely extensively here on the excellent analysis of this scene by DiIorio (2007), 34–35.

19. Georgakas et al. (2003), 214.

20. Hennebelle (1982b), 169.

21. Maggi and Maggi (1996); Georgakas et al. (2003), 213; Rouch (2003e), 272.

22. A team of assistant editors was employed to do this but as there were 25 hours of rushes to deal with, it was a monumental task. “The girls who carried out that work,” Brault commented later, “deserve to have their names engraved on the arch of posterity” (Maggi and Maggi 1996, 135).

23. Morin (2003), 256.

24. Morin (2003), 240. In a recent interview, Marceline reports that it was she who proposed the idea for this sequence to Rouch and Morin (ten Brink 2007c).

25. Morin (2003), 264, n.12.

26. See chapter 6, p. 85.

27. Much to Marceline’s fury, one of the excluded scenes showed her and Jean-Pierre trying to patch up their relationship on a jetty by the seashore. This was retained in some early versions of the film but was later removed because, according to Morin, in order to overcome sound problems, it had to be subjected to so much cutting that it looked too staged (Morin 2003, 243; see also ten Brink 2007c, 145). The dialogue of this eliminated scene, which also appears in production stills associated with the film, is reproduced in Morin and Rouch (2003a), 320–321.

28. Morin (2003), 250–256.

29. Morin (2003), 264, n.16.

30. Rouch (1965).

31. Rohmer and Marcorelles (1963), 2–6.

32. “Vox pop,” an abbreviation for *vox populi*, a Latin phrase meaning “voice of the people,” is the standard documentary filmmaking term for the technique of asking the same short question in quick succession to a number of different people, usually randomly encountered in the street or some other public place. In the editing of this material, normally only a small selection of the responses will be retained. Although this is not the practice in *Chronicle*, after the first instance, the question is also usually left out because it is presumed that the audience will be able to remember it.

33. In addition to this major reworking of the chronology, there were many more petty examples of the manipulation of the rushes in ways that distorted their real chronology. Rouch himself later admitted that in the cutting of some of the conversations, certain comments are shown as if they were responses to remarks to which, in reality, they bore no direct relation. Dornfeld (1989) remarks that in cutting *À bout de souffle*, Jean-Luc Godard was much more open to the use of “jump cuts,” and that even the North American practitioners of Direct Cinema were “rougher in their treatment of continuity codes.”

34. Quoted in DiIorio (2007), 33.

35. Most of those who took part in the making of *Chronicle of Summer* apparently regarded it as being, on balance, a highly positive experience and a striking number thereafter became actively involved in filmmaking themselves. Perhaps the best-known case is that Marceline Loridan, who immediately after participating in *Chronicle* went on to make *Algérie année zéro* (1963), a film about Algerian independence with her then boy-

friend Jean-Pierre Sergent. Later, she got to know Joris Ivens, indirectly through Rouch, married him and became an active collaborator on his film projects until he died in 1989. Among many other contributions, she encouraged Ivens to start using synch sound in the manner pioneered in *Chronicle*. More recently, she and Sergent collaborated on the screenplay for a fictional feature that she directed, *La Petite Prairie aux bouleaux* (2003), which is about a Birkenau survivor who returns to the camp after fifty years. Another of the principal protagonists, Marilou Parolini, became an active participant in the New Wave, writing the screenplays of several films with Jacques Rivette, and later with Bernardo Bertolucci, and working as a production stills photographer for Jean-Luc Godard on a number of his most important films. She also codirected the fictional short, *Aussi loin que mon enfance* (1971) with Jean Eustache. Prior to becoming a well-known political figure, Régis Debray went to Venezuela to work with Pierre Kassovitz on his documentary *Les Chemins de la fortune* (1964). As described in chapter 9 of this book, Modeste Landry and Nadine Ballot later collaborated with Rouch on a number of other projects, while Ballot also performed a brief cameo in François Truffaut's *Tirez sur le pianiste* (1960; Morin and Rouch 2003b; ten Brink 2007b, 2007c; Dilorio 2007, 42).

