

## Generative Artificial Intelligence and Film Production: A Media Educational Approach

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**Diplôme :** Master en communication multilingue, à finalité spécialisée en digital media education

**Année académique :** 2024-2025

**URI/URL :** <http://hdl.handle.net/2268.2/24981>

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# **Generative Artificial Intelligence and Film Production: A Media Educational Approach**

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en vue de l'obtention du diplôme de Master Communication Multilingue,  
à finalité Digital Media Education

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**Année académique 2024 - 2025**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to say thank you to all the people who supported me through this work, but also during these five years at the University of Liège. Thanks to all the friends I have made during my studies, who accompanied me through both hard times and good times.

My deepest thanks to Sarah, my best friend, who never failed to support me, not only during this work, but during all aspects of my life. Thank you for being there for me.

Also, thank you to Laura, with whom I spent these two years of my master's degree. It was fun, and your support meant a lot to me.

I would like to express my thanks to my supervisor, who agreed to supervise me. Thank you for your advice.

Finally, many thanks to my family, who supported me during my studies, but also in life in general. Particularly thanks to my mother, who never fails to support me in life. Thank you for everything. Thank you for trusting me, more than I do trust myself. Last but not least, the biggest thanks to my little sister, Maëlle, who supports me more than she thinks.

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# Introduction

The year 2023 represents a major turning point in the history of artificial intelligence (AI), notably with Geoffrey Hinton, one of the pioneers of AI, who publicly warned against the technology on which he had worked for half a century. It was also the year when the whole Hollywood film industry shut down for 148 days, during which the Writers Guild of America (WGA) went on strike. Screenwriters protested against AI, a technology they saw as a threat to their profession and human creativity. Two years later, the situation has only intensified. Sam Altman's ChatGPT never stops evolving and going through new updates, expanding its capacities from text-to-text generation to the possibility of generating images and drawings. These new improvements have provoked concerns for artists determined to defend the value of human creativity, but these same improvements also generated some type of excitement among those who want to experiment with all the possibilities presented by AI. During these two years, the very first feature-length film with a script entirely written by ChatGPT, entitled *The Last Screenwriter*, came to life and was met with backlash, which led to canceling its release in the United Kingdom's theaters. While concerns about humans being replaced by AI in the creative sector remain central, other matters have also been addressed these last few years. The one concern that particularly caught my attention is the possibility of reproducing bias and prejudice in AI-generated film.

To navigate the complexities and different opinions regarding the use of artificial intelligence in film productions, individuals must not only inform themselves but also need to gain what the field of media education calls "critical understanding", which can be considered the first step to becoming media literate. As David Buckingham explains, to become media literate and active citizens in the digital media environment, individuals need comprehensive, systematic, and sustained programs of media education.<sup>1</sup> These programs aim to guide learners to develop the critical thinking skills that are required in today's world, which is heavily influenced by the media and all the new technologies. With artificial intelligence being a new, complex, and multifaceted technology, it is therefore fundamental to educate about its implementation in filmmaking, what it encompasses for artists, but also for the audience. This thesis will focus on the specific case of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in film production, more precisely in scriptwriting, in order to keep a link with the WGA strikes.

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<sup>1</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2019), 3.

The aim of this dissertation is to examine how the field of media education can address the specific case of AI-generated film. According to Fastrez and Landry, media education is a field that is developing continuously, since it has to respond and adapt to all the new and ongoing social phenomena that involve media and technologies.<sup>2</sup> In some contexts, media education has developed educational activities on the topic of film, since moving-image productions have always contained values, messages, and political and economic ideologies, which must be addressed in order to foster critical understanding and prevent the audience from being passive consumers. However, the integration of GenAI into the film industry reshapes everything. Media educators must adapt to these shifts, but also to new concerns, as well as the complexities surrounding films generated by AI.

The assumptions regarding the potential development of bias in AI film productions represent the starting point of this dissertation. The first research question is therefore: *Can AI generate scripts without reproducing biases and stereotypes?* To answer this question, I aim to analyze three films whose scripts were fully generated by AI. This case study approach hypothesizes that there are biases in AI-generated films, which brings me to add two more questions that allow for a media educational approach to this concern: *Should media education tackle AI-generated films?*, and *How can media education help analyze and deconstruct the biases inherent in these technologies?*

## 1.1. Methodology

The methodology for this research draws on the introduction of *Media Literacy and Media Education Research Methods: A Handbook*, in which Fastrez and Landry identify three categories of investigation that can be used in the context of media education.<sup>3</sup> These three categories of investigation are “[...] the media practices of users; educational initiatives aimed at improving, transforming, reforming, or mitigating these practices; and the prescriptive discourses that guide the educational initiatives themselves.”<sup>4</sup> They represent the diversity of the field and provide a methodology that can structure this dissertation by allowing to address not only practices related to GenAI, but also educational initiatives that respectfully address film, AI, and AI-generated film. Theories and discourses are also used to back up the curricula and activities introduced in this work.

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<sup>2</sup>Pierre Fastrez and Normand Landry, *Media Literacy and Media Education Research Methods: A Handbook*, (Taylor & Francis, 2023), 4.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

The first chapter provides the theory that is required to understand all the points that will appear throughout this work. Talking about AI-generated film with a media educational approach presents diverse topics. Indeed, combining film, which the field of media education has been analyzing long before the integration of artificial intelligence into filmmaking. It is necessary to define all the concepts that will be addressed in the other chapters. Definitions of artificial intelligence and its subtypes, but also cinema and media, and media education.

The second chapter aims to focus on how AI tools can impact scriptwriting. The notions of stereotypes and bias are explained to allow for a better understanding. More concrete context is provided regarding the implementation of GenAI in the process of writing scripts, notably through a literature review but also through the close reading and critical analysis of three films whose screenplays were entirely produced by artificial intelligence. The corpus is introduced, as well as the AI tools that were used for the creation of scripts.

As this work situates itself in media education and media literacy, it should focus on educational initiatives, since they represent an integral part of the field. This third chapter focuses on film and how media education can address that while fostering media literacy skills and critical thinking development. Instances of media educational resources and activities are introduced to illustrate how film productions have been used in various media educational curricula.

The fourth chapter contains a similar approach to the previous one but applies it to the case of artificial intelligence. This chapter discusses some considerations regarding the role of media education in empowering individuals to think critically about this technology, which not only educates them about how AI works, as well as what it encompasses.

Finally, the last chapter addresses AI-generated film with a media educational approach, emphasizing the many possibilities screenplays generated by AI present for the field of media education and media literacy.

This work concludes with a conclusion that aims to answer my research questions. It also addresses the limitations of this corpus analysis, while suggesting and encouraging further research.



# Chapter 1: Theoretical framework

## 1.1. Introduction

This chapter establishes the theoretical framework for this work by defining key concepts essential to understanding the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in film production. Since AI is a complex and constantly evolving field, precise definitions are necessary to contextualize its impact on scriptwriting and to provide the foundational knowledge required for this research.

First, artificial intelligence will be defined, with a particular focus on generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), as it is central to this work. I will mainly focus on generative artificial intelligence because the other subfields of artificial intelligence, which are numerous, are not directly related to my investigation of scripts generated by AI. However, a brief definition of predictive artificial intelligence will be included to highlight its role in the film industry, as it will be referenced later in this dissertation. Additionally, this section will explain technical concepts such as large language models, deep learning, and machine learning algorithms, which are fundamental to generative artificial intelligence.

This chapter will also cover the concept of media, as this work considers films a form of mass media, which will be analyzed later in the context of the use of GenAI in scriptwriting. To do so, I will define the term “media” and address the French distinction between “médium” and “média”, since I draw on a book by Barbara Laborde to explore the intersection of cinema and media education. In her book entitled *De l’enseignement du cinéma à l’éducation aux médias: Trajets théoriques et perspectives pédagogiques*<sup>5</sup>, she explores the integration of cinema education into media education, which I will use as a basis for developing a media educational approach to the case of AI-generated film, focusing more specifically on AI-generated scripts. For this reason, it is important to understand how she defines these terms, as there is a specific nuance in the French language.

Then, after explaining the difference between “médium” and “média”, these notions will be applied to the context of cinema, since this is what Laborde discusses in her book. Cinema will be analyzed through both lenses, allowing for a more comprehensive approach that connects different aspects of film productions.

Finally, this section will conclude with media education, since this work adopts a media educational approach to the use of GenAI in the film industry. To define media education, I will refer to scholars and various definitions to ensure a clear understanding of the concept. The

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<sup>5</sup>Barbara Laborde, *De l’enseignement du cinéma à l’éducation aux médias: Trajets théoriques et perspectives pédagogiques*, (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2017).

concept of media literacy will also be addressed due to the close relation there is between both notions.

## **1.2. Artificial Intelligence**

Before defining generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), it is important to understand what artificial intelligence (AI) is, as GenAI is a subtype of this broader field. Artificial intelligence has been at the center of numerous discussions and debates in recent years due to its rapid evolution and expansion. Indeed, it has become integrated into many aspects of daily life, sometimes even without people realizing it. It can be said that artificial intelligence is practically everywhere nowadays. For instance, AI is used to suggest ads and content online, to personalize social media algorithms, and even to enhance platforms like Netflix. With the rise of applications such as ChatGPT and Grammarly, AI has also reached the workplace and education sectors, assisting users in performing diverse tasks. It has also started to impact creative industries, notably the film industry, through the emergence of generative AI, which will be explored later in this dissertation.

However, when it comes to defining AI, it becomes more complicated. Most people are conscious that artificial intelligence exists, yet it remains such a complex and broad field, which makes it challenging to define it properly. According to English dictionaries, artificial intelligence is the capacity of machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. As evidence, here are two examples of definitions from two English-language dictionaries:

1. According to the Oxford Dictionary, artificial intelligence is “the capacity of computers or other machines to exhibit or simulate intelligent behaviour; the field of study concerned with this”. In later use it also defines AI as a “software used to perform tasks or produce output previously thought to require human intelligence, especially by using machine learning to extrapolate from large collections of data.”<sup>6</sup>
2. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, artificial intelligence is “The use or study of computer systems or machines that have some of the qualities that the human brain has,

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<sup>6</sup>*Oxford English Dictionary*, “artificial intelligence,” <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7359280480>. [accessed March 2025]

such as the ability to interpret and produce language in a way that seems human, recognize or create images, solve problems, and learn from data supplied to.”<sup>7</sup>

Both dictionaries provide similar definitions that highlight artificial intelligence’s ability to replicate human cognitive functions. Similarly, UNESCO states that “AI allows machines to mimic human intelligence, such as perception, problem-solving, linguistic interaction or creativity,”<sup>8</sup> which again emphasizes that AI can be defined as a technology that enables tasks usually performed by humans. However, as stated in the chapter entitled “Artificial Intelligence: Definition and Background” from the book *Mission AI: The New System Technology*, finding a generally accepted definition remains complicated, since AI is not limited to one specific field or one particular human capacity.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, AI can be used to generate images or texts, solve mathematical problems, predict future outcomes, recognize faces, and much more. This can also be understood by the fact that artificial intelligence has many different subsets, one of which is generative AI, the focus of my study. The authors of this book, Haroon Sheikh, Corien Prins, and Erik Schrijvers, also explain how the common definitions of artificial intelligence as the imitation of human intelligence only rephrase the term “artificial intelligence” and do not add or explain anything. They argue that this type of definition leads to confusion and ambiguity, as it fails to clarify what artificial intelligence truly is. In this chapter, they also note that in some definitions artificial intelligence is equated to algorithms, which they consider too broad and not exactly correct. Saying that AI is only about using algorithms does not make sense because algorithms can exist outside of artificial intelligence and perform tasks unrelated to it. However, it remains true that algorithms and AI are linked, but this link alone is insufficient to define what artificial intelligence is. Finally, the authors mention a definition that they consider more accurate, as it is not too broad and leaves room for future developments in AI.<sup>10</sup> This definition, provided by the AI HLEG, a group of experts appointed by the European Commission to provide advice on its artificial intelligence strategy, describes AI as “systems that display intelligent behavior by analyzing their environment and taking actions – with some degree of autonomy – to achieve specific goals.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, “artificial intelligence,” <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/artificial-intelligence>. [accessed March 2025]

<sup>8</sup>UNESCO, <https://www.unesco.org/en/artificial-intelligence>. [accessed March 2025]

<sup>9</sup>Haroon Sheikh, Corien Prins, and Erik Schrijvers, “Artificial Intelligence: Definition and Background,” in *Mission AI: The New System Technology*, (The Hague: Research for Policy, 2023), 15-41, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21448-6>.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence (2019) in Sheikh, Prins, and Schrijvers, “Artificial Intelligence,” 16.

