

## *On the Candid-Eye Movement*

Bruce Elder

It is a commonplace of the history of documentary film that at the end of the fifties there developed in the United States, France and Canada (including Quebec) a school of cinema known as *cinéma-vérité*. The fact that these allied movements did develop in so many different countries at one particular historical moment no doubt indicates a substantial change in the geological rockbed of cinema—a change which even today continues to affect the course of development of the cinema, turning it towards a greater realism. That all these movements, moreover, attempted to incorporate aspects of the real into the work of art and so share with certain other movements in art ("musique concrète", "objet-trouvé", "choïsisme", etc.) certain common aspirations clearly must be accounted for, and the willful obscuring or neglect of these similarities could only be accomplished at the expense of understanding why the cinema took this particular course at this particular historical moment.

All of these movements shared certain features in their reaction against the aesthetic of the preceding cinema. The aesthetics which subtended the silent cinema were, for the most part, material-formalist in character; the major innovations of the heroic period of the silent cinema—the fracture of space and time, the use of rigorously formal compositions involving closed forms, the structuration of montage devices on a linguistic model, and the use of an increasingly formal narrative with the concomitant increasing alienation of the cinematic diegeses from the reality—can all be considered in these terms. All of this meant, of course, that the aesthetic value of these works depended upon the rupture between the cinematic object and reality.

During the fifties, allied with those movements in modern art mentioned above, there developed several scattered movements in cinema, the aesthetic of which rested not upon the formal categories opened up by the transcendence of reality, but rather upon the tensions which could be developed in the dialectic between artifice and nature and, more particularly, between fiction and reality.<sup>1</sup> The strategies which characterize the works of these schools—the photographic respect for the integrity of space and time in the use of the long take, the use of more open and less formal compositional devices, the use of non-actors and real locations—were all calculated to integrate the real into the architectonic defined by the dramatic form.<sup>2</sup>

Though this much can readily be admitted, the degree of attention given the similarities among the movements taking place in different countries has resulted in some extremely misleading notions. It is, of

course, a commonplace to distinguish between American- and French-style *cinéma-vérité*, usually on the basis of the rejection of interviews in the former (but not in the latter), and the supposedly lesser degree of intervention on the part of the filmmaker in the pro-filmic event, though it seems to me the full measure of the difference between these two schools has not been fully appreciated. As for the Canadian brand of *cinéma-vérité*, it seems to be considered of secondary consequence and derivative of either the American or the French version. According to the usual accounts, the fact that Canada developed the style so close in time to the American and French developments reflects the degree of intimacy between Canadian cinematic culture and that of the United States and France.

The trouble with these accounts is not only that they are historically inaccurate, inasmuch as the developments in Canada actually anticipate those in the United States upon which they supposedly draw,<sup>3</sup> but also that the styles of *cinéma-vérité* developed in these countries differ radically from each other.

The work of Drew Associates, like that of the other allied schools to which we have alluded, usually exploited the tensions inherent in the dramatic form.<sup>4</sup> It is from this use of the dramatic form, in fact, that many of the characteristics which distinguish American *cinéma-vérité* from Canadian Candid-Eye cinema derive.

It has often been commented upon that the Drew films were journalistic in character inasmuch as they depended for their interest on the supposed noteworthiness of the event documented. In fact, the characteristics of the event necessary to sustain the structure on which the vast majority of the Drew films are built can be more precisely specified than this. As Mamber has pointed out,<sup>5</sup> typically these films are based on a contest-type situation. The fact that such a situation is constituted by a struggle between opposing forces—a struggle which by its very nature is decisive inasmuch as it is assured that one of the forces will achieve victory at the expense of another—guarantees that by conducting a simple track on the event, following contours of its external physical development and recording its key incidents, one will arrive at a work structured on the crisis-climax-resolution pattern which constitutes the basis of the dramatic form. The selection of these contest-type situations is therefore largely pragmatic; one can be sure that following such a situation over a specific period of time and recording only its external appearance will result in a workable structure which possesses a measure of dramatic intrigue.<sup>6</sup>

