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The Other Chronicle of a Summer; or, Caribbean Layovers of Transnational Vérité

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Abstract: *The early Flaherty Seminars served as incubator for the emergent form of cinéma vérité, bringing together major practitioners of a new mode that promised immediacy, objectivity, and realism. One notable collaboration between two Flaherty alumni—Michel Brault and Jean Rouch—would result in the landmark* Chronicle of a Summer *(1961). Before joining Rouch in Paris in the summer of 1960, however, Brault filmed* Festival in Puerto Rico *(1961) on location as an unofficial collaboration between the Canadian National Film Board and its Puerto Rican counterpart, the Division of Community Education. While a fulsome examination of the island's colonial status—Free Associated Statehood—the film demonstrates a shared sensibility for vérité experimentation between the two stateless nations of Puerto Rico and Québec, each in varying stages of waging "quiet revolutions" against their respective imperial centers. Despite these political and aesthetic solidarities,* Festival in Puerto Rico *offers the newly ratified colonial status in Puerto Rico as a model for Québecois decolonization. Resting on this false cognate, this unlikely collaboration nevertheless inverts the presumed triangulation of cinematic new waves between North America, Europe, and Latin America and recenters the South in the proliferation of global vérité—not as its debtor, but as collaborator.*

> Until recently, there was little chance to keep up with all this activity [in documentary film], to see the work of Jean Rouch for the Musée d l'Homme, of the new young directors at the Canadian National Film Board, or of the young Puerto Rican group. But, increasingly, the Flaherty Seminar has been filling this gap. (Young and Zweiback 40)

In the 1950s, the Flaherty Film Seminar became the site where many of the early debates, proposals, and negotiations of cinéma vérité took place, bringing together the major proponents of a new mode of filmmaking in the North Atlantic that promised immediacy, objectivity, and realism. Two Flaherty alumni—Canadian filmmaker Michel Brault and French ethnographer Jean Rouch—would collaborate on the 1960 production of *Chronicle of a Summer* (*Chronique d'un été*, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, 1961), whose blend of mobile cinematography, synchronous sound, and artist–subject interaction resulted in what is widely regarded as cinéma vérité's first onscreen manifestation. Prior to the production of Rouch and Morin's film, however, Brault had already been invited to shoot a film in Puerto Rico by members of its Division of Community Education (DivEdCo), a government-sponsored film agency whose role in the early Flaherty Seminars—and, indeed, documentary filmmaking in the mid-century—remains understudied. In *Festival in Puerto Rico* (Roman Kroitor and Wolf Koenig, 1961), Brault rehearses many of the techniques he would apply to Rouch's film later that summer. Part ode to a Caribbean modernity and part show of interinstitutional collaboration between the Canadian National Film Board (NFB) and its Puerto Rican counterpart, the film is an examination of the island's political status, Free Associated Statehood. Filmed in the vérité mode, the unofficially coproduced film invites comparisons between both Québec's and Puerto Rico's muted social and economic revolutions. Despite its mistranslations of the archipelago's colonial condition, *Festival in Puerto Rico* remains

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useful in complicating bilateral understandings of the historical development of global vérité, as it inverts the presumed film-historical triangulations of cinematic new waves between North America, Europe, and Latin America and re-centres the South in the proliferation of global vérité—not as its debtor, but as collaborator.

The DivEdCo and the NFB's French Unit: Liberal Internationalism's Others

In the late 1950s, Canada's National Film Board—or the ONF (*Office National du Film du Canada*) in French—had moved well beyond founder John Grierson's institutional mission to show Canada to Canadians. Instead, the NFB had reimagined itself as an educational film producer, balancing both its commitment to Western liberal internationalism within the Cold War media context with the conditional nurturing of experimentalism within its individual production units (Druick, *Projecting* 16–17). The consolidative approach to nationalism of the Grierson and immediate postwar years had given way to a more capacious understanding of Canadian identities. This shift would only be hastened following the triumph of Jean Lesage and the Liberal Party in the 1960 Québec general election, which ended the eighteen-year regime of the *Union nationale* under its authoritarian chief Maurice Duplessis. The coming to power of sovereigntist and separatist elements within Canadian politics set the stage for the *Révolution tranquille*, or the Quiet Revolution, a period in which increased nationalist sentiment resulted in a programme of social and economic reforms that reaffirmed French-Canadian provincial sovereignty. In turn, NFB studios offered an official embrace of multiculturalism that acknowledged in partial form the country's internal conflicts between English- and French-speaking provinces, its own status as a Dominion of Great Britain, and (to a lesser extent) its settler-colonial relationship to its indigenous territories (Druick, "Grierson" 107). Prior to the initial murmurs of the Quiet Revolution, the NFB had already mobilised to appease some of its agitators, moving its headquarters to Montréal in order to restore the balance between its Anglo- and Francophone staff. As Zöe Druick writes, "the move of the NFB's headquarters from Ottawa to Montreal was part of the federal government's attempt to infuse Québec's creative fringe with federal allegiances" (*Projecting* 133). Beneath the surface, however, the relocation reflected a growing understanding within the NFB that this Québecois fringe was quickly becoming its creative vanguard.

