Document Citation

Title
Claiming a style: the 'living cinema' of Pierre Perrault's Pour la Suite du Monde

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Source
Velvet Light Trap

Date
2004

Type
article

Language
English

Pagination
32-47

No. of Pages
16

Subjects

Film Subjects
Pour la suite du monde (Of whales, the moon, and men), Brault, Michel, 1963

Claiming a Style: The "Living Cinema" of Pierre Perrault's *Pour la suite du monde*

n a 1963 interview in *Cahiers du Cinéma* Jean Rouch expresses great enthusiasm for Pierre Perrault's *Pour la suite du monde* (1963), then a work in progress:

It's about fishing for a white whale, a film where you might say [Henri] Cartier-Bresson's camera grows out of Vertov's brain and falls back on Flaherty to give us *Man of Aran* in direct sound. If it lives up to the promise of the rushes, it is absolutely fantastic, a complete success, it's Rouquier's *Farrebique* with the wonderfully participatory camera of Flaherty but at the same time this camera walks—thanks to Brault—with direct interviews, and with fantastic characters. ("Interview" 21)[1]

This high esteem for the rushes apparently held true for the critical reception of the final version as well, and Perrault's first feature became the first Québécois film ever to be screened at Cannes later that year. Elsewhere in the same interview, Rouch praises Perrault's cameraman, Michel Brault, with whom he shot *Chronique d'un été* (Chronicle of a summer) in 1960: "It must be said: everything that we have done in France in *cinéma-vérité* comes from the Office du film. It was Brault who brought us a new filming technique that we didn't know and that we have all copied ever since. Really . . . this is certain: even those who considered Brault annoying, or who didn't like what he was doing, or who were jealous, are forced to recognize his contributions now" ("Interview" 17). Yet despite these initial recognitions from French critics and the obvious cross-over in technical personnel, Perrault's film, along with Quebec's other contributions to the burgeoning direct documentary style of the 1960s, has fallen into relative obscurity.

Roughly contemporaneous with the two supposed founding films of the direct documentary movement (Robert Drew's *Primary* and Rouch's *Chronique d'un été*, both 1960), this intimate elegy about the culturally isolated inhabitants of the Île aux Coudres in Quebec is nevertheless left out (or mentioned only sparingly) in many historical accounts. The project of this essay is to examine how Perrault's approach to the film reinvigorates the theoretical "can of worms" (see Carroll) around so-called direct documentary in an unexpected manner. For unlike the other hand-held, synch-sound documentaries of the early 1960s, *Pour la suite du monde* mobilizes a variety of stylistic strategies that question rather than emphasize the immediacy of its own direct filming techniques. By pointing to some of these I would like to suggest that Perrault's innovative first feature complicates the historical moment of direct cinema/*cinéma-vérité* in stylistic ways that have not been adequately recognized.

A Tale of Two Cinemas

Direct documentary practice of the late 1950s and early 1960s is usually remembered in terms of ethical debates surrounding the incorporation of new technology. The postwar advent of lightweight cameras and synchronous sound recording allowed a generation of filmmakers to develop a more intimate style of nonfiction film, known for shaky compositions and grainy images. To take stock of the wide range of films made during the period, historians and theorists often discriminate between two observational strategies, two national cinemas, and two key films. As the story goes, the American "direct cinema" of Drew and associates (first exemplified by

Figure 1. Perrault's subjects restage their beluga whale hunt. Photograph from the production of *Pour la suite du monde.* Directed by Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault. Produced by Fernand Dansereau. ©1962 National Film Board of Canada.

Primary) strives to capture events without allowing the presence of the camera or the filmmaker to "distort the situation" (Drew quoted in Hall 24) of real events on-screen. Conversely, the French *cinéma-vérité* of Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, first exemplified by *Chronique d'un été*, confronts the invasive nature of the new equipment by actively signaling its presence on-screen with the film-makers and their subjects.

On a practical level, the two terms for direct style serve as virtual synonyms, but the precise distinction between them remains crucial to historical accounts of documentary. The polarization of the two approaches to the new technology had emerged at least by 1963, when Rouch's camp confronted Richard Leacock and others at a now-legendary conference on documentary

at MIPÉ-TV (Marché international des programmes et équipements de télévision, French National Broadcast-ing Organization) in Lyon. Although the French con-tingent shared a fervent interest in direct techniques with their American counterparts, they objected to the Ameri-can refusal to admit "their eye in the act of looking through the viewfinder is at once more and less than the registering apparatus which serves the eye" (Jean-Luc Godard quoted in Winston 159). Erik Barnouw's summary provides a canonical example of how to de-fine the two trends stylistically: "The direct cinema documentarist took his camera to a situation of tension and waited hopefully for a crisis; the Rouch version of *cinéma vérité* tried to precipitate one. The direct cinema artist aspired to invisibility; the Rouch *cinéma vérité*

artist was often an avowed participant" (255). Following Barnouw's lead, Bill Nichols uses the long-standing contestation between the two labels as a reason to embrace more "descriptive appellations" for two documentary *modes* that clash in the early 1960s: "observational" (direct cinema) and "interactive" (*cinéma-vérité*) (38).

Whether it is upheld, renamed, or collapsed, the distinction between the two direct styles and the resulting theoretical implications therein are two of the most resilient issues in documentary theory. Even those theorists who disagree with the distinction need to answer to these two impulses. For his part, Brian Winston questions the differences between the two ethical stances by claiming that they rest on the same problematic basis: truth claims about the inherent "reality" of any recorded image: "Cinéma vérité might luxuriate in revealing its processes, allowing for the claim that the work is personal, 'signed' and mediated in an open and above-board fashion. But the gesture becomes hollow because [it is] urging us to believe that what we see is evidence, evidence of documentarists making a documentary" (188). Earlier in his book, Winston provides evidence for this claim by tracing a common (and convoluted) genealogy of trans-Atlantic terminology:

> At the time there were two terms, both French, available to describe film-making with the new equipment— *cinéma direct* and *cinéma vérité*. Both were preferred to the nascent English usage, in professional circles, of the word "candid" as part of some phrase. "Candid" did not become a term of art for this technology. The French expressions did. Unfortunately, there were also, essentially, two styles of film-making engendered by the new equipment and the French terms were used indiscriminately of both. And, as a final confusion, in the USA and UK, one term (direct cinema) was translated from the French (*cinéma direct*) and the other was not. (The bilingual Canadians did better on this front.) (148)

Winston's summary shows the difficulty that direct documentary, like so many perceived "movements" in film history, presents for those who want to stick labels to a heterogeneous body of films. It is interesting, then, that despite his reservations, he too reverts to an approach that includes only two styles. Even more telling, of course, are his parentheses at the end of the quote, which point to another North American cinema—a smaller, linguistically hybrid one that produced its own set of

conversations, its own set of films, and, I will argue, its own set of answers to the questions that so obsessed two larger cinema powers.