Further evidence of the dramatic quality of American-type *cinéma-vérité* can be found in the nature of its concern with character. The centrality of this concern is seen in the fact that the typical problematic underlying the films can be stated in the form "Will A (the protagonist) succeed in some real contest-type situation?" (e.g., will Hubert Humphrey win the Wisconsin primary? Will Eddie Sacks win in

the Indianapolis 500? Will Jane Fonda's initial Broadway appearance be successful? Will Susan Starr win her piano competition?). Typically the introductions to the works in this corpus serve to elicit audience sympathy for the protagonist by showing him engaged in a contest-type situation in which he is strongly motivated to win, since something of very appreciable consequence is shown to be at stake. Thus the conflict situation is calculated to put a stress on the character. The resolution of the film, typically the aftermath of a thwarting of the protagonist's will (consider *PRIMARY*, *EDDIE SACKS*, *SUSAN STARR*, *JANE FONDA*, in all of which the protagonist fails to achieve his goal), portrays the stripping away of his illusions (defined by his ambitious goals) and the emergence of his real character.<sup>7</sup>

Although the sorts of tensions which characterize the dramatic form are imported into the American-type *cinéma-vérité* film, they are, nonetheless, profoundly altered in character; for whereas in an orthodox dramatic work, the actions of the characters are determined by a body of conceptual material which demands that in order for a certain idea to be expressed a certain piece of behaviour must occur, in a *cinéma-vérité* film, the parallel dialectic is transformed into one existing between a person's appearance and his real nature, between his mask and his reality. Thus, in these works, the principle of structuration has shifted from a body of conceptual material to reality.<sup>8</sup>

In the traditional fictional cinema, the factors affecting the articulation of the diegesis are many. If a verisimilitude of reality is desired, as it usually is in conventional cinema, its requirements will be one controlling determinant of the work; competing with this, however, will be other determining factors—those resulting from the nature of the body of conceptual material which constitutes the principle determinant of the structuration of the work and particularly the internal logic of this body of material; those resulting from the aesthetic demands of developing tension, etc. All these factors act to deflect the diegesis away from perfect verisimilitude.

In *cinéma-vérité* films, however, this kind of competition among determining principles is eliminated as the structure of the real event itself substitutes for the logic of the body of conceptual material as the principle of structuration of the work, at the same time guaranteeing the existence of dramatic tensions.

The issue here, then, is not simply one of creating an accurate facsimile of the real. There is a deeper ontological issue involved. The diegesis of the traditional cinema is clearly an artifice, a construct; it is only for this reason that strictly aesthetic categories can be applied when considering its articulation. The representation of the world presented in a *cinéma-vérité* film is not a parallel construct to the real world articulated in accordance with certain aesthetic demands; it is a trace of the real world informed by the same structural principles as the real itself.

This of course profoundly affects the nature of the filmmaker's enterprise. His task is no longer creation but rather revelation. The process of making such a work is not the forging of an imaginative construct through an act of will but rather one of allowing the forms of nature to manifest themselves through an act of attentive submission on the part of the filmmaker; the goal of art is no longer seen as that of producing beauty but rather truth—or perhaps more precisely, truth in beauty.

Having elucidated the formal structures of American-type *cinéma-vérité* films, we are now in a position to grasp the full measure of the difference between the English-Canadian and American versions of "direct cinema", for the history of the Candid-Eye movement can in part be written as a history of the rejection of the dramatic forms. One of the most obvious examples of this rejection occurs in *THE BACK-BREAKING LEAF*. The film begins by establishing a contrast between the well-to-do townspeople who own the prosperous tobacco fields and the itinerant labourers who work the fields in late summer. For a few minutes at the beginning of the film it appears that this contrast will develop dramatically into a conflict between the two groups. So strong is this suggestion that in one remarkable scene we are shown the townspeople practicing archery at their recreation centre. The camera holds for a long time on a tautly drawn bow whose very tension seems to emblemize the tensions between the two groups, while the activity of archery itself is suggestive of the hostilities between them.

