The Point of View of the "Characters"
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We presented the principal participants of *Chronique d’un été* with the following questionnaire:

1. What were your feelings during the making of the film? Did you feel that you were interpreting a role? Were you bothered by the presence of the camera? by the method of the “authors”? Or, on the contrary, did you have the feeling of surrendering yourself totally and sincerely?

2. Do you think that some other method of inquiry, of “attack,” might have achieved a greater degree of truth? What, for example?

3. Does the definitive representation given of you in the film seem true to what you really are and to what your real preoccupations are? if not, how does it differ?

4. Do you think that some of the scenes which were shot but which don’t appear in the public version of the film could give a more exact image of you?

5. Is there anything in what you did or said in front of the camera that you disavow, that does not correspond to what you judge to be your truth? What? Why?

6. On the other hand, is there anything that you did not show or say in front of the camera, something that is important to you, which you think is essential for someone to know you, and that you would have liked to express? If so, what?

7. Do you know the other participants in the film? Does the image which it gives of them conform to the one you had and have of them yourself? Is it rather more real, less real, or simply different? In what way?

8. Did the fact that you participated in this film modify your way of living, your way of thinking, your idea of yourself? How so?

9. Do you regret this experience? Are you happy with it? Does it seem to have been useful to you?

10. What, in your opinion, is the true contribution of this film?

11. To the question “Are you happy?” what would you respond today?

The responses we received to these questions from Jacques Gabillon, Landry, Mme. Gabillon, Angélo, and Marceline follow.

Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch

Jacques Gabillon

1. Favorable sentiment; excitement at the prospect of participating in something new, if not of escaping daily mediocrity for a while. Rediscovering Edgar Morin, making new acquaintances.

   No discomfort in front of the camera; however, felt the impression of finding myself “brutalized” by the leader of the game (here I rejoin the criticism of a certain conception of modesty). In any case, there intervenes, along with dignity, the internal freedom to reject or accept. As for me, I could not give myself over completely; more precisely, I did not attempt to break out of the particular frame that Morin had placed me in. Why?

   Edgar Morin had solicited me personally. Since he addressed (my wife) Simone as well, the method of “attack” no longer involved merely the worker living in the new apartment, but the couple.

   And this brings me to the following question:

2. To my understanding, it is now less a matter of method of “attack” than of its objective: since I am no longer individually solicited, I must keep in mind conjugal relations. This is why I could not “give” what was expected of me.

3. I think the personal truth of the characters is found to be limited. In that, with cutting and editing, the directors were able to bend the meaning of the whole with regard to the particular truth... Whatever it may be, it must not be forgotten that the characters clarify each other, one after the other, and that as a last resort the truth is only really achieved by means of cinematographic vision. But there also lies the force of impact.

4. There are scenes which were filmed which do not figure in the screened version of the film. There are also scenes which could have been filmed. In the first case, it was only a matter of useless chatter to cover up uneasiness. As for what could have been done, it would have required that the camera penetrate into my little world of anachronistic bureaucracy at SNCF, with its grotesque silhouettes and general greyness. The camera would have had to tune in to capture the aftereffects of the ordeal of deportation with the subsequent decline, and not the militant who never much existed, and finally to throw a violent light on what had inevitably remained in the shadow, understanding that the camera will more quickly uncover a wound than evoke the humiliation or simple paltriness of daily life. Moreover, in that moment of refuge in the apartment, with the friendly presence of the old collected books and records, after our Spanish vacation (which left us, after all, with more than
just photos) the singular duality of the character that is me could have revealed its fundamental truth, no doubt inadequate at the present moment, that is to say, the moment in question.

(5) Nothing to be disavowed, as far as the part of the filming which was used is concerned, this being pertinent only as a preface to a comment.

(6) What is essentially lacking to a full understanding of me is as much the result of a certain dissimulation of my personality. It's why I don't assume what I really am, what's deep within me. Here enters the "pathology" of the wounded idealist, of the ex-concentration camp internee, coming to grips with the reality of a society to which he is poorly adapted, a society which, in fact, repudiates him and has, up till now, assailed his greatly diminished vitality. What is pathetic in my adventure is that for long years, the scream that was tearing me apart never left my throat. I no longer had the energy to scream.