By defining artificial intelligence in this way, it includes both current applications and potential future advancements, ensuring flexibility as the field continues to evolve.<sup>12</sup>

### 1.3. Generative Artificial Intelligence

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is a subset of artificial intelligence that, as its name suggests, can generate new content, such as texts, images, videos, and sounds, to give some examples. Unlike traditional AI models that analyze data or make predictions, GenAI creates original outputs by learning patterns and structures from large datasets. This ability has led to its integration across various industries, including the creative sector and, more specifically, the film industry, which is the focus of this work. Generative artificial intelligence relies on algorithms, machine learning, and deep learning models to produce content. These three concepts will also be explained in order to better understand how GenAI works.

Generative AI models can be classified into unimodal and multimodal models, depending on the type of data they process and generate. Unimodal models specialize in one type of media, which means that both the input and output belong to the same modality. To explain it more simply, it is when a model generates a text from texts. For instance, language models like GPT-3, which generate text-based content, are unimodal, as they work exclusively with text. As it can be seen in the figure below, multimodal models can process and generate content of different modalities. Multimodal models, such as GPT-4, can generate images from texts, or videos from texts. Text-to-image models like DALL-E and Midjourney are popular examples of multimodal generative artificial intelligence. As of today, unimodal generative AI still produces higher-quality content due to its focused training on a single type of data. However, multimodal models are evolving and improving, which can impact creative sectors, such as the film industry, as they provide more possibilities for GenAI to produce content, ranging from texts to visuals.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Sheikh, Prins and Schrijvers, “Artificial Intelligence,” 15-41.

<sup>13</sup>Ishneet Kaur Dua and Parth Girish Patel, “An Introduction to Generative AI,” in *Optimizing Generative AI Workloads for Sustainability*, (Dublin: Apress, 2024), 1-37, [https://doi.org/10.1007/979-8-8688-0917-0\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/979-8-8688-0917-0_1).

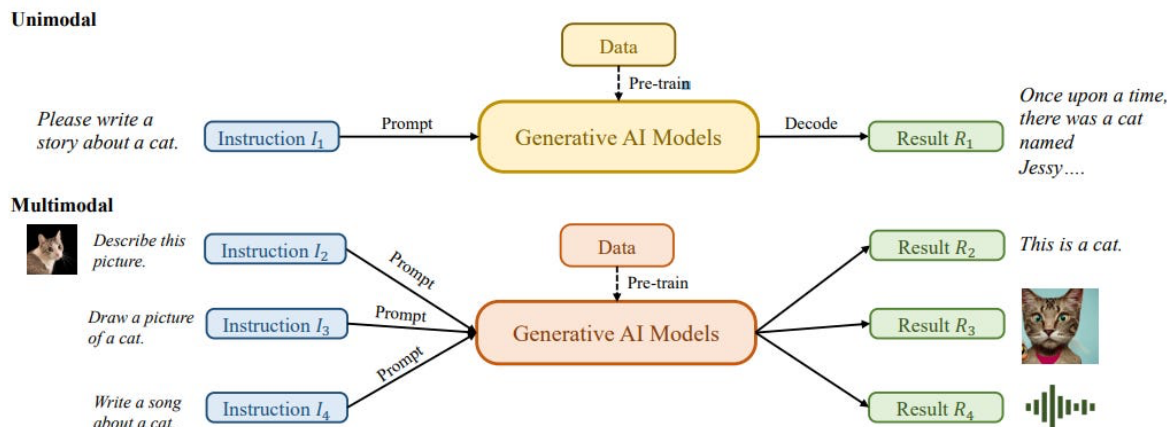


Figure 1: Overview of AIGC<sup>14</sup>

To explore generative artificial intelligence applications like ChatGPT further, it is important to know about “natural language processing (NLP)” and “large language models (LLMs)”, since GenAI bases itself on these technologies. NLP is a subfield of artificial intelligence that enables computers to understand, analyze and generate natural human language, facilitating communication between humans and computers. Common examples of NLP applications include chatbots, text summarization and machine translation. LLMs are models trained on vast amounts of data to predict what words should come next in a sentence. As they analyze and process datasets, they learn patterns and relationships that enable them to understand and generate natural language but also perform other tasks. GPT-4 by OpenAI, Claude 3 and Gemini are some examples of large language models.<sup>15</sup>

Generative artificial intelligence cannot be defined without considering its broader implications. In recent years, GenAI has been at the center of numerous debates in which people address issues and impacts related to the use of this constantly evolving technology. Questions about ethics, ecology, and ownership have been discussed, and this is happening in diverse sectors, going from education to the workplace. Concerns about the reliability and quality of the results and tasks realized by generative artificial intelligence have also been raised, as it has been shown several times that AI is not always accurate or capable of performing tasks properly. In the creative sectors, a similar debate is taking place, as GenAI has been considered a potential threat by artists, notably in the cinema industry. Many artists argue that AI is exploiting their work without their consent and that human artists could be replaced by machines. Those

<sup>14</sup>Yihan Cao et al., “A Survey of AI-Generated Content (AIGC),” *ACM Computing Surveys*, (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1145/3704262>.

<sup>15</sup>Faisal Kalota, “A Primer on Generative Artificial Intelligence,” *Education Sciences* 14, no. 2 (2024): 172, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14020172>.

concerns, among others, have been fought for during the 2023 WGA strikes, which lasted for 148 days and ended with a contract with guardrails on AI, such as the right to choose to use AI or not when they write, or the recognition that AI is not a writer and cannot be credited. However, the concern about the use of copyrighted material to train artificial intelligence has not been fully resolved yet, but the contract allows for future negotiations.<sup>16</sup> Another important issue is the fact that generative artificial intelligence can generate stereotyped content when models are trained on biased data, which is the issue I am going to develop in this work, since I am focusing on the potential biases in AI-generated scripts.

### 1.3.1. Algorithm

Among the various definitions of artificial intelligence, some highlight the concept of algorithms. As stated in the book *Mission AI: The New System Technology*, some definitions even equate artificial intelligence with algorithms, a perspective that Sheikh, Prins and Schrijvers consider too broad. However, it remains true that AI and algorithms are connected, making it necessary to define what algorithms are and how they are linked to GenAI. Similar to artificial intelligence, the term “algorithm” is difficult to define due to the fact that this is a technology that evolves continuously. Since many definitions are rooted in mathematics and science, which is not the aim of this work, I will try to simplify the explanations from my readings on algorithms.<sup>17</sup>

In “What an Algorithm Is”, Robert K. Hill compares distinct definitions of algorithms and conducts research to propose a definition that would be more accurate. After analyzing different perspectives, the author finally comes up with the following definition: “An algorithm is a finite, abstract, effective, compound control structure, imperatively given, accomplishing a given purpose under given provisions.”<sup>18</sup> In simpler terms, it means that an algorithm is a specific set of instructions designed to solve a problem or complete tasks.<sup>19</sup>

As it is mentioned in *Mission AI: The New System Technology*, it is necessary to note that algorithms are not exclusive to artificial intelligence. Indeed, they are used in various areas outside of this field, for instance, in sorting and searching algorithms. When algorithms are considered in the field of GenAI, machine learning and deep learning algorithms are examples

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<sup>16</sup>Molly Kinder, “Hollywood writers went on strike to protect their livelihoods from generative AI. Their remarkable victory matters for all workers,” *Brookings*. (2024) <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/hollywood-writers-went-on-strike-to-protect-their-livelihoods-from-generative-ai-their-remarkable-victory-matters-for-all-workers/>.

<sup>17</sup>Sheikh, Prins and Schrijvers, “Artificial Intelligence,” 15.

<sup>18</sup>Robin K. Hill, “What an Algorithm Is,” *Philosophy & Technology* 29, no. 1 (2015): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13347-014-0184-5>.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*

that come to mind. These algorithms play a central role in generative artificial intelligence, as they can recognize patterns in data, which enables machines to generate new content. They allow for the rapid production of humanlike content, whether in the form of text, images, videos, or other formats. Through these algorithms, GenAI can learn from large datasets and improve its ability to create outputs that mimic human production.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3.2. Machine Learning

Machine Learning (ML) is another important notion related to generative artificial intelligence. Machine learning is a subset of AI, and, as its name suggests, it is what enables computers and machines to “learn”. In “Machine Learning Algorithms - A Review”, Batta Mahesh mentions Arthur Samuel, an American pioneer in AI research, who said that machine learning allows computers to learn without being programmed.<sup>21</sup> It enables computers to learn from data and then produce data themselves without needing human intervention or assistance. As ML systems rely on data patterns, experiences, and observations, they improve themselves automatically. Machine learning has been useful in various sectors, such as optimization, banking and more, as it enables machines to access and learn from huge amounts of data, as well as to make accurate predictions from large datasets. Machine learning has been applied in various applications, ranging from automated customer support to creating creative content. For instance, it can also be used in many fields, such as object or image recognition, data collection and even speech-to-text translation.<sup>22</sup>

Machine learning can be divided into different categories, such as supervised machine learning (SML) and unsupervised machine learning (USML), which represent the main techniques used to improve their performance. Supervised machine learning involves a supervisor, whereas unsupervised machine learning operates without supervision. Supervised machine learning needs a supervisor to train machines using labeled data. This means the algorithm learns from input-output pairs, enabling it to predict outcomes based on labeled data. For example, if a machine is trained on labeled images of cars, it can later identify new car images by recognizing learned features. However, unsupervised machine learning does everything alone, such as analyzing and finding patterns in raw data and grouping similar

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<sup>20</sup>Sheikh, Prins and Schrijvers, “Artificial Intelligence,” 15-41.

<sup>21</sup>Batta Mahesh, “Machine Learning Algorithms - a Review,” *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)* 9, no. 1 (2020): 381–86, <https://doi.org/10.21275/art20203995>.