The dramatic conflict which this seems to foreshadow indeed appears to be developing as we are shown the labourers in an employment office rallying against exploitative labour practices and unfair wages. This, we sense, is a decisive moment; a show-down between labour and employer is arising which will develop into a crisis-type situation.

Our expectations are thwarted, however, as a remarkable thing occurs: the conflict situation is abruptly abandoned as the film proceeds to document the manner in which tobacco is picked and dried. Indeed, the film concludes as a text on the hazardousness of the enterprise of tobacco-growing.<sup>9</sup>

The contrast between Koenig and Kroitor's *LONELY BOY* and Leacock and Pennebaker's *JANE*, both portraits done in 1962 of young performers at early stages in their careers, is equally illustrative of the point we are considering. Whereas the American film is based on the crisis-type situation of the opening appearance of an actress in her first major role and develops fully the dramatic potential inherent in such a situation, the Canadian film eschews any situations involving conflict, and so lacks any sense of drama whatsoever. It restricts itself to documenting the ordinary day-to-day activities of the young pop star and the factors behind his success.<sup>10</sup>

The reasons for the rigorous stance against the use of dramatic form on the part of the Candid-Eye filmmakers are several. Some of them are related to "end-of-ideology" ideology which was current when this style

was forged; others have to do with those colonial attitudes so often found expressed in Canadian arts. But the key reason lies in the particular character of the journalism which provided the basis for the Canadian version of "direct cinema". Both the American and the Canadian versions of "direct cinema" were, as we have seen, essentially journalistic in character; the character of the journalism to which each group was committed, however, differed radically. The American-style of *cinéma-vérité* was, of course, developed under the auspices of Time-Life and the films themselves retained certain features of the Luce-type of journalism which those magazines practiced. Mamber, in his book *Cinéma-Vérité in America*, has demonstrated conclusively the important influence exerted by Robert Drew in the development of *cinéma-vérité* in the United States, documenting the important role played by Drew's concept of the "key picture"—an image of the moment in which the full drama of a situation emerges—in the formation of the American-type of *cinéma-vérité*. The photojournalism to which the Candid-Eye filmmakers held allegiance, on the other hand, reflects the influence of Henri Cartier-Bresson.<sup>11</sup>

Cartier-Bresson's approach breaks sharply with the traditions of photojournalism, including the Luce type, which prevailed at the time he began working as a photographer. Whereas earlier photojournalists were concerned with the extraordinary event (consider, for example, the subjects of Drew's "key pictures": catastrophes, the photo finish, etc.), Henri Cartier-Bresson captured in his photographs the ordinary and the unexceptional.<sup>12</sup>

One aspect of Cartier-Bresson's work, then, and an aspect which the Candid-Eye doubtless found important, is that it represents a forward step of the demotic tradition in photography. Photography was first called into being when acceleration in the rate of change prompted the recognition of the radical limitations of human vision; it enabled man to capture and freeze a moment within this realm of flux, preserving it for scrutiny in a way that eyesight never could.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, photography was forged to capture the everyday, the ordinary, that which was subject to change. Accordingly, there developed in the early days of photography a genre dealing with the street, for the locus of the acceleration in the rate of change was the city, and the central symbol of the city is the street. Soon, however, an "artistic" approach to photography was developed. In the attempt to elevate photography to the realm of art, a pictorialist style was developed which was based upon strategies in the use of texture, atmosphere, composition and framing which attempted to purge the image of its literalness and worldliness and to raise the subject matter of the photograph to the realm of the transcendental.

By the thirties, a sharp challenge to the pictorialist ambitions of art photography was being posed in the work of Walker Evans, Alfred

Steiglitz and Paul Strand. These photographers rejected the use of painterly devices and those strategies designed to elevate the subject matter of the photograph to the transcendental, and took a more literal approach to the photographic image.<sup>14</sup>

This conflict between the pictorialist and literalist approaches to photography rehearsed the conflict between premodernist and modernist concerns<sup>15</sup> in the arts inasmuch as it exemplified a struggle for a modern way of seeing which included the factual, the literal, as a part<sup>16</sup>—a struggle for the right of the real, the everyday, the fleeting and the momentary to occupy a legitimate position in a work of art.

