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Contents

EDITORIAL 7

ARTICLES

Arja Virta
Historical Literacy: Thinking, Reading and Understanding History 11

Elisabeth Erdmann
Visual Literacy: Images as Historical Sources and Their Consequences for the Learning and Teaching of History 27

Yehoshua Mathias
Cultivating Historical Literacy in a Post-Literate Age: Historical Movies in Classroom 37

Annie Bruter
History as a Tool for Acquiring Literacy in 19th-Century French Schools 55

Cristina Yanes Cabrera
Pedagogical Museums and the Safeguarding of an Intangible Educational Heritage: Didactic Practices and Possibilities 67

Authors 81

Notes on the submission of manuscripts 82

Previous issues 84

Editorial

In August 2006, Umeå University hosted the 28th session of the International Standing Conference for the History of Education on the theme "Technologies of the Word: Literacies in the History of Education". One of the sub-themes was "Subject-Specific Literacy", and among the 140 papers that were presented some addressed literacy from the viewpoint of the teaching of history. This special issue on "Historical Literacy" contains five of these papers. Representing a variety of countries, topics and aspects, the articles reflect the complexity of history and its teaching.

In the opening article, Professor Arja Virta of the University of Turku, Finland, presents an in-depth analysis of the concept of "historical literacy". Perceived as a set of competences necessary to the study of history, historical literacy involves considerably more than reading ability. Qualifying the concept by adding aspects from functional, critical and empathetic literacy, Virta argues in favour of increasing awareness of the language of history as presented in textbooks. Since history textbooks most frequently offer univocal, coherent narratives, this kind of historical literacy must be challenged by new ideas of history teaching. According to Virta, the concept of "multiperspectivity" provides the history teacher with a conceptual tool for developing a multivocal, problem-oriented and critical education that supplements the history textbooks by offering alternative sources and interpretations.

When applied to the teaching of history, the concept of "visual literacy" can be understood as a sub-division of historical literacy as discussed by Virta. Analogous with historical literacy, visual literacy involves more complex competences than simply watching. In her article on visual literacy, Professor Elisabeth Erdmann of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany, maintains that visual literacy includes not only exact observation, but also sensibility and capability to differentiate. Following art historian Erwin Panofsky's interpretation scheme, Erdmann presents an instructive stage-by-stage analysis of Jacques-Louis David's well-known painting "The Death of Marat" (1793). The article concludes by suggesting a more conscious use of images in history teaching supported by improved education in visual literacy, i.e. how to interpret images, proposedly in collaboration with art classes.

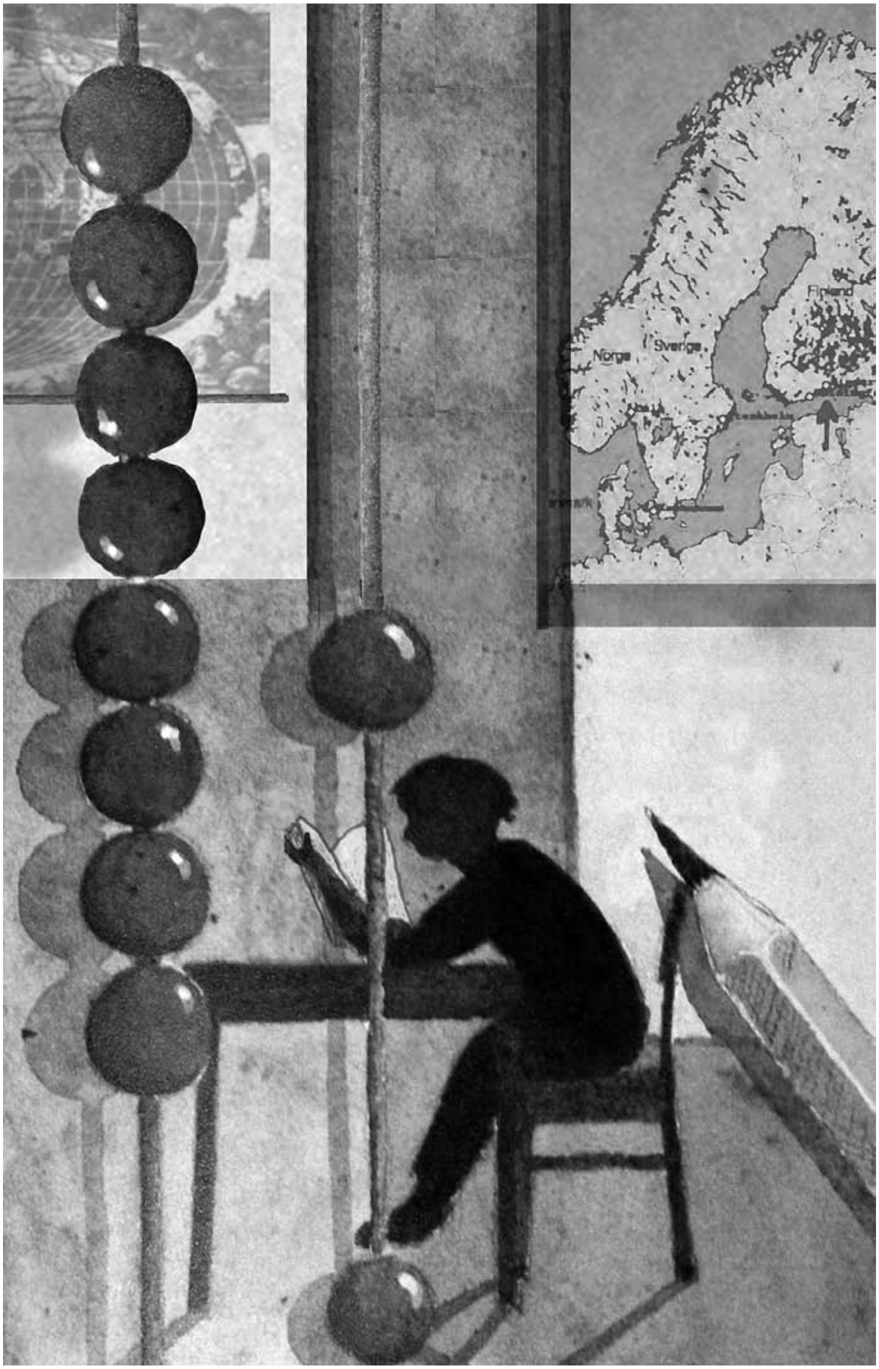
Historical literacy and visual literacy represent examples of analogical literacy, since the concepts encompass more competences than merely reading and writing skills. Cinematic literacy is another type of analogical literacy, which in certain respects can be considered a special case of visual literacy. In his article on the use of historical feature films in the classroom, Dr Yehoshua Mathias of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, convincingly argues that cinematic literacy embraces other competences than text-based historical literacy. Employing a variety of perspectives and discussing a range of film titles, the article represents a broad introduction to the educational use of historical films. Mathias also presents results from a questionnaire answered by student teachers attending his cinema and history courses. The answers indicate that the students often are more interested in judging the alleged objective historicity of the films than taking advantage of the opportunity they offer to discuss various interpretations of the past.

In the next article, Dr Annie Bruter of the National Institute for Educational Research in Paris, France, applies an historical perspective to the concept of historical literacy. After outlining the changing system of primary education and the various ideas of history education in 19th-century France, she demonstrates how history teaching and literacy instruction were closely intertwined in educational practice. Pupils were introduced to the history of France while practicing their reading skills by using readers with historical contents. The author points out that the applied concept of historical literacy was a narrow one, restricted to basic acquaintance with major historical events and personalities, far from the modern concept of historical literacy. Still, the French example teaches an interesting historical lesson concerning the persisting interdependence of generic and subject-specific literacy competences.

By addressing the "intangible educational heritage", the last article applies terminology from museology and does not explicitly refer to the concept of (historical) literacy. Nevertheless, in its focus on the oral practices of school culture, the article written by Dr Cristina Yanes Cabrera of the University of Seville, Spain, places itself in the very centre at literacy studies. When arguing in favour of collecting, classifying, storing and displaying the "spoken word", Yanes highlights a rich and regrettably neglected source material of great value for present and future research and education. In the concluding discussion Yanes emphasises the didactical advantages of incorporating the oral heritage of school culture into the teaching of history. Instead of presenting history as chronological sequences defined by important political events, as in traditional museums and textbooks, oral testimonies can offer a more holistic view of history. Furthermore, if students become engaged in materialising their own educative reality, then hopefully their interest in the intangible heritage of previous generations will grow.

In their analyses of various aspects of historical literacy, the articles presented here not only represent interesting contributions to the field of literacy studies, but also provide substantial input to the ongoing discussion of subject-specific competences in history studies at various levels of the educational systems of Europe.

Daniel Lindmark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Historical Literacy: Thinking, Reading and Understanding History

Arja Virta

Abstract

The paper deals with historical literacy as a concept and as a form of subject-specific literacy. Historical literacy is an ambiguous concept, which has been used by some authors in the framework of, and as an analogy for historical understanding, and even for historical consciousness. In the present paper, I will discuss the different definitions of historical literacy, although the main focus here, however, is on the relationship between history and language and on the multiple linguistic challenges related to reading and understanding history. The emphasis is on written texts, although the concepts of literacy and text can also refer for instance to visual presentations.

Introduction

"Historical literacy" is a construct that has been employed in the context of learning and understanding history, but it seems to resist explicit definition, or is often used without defining its scope and contents. This may at least in part explain why it has not become generic and dominant in the context of history education. The term is also often used without direct reference to the basic concept of literacy, to which it nevertheless is inevitably related.

Given the fact that literacy is a concept which in English can be used in multiple ways –some of which are quite remote from the original meaning of literacy as the skill of reading and writing – I will in the following attempt to analyse the concept of historical literacy. I will also relate the dimensions of historical literacy, or historical understanding, to the ways of reading that are required when working with historical texts, or learning and understanding history through texts.

The basic concept of literacy has been transformed over centuries, both deepening and broadening its content, and both of these

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dimensions of change are embedded in more general cultural and social developments. These changes are related to conceptions of learning and teaching, which emphasize active learning and knowledge construction, instead of the traditional conception of learning as knowledge reception. Instead of simply reading and writing, being literate today actually embraces multiple literacies and various skills and capacities. All this is also related to rising standards in education, which are apparent in several subjects in school curricula and in the more demanding standards of being literate.

To start with the deepening of the concept of literacy; as such, it is more than a technical skill, although at its simplest level it refers to the decoding of words and sentences in a text. There is in fact more to reading than the neutral process of realizing the manifest contents of a text, i.e., the understanding of concepts, the structure of the whole text, underlying messages, detecting bias, and the capacity to draw conclusions and apply the information in the text. Effective, functional reading requires interpreting and processing the text, willingness to be critical and to ask questions, in other words, to test the value of the statements. Furthermore, the reading act does not take place in a social vacuum; rather, we carry with us our cultural backgrounds and frames of reference, which affect the way we think and understand.

Functional literacy, although problematic to define, refers to literary skills that enable individuals to act and participate fully as citizens in their own culture and society. In fact, literacy also includes the dimensions of writing and communication and thus, being a functionally literate participant in society includes the skills of expressing one's ideas effectively. According to Apple (2000), it is not enough to gain technical literacy, or even functional literacy – what is demanded is critical literacy. He sees critical literacy as part of an individual's critical competence. In the course of history, literacy has served different functions in society. It has been essential for promoting skills that are necessary for the economic growth of the nation or for the creation of a common national culture, which is based on shared values. If an ordinary citizen were only required to receive information, technical and understanding literacy would be enough, but as this is not the case, our sights should be set higher upon ”critical literacy, powerful literacy, political literacy which enables the growth of genuine understanding and control of all the spheres of social life in which we participate” (Apple, 2000:42–43). And this is necessary, because knowledge is not neutral.

The broadening of the concept of literacy, or the rise of multiple literacies, is also related to deep societal, technological and cultural changes, in which visual and electronically mediated information has gradually replaced traditional literary culture. In addition to text skills, we are increasingly required to master some degree of visual literacy, media literacy, Internet literacy, etc. In this usage, and in the context of multiple literacies, literacy has become analogous with using several instruments or ways of communication. Another analogical use of literacy is to transfer it to various areas and use it for describing capacities and skills needed for working within a particular domain. Examples of this kind of literacy are mathematical literacy, civic literacy, scientific literacy, historical literacy, and moral literacy. As the concept of literacy enters numerous new domains, it has come to mean something else, and something more, than simply "to read and to write".[1]

The deepening and broadening dimensions of literacy are related to the domain of history, where skills in critical literacy, as well as visual and digital literacy, are required due to the flood of information and the growth of visual and electronically mediated information. Because of the growing emphasis on multiple literacies, the concept of historical literacy has become increasingly multifaceted, and an exhaustive and systematic analysis is certainly needed. This paper will concentrate on some aspects, related mainly to the reading of history, and the relationship between history and language.

Approaches to Historical Literacy

Historical literacy is a typical example of using literacy as an analogy for understanding a certain domain and possessing the instruments and capacities necessary to deal with it. What is included in the definition of historical literacy can vary to a great degree depending on the author. In a very narrow sense, following the model of Hirsch's (1988) well-known book *Cultural Literacy*, historical literacy was understood as possessing a stock of historical information, mainly consisting of names, dates and historical events, which could be seen to be an invaluable part of one's cultural heritage. This definition has been challenged because of its atomistic view of knowledge and culture. For instance Graff (1993:281; 1999:149–150), a prominent scholar in the field of the history of literacy, has been very critical of this definition of literacy, which has in fact subsequently become referred to relatively infrequently in contemporary literature on history education.

More often, historical literacy is used as a label for various higher-order capacities related to historical thinking, understanding and research. The exact capacities included are not, however, precisely defined, thereby giving rise to opinions. What seems to be held in common is the notion that historical literacy is more than possessing factual information about history. Instead it is skills, such as interpretation, inference, using historical sources, and argumentation (Perfetti, Britt, Rouet, Georgi & Mason, 1994:260–262; Lowenthal, 1997:50–51; van Sledright & Frankes, 1997). In this sense, historical literacy is also related to the basic ideas of the epistemology of history.

This broader and more ambitious conception of historical literacy is also somewhat controversial, or at least vague. Graff's comment on this is from 1999, but it can be applied to more recent discussion as well (Graff, 1999:151):

> *Also compromised if not lost entirely is a more fully developed and expansive concept of 'historical literacy' as a set of critical skills and abilities that contributes to the development of an encompassing and useful historical understanding. It is important to avoid adding to the ever-lengthening lists of forms and brands of literacies that threaten to drown us. Nevertheless, such a 'historical literacy' could be grounded in a notion of history as a distinctive form of thought and understanding based on a particular mode of understanding-in-historical-context.*

Stobart (1997:65) expresses a more pragmatic view, representing the broad interpretation of literacy as described in the introduction, and relates this concept to similar analogies from other domains, such as political literacy, computer literacy, cultural literacy and moral literacy:

> *Strictly speaking, of course, 'literacy' is 'the ability to read and write', and some purists strongly object to the use of the term in other contexts. Nevertheless, it can be used as a convenient label or shorthand term to cover the mastery of a body of content, skills and attitudes.*

Lee (2005) restarted the discussion of historical literacy, interpreting the concept mainly in the context of historical understanding, but also connecting it to historical consciousness, which he defines following Rüsen (1993) as an instrument with which individuals can create their own frameworks for understanding the past.

If we want to employ historical literacy as a broad concept embracing various skills or capacities, which can be seen as requirements for an in-depth understanding of history, we will end up with a question of definition and the need for more discussion. Notwithstanding the ambiguity surrounding this concept, I want point out the significance of language and the linguistic dimensions related to history and historical understanding. This dimension of historical literacy, or literacy related to history, has not been emphasised as much in recent literature as general cognitive skills. However, it is also important to see how history is related to the basic concept of literacy, and what kind of reading is needed in schools and in academic study. This is due to the major role that texts, and reading and writing, play both in knowledge construction and in the expression and acquisition of historical information. Reading history is certainly not a single process, because there are numerous genres of historical texts. It is also important to remember that understanding history is a more elaborate issue than simply reading or understanding history in written form.

History as Knowledge Mediated by Texts

Reading is always related to the nature of the content in question. As Husbands (2003:37) puts it, "the linguistic difficulties of history is also what we can call an interpretative and epistemological difficulty", pointing out that language should not to be separated from the epistemology of the field. Language is significant in historical learning processes, as well as in historical research, because historical knowledge is mediated, and reconstruction has to be undertaken to a great extent on the basis of written sources, subsequently communicated with words (Southgate, 1996:70).