"Québecitude" and *le direct*

In addition to Rouch's comments about Brault and the National Film Board (NFB), there is much evidence to suggest that Canadian filmmakers were among the first to technically master the new cameras from World War II.[2] Regardless of who did what first, direct documentary style has become a loaded issue for Canadian film historians not only for questions of observational ethics but also for questions of national identity. This is because portable cameras and synch sound played a crucial role in the creation of the first properly Québécois films.

In English-speaking Canada John Grierson's leadership in the 1940s culminated in the National Film Act (1950) and the founding of the NFB in Ottawa, which sought "in particular ... to promote the production and distribution of films designed to interpret Canada and Canadians and to other nations" (quoted in Marshall 19). Portable technology was immediately sought by NFB technicians as a way to fulfill the demands of this ambitious mission statement. According to Gary Evans, resident "technical wizard" Chester Beachell and others had satisfied this need by around 1955.[3] Although these first attempts resulted in awkward and heavy equipment, they were immediately put to use in the NFB series *Perspective* and *Passe-partout* (Evans 71). The possibility of documenting Canadian culture with visual and sonic mobility captured the imaginations of a generation of young filmmakers at the NFB. The most distinguished experiments with the new equipment took place for the television series *Candid Eye*, which began in 1958 and flourished under the vision of executive producer Tom Daly's Unit B. Inspired by a variety of stylistic precursors, including the photography of Henri Cartier-Bresson, the budding Free Cinema in Britain, and the neorealist movement in Italy, Daly and his talented group of young filmmakers (Colin Low, Wolf Koenig, Terrence Macartney-Filgate, Samuel Jackson, and others) sought a particular vision with their newfound mobility: "Daly encouraged his group to experiment with candid portraits by seeking out a naturally interesting character or group of characters, caught up in circumstances

that involved the whole person in some kind of univer-
sally significant and fascinating situation. Ideas expressed
without emotional engagement, he warned, were life-
less; hence emotion had to be the principal 'hook'" (Evans
72). Much has been made about the differences between
the *Candid Eye* group's take on direct cinema and the
"crisis structure" found in early American variants of
the movement (see Elder 120–37). Notably, the *Candid
Eye* series also gave jobs to a generation of young
Québécois technicians. It was with Daly's storied Unit
B that Brault, Marcel Carrière, and others gained valu-
able experience with the new portable technology. These
young Québécois were to play a vital role in the next
logical extension of the Griersonian mission—to put
documentary style in the hands of the French-speaking
Québeckers.[4]

Just as Daly's group formed, the NFB was also un-
der substantial pressure to produce multilingual prod-
ucts. The debate about how to satisfy both English
and French markets had raged at the NFB nearly since
its founding (see Evans chaps. 2, 3). Canadian televi-
sion, the lifeline of many NFB projects, had already
begun to address the demands of the Francophone
market. CBC/Radio Canada established both French
and English channels in 1952, and the increased de-
mand for dual-language coverage led to the creation
of a separate French branch of the NFB that was
dubbed the Office national du film (l'ONF). After
considerable controversy, the NFB permanently moved
its headquarters from Ottawa to Montreal in 1956 so
as to provide better access to both the English and
French markets (Evans 42). This move gave a genera-
tion of young Québécois technicians the chance to
work in their native language, including Brault (who
had already been working on English-language pro-
ductions for several years), Perrault, Gilles Groulx, Gilles
Carle, Claude Jutra, and others. The first projects were
in the form of short television documentaries. Films
like *Les racquetteurs* (The snowshoers, 1958) and *La
lutte* (The fight, 1961) were among the first chances
for Québeckers to appear on-screen, and they were
immediately embraced as exemplars of a stylistic *cinéma
québécois*.[5] Hand-held cameras and synch sound, affec-
tionately known to French Canadians as *le direct*,
quickly became more than just mere windows on re-
ality—they were a cinematic equivalent of their cul-
tural "Québecitude."

The international recognition of *Pour la suite du monde*
on the screens of Cannes and in the pages of *Cahiers du
Cinéma* represented both a triumph for feature-length
production (which was gaining steam during this period)
and an apogee for Québécois direct documentary. This
burgeoning industry was accompanied by an explosion
of discourse. New venues for discussion included jour-
nals (notably *Objectif*, which ran from 1960 to 1967) and
the first annual Montreal International Film Festival,
which began in 1959. Debates in these venues predict-
ably centered on *le direct* as a *national* mode of expression.
Formerly modest, made-for-television shorts like *Les
racquetteurs* suddenly became objects of intense critical
scrutiny—the vital precursors to what was now perceived
as an authentically Québécois intervention in an inter-
national conversation about direct documentary.

There were many distinctions for critics to draw here.
Like their European counterparts of the period,
Québécois contributors to journals saw Hollywood fea-
ture films as a force for political, economic, and linguis-
tic dominance. In light of this similarity many critics
categorized Quebec's brand of direct documentary as a
merger between Daly's *Candid Eye* vision and a sort of
Third World "echo" of Rouch and Morin's interven-
tionist tactics in *Chronique d'un été*. In 1973 Louis
Marcorelles traced these lines of influence in his book-
length investigation called, appropriately, *Living Cinema*:
"The wheel has come full circle. French-speaking Ca-
nadians have used both the 'candid eye' and the 'New
Wave' methods to their own advantage, and have cre-
ated an original cinema in which . . . they have set down
the facts about French Canada" (75). While descriptive
in a general sense, such a categorization also erases sev-
eral distinctions that Québeckers worked hard to galva-
nize in their visual style.

The first of these is a stylistic separation between the
Quebec documentaries and those of the English-speak-
ing Unit B. David Clandfield describes the differences
between the two Canadian direct units:

> For the Candid Eye filmmakers, the subject of the
> film was its subject matter rooted in objective reality. . . .
> The function of the filmic process, then, was not to
> mould but to reveal form, and with it meaning. For the
> *cinéma direct* filmmaker, the point of departure is the
> filmmaking process in which the filmmaker is deeply
> implicated as a consciousness, individual or collective.

Figure 2. *Pour la suite du monde* opens in Quebec. Photograph from the production of *Pour la suite du monde*. Directed by Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault. Produced by Fernand Dansereau.©1962 National Film Board of Canada.

