



European Cinema Education
for Youth

EDUCATIONAL TOOL

DISTANCES

➤ **Distances variations, distances as narrations**

Cinema is an art of distance, and as the image is in movement, these distance constantly evolve. First of all, it is about the distance between the lens and what is being filmed, closely and from far, using the zoom, etc. These distances variations give what is called shot scale – from the very big close-up which makes only a fragment visible (of a face, of an object) to the long shot, most often unveiling the wideness of a landscape.

Very often, particularly in extracts of the “Distances” editing, it is a matter of emotions and feelings (friendly or love feelings, but also fear, reject or animosity). The narration therefore happens through setup: distance, physical or symbolic, between people, their relation to the space tells the state of their relationship but also the characters’ interiority.

➤ **“The elastic”: near, far**

The image of the elastic is often used to illustrate the distances variation, which can last for a shot, a sequence, or stretch for the whole length of the film. It is very often about a ratio between attraction and repulsion, just like an elastic that stretches or loosens up; Character go apart and then, as if they were moved by an invisible force, end up getting closer. In the extract from *Rentrée des Classes* this principle is predominant, highlighting the mix of fear, game and attraction felt by the boy in the river towards the reptile.

In *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *Pierrot le fou*, the shots last, stretch. In the first one, the framing highlights the space, create a feeling of isolation in this deserted landscape where the two tiny bodies of the little girls are moving, the length and the focal depth highlight Ana’s anxiety towards the mystery coming out from the house. In *Pierrot le fou*, the shot is a radiography of the state of feelings, each person’s movement put them further away from one another, camera moves simultaneously remove one and the other from the shot, just like if they could not cohabit in the same space anymore.

➤ Approaches, connections

In most of the chosen extracts, the evolution of distances is about attempts at connecting. There are two ways of representing it in the cinema: The first one where – sometimes in sequence shots – within a same frame, the physical and effective connection between two characters is being filmed. The second one, through editing when, through connections between shots, it connects the characters together. The close-up highlights the psychological desire for proximity. The most obvious extract on this topic is without a doubt the *Work in Progress* one where two youngsters seem to repeat *Romeo and Juliet*'s serenade, the distance is not only spacial but also social.

In numerous scene where the youngsters appear, distances then take an initiative aspect from a sentimental and seductive point of view. This happens through glances, moves, but also through dancing which puts the bodies together as they are getting to know each other (*Uma pedro no bolso*, *Time Out*). Even though it is not about dancing, the extract from *L'Intervallo* can be seen as a discrete choreography where the two characters test each other before taming. The distance between the bodies can also end up in a fusion desire, with a carnal dimension, just like the two lovers in the second extract of *Work in Progress*.

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