(7) I only knew Edgar Morin, his insatiable curiosity, his interest in my situation. Did he want to attack my inhibition or provoke some brutal change in this condition which I endure with such difficulty? An "old accomplice," as I've already said somewhere, in the course of a presentation. However, I did not know the other collaborators in the film, people from his circle or those who evolved around the group. Ecclecticism in the choice of the collaborators? in the choice of "patients?" Not so much. Under varied social trappings lies a common way of reacting to life. Angelo, the worker breaking the proletariat, is the counterpart of the others. On Marceline's shelves I noticed, unconsciously, many of the titles which figure in Morin's library or in my own collection of books which marks my first years of reading. But could we do otherwise? It is a question here of whirled mince of acceptance in order to participate in an operation which was, above all, delicate, but where that acceptance was the natural result of long conversations in the past and of friendship.

I knew nothing about Jean Rouch until after the film was made. Jean Rouch is essentially a temperament which revealed itself under the African sun, among the blacks. You have to have seen him working, at ease with everyone, knowing how to gain confidence with a direct approach, a simple friendly gesture, toward the patient that he is about to "operate on." I am sorry that the camera was never turned toward him, to capture the instants when, sitting cross-legged on the floor at my house, he played to gain my son's confidence. *Chronique d'un été* being a team effort, the camera could have given us some other quality images, notably those which would have shown Jean Rouch at work with his operative grin!

(8) Participating in the film did not change my way of thinking, even less my way of living. It did, however, constitute a landmark in my life where, even now, more trust has entered it.

I mean, it's amusing: a certain shade of me is shown by the screen, with my accent with muffled southern intonation which I never suspected. And that intimate mobility of the face with its southern fluency, while I always thought of myself as a northerner!

(9) I am highly satisfied with the experience; the usefulness of the film which is really pertinent to a period which is troubled and alarming on many counts.

(10) This experience may not always have attained its ambitions, but the partial truth—those instants of truth captured in Marilou's shattered self, Marceline's secret compelxion liberated by memories—all of this cannot leave you insensitive. Sometimes it's unbearable, but often thrilling. And then it's also the film of life in the Parisian melting pot, with its "aggressions against everyday life: rapid "unscrewing" to him who doesn't recognize it in time!

(11) To this question I had answered "more or less happy." What else could I reply? Because in the meantime nothing has really changed.

Landry

(1) A feeling of unsettledness, a certain fear of not being able to stay myself until the end. I was not at all bothered by the camera because, first of all, this was my second experience of "cinema-vérité"; and then when you're wrapped up in something, really wrapped up, cameras, technicians, all that stuff becomes a part of some other universe than your own.

I worked with Rouch because I like what he does. When I start working with him, I know in advance that there will be a camera hidden somewhere, but I also know that Jean is ready to spend ten reels on me if I want to talk to him about my mother for those ten reels.

Surrendering myself entirely? I don't know if I surrender myself entirely, but what I know is that at the moment I say everything I have to say, without deceit, out of honesty to Jean, who allows me the most total freedom.

(2) I think that this form of cinema demands of us who wish to use it in a certain way "to offer our truth," a certain portion of honesty. First of all toward our director and then toward the public who must not see us as exhibitionists. And then for me, I'm not
used to mincing words; I say what I’ve got on my mind; I’m like that, take it or leave it. So for me all methods of attack are worthwhile, on the condition that they leave the individual complete freedom of expression and of manifestation of his personality.

(3) Chronique d’un été: It’s me during that summer of 1960, discovering the Riviera which I had only heard of through the scandals of Mme. Carmen Tessier; it’s me seeing for the first time the running of the bulls at Raymona; it’s me surprised to see the slightly too scant attire of girls on vacation, which is barely different from the attire of our African women before the era of civilization; it’s me discussing with Angelo, making the statements I’ve cited “preoccupations,” but my discussion on the terrace, and my discussion with Angelo are my preoccupations because they are permanent states in me.