Instead of effacing his presence, the filmmaker will affirm it. Instead of rendering the technical process transparent (supposedly), he will emphasize its materiality. ("From the Picturesque" 115)

Beyond this first national distinction was an international one having to do with the quality of the filmmaker's intervention in events. The second distinction, voiced most loudly in the pages of *Objectif*, was based on the differences between Rouchian interventionism and the more fictionalized approach of Perrault and others—often called *cinéma de la parole*. For critics like Jean-Pierre Lefebvre and Jean-Claude Pilon, the marriage between fiction and direct style christened a distinctly Québécois form of documentary, separate stylistically from the derivative brands of "Roucheole" they could see in other approaches. Opposing critics warned that links with Rouch were the key to Perrault's (hence Quebec's) visibility on the world scene and that if they strayed too far they might risk "a psychological ghetto, preoccupied with collective introspection" (Evans 86). At first, this distinction may seem to cohere with the observational–interactive dichotomy discussed above. I hope to show, however, that there is something else going on—at least in Perrault's seminal work—to indicate a profoundly different attitude about the ways in which direct documentary techniques can be used to show Quebec to the world. For Perrault's experimental ethnography is ultimately less concerned with how to capture "real" events than it is with celebrating—and complicating—the stylistic "materiality" brought to the screen by Brault's virtuoso camera work.

Performance Anxiety

Although Perrault is clearly interested in the new filming and recording techniques provided by Brault, he seeks to deconstruct their claim on objectivity rather than to explore the limits of the reality provided by the lens. Among the most radical advocates of distinguishing a Québécois approach to the direct techniques, Perrault—also an author and poet—had volumes to say about capturing the immediate "real." The search for an overarching theoretical position in his many interviews, essays, and experimental poems about documentary practice is perhaps a futile endeavor, but it is clear that "objectivity" and "Québecitude" are two of the most common subjects. Generally, his writing on the direct style seeks to shift the ethical debate away from questions of objective observation. In a 1963 conversation about his first film, for example, he attacks an interviewer who asks him to place *Pour la suite du monde* within other direct movements: "Do we always have to have a term? This talk of *cinéma-vérité* annoys me. This is because these words seem to have a moral pretension. I prefer that we concentrate on cultivating technical approaches. *Cinéma-direct* or *cinéma du réel*? Our real concern should be to find a term that opposes the 'fiction cinema,' the 'cinema-cinema,' or the 'bewitching cinema.' But the word is not easy to find" (Perrault 13). Despite this

reprehension for terms, Perrault does not hesitate to propose his own elsewhere. His approach, however, is rooted both in a search for a specific national "voice" and in a certain skepticism about the camera's ability to capture real events. A "living cinema," he claims, calls first for different ethics of the camera—less concerned with truth claims than with making inspiring documents out of recording everyday life:

> Another way to get out of this problem would be to describe this quest to find an object and to speak of a "living cinema" [*cinéma-vécu*]. In relation to fiction, yes, we are talking about a document, but in relation to truth [*la vérité*] we're talking instead about life, about actions, about instants. . . . [T]he truth, nobody has the right to claim exclusive rights to the truth. It is not a particular dimension of any form of cinema: it's more a quality of inspiration in the spirit of an Antonioni or a Grand-Louis Harvey. . . . *The "real" dimension of this film is elsewhere altogether. It's in a vital quality of what is produced—a quality that the spectator may not feel the first time through.* (13, emphasis added)

Grand-Louis, of course, is one of the native Québécois that Perrault brings memorably to the screen in his first feature. From this perspective it would seem that Perrault seeks to align his film more with European art cinema than with documentary. This claim seems less far-fetched when we consider all the ways that *Pour la suite du monde* disrupts the conventional links between direct style and the "immediacy" of the world viewed.

Part of Perrault's purpose with his first film is to perform a constructed tension between fiction and documentary—to compose a film around a vital energy and inspiration rather than to capture "unfolding" moments. Whether or not we buy his philosophical rants, they are clearly geared toward something that is not dependent on any objective facility of the camera. On the one hand, *Pour la suite du monde* is an ethnographic project about a group of Québécois who live on the Île aux Coudres (Island of Hazel Trees) in the St. Lawrence River; on the other, it is a staged event that takes place at the urging of Perrault and Brault. A man, Léopold Tremblay, decides to recruit support on his island home for the restaging of a beluga whale hunt, something that hasn't been seen since the 1920s but is still a proud legend among old folk. The hunt consists of strategically planting a long line of branches into the water off the

shoreline and waiting until a beluga whale gets caught between them. In the end, they do get their whale—and Perrault shows us much more than that.

The main "characters" of the tale are from two families. First, the family Tremblay: Léopold; his father, Alexis, who narrates parts of the film by reading Jacques Cartier's 1535 account of finding the island; and his mother, Marie. Second, the family Harvey: the talkative and quixotic Grand-Louis; his brother, Abel, who is the old schooner captain and the "genius" behind the beluga hunt; and Abel's son, Joachim, the current captain of a fishing boat on the island. Grand-Louis, Abel, and Alexis are old enough to have participated in the original hunts during the 1920s, while Léopold and Joachim have a few memories of them from their childhoods.

The first third of the film includes many discussions about the viability of restaging the whale hunt, but Léopold and Grand-Louis finally convince the others that they should perform it one more time to "garder les traces pour la suite du monde" [keep its memory alive for the future] and to show the young people about the history of their island. During the film we follow the development of the hunt as well as learn a lot about some of the other rituals and customs in the community (an auction for their souls, dancing, a cross-dressing mid-Lent festival, etc.). At the end of the film one beleaguered beluga is captured (compared with untold hundreds in the old days), and Alexis and Léopold take it to New York, where it is sold to an aquarium.

From the disclaimer in the very first shot we know that *Pour la suite du monde* is a sort of present-tense recreation of an historical event on the island; the filmmakers have encouraged "the people of the island to renew the beluga hunt." This, of course, places the film in a long tradition of documentary, including Flaherty's unabashed use of actor Tony Scott (*Man of Aran*) as well as Rouquier's epic tale about French farmers (*Farrebique*). Many Québécois advocates of antifictional (hence anti-American) documentaries objected to this mix of fictional and ethnographic practices. To some, Perrault was selling out to the fictional forces he was supposed to be fighting against with a more authentic documentary practice. In any case, the incorporation of fictional performances is certainly the most widely discussed topic in the French literature on his films.