Throughout the decade, the NFB had allowed some of its filmmakers to experiment with new forms and play with genres. Many French-Canadian filmmakers, however, had their start in NFB-produced, English-language documentary television series, such as the flagship *Candid Eye*, a term that would soon become synonymous with the Canadian variant of cinéma vérité. Running from 1958 to 1961, its fourteen half-hour documentaries were mainly directed by observational cinema innovators Terence Macartney-Filgate, Stanley Jackson, Wolf Koenig, and Roman Kroitor, all members of the agency's famed Unit B. Despite its Griersonian inheritance, *Candid Eye* seized the creative effervescence of NFB filmmakers to assemble a new image of a plurinational Canadian identity. Along with the formal innovations of the *Candid Eye* films, Unit B artists developed film technology that would facilitate the practical demands of this new style of filmmaking, one that required lightweight, shoulder-operated cameras and portable recorders that could capture direct sound without interference. Working as apprentices under the old, Ontario-based guard was a new set of French-Canadian filmmakers and cinematographers that

included Michel Brault, Gilles Groulx, Claude Jutra, and Pierre Perrault, among others who began to further push the boundaries of this emergent form of observational filmmaking.



Figure 1: Brault's signature "walking shot" in *Les Raquetteurs* (Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx, 1958). Screenshot.

The shift from Canadian nation-building to French-Canadian affirmation within the NFB was not without its difficulties.[1] Despite the new campus in Ville Saint-Laurent, French Canadians were largely barred from executive positions or were bogged down in apprenticeships of indefinite length. The 1958 release of *Les Raquetteurs* ("The Snowshoers") by Michel Brault and Gilles Groulx opened new avenues for expressions of French-Canadian cultural nationalism within the NFB but also invited increased scrutiny on the upstart Quebeckers. The film contained footage of the typical Québecois pastime of snowshoe racing. Filmed with mobile cinematography and synchronised sound, *Les Raquetteurs* was an early example of what the filmmakers were calling cinéma direct, a precursor to similar movements in observational cinema that would soon adopt the moniker in the US and elsewhere. Although armed with a 35mm camera, Brault debuted the handheld, forward-moving "walking shots" which were to become his signature (Fig. 1), while also placing his Nagra sound recorder in the fray to capture candid and direct sound. Perhaps more exceptional still was the fact that the film highlighted ethnic difference by representing a cultural activity specific to the region entirely in French and without voiceover narration. Working alongside editor Gilles Groulx, the initial rushes of the film were rejected by the NFB leadership. A thirty-minute version of the film was nevertheless completed clandestinely. André Loiselle writes that the resulting film, *Les Raquetteurs*, acquired great symbolic significance as it was "a film about a typically French-Canadian pastime [made] in defiance of anglophone authority" (38). This factor—more so that any

formal or technical innovations—marked a widening of the creative possibilities for the young, Québecois counterculture, many of which in their capacity as apprentices had been limited to translating French-Canadian culture to an assumed English-speaking audience.

Much like Canada had adopted Grierson's model from the United Kingdom's Empire Marketing Board and employed it toward its own nation-building enterprise, Puerto Rico's Division of Community Education had similarly adopted the strategy of the US Farm Security Administration in designing a public arts and education programme to uphold the island's newly ratified status as a United States Commonwealth. The DivEdCo brought in artists, writers, and general expertise from the US mainland to establish a rural education programme which would respond to the needs of the Puerto Rican poor through art. In the Puerto Rican case, the literature, posters, and films made by the DivEdCo since 1949 furnished audiences with a sense of national identity in lieu of political sovereignty, a compromise that has often been referred to as the island's "bloodless revolution". Mariam Colón Pizarro characterises DivEdCo's role in resolving this tension as a "poetic pragmatism", or the "successful interplay between modern industrial development and state-sponsored cultural production" as a means of creating an idea of community amidst the turbulence and uncertainty of the belated coming of modernity (17).

In the mid-1950s, the DivEdCo underwent dramatic changes to its organisational structure and educational mandates, not unlike their counterparts at the NFB. The old guard of American artists and administrators who had founded the Division in the late 1940s—among them Jack and Irene Delano and Edwin and Louise Rosskam—had left their permanent positions at the agency. This left the Graphics, Editorial, and Cinema Units all under Puerto Rican leadership for the first time. The assumption of homegrown talent within the organisational hierarchy of the DivEdCo was not accompanied by a measure of autonomy in the subject and style of the films themselves. Instead, it had resulted in creative disagreements between production units, delayed or abandoned projects, notable resignations, and extended leaves of absence, leading René Marqués, chief of the Editorial Section of the DivEdCo, to remark of this period: "As an agency we have not only come of age, but are already old" (qtd. in Marsh Kennerley 125). In response to the waning professional development opportunities at the agency, many young DivEdCo artists appealed to professional networks assembled through their prolonged apprenticeships under established filmmakers to seek new institutional allegiances. One such institution rose to meet the Puerto Rican filmmakers' newfound ambitions: the "Roberto [*sic*] Flaherty Film Festival" (Rigau).

