

## *Shooting and editing Paraguay Remembered*

It was after having read Stendhal's autobiography - *The Life of Henri Brulard* - that I decided to make a film about my time in Paraguay at the end of the sixties, more exactly, a film about *how I remembered that time*, about my memory trying to remember some things of that time.

While he seems to improvise as he writes and lives his days, Stendhal really elaborates a very complex narrative style which is based on a simple principle: *memories don't precede the act of writing; on the contrary, it is the act of writing that calls forth, shapes or sharpens the vague memories that we have*. Every memory of our past thus takes place in the act of writing – the moment when we write, the age we've reached at that moment, what we think of the world, what we think about our self and our life, and even about what we are presently writing – all that must be written as well.

So *Paraguay Remembered* is first of all a film in the *present tense*: a sequence of moments seized as they happened, that can be read like a notebook of a return to Paraguay during a movie festival, after forty years of absence. That's what I pretend in the film, although it is clear that I couldn't possibly have shot all these images in a few weeks: luck can only be pushed so far... (in fact, I went back to Paraguay four years in a row - between 2011 and 2014 - for one or two months stays, filming haphazardly what I saw or what happened to me. It was only during the last year that I began to see the design that the film would make and that I shot accordingly). But whether these images were shot in a short or long period of time, it is always the present moment that is shown on the screen. It is in this present, the present of my shootings, that my "unmemorized memory" manages at times to remember some things.

If the shooting was long and trying, the editing was completed with "*terrible difficulty*". Here I'm quoting Bresson: "*Cinema is not a spectacle, it is a language, a language with which one attempts to write with terrible difficulty*". And I may say that my difficulty was double, since I had to "*write*" both the images and sounds - and the voice of memory. Speaking of this inner voice, the *terrible difficulty* was to find the right tone, the right distance to tell what could not be told. Spectators that think my tone is right will follow the film, the others will probably reject it.

Now, about the "*terrible difficulty*" of the editing itself, I thought that the things I knew how to do and that had worked in previous films would work in this one too. But experience is powerless when the givens of the problem have changed. Here, I wasn't going to talk about my life, that is, to pin it down in a story which was unavoidably fictional (the way I did in *The Filmmaker or Novel of a Childhood*). I wanted to follow the traces of my wandering memory, with its apparitions and disappearances, its movements, caught as these are in the

flow of circumstance and present sensations with which memories are somehow superimposed, sometimes even melting into the present feeling, disappearing into it. Like a seismograph, I had to catch the evanescent movement of memory in the movement of things and accompany it by the very rhythm of the editing.

In that respect, the long days working on the editing table led me to build most sequences on the principle of the repetition of series of almost identical shots: *same frame, same focal length, same angle, same travelling shots speed...* Most of the sequences are thus a suite of very few musical "notes", that are repeated in order to create a rhythm, each time different, so that it will agree with the moment. This rhythm suggests how reality reaches me by repeated knocks on my consciousness, or how I perceive it through the rhythmic beat of image and sound.

Again, this is Bresson's lesson : "*You can 'write' a film with crotchets and double crotchets because cinema is music*". "*The rhythms of a film must be editing rhythms, must be like heartbeats.* »