Reading history is certainly more than decoding the manifest content of words and sentences. Historical understanding requires functional literacy as well as critical literacy, and the reader has to ask what can be seen as factual information, and what is more or less biased or stereotypical. It is not enough to understand the information provided by the text; the reader must go beyond the text and place its message against broader backgrounds. Although these are general reading skills, they can be also be deduced from the essential features of subject-specific historical epistemology. Wineburg (1991) has divided this process into sourcing (evaluating the source of the document), corroboration (checking the factual information against other documents), and contextualising the message against a broader background.

Of course, the reading process includes the understanding of concepts, both first-order and second-order concepts, i.e., concepts related directly to historical substance, and those which are more immanent, organising principles related to the subject-specific nature of history, such as time and causation. A basic challenge of functional literacy is that of understanding the message of the text and creating coherent knowledge structures, instead of only adopting details and anecdotal information. Related to these is obviously the concept of narrative literacy used by Rodrigo (1994:311–313), which refers to understanding information that is packed into the form of narratives.

Critical literacy represents one of the basic tools of historical research, and it can also be related to the discussion of this concept within the school of critical pedagogy, where critical literacy is expanded to embrace the analysis of power and hidden ideological messages underlying the texts (Apple, 2000). Consequently, critical literacy is one of the basic social and political competencies required of an adult individual. It is thus not only a subject-specific skill, but also deemed necessary for any citizen in everyday life, democratic participation, and for instance reading newspapers, watching news on TV, or surfing on the Internet.

Critical literacy is a great challenge to the student learning history or any other subject. This problem may be the result of persisting pedagogical traditions emphasising more the amassing of information with the help of texts rather than using texts as bases for argumentation and discussion (Säljö, 2000:19). The same problem was described by Wineburg (1991; 2001) in his research where professional academic historians and talented high school students read similar historical documents. The professionals had a critical and questioning approach to what they were reading and were observant of subtexts underlying the written documents, while the students tried only to absorb information efficiently.

In their textbook on historical methodology, Jarrick and Söderberg (1993:8–9) add another dimension to the reading skills needed to study history. Critical literacy alone is not enough, if the reader wants to know what the author of a historical account really wants to say; “empathetic literacy” (or reading with empathy), which means understanding the purpose and values of the author is also required. Empathetic literacy involves “liberating oneself from one’s own preconceptions and comprehending what is really said in the text, also between the lines”.[2] Empathetic reading begins with critical reading, but the reader also needs to detect the premises, motives and values that the author had, and the ambiguities in the text.

It is basically a question of historical empathy, or an attempt at understanding the world in which the people of the past lived, putting oneself in their position and trying to understand the issues from their points of view (Jenkins, 1991:39). Gaining real historical empathy can be seen as an epistemological problem, as it means recovering the thoughts and values of people who lived a long time ago.

The empathetic reading of historical texts challenges the cognitive approach to learning. If the readers only interpret texts in the framework of their existing schemes or preconceptions, they might miss something essential, and historical texts may be interpreted on the basis of existing, perhaps unsatisfactory knowledge and structures, though the author's purpose and way of thinking might have been totally different (Jarrick & Söderberg, 1993). Empathetic and critical literacy are not mutually exclusive, but the former requires an even more critical attitude, because the readers have to overcome their own preconceptions.

Language Reflecting the Past

The evidence of past events can be fragmentary, and written texts are quite often biased and far from neutral. This brings a certain cognitive and epistemological uncertainty to the understanding of history. Nor does the language as such describe past events accurately or objectively. According to modern language theories, language is not a neutral instrument used only for describing the world and carrying information, it also has the capacity of constructing reality by directing and limiting our thoughts, observations and expressions (Tosh, 1994:96–97; Southgate, 1996:70–71).

All this implies that it is important to analyse the language of history: ideologies, metaphors, analogies, emotions, and attempts at influencing the reader (Stradling, 2001:101–102; see also Husbands 2003:30–42). Historical concepts may carry heavy ideological burdens, often ignored in textbooks which instead reproduce the concepts as if they were totally neutral, unproblematic mirrors of the past. They are seen as more accurate than they are, although their meaning may have changed across times, and contemporary uses of concepts do not necessarily correspond to their past meanings. In this sense, the language of history can be compared to a foreign language, or a language which we almost, but not quite perfectly, understand.

In the book *Power and Criticism*, Cherryholmes (1988:49–74) discusses the way in which textbooks use historical concepts, and claims that their meanings are taken as far too self-evident. For instance, the expressions ”the Union won the Civil War”, ”the Union won the War Between the States” or ”the North won the War Between the States” need some explanation in order to be understood (Cherryholmes, 1988:49). One can ask what we really mean by “winning” in that specific case. A similarly impossible expression in Swedish or Finnish history may be, “During the Reformation the Swedish crown confiscated the properties of the church”. Another difficulty are words or terms which may have both concrete and abstract meanings, which confuse the student (e.g., crown as currency, or as symbol, or as, in the above text, metaphor for state).

Texts always carry with them the taste of their own time. People in history, including the authors of documents, had their own ways of thinking and conceptual frameworks, and modern historians, lay readers and students have theirs. Each writer and reader brings their attitudes and frames of reference to the table. The images that we create are dependent on the language we have at our disposal, and existing linguistic models and traditions shape our ways of speaking and writing (Berkhofer, 1995). However, reading history with as true an understanding as possible requires that we understand the texts and messages in their contexts, and attempt to locate the meanings with which they were charged when they were written.

Multiperspectivity and Controversiality of History

Jus as history has no single or univocal line of development, there are numerous perspectives applicable to it. Multiperspectivity can be related to issues of gender, ethnicity, or social class, or to political contradictions within one society or between two nations. Historical events and issues are often sensitive and controversial, and there are seldom any self-evident truths about historical events, but rather several accounts, none of which is absolutely correct; each of the parties may have their own truths (Stradling 2001:141–42; Berkhofer, 1995:50). History is seldom a straightforward report of positive development, but rather often an account of struggles and animosities. This is why historical accounts are often biased and far from objective. History can also be written in highly emotional and subjective ways, and this is often related to the more or less conscious use or misuse of history for political, national or other purposes (Stradling, 2003). Even seemingly neutral texts may have hidden messages and subtexts.

The writers of school textbooks for instance choose content on the basis of what they consider to be important and worth transferring to the new generation as valuable historical knowledge. Thus professional historians have power when they decide what is and what is not to be included, what counts as "official knowledge" (Berkhofer, 1995; Apple 2000). Here, the manifold parallel interpretations and controversiality of historical phenomena are often ignored.

Multiperspectivity can be seen as a great challenge to historical literacy, demanding the capacity to understand the fact that historical issues are sensitive and problematic and that there are always various interpretations available, thus requiring critical and empathetic reading of historical texts so as to avoid an unrealistic view of history. This is at least as problematic for the authors of historical texts as it is for their readers.

Multiple Histories – Multiple Genres

In addition to the multivocality and multiperspectivity of history, the genre of historical texts has become more and more multifaceted. Historians no longer believe in great narratives, but rather instead a flora of smaller narratives. There are also numerous genres of historical culture outside academic spheres; instead, there are other types of history, which may gain even more popularity and have more influence on people's historical consciousness than academic texts. As Jenkins (1991:65–66) describes, various forms of history can be found anywhere in consumerist and democratic culture. History can be popularized, disseminated and consumed through various channels and in various manners. The list is endless: Popular history books for children and adolescents, historical novels, computer games, role plays, CD-ROMs, websites, and so on. These developments are not infrequently related to powerful economic interests, which may play a more significant role in determining quality than academic interest of accuracy do (see also Aronsson, 2004: passim).

Historians ought not to only lament this development, which may in the long run contribute to the growth of historical culture, historical consciousness and identity. History can also be popularised in attractive, enjoyable and aesthetic ways. For instance Aronsson (2000:19) maintains that in principle all historical knowledge can – notwithstanding its academic quality – contribute to the growth of the receivers' self-understanding and identity. On the other hand, Lowenthal (1998: passim) makes a clear distinction between heritage, or lay history, and professional academic history. What is crucial is, of course, the quality of the package and its contents.

This multiplicity can be seen as an expression of postmodernity, which challenges indisputable facts, objectivity and truths, and encourages scepticism toward history, when all versions of history can be seen as provisional hypotheses in linguistic form. As history grows to resemble a mosaic of multiple forms of expression and multiple truths, what can be certain and true? If nothing is certain, the reader should in principle display a critical attitude toward everything, including entertaining forms of history (Southgate, 1996:7–8). Thus a central criterion of historical quality is then whether the author is conscious of the epistemology of history and of the need for critical analysis of the evidence (Jenkins, 1991:69).

Do History Textbooks Teach Historical Literacy?

Stanford (1994:100) summarizes the qualities of a good history textbook in three words – true, clear and beautiful. It should provide reliable descriptions of the past, communicate them clearly, and be written in an enjoyable style. Not all textbook authors manage to meet all these requirements.

In his classical work ”The Nature of History”, Arthur Marwick (1989) addresses the history textbook in general, writing that its contents should solely be based on historical research. Additionally, it should

> *carry with it some of the stuff and excitement of history: history, we all know, is not mere succession of dates, of kings, of presidents… Textbooks aimed at more junior audiences are something of a different case; their writing involves much greater understanding of educational psychology than most professional historians can pretend to. All one can ask is that school textbooks, still being the main contact which the majority of people have with history, should not do more violence than is absolutely necessary to historical reality as revealed by the best recent academic writers.* (Marwick, 1989:266)

However, there is a rich tradition of research which levels criticism at the traditional ways of writing textbooks, from both pedagogical and linguistic points of view. At the same time, the history textbook genre is, of course, very variable, and there are certainly many positive examples of books that can be instrumental in encouraging and developing students' historical thinking.

If a textbook in the 1950s was generally a long narrative story, by the 1980s it had lost this characteristic. Texts have become shorter and shorter and made way for illustrations; newer textbooks resemble dictionaries, whose main purpose seems to be to quickly dispense information. Selander (1988) has analyzed the style of history textbooks in Sweden from the 1840s up to the 1980s and concludes that modern textbooks have abandoned the narrative style altogether. Instead of stories, there are short statements of fact, and descriptions of events lacking context.

There has also been criticism about the superficiality of textbook texts, that they present only one line of development as some kind of official knowledge, consisting of certain and objective facts, failing to show the reader the many uncertainties and alternative interpretations of historical reality which exist (Karvonen, 1995). Textbooks have also been criticised for lacking metatexts or a metadiscourse. Instead of thoroughness, texts present broad and superficial outlines (Crismore, 1984). This kind of criticism refers to other subjects too, as is shown by van Sledright and Frankes (1998). The information provided is not related to research in the field, and students are not given the opportunity of learning about the thought processes behind the research that generated the information, as indicated by Wineburg (1991). History textbooks typically present only one perspective, so students do not learn to analyse and compare contradictory texts (Stradling, 2001). The basic weakness of history textbooks is that they do not provide adequate opportunities for learning historical and critical literacy, and understanding the very nature of history and its epistemology.

Although textbooks are important to the construction of adolescents' view of history, they are only one instrument. While important, texts alone do not determine how individual cognitive capacity develops (Säljö, 2000:210). More important is the social practice of teaching, using textbooks and working with texts. Instrumental is how the students are trained to read. However, even more important may be the everyday philosophy of history that underlies classroom practice. Is history seen as lists of facts and names, or development, questions and alternative interpretations?

Although the need for understanding several points of view is self-evident, it may be difficult to write texts that include this multiplicity of perspectives while remaining understandable to the average reader. Berkhofer (1995) points sceptically to the difficulties of including several viewpoints in a single historical text, emphasizes the need for dialogue. Despite the fact that a text may be polyvocal and include several viewpoints, it may still lack multiple perspectives or fail to be truly multicultural, thereby remaining rather fragmentary or incomprehensible (Berkhofer, 1995:170, 185).

In sum, textbooks alone are not enough for teaching historical literacy. It is important to use various types of historical texts, including original sources and fiction, as well as texts written from several points of view. This is how students can be exposed to alternative approaches and perspectives, and the many and varied genres of historical presentation.

Conclusion

We cannot overlook the higher-order capacities that are included in the definition of historical literacy (which in itself is a very ambiguous concept) and in the dimensions of reading history. If we want to use this concept in the context of reading history and decoding messages about history, there are a few inevitable requirements. Above all, what is required is being able to read critically and with empathy. Another requirement is to acquire a way of reading that enables students to grasp and compare various interpretations and accept the fact that there are perhaps no single truths but instead a number of various approaches. The need for understanding various points of view is even more important in multicultural societies. A major challenge for modern schools and their history education is to prepare students to read various kinds of texts and understand multiple forms and channels of communication. Adolescents meet different forms of historical culture outside the school, some of which are of high quality, others more or less unreliable – but all of them can be connected to the teaching of history, used as motivation – and as objects for critical reading.

The growing multiplicity and fragmentation of the historical genre creates new requirements for historical literacy compared to our traditional view of historical understanding (such as understanding the messages of academic history or history class in school). In the colourful marketplace of history, readers need to be highly literate, and able to read critically various types of texts and cultural products coming at them through various channels. It does not suffice to try to assimilate all this new information with what we already know; popular forms of history can also be Trojan horses and instruments for promoting selfish goals, which often have very little to do with historical truth.

Given the immense flood of information, and the existence of competing explanations and truths, thoughtful and sensitive reading of history can thus be seen as a crucial goal, instilling the capacity for quality control of historical accounts and presentations. This ideal may seem remote to the everyday life of the classroom, given the learning disabilities hampering less able and less motivated students, who may have problems simply coping with simple and unidimensional texts. Without going deeper into this issue, skills related to historical understanding are also very meaningful to slower learners, and higher-order skills can be trained with simpler texts that nevertheless require thinking about causation, evidence and similarity.

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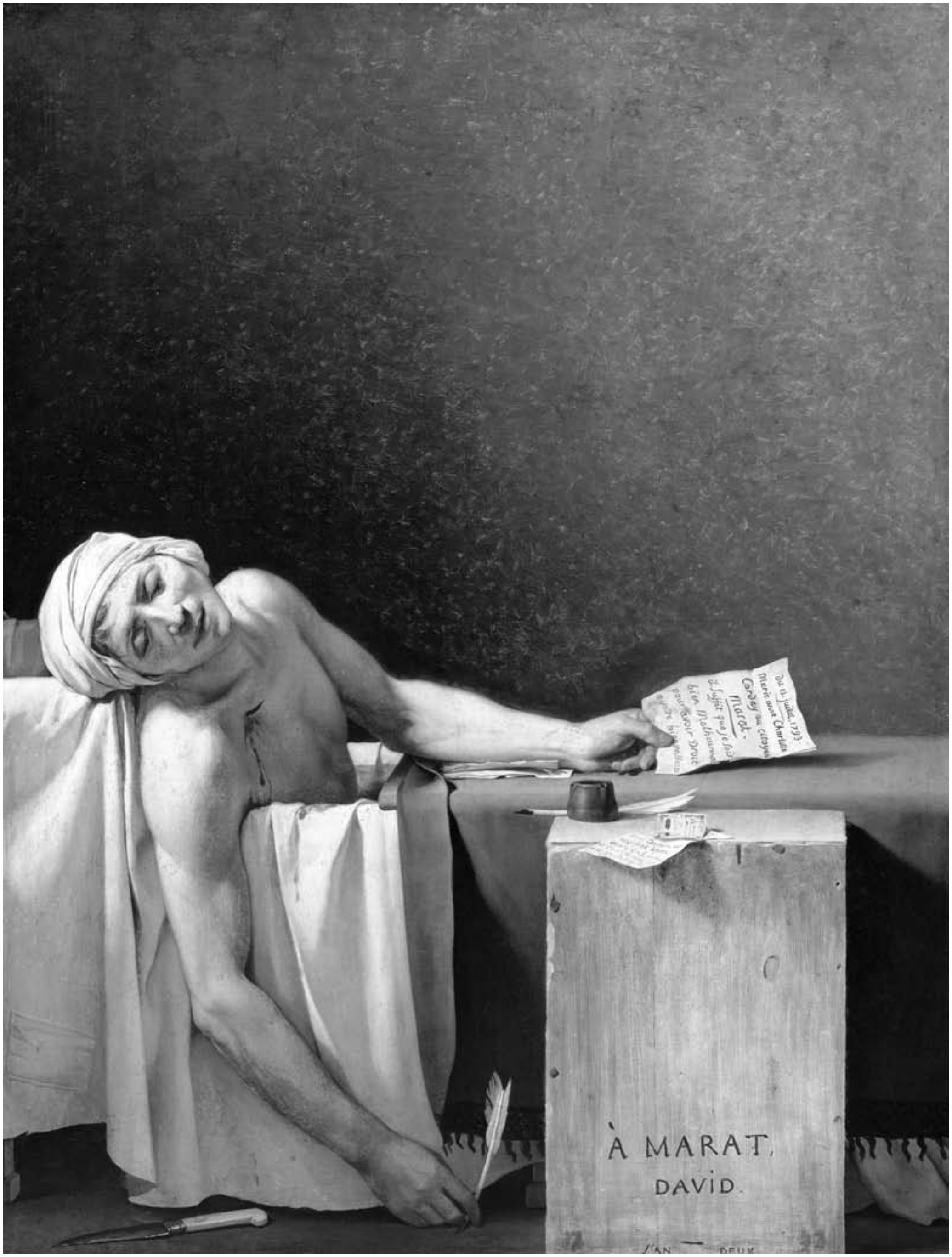
Endnotes

[1] The use of literacy in the meaning of 'to read and write' also seems to be typical of the English language, and thus of international academic discussion, but it is a difficult term to translate and make understandable in many other languages. For instance, the corresponding terms in Finnish (*lukutaito*) and Swedish (*läskunnighet*) refer only to reading, not to writing, and it is even more problematic to find an accurate translation for the metaphoric uses of literacy such as historical literacy, mathematical literacy and visual literacy. One may also pose a question about what is gained, when one single concept is used in so many different contexts and includes various dimensions, which are mutually unrelated, risking its explanatory power.