The Flaherty Film Seminar: Synchronising Global Vérité's Quiet Revolutions

In the postwar period, the search for forums for film exhibition and discourse prompted nontheatrical film professionals to meet through informal networks in the form of film societies, film councils, and cineclubs. These organisations brought cinephiles together in quasi-institutional settings such as university campuses, public libraries, or independent theatres, where spectators could watch rare films and filmmakers could exhibit their own to new and critically attuned audiences (Acland 150). The diversification of nontheatrical outlets informed the decision to establish the Flaherty Film Seminar in 1955. Catering to a diffuse audience consisting in its majority of filmmakers, scholars, librarians, museum curators, critics, and students, the Seminar became an idiosyncratic film institution which merged the function of the film school, the film

festival, and the film society. Held as invitation-only retreats at the Flaherty family farm in Dummerston, Vermont, participants would be expected to lodge for the duration of the week-long seminar, attend thrice-daily screening sessions, and participate in vigorous discussions, typically with veteran filmmakers and former Flaherty collaborators serving as guests of honour (Fig. 2). There, screenings would highlight films made through individual, artisanal, and (mostly) independent means, sparking discussions on the state of film education and the future of documentary filmmaking (Zimmerman and MacDonald 10). Despite this emphasis on independent cinema, the Flaherty network also consisted of many filmmakers and administrators employed by government- or institutionally sponsored film bodies, including the Puerto Rican Division of Community Education, the National Film Board of Canada, and others such as the United States Information Agency or UNESCO. By the end of the 1950s, the Flaherty Seminar had become a main attraction in the documentary film circuit.



Figure 2: Participants gather at the 1960 Flaherty Seminar. Courtesy of The Flaherty.

Around this same time, a new type of documentary style was emerging between Europe and North America, one which marshalled advances in film technology in an attempt to represent reality, warts and all. In France, this style would later be popularised by Jean Rouch under the

moniker of cinéma vérité—a "film truth". In its vernacular usage, vérité was a style premised on an observational approach to the subject, communicated through the use of hand-held cinematography, the capture of direct sound (where possible), a lack of or aversion to voiceover narration, minimal interaction with the subject (or maximal, in the French case), and the assumption of the camera as a naïve or objective actor.[2] None of these descriptors are without qualifications.[3] The style had been nurtured by regional vérité predecessors in the North Atlantic, such as free cinema in the United Kingdom, direct cinema in North America, and the *Candid Eye*/cinéma direct house style which had taken root in Canada. It is best to understand vérité filmmaking as a spectrum with "pure", detached observation on one end and interventionist or participatory discursive strategies on the other. Brian Winston has helpfully illustrated the differences between the major variants by characterising American direct cinema's approach as "flies on the wall" versus cinéma vérité's "flies in the soup" (188). In the Canadian case, the fly could then be conceived as in flight—agile yet erratic, and prone to sustained digressions. Global vérité in all its forms became a central part of Flaherty's programming as the Seminar further distanced itself from the "poetic" approach of its namesake and attempted to seize documentary realism through political filmmaking and formal experimentalism (Zimmerman and MacDonald 56).[4]

But cinéma vérité is certainly no orphan. Although many claim the style as their progeny today, Patricia Zimmerman has argued that the Flaherty Seminar served as the mode's incubator in its early years (203).[5] It has become the stuff of Flaherty legend that the development of direct cinema began in earnest as a result of the aesthetic and intellectual contacts at the 1958 Seminar, where a chance meeting between Terence Macartney-Filgate of the NFB and Robert Drew, D. A. Pennebaker, and Ricky Leacock of the Drew Associates resulted in their coauthored debut film, the landmark documentary *Primary* (1960), uniting the North American vérité variants under one banner (Zimmerman and MacDonald 63). The ensuing year, this new style of documentary filmmaking would become the silent theme of the Seminar in Santa Barbara. Jean Rouch, a late addition to the programme, would address for the first time a generation of nontheatrical filmmakers he had inspired in North America. Zimmerman and others trace the genealogy of vérité to Jean Rouch's exposure to Michel Brault's *Les Raquetteurs* in California that year, included in the programme at the behest of Frances Flaherty.[6] Rouch himself is unambiguous about the event as it relates to the course of his own film practice: "For me, the Flaherty Seminar in Santa Barbara was the open door to a new way of making film."

Following the Seminar, Jean Rouch extended an open invitation to Michel Brault to collaborate on an ethnographic project on the other side of the Atlantic. In summer of 1960, Brault joined the production of *Chronicle of a Summer* as cinematographer. Rouch had been particularly impressed by Brault's sporadic and rudimentary capture of direct sound using lapel microphones, then a relative rarity in nontheatrical film. The absolute necessity of recording dialogue in Rouch's unfinished film had forced them to shoot scenes around a sound recorder, usually in fixed compositions that did not reflect the impassioned arguments or the intimate confessions occurring onscreen. Departing from the conventions practiced during his tenure at the *Candid Eye*, Brault would take the mobile camera to its logical extremes in *Chronicle of a Summer*, forgoing telephoto lenses, conventional framing, and even the aid of the viewfinder in favour of close-up, liquid cinematography often shot from the hip (Loiselle 37). Two years after the film's release, Rouch said in an interview: "It was Brault who brought us new shooting techniques which we didn't know and which we have been copying ever since […] We have to admit that everything we have done in French cinéma-vérité

derives from the NFB" (Rohmer and Marcorelles 17). As we will soon find out, however, Michel Brault had already begun exporting his techniques abroad prior to his French visit.