Although all the scenes were originally shot with Brault's camera and synch sound, they display a strange

Figure 3. The filmmakers stage an interview with mobile equipment. Photograph from the production of *Pour la suite du monde*. Directed by Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault. Produced by Fernand Dansereau. ©1962 National Film Board of Canada.

variety of uses for mobile recording techniques. Some scenes are shot in what we might call conventional direct style with synchronous sound: the opening auction scene establishes shaky compositions and inconsistent audio levels; a scene of a church worship service includes many awkward jump cuts linked by uninterrupted sound; the almost otherworldly long takes during the mid-Lent festival, replete with masked men dancing in dresses and jubilant accordion music, beckon the viewer's "immediate" presence in the room. In stark contrast, other scenes barely hide their staged quality as the colorful Québécois locals "act" their own roles: Léopold and two other men discuss the beluga hunt facing the camera in a rather awkward, fanned-out formation set up for the camera; Grand-Louis speaks over the noise in his woodshop but can't help sneaking glances at the camera; any number of collective outdoor scenes showcase the forced overacting of the principal characters

against the almost painful shyness of children and other townspeople.

In his effort to "faire parler les gens" [have the people speak] (Perrault 12), Perrault purposely collapses the conventional distinction between fictional staging and the "real" of hand-held images. In order to create these staged scenes, Perrault used an in-depth shooting script to guide his actors through the screen presentation of their own lives. This idiosyncratic method included rough plans for the action and, oddly, even his eventual goals for what the *audience* would think of each scene (see Clandfield, "Ritual and Recital" 137–39).

The staging of scenes is one of Perrault's strategies for disabling the "moral pretension" of his images: "Léopold acts in a false manner (at least for you). But in acting this way, he is true. Let's just say he represents a certain type of character that we find in every village: a sort of ambassador who could play a different role no

matter what he tries to do" (Perrault 9). Léopold's role playing, he claims, is beyond a simple true-false distinction—he is irremediably neither true nor false. The film tries to avoid making concrete truth claims about the nature of its subjects. Undoubtedly an important stroke for ethnography, this is also a purposeful complication of "objective" images. If this performative dimension puts the film on the "interactive" side of direct cinema, it is not because Perrault signals his physical presence like Rouch and Morin. Rather, this is a well-nigh neorealist move, a repeated provocation of screen "authenticity" through a sort of "double-negative" gesture in which the spectator is painfully aware that a (non)actor is nevertheless *acting* a part while he tells his own story.

This performative practice is usually considered Perrault's most personal and innovative contribution to direct documentary style. Marcorelles's 1973 account of the Québécois movement lauds Perrault's approach to his subjects as a "wholly new departure" within direct cinema, "in which the 'living'—which is more or less spontaneous and more or less organized—and the 'lived'—with its historical structure, its sense of becoming—will one day produce an autonomous cinema that has finally broken completely with established means of expression" (83). Likewise, Gilles Marsolais claims that the reenacted quality of the scenes gives the film a "spiritual richness" that makes it "less a document than a poem" (159).[7] Writing eloquently about the complexity of the film's paradoxical relationship with the whale hunt restaging: "The *act* [in *Pour la suite du monde*] becomes a sublime pretext that forces its subjects *to be* [*être*] and that liberates a *speech act* [*parole*] that is experienced more intensely. To grasp an individual who *is* in his *action* as well as his *speech act* [*parole*], such is 'living cinema' [*cinéma vécu*]" (Marsolais 278). Both of these descriptions are compelling, but they fall somewhat short of pinpointing the peculiar conflicts of representation at stake in Perrault's use of native character actors.

The work of Noel Carroll is helpful in categorizing these performative situations. Borrowing vocabulary from Monroe Beardsley, Carroll differentiates among three types of portrayal in the cinema: nominal, physical, and depictive. For Carroll, these terms explain how three otherwise identical images of a person can change valences in different contexts. Carroll's example is of a shot of Clark Gable playing the role of Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind*. Given a fictional context of the shot,

the viewer is encouraged to see the man in his *nominal* role as Rhett Butler, a character in the story. However, if the viewer is otherwise aware of Gable's identity as an actor, she might also watch that same scene of him for his *physical* immediacy as a person acting on a set. Whether Gable has adopted the role of Rhett or otherwise, it is always possible to watch him as an actor instead of a character, playing a role at a particular moment in time. This is particularly true in the case of stars, but I take it to be possible any time we see a person on-screen—just as long as we choose (or are encouraged) to view the image for its indexical rather than fictional qualities (see Carroll). Finally, the viewer can also see Gable as neither a character nor an actor but as a man, plain and simple. Of course, this third category is less likely in a Hollywood film, where there are usually nominal roles played by well-known physical presences on the screen (actors). A star of Gable's magnitude would be hard to see as simply "a man" no matter how or where we saw him. But there are also a number of other actors in films who are not characters in the story—the extras who walk by in street scenes, for example. Given this context, we are less likely to attach the other two categories to these presences on-screen; we see them simply as *depictive* of "men" and "women" in a general sense. In one case the image is taken as the portrayal of a character (nominal); in another it is seen as an historically specific instance of an actor playing a role (physical); in the last it is as a nonspecific view of a "man" (depictive). For Carroll it is important to recognize how these distinctions shift when we watch a film of another type, like a documentary.

Discussion of this dimension of direct style is not uncommon in the literature. A particular moment in *Jane* (Drew-Leacock, 1962) is often cited for just such a resonance between Jane Fonda the actor and Jane Fonda the woman. Peter Graham points this out in a 1964 essay: "Throughout, one has the impression that Jane is *acting* rather than being. But there is one moment in the film when the mask falls and we see the true, vulnerable, young actress—when the camera fixes relentlessly on her face as she reads out the notices which damn both the play and the performance" (35). For Graham, Jane's self-awareness as a *nominal* agent disrupts the viewer's ability to see her as a young woman in show business, intimately portrayed in *physical* immediacy by the camera. These comments thus imply that there is something

"true" to be seen about the "young actress" that is not visible in the actress when she is aware of being filmed.

The traditional binary of "observational" and "interactive" reinforces the assumption that 1960s hand-held techniques were oriented toward capturing a more authentic, intimately *physical* image of the subject matter. The makers of *Primary* are only truly observational, for example, if we accept that their intention is to present a more authentic, "direct" portrayal of the events surrounding Kennedy and Humphrey. Likewise, Rouch's *Chronique d'un été* experiment would not be deemed "interactive" if the filmmakers' own physical identities as sociologist Morin and ethnographer Rouch were read as *only* cinematic roles or characters. Indeed, the status of such an "intervention" depends on a sort of demystification of the film's fourth wall—an "open" admission that camera-wielding agents are invasive and that their physical presence induces a change in the indexical *truth* presented to the viewer.