[2] In Swedish, *frigöra sig från sina egna förutsatta meningar och verkligen uppfatta vad som står i texten, även det som står mellan raderna*. The literal translation from Swedish *att läsa empatiskt* is "to read with empathy".


À MARAT,
DAVID.

Jacques-Louis David (1793): Marat à son dernier soupir ("The Death of Marat"), 1.65 x 1.28 m. Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts.

Visual Literacy:

Images as Historical Sources and Their Consequences for the Learning and Teaching of History

Elisabeth Erdmann

Abstract

Today's culture is increasingly influenced by visual images. As such, it is important to sharpen the senses, to watch closely and to reflect on the creation and effect of images. In the present article, I will deal with the attitude of history and history didactics toward images and different approaches to image interpretation will be discussed and assessed. It will turn out that Panofsky's interpretation scheme with several, also historical extensions builds a good base. Jacques-Louis David's painting *Marat à son dernier soupir* ("The Death of Marat") is chosen to be interpreted because it is an "icon of revolution" and influences art until today. We shall argue that while seeing seems to be an ability that normally exists from birth, it is actually necessary to learn to see images. Finally, some proposals for history teaching in elementary school, college and university are offered.

Introduction

Today's culture is increasingly influenced by visual images. Film, television and the printed media have gained enormous importance in our everyday lives. Gottfried Boehm spoke of the "iconic change of modern times", though with a question mark at the end (Boehm, 1995:13ff.). We find many images in historical works, mainly in those written for a broad audience and especially in history school textbooks. Unfortunately, the actual handling of images is often not up to standard (Erdmann, 1998:180ff.) Generally, the desire to visualize has increased considerably and the ability to manipulate images is technically very easy to do today.[1] In this situation it is important, despite or because of the masses of images, to sharpen the senses, to be vigilant and to reflect on the creation and effect of images.

In the following, I will briefly deal with the attitude of history and history didactics toward

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images and representational sources. Furthermore, I will present a variety of approaches to the interpretation of images most suitable to historians. By concentrating on one example, I will show how an image can be interpreted, and, finally, I will draw some conclusions about how to teach visual literacy.

The Attitude of History and History Didactics toward Visual Images

According to Joachim Rohlfes, images are not the favourite medium of historical tradition. They stand far behind texts, recently also behind numbers (Rohlfes, 1997:331). Since the 19th century, written as opposed to visual and representational sources have been considered much more meaningful, partly due to the fact that in the 19th century the intellectual ideals of the humanities had penetrated historical research (Nipperdey, 1968:150f).

Since the outset of the 20th century, other sources than texts – like archeological remains and images – have begun to be granted greater value by historians. Jacques LeGoff rejects the differentiation of sources by calling them all "documents/monuments". By that he meant any form of written text, visual documents, archeological findings, oral traditions, and so on. At the same time, he called for a new source review. According to him, it is no longer sufficient to apply traditional source review, which merely serves to uncover forgeries. The structure of the document needs to be dissolved in order to understand the condition of its production. Historians need to discover who regulated the production of remains which had become, with or without intent, historical documents (LeGoff, 1990:16, 49). Comparable developments can be witnessed in Germany. Rainer Wohlfeil and his scholar Heike Talkenberger have provided historical imagery with significant impulses, without however receiving an appropriate response (Tolkemitt & Wohlfeil, 1991; Talkenberger, 1994).

In history didactics, the use of images has always been encouraged. Images are to be used not only in an illustrative way but also heuristically. There are several publications on this matter available (e.g. Sauer, 2000; Buntz & Erdmann, 2004).

Approaches to Image Interpretation and their Assessment

In the following, I shall briefly present different approaches to the interpretation of images, judging them according to their suitability for historians (cf. also Burke, 2003:195ff).

The psychoanalytical approach attends to unconscious symbols and associations mentioned by Sigmund Freud mentioned in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1901. This approach, however, is difficult for historians, since unlike psychoanalysts, they cannot listen to their "patient's" free associations. Furthermore, historians deal with whole societies and cultures rather than individuals.

When we examine structuralism, also known as semiology, as the theory of symbols, two important hypotheses emerge: An image can be regarded as a "system of signs", but it can also be regarded as the subsystem of a larger system. Structuralism is sensitive to contrasts and associations between images. Furthermore, the act of selection is of great importance – what does the artist choose to show, what does he not display? This emphasis on formal parallels and contrasts makes a significant contribution to the interpretation of images, but structuralists care more about the relationship between certain elements of images than their deciphering. They also neglect the dispute over the phenomenon of change. As a reaction to this, the poststructuralistic movement evolved, which focuses on the undefined or the "endless playing with signification" (Jacques Derrida). The disadvantage of this approach is the supposition that each meaning accredited to an image is as valid as any other (Burke, 2003:198ff).

Art historian Erwin Panofsky developed a three-stage interpretation scheme, which puts the individual image at the centre of analysis. The first step is the "pre-iconographic description". This requires practical experience, i.e. familiarity with the objects and events in question. The work of art is surveyed for its factual content and expressional statements; facts and emotional content are gathered. What follows is the "iconographic analysis". The topic is deduced from historically mediating motifs. In order to achieve this, the viewer needs to be familiar with certain topics and representations, as well as knowledge of the written sources. In the third and final step, Panofsky presents the "iconologic interpretation". Here, interpretation is paramount. A work of art is to be interpreted according to contemporary political and social, intellectual, religious and cultural conditions along with ideas in circulation at the time of its creation (Panofsky, 1978:36ff). Art historians after Panofsky have referred to the difficulty in distinguishing between iconographic analysis and iconologic interpretation (Bätschmann, 1992:70ff); however, even Panofsky's own interpretations lack a clear distinction between the two steps.

Furthermore, the social dimension, i.e. the context which relates to community, is neglected, as is the question of reception and whether its audience was able to understand the image adequately. For historians, Panofsky's approach is surely the most germane one, but it has to be complemented with historical aspects and sources. It also builds a good base for history lessons, yet it should be extended. First, the impression that is created by the image has to be verbalised. Furthermore, supplements from an historical point of view need to be added, including written sources. Whether the order and differentiation of the steps can be achieved also depends on the questions and comments of the pupils. Naturally, only the teacher in each given classroom situation can decide how detailed the interpretation of images may become, because the teachers are the only ones who know the age and interests of their pupils.

David's "The Death of Marat"

To demonstrate this interpretive method, I will use *Marat á son dernier soupir* by Jacques-Louis David, a painting that became an "icon of the revolution" and remains well-known today.[2] In its interpretation, I shall follow Panofskys approach with the supplementary pedagogic and historical tools mentioned above.

Spontaneous Reactions

First, pupils should be allowed to react spontaneously to the impression the image has on them.

Preiconographic Description

The viewer is confronted with a dying man (cf. Sauerländer, 1983; Traeger, 1986). The hipbath plainly arranged resembles a sarcophagus, from which looms the body of the person bleeding out. The tub is laid out with a piece of white linen, on which a patch is visible. Several large creases drop over the edge of the tub to the floor. The head of the man rests on the elevated edge of the front end. It is muffled with a white cloth. A wound gapes beneath the right collarbone. The left forearm lies across pieces of paper on a writing board laid upon the edge of the tub. It is covered with green cloth. In his hand the man holds a text on which one can clearly read the following (my translation): "On July 13, 1793. Marie Anne Charlotte Corday to the citizen Marat. It suffices for me to be miserable to have a claim to Your benevolence." Blood stains the paper. The right arm hangs over the edge of the tub, the nib slipping from his hand. To the left lies the murder weapon, a kitchen knife. The box upon which stands a leaden inkpot and a feather, some paper, and a piece of paper currency – a so-called "assignat"

– is inscribed “A Marat David”. Below ”L’an deux”, the date according to the revolutionary calender, one can see that the original date of 1793 was repainted. The following instruction stands on the paper: “You will give this *assignat* to the mother of five whose husband has fallen in defense of the fatherland.” The background and lighting also need explaining.

Iconographic Analysis

Since 1789, the former doctor and now publicist Jean-Paul Marat had tirelessly tried to maintain revolutionary momentum with his activism and various newspapers as the widespread “L’ami du Peuple”. At the beginning of June 1793, the National Convention was put under pressure from the sections and the commune to accuse the Girondist deputies of betrayal. Marat played a significant role here. When it became unbearably hot in Paris that July, Marat spent most of the day in the backroom of his apartment writing in the tub in order to somewhat ease the pain caused by his skin disease and exacerbated by the heat. Charlotte Corday d’Armont, who, child of a poverty-stricken aristocratic Norman family, had been raised with the liberal Benedictines in Caen and had read Voltaire and Rousseau, as well as Plutarch and Tacitus. She socialised with the Girondists who had fled to Caen. She came to Paris intent on killing Marat because she loathed Jacobine radicalism, for which she held Marat responsible as the main agitator. After she had not been permitted to see him on the morning of July 13, she left a written note in which she begged to be received by Marat. When she returned at night, she had another, more emotional note with her. She was allowed in and Marat received her sitting in his tub. Shortly afterwards, one could hear cries for help. Charlotte Corday was arrested without incident. Four days later, after a trial before the revolutionary tribunal, she was guillotined.

With this in mind, it becomes clear that the image before us is deliberately staged, starting with the fall of light and the layout of the background. The relation between the head laying on the shoulder and the right arm reminds us of both antique examples of the hero being laid out in his tomb and of Christian *pietas*. These interpretations can also be amended. Given the written testimony of eyewitnesses who had visited the room where the murder was committed, the walls were covered with baroque wallpaper with candelabra and other wall decorations. David knew the room because he had visited Marat on the day preceding the murder. Lining the tub with linen is not realistic. And even the piece of writing that Marat was holding in his hand is, according to the wording, the second that was found with Charlotte Corday after the deed. Furthermore, the last sentence that is visible on the painting has been changed – *bienveillance* (benevolence) instead of *protection*. *Bienveillance* signifies a revolutionary alternative to Christian altruism. The will bequeathing money to the widow was David's invention; it does, however, refere to Marat's request of June 4 to support aid to the families of soldiers. It thus becomes evident also by looking at the dedication on the wooden box that David stylised his friend Marat as a martyr of the revolution, as a friend of the people and the poor, who, anguished by his own illness, leaves his last pennies to a poor widow. This tendency can also be seen from the artist's speech upon handing the completed painting over to the National Convention on November 14, 1793.

Iconological Interpretation

The acceptance of the Jacobine Republican constitution by various regions of the country came the day after the murder of Marat. Then the president of the National Convention announced the assassination. Since David had already painted assassinated representative Le Peletier, the "Contrat social" section called on painter and current president of the Jacobinian Club, Jacques-Louis David, to paint a picture of this latest incident. After David handed over the picture to the National Convention, it decided to place Marat in the Panthéon. Furthermore, David's pictures of Le Peletier, which is missing today, and of Marat were to be put up in the representative's session meeting place. A thousand reproductions of both pictures were to be sent to representatives and to each "département", all at public expense. Even here, the propagandistic character of the painting becomes apparent. The stylisation of Marat as a martyr of the revolution needs to be seen in the context of the cult of rationality. On November 10, the National Convention had participated at the "festival of rationality" in Nôtre-Dame completely. Paralleling the "dechristianising" movement, the cult of the "martyr of freedom" emerged, which encouraged the adoration of Marat.

Learning to See

Reading and writing as cultural techniques are learned and rehearsed through tedious repetition. Psychologist and art historian Rudolf Arnheim has referred to the fact that seeing is the very basis for formation of intellectual concepts (Arnheim, 1996:24ff). In history and history didactics it is self-evident that written sources are being interpreted according to the rules. That is what students of history learn from their very first class; there are even some excellent recommendations how sources can be used and interpreted in history lessons (e.g. Hug, 1977:148ff; Rohlfes, 1986:279ff; Pandel, 2000).

In contrast, seeing seems to be an ability taken for granted to normally exist from the moment of birth. This opinion and the orientation of the humanities have led to a situation where, compared with written sources, visual sources have long been used only illustratively and have therefore been deemed of lesser relevance. Another reason for the absence of reflection about images in general is the fact that we can only communicate about images by talking about them (Boehm, 1995:326).

Director Wim Wenders recently said in a discussion, "In today's culture there is not much seeing any more being done; instead there is judging, exploiting, examining, commenting, dealing with, or, at best, 'finding something interesting' and being appreciated. In the age of consumption, *seeing* has gone out of style" (Wenders, 2002:39; my translation). This has been approved by psychological studies, which show that the value of information about images is underestimated (Weidenmann, 1988a:43; Weidenmann 1988b:143ff).

In order to combat this, we must become "visually literate" or, quite simply, learn to see. The concept is not uncontroversial, particularly when the metaphor "literacy" has been understood too narrowly. In contrast to that, advocates of the visual literacy movement have constantly reiterated that we humans fail to make use of the entire range of our potential to comprehend and that visual images comprise a large part of this area. (Weidenmann, 1988b:174ff; Pettersen, 1994). Referring to the average museum-goer, Nelson Goodman wrote "indeed most of those who use a library [can] also read but the majority of those who go to museums cannot see" (Goodman, 1987:251). As a concequence, he demands for a visual education. That can also be transferred to the dealing with images.

Consequences for the Future

The following four suggestions for using images in history lessons in elementary schools, colleges and universities have been gleaned from what we have described above.

1. Images should not only be used to illustrate. From the very beginning of their education, students should be taught how to interpret selected images in the same way that it is

already standard for written sources. In order to achieve that, and what we have heard so far, there is provided a procedure in four-steps that makes use of Panofsky's model with extensions made on a pedagogic and historical level. However, the course of discussion about images should be allowed to be flexible according to the situation of each respective class.

2. Interest, level of proficiency, and age as well as the explanatory power of the image need to be taken into consideration when selecting an image for classroom interpretation.

3. It is important that pupils and students of history learn how to see. They need to learn to perceive images as a source, to interpret them accordingly and, when appropriate, to detect manipulation. Exact observation, sensitivity and the capability to differentiate are thus important characteristics to cultivate. Here, collaboration with art classes is both helpful and essential.

4. Furthermore, it is necessary to better support teachers and give them historical background information in order for them to interpret images properly.