36. Michaud (1982); Serceau (1996); Goldman (1996); see also Lévesque (2004).
37. Morin (2003), 259–260.
38. Dilorio (2007), 42.
39. See chapter 1, p. 11.
40. See Dilorio (2007), 41; Ben Salama (1996), 126–127.
41. Rouch (1997e), 211.
42. See Piault (2000), 159n.
43. Ben Salama (1982), 136, and (1996), 127. The exact phrase that Morin uses is “*pot pourri*.”

Chapter Nine

1. Aumont et al. (1986), 320.
2. Among other references in *Cahiers*, see Rouch (1960c); Jutra (1960, 1961a, 1961b); Delahaye (1961); Hoveyda (1961); Rohmer (1961); Weyergans (1961); Moullet (1962); Rohmer and Marcorelles (1963); Hoveyda and Rohmer (1963); Comolli (1964); Moullet (1964); anon. (1965a), 58; Ollier (1965); Godet (1966); Pierre (1967); Fieschi and Téchiné (1967); Fieschi (1968).
3. Moullet (1986), 35; see also Villain (1991), 134. According to Maxine Scheinfegel, there is even a direct allusion to *Moi, un Noir* in *À bout de souffle* (2008, 73).
4. Thompson (2007), 186. See also Bergala 2005 for the influence of Rivette and Godard on Rouch, and vice versa.
5. Truffaut (1985), 275. For the influence of *Moi, un Noir* on *Les Quatre Cent Coups*, see Delahaye (1961), 7; Rouch (1999); and chapter 6, pp. 88–89.
6. Scheinfegel (2008), 69.
7. On the experimental attitudes of the Surrealists, see chapter 2, pp. 28–29. In relation to Vertov's experimentalism, see Rouch (1968), 445, 449.
8. Prédal (1996b), 18.
9. See chapter 2, pp. 29–31.
10. Prédal (1996b), 18. See also ten Brink (2007b).
11. Unless otherwise stated, the information about how Rouch went about filming *La*

Punition is taken from an interview that he gave to Éric Rohmer and Louis Marcorelles (1963).

12. I am indebted to Christopher Thompson for identifying this source.
13. Weyergans (1961).
14. Hoveyda and Rohmer (1963), 2–7. See Mundell (2004), for the mutual influences of Rossellini and Rouch, as reported by *Cahiers du Cinéma* author Alain Bergala.
15. Moullet (1964).
16. Serceau (1996), 171; Thompson (2007), 182.
17. Moullet (1964), 50.
18. According to the *Cahiers du Cinéma* critic, Alain Bergala, this project was initially to have been produced by Roberto Rossellini. However, he did not like the proposals that were put to him by the New Wave directors and he dropped out. But the directors then found alternative sources of funding, and the project went ahead anyway (Mundell 2004).
19. Rouch (1965).
20. Rouch (1995c), 410n, 413.
21. I am indebted to Laurent Pellé of the Musée de l'Homme for alerting me to the fact that Caquot was possibly one of the designers of the bridge. I was able to confirm this by inspecting the plaque that hangs to this day on one of the central pillars of the bridge.
22. See ten Brink (2007b), 412. At around this time, Becker and Nadine were married, though I have not been able to establish whether this was before or after the shooting of *Gare du Nord*.
23. Maxime Scheinfegel (2008, 170–179) has recently published a very interesting analysis of *Gare du Nord*, which I have drawn on at various points here.
24. Scheinfegel (2008), 176.
25. Rohmer and Marcorelles (1963), 6.
26. Rouch (1965).
27. Ten Brink (2007b), 142.
28. Eaton (1979a), 19.
29. Marie (2008), viii, x.
30. The Canadian part was to be directed by Michel Brault.
31. According to Braunberger, this title was given to the film in order to get it past the censors whom, it was thought, would have taken a negative view if the film had remained with its original title, *Les Jeunes Filles*, “the young girls” (Serceau 1996, 171).
32. Veuve (1967), 90.
33. She confesses this in one of the longer scenes in the film in which she is shown doing a fashion shoot with a society photographer played by Maurice Pialat, who would later become a distinguished feature film director (Serceau 1996, 171).
34. Aumont et al. (1986), 320.
35. Fieschi and Téchiné (1967), 20.
36. Veuve (1967), 90.
37. Serceau (1996), 171.

Chapter Ten

1. Jutra (1961b), 116, 40.
2. Rouch (2003d), 111.