Of the many government film groups at the Seminar, perhaps none developed as close a relationship with the NFB as the DivEdCo (D. Flaherty). Brault had become involved in the Flaherty gatherings since the inaugural Seminar in 1955. Members of the DivEdCo had attended annually beginning in 1956, recommended by former Robert Flaherty associates Benjamin Doniger and Willard Van Dyke, who had since taken up positions at the Puerto Rican film unit.[7] By the late 1950s, however, the young filmmaking groups from Québec and Puerto Rico were ascending within their respective agency's ranks while being tasked promoting integrationist or neocolonial policies to which few of them subscribed. In the case of the French Unit, their films responded to this contradiction by developing novel techniques and addressing hyperlocal themes in their films, even at times blatantly disregarding the institutional leadership in pursuit of their own creative visions. The DivEdCo apprentice filmmakers, despite their best attempts to steer the creative direction of their cinema closer to the what they considered to be the vanguard in documentary, remained subject to the narrow mandates of the federally appointed head of the DivEdCo Fred Wale and the ever-involved Governor Luis Muñoz Marín. In the years since their respective muted revolutions, scholars have reconstructed the historical linkages between the struggles for Québecois and Puerto Rican independence. As José Igartúa writes, Québec's and Puerto Rico's "parallel destinies" emerge from each territory having resisted attempts to be "re-made in their colonizer's image" in search of some measure of political autonomy (51). Both the DivEdCo and the French Unit were united in their resistance to their respective anglophone leadership, reflecting broader struggles for Puerto Rican and Québecois decolonisation at the national scale (Den Tandt 46-47). The Flaherty Seminars provided a forum for the expression of shared creative as well as political aspirations at the margins of their respective institutional agendas.

The two upstart government film units from Québec and Puerto Rico were not the only ones to notice their stylistic similarities, or to connect their films to broader currents in global documentary. The French Canadians and the Puerto Ricans shared a common disposition towards their documentary subjects out in the remote corners of their respective territories. In the excerpt featured in this article's epigraph, Colin Young and A. Martin Zweiback take note of the affinities between French-Canadian cinéma direct and Puerto Rican educational film during the 5th annual Flaherty Film Seminar in Santa Barbara, grouping them together with Rouch's own ethnographic filmmaking.[8] Titled "Going Out to the Subject", Young and Zweiback's review ties early cinéma vérité to the other two Atlantic schools due to their shared willingness to turn their ethnographic focus inward and meet their subjects on their own turf, aided by lightweight cameras and synchronous sound equipment (Young and Zweiback 39). As part of the emphasis on self-exploration, the DivEdCo almost exclusively took as its subject the Puerto Rican countryside and those considered marginal to Puerto Rican modernity. The early observational films by French-Canadian filmmakers were similarly concerned with the Québecois periphery, even as it upset the power centres of its government-sponsored cinema. Perhaps it is this disposition that united the two groups, whose cameras were aimed at rural populations underrepresented in moving images, often disenfranchised politically, and always provincial. It is no surprise, then, that Puerto Rico's *Estado Libre Asociado*, bearing the closest resemblance to *l'État québécois*, would itself soon become the subject of a National Film Board documentary.

Of *Candid Eye*s and Poetic Cores: *Festival in Puerto Rico* (1961)

Before the cinéma vérité of the old world and the new, Michel Brault had already been tasked with chronicling the summer of 1960. The streets and apartments of Parisian *arrondissements* were preceded by the stone walls and concert halls of Old San Juan. Following an invitation from the Puerto Ricans, Brault travelled to San Juan alongside *Candid Eye* filmmakers Wolf Koenig, Roman Kroitor, and Tom Daly in June of 1960 to film the classical music performances of the 4th Casals Festival. *Festival in Puerto Rico* (Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor, 1961), as the film would be called, was to be the last instalment of the *Candid Eye* series and marked the end of Brault's first stint with the NFB a month before he would join Jean Rouch in France to finish shooting *Chronicle of a Summer* (Vineberg). As an unofficially coproduced film, it stands as one of the earliest examples of the vérité style to be filmed in Latin America and the clearest evidence of the DivEdCo's artists pursuing experimental filmmaking through the work of its partner institutions. These imperfect collaborations, although done in the spirit of solidarity, nevertheless reveal political and aesthetic incompatibilities between the early adopters of vérité in and of the former Third World and those of the North Atlantic. Although these slippages explain how the French Unit's—and, to a lesser extent, the Puerto Rican—contribution to the form faded from the record, *Festival in Puerto Rico* disrupts settled accounts of North-to-South transmission and triangulation in the historical development of global new waves.