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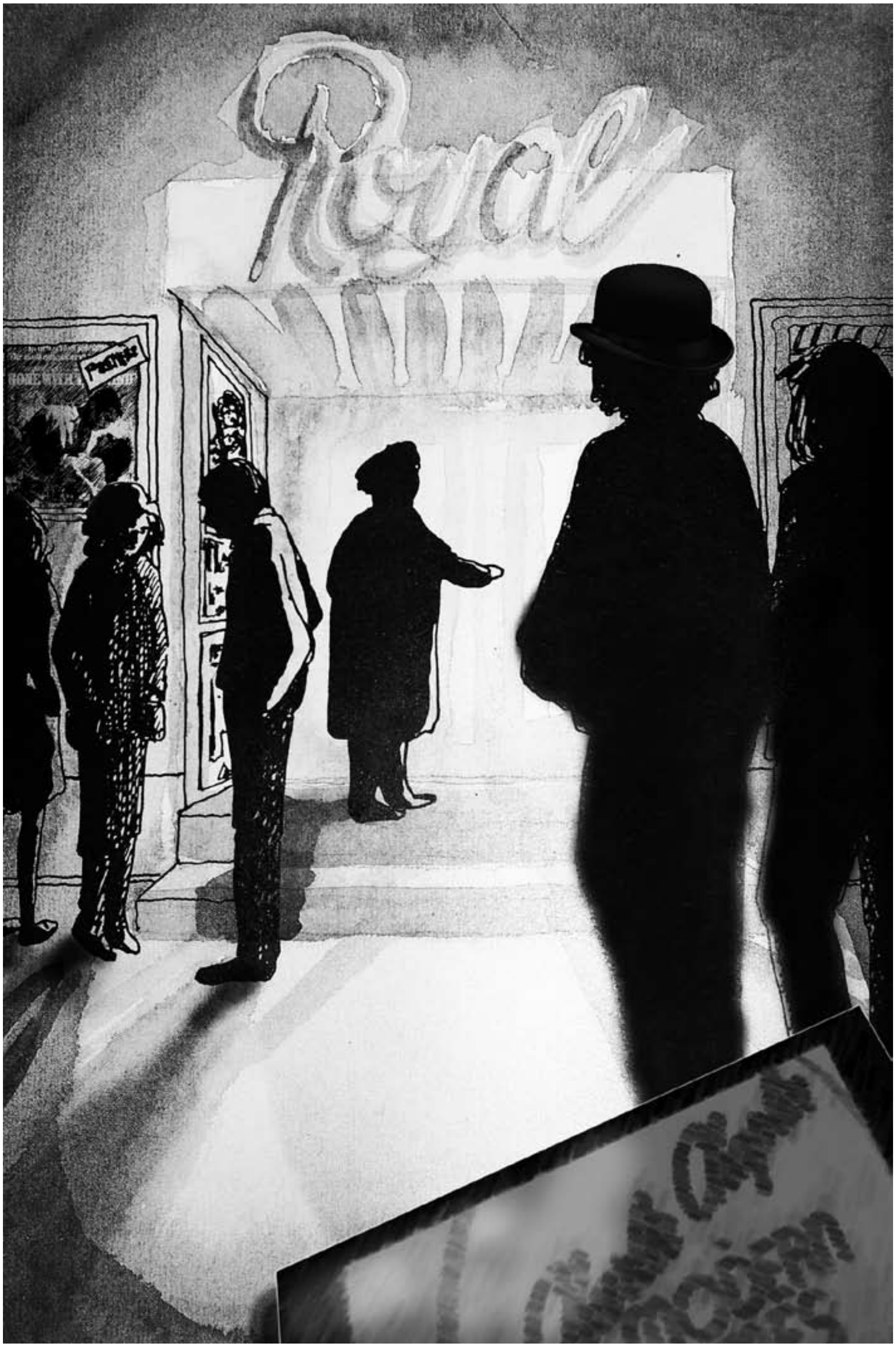
Endnotes

[1] Cf. the exhibition "Bilder, die lügen" in *Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* in Bonn, which ran from Nov. 27, 1998 to Feb. 28, 1999. In a video shown only at the exhibition, it was shown how easy it is nowadays to manipulate images. In this context, see also Jaubert, 1989; King, 1997; and Treml, 1997.

[2] This is not the place to address the issue of how difficult it is to classify this "icon of revolution" – is it a portrait, an historical image, a factual image, an image of a martyr or an epitaph? (Cf. Bleyl, 1990:370).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Cultivating Historical Literacy in a Post-Literate Age:

Historical Movies in Classroom

Yehoshua Mathias

Abstract

This article introduces a course designed for student teachers intending to use historical feature films in history class, not merely as illustrations, but rather as part of a new and broader concept of historical literacy and textuality. It furthermore discusses at length some of the components of the new concept of historical literacy offered by the course and proposes the development of new ways of thinking about the subject of history which includes a grasp of the language of images and feature films. The article also analyzes the students' response to the course; although all of them ranked the course as highly interesting and stimulating, only a few expressed willingness to use its methods in class. The reason for that might be that the new historical literacy implies, in fact, a "Copernicean revolution" in the study of history and its teaching practices.

Introduction: Changes in Historical Literacy

Changes in the components of literacy as well as its definition are a constant in the history of education, as shown by research into the development of literacy programmes – reading and writing – in elementary schools since the 18th century (Chartier & Hebrard, 2001). The same can be said about historical literacy. In the 18th century, Voltaire created a framework for the study of universal history, while Rousseau recommended the study of the history of the classic world. In the 19th century, through the influence of the new nation-state and the compulsory education it imposed, the history of the nation and the state became the axis around which revolved historical teaching in elementary schools. In more recent times expectations that a more critical approach and meta-historical understanding of the subject have arisen. Nowadays, new historiographical paradigms and technical advances serve to rede-

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fine the boundaries of historical literacy. Some scholars are of the opinion that the basics of a post-modernist approach and the fundamentals of narrative thinking ought to be taught already in schools (Seixas, 2000).

Within such a framework there is certainly space to encourage a cinematic literacy of history. As Susan Sontag puts it, our epoch is characterized by a thirst for image and symbols.

> *Humankind lingers unregenerately in Plato's cave, still revelling, its age old habit, in mere images of the truth ... this very insatiability of the photographing eye changes the terms of confinement in the cave, our world ... photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe... Finally, the most grandiose result of the photographic enterprise is to give us the sense that we can hold the whole world in our heads – as an anthology of images* (Sontag, 1979:3).

Popular movies are indeed currently one of the main sources in structuring public historical memory. The use of images and historical films is also rapidly spreading in schools, be it as part of regular class teaching or within the framework of days of remembrance and commemoration. However, in spite of the fact that cinematographical memory is an important facet of historical literacy, up to now rather limited attention has been paid to it in the training of history teachers. There is no doubt that cinematic literacy differs widely from the historical literacy that students can acquire in the normal course of their college studies. It also requires skills and knowledge which differ from those required for reading and understanding texts. In order to compensate for this deficit, between the years 1997 and 2003 I developed a course intended to inculcate the "basics" of cinematic literacy.

I shall concentrate here on the fundamentals of cinematic literacy in history as they were developed in this course. In the second, and shorter, part of this paper, I shall analyze the attitudes of the students attending the course. The data for an assessment of the skills acquired by the students and their attitudes, were collected through quantitative and qualitative methods; questionnaires filled in by the students; my own impressions as the teacher of the course; and the assignments and papers presented by the students as requirements of the course.

The Basics of Cinematic Historical Literacy

What are the basics, the alphabet, of cinematic historical literacy? This was the first question I tried to answer when embarking on the enterprise of creating such a course. In fact, instead of a theoretical discussion, I chose rather to find the answer by charting the themes and questions one finds in general introductions written by historians on movies and history, and general introductions on the history of film and its fundamentals designed for the general public.

The basic assumption was that they both reflect the state of the art of cinematic literacy in history, a balanced synthesis of what could be found in the two volumes *Studies in History, Film and Society*, edited in 1979–1980. Fledelius, one of the editors, suggests twelve different fields of analysis, which in turn could be divided into three different parts according to their place in the production process of the film: The first taking place even before the film's production begins and dealing with the social background of the film, subject, sources and process of production; the second with the process of film making, including recordings, structure elements of expression, informational contents, aesthetic aspects, values and messages; and the third part with the film after its completion – distribution, censorship, context of screening, public evaluation and reception, and finally its influence (Fledelius, 1980). Although the relative importance of each field depends on the point of view and research interests of the historian, the three of them reflect legitimate topics in the historical discourse on cinema and history. Since the course was rather rudimentary in its character, we paid more attention to general historical topics in each field and less to its cinematic aspects; more to the historical and social background of the film, and less to its structure elements; more to its public evaluation and reception, and less to questions of distribution and censorship.

At first glance, the study techniques of the historian differ from that of film studies; however, some common ground does indeed already exist. Historians who write about film and history almost never fail to refer to the matter of the unique nature of the film media and its relationship with historiography. This leads to a discussion of the specificity of film language and to which genre the particular feature film under discussion belongs. Knowledge and some awareness of film language are, as well, basic conditions for a richer understanding of a particular feature film and its historical meaning. Nevertheless, there is a common tendency among historians of the cinema to go into the details of cinematic devices and technological innovations, which we tried to avoid in our course. After all, as Goodman puts it, technical devices and innovations in the movie industry only have meaning to cultural research, if a relationship between them and "artistic changes" can be discerned (Goodman, 1978). However, the historian's interest in these changes derives mainly from the need for elucidation of the historical and communicative meanings of the feature film, namely, the way cinematic language shapes the images of the past and influences the collective memory of the public. Therefore, when the historian pays attention to technicalities such as shot angle, lighting, soundtrack, etc., his aim is to understand their influence on the historical and ideological messages of the film and their perception by the audience. Ella Shohat's research on the history of Israeli cinema demonstrates such an analysis as she examines visual imagery, casting, themes and narrative as components and determinants of the ideological trends of Israeli cinema (Shohat, 1989).

Why Historians and History Teachers Should Care About Historical Movies

The very first question asked by the course we created was why historians should care about historical movies at all. We focused on Sorlin's answer, as it testifies to the basic motivation of historians' interest in movies: "Historians must take an interest in the audiovisual world if they are not to become schizophrenics, rejected by society as the representatives of an outmoded erudition" (Sorlin, 1980:26). According to Sorlin, it is fear of a devaluation of the social value of historical knowledge provided by scholarly research that causes historians to take an interest in movies. On the other hand, historical films may create a stimulus and pose a challenge to the professional historian as witnessed by Natalie Zemon Davis, who was historical consultant for *The Return of Martin Guerre*.

> *Paradoxically, the more I savored the creation of the film, the more my appetite was whetted for something beyond it ... writing for actors rather than readers raised new questions about the motivations of people in the sixteenth century... Watching Gérard Depardieu get his way into the role of the false Martin Guerre gave me new ways to think of the accomplishment of the real impostor... I felt I had my own historical laboratory, generating not proofs, but historical possibilities* (Davis, 1983:viii).

That is how Davis' historical research into the case of Martin Guerre originated; as research which provided answers to historical questions the movie did not.

What Should Historians do with Historical Films?

Of course, an opportunity like the one Davis was offered does not appear every day. As early as the thirties, the American historian Gottschalk turned to the Hollywood studios with a claim that historians should be given a role in the production of historical movies. His claim was based on his fear that movies offer the public false and simplistic images of the past (Rosenstone, 2001). If papers recently published in Israel on cinema and history are any indication, many historians still believe that their role is to defend against the banalization, deformation or over-simplification frequently plaguing historical movies. Such seems to be the prevailing motivation behind a number of the articles published in the Hebrew-language anthology *Cinema and Memory a Dangerous Relationship?* (2004). However, a preoccupation with the historiographical shortcomings of historical movies cannot change the fact that, whatever qualities historical research may have, it will never enjoy the popularity of well-made feature films. The same can be said about the learning experience provided by a textbook as compared with a popular feature on the same subject. That is why Sorlin strongly criticizes this view of the role of the historian in film production: "First let us underscore that ... when professional historians wonder about the mistakes in an historical film, they are worrying about a meaningless question... They would do better to concentrate on other problems..." (Sorlin, 1980:38).

It is indeed a pointless question, mainly because it ignores the fact that feature films are very different from scholarly research: "The cinematographic conception of historiography ... is a very specific one and does not necessarily coincide with the historians' conception of historiography. Movies do not supply a total reality when dealing with the past. They translate aspects of the past by choosing a few people, placing them in a particular setting, making them act" (Sorlin, 1980:26). Feature films also act differently on their viewers than historical research does on its readers: "History through lenses and motion picture, works differently than written history... It is designed to strike by its evidence and through immediate contact, instead of convincing through reason and deduction" (Sorlin, 1980:26).

A further difference is, of course, linked to the way in which historical movies and historical research present the past. Feature films work through a story focusing upon personal fates, played by actors and actualizing the past, whereas written history works through words, by generalization and abstraction. They are thus subject to different rules. In weighing their respective advantages and shortcomings regarding the representation of certain aspects of the past, the results would clearly show the better accuracy of written history. Nevertheless, it too has its shortcomings. When it comes to showing a battlefield, movies achieve a better representation of its visual sides or of the battle experience of the individual soldier involved in it. On the other hand, historiography is superior to movies in explaining the general background of wars (White, 1988).

The character of visual history, as well as the differences between it and written history, raise important questions about historical representation and the historical reality to which it refers. White and the post-modernists underscore that every history, both visual and written, is above all a selected mode of representation, obeying conventional rules and, as such, could not be epistemologically, an adequate account of historical reality itself "as it was at the time". On the other hand, historians still maintain that historical research, contrary to feature films, offers a truthful account of the past. Rosenstone takes a middle path, emphasizing the fact that, whatever their natures, research and movies, are both legitimate forms of historical knowledge: "It is time for historians to accept the mainstream historical film as a new kind of history that, like all history, operates within certain limited boundaries. As a different endeavor from written history, movies can certainly not be judged by the same standards. Movies create a world of history that stands adjacent to written and oral history" (Rosenstone, 2001:65).

Film Genres and Their Respective Rules

In order to understand this new visual realm of history, we must become familiar with the variety of movie genres using the past as their theme. Even if scholarly research outdoes historical movies as far as accuracy is concerned, not all historical movies belong to the same category, nor do they play according to the same rules. Just like one can find different sorts of books about the past – scholarly research, autobiographies, historical novels – one also finds different kinds of historical film genres.

The first and most obvious distinction is between documentary and fiction, but there are many others: Sorlin proposes making a distinction between "narrative pictures" which concentrate upon the sequence of action through chosen characters, and those which concentrate upon interpretation and exposition of a general meaning relating to a given epoch (Sorlin, 1980). As an example, he points to two movies about the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise to power, *La Marseillaise* and *Napoleon Bonaparte*. The former retells the events of the revolution through narrative, whereas the latter provides a general interpretation of the entire period. Rosenstone distinguishes between experimental or avant-garde movies such as Eisenstein's *Potemkin*, and mainstream features such as *Gone with the Wind*. They are movies belonging to different genres obeying different rules. He emphasizes the fact that historical movies are a particular kind of history and have their own boundaries. Thus, if historians want to understand history as it is presented in mainstream feature films, they should bear in mind the following six rules:

1. Feature films present history as a closed and uncontested story.

2. They bring together various aspects which are fragmentized by historiography, including politics, love, family, war, etc.

3. They present history as the story of individuals.

4. They alter historical facts in order to make the story more appealing to the audience.

5. They condense the experience of the masses into a narrative with only a few characters, some fictional; this narrative has a certain dramatic form (drama, comedy, epic, etc).

6. They use metaphors to express the characters and the ideas of the film.

Almost any mainstream feature film can serve to exemplify these rules. Davis' words, cited above, comparing the filming of the Martin Guerre story with her historical research, succinctly epitomizes the first point above; there was no room in "this beautiful and compelling cinematographic recreation, for the uncertainties, the perhaps, the may have been, to which the historian has recourse when the evidence is inadequate or perplexing" (Davis, 1983:viii).

Schindler's List, Hollywood historical melodrama at its best, is a closed story, representing the Holocaust through a small number of characters with the figure of Schindler, the good German, a character bigger than life, at its center. The director took some liberties with facts, especially when making the plot more dramatic, in order to clarify some aspects of the main character's personality. In fact, a measure of fiction is almost unavoidable in mainstream movies, as part of the construction of the narrative, since the director is almost never in possession of sufficient historical knowledge concerning the characters' various motivations. Thus in order to construct a complete and coherent story, as required by the genre of mainstream movies, he has to "make up" details not found in the historical documents. On the other hand, the presence of such inventions, the fruit of the director's imagination, is one of the primary reasons for the historians' rejection and dislike of mainstream features – "the one that sets history on film most apart from written history, which in principle eschews fiction" (Rosenstone, 2001:60). But do such inventions deprive a film entirely of its historiographical value? Is historical accuracy in every detail a sufficient warrant for historical credibility?