Initially, however, this right was not asserted without reservation, for in the work of these photographers the real found its place only by virtue of a kind of formal appropriation in which the real was transformed to conform to certain formal aesthetic canons. The dialectic between real object and its formal transformation constitutes the major source of tension in an overwhelmingly large proportion of the works of this school.

Once the right of the real to take its place in an art object had been established, on those terms, the struggle became one to allow the real to enter the art-work more on its own terms. The first stage in this struggle was conducted primarily in the field of photojournalism. Certain photojournalists began to develop a style of documentation which precluded the necessity of the real to conform to certain formal canons, thus gaining a victory in the overthrow of those conventions exemplified in the work of Steiglitz, Strand and Evans. Their victory, however, was again qualified in that they took as their subject matter scenes from the underbelly of society. In this way they transformed the document into an image of the exotic, the strange, at times even the bizarre.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, although adherence to formal conventions was markedly reduced in the work of these photojournalists, new conventions arose which derived from the choice of the exotic as subject matter.<sup>18</sup> Full victory in the struggle for the right of the real to enter the work of art had still not been gained for it was only by conformity to certain criteria of the dramatic that the real was allowed to occupy that place.

In the photojournalism of Cartier-Bresson these tendencies towards dramatization were to a considerable degree repudiated. Cartier-Bresson's work does not treat that special class of events (e.g., the catastrophic, the photo-finish), which lent a dramatic quality to the photojournalism which preceded him. His photographs are instead drawn from the everyday. This turn away from the dramatic towards the ordinary is, however, accompanied by a renewed formal interest, for "the decisive moment" approach to photography practiced by Cartier-Bresson consists in selecting from the everyday occurrence precisely that moment in which the pictorial elements in the scene interrelate to form a rigorously composed design.<sup>19</sup> Thus, his works depend upon the tension arising from the

dialectical relationship existing between the ordinariness of the occurrences selected for representation and the precision of the formal framework in which these occurrences are represented.

In an important sense, therefore, the "decisive moment" approach in photography still rested on the sense of privilege attaching to certain selected fragments of reality by virtue of their conformity to certain formal canons. It is important to note, however, that this conformity obtains in the photographs of Cartier-Bresson in a somewhat different manner than it did in photographs of Steiglitz, Strand, Evans and Weston. In the work of this group the conformity was photographically imposed—it was obtained by using such techniques as the manipulation of depth of focus, of framing, of the control of tones in printing. Cartier-Bresson refuses to impose such a formal framework on the event;<sup>20</sup> rather he discovers it in the event as it runs its natural course.<sup>21</sup>

The Candid-Eye filmmakers in Unit B of the National Film Board followed Cartier-Bresson's lead in rejecting as object matter those special events so valued by the "direct cinema" filmmakers of the American school, and in repudiating the use of dramatic frameworks within which to represent these events. They chose, for the most part, everyday events—tobacco harvesting, the daily round of police activity, days before Christmas, the very ordinary side of the making of a popular music star—and, as did Cartier-Bresson, allowed the formal structure of the work to evolve organically out of the events themselves. Moreover, like Cartier-Bresson, the Candid-Eye filmmakers leaned towards formal rigour rather than dramatic importance in the selection of their images. It is for this reason, I believe, that the Candid-Eye films always have a more polished surface than those of their American counterparts. This refusal to impose forms in the matter being represented and the concomitant desire to allow the forms to evolve organically stem from a particular conception of the photographic image—one which holds that the particular virtue of the photographic essay lies in the character of presenting a detached and objective model of representation.<sup>22</sup>

