

● Michel Clarembeaux  
Liège (Belgium)

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# Film Education: Memory and Heritage

Educación en cine: memoria y patrimonio

## ABSTRACT

Film education in the digital age should be based on three closely-related and complementary fundamentals: to see, to analyze and to make films with young people; three basics that must interact and support each other. The concept of creative analysis could be the glue that binds this subject together, making it coherent and efficient for educational purposes. If cinema is an art, it is above all the art of memory, both individual and collective. This article suggests that we can join the pedagogy of film education to the citizen's desire to perpetuate memory and preserve cultural heritage. The author describes various types of films to prove this hypothesis, and at the same time indicates the economic and cultural dimension of the media. The essay starts with an approach to film education in the digital age. Later, it analyzes certain aspects of films of memory, referring specifically to the typology of standpoints of film-makers and the treatment of their sources. Lastly, there is a reflection on the convergence of the concept of creative analysis, promoted by film education, and the production of videos by young people dedicated to the individual or collective memory. This convergence matches European Union proposals concerning the production and creation of audiovisual media from this viewpoint.

## RESUMEN

La educación para el cine en la era digital debería apoyarse en tres polos complementarios y estrechamente asociados: ver, analizar y hacer películas con jóvenes. Estos tres polos han de potenciarse mutuamente. El concepto de análisis creativo podría ser la argamasa que diera coherencia y eficiencia al dispositivo educativo. Si el cine es un arte, es sobre todo el arte de la memoria, tanto colectiva como individual. Este artículo sugiere que es posible hacer converger la pedagogía de la educación cinematográfica y la voluntad ciudadana de perpetuar la memoria, al tiempo que se protege el patrimonio cultural. El autor propone una serie de películas para ilustrar estos planteamientos, que ponen de relieve la dimensión económica y cultural de los medios de comunicación, respondiendo en esta convergencia a las más recientes directrices de la Unión Europea sobre creación y producción, desde esta perspectiva, de medios audiovisuales. El trabajo se inicia con una aproximación a la educación para el cine en la era digital. Posteriormente se recogen algunas singularidades de las «películas de la memoria», aludiendo concretamente a la tipología de los puntos de vista de los realizadores y al tratamiento de sus fuentes. Por último, se refleja el encuentro entre el concepto de «análisis creativo», fomentado por la educación cinematográfica, y la realización de videogramas hechos por jóvenes y dedicados a la memoria individual o colectiva.

## KEYWORDS / PALABRAS CLAVE

Media education, film education, creative analysis, film production, collective memory, heritage.  
Educación en medios, cine, análisis de creación, producción de películas, memoria colectiva, patrimonio.

◆ Michel Clarembeaux. Director of Liege Audiovisual Center (Belgium) (cav.liege@sec.cfwb.be).  
Translation: Noel Byde

Film is an art, principally an art of memory that is individual and collective. Film education is about questioning oneself about memories transmitted by sound and images, a reencounter with forgotten signs and gestures, discovering faces from the past and an environment that was once ours and that of our parents and ancestors. It is a re-acquaintance with time beyond the images that it evokes.

Our hypothesis proposes uniting film education pedagogy with the desire to preserve and perpetuate the memory of peoples and things. This approach fits in the wishes of the European institutions for the media, and cinema in particular, with their considerable financial and cultural influence, to help «increase awareness and knowledge of our cinematographic heritage, especially among young Europeans, as well as stimulate interest in European film-making both past and present». They also aim to «foster the acquisition of skills in the creation and production of audiovisual media»<sup>1</sup>.

First, we define our concept of film education in the digital era. Later we deal with typical aspects of «films of memory», with special reference to a typology of directors' viewpoints and the treatment of their sources. Finally, we examine what emerges from the coupling of «creative analysis»<sup>2</sup> promoted by film education with videograms produced by young people that tackle individual or collective memory.