In order to answer this question one can compare *Walker* (1986), directed by Cox and *Mississippi Burning* (1984), directed by Parker. Because of its constant leaps back and forth in time, *Walker* is much like an experimental movie. It tells the story of an American adventurer named Walker in Nicaragua who for a brief period became the country's president. *Mississippi Burning* is a Hollywood melodrama about the murder of three Civil Rights Movement militants in 1963 and the efforts of FBI agents to find their murderers. *Walker* features numerous fictional scenes, such as the rescue of the president's partners by an American army helicopter. All the same, *Walker* offers an interesting interpretation about the development of American foreign policy since the nineteenth century, a combination of the ideology of the white man's burden with capitalist interests and self-appointed adventurers. *Mississippi Burning*, on the other hand, tries to offer its audience a realistic historical drama, though it rather awkwardly turns the FBI into a key factor in the success of the civil rights movement in the summer of 1963, while neglecting the roles played by Afro-Americans and their white liberal allies.

Thus it appears that the main appeal of these two movies emanates from two different sources. The appeal of *Mississippi Burning* lies in its reconstitution of the small-town atmosphere where the murder of the civil rights militants took place, while its general interpretation of the movement's successes in the summer of 1963 is both incorrect and misleading. The appeal of *Walker*, on the other hand, lies in the fact that the film is offering a serious, although controversial, general historical interpretation of US policy during the previous century and its continued presence in Central America ever since. The conclusion is that mere factual accuracy cannot be the sole criterion, nor even the main one, in determining the historiographical value of feature films. In fact, some movies are useful in understanding the past, while others hamper it; and the difference between them is not a result of factual accuracy alone (Higashi, 2001). In spite of their historical inaccuracies, mainstream feature films like *Schindler's List* or *Mississippi Burning* deserve more attention from the historian than experimental films; they drew much larger audiences and therefore had a greater impact on the historical public memory.

Feature films supply a vast amount of data to the "image bank" which structures the collective public memory. Lefebvre asserts that we each possess a sort of imaginary museum within us, partially comprised of images from historical movies which have left an impression on us (cited in Limond, 2005:158). The role of historians is to examine this image bank/imaginary museum and its influence on society's collective memory. A fine example of these images and of their role in forging historical memory can be found in Chaplin's *Modern Times*. This feature offers us the Little Tramp, who embodies the idea of freedom, good and love and, even more emphatically, of protest against social conformism. It also contains the dramatic image of the tramp caught in the wheels of the machinery which became a symbol of the crushing power of the modern, mechanized world. In fact, recognition of that visual image is no less part of the historical literacy of history students than knowledge of the causes of the Great Depression in the thirties, which provides the background of the film's plot.

Various historical studies indicate that visual imagery originating in feature films or TV movies has had a major impact on the public historical consciousness of different historical epochs. Anthony Kaes demonstrates the influence of historical movies in the forging of the collective memory and historical consciousness of the Holocaust and the Nazi regime (Kaes, 1989). Aviva Halamish, an Israeli historian, shows quite convincingly that *Exodus*, Preminger's film starring Paul Newman, prevails in the historical memory of this crucial event in the history of Zionism (Halamish, 2004).

"Teenpics" – a genre Hollywood developed after the war – and particularly "youth cult movies", like *American Grafitti* and *Grease* had an enormous impact on the collective memory of the

1950s and 1960s (Doherty, 1988). It seems that the images of these years and the nostalgic mood that surrounds them draw heavily on these movies. Futhermore, these movies play a dual role both as an historical reference to the fifties and sixties and as a subject of nostalgia for their audiences. They present those decades as a Golden Age of "pure" youthful rebellion now gone forever. Our nostalgic relationship with these times reappears in popular television series such as *Happy Days* or *Pleasantville* which reproduce those years through images originating in the old teenpics. Thus both teenpics and television series construct and diffuse images which characterize popular and consumerist culture but are void of any historical content: they are just "simulacre", or "pastiche" and as such, they reflect the loss of modern historical consciousness, which has been anchored in the belief of the existence of an objective reality (Jameson, 1991).

The Historical Film as a Mirror of Its Time

For many historians the historical value of films in general and of historical features in particular resides in the information they deliver about our present concerns, about the epoch in which they are produced or, as Sorlin puts it, "historical movies are concerned with the problem of the present even if it is expressed only indirectly. We could say that past is narrated in the present tense" (Sorlin, 1980:71). As such, each film belongs to the cultural history of its period or, at least, to their creators' image of the world. Krakauer's research on the German film industry between the two world wars sees it as a mirror of the moral and psychological crisis of German society during the Weimar Republic, the crisis that fueled the rise of Nazism (Krakauer, 1949).

Modern Times, in offering its criticism of the assembly line production system, can also be seen as a mirror of its own times. Although it does not refer to specific historical events outright, various background details (especially massive unemployment) make it clear that it is referring to the years of the Great Depression in which the film was produced. In his autobiography, Chaplin says that the idea for the movie came to him after he had read in the paper about workers on Ford's assembly lines suffering nervous breakdowns (Chaplin, 1964:409–423). Chaplin was probably also inspired by Claire's film on the same theme, *A nous la liberté* produced a few years earlier. The movie also alludes to the artistic problems encountered by Chaplin in the 1930s as silent film, which made him a star, was losing ground to the talkies. Sound machines "star" in *Modern Times* as devices of capitalist oppression – the boss controls his workers from a distance through a speaker, while radio sets use voices to sell commercial products. Meanwhile, toward the end of the film, the tramp – who forgot the words he was supposed to sing – still manages to elicit the applause of his audience for his acting and (wordless) singing. Thus the film concludes with the triumph of silent movies, where the actors really know how to act and sing, while the talkies appear to be part of an alienated mass industry.

Public Reception of Feature Films

Another field of historical interest is the reception of the movies by their audiences. Today we no longer believe that structural analysis of movie texts suffice; if we look at a movie as a system of signs, its significance is not clarified until we take into account the significance its spectators grant it. To achieve this, one has to study a movie's reception by its audience.

The presumption is that the popularity of a given movie indicates the cultural taste and the ideological and historical concepts of its audience. Studying a movie's reception and popularity can be seen as a kind of Rorschach test of its epoch and its consciousness. Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* can serve as a good example of this perspective. Released in 1937, it turned out to be the most popular movie in France in the period between the two world wars. Such popularity testifies to the pacifist mood which prevailed in many layers of the French society on the eve of WWII. Nevertheless, as shown in Ferro's research, upon release it was interpreted differently in different countries (Ferro, 1988). In the US, it was seen as a French nationalistic movie; in Nazi Germany, Goebbels branded it as philosemitic and therefore banned it from German screens. In retrospect, says Ferro, it seems that, despite its favorable attitude toward Jews, it shares the prejudices most of the society harbored against them. Not less interesting are the changes in understanding of some of its scenes that occurred after the war. Whereas at the time of the movie's release, the love affair between the French POW (Jean Gabin) and the German woman farmer was seen as a pacifistic plea against the approaching conflict between Germany and France, after the war it was considered as an approval of collaboration. Therefore, Renoir decided to remove it from the post-war version. Another example is offered by the reception of *Modern Times* in different periods. In 1936, it was considered by many as a movie made by a Socialist or even a Communist, whereas after the war, critics shed light on the general themes of the movie, including the alienation of the worker in modern industry (Mitchell, 1997).

The reception of *Schindler's List* by the Israeli press provides an illustration of the cultural and ideological forces forging the memory of the Holocaust in Israeli society. The debate about the movie concentrated on the legitimacy of the choice of Oscar Schindler as the main character in an historical movie about the Holocaust, and on the legitimacy of representing the Holocaust in the form of a Hollywood melodrama, a genre which belongs to mass culture and the entertainment industry. To many Israelis, the thematic and artistic choices of Spielberg's movie are an affront to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Critics believe that *Schindler's List* begs comparison with Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* as its antidote. Lanzmann had followed in the steps of Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*) and chose to concentrate upon the Holocaust as the story of a place impossible to duplicate, while Schindler creates the illusion of a return to the past, reconstitutes it for the audience and tries to convince it that it can be understood through one single story with a happy ending (Bratu-Hansen, 1996).

History and the Language of the Cinema

The particularity of history as it is shown on the screen as compared with written history stems of course from their different media languages; between cinematic language, which is narrative, and the more abstract language of written history. Therefore, a course in cinematic historical literacy must underscore the narrative character of films, its components and their influence upon the structuring of their historical representation. Many components of cinematic language as well at its "syntax" have been borrowed from other arts; in fact, film brings together theatre, romance, photography, and music and integrates them into one organic whole.

The cinematic language is also the result of a certain technological level, which provides the ability to create moving images and soundtracks, and the advancement of its language depends also on the technical progress of the industry. However, when dealing with the relationship between cinema and history we have been interested only in the influence of the cinematic language on our understanding of the historical reality and thus we paid special attention in our analysis to space – location, decor, and soundtrack.

Space, as well as time, is a basic category in history. Location – the cinematic equivalent of historical space – is also fundamental to understanding films. A movie, through the location where it was shot, is able to offer authenticity, plastic richness, and meanings absent in written texts. A movie is also able to unfold, in a dramatic and vivid manner, the story of a place, as shown by Ettore Scola's *The Ball* (1982), which traces the course of 20th-century French history through the story of a ballroom – from Blum's Popular Front across WWII, the Liberation, the rock and samba stylings of the fifties and the student revolt in 1968 right up to the present day. Through the story of this ballroom, we learn about the evolution of popular culture in the world of simple people as well as about the relationship between men and women.

Schatz claims that the choice of location bears ideological as well as thematic meanings (Schatz, 1981). Movies shot in close places, such as apartments, are identified thematically as feminine, whereas those shot in the open air are masculine. Location is also a defining characteristic of genres; and indeed, one of the features characterizing the genre of teenpics is their stock locations – beaches, schools, playgrounds, cars, drive-ins – all places identified with youth culture (Shary, 2002).

Location is just as important to other genres, like courtroom dramas and war stories. According to Krakauer, one of the main themes of German movies between the two world wars is the conflict between mountain dwellers, representing an ideal world of unstained morality, and the plains dwellers who represent the uncontrolled lust for financial gain. Plains and mountains become, thus, symbols of a moral and ideological conflict. The settings of Renoir's *La Grande Illusion*, a German prisoners of war camp, suited its pacifist message. Public opinion was more tolerant toward the idea of collaboration between French and German soldiers during the bloody First World War in which the movie is set when the story unfolds in a prison camp than to collaboration on the battlefield, as in the German movie *No Man's Land*, released in 1931 (Sand, 2002). The pacifist message of Renoir saturates his film: In the opening shots which create a symmetry between French and German soldiers; on the soundtrack which emphasises that each national group talks in its own language and sings its own popular songs. Aristocratic French and German officers who talk to each other in French or English underline their estrangement from their men and allude to their future disappearance as a class. The movie's ideological message also fits Renoir's conception of the function of the cinema to serve as a bridge between nations in an era of conflict and nationalistic hatred. However, the fact that Renoir (and the censor) released different versions of the movie at different times begs the question which movie is the "real" one.

Soundtrack and music play a particularly important role in teenpics, since they became one of the defining features of the genre itself. One of the outstanding characteristics of popular youth movies like *Blackboard Jungle*, *The Graduate*, and *Grease* is the role played by the soundtrack; not only did it spawn hit albums, but it also produced the nostalgic effect singular to the movies, in securing "a bond between consumer and product while also arousing a feeling of generational belonging in the audience" (Shumway, 1999).

Teenpics also appeal to their generational audience by their decor and consumerism, exemplified by objects like eyeglasses, blazers, blue jeans, hairstyles, Harley Davidsons, etc. Thanks to teenpics these objects have become symbols of youth culture and its rebellion against the older generation.

Student Attitudes and Skills in Cinematic Historical Literacy

Over the years the course was offered, thirty-five students answered a questionnaire on history and cinema as well as submitting papers. Below, I shall discuss the findings provided by them and attempt to assess the visual literacy skills they achieved. However, it must be mentioned that the analysis of the papers has not been completed yet.

A majority of the students hold a positivist approach to history; eleven believe that the aim of historical research is to reveal historical reality "as it was"; while nine of them believe that historical movies are more concerned about "dramatic suspense" than historical truth. Many of them (eleven) also believe that historical movies are inferior to school textbooks, either in regard of historical truth, factual accuracy, or complexity of the representation of the past. Close to half of them (fourteen) think that movies only provide the illusion of historical accuracy. On the other hand, many of them (eleven) believe that historical movies have a stronger impact than historical books/textbooks on the historical knowledge of public school pupils and the structuring of their historical memory, since movies are more easily remembered than written material.

It seems that the course aroused a keen interest among the students and almost all of them (thirty-three) welcomed its addition to the curriculum. In this sense, it was a success. However, only seldom were they apt to apply its methods in their classrooms. A majority were willing to use feature films provided they render a faithful account of historical events as they had been presented by the textbooks (twenty-one). Most of them also considered historical feature films to be an effective tool to recreate the dramatic aspects of the historical events studied by the class, helping to penetrate the moral and psychological atmosphere of the time and allow students to more readily identify with the protagonists of historical events. However, they assumed that feature films on dramatic political events – for example the World Wars or the Holocaust – were best served by these aims; only a few students (six) were ready to approach the more sophisticated subjects and methods the course tried to introduce. In general, the student teachers concluded that such an approach might serve cultural history well, but was unsuitable to political and social history, and for teaching history in the classroom.

The greatest obstacle hindering teachers from using feature films in their classrooms stems from the fact that they do not have a firm grasp of cinematic language; they lack training and do not have access to all the relevant historical data on the screened films.

The conclusion to be drawn from summing up this data is that at least half the students think that, on the one hand, there is a danger in studying history through feature films, especially from the point of view of historical truth; while on the other hand, feature films have an important advantage via the living experience they provide. They arouse interest, identification and emotions, provide clear messages, and are more easily memorized. They make history more concrete, provide a better understanding of the characters involved in it, shed light on collective myths and basic social creeds. They "moralize" history by alerting the student to the moral dilemmas faced by its protagonists. Paradoxically, although student teachers in general hold positivistic notions of truth and objectivity, they also believe that teachers should invoke the moral aspects of history in order to make it more attractive to their pupils.

Conclusions

Could the knowledge and skills required by visual literacy be integrated in history classrooms? This was the real challenge posed to the students who attended the course described above. Even if they are in favor of the use of feature films in teaching history, most see it as an auxiliary means of enriching subjects brought up by textbooks. Therefore, they choose the films and evaluate their didactic potential according to their conformity with current textbooks. The main question they ask is, whether the movie conforms with the historical reality as the latter is represented in the curriculum. Only on rare occasions did they fulfil the intention of the course by gravitating toward another set of issues proposing historical movies as another way of representing the past and analysing the ideological, cultural and social backgrounds which determine the ways in which the images of the past are constructed. Such a shift presupposes a Copernican revolution in the notion of history as well as of the perception of didactics of teaching history. It implies a change of perspectives from the classic epistemological question of correspondence between historical research and historical past, to the question how filmography and historiography organize and construct the past and its images.