In keeping with this conception of the virtues of the photographic process, the structures which the Candid-Eye group developed were observational in character; i.e., they are imitative of the acts of an observer witnessing the unfolding of a spectacle. This general character, however, was further specified by two additional conditions: first, in order to remain within the realm of the non-dramatic, the events that were chosen as object matter had to be limited to everyday events; second, in order to remain fully consistent with that quality of photography just described, the structures had to imply a radically detached, non-involved spectator who is neither physically engaged in effecting the course of action of the pro-filmic event nor intellectually active in imposing a preconceived grid on the events. Generally, the most effective sort of structure which evolved to meet these conditions was one whose progression is homologous with the process by which an outsider develops familiarity with an event, character or situation.<sup>23</sup>

The ideological implications of this sort of structure are revealing. The extreme sense of detachment which this suggests and which in the Candid-Eye films often passes over into a kind of self-abandonment in the face of reality implies a form of consciousness which is alienated from the world and whose sole activity is limited to passive observation—a consciousness then which plays no role in the structuring either of reality or of our perception of it. The continual rehearsal of the process of becoming familiar with the everyday things around one suggests the extreme alienation of this consciousness as it tries to come to terms with a world beyond itself. Behind this lies a view of reality which, because it is thought to be beyond the individual's control, appears as mystified and needing continually to be demystified. It is hardly surprising, for it is in keeping with the colonized outlook which all of this embodies, that the structures employed in the Candid-Eye films should suggest that the attempt of the overcoming of this alienation occurs only at a the level of cognition.

In all of this, one is reminded of Frantz Fanon's analysis of the stages of development of colonial art.<sup>24</sup> According to Fanon, the development of national art occurs in three stages: the phase of assimilation of the colonizer's art; a phase of the affirmation of past, native culture but articulated from an external point of view—the view of the colonizer; and finally a fighting phase in which the artist becomes an awakener of the people. The consistently national/object matter of the Candid-Eye films situate them within the second phase of Fanon's historical schema.

The benchmarks of this second phase, described by Fanon, precisely characterize the Candid-Eye work. Fanon states that this phase is characterised by an ironic sort of humour. This sense of irony arises from the dialectic inherent in the position of the artist in this period of development: on the one hand he is committed to a national culture, while on the other he views the national culture from a detached, external and hence often amused point of view. The Candid-Eye films frequently exemplify this kind of detached, ironic humour. *LONELY BOY* again is a case in point; the object matter is Canadian but the vantage point taken is a detached one from which the singer is ironically viewed as a kind of amusing, manufactured commodity whose appeal is that of an adolescent curiosity-piece. How far this is from the point of view taken by Leacock and Pennebaker on Jane Fonda's attempt to achieve stardom, which is seen as the stuff of real human drama.

Another contrast between the two films, explainable on Fanon's model, concerns the difference in the degree of rigour of the structures of the two works. The American work employs a very tight structure, as all the incidents of the film relate directly to that one single contest-type situation which provides the central focal point for the entire work. The Canadian film, by comparison, is extremely diffuse and episodic, presenting us with a number of incidents which purport to give us an in-depth portrayal of the man behind the star and of those forces which operate in shaping his stardom.

The effect of this lack of a central focussing event is that the incidents in the film tend to break up into a kind of shower of discrete particulars. Fanon's model would explain this in terms of the artist's grasp of historical realities at this stage in the evolution of national culture. The artist's detachment prevents him from understanding the inner workings of reality or the logic beneath the unfolding of events. As a result, he can see reality as a series of accidental occurrences, that is, only as a kind of assemblage of separate particulars. For this reason, that structure employed in the films of Drew Associates which depends upon a grasp of the homology between the dramatic form and the structure of conflicts which characterize the inner working of reality is not available to the colonized artist of this phase. His work is restricted to presenting merely the surfaces of reality. Thus, what was claimed to be the result of a meritorious, willful detachment shows itself, on deeper study, to be a meretricious, alienated lack of understanding. This sort of realism surely deserves the appellation it has sometimes been given—"naïve realism".