Figure 3 (left): Violinist Eugene Kash with his daughter in the Condado beach.
Figure 4 (right): Governor Luis Muñoz Marín at the palace gardens.
***Festival in Puerto Rico* (Wolf Koenig and Roman Kroitor, 1961). Screenshots.**

Festival in Puerto Rico follows Canadian contralto Maureen Forrester and her family at the rehearsals, performances, and celebrations of the 1960 Casals Festival in San Juan. The classical music festival, held in honour of Spanish exile and music composer Pablo Casals, was founded as a semiprivate venture in 1956 to promote the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as a beacon of high culture in the Caribbean and to lure foreign investment into its then-booming economy (Lazo 190–91). Geopolitically, the Spanish ex-pat Casals's association with the festival also served the secondary purpose of establishing the archipelago as a model for US-styled liberal democracy, ironically lending a cosmopolitan appeal to the Puerto Rican government's cultural nationalist line.

Yet Michel Brault's camera only loosely interprets what constitutes the performance itself. The film is a highly distractible reportage of the festival happenings told through shots of bored audience members at the rehearsals, intimate scenes of the Forrester family on vacation in the Caribbean (Fig. 3), a few ethnographically oriented detours into the Puerto Rican countryside (Fig. 4). Through its laudatory account of Puerto Rico as a "modern democracy in the Caribbean", the film takes great pains to situate the Commonwealth as a sustainable model for decolonisation.

Despite its best intentions, perhaps no film captures the toothless politics of the *Candid Eye* movement better than *Festival in Puerto Rico*, best illustrated by a sequence featuring Governor Luis Muñoz Marín in the palace gardens. As the narrator explains the nuances of Puerto Rico's Commonwealth status, Muñoz Marín touts his writerly *bona fides* in conversation with Forrester and her husband, explaining that "In Latin America, almost any person who is engaged in politics has written poetry at one time or another" (Fig. 4). Instead of an analytical look into Muñoz Marín's thesis, Brault's camera makes little effort to hide its boredom. It lowers its gaze, scanning the white linen table to its left in search of hors d'oeuvres, then finally glancing at a tray of champagne glasses still fizzing on their way to the guests. Meanwhile, the Governor, First Lady Doña Inés, and Maureen Forrester continue to exchange pleasantries in the deep background, out of focus and out of earshot. While this scene could easily be interpreted as oppositional to *muñocista* doctrine, its supple film language and surface-level experimentalism encapsulates the philosophy of Muñoz Marín's Operation Serenity which, according to Arlene Dávila, aimed "to provide a sense of spiritual balance threatened by rapid social change" through cultural programs such as the Casals Festival or the DivEdCo (34). The imposition of a cultural nationalism from above was meant to stand-in for any measure of political sovereignty—poetry in the absence of power.




Figure 5 (left): Maureen Forrester and Alexander Schneider in rehearsals. Figure 6 (right): Opening walking shot through orchestra. *Festival in Puerto Rico*. Screenshots.

Elsewhere in the film, locals are depicted enjoying Maureen Forrester's and Alexander Schneider's rehearsals in the recital hall (Fig. 5), which are also being broadcast to passersby in the nearby town square (Fig. 7). However, this encounter with the television screen in *Festival in Puerto Rico* precludes any attempt to re-engage documentary subjects as their own potential spectators, as we see in the famous ending to *Chronicle of a Summer*. Instead, they are treated only

to simulacra—flip rehearsals at the University of Puerto Rico auditorium remediated through the television screen. Puerto Rican musician Roberto Sierra describes the experience of watching the festival from afar as follows:

> For the first time […] through those primitive televised waves […] totally spectral and phantasmagoric […] those fuzzy images of high culture imposed an emblem to which we should aspire, so creating the image of what was great, genial, and noble. Then there were us—the others. (qtd. in Lazo 195)

Sierra here is describing the popular impression of the Casals Festival as an elite institution, a demonstration of modernity that, while global in its reach, was nevertheless denied to the majority of Puerto Ricans. Once again, the *Candid Eye* remains ambivalent in depicting this screen encounter, refusing to acknowledge the irony in the fact that the festival—ostensibly a celebration of Puerto Ricanness—was received by Canadians and Puerto Ricans in much the same manner through the ephemerality and detachment of its televised image.[9] Canadian film historian Bruce Elder has attributed the NFB's noninterventionist approach to its filmmakers' aesthetic debt to Henri Cartier-Bresson and his photographic ideal of capturing the "decisive moment", often to the detriment of a moral decisiveness ("On" 90). The *Candid Eye*'s attraction to the poetic indeterminacy of Puerto Rican Free Associated Statehood is a feature, not a bug, of this style.[10]