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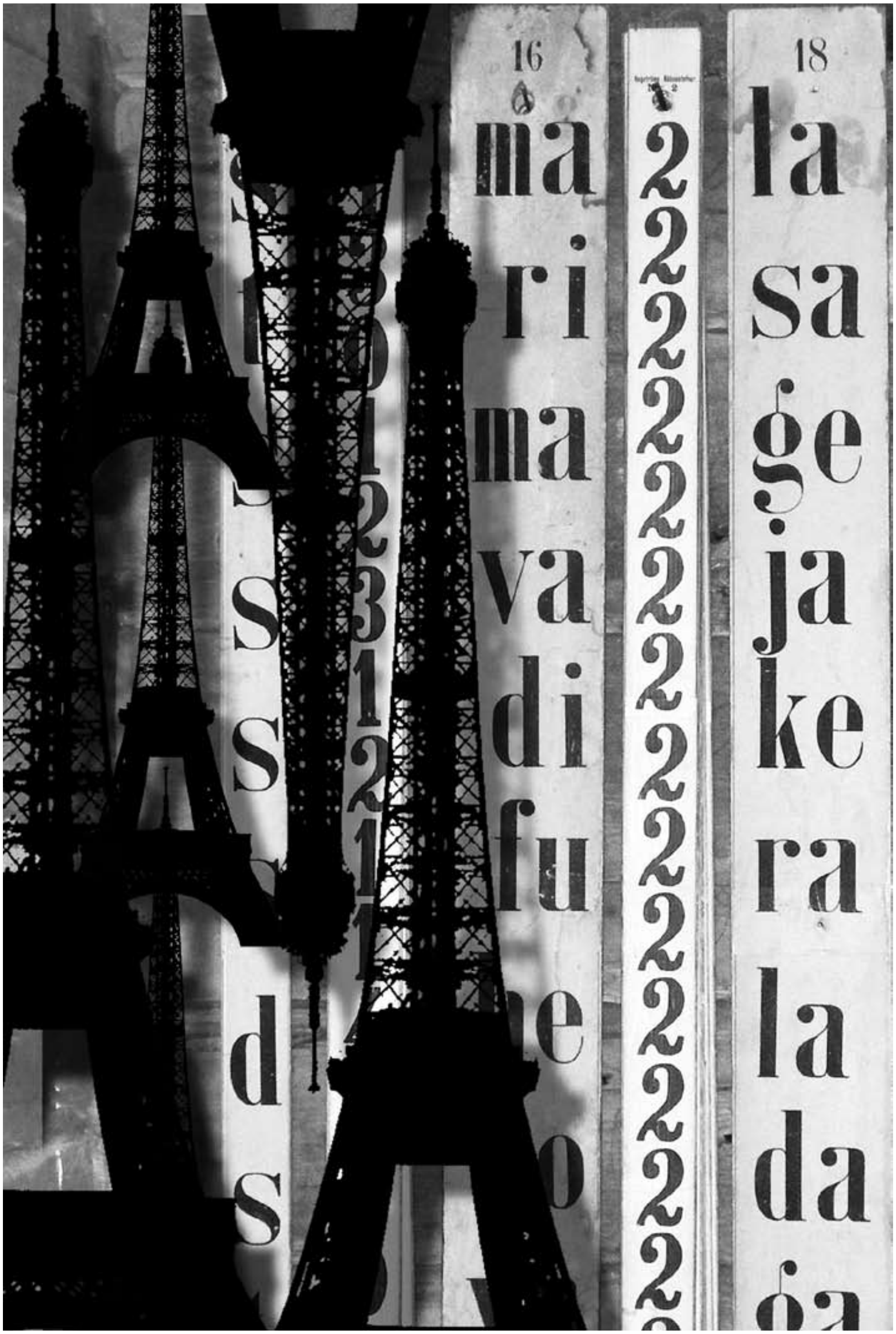
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History as a Tool for Acquiring Literacy in 19th-Century French Schools

Annie Bruter

Abstract

This article is about the historical content of the readers used in French 19th century primary schools, before and even after history was made a compulsory subject in these schools by the Education Law of 1867, and about the kind of historical literacy the authorities wished to teach the pupils. The need to give them some historical instruction was felt early in the 19th century. It was first provided for by the teaching of sacred history. The rise of the nationalism in the second half of the century made the wish for the teaching of French history increasingly stronger, but profane history had been banned from the training colleges, for it was feared that it would lead to the spread of revolutionary ideas. Readers were thus used to impart at least some historical knowledge to teachers and their pupils, thereby developing limited but real historical literacy.

This essay deals with an issue that still needs further investigation today, at least in France: The link between acquiring literacy and studying history in 19th-century French primary schools. In other words, it is about the kind of historical literacy which was deemed necessary to the children of the working classes by the people who wrote readers for them before history was made a compulsory subject in French primary schools through the Education Law of 1867.

The problem confronted by such a study at the very start is that it is impossible to provide an accurate picture of what French schools were like before the Third Republic (1870–1940), since there were so many differences among them – differences between urban schools and country schools; between schools run by religious congregations and schools run by a lay headmaster; between schools situated in northern and eastern France, where literacy had started to expand before the French Revolution, and

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schools situated in the southwest, where literacy was far less common. Moreover, changes in the material and pedagogical conditions of the schools were not always for the best. During the Second Empire (1852–1870), Paris had more "ragged schools", to use Octave Gréard's words (Gréard, 1887), than during the July Monarchy (1830–1848), because of the rapid growth of the Parisian population due to the arrival of many poor immigrants. All this certainly helped the Republicans who came into power after 1879 to present themselves as the true founders of French primary schooling, and particularly of history teaching in primary school. But it is not that simple. Many of the pedagogical methods which the Republicans made compulsory had already been created and implemented well before. So the whole 19th century could be described as the time when pedagogical ideas and habits inherited from the Old Regime (the era preceding the French Revolution of 1789) were replaced with a new pedagogical model, which included the inculcation of some historical knowledge. That is why this paper will start with a short description of the situation of French primary schooling at the beginning of the 19th century.

Why the beginning of the 19th century? The French Revolution had been a time of numerous debates about primary instruction, but it is well known that these debates led to nothing. From 1795 to 1816, French educational laws dealt exclusively with secondary and higher education, while primary instruction remained the responsibility of local authorities.

A major change occurred in 1816, one year after Napoleon was defeated for the last time and replaced by King Louis XVIII. A Royal Ordinance then prescribed that every schoolmaster was required to take a specific degree, the *brevet de capacité*. This degree could be taken at three levels, first, second or third, according to the extent of the knowledge and teaching skills of the master. In all cases, he had to know religion, but only the possessors of a first level *brevet* could teach more than the basic elements. The subjects they were allowed to teach included religion of course as well as reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and geography. History was not among them, although a few historical facts could be mentioned during geography lessons; since Napoleonic legislation had made history part of the defining features of secondary schools, it could not formally be taught in primary schools. In any case, there were very few first level schoolmasters, not only because the vast majority of schoolmasters failed to obtain more than a third-level degree, but also because the granting of a first-level degree was controlled by the State, that is, by the *Commission de l'instruction publique*, which did not want their number to grow for fear that the distinction between primary and secondary education would vanish.

Moreover, in most schools, teaching methods still resembled those employed during the Old Regime: The schoolmaster called each child in turn and had him or her read aloud from his or her book while the others were required to keep quiet (but generally did not). French people call this method the *mode individuel*. On the whole, not only the methods but also the goals of primary instruction remained what they had been under the Old Regime – to instruct pupils in the faith of their community and to give them the means to read its sacred texts, not to extend their knowledge of the natural or social world, as is shown by the fact that the readers used in many schools long remained religious texts, often written before the French Revolution and barely comprehensible to the pupils. In many country schools this situation still remained unchanged during the Second Empire, as we can see through the inquiry about primary schools launched by Minister of Public Instruction Victor Duruy soon after he took charge in 1863. One of the questions in this inquiry asked which books were used in the schools, to which many inspectors replied that they were still the same ancient books which the children could not understand (*État de l'instruction publique*..., 1866). Thus the kind of literacy expected of the pupils was a strictly limited one, consisting of the ability to decipher a familiar text, not in the capacity to practise extensive reading.

But this old pedagogical model was challenged by a more modern one early in the 19th century. In 1815, some supporters of popular education founded an association, the *Société pour l'instruction élémentaire*. French historians have previously drawn attention to this society for its role in promoting what is called *le mode mutuel d'enseignement*, that is a method of teaching in which the children were divided into small groups taught by instructors chosen from among the more advanced pupils, as opposed to the *mode simultané*, which was the method used by the *Frères des écoles chrétiennes* (the members of a religious congregation founded at the beginning of the 18th century to teach Christianity, reading, and occasionally writing and arithmetic to the children of the poor). In the *mode simultané*, the master addressed all the pupils at the same time. The main issue in this struggle was not pedagogical, it was a political one, since to extend the *mode simultané* further into the educational system was to extend the influence of the Catholic Church, while the *mode mutuel* was championed by liberals. Since all 19th-century French political regimes before the Third Republic needed the support or at least tolerance of the Catholic Church, they never favoured the *mode mutuel*, except during a short period between 1816 and 1820. At that time, the *Société* played an important role in helping primary schooling to expand. It was also a place where pedagogical ideas and their implementation were discussed. And it is interesting to note that the *Société* wanted popular education to convey to pupils not only religious and moral instruction, but also positive and utilitarian knowledge of various kinds. It is worth mentioning, at this point, that most of these men were already linked by their common membership in other associations, mainly philanthropic ones. But one of these associations was of a different kind; its goal was to promote industrial development. So we see how philanthropy and the spirit of enterprise could merge in the idea that popular education should expand and teach useful knowledge.

What kind of knowledge was deemed useful by the society? Some evidence is given in an article by Jullien de Paris published in its house periodical, the *Journal d'éducation*, in 1818. At an early stage, the society had realized that teaching reading was far from useful if children did not have the opportunity to practise what they had been taught after they left school; and keeping them in school longer was out of the question in a time when many children had to work and schools were far from numerous. One of the obstacles to children continuing to read after graduation was the lack of inexpensive books in plain prose – such books simply did not exist! So the *Société* decided to promote the production of books of this kind by awarding prizes for the best of them every year. The above-mentioned article is in fact a review of the various subjects to be covered by these books and reveals a lot about what the society had in mind. Its plan was quite ambitious since almost all fields of human endeavour were mentioned. The section of the plan devoted to "necessary" books comprised no less than thirty-one subjects, including grammar, arithmetic and geometry, natural history, and technology, but also law and medicine (Jullien, 1818). This means that the society was calling for *extended* literacy, making people able to read texts entirely new to them.

Still, if the knowledge which the *Société* wished to spread included history, as would seem to be the case by the mention of two books about French history on the list, the main goal of such books was a moral one: To offer examples of virtuous men that the readers could take as their models, something which has little to do with historical literacy as we understand it nowadays. The only subject in which we can find something similar to our present idea of historical literacy is religion, since it included sacred history. In this respect, it is interesting to note that the first book mentioned on the list was a summary of the *Catéchisme historique* written by Fleury at the end of the 17th century (first published in 1683), which was itself a summary of the Bible.

Although the *Société pour l'instruction élémentaire* professed the utmost respect for religion and pretended to have moral education as one of its main goals (as everyone did at the time), its conception of education was actually secular since it craved books written mainly about secular subjects, including "dangerous" topics like the political system. After the extreme right came into power in 1820, the Catholic Church became even more influential than it had been during the preceding years, particularly in the sphere of education, and the teaching system advocated by the *Société* was accused of being anti-religious. Thus its efforts to promote new ways of teaching were greatly hindered.

Things changed only after 1828, when the liberals regained power, and even more after the 1830 Revolution, for the new leaders also wanted popular education to expand and to modernize. The Education Law of 1833, which ordered every French village to erect and maintain an elementary school for boys, made the teaching of sacred history compulsory in all schools. It also made general and French history an optional subject in elementary schools, but only a few teachers actually taught it since most of them simply did not know it; moreover parents generally did not ask for it. Nevertheless, the educational authorities of the time tried to improve the historical knowledge of the teachers and their pupils through two different means. They established tests in sacred and general history in the exam for the *brevet de capacité*, and they encouraged the use of new textbooks, sending a great number of them to primary schools all over the country to replace the Old Regime books on Christian doctrine. Among them were primers, of course, and also popular religious books such as the above-mentioned *Catéchisme historique*. But the ministry also wanted the schools to use new readers. One of the motives for such a step was that the older books mentioned shocking subjects such as adultery and incest, which could undermine the children's "innocence". Another motive was that these books were beyond the children's ability to understand them. Interestingly, the reader promoted by the ministry began with a sketch of universal history, stretching from God's creation of the world to the present day (*Alphabet et premier livre de lecture*, 1831). Although in clear agreement with the Bible, this version of universal history was obviously meant to prove how much things had improved since the beginning of the world and to instil the idea that progress was to be valued and pursued. This went along with a political objective, of course, intended to convince pupils that the new political regime was better than the preceding one (Rosanvallon, 1985). But it also implied a new representation of time and the meaning of human existence.

It is difficult to determine how much this book was read and still more difficult to assess how its content was received, but the sparse data which we do possess seem to indicate that it was not particularly successful. Reports by inspectors tell how the books sent by the ministry were left in a corner of the classroom while older books were still used. It has already been mentioned that these older books were still in use in some country schools during the Second Empire.

Notwithstanding this survival of old educational traditions, the Second Empire was a time of important changes. Not only was the study of sacred history still considered necessary but, as a result of the tight bond that had been established between the Catholic Church and the State in order to eradicate the socialist ideas brought forth by the 1848 Revolution, new emphasis was put on it, particularly in the training of future teachers. Since sacred history was one of the subjects of the written test which the candidates for the *brevet de capacité* had to take, the kind of historical literacy demanded of teachers now included the ability to compose a short narrative.

This extension of the teachers' abilities at first affected only sacred history, since profane history had been almost entirely banned from the *écoles normales* (the training colleges for primary school teachers) by the Law of 1850, along with other subjects which could make teachers feel superior to their humble status in village schools; it was now only an optional subject in the *écoles normales* and in the *brevet de capacité* exam. Most of the schoolmasters who began their careers during the Second Empire never studied it and were not allowed to teach it.

On the other hand, the Second Empire was also a time when many improvements in pedagogical methods had been achieved. Most schoolmasters now actually possessed basic knowledge of the subjects they were to teach; the old *mode individuel* method disappeared almost completely – in fact, the struggle between it and the *mode simultané* was over since the most commonly used method was a mixture of both; reading and writing were now taught concurrently and with better results, so there was more time for lessons beyond spelling. True, the main concern of the ministry remained to extend primary schooling to children who had not yet entered school, notably girls. But new preoccupations were now appearing. For instance, inspectors tried to induce schoolmasters to make schedules and prepare their lessons. In these circumstances, it is not surprising to see that a new emphasis was put on reading lessons and that new readers were published.

At the same time, nationalism was growing stronger and stronger. The history of this phenomenon in France remains to be written, but it may safely be said that its strength before the Third Republic has been vastly underestimated. It was already on the rise during the July Monarchy and was aroused further by the victories won by Napoleon III at the beginning of his reign. Thus many educators of the time wished children to be taught at least the basic elements of French history. But since the subject was not compulsory and since inspectors had reasons to doubt the ability of schoolmasters to teach it properly (i.e., orally with the necessary explanations), having the pupils read about French history in their readers appeared a better solution. Unfortunately, history textbooks were usually off-putting; in 1857 inspector Jean-Jacques Rapet declared that they made history “a thankless study of names and dates” and advised the schoolmasters to use readers describing pure historical facts instead (Rapet, 1857).

Precisely at that time, two readers of this very sort had just been published. One of them seems to have been quite successful since it remained in use for thirty years. It is simply entitled *La France, livre de lecture courante pour toutes les écoles* (“France, a reader for all schools”), though it also has a long subtitle enumerating all the fields of knowledge dealt with – “geography, history, administration, landscape, agriculture, industry, commerce, great men, useful men, various notions”. But it bore the appearance of a fluent story with a schoolmaster telling his pupils about the diverse regions of France, not unlike a tourist guide. The characters in the book sometimes asked or were asked questions, which helped give life to the story – or at least helped make the lessons less dull.

Did the pupils enjoy reading this book? This we have no way of knowing but we do know that the book was revised thirteen times, not to mention the numerous reprints, which seems to show that it suited the needs of the schoolmasters, or at least quite a lot of them. We understand how the text took the form it did when we note that it makes use of a well-established primary school tradition, that of geography lessons. It had always been agreed that geography could be taught in primary schools, as long as the schoolmaster was qualified enough, and that geography lessons could include an account of the historical events which had taken place in the area under study. A whole course of geography lessons had been published in a review read by almost all schoolmasters, the *Manuel général*, in 1839. If we compare it with *La France* we find that, although the reader offers a much longer and detailed account, both follow the same pattern. In both cases, the territorial unit described is the *département* (the administrative geographical unit created by the French Revolution) and the descriptions run along the same lines: After a short presentation of the département recounting its location, area, population, etc., comes a description of its main cities including an account of the important events which happened there. Not surprisingly, these important events are of the political or military kind. What is less well known, however, is how deep the resentment of the battles lost by Napoleon and the occupation of France by foreign armies appear in the geography lessons and in the reader *La France*. The emotion permeating the text when dealing with these events is quite striking.

> *Do you know what the word "invasion" means? Do you understand all the disasters that it recalls? To see the enemy in your country, in your home; to fight, not for glory and honour, far away or at the border, but for your own sake; to have to defend, when you wake up in the morning, your property, your field, your house, your wife and children! To see the Prussians or the Russians settle in your villages, break up your roads with their guns, loot your farms, burn your barns, sit down by your fire and tell you: All this is mine!* (my translation; Manuel et Lévi Alvarès, 1855–1857).

The feelings expressed by these textbooks are of shame and mourning, and the memory of the battles won by France in other times, especially during the Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, seems to make it that much worse. At the same time, this reminder of France's glorious military past offered consolation and hope for recovery.

In 1867, a new educational law was passed which made the teaching of French history and geography compulsory in primary schools. Hence French history had to be taught in a formal course, just like sacred history. This meant that simply knowing about great men and important events of the French past was no longer deemed sufficient. Pupils were now required to be able to locate them chronologically.

