

Valor educativo y preservación de la memoria histórica en la documentalística de Santiago Álvarez

Educational value and preservation of historical memory in the documentary work of Santiago Álvarez

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Resumen: El estudio del valor educativo y la preservación de la memoria histórica en la documentalística de Santiago Álvarez tiene como particularidad en este artículo, el sustento metodológico de los postulados teóricos de la Educación Audiovisual y Patrimonial, al asumir la perspectiva cualitativa de la investigación científica y el empleo de los métodos hermenéutico, etnográfico, análisis y síntesis, con el objetivo de analizar el discursivo educativo e histórico contenido en la apreciación del texto cinematográfico, a partir del carácter testimonial, auténtico, identitario, excepcional, social, ideológico, político, de uso y sus relaciones intertextuales.

Palabras clave: Valor educativo; Memoria histórica; Santiago Álvarez; Preservación; Documentalística; Audiovisual, Patrimonio cultural.

Abstract: The study of the educational value and the preservation of the historical memory in the documentary work of Santiago Álvarez has as particularity in this article, the methodological support of the theoretical postulates of the Audiovisual and Patrimonial Education, when assuming the qualitative perspective of the scientific research and the use of the hermeneutic methods, ethnographic, analysis and synthesis methods, with the objective of analyzing the educational and historical discursive content in the appreciation of the cinematographic text, from the testimonial, authentic, identity, exceptional, social, ideological, political, of use and its intertextual relations.

Keywords: Educational value; Historical memory; Santiago Álvarez; Preservation; Documentary work; Audiovisual, Cultural heritage.

Introduction

The first thing that characterizes the documentary work of Santiago Álvarez Román (1919-1998) is the sincere, truthful and firm ideological and political aesthetics of an art that is necessarily

educational, transformative, cognitive, and a promoter of transcendental socio-cultural stories for the construction, preservation and conservation of historical memory.

His work is a cinematographic research that defends the thesis of the Cuban Revolution, born in 1959, from the authorial point of view or, as defined by Weinrichter (2011), a film essay, which generates the reading of the consumption of news and realities based on his own and others' representations, according to the subjective narrative of history.

In this sense, the purpose of Santiago's work is to show the stories as their subjectivity distinguishes them in the form of a discursive effect to produce evocative images of past and present events in the subjects, constituting individual and collective memories that affect the conscience, inscribed in the texts and contexts of the audiovisual text, promoting education and training in values.

It is impossible then, to form interacting generations and more, professionals who are in charge of the educational process without didactic instruments that call the attention of others on the educational influence of the audiovisual in the understanding of reality, of the manipulation of pseudo-art and the polysemy of artistic languages from the appreciation.

Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the educational value of Álvarez's documentary heritage and his narrative management of Cuban and international history, which, as Ferro (2008) clarifies, is a reference because it is a film that interacts with society and represents the ideo-political contexts of a nation.

The objective of this article is to analyze the educational and historical discursive content in the appreciation of the cinematographic text, from the testimonial, authentic, identity, exceptional, social and ideo-political character, of use and its intertextual relations, which enhances the educational value and the preservation of the historical memory, by its patrimonial declaration, as the individual or reader interacts with it, by means of the perception of references from diverse fields and cultural disciplines, that is to say, of the internal and external retributions between the plurality of referential issuers and the coordinated action of different procedures that create and/or accentuate its meaning and where all the texts work in the interpretation.

For this, the qualitative perspective of scientific research is assumed from the history of Cuban art, through the appreciation of documentary works and the use of the hermeneutic, ethnographic, analysis and synthesis methods that make possible to defend the idea that the educational value of Santiago's production, directly and indirectly increases the life expectancy of the historical memory and strengthens the commitment and responsibility of the perdurability in the time of culture.

Development

The didactic use of cinema created by Santiago Álvarez allows for a systematic understanding of the socio-cultural realities of the historical stages of the past and the present, through the practice of judgment, by means of audiovisual education, which requires the analysis of the contexts and texts in which it was made and the presuppositions that the reader has for its comprehension.

Therefore, the educational and at the same time auxiliary value of this artistic production requires the interpretation of society, its meanings and the appropriation of mechanisms of the historical sciences to become an influential and instructive entity in the perception of social processes, a problematizer of aesthetics and aesthetization of culture and a generator of consciousness that preserves individual and collective memory.

The values are qualities that act in a global and singularized way in the works and their constitution can be decomposed in cultural contents and identity objectives of the subjects that recognize them, as they have a cost in the individuals, it is necessary to evaluate from the science its foundation in the protection of the Cultural Heritage.