The *Candid Eye*'s house style stands in stark contrast to the way in which Stephen Mamber has characterised the animating force behind the producers associated with US direct cinema, differentiating it from other currents in vérité at the time. Direct cinema, Mamber has argued, tended to be organised according to a crisis structure (115–18). The determining factor in direct cinema's choosing of its subjects was its newsworthiness, which arranged its narrative patterns around the dramatic potential in moments of heightened tension and their likely (and sometimes explosive) resolutions. For example, subjects tended to be filmed in times of extreme duress, at the height of competition, or on the verge of a defeat of one sort or another. It is no mistake, then, that US direct cinema, propelled by its journalistic mission, and cinéma vérité, driven by an ethnographic impulse, both found in the contemporaneous Cuban Revolution a reliable source of documentary material.[11] *Festival in Puerto Rico*, contra global vérité's fixation with revolution, is drawn to the Commonwealth as it trades the risk of a reality in crisis for access to a reality in perceived stasis. Innocence does not hue or alter the perception of the *Candid Eye*; it is a projection of the candid camera that presupposes its image. In other words, the *Candid Eye* filmmakers sought subjects that they already deemed bereft of potential aesthetic or epistemological insurgencies. Elder has identified this attitude within *Candid Eye* filmmaking as the quality of "naïve realism", or their films' tendency to diffuse historical phenomena into discrete incidents or episodes, the titular candour stopping short of curiosity towards and much less a critique of colonialism (*Image* 134). *Festival in Puerto Rico* shares with *Chronicle of a Summer* a studied ambivalence and commitment to everydayness which abstracts struggles for liberation happening just offshore, in the case of the latter, or effaces them altogether, as in the former.

Its political shortcomings notwithstanding, *Festival in Puerto Rico* stands apart from the rest of the episodes in the series because Michel Brault seems to trial some of the technologies and workshop some of the techniques he would employ in Paris later that summer, debuted here to little fanfare. Among the very first shots, there is already an example of Brault's signature "walking

camera" as he films the orchestra members tuning their instruments in preparation for the event (Fig. 6). The camera makes its way through the orchestra pit, avoiding any stray bows and protruding elbows from members of the string section. In his study of the use of lightweight cameras and synchronous sound equipment at the NFB, Vincent Bouchard notes that developments in film technology were not linear and were not used across all the Board's units uniformly (*Pour* 22). Although much has been made of the NFB's tinkering, it is best to understand these as improvised "micro-inventions" that often went unreported and primarily occurred at the meeting point between the film equipment and the profilmic space (Bouchard, "Les traces"). In fact, technical reports written by the crew involved in the production of *Festival in Puerto Rico* give a recommendation that the NFB incorporate the use of triple track magnetic recording equipment, due to the field improvisations the *Candid Eye* team had to make in order to capture the correct balance, distance, and direction of the competing source sounds at the Casals Festival, lessons Brault would later employ for the dynamic, on-street interviews he would film in Paris. Given the use of direct sound in scenes shot in close-up and the unrestrained movement of Brault's walking camera in others, vérité's Puerto Rican layover inched the emergent mode toward its desired verisimilitude in this other, earlier chronicle of a summer.

In the 1961 curricula vitae of director Luis Maisonet, producer Otoniel Vila, and cinematographer José Jolguera, each of these DivEdCo artists credit themselves with having participated in the production of *Festival in Puerto Rico*. The evidence of their contributions can be found in their mistaken references to the project's working title, "Don Pablo Casals—alternatively written as "Casals", "Don Pedo Casals", and "Don Pablo Casals"—before offering a clarifying note that the project was done for the Canadian National Film Board (Tirado). This type of uncredited collaboration between NFB and DivEdCo artists recalls a founding principle of cinéma vérité, as conceived by Edgar Morin, that has largely been left out of retrospective theorisations of the style, that of commensality, which Morin defines as follows:

> In the course of excellent meals washed down with good wines we will entertain a certain number of people from different backgrounds, solicited for the film. The meal brings them together with the film technicians (cameraman, sound recordist, grips) and should create an atmosphere of camaraderie […] The problem is to lift people's inhibitions, the timidity provoked by the film studio and cold interviews, and to avoid as much as possible the sort of "game" where each person, even if he doesn't play a role determined by someone else, still composes a character for himself. This method aims to make each person's reality emerge. In fact, the "commensality," bringing together individuals who like and feel camaraderie with each other, in a setting which is not the film studio but a room in an apartment, creates a favourable climate for communication. (234)

If we are to take Morin's definition of commensality as a foundational discursive structure of cinéma vérité—and allow it to be transported from a smoky Parisian haunt to the Caribbean countryside—then one may begin to understand the DivEdCo's participation in vérité experimentation via the Canadian contingent as far from vicarious. The Puerto Ricans would have been instrumental in making *Festival in Puerto Rico* possible, granting Brault, Koenig, and Kroitor unprecedented access to the island's official and vernacular cultures.