## 1. Film education

Given the digital context inhabited by young people, film education today is necessarily based on three complementary and inseparable actions: to see, to analyse and to produce films. Film education is the management of the friction generated between these three activities so that they can feed off and influence each other, with the unerring objective to increase efficacy and pleasure, since these two parameters are constant and require continual reinforcement.

The last 50 years have seen a dramatic change in film education. More accurately, film education is now the education of the animated image, since the cinematographic image has become isolated, just as it was before the first half of the last century. In terms of its codes, references, everyday landscape and what we can learn from it, the film image is virtually inseparable from the TV image, the video image, the digital image found on the Web, images captured by mobile phones or those viewed on a laptop computer or any of the numerous screens that crowd our days and nights. The film image is mixed up with all the others, indistinguishable in a universe of sounds and images that

populate the daily lives of young people who we have to educate in the concept and practice of the cinematographic image.

### 1.1. Seeing Films

Fifty or sixty years ago in most Western countries, the discovery of the novelty of film and the classic works of the Seventh Art happened in the cinema, and in particular in film clubs, where a whole generation of enthusiasts could watch the great films (in 16mm or 35mm) that the history of cinema was creating. That generation could witness the adventures of independent cinema from the USA, the «new waves» from France, Sweden, Great Britain, Germany and Czechoslovakia. At the film club we were privileged to receive an initial education in cinema by seeing selected films and participating in informal debate on their socio-political and artistic context. The club also encouraged us to spread the word, so that others opened their own venues to show films.

Then, the 1990s saw the opening of a variety of new spaces where quality cinema could be shown. Cinemas modernized, with better projection techniques, and new individual and collective viewing habits developed that challenged conventional cinema-going, although it is still believed (rightly or wrongly) that the cinema theatre with its wide screen is the best place to see a film and appreciate its cinematographic language. Television contributed to this diversification, as subsequently did «home cinema» and the Internet, replacing cinemas in popularity for film viewing.

But the most important revolution has undoubtedly come with DVD and the advances in the sound and image quality of video projection systems.

Film education leapt forward with these new supports and techniques as access to film heritage multiplied. In less than 10 years, we suddenly had unlimited access to film heritage in terms of types of cinema, schools, periods, national productions and directors. There was a veritable explosion of available material, which was not always ideal since watching on a laptop, for example, is not the best way to discover a film. Neither is a cinema always the best place to see a film; interference can ruin the «magic of a dark theatre». But by and large, seeing a film on a screen with perfect reception is virtually guaranteed these days.

It is also important to mention the «law of pedagogical exception» that many countries have now adopted. This allows any teacher to show all or part of a film or TV programme in the classroom. In reality, teachers have always done this but the law legalizes the use of teaching tools and resources to enable them to

get the most out of the film, educating both for the cinema and in the cinema, which are two complementary forms of education. Consequently, film is put to legitimate use in History, Language and Social Science classes, etc.

Watching fragments of a film is often much more useful than sitting through the entire work if you wish to highlight the director's particular point of view or style. DVDs offer useful teaching tools allowing you to jump from one sequence or shot to another to clarify, emphasise and compare. Comparisons are easily demonstrated this way, and this practice is especially useful with regard to timetabling and students' limited attention span over long viewing periods. Repeat viewing a film or fragments of a film, personalizing and adapting it to objectives and circumstances, seems to be the norm these days.

### 1.2. Analysing Films

Analysis of a film forms part of any debate on cultural objects or artistic creation when considering technological advances and the flexibility and adaptability of the new supports. Analysis must avoid being formal and academic if the debate is to attract participation. Analysis must enable the viewer to stand back from first impressions in order to evaluate a creative work, and not allow themselves to be carried along by the emotions of first contact, be they rejection or enthusiastic approval. This is a good position to take up with regard to the director and the film, from which to understand and appreciate the value of a work and all its nuances, and the important elements of language. This position helps enhance pleasure and involvement with the director and the work, perceive all the dimensions, moving away from a first impression which, due to syncretism and globalization, can mask essential aspects. This type of analysis must clearly identify the director's viewpoint on the chosen subject matter. It must also show how sounds and images «function» so that the director's «message» reaches the viewer.