(4) As far as I’m concerned, I think that everything important I had to say in this film is there, since it was not really a question of me. I only had to serve as a catalyst to Angelo, and if, in the end, Angelo and I got around to the problem of inferiority complexes, it’s simply because we felt so close to each other that we had a need to know who I really was and what I was thinking. But I would have liked them to keep certain sections where Raymond and I talk about what we think of marriage between blacks and whites, because I think white women are often asked what they think of mixed marriages, but young Africans are not often asked what they think about it. Mixed marriage is a danger of which certain of us are conscious. There are a lot of blacks who do not set their sights on a white woman, blacks who are ill at ease going out with a white woman, in the interest of that white woman herself; certain blacks who seek a white woman’s pure, true friendship, in no way connected with any sexual need. Now the young African student goes to look for his bride in Africa. I mean all these problems which have arisen since Black Africa’s accession to independence; certain realities which escape a large part of the white masses.

(5) My own truth is one, and not double; when I have the chance to say it, I say it, and I will not renounce it because it shocks or because people might think it debatable or false. From the moment when I figure I’m being honest with myself, to hell with “What will they say?”

(6) I would really like to say more about mixed marriage and the worker situation in my country; to express myself more fully on the problem of the Congo; also to express myself more fully on this delicate problem they call the “skin complex.” But I think that would have required a whole film just about me, while Chronique d’un été is a film on the life of people in general.

(7) I’m going to take the participants of the film in order, and classify them as to whether they were close to me.
Marilou: The friendship between me and Marilou was born, I think, without even the directors knowing about it. The first evening I saw her, Marilou gave me the impression of a lost girl who was actually looking for herself. She was tense, nervous, in her every gesture and movement. I think she was very impressed by my "kindness," and we got along from that very evening. Afterward I often went to see her at "Cahiers du Cinéma"; she even helped me out of my bad period. Then I went on vacation. When I came back I found Marilou distinctly more radiant than she was that first evening. So we went out for a drink in a café near the Champs-Élysées. Marilou talked to me as though I were a brother, a relative, and told me that she was now better than before and that she had found happiness. Since then Marilou and I have remained friends, and I often go to see her at her job. I saw her two sequencers with Morin a long time after they were shot (because we were not allowed to see the rushes) and absolutely nothing surprised me. Without pretending to have been a determining factor in Marilou's life, I do think I helped her a bit.

Next comes Angélo. My friendship with Angélo was born in front of the camera: it is nonetheless real and sincere. And just as Angélo currently has a photo enlargement of the two of us next to his phone at home, I have one too, covering a full page of my photo album. You have to see Angélo to really recognize that he is in real life just what he was trying to be in the film. Angélo truly did not like the situation he was put in at Renault, and he'll say so to anyone who cares to listen. But besides that he is a good guy, extremely sensitive. It's very easy to communicate with him, and he is very sensitive to the friendship felt toward him; it bursts out on the screen, I think.

Marceline: She aroused different sentiments in me. Emotion when I learned for the first time that she was a deportee. And then she impressed me so much by the way she climbed that moral slope. I would have been marked by that for the rest of my life. And then, finally, pity, because it must be said that all that self-assurance, that trust Marceline had in the future, was all conditioned by her happiness with Jean-Pierre; a happiness which was falling apart in spite of all the directors' efforts to permit these two young people to get back together. But the drama of Marceline and Jean-Pierre was beyond me, and, as I never had the chance to communicate with either of them, I never really felt close to them like I did with Marilou and Angélo.

(8) This film changed nothing in my way of life, because I am, if you will, as much a "spectator" in this film as anyone else.

(9) I in no way regret this experience, and I would start it all over if I had it to do again. I am pleased with it because it allowed me to discover two friends who are still friends, and God only knows that you can't buy real friends at the flea market.

(11) I will not really be happy until the moment when I will have consolidated all these little transitory satisfactions which I have at the present moment.