Several researchers have addressed the issue of heritage values in their studies, emphasizing that they are sociocultural products, human faculties and added qualities that individuals attribute to objects as an individual and collective identity. Darwill (1995), in Malcom, relates in his research values such as: of option, which are determined to the transmission of information, knowledge to interacting and future generations; of existence, which provide well-being and desire of connection with the past; and of use, which comes from the interest and right of the subjects to access the heritage as an active entity. These three values refer to archaeological heritage, but as their essence is clearly social, they can be perceived in all types of cultural property.

Grefe (2003), for his part, defines values in three groups, the first of which is the so-called traditional group, attributed to culture (historical, aesthetic, artistic and cognitive); the second, the economic value; and the third group, the communicative values (symbolic, social and brand image). All of them provide understanding of the heritage asset separately, each one is contemplated in the epistemological valuation of heritage education.

Similarly, Niglio (2012), makes explicit that the awareness of the link value allows to analyze with greater objectivity the dynamics that characterize the different theoretical, methodological contributions, the knowledge of diversity and self-preservation. This diversity can only be reflected in the educational value, a value that provides to establish links and attributions.

The values of cultural heritage have an organic impact on moral values and both are interrelated, they teach to learn the different natural actions of the human being with himself and with his creations, which are often related to socio-cultural norms.

The educational value, due to its psychic potential, is distinguished in the beings that act on the patrimonial goods by the ethical and aesthetic assumption and the emotional influence of learning. In one or the other, the relevant debate is education itself; in men, morality constitutes and shapes the guidelines for the development of individual and collective conscience; in objects, it is man himself who confers identity and therefore quality to the objects that their content offers to others in the civic exchange.

The formative centers, first family, then school and community must understand that the audio-visual media, the whole art, is proposed even without being its initial premise to be a cultural influence. They do not and will not deny their role in the valorization of culture, the globalization of ideas, emotions, feelings and solutions to educational problems.

This, surely, was what moved Santiago Alvarez's cinema to be an educational environment for Cuba and Latin America, for the world, beyond the media power of the cinema made by powers such as the United States, which found in the socialization of its values and intertexts, a permanent task that contributes to the analysis of history.

The educational value in Santiago Álvarez's work is present regardless of its use because it is linked to the existence of the diegesis of the text, an expression that provides schooled or literate learners to unravel codes, symbols and narratives from the following elements of appreciation:

1. Contextual interpretation, which allows us to understand the social and textual conditions of the work, by appreciating the author's subjectivity relations from the logic of the story captured by the cinematographic language.
2. The intertextual experiences and expectations contained in the author-work-spectator relationship.
3. The competences to carry out the audiovisual reading. This element is the rector of the appreciative process, where the spectator uses instruments apprehended on the basis of clues, indications, concepts, codes and symbols for interpretation.
4. Attributions of the reader for the reading and its conclusions. In this element the spectator must react actively to the reading texts that are present or absent during the appreciation and must support with conceptual and formal data the algorithms of the cinematographic language, valuing the author's judgment and his own in the conclusions of the analysis, expressing in the reflection the ethical, aesthetic and social commitment of the text.

The educational value sets its accent in the audiovisual discourses of Santiago Alvarez through the diversity of texts that teach to observe and preserve memory from a counter-historical perspective, the history that ensures the preservation of the identity of past cultural processes and that allows the deconstruction of the past and the preservation of traditions; because historical memory is more than a political purpose that is produced, it is the interrelation between times to modify or affirm objectives of identity, religion, beliefs, customs, popular culture, folklore and ideologies.

Historical memory is defined as an ideal, a political and ethical aspiration that interacts in the present in the formation of conceptual, formal and habitual norms in the future or as the ordered activity that from hermeneutics makes intangible subjectivity a tangible authenticity.

Therefore, the educational value of Santiago Álvarez's documentary work acts on the discourse of tradition from the individual and collective memory, in this way, the analysis must also be a

communicative space to create, preserve and archive the historical memory, the same that is produced, reproduced and transformed by studying society and the audiences that contemplate arguments and persevere in tradition.

It can be affirmed that these films by Álvarez make the subject understand the past as part of the relevant memory and influence his present insofar as it forces, through behavior, aesthetics and subjective journalism, to permanently reflect on society, preparing the individual for the understanding of the stories at all levels of learning, therefore, it should be seen as a patrimonial good.