Perrault's use of staged scenes, although intimately shot in an exotic locale, presents a different sort of problem here. By highlighting stiff postures and overacting, Brault's camera does not only ask us to think about the physical "truth" of these images on-screen. (Is that what she really acts like with/without a camera there?) In the first scene on the boat, for example, we are not yet aware of Joachim Harvey's name or his role in the story that will follow. At this point, he is simply *depicted* as a man operating his fishing boat. Later, Joachim is given a role in the awkwardly acted "story" of the film (nominal) as well as embodying an authentic, *physical* role as Québécois fisherman. The tension between nominal and physical is palpable here, as these people are allowed to "play themselves," nominally and physically, at the same time. Perrault's style thus forces a combination of two modes of viewing that are more commonly kept separate in documentary practice.[8]

Though made possible with the same recording equipment, the forced performances in Perrault's film pose questions entirely different from those of Rouch or the American direct cinema. By forcing us to navigate the liminal spaces between Léopold the man, Léopold playing the role of Léopold, and Léopold playing the role of native Québécois, the film interferes in objective truth claims that such hand-held images might otherwise imply, thus denying the authority accorded to other early approaches to direct cinema. Rather than

a simple hybrid of the "interactive" and "observational" modes, this film seems to be working from a different set of assumptions altogether.

Candid Style

Some forty years after the first direct documentaries, scholarship on the style of these films still lags conspicuously behind the work on their ethical and technical dimensions. From the small amount written on the subject and a look at the films in question, it is clear that both the American and French traditions of *vérité* operate according to certain conventions of continuity and containment of meaning. In this way the primacy of the new recording techniques is advanced as somehow more "immediate" than other forms of documentary. In her insightful analysis of *Primary*, Jeanne Hall suggests that the film employs a strategy of editing that actually works to advance verisimilitude *over* other capacities of the cinema and the technical gaffes of the crew. In this sense, any film from the period could be seen as a "hybrid" or a variety of visual elements not necessarily associated with direct shooting and recording "live" events. But I would agree with Hall that even when *Primary* includes static portraits of farmers, disembodied feet at voting booths, and other elements that do not coincide with the live soundtrack or the hand-held images, these contrasting elements function in service of a larger verisimilitude and the quest for an inside view of the campaign trail.

In *Chronique d'un été* we might also notice several disruptive moments such as a montage of newspaper headlines about the Congo or a prolonged zoom-in on a music box that marks the transition to another scene. But by comparison with the interviews, the street scenes, and the panel discussions that dominate the film, these moments are relatively few. Like his American counterparts, Rouch goes to great lengths to preserve the accidental immediacy of the film's more expressive moments. For example, when Marceline speaks to herself about the Holocaust as the camera slowly pulls out to reveal the train station roof, Rouch argues that this is just one among many miracles of the mobile filming instance: "The camera was placed in the back of a 2CV so no one was aiming it. Marceline wore the tape recorder and she talked alone into her clip-on mike. When Marceline entered les Halles, we pushed the car ahead
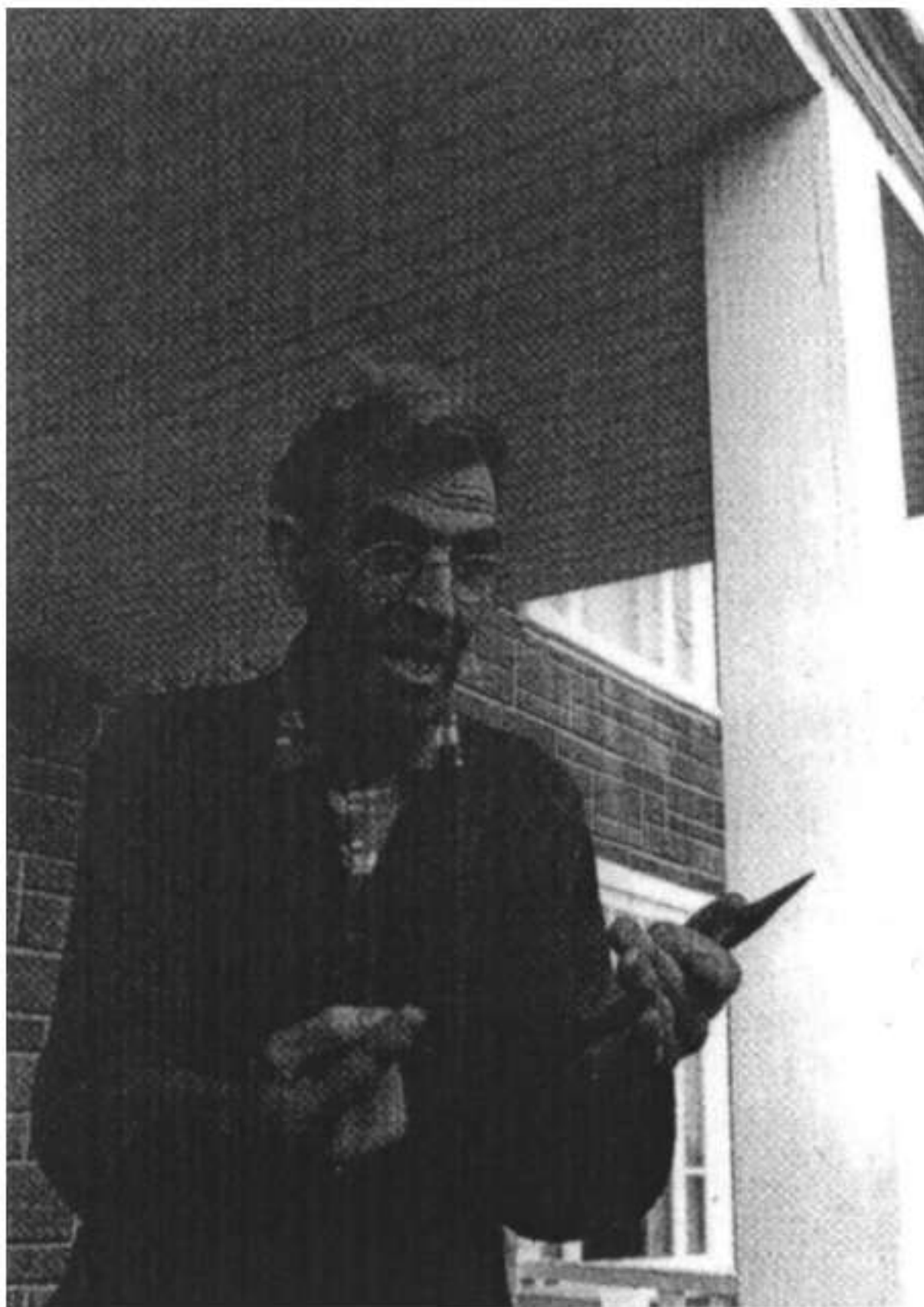
Figure 3. The filmmakers stage an interview with mobile equipment. Photograph from the production of *Pour la suite du monde*. Directed by Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault. Produced by Fernand Dansereau.©1962 National Film Board of Canada.