Simone Cabillon

(1) A very happy sensation. The daily routine was broken. No doubt at the beginning the camera was a bit intimidating, but mostly because of the heat of the lights. In the end I got used to it. On top of that, I had total confidence in Edgar Morin, who was interviewing me. I didn't have the impression of being misguided by the game leader, because at no time did I have the feeling of being asked indiscreet questions.

(2) For me attaining the truth is not all that easy. It would have been necessary to dig around in the past. No doubt—my husband being a former deportee—it would have been interesting to learn the repercussions of deportation on the life of a couple, and in particular on the life of a young woman who was not prepared to confront existence. To dig into the past, it was not just recollecting the housing shortage—the first difficulty of all young people in our day—but remembering those long years in which Jacques, out of work, was on the edge of madness.

(3) The image of me which this film gives strikes me as superficial. However, curiously enough, this film helped me to know myself. My excessive nervousness, almost unbecoming, was laid bare, along with a certain grin which accompanies a pretty disagreeable voice. To hear, on the subject of my voice, I was obliged to raise it to the maximum, upon the request of the soundman, which was no doubt some disadvantage for me.

(4) The other omissions filmed in our house were uninteresting because they did not reflect our way of life.

(5) When I defended Marilou, I had only seen one sequence of the film. It is certain that my judgment would have been more colored had I seen the entire film.
(6) My two quite different attitudes, at the office and at home: at the office, where I am really myself, relaxed, gay, very much at ease in my work; at the house, curiously different, feeling almost guilty for having lived a life with no great history until the moment of my marriage, almost guilty for not having a tragic past, in the face of my husband and the majority of his friends, who are almost all former deportees or resisters. 

(7) I did not know any of the participants in the film. However, the image it gives of them seems very real to me. Marceline, in particular, even though she claims that she is acting in the scene where she walks alone in Paris. It doesn't matter whether she is acting at that precise moment; we are sure that she has repeated those words to herself so many times that the images she evokes are a part of herself.

(8) The film changed nothing in my way of living and thinking.

(9) I have no regret. I was happy at the time of the filming because the ambiance was so friendly.

(10) I wonder if each viewer felt the same feeling I did when I saw the film the other evening at the "Agriculteurs." None of the characters in the film (except probably the artist-painter couple) found an equilibrium during this period, which was troubled in every way (memories of the last war, the war in Algeria, the events in the Congo). Each person feels more or less responsible. Racism is profoundly foreign to all of the participants of the film who were questioned about it, and that is very comforting. I do regret not having participated in the Saint Tropez rendezvous, specifically in the dialogue around the table.

In other respects (again, not counting the artist-painter couple and, I must say, me) no one likes his work, each one does it like forced labor. All of them claim to submit to it completely . . . since they've got to live.

(11) I can't add anything to answer this question.

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Angélo

First of all, to give an account of the film and of my behavior, I need to recapitulate the basics.

I was a worker at Renault, as a machinist, spending lots of time on the problems of the worker and of management exploitation. One day a workmate, Jacques, who had a number of outside contacts, particularly in the literary world, came to see me saying he was in touch with some people who would like to make a film about the life and the world of workers, where we would be able to express our way of thinking.

We had had this idea much earlier, but had never been able to realize it, for the sole reason that we did not have the necessary money for such an enterprise.

So we made an appointment for one weekday. When I was to meet Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch. We went to the home of Marceline, an actress in Chronique, and there I was surprised: cameras and spotlights were trained on us. Then we sat down at a table that was covered with things which would have cost us a month's salary to provide.

Then some guys waved some gadgets around our faces and in back of our heads, I think these gadgets were for checking the intensity of the lighting. I felt like I had become another man, a sort of "Robespierre of the Machines," the rare beast that is shown to the public. I don't mean that I was forced, but it seemed like another world; it was something quite new to me.

The first question we were asked: If you had a film to make, what subject would you choose?

One of us replied: Me, I'd like to do a film on the lives of workers, and, in particular, to denounced the methods of management and the so-called defenders of the proletariat: the unions.
Then we discussed problems of the shop. We were not really in form after our day's work, and we were very impressed by this cinematographic domain, which we know nothing about. Then we said good night, and I was convinced that one day the public would be shown what work in the twentieth century is like.

