

Introduction: Editor's Note

Steven Feld

Twenty-five years after its debut, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's "Chronicle of a Summer" remains a seminal work of documentary and ethnographic cinema. The book of and about the film, translated here for the first time, has been far less known, even though its essays, transcripts, and interviews are essential components of the self-reflexive authorship, cinéma-vérité, and critical style that continue to bring artistic and intellectual acclaim to the film and to its makers.

After fifteen years of ethnography and filmmaking in West Africa, Rouch found that the experience of filming Parisians for "Chronicle" stimulated a synthesis of his approach to realism, narrative, and the drama of everyday life. For Morin, the film grew out of his own sociological inquiries about mass culture and alienation, but the experience prompted him to turn a sociological eye on the study of film itself. His book on the star system (Morin 1960) and, more directly, his theoretical book on the nature of cinema (Morin 1965) develop many of the insights suggested in his essay in this volume. Similarly, Rouch's later theoretical essays (1974, 1978) also develop key questions raised first by his essay here.

While it is generally acknowledged that "Chronicle of a Summer" was an innovative film that inspired many documentary, ethnographic, experimental, and new wave films to follow, the publication of the "Chronicle" book should make it clear that this too is a historically innovative text. Far more than the transcript of an unscripted film, the essays, interviews, and restoration of cut dialogue are an exercise in discussing the problems of intersubjectivity, realism, and deception in documentary cinema. At a time when many filmmakers buried these issues in celluloid or claimed they were outside the film itself and therefore outside the proper critical discourse on film, Rouch and Morin show that it is possible to be both filmically

reflexive and intellectually critical of that process. In effect, the achievement of their essays and interviews here is to point to the very ways a film's meaning continually changes and develops through the interaction of its makers, its participants, and its viewers (including the makers and participants). For these reasons, it is particularly appropriate to present this monograph here, in a journal devoted to problems of visual communications.

The *Chronique d'un été* book was published in 1962 by Interspectacles, as number one in the series *Domaine Cinéma*. The French original consists of Edgar Morin's essay "Chronique d'un film," with additional footnotes by Jean Rouch; Jean Rouch's essay "Le cinéma de l'avenir?"; the transcribed text of the film, including additional parts of several sequences cut from the final version; transcripts of two other long scenes cut from the film (The Workers: dialogue among Jacques, the film electrician Moineau, and Morin; and another among Morin, Angélo, Jean, Jacques, and Rouch; other discussion fragments between Rouch and various people concerning Algeria); a set of interviews with principal participants; about thirty short reviews of the film, all written at the time of its appearance in 1961; and a short bibliography. The present translation excludes the transcripts of the Workers and Algeria scenes and also the reviews and bibliography.

The original publication also contained twenty-seven photographs; these were a mixture of frame enlargements from the film, frame enlargements from scenes not included in the final version, and location shots of participants and crew. A different, enlarged, selection of photographs from the film and its making appears here.

In 1974 Sol Worth and I planned an issue of *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* devoted to "Chronicle"; it was to appear as the last in a series of my translations of Rouch's ethnographic film papers (Rouch 1974, 1975, 1978). The Morin and Rouch essays and part of the film transcript were translated by me the following year, and then, for a variety of reasons, the project was put on hold. Jay Ruby revived the publication idea in 1982, and Anny Ewing then drafted a fresh translation of the essays and film text. I have merged and revised all the translations; misprints or ambiguities in the printed French text have been corrected by a new word-for-word check with the actual film.

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The translations of the essays by Morin and Rouch have been modified to integrate the authors' footnotes into the text. I have also amplified the notes on frame composition, screen direction, and continuity that are interspersed through the transcript of the film; these additions and modifications are based on the version of the film currently in 16mm distribution in the U.S. These notes are not shot-by-shot descriptions but more general continuity indications. Editorial footnotes are only provided to clarify obscure references in the text or to provide the original French idioms or expressions sometimes awkwardly translated by phrases in quotation.

We wish to thank Anatole Dauman, producer of *Chronique d'un été*, for permission to print the text of the film; Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch for permission to print their essays and for providing photographs from their collections; and Marie-France Laval and Marie Hélène Houdaille for locating and reproducing photographs. For help clarifying various names, dates, places, and references, I am particularly grateful to Marielle Delorme and Jean Rouch.

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