<sup>22</sup>Ranjan Kumar Mishra, G. Y. Sandesh Reddy, and Himanshu Pathak, “The Understanding of Deep Learning: A Comprehensive Review,” *Mathematical Problems in Engineering* 2021 (2021): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/5548884>.



elements without predefined labels. Unsupervised machine learning is more about exploration and dimension reduction, as it is used for pattern recognition, while supervised machine learning can predict known outcomes and relationships.<sup>23</sup>

Machine learning plays a crucial role in the development of artificial intelligence thanks to its capacity to access and analyze vast amounts of data, which contributes to GenAI's development. As machine learning handles large datasets, GenAI can generate coherent content from collected data and identified patterns. It can be said that a significant part of generative artificial intelligence is founded on machine learning, but also on deep learning, which are two technologies necessary to enhance GenAI's capabilities.

### **1.3.3. Deep Learning**

Deep learning is the last concept in relation to generative artificial intelligence that will be defined, since, as mentioned above, it is essential in GenAI's development. Deep learning is a type of machine learning that uses artificial neural networks, which process data in a way that mimics the human brain, enabling the machines to analyze and understand large datasets. Deep learning can learn from unstructured and unlabeled data, allowing it to solve complex problems such as image and speech recognition. By utilizing multiple layers of artificial neurons, deep learning models can automatically extract complex patterns from large datasets. This process improves their ability to make predictions, recognize patterns, and generate new content.

Just like machine learning, deep learning contributes to the evolution of generative artificial intelligence. For instance, Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) are powerful generative models based on deep learning and represent a major step forward in artificial intelligence. GANs have been used for many purposes in the field of generative artificial intelligence, such as creating images, videos and sounds, generating natural text outputs, and even producing realistic human faces. Both machine learning and deep learning significantly enhance GenAI due to their ability to access large amounts of data, enabling machines to learn from and train on these datasets. This allows for models capable of generating a wide variety of content, such as text, images and audio, by identifying patterns and relationships within the data.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Faisal Kalota, "A Primer on Generative Artificial Intelligence."

<sup>24</sup>Nitin Liladhar Rane et al., "Role of machine learning and deep learning in advancing generative artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT," In *Applied Machine Learning and Deep Learning: Architectures and Techniques*, (Deep Science Publishing, 2024), 96-111, [https://doi.org/10.70593/978-81-981271-4-3\\_5](https://doi.org/10.70593/978-81-981271-4-3_5).



## 1.4. Predictive Artificial Intelligence

Given that the main focus of this work is the use of generative artificial intelligence in the film industry, defining predictive artificial intelligence might seem less relevant. However, since this subfield of AI also impacts the film sector, providing a definition will help clarify its meaning, especially as it may be mentioned at some point in this dissertation.

Predictive artificial intelligence is another branch of AI, which is different from generative artificial intelligence, as it focuses on forecasting future outcomes rather than creating new content. Predictive AI uses historical data and algorithms to analyze patterns and make predictions. Throughout my readings on AI's application in filmmaking, several recurring points have been raised about predictive AI's use and its impacts. This technology can be used to predict audience reactions, but can also predict many other things, such as the actors or the plots that are more likely to be profitable.<sup>25</sup> In her article entitled “Ghost in the (Hollywood) Machine: Emergent applications of artificial intelligence in the film industry”, Pei-Sze Chow explains that AI algorithms can offer insights and analytics based on screenplay content, casting choices, and even market trends. Using artificial intelligence for these purposes aims to increase audience engagement by ensuring productions resonate with viewers while guaranteeing success and reducing financial risks.<sup>26</sup>

## 1.5. Media

Since this work focuses on the implications of generative artificial intelligence in the field of film production, it is essential to understand what media are to understand films as a form of media and develop a media educational approach to them. The term “media” is multifaceted and has been defined in so many ways, depending on various perspectives and the evolution of technology. When people talk about media, the first thing that comes to mind is mass media, including newspapers, radio, television, cinema, and more recently, the internet. Citton defines media as “devices for recording, transmitting and/or processing information, words, images, sounds”<sup>27</sup>, which emphasizes their technical and communicative functions. This can echo McLuhan’s famous saying, “The medium is the message”, which illustrates how the medium through which messages are conveyed can influence the way those messages are understood and perceived. The CSEM (Conseil Supérieur de l’Éducation aux Médias) considers that media

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<sup>25</sup>Minzheong Song, “A study on the predictive analytics powered by the artificial intelligence in the movie industry,” *International Journal of Advanced Smart Convergence* 10, no. 4 (2021): 72-83, doi:10.7236/IJASC.2021.10.4.72.

<sup>26</sup>Pei-Sze Chow, “Ghost in the (Hollywood) Machine: Emergent Applications of Artificial Intelligence in the Film Industry,” *Research Portal Denmark* 9, no. 1 (2020): 193-214, <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14307>.

<sup>27</sup>Yves Citton, *Mediarchy*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

have a crucial role in shaping communication and social interaction, as they refer to media as informational, technical and social objects.<sup>28</sup> Jeanneret expands on this by stating that media are a “material device affecting the way in which communication can take place, the role that people can play in it and the signs that can be mobilized.”<sup>29</sup> This definition underscores that media are not just tools for transmitting messages but also structure the way communication happens, influencing the role of participants, the signs used, and the conditions under which messages are expressed.

These different approaches suggest that media are not neutral and actively influence how messages are created, delivered and interpreted. The same can be applied to films, as they also convey messages that can impact viewers. Indeed, film productions can be seen as entertainment or art but also as a type of media that relies on technical devices, creativity and social contexts to transmit messages. However, with the emergence of AI in film production, everything needs to be reconsidered.

### 1.5.1. “Médium” and “Média”

In French, a specific distinction exists between “médium” and “média”, and since a part of this work deals with Barbara Laborde’s book entitled *De l’enseignement du cinéma à l’éducation aux médias: Trajets théoriques et perspectives pédagogiques*<sup>30</sup>, it is necessary to understand the meaning of both concepts.

In her book, Barbara Laborde explains the difference between “médium” and “média”, two notions that are often mistaken for one another in the French language. “Médium” is a concept that historically refers to the vehicle through which a message is transmitted in a specific form. This designates a specific stage between the moment during which a message is transmitted and the moment people interpret the message. Then, she explains that there are three important aspects to take into consideration when defining what a “médium” is, which are the vehicle, the message, and the environment. Barbara Laborde also mentions Soulez and Kitsopanidou, who divide “médium” into three items, which are the formal vehicle, the material (technical component), and the format (the surface on which the message appears, such as a screen or a paper).<sup>31</sup> It can be said that the transmission of messages is influenced by the

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<sup>28</sup>Conseil supérieur de l’Education aux Médias, & VERN, P. (2016). Les compétences en Éducation aux Médias : un enjeu éducatif majeur. CSEM, 11-13, <https://www.csem.be/sites/default/files/2021-01/cadre-competences-education-aux-medias-portefeuille-activites-pedagogiques-2016.pdf>

<sup>29</sup>Yves Jeanneret, *Critique de la trivialité: Les médiations de la communication, enjeu de pouvoir*, (Paris: Editions Non Standard, 2014), 13. (Translated by Mayeur, I.)

<sup>30</sup>Laborde, *De l’enseignement du cinéma à l’éducation aux médias*.

<sup>31</sup>Soulez, G. & Kitsopanidou, K. (2015), in Barbara Laborde, *De l’enseignement du cinéma à l’éducation aux médias*, 22-23.

medium used, which resonates with McLuhan. As for the notion of “média”, Barbara Laborde starts by explaining that when Latin is considered, it can be interpreted as the plural form of “médium” and, therefore, used to group together all possible “médiums”. Then, she adds that the term “média” can also represent, “[...] the institutional, political and economic dimensions that arise when various “médiums” come together.”<sup>32</sup> It also refers to industrial, technical, sociological and other related issues.

In short, “médium” refers to the way a message is transmitted through a specific socio-technical setup in a particular context, whereas “média” is used to tackle the political, economic, legal and other issues associated. However, Barbara Laborde notes that the term “média” tends to be used instead of the concept “médium”, absorbing its definition in the process.

### **1.5.2. Cinema as a “médium/média”**

Now that the distinction between “média” and “médium” has been explained, it can be applied to the specific case of cinema. The term “médium” refers to how a film is projected, transmitted, and captured. Barbara Laborde provides various examples, such as the first videotapes and modern formats, like 4K digital video. Regarding transmission, she mentions theater screens and today’s plurality of screens. The term “média”, in the context of cinema, is associated with all the industries that are interconnected with it, such as the cinematographic, cultural, and creative industries.<sup>33</sup>

Considering cinema through the “médium/média” distinction creates a certain ambiguity. Indeed, cinema can refer either to the formal materials that transmit audiovisual content or to the organizations that finance, broadcast, and exploit that same content. This approach also highlights how cinema is not only considered a type of art but also a means of transmitting messages, which are influenced by the materials and techniques used, as well as by the associated industries and issues.

As Barbara Laborde points out, this ambiguity has only increased over time, particularly due to new materials and technologies, as well as political, economic, and social contexts. The film industry has already undergone numerous changes, such as the transition from black-and-white to color films, or the era of streaming, where screens and interfaces for watching films are now easily accessible. The rapid evolution of AI and its potential implementation in the film sector are the latest disruption, which has sparked much debate, concern, and controversy.

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<sup>32</sup>Laborde, *De l’enseignement du cinéma à l’éducation aux médias*, 24. (My translation)

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 27.

## 1.6. Media Education

Since this work adopts a media educational approach, it is necessary to define what media education is. Over the last decades, media education has gained significant importance, especially with the rapid evolution of digital technologies and the rise of social media and artificial intelligence. To explain it in simple terms, media education refers to theories, methods, and practices used to help individuals to become media literate. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about media education without mentioning media literacy.

Media literacy has been defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create and act using all forms of communication and media.<sup>34</sup> According to Buckingham, media literacy involves the ability to both “read” and “write” media, which means that people who are media literate are able to understand, create and interpret media messages. Indeed, in *The Media Education Manifesto*, Buckingham explains that being media literate is not only about knowing how to use media but also “[...] entails an in-depth critical understanding of how these media work, how they communicate, how they represent the world, and how they are produced and used.”<sup>35</sup> Renee Hobbs adds that it is important to constantly gain knowledge, skills and habits of mind in order to engage in today’s complex digital world. She highlights that asking questions is essential, as it is “[...] the most direct and powerful form of informal learning that humans have for making sense of the social world.”<sup>36</sup> Additionally, media literacy involves not only critical reflection and analysis of the media text itself but also of the political, economic, social, and historical contexts in which the media was created and distributed. To support this critical reflection and analysis, Hobbs has defined five key questions of media literacy, which are the following ones:

- 1) Who is the author and what is the purpose?
- 2) What techniques are used to attract and hold attention?
- 3) What lifestyles, values, and points of view are depicted?
- 4) How might different people interpret the message?
- 5) What is omitted?<sup>37</sup>

These five questions can be used to analyze media but also the messages and contexts they encompass while developing critical thinking skills. As Hobbs emphasizes, asking questions is a powerful way of learning and by engaging in this process, people improve their

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<sup>34</sup>Renee Hobbs, “What is Media Literacy?,” in *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), 5.

<sup>35</sup>Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 3.