## *Rhythm 'n' Truths: Norman McLaren*

Derek Elley

It is difficult at any one point to separate the names of Norman McLaren and the National Film Board of Canada. Yet paradoxically neither has impinged on the other's international reputation: the NFB has certainly provided the working conditions for McLaren to experiment, but in its turn the board has produced a vast output of films which, except for those from certain East European schools, bear the most instantly recognizable stamp of any film centre in the world.

In retrospect it seems more than a happy coincidence of fate that Norman McLaren grew up in the area from which John Grierson had sprung sixteen years earlier. He was born in 1914 in Stirling, Scotland, and showed no special interest in cinema as an art form until well into his teens. "As a kid I went to the movies about once a week, but that was routine, just entertainment. Later I went five days a week, because my best pal at school was the son of the owner of the three cinemas in town. We got in free. But they didn't mean a thing, movies, until I was about twenty years old. It was thanks to the Scottish Film Society Movement that, as an art student [at the Glasgow School of Art from 1932 to 1936], I

- <sup>29</sup> Paul Rotha, Sinclair Road, and Richard Griffith, *Documentary Film* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 327.
- <sup>30</sup> McKay interview.
- <sup>31</sup> Roffman interview.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> Grierson, "The Documentary Idea, 1942".
- <sup>34</sup> Tom Daly, interview, August 1962.
- <sup>35</sup> Michael Spencer, interview, August 1962.
- <sup>36</sup> Raymond Spottiswoode, "Developments at the National Film Board of Canada, 1939-44" in *Journal of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers* XLIV (May 1945), pp. 391-400.
- <sup>37</sup> NFB, "The National Film Board of Canada".
- <sup>38</sup> Grierson in a letter to Basil Wright, October 1940.
- <sup>39</sup> Donald Fraser, interview, August 1962.
- <sup>40</sup> McKay interview.
- <sup>41</sup> Grierson to Wright.
- <sup>42</sup> Grierson, "The Eyes of Canada", mimeographed (January 1940).
- <sup>43</sup> Stuart Legg in a letter to Basil Wright, December 1940.
- <sup>44</sup> Margaret Grierson in a letter to Basil Wright, February 1941.
- <sup>45</sup> "News from Canada" in *Documentary News Letter* II (April 1941), p. 76.
- <sup>46</sup> McKay interview.
- <sup>47</sup> NFB, "The National Film Board of Canada".
- <sup>48</sup> Grierson, "A Film Policy for Canada" in *Canadian Affairs* I (June 15, 1944), pp. 3-15.
- <sup>49</sup> Rotha, Road, Griffith, *Documentary Film*, p. 331.
- <sup>50</sup> Grierson, "A Film Policy for Canada".

### Before the Guerillères: Women's Films at the NFB During World War II

- <sup>1</sup> Susan Trow and Olga Denisko, eds., *Four Days in May* (NFB, 1975).

### The Innocent Eye: An Aspect of the Work of the National Film Board of Canada

- <sup>1</sup> (1976) At the time of writing, I was scarcely aware of the role played within this unit by Terence Macartney-Filgate. In the early days of cinéma-vérité, his camera work quickly gained for him an international reputation; and judging from the films he made with Unit B—films such as *THE DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS* (1958), *BLOOD AND FIRE* (1958), and *THE BACK BREAKING LEAF* (1959)—Filgate was very much concerned with using the camera as a tool for social investigation. He expressed this concern again when he returned to the board to make *UP AGAINST THE SYSTEM* for George Stoney in 1969.

### On the Candid-Eye Movement

- <sup>1</sup> Frequently, melodramatic narratives were used in the works of these schools in order to sketch in outline the architectonic of the dramatic form. Thus, the outline of the formal structure of the narrative, to be completed by the

integration of the real, is presented almost schematically.

<sup>2</sup> On a theoretical level, this tendency was defended by André Bazin in his article, "Montage Interdit". This article presents an argument to the effect that integration of reality and the drama is an essential feature to truly cinematic works.