A few days later, Marceline came to my house with a tape recorder, to interview me on my "private life. "Do you love your fiancée?" "Do you sleep with her?" "Have you ever cheated on her?" These are the beginnings of the mirror-film. What was the connection with the worker problem? These questions left me perplexed.

Then there was the problem of vacation. Theoretically they were supposed to come film a day in my life, the life of a worker on vacation. And yet only a segment on Saint Tropez was filmed. Saint Tropez, a snobbish city par excellence, too pretentious for a worker. Once again, what was the connection with the basis of the film?

After vacation, Morin wrote to me to say that they were back in Paris, working on the film. First of all, there was the Renault period, filmed at the company, then to my house, and the scene in my home. This sequence, I think, shows a bit of the worker's life. Then there was the contact with the students, where I met the greater part of the actors in the film.

For me personally, the scene with Landry and me on the Renault problem was very dissatisfying, in the sense that there was a bad reaction among the workers at Renault. What I meant to say was not really that the guys are poor slobs, but that this sort of evolution forces them to the point where they want to possess that excess of material things. For example, it is known that before the war about 40 percent of the people had their own cars. Whereas in the modern world, 80 percent of the people have a car, of which 40 percent is the real bourgeoisie and 40 percent is the proletariat. In the 40 percent of the proletariat there are 20 percent who are really able to have their car and the other 20 percent are obliged to make concessions.

In addition, I would add that Renault is a special factory, it's a factory of guarantees, a so-called serious factory. You know that a Renault worker can buy things outside, with all those guarantees. All he has to do is show his company card for all credit doors to be opened to him. And then we remember the sixty-day layoff, which was in fact nothing more than a filtration of the proletariat bourgeoisie. That's what I meant to say on television about the worker problem.

If someone were to ask me today, "If you could make a film, what subject would you choose?", I would take the subject proposed by a friend, with the difference that I would try to see to it that we were the ones who took charge of the operation, and not the sociologists. I would try to make a film for the workers and not for the intellectuals.

I think it would take too long to explain how I would go about it, but I could always give concrete guidelines. For example, put tape recorders around among the shop mates, record the most important problems, like strikes, discussions between delegates and workers, and the management's rebuffs.

This film changed nothing in my way of looking at things. I am not any happier than I was before. I think I never will be, because evolution creates division.
Marceline

I lived the period of shooting Chronique d'un été as though it was both an adventure and a slightly crazy experience, but without ever forgetting that it was also a cinematographic experiment. I thus gave myself over to this experiment which interested me for its slightly mad side, without knowing in the beginning where all this might lead and where I myself might end up. Being part of the technical crew from the start, I must say that a wonderful climate of camaraderie and friendship sprang up very quickly.

Not a fictional film, Chronique d'un été is called ‘cinéma vérité.’ Yet nonetheless, you have to start with the principle that it is first and foremost a cinematographic work.

There is no question here of raising the quarrel over ‘cinéma vérité,’ even though this was the source of much confusion and interminable polemic, nor of judging the value or the ideology of the film by posing the problem of possible methods of approach, of interviewing, etc. Given that I participated in this film, it would never occur to me to judge it in this fashion.

What is unquestionable, whether or not it succeeded, is the new tone; it’s the fact that this film opens up directions for research which cannot be neglected in the domain of filmed investigations, for example: Mario Ruspoli’s Les inconnus de la terre, prizewinner at the last Tours festival, or even another possible method for actors to try (of the Godard type, for example).

In any case, in a certain way this film will draw a following; it’s an interesting experiment, even if you don’t think the authors have gotten the essence out of the twenty two hours which were filmed.

I am thinking of one scene in particular, of Jean-Pierre and me, which we filmed in Saint Tropez (it is going to be reedited into the distribution version) with all the desired distance (I admit to having had Antonian reminiscences while we were filming). I must say that the choice of passages from this sequence, which lasts almost half an hour, is outside the context of the filming. Jean-Pierre appears as a hard, cynical person and I seem like the “poor little victim,” whereas the whole sequence is quite different, where I am far from being a saint.