<sup>36</sup>Hobbs, “What is Media Literacy?,” 5.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 28-29.

media literacy skills, since they critically interrogate media content rather than just being passive consumers. Indeed, the five questions encourage reflection on other important aspects, such as media messages and their different interpretations, the author, the intended audience, and even the values and perspectives embedded in media messages. Examining all these elements helps individuals become more critically aware and media literate, which enables them to participate actively in the media-saturated society we live in.

Media education, therefore, provides the foundation for developing media literacy. Buckingham defines it as a process of teaching and learning about the media that also involves “developing young people’s critical and creative abilities.”<sup>38</sup> This process can be implemented, for example, through curricula and workshops that guide learners toward media literacy. Various approaches exist to develop media literacy, such as the protectionist, the participatory, and the citizenship approaches. Each of these approaches has its own methods and focus points but eventually, they share the same goal of preparing individuals to critically engage with media and become informed, active citizens in a world surrounded by media.

## Chapter 2: Case Study of AI Bias in Scriptwriting

### 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the specific case of using generative artificial intelligence to produce film scripts. As it has been explained in the introduction of this work, one of the many concerns related to the use of GenAI in the film industry revolves around the potential bias and stereotypes that could appear in AI-generated scripts. This chapter aims to address this concern and answer one research question, which is: *Can AI generate scripts without reproducing biases and stereotypes?*

First, the chapter will explain what stereotypes and representations are, but also what these concepts encompass when discussed in relation to their presence and effects in media productions. To do so, I will use *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*, in which Renee Hobbs dedicates several sections to the notions of stereotypes and representations, exploring them from a media literacy perspective.<sup>39</sup> Then, I will specifically focus on defining

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<sup>38</sup>David Buckingham, “Media Education: a Global Strategy for development (By UNESCO Sector of Communication and Information),” (2001): 3, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Buckingham-3/publication/228730180\\_Media\\_Education\\_A\\_Global\\_Strategi\\_for\\_Development\\_A\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_Prepared\\_f or\\_UNESCO\\_Sector\\_of\\_Communication\\_and\\_Information/links/55144aff0cf23203199d4825/Media-Education-A-Global-Strategi-for-Development-A-Policy-Paper-Prepared-for-UNESCO-Sector-of-Communication-and-Information.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Buckingham-3/publication/228730180_Media_Education_A_Global_Strategi_for_Development_A_Policy_Paper_Prepared_f or_UNESCO_Sector_of_Communication_and_Information/links/55144aff0cf23203199d4825/Media-Education-A-Global-Strategi-for-Development-A-Policy-Paper-Prepared-for-UNESCO-Sector-of-Communication-and-Information.pdf).

<sup>39</sup>Hobbs, *Media literacy in Action*.

bias, particularly focusing on the case of AI bias. This enlightenment on AI bias is essential for understanding what it means, as well as examining why and how generative AI can create biased content. Different types of AI bias will be discussed, along with their impacts and consequences.

After exploring the concepts of stereotypes, representations, and bias, which are all essential for this research, this chapter will analyze three films whose scripts are fully generated by AI tools to determine whether their content contains potential biases and stereotypes. The corpus used for this case study will be presented, along with the GenAI tools used for the scriptwriting process. The methodology will be explained to justify both the analysis and the results obtained. The limitations of this research will also be acknowledged, as they are relevant for interpreting the results. Finally, the chapter will conclude with new questions and hypotheses, which will be addressed in the following chapters of this work.

## 2.2. Stereotypes and Representations

In her book entitled *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*, Renee Hobbs develops a theoretical framework for media literacy, where she specifically addresses the case of representations and realities. Hobbs quotes Alfred Korzybski's famous saying, "The map is not the territory"<sup>40</sup>, which expresses that messages are selective representations of realities. This expression "[...] encourages people to distinguish between symbols and the things that symbols stand for."<sup>41</sup> According to Renee Hobbs, it is necessary to be aware of the differences between media representations and reality, even more when people lack direct experiences of the real world, since they fully depend on media representations, which sometimes are not accurate.

Hobbs also explains that media messages make use of stereotypes to express ideas and information. She defines stereotypes as "[...] a form of media representation that depicts people, events, and experiences using widely shared but oversimplified ideas."<sup>42</sup> Stereotypes can have various consequences, including discriminating against certain people, providing representations that are not always accurate, as well as distorting people's understanding of the realities they live in. Renee Hobbs brings up the case of filmmakers who make use of stereotypes in their production because "[...] they provide an effective shorthand for depicting personalities, relationships, events, and experiences quickly."<sup>43</sup> She also notes that some films

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<sup>40</sup> Alfred Korzybski, in Renee Hobbs, *Media literacy in Action*, 27.

<sup>41</sup> Hobbs, "What is Media Literacy?," 27.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

challenge stereotypes by pretending their characters are cliché to then break with the usual expectations, which is a way to play against stereotypes in the media.

In the twelfth chapter of *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*, Hobbs specifically addresses why people worry about stereotypes and how stereotypes affect media representations. She also proposes two other definitions of the term stereotypes. The first one draws on social psychology, which defines a stereotype as “a set of characteristics of a group of people based on generalizations about appearance and behavior.”<sup>44</sup> The second definition she proposes comes from Walter Lippmann, who introduced the term stereotype in 1922, describing it as “a picture of the world on which we can act.”<sup>45</sup> In this chapter, Hobbs points out how the media, which are not direct experiences, shape ideas and stereotypes in individuals’ minds. She provides the example of how every college student had an idea about what college life would be like, due to the stereotypes acquired from TV shows depicting students and faculty at college. She also explains that stereotypes are “[...] actively formed subjective constructs that are dependent on the attitudes and worldviews of the interpreter.”<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the way individuals interpret and recognize stereotypes depends on various factors, such as their values, beliefs, background and cultural context.

In the sixth chapter of her book, entitled “Why Are We Attracted to Characters and Stories?”, Renee Hobbs goes through what makes characters interesting or entertaining, as well as the importance of the archetypes of storytelling. According to her, stereotypes have always been part of media culture. She illustrates this with the instance of storytellers who make use of stereotypes to write stories. In this chapter, she considers stereotypes in the context of storytelling and defines them as “[...] anything that is conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified, or conforming to a set image or type.”<sup>47</sup> Stereotypes are useful for various reasons, ranging from the feeling of familiarity they produce for the audience to simplifying the process of storytelling because it is not possible to develop every character in a film. To that, she adds Carl Jung’s concept of *archetypes*, a concept he introduced to the characters of human experience that he considered universal. Archetypes not only refer to psychological structures supporting people’s mental functioning but also enable the analysis and creation of different types of characters and their respective roles in storytelling. Among the archetypes of storytelling, characters are divided into the roles they can play within the story, including the

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<sup>44</sup>Hobbs, “Why Do People Worry about Stereotypes?,” 295.

<sup>45</sup>Walter Lippmann (1922), in Renee Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*, 295.

<sup>46</sup>Hobbs, “Why Do People Worry about Stereotypes?,” 295.

<sup>47</sup>Hobbs, “Why Are We Attracted to Characters and Stories?,” 151.

ones of heroes, villains, victims, and helpers. Through the use of archetypes, storytellers create recurring characters and plotlines that tend to resonate more deeply with the audience, creating a sense of familiarity and closeness.

She develops this further in chapter 12, where she explains that since the 1930s, filmmakers have started to produce films that looked the same, changing filmmaking into some kind of big business deprived of originality and novelty. The casting choices were impacted, with the selection of actors and actresses considered conventionally attractive, but it also influenced the stories that were written, following recurring themes like “bad-people-get-what-they-deserve”.<sup>48</sup> When she explains why audiences seem to like stories that are filled with conventional plot lines and characters, she refers to Roland Barthes, who recognized that if viewers enjoy stereotypes, it is because they feel familiar and produce some feeling of comfort in them.<sup>49</sup> She also mentions Adorno’s theories on popular culture, conditioning people to passively consume mass media and cheap comedy, which can make them lose their critical thinking skills and miss out on the pleasures of exploring more challenging and unconventional works.<sup>50</sup>

Renee Hobbs insists on the importance of being aware of the use of stereotypes in media, since they can lead to various concerns. She explains that when a film contains stereotypes about women or minorities, it can perpetuate and even amplify discrimination and biased perceptions already present in society. Another concern is that media representations actively shape and influence individuals’ attitudes and behaviors. For these reasons, Hobbs emphasizes that it is fundamental for individuals to ask themselves critical questions, such as “*Why are people so sensitive about stereotypes in entertainment media?*”, “*How do people evaluate the realism of a media message?*” and “*How do media representations affect people’s sense of personal and social identity?*”<sup>51</sup> These questions can help people develop media literacy skills, which are necessary to interpret messages critically, identify biases and stereotypes, but also engage critically with storytelling, either conventional or innovative. Understanding stereotypes leads to a deeper understanding of media content, but also of the social and cultural implications behind the stories they consume.

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<sup>48</sup>Hobbs, “Why Do People Worry about Stereotypes?,” 296.

<sup>49</sup>Roland Barthes, in Renee Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*, 296.

<sup>50</sup>Theodor Adorno, in Renee Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*, 296.

<sup>51</sup>Renee Hobbs, “Why Do People Worry about Stereotypes?,” 292.



## 2.3. Bias

“Everyone has biases. It’s true. Having bias doesn’t make you a bad person, however, and not every bias is negative or hurtful. It’s *not* recognizing biases that can lead to bad decisions at work, in life, and in relationships.” – Karen Steinhauser (2020)<sup>52</sup>

In her article published in 2020, the attorney Karen Steinhauser claims that everyone is a little biased.<sup>53</sup> According to her, all humans have biases that affect not only diverse aspects of their lives but also the lives of other people with whom they interact. For this reason, it is essential to understand what the term “bias” means, as well as learning to recognize biases in order to overcome them. In a broader sense, bias refers to “the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment”, according to the Cambridge Dictionary.<sup>54</sup> In “Everyone Is a Little Bit Biased”, Steinhauser identifies two types of biases, which are explicit biases and implicit biases. According to her, implicit biases are the ones that people should particularly pay attention to, since they are less easy to spot and are often unconsciously internalized.<sup>55</sup> Hobbs, in *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*, defines implicit biases similarly, as she explains that they represent stereotypes and attitudes influencing individuals’ decisions, actions, and thoughts in unconscious ways. According to her, these biases are activated in the subconscious and are shaped through life experiences, cultural exposure, media representations, and even news programming. While some biases are favorable, others are not, and they activate positive or negative feelings and attitudes in the subconscious about other people. They can be based on various characteristics, including race, gender, ethnicity and appearance. These stereotypical associations individuals make about other people develop since childhood and evolve through time, depending on life experiences and even the media they consume.<sup>56</sup>

If humans are biased, it goes without saying that the media can also contain biases. As Buckingham says in his manifesto, “[...] the media do not offer us a transparent ‘window on the world’, but a mediated version of it.”<sup>57</sup> According to him, even when media productions address real-life events, they do not present but they do *re-present* realities, which implies that they are biased and not entirely objective. This is why both David Buckingham and Renee

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<sup>52</sup>Karen Steinhäuser, “Everyone Is a Little Bit Biased,” *Business Law Today*, (2020), 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27181763>.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Cambridge Dictionary, “bias”. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bias> [accessed in July 2025].

<sup>55</sup>Steinhäuser, “Everyone Is a Little Bit Biased,” 1-3.

<sup>56</sup>Hobbs, “Why Do People Worry about Stereotypes?,” 305.