This criterion is based on the connotation of his work as a representative document of the historical account, which deepens its educational value, element of truthful subjective translation of culture, having a fundamental premise: the reflection, transmission and reconstruction of the identity, ideological, political and artistic heritage from an intergenerational dialogue with interdisciplinary signs and meanings.

For this purpose, some relevant documentaries made by Santiago are analyzed through the use of hermeneutic and ethnographic methods that enable to defend the idea that not only the production of ICAIC Latin American News (declared in 2009 by UNESCO as "Memory of the World") stand out as works with a heritage value but all his filmography.

The theory on cultural heritage is abundant, however, we continue to assume the definition of UNESCO (1982), which generally coincides with the contributions of this study, by defining it as the legacy of artistic works, of popular character, language, archives and values that we receive from the past in tangible and intangible form and that we transmit between generations to future generations.

It is important to emphasize, then, that cinema uses other artistic manifestations to export texts and contexts through its aesthetic, creative, educational, practical-transformational and cognitive functions, forming identities and individual and collective memories.

Likewise, Santiago Álvarez's cinema is a document that presents the past and the action of the present in it, discovering with and in the individual, traditions, customs, practices and events that

come and go from the historical memory, as a social process on which we depend and at the same time build subjectivities and realities in search of answers and solutions to problems, in many cases, pregnant with historical gaps and identities globalized by audiovisuality itself.

For the purposes of this analysis, cultural heritage is defined as the most significant heritage created by man in his relationship with nature and culture in a given historical time due to its social relevance and the benefits that create values, identities and memory.

This being so, we turn to Ardévol (1997), who describes the audiovisual text as an ethnographic document and defines the concept of filmic ethnography as the process to be understood only as generated from anthropological research.

Consequently, if Ethnography as Anthropology are sciences that study, draw on, unveil the cultural, natural and mixed heritage, the documentaries of Santiago, from their genesis are ethnographic constructs that by appreciating their educational value, inspire profound changes in social and individual consciousness and revolutionize the forms of Audiovisual Education, by proffering methodological tools in the interstices that will be argued later in this article.

This is testified by films such as *Ciclón* (1963), which reflects the events, pain, losses and hope of the Cuban people, after the passage of what at that time was the most devastating weather phenomenon that hit the eastern region, Cyclone Flora, still remembered by the elderly who lived through it, meteorologists, historians, sociologists and other specialists who study these atmospheric events.

This documentary demonstrates the formal and conceptual creativity of the production team and especially of its director, thought from the exposure of sensitivity and an inescapable commitment when showing the hopeful images of the Agrarian Reform and the young people who symbolize the continuity of the revolutionary work.

Now (1965), which fuses photographic and audiovisual images with the personal experience of those years lived in the United States, where he observed racial discrimination, the processes of memory in a web of cultural texts from various disciplines, a clear example of the relationships and the educational value of Santiago's filmography.

In this enigmatic documentary, the story of racism and racial discrimination is told not only against black Americans through faces, people, looks and desires brought together in a masterful soundtrack, but also as a symbol and universal denunciation, since the music used is that of an Afro-descendant: Lena Horne, an American diva, also an activist and committed to the anti-racist cause, manages to create an effervescent tearing of the soul, a painful shock that does not let the audience become passive spectators, even if they want to, but creators of a counter-story, that of the marginalized and attacked, of those discriminated against in the United States and in the world, since the song that gives title to the ethnographic document, was composed based on Hava Naguila, a Hebrew theme of high cultural connotation, a hymn that supposes a type of intertextual relation defended from the presence also of the photograph of the typical dance of the Jewish collective festivities and in the lower part the representation of a scene of repression.

It is obvious that another text within the text is the hope generated by the Now theme in spite of the crude diegesis and in parallelism of the Jewish-American extermination, which today is not in term, but in another of the sequences a policeman is shown with one of his legs on the neck of a black militant, perhaps, the same that in our collective historical memory recalls in the case of George Floyd in May 2020.

Now, is a game of intertexts, its dialogue is written between racism, whether towards blacks or Jews, towards ideology and culture, it is an exhaustive historical resource of the sixties, a denunciation at the point of the camera, with a blow of arguments of meanings and signifiers.

This majestic document is a clear example of the patrimonial value of Álvarez's work, a powerful and ductile educational film that not only generates social reflection, but also contributes to the preservation and conservation of historical memory.

Its setup of juxtaposition of images, stirring drama through sound and music makes it an authentic, original style, unveils xenophobia with its noxious darkness, transmits universality and generates subjective and objective challenges to fight against this scourge still latent in any society.