of her, but a little bit faster than she was moving. . . . We had not seen or heard anything. . . . When we saw these images on the screen for the first time, Edgar, still very surprised, suddenly said, 'Yes, it's the image of her return'" (Fulchignoni 270–71). In a lucid breakdown of the film's editing patterns, Bruce Dornfeld works out a typology of six basic strategies that preserve the continuous nature of this initial experiment with *vérité* and concludes that "*Chronicle of a Summer* did not intend to call attention to the form . . . of this new *cinéma vérité*, but rather to the authenticity and the candidness made accessible by this form" (319). Rouch himself testifies to this conclusion in his insistence on the objective neutrality of his "scientific" montage: "If one records on

film everything that man has seen one will naturally get only a jumbled mess. If one edits scientifically, the things that were photographed become clearer. If you throw out what bothers you, better still. We will thus be able to gain an organized memory of impressions from an ordinary eye" (Issari and Doris 75). Rather than showing all twenty-one hours of footage for his *Chronique d'un été*, a possibility he apparently considered (Issari and Doris 75), Rouch settles for a shorter replication of the authentic experience an individual might have in "real" situations provoked by an invasive camera.

Perrault's position on authenticity diverges sharply here. Although fascinated by the images of Brault's camera, he makes no bones about his own intervention and exploitation of the medium's different capacities: "To understand what I'm doing here, you first have to feel that nobody in this film is speaking for himself (it's the shot) but as part of a proposition (a sequence) that articulates itself in a discourse (that's the film)" (Perrault 9). In addition to the complex staging of native actors, then, Perrault uses many other stylistic strategies to render the camera's direct images part of a larger, overarching proposition not limited to their candidness. In his 1974 analysis, Marsolais writes enthusiastically about this innovative mixture of elements: "This poetic fresco, exploding with truth, made with fresh and sometimes fascinating images, obviously goes beyond the story of the film itself. . . . Renouncing the false prestige of both the 'objective' camera and of superficial 'live' reportage, . . . it thus makes a work where truth and poetry form a homogeneous whole emanating from the subject itself" (159). Though he rightly mentions that the film's montage is "based simultaneously on the blending of speech and action [*la parole et l'action conjugées*]" (Marsolais 160), Marsolais does not follow up these insights with attention to specific sequences. In the space that remains, I hope to show some concrete ways in which Perrault and Brault craft their "living cinema" through stylistic interventions in direct documentary practice.

From the opening sequence, *Pour la suite du monde* fairly announces its ambivalent relationship to time. Rather than establishing spatial coordinates (as would, say, an explanatory voice-over narration or the image of a typical Parisian subway station), the first two images of the film are disconnected, almost abstract shots of a church steeple and a buoy floating on the waves. While

we see the steeple and the title of the film, we hear the sounds of singing and music, but these fade out completely for the second image. The only connection we might make, then, is an associative graphic link between the two shapes (steeple and buoy). As the shot of the buoy slowly pulls out, the soundtrack becomes more audible, and we get our first taste of Québécois dialect: boat captain Joachim Harvey reports through his radio that they have rounded up all the buoys for the season. The fish harvest is over, and Joachim is headed for home. But although we get a substantial part of this sound in correlation with the images in question, Perrault overlays it with another discourse: Alexis Tremblay, whom we haven't yet identified as a person in the film, reads from the adventures of Jacques Cartier in 1535: "My young friends, after reading the grand adventures of Jacques Cartier . . . during his voyage of 1535, I found a part that I think you might be interested in . . . so I'm going to try to read it for you, the best that I can, . . . given that it is in old French." Longer shots of the schooner, including a man dancing on deck, are carefully added to the mix, complicating the spatial coordinates that link Joachim's work with Alexis's abstract commentary. The voice-over, read somewhat uncertainly in old French, provides both a linguistic and a temporal contrast with the commands of the ship captain.

As Michel Brulé points out, this first sequence contains a kernel of the temporal weave that will become more pronounced in later scenes of the film.[9] In one sense, the Cartier reading provides an introduction to the cultural context of the film's subject. Perrault's goal here is clearly to use the immediacy of direct sound and images but not in terms of their objective claim on reality. Rather, this carefully constructed sequence places Joachim's "everyday" actions in a tense rapport with more static shots, more disconnected sounds, and a double trace of the past: the voice of an old man who is nevertheless too young to remember the story he tells. Although Cartier's adventures play a role in his own history, Alexis's wavering voice marks his estrangement from the ancient language he reads.

Later sequences also play on what Charles Perraton calls a "triple track" narration between geography, narrative, and history. Extreme long shots of the island from afar routinely interrupt the flow of immediate images on the screen; intermittent close-up shots of Alexis narrating his memories of the beluga hunt dis-

rupt and accent the shaky but beautiful present-day images of sapling branch planting according to that same plan forty years later; synchronous sound accompanies images for long stretches only to drop out or be overwhelmed by music or voices from another scene. The opening sequence is followed by what Perrault calls the "sequence of the moon," which combines at least three styles of camera work as well. The clearly *direct* scene here is a traditional auction during which the villagers gather to sell their belongings to other members of the island for both communal and religious reasons. Brault's camera bobs and weaves in the melee of shouting and bidding, following closely over the shoulder of a man auctioning a piece of clothing. Interspersed in this sequence are shots of Grand-Louis and Joachim debating with another man who apparently is off-screen about the role of the moon in the life of the earth. Against the other man's claims for scientific progress, Joachim asserts that the moon is not a destination that man should try to reach, as it is too important for the seasons and the health of the planet. Grand-Louis mediates the two extremes of the conversation by lauding both natural and exploratory interpretations.

Brault's framing is relatively static in the shots of the men, and the image track cuts back and forth between the more mobile crowd images and this isolated group of three. Meanwhile, the soundtrack alternates noticeably between a general humdrum of voices and the more placid coverage of one conversation, often splicing the two together in audible contrast to one another. Following this, we see several high-contrast shots of the moon itself, beautifully framed and then dissolved into a reflection shot of streaming water. As this appears, Joachim's voice-over reflects on the purpose of the moon and the auction we have just seen, which is meant as a way to consecrate the souls of the little village: "There is not one man on the Île aux Coudres who has been to war during wartime. Who made this possible? This was made possible by our little souls, . . . our little souls that protect us." Patched with the thematic of the moon debate and poetic shots of the moon itself, this sequence presents the raucous auction coverage as one stylistic option among several, constantly contrasting communal and isolated atmospheres.