Analysis should also include two important parameters. The first is that a film must be considered as a media object and not just a work of art, and it must be a work of creation, that is, it must sooner or later lead to its final production.

It is hard to see a film as just a creation, the mere

wish of the director to express himself and communicate with the public. Like it or not, cinema is a medium and a film is a media product. Analysis cannot ignore the technology the director has employed or the production system to which the film belongs. This system comes with financial and technical obligations that condition the product and influences its form and content, be it an experimental work or a blockbuster. A realistic analysis of a film must take these aspects into consideration.

The second parameter is that analysis must lead to an interpretative reading of the film that is precise and which takes in the embryo of the creative work. This is what the French writer and director Alain Bergala

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calls «creative analysis»<sup>3</sup>, understood as an analysis closely linked to a new phase of creation. Analysis must take into account all that occurred before the film was made, focusing on the decisions taken by the director prior to production. Why did he opt for that perspective? Why did he choose that approach, that framing, that background, that close-up or that lighting? It is a type of analysis that demands observation and understanding, just like classical analysis. But it also requires the imagination to make counterproposals, suggesting other possible propositions that reconstruct the creative process, sending it off in a different direction with other linguistic materials. These materials can be found in the script, in the development of the narrative and characters, in the direction given to the actors, in the stage design and staging. Would I have made the same decisions? What modifications could I make so that they are more in accordance with the emotions I feel? Creative analysis leads to options and alternatives. But in order to make them interesting, these alternatives must be articulated in well-grounded choices and clarified in new sounds and images. It is important

that these counterproposals are limited in space and time; that they do not amount to a remake of the film being analysed but to changing, at most, a particular shot, angle or scene. These modifications must be coherent and adapt to an original and personal interpretation of the subject. It is clear that this type of analysis can be highly dynamic and contain its own form of evaluation, within a realistic diversity of combinations. We see how this analysis can get inside production of the work, and how both «moments» in film education converge in the same flow and continuity.

Jean Renoir said in 1979: «In reality, to love a film you need to be a potential film-maker; you have to say: I would have done it like this or like that; you have to make your own films, if only in your imagination, but

ning. It was more a workshop activity than an important stage in the educational process of the animated image. Recording sound and images, as well as filming in Super 8, resulted in numerous difficulties particularly in collective learning. Recent technological advances have changed teaching conditions. DVD, filming software and simpler lighting and sound effects has made film education easier. Technology no longer dictates the content or structure of the work like before. Today it is easier to express yourself, and the tools are more responsive to allow you to do so.

Young people now have a real culture of self-production. The webcam and the mobile phone have made image recording almost trivial. Our students regularly download images and songs from Internet.

They are immersed in the world of image and digitalization. This also helps in the transformation of objects and the creation of an environment of images that can contribute to our activity. This environment we occupy should lead to a more structured form of learning, a reflection on the nature and function of sound and image, and on the responsibility towards intellectual property from which all of this derives. It would be a shame not to take advantage of this new young culture to make

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you have to do it. If not... it is not worth going to the cinema to see films»<sup>4</sup>. Renoir's suggestion makes perfect sense, and film education ceases to separate the «said» from the «done», as has occurred for many years.

### 1.3. Making films

Creative analysis is not the only path that leads to cinematographic creation, but it does enable learning to be broken down into the acquisition of micro-competences that demand a control of narrative that is not always easy for beginners. Creative analysis can focus more easily on a single element of language or a particular technique

We can now briefly turn to production, although the remit of this article does not allow us to embrace all its numerous ramifications. We only wish to point out that for a long time cinematographic or video production was the poor relation in the film education pedagogy for young people or those in lifelong learning.

film education more coherent and attractive, in which theory and practice are finally united in a more efficient and pleasurable form.