Therefore, Now stands as an archetype of audiovisual historical memory. Its images seem to us to be as current as in the past, its denunciation as current as in the past, its message unforgettable, repeatable, its discourse, immeasurable, tenacious, brave, vigorous, militant, its dramaturgy,

critical, its intertextual content, its corpus shows injustice, humiliation, violence, horror, its conflict, the contradiction impotence-suffering against victimizing barbarism; its value, patrimonial.

From the anthropological point of view, the film establishes the connections between individual and collective memories to expose the aforementioned relations between racists and discriminated, victimizers and victims, history and counter-history.

Until the Victory Always (1967), is a heartfelt tribute to Che, to his life, to his ideology, a few days after his death. In this documentary, Santiago uses silence to tell the work of a man of light, without resorting to reiterative images, but from the sensitivity of the people, through the demonstration of his struggle against inequality, poverty and imperialism, for spiritual and social progress from the revolutions, with a narratology juxtaposed and intertextual with the speeches of Ernesto Guevara. His contribution in this historical moment is to show that the relations of efficacy of the aesthetic, cognitive, ideological and political functions.

Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th (1967), is a gigantic documentary text in which the filmmaker convinces through collages and individual and collective references built with facts narrated by various mythological resources. He shows tapes burning; the war itself as it is, exposing a different audiovisual language, relevant, anti-war, novel. He told a reality from his subjectivity, with his narratology of the immediate, committed, aesthetic, authentic, educational and transforming.

Another important element of the heritage value of Santiago Álvarez's documentary work can be seen in "79 Primaveras" (1969), "LBJ" (1968) and "I have faith in you" (1979), just to cite a few examples. In the first one, as in the third one and in almost all the titles of his extensive work, the marked Martí's influence is approached. "79 Primaveras" is a visual biography of Ho Chi Minh with texts by Martí that recreate the life and death of the Vietnamese leader, using as intertext, brief speeches, silence, music and the memory of the macabre sediments of the war, sunflowers become bombs and Uncle Ho's poems fork with the rock of The Beatles that serves as background to the images of destruction while the International is heard in an oriental version.

Meanwhile, in I Have Faith in You, ingenuity returns to show itself through collage, this time of images of Vietnamese children, hospitals, children's circles, schools, shelters, it is a social denunciation of abuse against infants, without a doubt, the recursive use of Martí (as in I am a son

of America... and to it I owe and among others, The first delegate); it refers us to the transtextuality of: (I have faith in you, in human betterment...in the usefulness of virtue). It is not only the narration of war and its consequences against the child population but the hope that these same victims can make the world a better place.

LBJ constitutes an intertextual sketch of genius. Its signifier and signified constitute symbols of reference. The title is based on the initials of the American president Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973), also to identify the deaths of Martin Luther King, Bob and John F. Kennedy. The idea of the title occurs because of Kennedy's death and for this, Santiago divided it into three parts, collage parts with allusive music, as already distinguished, this time with *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff, a composer openly related to Nazism. In this documentary a gothic cathedral is visualized, in the image of the wedding cake of President Johnson's daughter a gangster with a machine gun appears, attacking the guests and a resounding dedication to Fidel.

My Brother Fidel (1977) is a sympathetic, sensitive, emotionally charged work with a powerful testimonial charge, here the director produces a dialogue between a 93 year old man, witness of the landing of Martí and Gómez in Playitas de Cajobabo, Guantánamo and Fidel. This man was talking to Fidel himself without being aware of it, and when he recognizes it, he can only cry.

To explain, characterize or analyze other works by Santiago Alvarez, such as his monumental *ICAIC Latin American News* (1960-1990) would be endless, its eminent ethnographic and patrimonial character, its educational value for the preservation of historical memory by itself, it enables the acquisition of knowledge, it is an unparalleled journalism, a propitious vehicle and key element to drain through the news the dramaturgy of history with a rich and fluid soundtrack.

Alvarez's artistic productions, mainly from the 60's and 70's, mentioned above were aimed at showing the cultural achievements of Cuba and its Revolution.

In this context, the educational value of his creations, their militant, critical and political character explores the cinematographic aesthetics of the social chronicle of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), made mainly by Dziga Vertov in the first half of the 20th century, however, in Santiago we find that the content, form, theme, style and dramaturgy are inextricably

linked to the soundtrack and in totality, constitute a determinant, sharp, subjective but truthful statement.