Perrault also edits sequences together so as to place emphasis on temporal discontinuity. A later sequence of a priest's dedication of the new whale hunt and the

Figure 5. Michel Brault takes advantage of his lightweight camera. Photograph from the production of *Pour la suite du monde*. Directed by Michel Brault and Pierre Perrault. Produced by Fernand Dansereau. ©1962 National Film Board of Canada.

ensuing celebration demonstrates Brault's efficacy at what Perrault terms a *caméramage*, or a sort of hunter for "visual poems" through in-camera editing. As the music in this scene increases in volume, Brault's viewfinder closes in on couples dancing and spinning in circles, almost abstracting the images in a flurry of shoulders and faces. Accordion music and stamping feet, strangely distant in tone, play beneath this sequence, which nevertheless seems to synchronize by the time the camera focuses on a woman's dancing feet as she hops onto an overturned boat. Suddenly, the woman leaps from her perch, and, in a punctual use of match-on action, the image track completes her fall in the form of a small girl landing in a meadow full of flowers and running to frolic with a group of other children. Simultaneously, the soundtrack cuts from the festive accordion to a rather rustic lilt played on a flute. The flute theme, which returns as a motif throughout the film, is resolutely nondiegetic and seems

to be motivated only by the innocent play of the children in contrast with the image-anchored, dancing sounds of the beach party. The viewer is thus left in a lurch between two image-sound relations—one anchored in the indexical "real," the other floating like a pastoral epiphany—that nevertheless derive from the similar hand-held camera techniques.

Perrault's restaging technique interacts fruitfully with his sound editing in another scene that both accounts and recounts a legendary mid-Lent festival. Joachim tells us in voice-over about the special day before the harvest when all the young men of the village dress in women's clothing with masks, then travel around from house to house rousing the community. The story he tells us is a mixture of memories—his own participation in the event as well as other stories told to him by the elder Abel Harvey. Joachim tells of one memory that involves a strange goat playing with a child at one of the houses

during the festival. Meanwhile, the image track shows us this event as if narrated in real time, even though it is the specific memory of one man. Perrault thus brings Joachim's memory back to life in a restaging that mimics in smaller form the larger restaging of the beluga hunt. (One can only imagine Brault traipsing around the island searching for just the right goat and just the right child.) Unabashedly constructed, this sequence completely collapses the image track's tentative claim to immediacy in favor of more global contemplation of the precipitous survival of traditions and customs.

Perrault's film is commonly read as a meditation on the relationships between an antiquated rustic community and the encroaching elements of the modern world. In the end, the men do get one beluga whale. The final sequences of the film relate Alexis and Léopold's trip to New York, their sale of the beluga to an aquarium, and their discussions of the role that the anachronistic restaging and filming of such an event might have in preserving these customs for future generations. Perrault followed up the film with two more feature-length explorations of the Tremblay story, *Le règne du jour* (The reign of the day, 1967) and *Les voitures d'eau* (Water cars, 1969). His later work, as Jerry White points out, moves even farther to question the legitimacy of the direct style as an authentic discourse. *Un pays sans bon sens!* (A country without good sense! 1970) is also a film about the same island but no longer even pretends to link its disparate parts into a cohesive whole. Instead, the film follows several characters from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. As White notices, this film often overlays images of the island's inhabitants with the voice-over of other people's perspectives of the island, both violating the "immediacy" of the images and rendering them difficult to read. Included among the significant "characters" are (once again) Léopold Tremblay and Maurice Chaillot, a more "modern" Franco-Albertan who lives in Paris. Writes White: "Is Perrault making fun of both Maurice and Léopold? Is he in all seriousness exposing the painful contradictions of being a North American Francophone? It is just not clear. Perrault seems to be using different editing strategies in *Un pays sans bon sens!* to move from a comparison of different kinds of frustration . . . to images of frustration and fragmentation" (118). White concludes that this later film marks Perrault's decisive "break with the *cinéma direct* style of the Île-aux-Coudres trilogy"

(118). But there is substantial evidence that Perrault's first feature exhibits these stylistic tendencies from the outset. For by constantly questioning its *own* stylistic moorings, *Pour la suite du monde* complicates our view of direct cinema's origins in a quest for authentic, cinematic "reality."

For the Future of "Living Cinema"

In the opening pages of his overview of direct cinema styles in America, Stephen Mamber cautions the reader about the dangers of generalizing the movement:

> Cinema verite in many forms has been practiced throughout the world, most notably in America, France and Canada. . . . To embrace the disparate output of Rouch, Marker, Ruspoli, Perrault, Brault, Koenig, Kroitor, Jersey, Leacock, and all the others under one banner is to obscure the wide variance in outlook and method that separates American cinema verite from the French and Canadian variety and further to fail to take into account differences within the work of one country or even one filmmaker. (1)

Mamber goes on to limit his own study by focusing specifically on the different approaches within the American school. Yet despite the clear need for detailed stylistic analysis of the many different strands, historians and theoreticians all too often limit themselves to the same old questions of "authenticity." Thus, many continue to place Perrault as a sort of "hybrid" case, somewhere in between the Drew and Rouch poles of direct style: "Brault and Perrault seek to minimize the mediation between 'reality' and representation, eschew commentary . . . and develop strategies for making the Arriflex technology as unobtrusive as possible. . . . However, something new in the method is also occurring, and it has profound implications for Québécois identity construction. The 'reality' represented by the film is [also] provoked by the filmmakers" (Marshall 125). As we have seen before, such analyses seem to lump Perrault's work somewhere in the gray area between two categories of direct cinema—interactive and observational. In his otherwise excellent analysis of the film as a "hybrid" ethnography, White makes a similar assumption in a passing comment: "The aestheticizing of island life, alternating with the use of a very pared down documentary style (which looked especially unusual in 1963) makes it clear

that Perrault is not a pioneer of a pious, we-seers-tell-the-truth type of vérité orthodoxy but is following a hybridized, semifictional Rouchian idea that filmmaking is a search for understanding" (113). A more precise description of this "unusual" style has been the goal of this essay.