<sup>57</sup>Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 60.

Hobbs both consider that media education could help people reflect on the media they consume, which contains messages and values, which could sometimes lead to prejudices and misrepresentation.

### **2.3.1. Bias in Generative Artificial Intelligence**

In “Fairness and Bias in Artificial Intelligence: A Brief Survey of Sources, Impacts, and Mitigation Strategies”, Emilio Ferrara provides information regarding the case of bias in artificial intelligence.<sup>58</sup> He defines bias as “[...] the systematic errors that occur in decision-making processes, leading to unfair outcomes.”<sup>59</sup> Ferrara explains that in the context of AI, bias comes from various sources, such as data collection, algorithm design, and human interpretation. Machine learning models, a type of AI system, play a role in producing bias, since these systems train on data from which they can learn and reproduce existing bias, which could lead to unfair or discriminatory outcomes.

Ferrara goes through the different sources of bias in AI, which include Data Bias, Algorithmic Bias, and User Bias. According to him, AI bias occurs at different stages of the machine learning process, such as data collection, algorithm design, and user interactions. Data bias refers to when machine learning models are trained on unrepresentative or incomplete data, which leads to biased outputs. For example, this can occur when the data are collected from biased sources or are incomplete, lacking important information, or containing mistakes. Algorithmic bias happens when “[...] the algorithms used in machine learning models have inherent biases that are reflected in their outputs.”<sup>60</sup> This is the case when algorithms are based on assumptions that are biased or when they make decisions using biased criteria. According to Ferrara, user bias takes place when users introduce their own biases or stereotypes into AI systems, which they can do consciously or unconsciously. For example, it can happen when the data users provide the AI with is biased, or when users interact with the AI system in ways that reflect their own biases and prejudices.

Emilio Ferrara illustrates what AI bias is through various real-life examples, ranging from healthcare to generative artificial intelligence outputs. He also provides an instance of GenAI bias, where OpenAI’s DALL-E and Midjourney, text-to-image tools, presented stereotypical and racial biases in their productions. Indeed, when these tools were prompted to generate images of CEOs, they principally produced images of men, reinforcing gender bias. The second

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<sup>58</sup>Emilio Ferrara, “Fairness and Bias in Artificial Intelligence: A Brief Survey of Sources, Impacts, and Mitigation Strategies,” *Sci* 6, no. 1 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.3390/sci6010003>.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

example Ferrara provides is that when GenAI models generate images of criminals or terrorists, the images generated are mainly of people of color. Both examples demonstrate how GenAI poses concerning risks of perpetuating societal, racial, and gender biases.

Bias in AI has negative impacts, which not only affect individuals but also society. Biased AI systems perpetuate and even amplify existing inequalities, but can also lead to new forms of discrimination, such as those based on skin color, ethnicity, or even physical appearance. AI bias affects people's perception of themselves, as well as the way they perceive other individuals. This can impact individuals' opportunities and interactions with other people, including denial of services, not obtaining a job, and even wrongful arrests.

To make AI systems fair, equitable, and useful for every user, bias in AI must be identified and mitigated. Some solutions involve concerted effort from all stakeholders, and the development of ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks promoting fairness, transparency, and accountability regarding AI systems.<sup>61</sup>

### **2.3.2. Bias in AI-generated Scripts (Literature Review)**

The specific case of AI potentially generating bias in scripts is an issue that scientific literature highlights when addressing the use of GenAI in the film industry. For instance, in 2020, an article entitled "The artificial intelligence of a Machine: Moving images in the age of algorithms", written by Ruggero Eugeni and Patricia Pisters, addresses algorithms by covering ethical questions about bias with respect to gender and race.<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, "The Significance of Artificial Intelligence in Contemporary Cinema", a conference paper from 2023, also explains how artificial intelligence is starting to "[...] play a greater role in the creative aspects of filmmaking."<sup>63</sup> Generative AI can be used to generate scripts, improve visual effects, create storyboards and posters, but also to analyze and recognize genres, patterns, and narratives. The conference paper also explains that AI algorithms collect data not only about creative aspects but also about the audience. For instance, information regarding their tastes, interests, and behaviors is collected. By doing so, these algorithms better understand the audience and know what should be produced depending on whom they target, guaranteeing engagement, success, and revenue. These aspects of AI, however, tend to be more

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<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup>Ruggero Eugeni and Patricia Pisters, "The Artificial Intelligence of a Machine: Moving Images in the Age of Algorithms," *NECSUS European Journal of Media Studies*, Jg. 9 (2020), Nr. 1, S. 91-100. <http://dx.doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14325>.

<sup>63</sup>Aneesh Pradeep et al., "The Significance of Artificial Intelligence in Contemporary Cinema," *Second International Conference on Trends in Electrical, Electronics, and Computer Engineering (TEECCON)*, (2023), 111-16, <https://doi.org/10.1109/TEECCON59234.2023.10335867>.

related to predictive AI, since this is the type of artificial intelligence mainly used to make predictions, which differs from GenAI, the main focus of this work.

Indeed, this use of predictive AI is often discussed in scientific articles that deal with the role of artificial intelligence in the film industry. This is notably the case of Pei-Sze Chow's article, which has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, discussing how AI algorithms provide producers with insights and analytics based on casting choices, budget considerations, and market trends, to ensure success and reduce financial risks.<sup>64</sup> The use of such tools for decision-making can create a limited tendency in cast choice, as AI would only suggest the same A-list actors to have roles while giving no opportunities to new talents. This same limited tendency can also appear in the use of GenAI to write scripts, as the tools might privilege most popular plots and narratives, instead of considering the ones that the algorithms would consider more, which definitely limits creativity and innovation. This recalls what was explained in the point 2.1. regarding Adorno's critique of popular culture and the standardization of media. This could raise a new question for this work, which is "Can the lack of originality and potential biases in AI-generated films affect the audience's critical thinking?" The article also provides examples of AI tools that can be used to generate scripts, including ScriptBook and DeepStory. The article also highlights potential bias issues, which could be perpetuated, for example, when GenAI tools are used to generate other film scripts, collect and train on film data from the past that might be controversial or contain discriminatory content.

All these sources share something in common: they only mention the potentiality of AI bias in scripts, but they do not provide examples or prove that it actually happened. This issue of bias and stereotypes in AI-generated scripts remain entirely hypothetical. Through my research for this dissertation, I did not encounter any instances of research or analysis of AI-generated scripts and the biases they generated. However, bias in AI-generated content has been studied and analyzed for aims that are unrelated to scriptwriting, such as image generation. For instance, specific case studies of bias in images generated by AI have been demonstrated, such as Dina Bass and Leonardo Nicoletti's case study on Stable Diffusion for the Big Take Bloomberg Technology. Indeed, in 2023, they collaborated to write "Humans Are Biased. Generative AI Is Even Worse", which demonstrates how Stable Diffusion, a text-to-image AI tool, amplifies biases and stereotypes about race and gender.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Chow, "Ghost in the (Hollywood) Machine," 193-214.

<sup>65</sup>Dina Bass and Leonardo Nicoletti, "Humans Are Biased. Generative AI Is Even Worse," *The Big Take Bloomberg Technology*, (2023). <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2023-generative-ai-bias/>

As of now, one of the few sources encountered that deals more concretely with the possibility of bias in scripts made by artificial intelligence is an article entitled “Artificial intelligence as a collaborative tool for script development.”<sup>66</sup> In her article, Susan Cake takes into consideration some ethical considerations impacting the use of GenAI in scriptwriting, such as the potential for bias, equitable access to technology, and uncertainty over copyright infringement. To analyze the issue related to the potential for bias and stereotypes in AI-generated scripts, Susan Cake developed a practice-based approach to scriptwriting, in which she worked with GenAI to write a script, but also critically reflect on each step of the process. Her findings include, for instance, ChatGPT’s use of “Archetypes, Literary Tropes, Realistic Depictions and Character Foils”<sup>67</sup>, which were listed when she prompted ChatGPT to explain what inspired the creation of the teacher generated in its script. The GenAI tool specifically refers to strict teacher archetypes like the ones encountered in Roald Dahl’s *Matilda* and James Hilton’s *Goodbye Mr. Chips*. This illustrates how GenAI tools rely on basic media tropes and characters, which can sometimes be a bit stereotyped. This article will be further analyzed in the last chapter of this work, as it represents a relevant example of how the case of bias in AI-generated scripts could be addressed in media education.

However, it is possible that, in the future, more investigations on the topic of the presence of bias in AI-generated scripts will be written, since it represents a new issue as of 2025. Generative artificial intelligence tools that enable writing scripts for film are still evolving and improving when this work is being written.

## 2.4. Corpus

For this research, I have selected three film productions whose scripts were fully generated by artificial intelligence. Out of the three films, only one is a feature film, while the others are short films. These instances are relevant examples of how artificial intelligence tools can be used to generate scripts, something that usually necessitates humans and creativity. However, with the fast-paced technology that GenAI represents, important progress has occurred and is still happening, which raises several questions, notably about humans losing their jobs, as well as the generation of bias and stereotypes.

The first film is entitled *Sunspring* and was produced in 2016 by a generative artificial intelligence tool named Benjamin. In the third chapter of his book *AI-Generated Popular*

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<sup>66</sup>Susan Cake, “Artificial Intelligence as a Collaborative Tool for Script Development,” *Media Practice and Education*, (2025), 1-16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2025.2454074>.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

*Culture: A Semiotic Perspective*, which is dedicated to the use of AI in cinema, Marcel Danesi notes that the film *Sunspring* represents the first time an AI-generated film was introduced in Sci-Fi London's film competition.<sup>68</sup> This AI-generated film is a fundamental example of the use of GenAI in filmmaking, since it involves one of the first scripts fully generated by artificial intelligence, marking the beginning of the proliferation of AI-generated movies. In his book, Marc Danesi explains that this film was “written and produced by a neural network trained on hundreds of classic sci-fi films over two days, and on how to meet the actual contest guidelines.”<sup>69</sup> The plot of *Sunspring* is set in a dystopian future where young people are forced to sell blood due to mass unemployment. The film is centered around three characters named H, H2 and C, who are involved in a love triangle dynamic. As Danesi states in his book, *Sunspring* is filled with basic tropes, codes and textual styles of science fiction, since the AI tool that generated the scripts was fed by what humans had already written in the sci-fi genre.<sup>70</sup> This short film of nine minutes is available online for free, more specifically on YouTube. The script is also easily accessible online, which allows for the close analysis I aim to undertake in this chapter. *Sunspring* involves humans in the production process, notably director Oscar Sharp, who wanted to experiment with AI in the scriptwriting process, and the cast involves human actors too.

*The Safe Zone* is the second film of my corpus, an AI-generated production from 2022, which aimed to use ChatGPT to produce a four-minute script, along with a shot list that was used in the film production by the actors and the crew. On X, formerly Twitter, Aaron Kemmer, one of the directors of *The Safe Zone*, made available the steps of the production process with AI. Among these steps, they had ChatGPT come up with various story ideas, then they chose the best ideas generated by the AI tool and asked it to turn them into film scripts, with the following prompt: “Write me a new 4 minute script based on our actors and set: It's the last day on Earth. Everyone is going to die. Only 1 person per family gets to go to the new planet, where everyone is going to refuge. 3 siblings arguing about who gets to go. Make it emotional”.<sup>71</sup> They also used ChatGPT to help them directing the film, and the AI tool created a step-by-step shot list, including shots like opening shot, close-up of specific characters, over-the-shoulder shot, and more. The producers did not stop there, and asked for more details, such as the

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<sup>68</sup>Marcel Danesi, “AI-Generated Cinema,” in *AI-Generated Popular Culture: A Semiotic Perspective*, edited by Marcel Danesi, 45–65, (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54752-2\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54752-2_3).