### 2. Cinema, memory and heritage

In this section, we present our working hypothesis, in which we reiterate the idea of coherence referred to at the start of this article. See films, analyse films, produce films. Could we imagine the main theme of this journey to be memory? Individual and collective memory, memory nourished by images, the memory of images. A memory that is revealed through media texts, images and sometimes in film; a memory that each one could help to construct, perhaps for no other reason than to better understand who we are or the present in which we live. This stance is important, fundamental even, as it represents an individual stance, a civic stance, one that affects our future and our commitment to society. We don't believe it is fanciful to think that film education is also the guiding light with

which to explore the heritage handed down by memory.

In the past, we used film as a didactic document in courses of History, Social Sciences, etc. Today, lots of teachers use it to illustrate course content or merely as a source of information to foment a critical spirit in their students and open debate or ideological commitment. But it is important not to forget that cinema gives us memory with no scientific guarantee, and takes pleasure in dramatizing it and representing it by adding a political ideology and viewpoint imposed by the producers.

It is also important to realise that the occurrences of memory happen on many different levels. On a global level, there is conflict, war, plague, epidemics and huge migratory movements. But with the world now reduced to a village, and with limits and frontiers abolished, all occurrences, events, social situations and characters can be described in a national, regional or local context. The memory of one place becomes the memory of another place.

But which type of memory, individual or collective? Collective memory is built on activities or the experience of a group of people who remember something as members of a group. Collective memory «envelopes» individual memories but does not get mixed up with them. As Maurice Halbwachs<sup>5</sup> said in 1950: «We need to differentiate between two memories, which we can call interior, or internal, and exterior, or personal and social. More precisely, this is autobiographical memory and historical memory.» In fact, countless witnesses more or less consciously add their memories to the history of their time. A conflict, a fair, the changes to their street or neighbourhood, the evolution of public transport, fashion, eating habits and forms of speech can be considered part of both individual and collective memory. This explains why so many memories emerge, grow and dominate from a simple reconstruction of the collective past. The image of the past changes constantly according to the perspective through which that past is viewed.

It is important to bear this in mind when viewing and studying works that evoke or wish to reinterpret the past in one way or another. This goes for a written text but even more so for a photograph or a film, both of which, due to their technical characteristics and meanings, bring about an amalgamation of components of memory and our own memory experienced as viewers.

Returning to film as a vector of «autobiographical» and «historical» memory, cinema has always explored the types and levels of memory, multiplying nuances

and creating infinite variety. One could list a complete typology but here is not the place. What is relevant is the film treatment of memory and the plural forms that it employs to evoke it.

Fiction now plays a predominant role, carefully and truthfully restoring the past, as if it had little scientific value, and bowing to the «official» version of history, preferring the «memory experienced individually» by basing itself on personal testimony.

In some cases fiction creates an impression of reality more real than the historical reality itself. The 1905 Revolution in Russia, as presented by Eisenstein in his (authorized) work «The Battleship Potemkin», seems more authentic than what actually happened (the Odessa staircase in the film did not exist in reality).

In other instances, cinema opted for the documentary and followed the tracks left behind by the past, in archive footage and survivors' testimony. But this also has its limits as these tracks from the past are decontextualized: at most, they can evoke, not represent. Archives (especially film archives) were mostly produced and directed by those in power, so they should be treated with caution. It is important to analyse their «statute», and deconstruct them in order to remove their myths and stereotypes. In addition, the image of the memory can take on a decorative role and as such offers no guarantee of authenticity.

First-hand accounts are also unsound as they could be taken as single reference testimony. They are of interest because they help to visualize an event, a moment in a life, an era or way of thought or dreaming. As such, they diminish or contrast the contribution of official history. A personal recollection, an anecdote or the emotional dimension can be a positive counterweight to history but they cannot substitute it. If they did so, the dubious concept of having experienced, participated or suffered would be the only requirement needed to describe the past. The memory of the survivors' would be more important than events remembered (or not), than the events retold (or ignored and forgotten). The word and its affective weight would be worth more than the reality. Neither must we forget that «the duty to memory» has taken on a particular importance and now amounts to a civic behaviour that as come to be expected. This «duty» is highly ambiguous.