<sup>3</sup> The first fully developed "direct cinema" works in Canada date from 1958 (BLOOD AND FIRE, THE BACK-BREAKING LEAF)—anticipating the Drew/Leacock PRIMARY by almost two full years—and the roots of the style in Canada can be traced back at least to 1952.

<sup>4</sup> On this topic, see Mamber's incisive study of American-type cinéma-vérité, *Cinéma-Vérité in America*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Perhaps explaining this idea in another manner would help to clarify it. By basing the films on a contest-type situation, one is guaranteed that there will be a central problematic posed by the film which can be expressed in the form "Will A win over B" and that this question will be answered by following the external course of development of the event. This entails that the course of the unfolding of the physical event is homologous with the form for the drama and thus that a document of the unfolding of the event will possess at least a degree of dramatic intrigue.

<sup>7</sup> As an interesting aside to this point, one might note how in these films the conception of a man's real nature is ideologically bound. In every case, man is shown to have the ability to survive under stress, to carry on his struggle despite defeat. As Mamber points out, this is a very American conception of human nature. Mamber compares the depiction of the central protagonist in the Drew films to Hawks's conception of hero. (Though the idea of hero is opposite, I should think the best parallel would be found in the works of Hemingway.) Mamber fails to note, however, how often this depiction of the American is permeated with that strong tone of condescension, even contempt, which is so typical of the eastern American attitude toward the ideals of Middle America. Leacock is most guilty in this regard: HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY is thoroughly infected with an attitude of contempt only partially redeemed by his so obvious humane sympathy for Mrs. Fisher. Furthermore, Mamber fails to note how the ambitious, striving American-hero character is consistently depicted in these works as a mask, disguising the underlying essence. The importance of the crisis-type of situation is precisely that it provides the stress to crack open this mask and reveal the real nature of the human character.

<sup>8</sup> The fact that this conception of the character's real nature is ideologically determined does nothing to refute the claim that the work derives its structure from reality, for the character's revelation of himself at the moments after the crisis surely admits of something that is undeniably real. What is ideologically determined is the conception that what is revealed in the aftermath of the crisis situation is more basic to the human constitution than what is revealed in the character's choices of his goals. This conception of the unity of truth and beauty, of the affinity between natural and artistic forms (indicated by the use of natural activities to provide the structure by which aesthetic tensions are resolved) and of the organic character of a work of art indicates the allegiance of this kind of cinema (and more generally of the stream of modernism with which it is associated) to the aesthetics of Romanticism.

- <sup>9</sup> It should go without saying that the ideological implications of this shift in direction in the film are quite profound and disturbing.
- <sup>10</sup> The examples I have chosen are not isolated cases of the refusal to use dramatic forms for the documentation of situations which have an inherent dramatic potential; indeed, the entire history of the Candid-Eye movement is a succession of crisis-type situations refused, of conflicts not taken into account. Two further examples one could point to are *BLOOD AND FIRE* which could have been developed as a drama of the struggle to save souls, and *I WAS A 90-POUND WEAKLING* which could have been a dramatic presentation of individuals striving to overcome their physical limitations.
- <sup>11</sup> This influence has been attested to by the Candid-Eye filmmakers themselves, for example, Terence Macartney-Filgate in an interview with Sarah Jennings (see "An Interview with Terence Macartney-Filgate" in this book).
- <sup>12</sup> This approach places the work of Cartier-Bresson within the streams of modernism which eschewed the use of dramatic forms because they tended to privilege certain moments over others. The logical extension of this trend was to repudiate even Cartier-Bresson's "decisive moment" (which will be discussed shortly) and to capture the moments before or after it. This was the step taken by Robert Frank in his important ground-breaking book, *The Americans*.
- <sup>13</sup> The idea that photography developed when a series of technical innovations made it possible is simply historically false; all the technical components necessary for the development of photography were in existence at least two hundred years prior to its invention.
- <sup>14</sup> This chronological method of presentation of course oversimplifies and distorts the actual history, for there were at all times literalist as well as pictorialist tendencies co-existing; in fact, at times literalist and pictorialist features co-exist in the work of a single photographer. This chronology does, nonetheless, outline some essential tendencies in the history of photography. (A cogent presentation of the conflict between these two modes of photography is Walker Evan's article in *Hound and Horn* no. 37.)
- <sup>15</sup> Here I use the term "modernism" not to refer to those tendencies described by Clement Green as defining modernist painting, but to refer to that stream of art flowing from impression.
- <sup>16</sup> Hence the resemblance between the object matter of much of literalist photography (and of the affinities of photography discussed by Kracauer in his *Theory of Film*) and the object matter of much of impressionist painting.
- <sup>17</sup> Susan Sontag has described the way in which Surrealism lay close to the heart of the photographic enterprise itself, and showed how those photographs which eschew the decorative convention introduced by Surrealism into the other arts and cling more nearly to the reproductive process are the most likely to be surreal. An overwhelmingly powerful demonstration of this in films is, of course, Luis Bunuel's *LAS HURDES*. (See Susan Sontag, "Shooting America", *The New York Review of Books*, April 18, 1974.)
- <sup>18</sup> An alternate approach of the early photojournalist was to deal with the noteworthy, even the spectacular. But here again, the real was allowed to enter the work of art only by virtue of its dramatic qualities.
- <sup>19</sup> It was not until Robert Frank's publication of *The Americans* that this approach was rejected. Frank refused to select those climactic moments which constituted the object matter of Cartier-Bresson's photographs and instead selected