Still, *La France* remained in use for almost twenty years. The fact that it was not reprinted after 1885 does not mean that history was no longer considered useful; rather, the reader was surpassed by the publishing in 1877 of a new reader, much more artfully written: *Le tour de France par deux enfants* (Bruno, 1877). This book tells the story of two children from Alsace who leave the province after it has been conquered by Germany. Their father has just died so they walk across France in search of their uncle, seeing on their way fields and factories, villages and cities, rivers and mountains, and listening to tales about the great men who have lived in the places through which they pass. The choice of such heroes of course added a strong emotional quality to the novel in a time when France was mourning the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Moreover this book is undoubtedly more entertaining than *La France*, for the boys in the story do far more than simply listen to a schoolmaster: They have an adventure in their quest to find their uncle – will they find him or not? This gave the author the opportunity to stage many lively events in which were embodied moral lessons.

Still, one can but be stricken by the similarities between the two books. Not only both are about France, but they contrive to convey knowledge in a very similar way (the preface to the *Tour de France* mentions the same subjects as the subtitle of *La France*: industrial and commercial economy, agriculture, the sciences, great men). They also have the same purpose, which is to foster admiration and love for France, and they express the same kind of feelings, even though the sense of loss and shame felt after 1871 was not caused by the memory of the 1814 invasion any more but by a more recent event, the war lost to Germany. Finally, in both cases, reading was used as a means of conveying historical knowledge to the pupils while French history was used to make their reading lessons interesting. So the *Tour de France* has clearly been created according to the same pattern as *La France*. Both were successful, though the *Tour de France* was even more successful than its predecessor, going through over four hundred editions and remaining in use until the 1960s.

It was even recently revised, though not for use as a school reader.

This essay has attempted to show how historical literacy made its way into French primary schools during the 19th century partly through reading lessons, which may explain why history textbooks long remained readers in France. The kind of historical literacy which the reading of such books developed amounted to little more than acquiring a stock of historical information about kings, great men and important battles, a very narrow conception of historical literacy by today's standards. One should keep in mind, however, that French teachers themselves were given no consistent historical instruction until 1867. So the readers were a means of learning history while teaching pupils how to read. On the other hand, books about the French past certainly were interesting for children in a time when nationalism was growing. So history helped teachers make reading lessons more attractive, while reading lessons helped historical literacy to expand.

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Torsdag
Psalm
Kristendoms-
kunskap
Välskrivning
Räkning
Ta-la all-tid san-ning, barn!
Tjog. Tjuf. Tjur. Tjä-ra.
Flag-gan är gul och blå.
Få-gel. Fjä-ril. Fjärd. Kjol.
Präst. Prins. Post. Pa-ket.
Per är en duk-tig poj-ke.

Pedagogical Museums and the Safeguarding of an Intangible Educational Heritage:

Didactic Practices and Possibilities

Cristina Yanes Cabrera

Abstract

In recent years, the traditional scope of history teaching has suffered a change in relation to its knowledge sources. Fresh academic literature about school culture has brought to light a wide variety of practices, habits and traditions related to the educative process. These new habits are essential to understanding scholarly institutions and have been transmitted by means of oral tradition. So, the "spoken word" has become a heritage that must be protected to keep the oral tradition alive. My work proposes pedagogical museums as a suitable environment in which to preserve this intangible educational heritage. I begin by justifying the necessity of protecting and recovering this rich heritage in an educational context, after which I undertake a classification of this intangible heritage, proposing mechanisms for carrying out its cataloguing. Also, various possibilities for exhibiting the spoken word are shown, covering the didactic alternatives that museum exhibits offer.

The Intangible Educational Heritage: An Emerging Resource in Museology

The word plays a decisive role in educational heritage. Together with other vehicles for transmitting pedagogical practice – such as memoires, diaries, and textbooks – the written[1] and spoken word are sources of great value for studying our educational past. However, the positivist and idealist tradition has led to the construction of a history of education based on written sources, relegating oral history to second fiddle. But a revision and cultural recognition of the events related to the educational process is currently taking place. These studies show how a specific culture exists in the educational institution. It is part of what has been defined as "school culture" and what Prof. Viñao Frago summarizes as the "set of theories, ideas, principles, norms, rules, rituals, inertias, habits and practices...developed through time as unchallenged traditions and rules shared by

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their authors, in the educational institutions" (Viñao, 2002). The spoken word comprises an important part of this culture, which we can easily discover by simply using it.[2]

As the linguist Smeets has asserted, language is essential as the medium of co-operation and communication par excellence among performers and other tradition holders, and between them and other community members (Smeets, 2004). We have the opportunity to discover a universe of experiences, knowledge, values and techniques during the educative act by including narrated stories and personal interviews. However, traditional research has been frequently ignoring these aspects, as they belong to a heritage only learned by means of the word and through shared experiences by the members of the same educative context. For the ongoing development of non-material heritage, continued proficiency in the traditional language appears to be a prerequisite.

Therefore, the link with our educative past is in danger of disappearing with the passing of those who carry oral tradition. This learning only survives when it has been successfully transmitted, that is, if it is fixed in the receptor memory and transformed into a new transmission element of the bequeathed culture. Interest in safeguarding this rich, intangible heritage is not new. There has been increasing support in recent years for safeguarding cultural traditions transmitted only by means of the spoken word, in contrast to policies focused on protecting the material heritage. In 1998, the executive board of UNESCO approved the nomination criteria of those cultural spaces that can be proclaimed symbols of the oral heritage of humanity. One year later, the award for "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" was created. Since then, "immaterial" history has been incorporated with the concept of oral heritage. More recently, the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* was adopted by the thirty-second session of the General Conference of UNESCO on 17 October 2003. This working document includes policies and legal strategies to protect the immaterial cultural heritage of communities, groups and individuals, as well as providing a framework for international cooperation in the matter (the document can be accessed at http://portal.unesco.org/culture/). This universal act of will aims at rescuing immaterial and intangible heritage and seeks out concrete strategies focusing on safeguarding, protecting, and bringing to light oral heritage. In this respect, the museum environment appears to be one of the most suitable places to preserve our educational traditions.

Recent studies demonstrate that museology has undergone a major transformation in the last decades (Bolaños, 2002; Sandell, 2003; Alonso, 2003; ICOM & ICOFOM, 2004; Ross, 2004; Hernández, 2006). In the late twentieth century, European museums were more numerous and more popular than ever before. Now, museums can be found throughout society, and the distinctive thematic objectives for which they are created are multiplying fast.

In Spain, the founding of pedagogical museums focused on promoting our educational past (along with other smaller and even Internet-based virtual museums) has recently been on the rise.[3] Typically, these centres focus their interest on collecting, conserving and exhibiting physical objects related to our educational past, though nowadays increasing attention has been paid to the practices, ideas, knowledge, and skills associated with the objects. This "didactic" or "interactive" attitude with respect to the museums show the existence of specific values, as well as a philosophy and an ethical code intrinsic to the educational process. And this entire intangible heritage can only be transmitted via oral culture.

So, the intangible educational heritage can be defined as the set of perspectives that characterize the culture of the traditional school and are intrinsic to every process related to educational practice throughout history. It is about traditions whose transmission mode has mainly been oral or anecdotal, and have been modified over time through processes of collective re-creation. Oral traditions associated with educational activity will be included in this group, as well as habits, songs, prayers and festive events at schools. This rich heritage is in danger of extinction and must be organized and exhibited together with the material heritage. It will prove complementary to the written word and contribute essential information about determined practices and school processes that are inexplicable through mere material exposition. As a consequence, the static scope of the museum will be complemented with a dynamic representation capable of bringing any school object to life.

Efforts to Make "Tangible" That Which is "Intangible"

Putting an intangible educational heritage on display in a museum is not easy, and implies an important premise: the intangible heritage should not be considered the opposite of the tangible heritage. The intangible educational legacy refers to all those things that can be sensed but that we are unable to physically touch. However, it is important to note that every intangible element in education must be related to a tangible element. First, because the exhibited objects imply symbolism and significance, which is not material but which exists in the mind (in an intangible way). And, in certain cases, these are indispensable in order to understand the material world. Secondly, because certain aspects of the intangible heritage, like oral history, can be made "museumable", and can be materialized through systems that are closely linked to new technologies, this can also paradoxically cause problems. For instance, when recording the intangible heritage in attempting to gather it for preservation in a museum, we have to move it from the oral to the written or recorded, and that can change its very nature. The process of safeguarding the intangible educational heritage thus necessarily involves making a tangible record of said heritage. Experience taught anthropologist J. Goody how heritage that depends on hearing in general presents a problem for any museum or indeed any kind of storage system, because oral and traditional culture cannot be viewed as "static" (Goody, 2004). Because of that, we should not forget that in conserving oral heritage by recording it in permanent form we are changing its nature and its character.

Any starting point must be undertaking the compilation of a precise catalogue, and subsequently, identifying the intangible heritage in an exhaustive manner. There are three comprehensive categories within which intangible educational heritage may be found:

1. Physical expressions or representations of school culture in a particular community or from a particular historical moment, including religious rites, festive events, uniforms, punishments, educational protocols, styles or habits related to the transmission of knowledge, etc.

2. Individual and collective expressions which have no physical form, including orally-transmitted traditional songs and melodies, riddles, prayers, political slogans, proverbs, tongue-twisters, fables and sayings, reprimands, racist or sexist expressions, etc.

3. The symbolic and/or metaphorical significance of objects that constitute the tangible heritage, pertaining to their physical aspect and to significance, which come from its history.

Once these categories have been established, the type of legacy that has subsisted until the present time must be identified. This is necessary in order to initiate the inventory process.

The starting point is the link with the spoken word, so it is suitable to turn to living embodiments of history, most obviously our elders. Because of their vast experience and accumulated memory, they are the main carriers of immaterial heritage.

Memory is both a sign of personal identity and the main tool of oral history. And its recovery and maintenance is necessary in order to prevent its disappearance. Teacher associations, old age centres, and lecture rooms in the universities dedicated to the elderly are privileged places that can be used in urban areas. In small villages, oral history can be found in taverns and pubs, small shops, or simply by speaking to those elders sitting on their front porch. Once they have been contacted, we could cordially invite them to tell us stories about their schooldays and communities,[4] while we transcribe them. Another important task is locating each and every individual relevant to the institutional history of education (janitors, teachers, pupils, clergy, administrative assistants) in order to enrich the scope of history with multiple perspectives.

Once the stories derived from oral tradition have been rescued, the expressions and symbols in danger of extinction must be identified. In this process some material needs to be elaborated according to diverse descriptive categories and allowing the material to be inventoried.[5] After that, the immaterial educational heritage should be collected in detailed archival records, where the various expressions, their characteristics, origins, relative importance to each educational community, and any other information of interest can be classified.

Next, I present a more detailed proposal about what should be noted about these expressions:

1. Description of the expression (song, rite, festive event, oral expression; theme; and argument).

2. Origin of the expression (Where does it come from? What is its significance when used? Legends that might use the expression).

3. Physical location and spatial coverage (Where was it used? Where is it being used now? What is its geographical reach?).

4. Author/transmitter (Who used to utilise the expression? Men, women, children, elders?).

5. Context (Where was it used? In class, during recess, at home, and at what times?).

6. Type of educational resource (stimuli for teaching, apprenticeship support, etc.).

7. Significance(s) of the expression (What was its significance or symbolism in the group or community context in which it appeared?).

8. Mode of transmission (processes associated with the time in which it was transmitted and learned).

9. Observation (This field includes everything that might be associated with the expression but cannot be sorted under the previous categories).

Finally, it is important to highlight that these artifacts should be as well documented as possible by means of photographs, written stories, audio or video recordings, or any other medium readily available for subsequent consultation.

Exhibiting the "Spoken Word" in the Pedagogical Museum

One of the most recent and revealing definitions of museums comes from philosopher J. A. Marina, who calls it an "institution capable of creating". In Marina´s terminology, to create is "to use the actual properties of the things to invent new possibilities" (Marina, 2005). The museum concept assumes a cultural role, featuring a broad social expectative and armed with new strategies derived from the inclusion of new communication media. Now, conservating heritage is not only a basic function, but is formulated with an educational objective. Everything that is exhibited in a museum is meant to educate its visitors (Kotler & Kotler, 2001) and intangible heritage is no exception.

However, as I have been indicating, the intangible educational heritage should be presented together with material support and within a spatial-temporal context. In fact, it is important that the intangible material be introduced in the museum and maintained within the context of the space and time from which it was collected. If not properly documented and contextualised, extracting its testimony could become difficult if not impossible to the viewer. It would be equivalent to analysing the same word but in different sentences – accordingly to the way it had been used, it could incorporate different meanings.

Exhibiting the spoken word in museums should be linked directly to the model of "interpersonal" or "interactive communication" (or, to put it another way, a model with a didactic approach), different from the classical "model of mass communication" (Pastor, 2004) focused on the simple exhibition of objects. Intangible material as an element in an exhibition element should encourage the participation of visitors, activating their physical, mental, and emotional mechanisms. The pedagogical museum should impact its visitors, and interactive models allowing a heritage exhibition capable of stirring the emotions of the visitor should be created. Interactivity as expositive didactic strategy is a mechanism of unquestionable usefulness that has been tested in modern science museums in recent decades. However, there are issues that must be taken into account in order to guarantee an adequate exhibition. Serrat Antolí and Font Guiteras indicate that not all ideas and (spoken and unspoken) concepts can be presented in the form of interactive models, and that on some occasions there are very complex processes that do not allow for the utilisation of such expositive techniques (Serrat & Font, 2005). Among the modalities and modules of exhibition suggested by the authors, the most significant for an exhibition of intangible material include *sound interactive modules*, *re-creation interactive modules*, and *interactive modules based on software and/or hardware tools*. In all these cases, information and communication technologies offer a new framework for the exhibition concept that facilitates the presentation of the intangible educational legacy in museums.

Sound interactive modules are those that most directly present the educational heritage of oral transmission. These interactive modules allow for the re-creation of scenes from the actual original environment, such as the real sound of a school bell, or a didactic song sung in a classroom. Hence, within the framework of constructivism, we would add the sensorial perception of sound to the careful observation of the tangible objects displayed. In this framework, the learners would construct knowledge by themselves. Thus each learner would be able to construct meaning by him/herself individually and socially. An example of this strategy in a museum would be the construction of an educational scene with the purpose of including the visitor in the story and generating questions in his/her mind about what he/she has been listening to. This should provoke in his/her mind a mechanism of a relationship between the staged scene and various past experiences in his/her own life. The interactive modules should also undertake an exploration of the written word, attempting to identify its significance and help the viewer to associate with his/her own experience and family memories. Finally, the process should be associated with specific materials, moments, and spaces.

When the visitor can remember the sound of a bell by means of a recording, or he/she can listen to a forgotten expression in the words of an old teacher while he/she is recognizing an object, he/she experiences a set of senses and emotions that he/she would probably thought was consigned to oblivion. This type of information can be presented through a loudspeaker or a set of small loudspeakers activated by a button or by movement sensors. It is also possible to use digital mp3 players with the additional benefit of this technology being capable of reducing background noise.

Re-creation interactive modules are capable of bringing back to life ages or situations that cannot be perceived by the simple exhibition of the material by means of representing experiences or educational traditions. It not only recreates a concrete scenography, but incorporates all intangible material (symbols, uniforms, decoration materials, illumination) and makes its utilisation and significance known to the visitors through different communication channels, including videos, informative icons, panels, etc. For example, the visitor can enter a 19th-century faculty of medicine and take a seat in the dissecting room. He/she can access those objects and surgical materials, assuming the role of a medical student of that century for a few minutes. Undoubtedly, this model offers visitors a high level of emotional interaction, because it activates empathic capabilities. However, one of the main drawback is damage done to the exhibited material. Searching for a solution, it has been proposed that exact replicas be used in the scenarios instead of original artifacts.

Finally, *interactive modules based on software and/or hardware tools* mainly make use of informatics, as opposed to the previous two modules which are based on mechanical or electronic media. Informatics offers many possibilities, because they can be implemented together with the other modules. The visitor might access an oral file and a screen showing him/her how the classroom of an Andalusian village looked like at the beginning of the 20th century appears, while the teacher is narrating her experiences virtually. At the same time, another computer might recreate the story of the teacher using three-dimensional simulation software, allowing the visitor to take a virtual walk in the village observing the places referred to by the teacher.