No sequence better illustrates this dynamic than one in the latter half of the film where the visiting Canadian filmmakers venture outside of the capital city sans the subject of the film itself, Maureen Forrester. Prefiguring Rouch's own sojourn in Saint-Tropez, the *Candid Eye* film crew is chaperoned into the deep Puerto Rican countryside by the trio of Maisonet, Vila, and Jolguera, each already deeply familiar with the DivEdCo's rural circuits. Out in the field is where the DivEdCo fingerprints are most prominent, capturing the vagaries of the Puerto Rican folk culture. As a point of both thematic and aesthetic contrast, the *Candid Eye*'s individuating impulse is momentarily cast aside. The probing, integral, and liquid camera movements of Brault's orchestral walking shots give way to a backseat cinematography premised on speed, ellipsis, and linearity as the camera becomes the literal passenger in the DivEdCo collaborators' abridged tour of the island's mountainous centre (Fig. 8). The rural scenes do not display the same concern for individual talents or personalities as in the San Juan-based sequences which bookend the film, instead glimpsing the recreational activities of the community at large as expressed through cockfights (Fig. 9), a friendly game of domino in an unnamed town's central *plaza*, and local beachgoers enjoying a day in a lagoon out in the provinces. The embodied contralto of Forrester's performance is replaced by a nondiegetic score of Puerto Rican string music, whose source sound is only deacousmatised following the group's return to the city. As Forrester, Kash, and Schneider sit at a private table at the Mallorquina restaurant in Old San Juan, their conversation is interrupted by the sounds of Maso Rivera's *cuatro* strings emanating from the bar, a sonic bridge that nevertheless marks a distance between the guest diners at the table from the local *comensales* at the counter (Fig. 10). In contrast to the exploratory movements of the camera at the music hall premised on access, the frame is circumscribed by a self-awareness of its own touristic status in these sequences, made possible by function of the commensality between its filmic collaborators. This formal interplay between centre and periphery and the generic contrast between an individualising gaze and a collective envisioning of modernity recall the thematic affinities between the two government agencies pointed out by Young and Zweiback a year prior.



Figure 7 (left): The Casals rehearsals being broadcast in the local town plaza. Figure 8 (right): The Puerto Rican countryside shot from a moving vehicle. *Festival in Puerto Rico*. Screenshots.




Figure 9 (left): A traditional cockfight. Figure 10 (right): Puerto Rican folk musician Maso Rivera plays his *cuatro* at La Mallorquina. *Festival in Puerto Rico*. Screenshots.

This same spirit of camaraderie would inform the DivEdCo's decision to host the 1961 edition of the Flaherty Film Seminar in the town of Barranquitas, Puerto Rico (Fig. 11), its first ever held abroad. The programme was intended to convene recent achievements in vérité filmmaking, bringing together its major practitioners from both sides of the Atlantic. Jean Rouch was slated to serve as guest of honour, where he would premiere his most recent film, *Chronicle of a Summer*. The Canadians would screen *Festival in Puerto Rico*, considered the best the *Candid Eye* had to offer (Coté). At the last minute, however, Rouch was forced to cancel his appearance at the Flaherty in order to attend—of all events—the 2nd Montreal International Film Festival, a missed connection that may have been the moment when Puerto Rican vérité became consigned to either the archive or the status of apocrypha (Escribano 7, 11).


EL MUNDO, SAN JUAN, P. R. — SABADO, 1ro. DE JULIO DE 1961

Participantes y anfitriones del Seminario de Cine Flaherty que se lleva a cabo actualmente en el hotel Barranquitas, disfrutan de una velada con don Sindo, el último de lo sauténticos pleneros de Puerto Rico, quien aparece a la extrema derecha de esta tirilla, acompañado de su grupo. En la foto a la izquierda aparecen, de izquierda a derecha: Guy Coté, del "National Film Board of Canada", Reginaldo Rivera y Amilcar Tirado, de la unidad de cinema de la División de Educación de la Comunidad. En la foto al centro, aparecen, de izquierda a derecha: Rafael Tufiño, director de la unidad de Artes Gráficas; el escritor Emilio Díaz Valcárcel; Alfonso Borrel y Reginaldo Rivera, de la unidad de cinema local; la señorita Mary Dickinson, artista de Boston; John Korty, director de Nueva York; Luis A. Maisonet, director en la unidad de cine local; y el señor Robert Steele, profesor de Artes de Comunicación en la Universidad de Boston.

(Fotos EL MUNDO y Depto. de Instrucción)

En Hotel Barranquitas

Asistentes a Seminario de Cine Flaherty Gozan de un Concierto de Plenas Ponceñas

Figure 11: Newspaper clipping of *El mundo*, 1 June 1961 The title reads: "Flaherty Seminar Attendees Enjoy *Plena* Concert". Courtesy of University of Puerto Rico.

In his comparative survey of the emergent film cultures in Latin America, Paul Schroeder Rodríguez argues against the idea that Latin America's position toward the cinemas of Europe and North America was one of pure mimesis. Instead, he characterises the development of national cinemas in the region as having been brought about through an active practice of triangulation between Latin American film and the First and Second Cinemas of the North Atlantic, whereby "Latin American filmmakers [navigated] a global cinematic landscape from a position of marginality" (20). Likening the concept to the sport of orienteering, the aesthetic triangulation Schroder Rodríguez outlines is useful in countering a top-down interpretation of global film style and restoring the referential tapestry that was historically available to Latin American cineastes. The self-positioning of Latin American filmmakers within these three points—European cinema, Hollywood, and Latin American documentary—remains a defining feature of Latin American filmmaking at large.