Thus memory, according to circumstances, becomes a scientific obligation in which precision and rigor are the all-important essential features, or memory transforms into an element of popular culture where mediatization is all that matters. It is not easy to choose between these two extremes, and there are

also innumerable models all with their own mutations, the newly arrived docu-fiction and its evolution in television and cinema, to name but one.

Another typology also emerges, which includes «staging» the past and the mechanisms that «modulate» the entire film<sup>6</sup>. Just as the selected images, their staging and emotional density inevitably lead us to the concepts of «point of view» or to «counterfield», we truly find ourselves at the centre of the problem of discourse and style, formulation and the implicit. In fact, we are at the very heart of film education, whether in terms of analysis or alternative propositions and creation. It is a question of educating the mind's eye but also of inciting a different (cinematographic) view of people and things. We find ourselves before the three fundamentals of film education: seeing, analysing and making films. Here we offer some examples.

### 3. Film education as a meeting point

Concentration camps and genocide carry particular weight in collective memory. These are compulsory subjects for study on History and Civic Education courses. They also provide abundant material for film production that is rich and diverse, perfectly illustrating the variety of directors' viewpoints and methodologies.

We select four films (in no particular order), all available on DVD, which have been shown and debated in secondary schools. Alain Resnais's «Night and Fog» (1955), «Schindler's List» by Steven Spielberg (1994), «Shoah», by Claude Lanzmann (1988) and «S-21», «The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine», by Rithy Panh (2001) are more or less representative of the 50 or so films made on the subject. They are four clearly defined and contrasted points of view on genocide.

Resnais's film examines the past in order not to forget it, and so that the memory of an indescribable horror will be preserved, by alternating archive footage and sequences in real and contemporary colours. Spielberg's film deliberately chooses a fictional model which has certain scientific guarantees, but above all he deploys the typical super production procedures for fictional films: well-known actors, a well-worked narrative to build up suspense and empathy, script devices so that we identify with the film's protagonists, emotional impact cleverly constructed and musical and ambient effects. Spielberg uses all the dramatic effects possible even sometimes to the detriment of the story. Lanzmann, who criticised it as a «transgression», chose a totally different viewpoint in his film Shoah. It contains long interviews (virtually uninterrupted) filmed in sequenced shots, of concentration camp survivors and their tormentors. Memories rise up and invade the pre-

sent. The surprising and amazing part of these interviews is the director's constant concern with rigour and attention to detail regarding the testimonies. We are left to build our own representation of the concentration camps based on testimony, mimicry, and the suppressed emotions and shame felt by those who escaped death. «S-21» is different. It involves a geographical shift and change in time. Panh reconstructs memory by confronting those responsible for genocide and their everyday gestures under the gaze of their victims. Words and gestures are presented by using shots that are very long and repeated. This is highly original and is far removed from any conventional drama. On the one hand we have the murderers, on the other the ghosts from the past, and their behaviour which is repeated 25 years later takes on a unique evocative power, making an exceptional impact. It is the memory of the body and the voice.

We have four different methods that enable us to make a comparative analysis of four sensibilities and points of view that are in opposition but also complementary.

After identifying those viewpoints, students need to identify those techniques of sound and vision the director uses to convince the public of his viewpoint and of the importance of his method of filming and elements of cinematographic language<sup>7</sup>. A systematic reconstruction and critical analysis is now required. This analysis is based on observation and debate but students also need to deploy imagination and counter-proposals. How to evoke that memory as sharply as possible? How to avoid betraying «the duty to memory»? What might the impact be of these images and of this staging of the past? And most importantly, what would I have done differently and what method would I have chosen?

This is where creative analysis comes in to play. Here is where we can move on from the «talk» in the debate to «production». Students can get down to practicalities, writing, drawing, filming, staging and offering us their own interpretation, producing their own, or an alternative, point of view.

It is normal for students to choose other subjects, but what is important is the intervention model they select and the arguments put forward to explain and justify that model over others.