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*, 45–65.

<sup>71</sup>Aaron Kemmer (@aaronkemmer), “We used ChatGPT to WRITE and DIRECT a film in a weekend.,” X, December 18, 2022, <https://x.com/aaronkemmer/status/1604570089059061760>.

lightning, the camera position, and even the outfits the characters should wear. More data and information about the film can be found on *The Safe Zone*'s official website, where the producers' vision is notably introduced. The producers' goal with this short film was to "[...] share a sneak peek of what's to come in creating stories and how humans and AI can co-exist in the creative field."<sup>72</sup> However, the website does not provide an entire script, which makes the analysis less easy, since I do not have the material to closely analyze *The Safe Zone*'s screenplay, but I will use for this research the few content available on X. As it can be guessed from the prompt, which was mentioned above, the story is about AI taking over the world and threatening humans, who try to escape to the Safe Zone, where only one member of each family can go. The genre of the film is, just like the previous example, science fiction.

The last film for this research is entitled *The Last Screenwriter*, and it is the first long film whose script is generated by AI, lasting more than one hour. This film was produced by two brothers, David Luisi and Peter Luisi, who used ChatGPT 4.0 to generate the entire script in 2023. *The Last Screenwriter* marks a shift in AI film production, since it represents the first feature-length film, but also because it was supposed to be broadcast in London's Prince Charles Cinema in June 2024.<sup>73</sup> However, backlash and numerous complaints from the public canceled its premiere, but the film remains available on YouTube, where it can be watched for free. Regarding this cancellation, Peter Luisi told the *Daily Beast*:

"I think people don't know enough about the project. All they hear is 'first film written entirely by AI' and they immediately see the enemy, and their anger goes towards us... If screenwriters take the time to watch the movie and read about the process and why we did this film, I can't imagine they'll condemn us or me because I'm one of them... I want to do this as a contribution to the cause."<sup>74</sup>

A statement that can be further understood through *The Last Screenwriter*'s official website, where the producers' goals are clearly explained. Indeed, the Luisi brothers said that they "[...] wanted to find out if artificial intelligence is able to write an entire feature film and how good this film would be if produced by a professional team."<sup>75</sup> By sharing the results of their ambitious experiment, they hope that they will contribute to the filmmaking community,

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<sup>72</sup>Safe Zone Film, "The Safe Zone Film," The Safe Zone Film, n.d., <https://thesafezonefilm.com/>. [accessed in July 2025]

<sup>73</sup>Andrew Pulver, "London Premiere of Movie With AI-generated Script Cancelled After Backlash," *The Guardian*, June 20, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/article/2024/jun/20/premiere-movie-ai-generated-script-cancelled-backlash-the-last-screenwriter-prince-charles-cinema>.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>The Last Screenwriter, "Home - the Last Screenwriter," THE LAST SCREENWRITER, July 8, 2024, <https://lastscreenwriter.com/>. [accessed in July 2025]



which is going through a new era in film history, where AI tools can be used in various aspects of film production, raising various questions and concerns. The film tells the story of Jack, a human screenwriter, who discovers he can use artificial intelligence to write scripts. At first, Jack is amazed by the technology, but he slowly starts to lose confidence in his own skills, as he thinks the AI tool is more efficient than him.

## 2.5. Generative AI Tools for Scriptwriting

When considering what AI applications are used to generate scripts, it is important to take into consideration that things evolve really fast, which can make it complicated to be exactly on the page with each new technology. Numerous generative artificial intelligence tools enable to produce scripts for films, but I will only focus on the ones that were used in the case of the films selected for my corpus. However, I find it essential to repeat that the list goes beyond the two GenAI tools that will be analyzed in this work. For instance, Scriptbook and Deepstory are two famous GenAI tools for scriptwriting and are often mentioned in scientific articles, such as in the article by Pei-Sze Chow mentioned in 2.3.2.<sup>76</sup>

As it has been said earlier, Benjamin was used to generate the script of Oscar Sharp's *Sunspring*. This AI scriptwriting bot was created by Ross Goodwin, an AI researcher at NYU, with whom Oscar Sharp collaborated for the short-film *Sunspring*. In a paper entitled "Research on the Application of Artificial Intelligence in the Film Industry", Yaxing Li presents Benjamin's algorithm, clarifying the screenwriting process of the AI-generated film script.<sup>77</sup> Benjamin made use of a Recurrent Neural Network (RNN) with Long Short Term Memory (LSTM). In the first chapter of this dissertation, I briefly mentioned what neural networks were, by saying that they processed data in similar ways to the human brain, allowing the machines to analyze and understand large datasets. Yaxing Li explains in this paper that RNNs are similar to traditional neural networks and cannot solve the long-term dependency problem. This creates difficulties for learning scriptwriting, since long-term dependencies occur when the current output of a sequence depends on previous inputs that are far back in time. However, the LSTM algorithm, a special kind of RNN, can overcome this problem, enabling Benjamin to learn how to imitate the script structure and to generate lines and stage directions. This process depends on a four-layer structure. The first layer selects information, filtering out what is not needed for learning how to write scripts. The second and third layers are used to update new information, while the fourth layer determines and produces the output of the model, which is the script.

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<sup>76</sup>Chow, "Ghost in the (Hollywood) Machine," ...

<sup>77</sup>Yaxing Li, "Research on the Application of Artificial Intelligence in the Film Industry," *SHS Web of Conferences* 144 (January 1, 2022): 03002, <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/202214403002>.



According to Yaxing Li, the advantage of the LSTM algorithm that is present in Benjamin is that it can handle much longer text, allowing it to predict whole paragraphs and generate new sentences rather than reusing sentences from a corpus. This enabled Benjamin's scriptwriting process to be successful. Goodwin trained Benjamin with numerous sci-fi movie scripts he found online, such as *Star Trek*.<sup>78</sup> After Benjamin received the necessary input, it used the algorithm to analyze the film scripts, learning from them which letters or words were likely to appear together. Through this process, the AI tool gained the capacity to generate scripts with a structure similar to the ones it was trained on, while also creating dialogues and stage directions.

OpenAI's ChatGPT was used for writing the scripts of both *The Safe Zone* and *The Last Screenwriter*. Since these two instances of AI-generated scripts were not produced at the same time, it is important to note that their respective producers did not make use of the same versions of ChatGPT. Indeed, OpenAI's ChatGPT is constantly going through updates and evolves pretty fast. At the moment of writing this work, a new update, called GPT-5, was launched on August 7<sup>th</sup>, which is supposed to be faster and more accurate.<sup>79</sup> The previous updates were not even that long ago, one of them was on March 25<sup>th</sup>, and sparked controversy right away with the Studio Ghibli AI Trend<sup>80</sup>, which crashed AI servers and provoked ethical debates.

The version of ChatGPT that was used for making *The Safe Zone*'s script was the 2022 version of ChatGPT, while the Luisi brothers used ChatGPT4.0 to generate the script of *The Last Screenwriter* back in 2024. As it is explained on *The Safe Zone*'s official website, ChatGPT is an artificial intelligence chatbot specializing in dialogue, relying on "a large language model fine-tuned with both supervised and reinforcement learning techniques."<sup>81</sup> This makes ChatGPT a relevant AI tool to produce scripts, since it is a generative artificial intelligence, which, as it has been explained earlier, represents a type of AI that can produce content, including text and images. Indeed, ChatGPT has access to a large quantity of data that could be potentially useful to generate scripts but also provides its users with the possibility to directly upload documents from which the AI tool can learn and produce new content. As Craig Erpelding et al. note in "Forum on Artificial Intelligence", ChatGPT is an advanced generative AI trained on a large dataset of diverse text sources, enabling it to recognize patterns in human

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<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>79</sup>Metz, C. (2025, August 7). OpenAI unveils GPT-5, new AI model, to ChatGPT Users. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/07/technology/openai-chatgpt-gpt-5.html>

<sup>80</sup>"The Studio Ghibli AI Trend" refers to the viral AI trend that took place after the launch of GPT-4, involving users to generate selfies, family pictures, etc. in a "Ghibli" style.

<sup>81</sup>Safe Zone Film, "The Safe Zone Film."

language and produce contextually appropriate responses.<sup>82</sup> The data on which ChatGPT trains provides it with some knowledge regarding screenwriting conventions, allowing it to respond to prompts such as “write a dialogue between two detectives”. However, its outputs often include predictable story elements, since ChatGPT draws on patterns from its scriptwriting training data, learning from the most common and recurring plots, characters, and themes typical of contemporary screenplays. It is important to note that ChatGPT has limitations, such as not using the font Courier New, which represents standard screenplay formatting, as well as the lack of consistency regarding its characters’ names. The authors of this article also discuss another limitation of ChatGPT when it comes to writing scripts, which is the fact that the AI engine struggles to create scripts containing more than a few pages or more than one location. longer than a few pages or with more than one location.

In 2024, when the Luisi Brothers experimented with ChatGPT, they encountered the same issue, as they explained it on the website dedicated to *The Last Screenwriter*. On the website, they specify that they had no influence in the scriptwriting process, which was entirely realized by GenAI, but they do admit that they had to assist ChatGPT in order to obtain a feature-length film script. Currently, however, computers cannot completely replace screenwriters. Since ChatGPT has a limit of characters when it generates responses, they had to continue providing the AI tool with new input to make sure the screenplay would be long enough. For instance, they prompted ChatGPT several times to generate a step-outline for the story, and possible scenes and twists, which were then written out as a script by the AI engine.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.6. Method

The method that will be used to analyze bias in AI-generated scripts has been inspired by what I read to write the beginning of this chapter. Indeed, my readings on Renee Hobbs’ *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media* regarding stereotypes and representations, as well as Ferrara’s article on AI bias, have provided me with essential information to come up with the method for this case study<sup>84</sup>. The goal of this research is to answer the following question: *Can AI generate scripts without reproducing biases and stereotypes?* To answer this question, a close analysis of the three instances of scripts made by AI is required. However, as it has been said earlier, it will not be entirely possible for *The Safe Zone*’s due to the fact that the script was not fully available online. For this reason, I will also analyze the shot list generated by ChatGPT,

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<sup>82</sup>Craig Erpelding et al., “Forum on Artificial Intelligence,” *Journal of Film and Video* 76, no. 1 (April 1, 2024): 44–55, <https://doi.org/10.5406/19346018.76.1.05>.

<sup>83</sup>The Last Screenwriter, “Home - the Last Screenwriter.”

<sup>84</sup>Renee Hobbs, *Media Literacy in Action*.

since some descriptions of emotions are also provided. The two pages made available on X will also be used for this analysis. As for both *Sunspring* and *The Last Screenwriter*, their scripts will be analyzed in depth according to the following method. Additional information generated using ChatGPT about *The Last Screenwriter*'s characters and their backstories, but also plot twists are made available on a Dropbox folder by the film's creators. They represent relevant material for this analysis, but the aim of this case study remains specifically for the analysis of scripts generated by the AI tool. However, these supplementary resources can potentially support both my analysis and interpretation.