Triangulation notwithstanding, the institutional histories outlined here are not meant to establish an "influence game" that seeks to restore the place of Puerto Rican cinema in film history by virtue of its proximity to the cinematic new waves of the Global North. Neither is the analysis of *Festival in Puerto Rico* meant to flatten the topography of this tripolar map to merely elevate a singular Puerto Rican contribution. On the one hand, I have attempted to uncover the extent to which these mid-century Puerto Rican government film workers participated in global film culture and the creation of transnational film-institutional infrastructures, claims thoroughly substantiated in the cases of national cinemas elsewhere in Latin America.[12] The DivEdCo's uncredited involvement in the NFB's *Festival in Puerto Rico* allows us to forgo authorship as the validating quality of Latin American filmmaking and thereby expand the conditions of possibility to include these strategic partnerships and political solidarities, particularly in the case of artists struggling against a colonial film apparatus from the inside. It opens Latin American film historiography to a more capacious understanding of experimental filmmaking in the context of colonialism, underdevelopment, and state-controlled cultural production.

Moreover, revisiting the little-known institutional collaboration between the NFB and the DivEdCo—one that served as the immediate precursor to Rouch and Morin's *Chronicle of a Summer*—recasts the Global North in the role of cinematic cartographer, articulating cinema vérité's own "self-positioning" against two cinematic landmarks with which its main proponents were closely engaged at the time, namely, the cinéma direct of the French Unit and the rural education project of the DivEdCo. This is not meant as an exercise in a rote recentring of the margins by merely identifying the southerly winds of film style or placing the onus of imitation on northern filmmakers. Rather, our analysis of transatlantic vérité's brief Caribbean layover is meant to resist the "Big Bang" interpretation of film history that accompanied the early historiography of global vérité which, despite scholarly elucidations in the intervening decades, has still not fully reckoned with many of its formative erasures. To return to that *other* chronicle of a summer in Puerto Rico upsets established patterns or triangulations of film culture between Canada, France, and Latin America, revealing that global vérité owed as much to technique and sensibility as it did to simply keeping good company.

Notes

[1] See Véronneau for a brief history of the French-Canadian involvement in the NFB. Helfield provides a useful overview of how the Quiet Revolution affected Québecois cinema at large.

[2] I use vérité as an umbrella term that includes its direct influences and derivatives, much like the mode was referred to at the time by its foremost purveyors and their scholarly interlocutors.

[3] For example, the Québécois cinéma direct and the American direct cinema variants were committed to an observational style of filmmaking in which the presence of the camera or its operators was rarely acknowledged, but direct cinema tended to have a latent narrative behind its deliberate ambiguities and often included voiceovers in its early days. In France, vérité had a more interventionist, reflexive approach to the documentary, often prompting subjects through interviews and other instigations such as onscreen interviews and prompted actions or re-enactments.

[4] Genevieve Yue has argued that the distancing of the Seminar from the work of Robert Flaherty is an ongoing effort, led primarily by Black and Indigenous filmmakers. She cites the Flaherty board's decommissioning of the seminar's infamous *Nanook* logo in 2018 among some of the early successes of these efforts toward restitution (Yue 165–66).

[5] Edgar Morin, Jean Rouch's collaborator in the paradigmatic *Chronicle of a Summer*, ascribes his own use of the phrase "truth in film" to the 1959 Festival de Popoli, where the two filmmakers delivered an address that prefigured some of the techniques and motifs that would later appear in their codirected film.

[6] See Ellis and Marsolais for additional accounts of these notable encounters at the early Flaherty Seminars.

[7] The young Benji Doniger, following his sound work for Robert Flaherty's *Louisiana Story* (1948), joined the DivEdCo in 1949. Willard Van Dyke codirected two films in Puerto Rico in the 1950s (F. Flaherty).

[8] See Chapters One and Two in Astourian for a history of the "inward shift" in Rouch's filmography around this time, a turn toward participatory ethnographic approaches that prefigured the reflexivity of his Parisian films in the early 1960s.

[9] Cinta Pelejà is the first to theorise the documentary device of the screen encounter, a term which she uses to refer to the phenomenon of documentary subjects seeing their literal selves onscreen, as in *Chronicle of a Summer*.

[10] Nicole Beth Wallenbrock writes of *Chronicle of a Summer*'s own faint acknowledgements of the Algerian War of Independence, where she argues Rouch and Morin's film employs a guided ambivalence toward colonialism generally, a discursive restraint employed to evade French censors (Wallenbrock 133–34).

[11] Chris Marker's *¡Cuba Sí!* (1961) or the Drew Associates *Yanki No!* (1960) are two prominent examples of vérité's use of crisis as organising structure vis-à-vis the Cuban Revolution.

[12] Juliane Burton was the first to describe the vérité influence in the early days of the New Latin American Cinema, tracing the dissemination of the style across the continent as a result of transatlantic contacts with new wave filmmakers in Europe and beyond. Rielle Navitski further historicises a shared cinephilia between Latin American and French filmmakers, critics, and cultural workers, who strove to build their own transnational film infrastructures on either side of the Atlantic.

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