Therefore, we are in the presence of an art that links culture and life, beauty and ideology, history and memory, statement and society and is an example of universal heritage, because in it live diverse patrimonial goods and artistic expressions that generate a plurality and absolute singularity to appropriate the individual and collective experiences of reminiscence.

This analysis points out that publics are made, exemplary subjects are not born, they are educated from the acquisition of values in learning. Critical thinking develops memory and builds empathy to solve social problems from solidarity; it constitutes the foundations of respect for diversity, cognitive and emotional differences and the democratization of opportunities; it creates a feeling of civic care for cultural, natural and mixed heritage and health, with an assertive communication for personal, professional and affective relationships.

The understanding of the educational value of Santiago Álvarez's documentaries requires the potential of the preservation of social and collective memories, which is an essential component of intangible heritage.

From this point of view, audiences with an Audiovisual and Heritage Education, will have as an initial point, their experience, the intertextual texts of reference to sustain their individual (historical) memory.

Secondly, being immersed in the application of the steps of the appreciation process (before, during and after), they will move towards the collective (historical) memory through the educational value of the audiovisual and its relationship with other values: social, aesthetic, ideological, of use, authentic, exceptional, intrinsic (intertextual), economic, among others in the debate generated by the design and application of the observation guide that will allow identifying in turn the dominant or imposed memory of the identity memory.

Finally, the formation of critical judgments based on the understanding and evaluation of the text in its context will allow the preservation of historical memory as a thought, heritage and continuity.

When Santiago Álvarez's documentary work is analyzed, the individual is immersed in his own or other people's experiences, which sensitize his social conscience, creating a reflexive attitude, which is revealed in the capacity to react to reality, accepting the influence of history. This effect is perfected by the use of the following didactic-methodological instrumentation that serves for audiovisual appreciation in general:

- Knowledge of all the actors in the audiovisual education process of the potentialities and deficiencies in the appreciation of Santiago Álvarez's documentary work (diagnosis).
- Creation of a favorable environment where appreciation is developed for the formation of values.
- Appreciation should include activities that integrate in their conception debates on cultural education and preservation of historical memory.
- In teaching activities, the role of criticism is required (design of observation guides).
- Advising of professionals of Education and Artistic Teaching, artists and art critics.

The filmic materials described above, from their ontological hermeneutics, find in history an encounter with local, national and international stories, with relevant figures of the historical processes that led to the triumph of the Cuban Revolution or those of nations such as Vietnam, to the emancipating deeds of Latin America, to the guerrilla war of Che or to moving scenes such as those of the Flora cyclone.

The audiovisual exists and exists because it studies and is part of history, constructs it in a subjective, autobiographical, domestic and group way in a historical time socially determined by the formation and direct and indirect experience or by what Espinosa (2015) called, struggle of stories, struggle of memories, one and the same struggle.

Evidently cinema, especially which of Santiago Álvarez should be used to illustrate and reconstruct the most heterogeneous geographical, historical and social facts of the past, especially because it is a didactic resource that, for its educational value:

a). Motivation.

- b). Exemplifies.
- c). Strengthens or replaces other elements.
- d). It serves to initiate discussions that generate judgments and assessments.
- e). It constitutes the presentation of a cultural narrative.
- f). Strengthens individual and collective (historical) memory.

The essential procedure for the analysis of the educational value and the preservation of memory lies in linking in an organic way the elements of cinematographic language with the cultural texts provided by intertextuality, to create other texts or codes: dialogue, characters, symbols of times and stories that connect the past with the present. This link serves as a clue for the integral construction of the appreciation and connection with the historical source.

Conclusions

Santiago Álvarez Román's documentary work has an essential educational value that allows him to establish, build and reconstruct processes of social conscience in the audiences that appreciate it, contributing to the preservation of historical memory.

The ethical position and the aesthetic model he established in his audiovisual language, favors the understanding of history and marks a turning point in the cinematographic production, not only of the documentary work of the region or of the third world, but of the universal culture, allowing an ethnographic argumentation that gestated the formation of subjects capable of extracting from a subjective archive, the Cuban socio-cultural reality in its relation with the past and present world.

The use of these exceptional works of art in educational activities should aim to teach students about civic responsibility, identity activism, affective and emotional attention in the process of appreciation and socialization of cultural values, which in turn will affect the ways of acting in the various contexts where they interact, paying special attention to the fight against discrimination, xenophobia or racism and the protection of cultural and natural heritage, democracy, life and history, in short, culture.

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