Overall, the present editing choice does not seem the best to me. They’ll say they wanted to even out the sad, happy, nice, tragic parts. In any case, what’s sure is that they did not always use the best things.

Coming back to me more specifically, I feel that I was freer than the other actors, and, as far as I’m concerned, Edgar Morin has very little to do with it. After being intimidated the first time I was filmed, I controlled myself, completely dominating my personality, dramatizing with words, with my face, my tone, with gestures. Being particularly aware that the camera was there, that the technicians, the lights were there . . . , etc., there was a certain directing of me by me, since there was no other direction of the actors. I thought that was the only way to act other than discourse, because the cinema is not a lecture, and I was doing a film.

During the filming of the scene on deportation, I acted without being involved, having gotten control of the character. There too I had cinematographic fantasies, certain lines from Hiroshima mon amour came to me and I pushed them away. And if the technicians cried upon listening to the sound track, I didn’t, and I recall asking Edgar several times, “Is this okay? Shall I go on like this?”

Is this quackery, playacting on my part, lies, because I was acting? Do I say this after the fact because I want to become, as we suggested, an actress? Is it also a reaction of self-defense?

I put myself in the situation, I dramatized myself, I chose a character which I then interpreted within the limits of the film, a character who is both an aspect of the reality of Marceline and also a dramatized character created by Marceline. So, too, the couple Jean-Pierre/Marceline is an aspect of the reality of the couple Jean-Pierre/Marceline, a mixture of reality. Let’s also say it’s a character among all the faces of characters which each one of us carries within.

Is this falsification? In the name of cinéma vérité, perhaps, but isn’t cinéma vérité in its simplistic interpretation a myth?

My truth is not in this film even if the memories of deportation I evoked are real. In fact this is where all the ambiguity of cinéma vérité lies. Even if I thought about this scene long before filming it, and it was just a matter of finding the “tone” for me, my truth is there in this sequence, because what I say is what I really lived.

The problem of the truth of beings is much more complex, ambiguous, diffuse, uncapable.

The same thing holds for Jean-Pierre, whose character has nothing to do with what he really is, nor even with his real preoccupations. He is interpreting a character, it’s something else, it’s not him.

The viewer may believe, after seeing the film, that we have separated, which is false, and I must add that neither the film, nor what we said to each other in the film has entered our private life at any level. We both have preoccupations which were not touched upon in this film, and which we don’t need to touch upon.

There is not especially, to answer the questionnaire directly, any truth about me lingering around somewhere which I would have liked to express in the film. The film is what it is. In some other context it is possible that I would have played some other character of Marceline. In fact, Edgar Morin said about me in an interview, “that I first chose a light and free-thinking character for myself, and then later changed the register.” That is entirely correct.
I don’t really feel involved or wrapped up in this film, so that at the level of truth I didn’t really learn anything about myself. I feel very distant from the character in the film, and even though that all may seem true, it is nonetheless not my reality. However, I don’t think that this is important. The viewers may feel involved with one or another of the characters or find symbols, myths, and other things. At this level it’s another problem. For the viewer, whether or not I am Marceline is not important, what’s important is that Marcelino or some other character provides something which touches him, which involves him. What is true is that through this film I met people who interested me and also perhaps found a career. It may also have been useful to me in that it may have helped to change my professional orientation.

Can one be happy in a country where police terror, torture, racism, and arbitrariness reign? I am all too familiar with racism, having suffered it myself, and I know that there is no basic difference in the way that Algerians are treated in France compared with my Jewish situation during the war, except maybe a difference in degree which lies in the absence of crematoria, that’s all. At that time the French people, the German people remained silent, not interfering except for a handful of people. Today as well, France remains silent except for a handful of people.

Jean-Pierre at Saint Tropez
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<td>1. Office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Return from News Agents</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Total (Sum of F. F1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in A)</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>1,960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Christopher Wessel, Business Manager.