This employed method for analysis can be made into a table format, which can help understand the different focus points that will be analyzed in the AI-generated scripts. This table draws on Hobbs' ideas regarding characters and representations in media productions, but also on what she explains regarding narrative analysis.<sup>85</sup> Ferrara, along with Buckingham and Hobbs, discuss bias by identifying different types, including societal, racial, and gender biases, which is a way to categorize the various biases and stereotypes that might be encountered in this case study. For establishing a structure to this analysis, I decided to define four main areas where bias and stereotypes supposedly could appear: characters, plots & narratives, and dialogues & language. Other areas could have been analyzed for this research, but these represent a relevant basis to conduct the script analysis for this work.

<b>Characters</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Gender (woman, man, other)</i></li> <li>2. <i>Character Archetypes</i></li> <li>3. <i>Diversity</i></li> <li>4. <i>Racial Stereotypes/Bias</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyzing gender representation: gender stereotypes (emotions, actions, descriptions, tone, etc.)</li> <li>2. Analyzing recurring tropes in characters (hero, villain, victim, helper)</li> <li>3. Analyzing if the characters are diversified, inclusion: age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.</li> <li>4. Analyzing if there are stereotypes related to particular ethnic groups: exaggerated names, traits, clichés, racism, etc.</li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Narrative Structure or Plots</i></li> <li>2. <i>Tropes</i></li> <li>3. <i>Themes (sci-fi)</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyzing recurring plot patterns (e.g. Seven Basic Plots: Overcoming</li> </ol>

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<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*

<b>Plots &amp; Narratives</b>		the Monster, Rags to Riches, The Quest, etc.) <sup>86</sup> 2. Analyzing basic and “cliché” tropes 3. Analyzing common themes (from sci-fi genre)
<b>Dialogues &amp; Language</b>	1. <i>Gendered dialogue</i> 2. <i>Emotion through expression and tone</i> 3. <i>Power dynamics through dialogue</i> 4. <i>Stereotypes in lexicon</i> 5. <i>Speaking time/Screen time</i>	1. Analyzing if the dialogue differs depending on genre (language, expressions, recurring words, stereotypes in the way a man/woman talks, etc.) 2. Analyzing if there are stereotypes in emotional expression/tone 3. Analyzing if there are power dynamics in conversation: not listening a character, interruptions, etc. 4. Analyzing if speech patterns are stereotyped: overused of idiomatic expressions, slang, etc. 5. Comparing the proportion of dialogue: is it well divided among all types of character?

Table 1: It contains the areas that will be analyzed for this case study. For implementing it, I notably inspired myself from Renee Hobbs’ *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*.

## 2.7. Analysis

The final script of *Sunspring* begins, like most screenplays, with a slug line or scene heading, which typically starts with “EXT.” or “INT.” to indicate whether the scene occurs outside or inside.<sup>87</sup> Scene headings provide contextual information about the location of the action. In *Sunspring*, it starts with “INT. SHIP,” demonstrating that Benjamin, the AI engine used to generate the script, can replicate traditional script elements and structures. Throughout the four-page script, other scriptwriting conventions are also reproduced, notably stage directions.

No gender bias can be identified in the script, which can be due to the fact that the stage directions do not display all the characters’ pronouns. Only one character, called “H”, is clearly referred to as “he” and therefore known to be a man. In the article “Movie written by algorithm turns out to be hilarious and intense”, Oscar Sharp explained that Benjamin was effective at reproducing the structure of a script and making sentences, but struggled with proper names,

<sup>86</sup>Booker (2004), in Hobbs, “Why Are We Attracted to Characters and Stories?,” in *Media Literacy in Action*.

<sup>87</sup>Sharp, Oscar, director. 2016. *Sunspring*. End Cue. <https://www.docdroid.net/1CZ2fPA/sunspring-final-pdf>.

which it seemed not to understand.<sup>88</sup> The single-letter names “H”, “H2”, and “C” are the first noticeable feature of the script, and can be disorienting. For this reason, it is not possible to analyze potential gender-related, nor is it feasible to discuss diversity or stereotyped emotion portrayals by gender, since the gender of some characters is unclear due to their names.

However, other aspects can be analyzed, since bias and stereotypes in media do not only concern gender or race. Analyzing the plot and sci-fi themes is relevant here, as Goodwin trained Benjamin on a corpus of dozens of sci-fi screenplays he found online, mostly s from the 1980s and 1990s. Benjamin learned from these scripts to predict which letters, words and phrases tended to occur together, resulting in the reproduction of common sci-fi patterns in both lexicon and narrative. While the story flows and dialogues are often incoherent, science-fiction elements are easy to notice. Examples such “standing in the stars”, “the particles of a transmission”, “black hole in the floor” can be correlated to the genre, as well as the spaceship setting, another common sci-fi feature.

The first line, “In a future with mass unemployment, young people are forced to sell blood”<sup>89</sup>, establishes a dystopian world, another typical element of the genre. The trope of survival, also common to sci-fi scripts, is also present in *Sunspring*. In terms of dialogue and language, some sentences are repeated multiple times, such as “I don't know. I don't know what you're talking about,”<sup>90</sup> or “I am not sure. I don't know what you're talking about.”<sup>91</sup> This repetition can suggest that the characters question their surroundings, a pattern in sci-fi frequently found in sci-fi films where characters try to make sense of the environment.

*The Safe Zone*'s script is not fully available online, which poses some limitations for this analysis. However, Aaron Kemmer, the producer, made available on X two pictures of script excerpts generated by ChatGPT, as well as a picture of the AI-generated step-by-step shot list. These materials show several observable patterns in gender representation.

In the first excerpt, the script introduces three siblings, two girls and a boy, who learn from watching TV that an asteroid is going to collide with Earth. The female characters' reactions in the script are framed in more emotional terms, with stage directions such as “tearfully”, “angrily”, “shocked”, and “frustrated”. The second excerpt provided on X shows the siblings in everyday-life situations, with the girls performing activities stereotypically associated with women. Indeed, one is cooking, the other lying on her bed flipping through a

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<sup>88</sup>Annalee Newitz, “Movie Written by Algorithm Turns Out to Be Hilarious and Intense,” *Ars Technica*, May 30, 2021, <https://arstechnica.com/gaming/2021/05/an-ai-wrote-this-movie-and-its-strangely-moving/>.

<sup>89</sup>*Sunspring*, 1.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

magazine, while their brother sits at the table, bored and staring at his phone. A similar pattern appears in the shot list, where the sisters' names frequently appear alongside descriptions that emphasize emotions such as tears, fear, frustration, and anger. There is a clear contrast with the brother, who leans more toward disbelief, skepticism, determination, and conviction.

*The Last Screenwriter* represents the best object of analysis for this research, with a script of 60 pages, providing more content to analyze. Similar to both previous examples, *The Last Screenwriter* demonstrates the AI tool's ability to follow conventional script structure. Regarding gender bias, this film script seems to include some stereotypes related to gender. Indeed, it can be seen through the character of Sarah, who is immediately referred to as "Jack's wife" the first time she appears in the script, where she is described as "... holding ALEX, their child, sitting on a plush sofa surrounded by family photos." In this script, she is only acting either as a wife or a mother, Sarah does not have any scenes about her as her own person. Her lines are also very repetitive, limiting her to supportive or confrontational lines such as "Is everything okay?" or "We need to talk?" Indeed, her role in the script is reduced to being some kind of plot device for Jack, as she represents the person who supports him, but also the person who confronts him when AI starts to take too much importance in his life. Her leaving with their child marks the awaited turning point where Jack finally realized that things went too far, and that he let the AI tool have too much power over his life.

The contrast between these two characters is obvious, Jack is a famous screenwriter experiencing a new technology, while Sarah is only represented as a wife or a mother, erasing all the other possibilities. Most characters in the script are men and they seem to have more personality than Sarah, and more lines too. Two other female characters, Rachel and Ava, appear in the script but only for one scene each, but they bring nothing to the story and are only there to complement Jack's AI-generated script. Analyzing the stage direction also shows that Sarah is "different" than the male characters from this story. The overuse of words such as "concerned", "softly", "worried", proves that she is only present in the story to be concerned and soft towards Jack. She also several times engages in activities like preparing the tea, or making the breakfast, which again creates a gap between her and the male characters in *The Last Screenwriter*.

Jack's use of AI, when he writes his script, funnily reproduces this experiment accurately. Indeed, the worries of Jack when he makes use of AI are the same concerns people have in real life. Several times in the script, through the dialogues, some characters wonder if the AI is able to reproduce human emotions and even understand them. A possible theory could

be that ChatGPT bases itself on one of the most common assumptions and questions people have regarding the use of GenAI for creative purposes. The script ends with the narrator saying:

“The digital age has given us tools of unimaginable power, machines that can mimic our creativity and efficiency. But as we forge ahead into this brave new world, let us not forget what makes us fundamentally human: our ability to feel, to dream, to tell stories that capture the essence of the human experience. Machines can replicate many things, but they can’t replicate the soul, the messy and beautiful chaos that makes each of us unique. In storytelling, as in life, the human touch is irreplaceable.” (p. 60)<sup>92</sup>

An ending that is pretty cliché and even ironic when we know that this script has been written by ChatGPT itself.

## 2.8. Limitations

Before going through the results of this case study, it is important to consider its limitations, which have consequently impacted them. Indeed, the integration of AI for generating scripts is still something new, which not only impacts the number of examples of AI-generated scripts that are available, but also the number of research or works on the topic. Very little research has been done on the subject of AI and scriptwriting that analyzes whether scripts generated by artificial intelligence could be biased or filled with stereotypes. As I have explained in the literature review, bias in AI-generated screenplays is still a hypothesis when this issue is mentioned in scientific literature addressing the role of AI in the film industry.

The lack of content available is also a major reason why this remains complicated to know for sure if these fears about bias in AI-generated scripts can be confirmed. It is only something that will be possible to be analyzed when more resources are available, since generative artificial is still evolving and gaining more capacity, which could be used, notably for writing film scripts. Only analyzing three scripts is not enough to determine whether AI can perpetuate stereotypes or create bias in the scriptwriting process.

## 2.9. Results

My hypotheses, mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, cannot entirely be confirmed by the obtained results. While certain patterns related to gender roles or science-fiction conventions can be observed, this does not mean that the three scripts studied can be described as fundamentally biased. For example, *The Last Screenwriter* reproduces gender stereotypes through the character of Sarah, portrayed as a supportive wife engaged in domestic activities.

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<sup>92</sup>David Luisi and Peter Luisi. 2023. *The Last Screenwriter*.  
<https://lastscreenwriter.com/documentation-downloads/>

However, beyond this instance, the rest of the script cannot truly be qualified as biased. Rather, it reflects ChatGPT's reliance on the most common and conventional content found in its training data, which it recombines to produce a script. In this respect, ChatGPT displays a lack of originality rather than bias. As such, it does not align with Ferrara's definition of AI bias as "systematic errors that occur in decision-making processes, leading to unfair outcomes."<sup>93</sup>

It is also important to note that the examples of female representation in the analyzed scripts are not as strong or as evident as the biases documented in other uses of AI, particularly in image generation. Multiple studies have shown that image-based AI systems frequently produce visual outputs that reinforce or amplify stereotypes and prejudices related to gender or race. Evaluating such biases is often easier in images, where they manifest explicitly in the visual dimension. In text, however, bias can be more implicit, requiring interpretive skills and close reading to identify subtle indicators. Furthermore, there is currently a much larger volume of AI-generated visual content than AI-generated scripts, offering more material for analysis and making patterns easier to detect.