We have taken films that deal with the death camps as an example. But the range of methods chosen by film directors can focus on any type of individual or historical memory. We refer to film production dedicated to the Spanish Civil War, which is rich in contrast. We think of Joris Ivens's «Earth of Spain»

(1937) and the adaptation of the novel by Javier Cercas, «Soldados de Salamina», by David Trueba (2003), as well as «Sierra de Teruel» by André Maraux (1939-45), not to mention Sam Wood's «For Whom the Bell Tolls» (1943) as not even a Hollywood production viewpoint should be ignored. There are many more examples, such as «Mourir a Madrid» by Frederic Rossif (1963), «Canciones para después de una Guerra» by Basilio Martín Patino (1971), Luis García Berlanga's *La Vaquilla* (1985), *Land and Freedom* by Ken Loach (1995) and Jamie Camino's «Los niños de Rusia» (2001)<sup>8</sup>.

But memory on a cinema screen also refers to everyday situations and a way of living or thinking, an everyday environment and trivial things. These are situations and occurrences that could stimulate students to preserve this «immaterial» heritage with a camera in hand. And not just to preserve it but also to communicate it to others, especially when the aim is to denounce an archaism, a feudal system or an injustice. Films like «Las Hurdes, Tierra sin Pan» (1932) by Luis Buñuel, or «Borinage» by Henri Storck and Joris Ivens (1935), Jean Vigo's «Sobre Niza» (1930) have aroused a similar reaction.

Works from the British «documentary» school or more modern documentaries like those by French anthropologist Jean Rouch's «Bataille sur le Grande Fleuve» (1952) and «La Chasse au Lion à L'arc» (1956) can move and awaken the emotions with different methods of transcription and transmission of reality, be it near or far in time and culture. Any familiar reality can be put on film: everyday life, a way of eating, dressing, doing the household chores, working in a field, the changes a city undergoes, the development of a technique, etc.

We pass imperceptibly from an education through

cinema to an education for cinema, from discovery to analysis and production. We put into practice systematic learning about cinema with students in which context, language and its functions, point of view, criticism and creation arising from the debate on the image, its strength, its ideological statute and its heritage value are all inseparable.

### Notes and references

<sup>1</sup> Communiqué from the EU Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A European proposal for media literacy in the digital environment COM/2007/0833 final. Brussels (20-12-07).

<sup>2</sup> This concept of creative analysis was developed by Alain Bergala in his book

*L'Hypothèse Cinéma*, published in 2002 by *Les Cahiers du Cinéma*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>4</sup> RENOIR, J. (1979). *Entretiens et propos*. Cahiers du Cinéma. Hors-série.

<sup>5</sup> HALBWACHS, M. (1950). *La mémoire collective*. Versión numérica; 32. Coll. «Les Classiques des Sciences Sociales», Universidad de Quebec, Chicoutimi.

<sup>6</sup> There is a series of books by historians and film-makers on this subject, including two books by MAC FERRO, *Analyse de films, analyse de sociétés* (Hachette, 1975), and *Film et Histoire* (Editions Sociales, Paris, 1984). Also DOMINIQUE CHANCEL, *L'Europe à l'écran: le cinéma et l'enseignement de l'Histoire* (Council of Europa, 2001). In Spanish, articles published in *Comunicar*: ZUNZUNEGUI, S. (2007). Acerca del análisis fílmico: el estado de los cosas, *Comunicar*, 29; 51-28; MARZAL, J. (2007). El análisis fílmico en la era de las multipantallas. *Comunicar*, 29; 63-68, and the *Imágenes de la Historia* group; GORGUES-ZAMORA, R. & GOBERNA-TORRENT, J.J. (1998). El cine en la clase de historia. *Comunicar*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> See Archipels. Des parcours thématiques à travers une série d'extraits cinématographiques. A collective work. Audiovisual Centre, Liège. 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Mémoire du cinéma espagnol (1975-2007)*, edited by Pietsie Feenstra. *CinemAction*, 130. Corlet Publications. Condé-sur-Noireau. 2009.