While it does capture a major impetus behind the stylistic incorporation of new technology, the objective-interactive binary ignores the significance of Perrault's intervention. For while he is undoubtedly concerned with showing a people who have not been seen by most North Americans, his formal approach does not seek to promulgate their "authenticity" through new technology alone. Rather, *Pour la suite du monde* mobilizes a series of other cinematic techniques as they interact fruitfully with the new images and sounds of a people. Pointing to the constructed nature of its own processes formally, this project hence does *not* fall cleanly on a continuum between passive and active objectivity—nor does it make a claim to either one.

It is fair to say that Perrault's work, like others in the early moments of direct cinema, fascinates in the capabilities of portable cameras and synchronous sound. But the interaction here is not between an objective unfolding and a disruptive author. Rather, it is an expressive presentation of direct techniques considered *from outside* the questions of objectivity that fascinated other filmmakers of the time. As we have seen, Perrault does this by overlaying and combining many other materials of the cinema (performance, editing, sound, etc.) in evocative ways that purposely push beyond the spectacle of direct-style immediacy. In this light the film may have more in common with Chris Marker, another French proponent of *vérité* who is also often left out of the conversation about the orientation of direct cinema's aesthetic practices.

Perhaps the strangest aspect of all of this is that recent scholarship—usually intent on underlining the singularity of Perrault's work—often insists that it does *not* challenge the presumptions we have just suggested. Clandfield, for example, notices many of the same stylistic nuances that we have but then insists on quite the opposite conclusion about *Pour la suite du monde*: "Once more it is worth emphasizing that this sense of self-conscious enactment, performance, staging, and participation is not a challenge to the tenets of *cinéma direct*. Such behavior is the norm within community rituals, and the

opening up of the community to its visitors in this way softens the sense of intrusion and guarantees its authenticity" ("The Filmmaker's Role" 80). Interesting that what begins as a stylistic claim once again ends with an appeal to authenticity—as if the film's documentary status might be in jeopardy given this intrusion. Are we to take it, then, that the film's performative, profilmic innovations are purely derived from the adaptability of their subjects? Are we to assume that the Tremblay family was continuously restaging past rituals before the filmmakers arrived? More important, what can we say about the stylistic manipulations that took place during the editing process? Though he aptly discusses sequencing and montage, Clandfield's essay is silent on this point. Perrault's formal innovations are (once again) subsumed by a larger assumption about the way that style and substance *must* interact in order to claim a place in the canon of documentary history. Perhaps it is time that Perrault's film be considered for its formal innovation, according to what its variegated approach to performance and formal style contributes to documentary techniques, and not for how it "hybridizes" the supposed foundational poles of a movement.

Part of our continuing fascination with these mobile documentary images from the early 1960s lies in the way that they consecrate a certain aesthetic of immediacy. Direct style continues to thrive today in ways that are not necessarily invested in the "truth" (everything from *The Blair Witch Project* to reality TV to Hollywood action scenes comes to mind). If we are to trace the development of such "shaky-cam" images from conception to cliché, we also need a more precise map of how they were used in a variety of early films. As I hope to have shown, an historical understanding of these techniques is incomplete without a consideration of how Perrault's "living cinema" sheds many conventions of hand-held verisimilitude. Given this film's appearance in 1963, we might even speculate that the actual practice of this technology was unhinging from truth claims even as the Lyon conference attendees made cases for how to best keep them together.

By claiming the direct cinema–*cinéma-vérité* dyad, traditional accounts make an historical generalization that direct filmmakers all sought to find an "objective" authenticity in the images themselves. This may well be true for the French and American camps, at least in their early formulations. Drew's progeny are well documented

in their claims about filming "immediate" reality, whether this be through arousing "crisis structures" (Leacock) or claustrophobic institutional practices (Wiseman). Rouch and Morin are concerned with the ethical contamination inherent to their methods, but *Chronique d'un été* still plays out as a search for the authenticity of direct images, albeit including two meddling filmmakers who are (as Morin reflects at the end) forever implicated or "dans le bain." Perrault's film does deal in direct images and synch sound, but his stylistic presence is felt not as effacement (*Primary*) or as interjection (Rouch) but as a palpable, "living" tension between cinematic forms of expression. Brian Winston has cleverly characterized the two poles of direct documentary as "flies on the wall" (Drew) and "flies in the soup" (Rouch). These metaphors may be correct, but as overall descriptions of nascent direct techniques, they miss out on at least one filmmaker whose innovative approach did not aspire to insect status in the first place.

NOTES

I would like to thank the participants in Vance Kepley's documentary theory seminar (spring 2003) and the readers from the *Velvet Light Trap* for their suggestions in revising earlier versions of this article. I would also like to thank Veronique Da Silva of the National Film Board for her help in obtaining the rights to the images seen in these pages. Finally, I would like to thank Subha Xavier, whose constant input stimulated this project both directly and indirectly. All French translations in this paper, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

1. The original English-version title of the NFB release was *The Moontrap*. According to Jerry White (124), this version was reedited in many places (it runs thirty minutes shorter) and includes an English voice-over narration in parts, hence destroying many of the "direct" elements of the original. In 2000 the NFB released a new English version with subtitles and the original sound and image tracks intact. This second title was given the title *Of Whales, the Moon, and Men*. Henri Cartier-Bresson was a celebrated photojournalist whose style influenced many Canadian direct documentarists of the 1960s. The specifics of his style are beyond the scope of this paper, but they were critical to the NFB "Candid Eye" movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s. For an in-depth analysis of his relation to Québécois cinema, see Elder 86–94.

2. See Evans and a variety of articles in Feldman and Nelson.

3. Evans 71. Evans's book provides an excellent account of these and other issues involved in the realization of Grierson's Canadian vision both in Quebec and beyond. In an essay of this length, I can only hope to give a useful gloss of the technical advances made during these years.

4. There is not space here to go into the history of French-English tensions at the NFB offices. For an excellent account of these and other issues involved in the realization of Grierson's Canadian vision, see Evans.

5. Michael Dorland notes that this term itself did not enter common usage until 1968.

6. This book covers an astonishingly wide variety of 1960s direct styles. In addition to the breadth of his study, Marsolais offers technological charts and an extensive bibliography.

7. This aspect of the film has proved to be fruitful ground for many different philosophical approaches to the image. Most notably, it also caught the attention of Gilles Deleuze, who writes about the film in *Cinema II*. The film is referred to in numerous places but is treated at length on pages 150–53, 221–23, and 243–44.

8. See Brulé 19. This book includes the only published version of Perrault's strikingly in-depth plan for the shooting of the film. It is an interesting combination of scripted dialogue, shot descriptions, and a schematic breakdown of different sequences and overarching patterns of narrative.

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