The utilisation of interactive informatics support creates many more opportunities than the written word associated to the object, because it more easily gains the visitor's attention and more readily adjusts to the reality of his/her daily life. However, in order to succeed, it is necessary that the person curious about the history of the education of his/her country become part of the story. The visitor needs to feel that he/she is able to interact with history and that he/she is personally involved. Computers can help this process. Additionally, another didactic aspect that cannot be ignored when displaying oral testimony is the proximity of the message transmission process. The first-person narratives of historical personages are better perceived by the visitor than the labels and staging of museum staff, and they enhance the transmission of information by making it more direct and enriching. However, all this should be done with care, as too extensive use of this module can lead to over-saturation of the visitor.

This richness in the communication process that computers offer to museums presents a set of didactic possibilities for using web-based solutions, too, often called *virtual museums*. The set up of virtual museums tends to create a high level of interaction with the visitor, which has numerous advantages (Sala & Sospedra, 2005). From a didactic point of view, the virtual museum invites the visitor to follow his/her own rhythm, and it provides the visitor with the opportunity of being his/her own guide through his/her own experience. Additionally, virtual museums make it possible to work in groups without chronological or spatial coincidence between participants. As far as the interpretation of heritage goes, a virtual museum offers many more possibilities for the exhibition and preservation of oral educational heritage. In a virtual museum, individuals of any age can navigate through the website and hear summaries of testimonies on any and all aspects of the history of education in the form of concise messages (sometimes with the additional option of choosing between the short or the complete mode). It also offers the possibility of simultaneously visualizing anything referred to in the testimonies. In addition, it stimulates critical faculties through the presentation of different perspectives and contributes to raising awareness about the necessity of recovering our intangible heritage.[6] An example from the history of computer science is the work carried out by F. Garzotto, P. Paolini and P. Savino on the contents and uses of a Virtual Museum of Italian Computer Science History. They have developed two models where they stored a vast amount of information (documents, images, video, interviews) in a digital archive based on multimedia database with an online front-end. One of the modules allows for online access while the other is intended for working off-line by means of a CD-ROM device (Garzotto et al., 2001).

Didactic Possibilities and the Necessity of Preserving the Intangible Educational Heritage

The educational opportunities offered by the transmission of intangible educational culture via museums are extremely significant. The type of content that can be transmitted via the spoken word and exhibited by the means I have described in the previous section introduces two of the three goals Pastor Homs defines as essential to every museum's educational programme – "the *conceptual*, the *procedural*, and the *attitudal*" (Pastor, 2004). Learning of educational events and matters, the characteristics of school environments – in other words, the concepts – is mainly achieved through the exhibition of objects complemented with oral testimony. But learning procedures and attitudes, i.e., the exhibition of what I have called *intangible heritage* is essential. The utilisation of objects, their significance in the educational past and the emotions they convey can only be known by means of oral history. A ruler resting on the desk of a teacher in a 1950s classroom signifies nothing to a child today than an object to help draw a straight line. But behind this object we can find a world of experiences that would never be known and that would be lost if we did not attempt to preserve it. Through the simple tale of one of the witnesses, the visitor can learn about the "possible uses" (for drawing indeed, but also for punishing) of this ruler, as well as the values prevailing at that historical moment in educational context.

Among the impressions that the visitor can come away with, thanks to the complementarily between the material and immaterial legacies, is the imbalance produced by the phenomenon known as *temporality*. Museums of history, including of course museums of the history of education, are configured around particular historical and political moments. Traditionally, their collections have been exhibited in historical sequence. In the history of education transmitted by oral testimonies, milestones and historical moments are not usually defined by important political events, but by significant events or experiences in the history of humankind. Visitors may be surprised by the very different perceptions than people have about their school days, perhaps because memories are often distorted by the passage of the time. This fact reiterates the necessity of modifying the current organization of space in pedagogical museums, indicating the necessity of including what I have called "thematic blocs". Prof. Gómez García has recently advocated the establishment of such museums as living places in continuous movement and constantly interacting with the surrounding environment. She proposes designing rooms, spaces, or thematic blocs capable of suggesting dynamism (Gómez, 2003). This idea has inspired the Museum of Valencia, where the artifacts are distributed according to thematic blocs including "the origins of society", "the growing society", "changing society", "the possible future". This way of organizing material and immaterial artifacts breeds a more diffuse or holistic way of understanding and learning. In fact, one of the major faults in general of museums in the West is the classification system, where a clear epistemological rupture between ways of knowing and truth-making and historical truth exists. This legacy is manifested in positivist and neo-positivist methodologies, and is what Battiste and Henderson have dubbed the "Eurocentric monologue" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Another lesson the visitor can take away with him/her after visiting a pedagogical museum (either physically or virtually) is the importance of safeguarding and protecting the rich, intangible educational heritage, which is absolutely essential to the creation and maintenance of our collective memory. In common with B. Murphy, I believe that communal memory is "a dynamic, potent and alternative process of social memorizing, often hostile to formal history" (Murphy, 2005), requiring adjustments in consciousness as far as representation is concerned. This is key issue on two levels. First, it allows aspects of the educational process that were transmitted orally and were at risk of being forgotten to be recovered. Secondly, it allows the visitor (especially youth) to contribute testimony about his/her time, especially if he/she is encouraged to participate in the process of materialization of his/her educational reality (by being recorded, being interviewed about his/her experiences, etc.).[7] Potentially, our young people can revalue heritage transmitted by the word. And because of that, the elaboration of specific educational programmes, focused on our current students, becomes a key issue. Furthermore, these programmes should be focused on each specific academic level. Currently television, video games, and the Internet delimit the opportunities for communication between generations. In many cases, the young do not consider the stories of their grandparents particularly interesting. This creates a past without value for them, as they ignore the fact that humans require memory in order to create their own identity and be aware of their existence as a reality (Rosa et al., 2000). Therefore, one of the first measures taken would be to acquire resources capable of transmitting values to the new generations, as well as participate in the preservation of the intangible educational heritage by means of competitions and seminars. This can also be achieved by making the process fun by planning field trips and using new technologies, including video games and the Internet.

As historians of education, it is our task to preserve and configure individual and social memory (Viñao, 2003). It is important to consider our place of work as a research centre and, therefore, a centre of generational acquaintance, both past and present. We must initiate and promote specific projects in order to obtain artifacts of the intangible educational heritage from the surrounding community and then disseminate it back to that community. In this respect, Prof. Ruiz Berrio has suggested the creation of museums in pedagogical history created along the lines suggested by the concept of the *laboratory museum*. And this idea is associated to my message of changing the definition of heritage from something static to something installed in the collective mentality. I claim that heritage is alive, dynamic and is constructed by each and every citizen on a daily basis. Prof. Ruiz Berrio suggests a series of key elements in the process – collaboration between lecturers in the history of education and expert lecturers from other didactic disciplines; offering seminars, courses, etc. on museum premises; locating museums so that they are easily accessible to visiting classes; and close cooperation with the authorities responsible for recovering, preserving, and disseminating the artefacts of heritage (Ruiz, 2002). We must not forget the first principle of participatory research, which according to Kapoor (2002) is to serve without causing harm to the interests of those studied as much as those who study.

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Endnotes

[1] A recent study of the written word and its adaptation to multimediality and school-knowledge society can be found in Escolano, 2005.

[2] For a concrete example, see the empiric and political modalities stated by Prof. Agustín Escolano Benito in Escolano, 2002:31–32.

[3] These include the Pedagogical Museum of Galicia (MUPEGA), inaugurated in 2000, which deserves special attention. Also, the Museum of Childhood in Albacete, the Bartolomé Cossio Laboratory Museum in Madrid, and the pedagogical museum “The School of Yesteryear” in Huesca. Additionally, the Museum of the History of Education in Murcia and the Andalusia Pedagogical Museum (an ongoing research project funded by the Spanish Board of Education since 2004) will soon open their doors.

[4] Prof. Agustín Escolano (University of Valladolid) has constructed a questionnaire about school childhood, which was recently adapted and modified by Prof. Miguel Beas (University of Granada) and published in Beas, 2002. Other interesting proposals have been presented by Suárez (2002). Some researchers from the University of Seville have been designing a questionnaire for secondary education, currently in press.

[5] As an example Dr Trigueros Gordillo (University of Seville) has designed a form for inventorying songs, currently in use at the Andalusia Pedagogical Museum, and recently published in Trigueros, 2005.

[6] Many of these aspects are stated by Morales Miranda as essential for every interpretation of the heritage (Morales, 2001:63).

[7] With respect to this, Prof. Molero Pintado has recently complained about the educators who are now fighting to safeguard intangible heritage, because they have not considered their own experience as teachers or lecturers as a matter of historical record (Molero, 2002:196).

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   John, V.P and Horner, V.M. (eds) (1971) *Early childhood Bilingual Education*. New York: Modern Language Association of America.
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   Karmiloff-Smith, A. (1986) Some fundamental aspects of language development after age five. In P Fletcher and M.Garman (eds) *Language Acquisition:Studies in First Language Development* (2nd edn). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Innehåll i nummer 3–4/2004

Daniel Lindmark: Utbildning och kolonialism
Anders Marner: Ett designperspektiv på slöjden och ett kulturperspektiv på skolan
Per-Olof Erixon: På spaning efter den tid som flytt
Monika Vinterek: Pedagogiskt arbete: Ett forskningsområde börjar anta en tydlig profil
Barbro Bergström & Lena Selmersdotter: Att tala är ett sätt att lära!
Paula Berntsson: Att tillvarata förskollärarutbildningen
Kennert Orlenius: Progression i lärarutbildningen

Previous issues

Innehåll i nummer 1–2 2005

Tomas Bergqvist
IT och lärande – i skola och lärarutbildning
Jonas Carlquist
Att spela en roll. Om datorspel och dess användare
Elza Dunkels
Nätkulturer – vad gör barn och unga på Internet?
Johan Elmfeldt och Per-Olof Erixon
Genrer och intermedialitet i litteratur- och skrivundervisning
– teoretiska utgångspunkter och empiriska iakttagelser
AnnBritt Enochsson
Ett annat sätt att umgås – yngre tonåringar i virtuella gemenskaper
Anders Gedionsen, Else Søndergaard, Jane Buus Sørensen
Når moderniteten i læreruddanelsen møder virkeligheden
Ylva Hård af Segerstad och Sylvana Sofkova Hashemi
Skrivandet, nya media och skrivstöd hos grundskoleelever
Patrik Hernwall
Virtual Society: skillnad, tillgång, frånvaro
– om villkoren för inträdet i cybersamhället
Bertil Roos
Examination och det lärande samhället
Eva Skåreus
Du sköna nya värld

Innehåll i nummer 3 2005

Christina Segerholm:
Productive Internationalization in Higher Education: One Example
Charlotta Edström:
Is there more than just symbolic statements?
Alan J. Hackbarth:
An Examination of Methods for
Analyzing Teacher Classroom Questioning Practicies
Camilla Hällgren:
Nobody and everybody has the responsibility
– responses to the Swedish antiracist website SWEDKID
Brad W. Kose:
Professional Development for Social Justice:
Rethinking the “End in Mind”
Mary J. Leonard:
Examining Tensions in a “Design for Science” Activity System
J. Ola Lindberg and Anders D. Olofsson:
Phronesis – on teachers’ knowing in practice
Constance A. Steinkuehler:
The New Third Place:
Massively Multiplayer Online Gaming in American Youth Culture
Biographies
Notes on the submission of manuscripts

Innehåll i nummer 4 2005
Håkan Andersson
Bedömning ur ett elevperspektiv:
– erfarenheter från ett försök med timplanelös undervisning
Sylvia Benckert
Varför väljer inte flickorna fysik?
Lena Boström & Tomas Kroksmark
Learnings and Strategies
Per-Olof Erixon & Gun Malmgren
Literature as Exploration
Interview with Louise M Rosenblatt (1904–2005)
– Princeton, NJ, USA, April 25, 2001
Daniel Lindmark
Historiens didaktiska bruk: Exemplets och traditionens makt
Agneta Linné
Lärarinnor, pedagogiskt arbete och modernitet
En narrativ analys

Innehåll i nummer 1 2006
Lovisa Bergdahl
Om gemensamma värden i ett pluralistiskt samhälle
– Lärarutbildarens syn på och arbete med gemensamma värden i den nya lärarutbildningen
Elza Dunkels
The Digital Native as a Student
– Implications for teacher Education
Maria Elmér & Hans Albin Larsson
Demokratiutbildningen i lärarutbildningen
– Några jämförelser och tolkningar
Bodil Halvars-Franzén
Med fokus på lärares yrkesetik i den nya lärarutbildningen
Gun-Marie Frånberg
Lärarstudenters uppfattning om värdegrunden i lärarutbildningen
Margareta Havung
”Du, som är kvinna – du kan väl ta det, det där om genus”
– Om jämställdhet och genus i nya lärarutbildningen
Britta Jonsson
Lärarstudenters värderingar och kvaliteter

Innehåll i nummer 2–3 2006

Hans Thorbjörnsson
Swedish educational sloyd – an international success
Kajsa Borg
What is sloyd? A question of legitimacy and identity
Lars Lindström
The multiple uses of portfolio assessment
Mia Porko-Hudd
Three teaching materials in sloyd – An analysis of the makers' thoughts behind the visible surface
Viveca Lindberg
Contexts for craft and design within Swedish vocational education: Implications for the content
Bent Illum
Learning in practice – practical wisdom – the dialogue of the process
Ragnar Ohlsson
A Practical Mind as an Intellectual Virtue
Kirsten Klæbo & Bodil Svaboe
Design and Digital Textile in higher Education: The Impact of Digital Technology on Printed Textile and Surface Design
Marléne Johansson
The work in the classroom for sloyd

Innehåll i nummer 4 2006

Peter Bergström, Carina Granberg, Pär Segerbrant, Dag Österlund
Kursutvärderingar för kursutveckling
Steven Ekholm
Ungdomars läsvanor och läsintressen
Rapport från ett läsprojekt
Kath Green
Problematic Issues in Action Research:
Personal reflections as a researcher, doctoral student and supervisor
Kerstin Munck
Mångfald, text och värdegrund
Ett ämnesdidaktiskt perspektiv: svenskämnet
Joakim Samuelsson
Lärarstudenters emotioner för skolmatematik

Innehåll i nummer 1 2007

Lena Fejan Ljunghill
Till skolan, med kärlek och vrede
Diane J Grayson
The Making of a Science Teacher
Ference Marton and Lo Mun Ling
Learning from "The Learning Study"
Per-Olof Erixon
Från språk och litteratur till multimodalitet och design i det pedagogiska arbetet
Per Lindqvist och Ulla Karin Nordänger
Lärande i riskzonen? – konturer av ett obrukat forskningsfält
Christer Stensmo
Etnografiska fältnotiser i en vfu-period inom lärarutbildningen

Innehåll i nummer 2 2007

David Andrew
Learners and artist-teachers as multimodal agents in schools
Andrew Clegg
Creative Processes in technology Education;
Namibian Solutions to Namibian Problems
Liesl van der Merwe
Assessment in the Learning Area Arts and Culture:
A South African perspective
Hetta Potgeiter
The "I" in multicultural music education
Kajsa Borg
Assessment for Learning Creative Subjects
Per-Olof Erixon
From Written Text to Design. Poetry for the media society
Hans Örtegren
Formative Evaluation of Projects in Art Pedagogy

Innehåll i nummer 3 2007

Galina Nilsson & Elena Luchinskaya
Problembaserat lärande i högskolematematik. En studie av högskolestuderandes kunskapsutveckling
i matematik på datavetenskapligt program
Eva Nyström
Reconceptualising gender and science education: from biology and difference to language and fluidity
Kathleen Quinlivan
Twist and Shout! Working with Teachers towards affirming Sexual Diversity in a New Zealand Girls' Secondary School
Britt-Marie Styrke
Estetik – kropp – genus i relation till dans och dansutbildning
Hugo Vanheeswijck
Limitations and Possibilities of Catholic Education in a Multicultural World

Tidskrift

för lärarutbildning och forskning

CONTENTS

Editorial

Articles

Arja Virta
Historical Literacy: Thinking, Reading and Understanding History

Elisabeth Erdmann
Visual Literacy: Images as Historical Sources and Their Consequences for the Learning and Teaching of History

Yehoshua Mathias
Cultivating Historical Literacy in a Post-Literate Age:
Historical Movies in Classroom

Annie Bruter
History as a Tool for Acquiring Literacy in 19th-Century French Schools

Cristina Yanes Cabrera
Pedagogical Museums and the Safeguarding of an Intangible Educational Heritage: Didactic Practices and Possibilities

Authors

Notes on the submission of manuscripts

Previous issues

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