moments precisely on the basis of their ordinariness—of their being typical of the run of events.

- <sup>20</sup> So extreme is Cartier-Bresson's stance on this matter that he photographs only with a 50mm lens—a lense the angle of acceptance of which most nearly approximates the angle of acceptance of human vision, and he refuses to crop or otherwise manipulate the print in printing.
- <sup>21</sup> This principle underlying Cartier-Bresson's practice is allied very closely with that principle of non-interference in the pro-filmic event so dear to all practitioners of "direct cinema" in North America. No doubt this accounts in part for the affinity which the Candid-Eye filmmakers felt for his work.
- <sup>22</sup> This tendency in the practice of photography of this period also finds expression in the theories of photography which evolved contemporaneously. Aestheticians of the time often made claims for the virtues of photograph quality self-effacement. It is noteworthy that these claims for objectivity, for the detached, unmanipulative characteristics of photography, arose only in the mid-fifties.
- <sup>23</sup> This sort of structure was first used in cinema in the works of Robert Flaherty. It is noteworthy that Flaherty felt compelled to resolve such a structure with a dramatic finale, while the Candid-Eye filmmakers felt no such compulsion.
- <sup>24</sup> "On National Culture", *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

### What Challenge? What Change?

- <sup>1</sup> See "Memo to Michelle about Decentralizing the Means of Production",

#### Saint-Jérôme: The Experience of a Filmmaker As Social Animator

- <sup>1</sup> The Saint-Jérôme Chamber of Commerce, since that time, has asked that the film be restricted to specialized audiences, only to find the principal community organizations in Saint-Jérôme rising up in defence of the film.

## III. Feature Filmmaking

### The Years of Hope

- <sup>1</sup> This article is a reworking of *Movies & Mythologies*, prepared for CBC's "Ideas". A book based on the material was published in 1977. All quotations are courtesy of CBC sound archives.
- <sup>2</sup> See "The Innocent Eye", page 67.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

#### Men of Vision: Some Comments on the Work of Don Shebib

- <sup>1</sup> For instance, see the section on Don Shebib in *Inner Views: Ten Canadian Film-Makers*, by John Hofsess (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1975), pp. 67-79.
- <sup>2</sup> In *Marshall Delaney at the Movies*, by Robert Fulford (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1974).
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-71.
- <sup>4</sup> "The End of the Road", by John Hofsess, in *Weekend Magazine* (Toronto) 28 February, 1976, pp. 16 ff.
- <sup>5</sup> See "Introduction", pp. 372-376.