I would not consider these results as set-in-stone proof that GenAI in scriptwriting is biased due to the lack of instances and limitations encountered. However, the way Sarah is described in the script illustrates that some long-standing gender roles are reproduced, which indicates one clear instance of how AI could be biased and affect women's representation in film, but having just one instance is not enough to claim GenAI is biased. This example should rather encourage more research when more AI-generated scripts are available to further analyze whether bias and prejudices can appear in AI screenplays. It also should open up questions regarding the role of media education in a context where AI tools could sometimes be biased, which will be addressed later in the dissertation.

## **Chapter 3: The Case of Film in Media Education**

### **3.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I will explore the importance of films within media education as valuable resources for fostering critical thinking, creativity, and media literacy. It is fundamental to first address the case of film in a broader sense, before turning to the specific case of AI-generated film and media education. Therefore, I will begin by outlining what has been discussed and

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<sup>93</sup>Ferrara, "Fairness and Bias in Artificial Intelligence," 2.



implemented regarding the correlation between film and media education, particularly how films have been used as tools for developing critical media awareness.

Various examples of media educational programs and curricula will be presented to illustrate how movies have been a medium that can enhance individuals' media literacy. To analyze these resources, I will notably draw on Buckingham's book, *The Media Education Manifesto*, where he elaborates on a critical media education suitable for digital times, which can be applied to the specific case of film.<sup>94</sup> Other books and articles will be used to reflect on the selected resources with theories and approaches to media education.

I will also refer to an article written by Romero Walker, who argues the importance of incorporating media literacy practices into higher education film classrooms.<sup>95</sup> This article provides another approach, as it demonstrates the potential of implementing media education within filmmaking classes.

Additionally, I will draw on *De l'enseignement du cinéma à l'éducation aux médias: Trajets théoriques et perspectives pédagogiques*<sup>96</sup>, a book written by Barbara Laborde, in which she proposes a medio-pragmatic approach and advocates for the expansion of traditional film education into a broader media education framework. This book represents a valuable resource that allows for considering how cinema can be approached within media education, as it provides its readers with diverse examples and possibilities. For this reason, in this chapter, I will synthesize Laborde's medio-pragmatic approach, as it will be important for the rest of this dissertation, notably to suggest how media education could make address film generated by artificial intelligence.

### **3.2. Film and Media Education**

The integration of films as tools to enhance media literacy skills in the classroom is nothing new, nor is it a new idea to implement media literacy practices in film education. Many educators and scholars, such as Renee Hobbs in 1998, have long argued that film and television could be used not only as entertainment but also as powerful resources to foster reflection, critical thinking, and deeper social understanding.<sup>97</sup> As David Buckingham explains in "Media Education: A Global Strategy for Development A policy paper prepared for UNESCO Sector

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<sup>94</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*.

<sup>95</sup>Alexis Romero Walker, "A More Equitable Film Pedagogy: Including Media Literacy in Higher Education Film Classrooms to Result in Better Media Practitioners," *Journal of Media Literacy Education* 14, no. 1 (2022): 153-167, <https://doi.org/10.23860/jmle-2022-14-1-11>.

<sup>96</sup>Laborde, *De l'enseignement du cinéma à l'éducation aux médias*.

<sup>97</sup>Renee Hobbs, "Teaching With and About Film and Television: Integrating media literacy concepts into management education," *Journal of Management Development* 17, no. 4 (1998): 259-72, <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621719810210136>.

of Communication and Information”, media education includes many types of media such as print media, radio, new digital communication technologies, and even moving image media like films and television. In this UNESCO policy paper, Buckingham makes it clear that films are also considered within the landscape of media education, since they represent media and that “[...] media are, in many respects, the most obvious vehicle for media education [...]”.<sup>98</sup> However, he also warns that it is important not to confuse education *about* and *with* films with education *through* films, which represents a fundamentally different approach. Indeed, education *through* films refers to how viewers can learn about various topics and subjects by watching films, which falls outside the scope of media education. For instance, films can teach about science and history, which certainly remains educational, but not always related to the goals of media education itself.<sup>99</sup>

In her article “Teaching with and about film education: Integrating media literacy concepts into management education”, Renee Hobbs explains that even though viewers do not need formal training to watch a movie, “[...] they do need instruction in how to analyze and think critically about it.”<sup>100</sup> This is where the link to media education can occur, as it empowers viewers to consume films not simply by watching them for fun but by watching them while reflecting and thinking critically about them. This shift from passive viewing to active and reflective engagement is central to media education. As Buckingham explains in the previously mentioned UNESCO paper, it is through media education that both critical understanding and active participation can be developed.<sup>101</sup> Buckingham emphasizes the role of media education in preparing people to navigate today’s media-saturated society, as it enables people to become informed and active media consumers and producers. The critical and creative competencies developed through media education can also be applied to film, a medium that conveys messages and representations, enabling viewers to move beyond passive consumption. Hobbs also points out in her article that both film and television tend to be perceived as reflections of reality, but that they are, in fact, highly constructed cultural products. This perspective aligns

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<sup>98</sup>David Buckingham, “Media Education: a Global Strategy for development (By UNESCO Sector of Communication and Information),” (2001), 17. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Buckingham-3/publication/228730180\\_Media\\_Education\\_A\\_Global\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Development\\_A\\_Policy\\_Paper\\_Prepared\\_for\\_UNESCO\\_Sector\\_of\\_Communication\\_and\\_Information/links/55144aff0cf23203199d4825/Media-Education-A-Global-Strategi-for-Development-A-Policy-Paper-Prepared-for-UNESCO-Sector-of-Communication-and-Information.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Buckingham-3/publication/228730180_Media_Education_A_Global_Strategy_for_Development_A_Policy_Paper_Prepared_for_UNESCO_Sector_of_Communication_and_Information/links/55144aff0cf23203199d4825/Media-Education-A-Global-Strategi-for-Development-A-Policy-Paper-Prepared-for-UNESCO-Sector-of-Communication-and-Information.pdf)

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup>Renee Hobbs, “Teaching With and About Film and Television,” 8.

<sup>101</sup>David Buckingham, “Media Education: a Global Strategy.”

with the idea that films must be approached with critical thinking to uncover underlying values, ideologies, and representation strategies rather than being passively consumed.<sup>102</sup>

In the third chapter of *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*, David Buckingham further elaborates on this by defining media literacy as a form of critical literacy involving analysis, evaluation, and critical reflection rather than a functional literacy.<sup>103</sup> He states that media literacy is not merely about being able to use and interpret media, and that “[...] it also involves a much broader analytical understanding.”<sup>104</sup> Buckingham specifically focuses on the case of films within media education, as he explains that understanding ‘film language’ is different from understanding verbal language, where syntax and rules can be found. Indeed, understanding film language, such as zooms and various editing techniques, is more challenging to analyze for various reasons. Buckingham explains that the meaning of shots and techniques is not fixed, and that it depends on the context, but also on how the viewers interpret them. When he says that their meaning depends on the context, Buckingham refers to contextual information such as the development of the storyline or the other shots in the film. He gives the example of a camera zoom, which “[...] may ‘mean’ different things at different times; and it may on certain occasions ‘mean’ the same thing as a tracking shot or a cut to close-up.”<sup>105</sup> To understand and interpret a film, viewers need to look beyond individual shots and consider the entire story, its structure, the way it connects to other films or genres, and how it represents reality. Considering films with a media literacy perspective is not just about recognizing technical elements but about understanding deeper meanings and messages.

In this chapter three, Buckingham also provides a concrete example through the British Film Institute’s model of ‘cineliteracy’, which was first proposed in the report *Making Movies Matter* (1999).<sup>106</sup> Produced by the Film Education Working Group, the report discusses the future of moving image education in the UK, advocating for a new perspective that recognizes critical and creative skills related to film as essential parts of literacy in today’s world. It outlines a coherent plan for change, including the integration of moving image education throughout the curriculum, training for educators in film pedagogy, improved access to cinema for learners, and research into the effectiveness of film education. The report argues that “[...] education, information and entertainment industries are becoming ever more dependent upon the

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<sup>102</sup>Renee Hobbs, “Teaching With and About Film and Television”.

<sup>103</sup>David Buckingham, “Chapter Three of Media Education,” 3.

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>106</sup>Film Education Working Group (1999) *Making Movies Matter* London: British Film Institute.  
<https://carybazalgette.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/21.pdf>

communicative power of the moving image, whether delivered through cinemas, broadcast, video or online.”<sup>107</sup> The report suggests that film and video play a crucial role in maintaining an informed public, which is essential for democracy, and emphasizes that this important form of communication should be integrated as a fundamental part of literacy in our media-driven society. By framing the moving image as a “unique and vital language”, the report situates film education within the broader goals of media education, highlighting its role in fostering both cultural understanding and democratic participation. The report also identifies four core competencies of ‘cineliteracy’: the ability to analyze how films are constructed (analytical competence), to understand their social and historical contexts (contextual knowledge), to appreciate a wide range of cinematic works (canonical knowledge), and to produce moving images (production competence).<sup>108</sup> These competencies can remind of what Buckingham explains in *The Media Education Manifesto*, where he distinguishes “[...] three dimensions of media education pedagogy, in line with the notion of literacy.”<sup>109</sup> The three dimensions are textual analysis, creative production, and contextual analysis. Textual analysis, also referred to as close textual analysis by Buckingham, is a crucial dimension of media education that involves close reading, discourse analysis, and semiotic approaches. It is not limited to written texts or spoken discourses but can also be applied to analyzing a complex film scene, a post on social media, or even the cover page of a newspaper. According to Buckingham, textual analysis mainly focuses on the dimensions of media language and representation, as it encourages individuals to look more closely and reflect on how media constructs and convey meaning. The second dimension, creative production, refers to producing media-related content, such as videos, pictures, posters, or designs for websites. The correlation between creative production and media education may seem more subtle, but it is not the case, as creative production requires close attention to media language, audience, and representation. For instance, when creating content, learners could reflect on the strategies they might use to engage a specific audience, as well as critically consider how their work can include and address underrepresented groups or issues in a respectful and meaningful way. Contextual analysis refers to examining media by considering their broader social and cultural contexts, with particular attention to both institutions and audiences. These dimensions of media education can be associated with the competencies of ‘cineliteracy’, as they involve similar points such as analyzing how films are constructed, which would be part of the dimension of close textual analysis; the competency of

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<sup>107</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>109</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 69.

understanding the historical and social context of films can be associated with the dimension of contextual analysis; producing moving images would go with the dimension called creative production. By combining analytical study with creative production, the report *Making Movies Matter* emphasizes that being “cineliterate” emerges not only from interpreting moving images but also from actively participating in their creation, thereby fostering knowledgeable, critically aware audiences for the future.

The model of ‘cineliteracy’, as Buckingham explains in the previously mentioned chapter 3, specifically takes into consideration moving images, which include video, film, and television, but it could definitely be applied to other media, such as print or radio.<sup>110</sup> It represents a valuable instance of how media education can make use of film to develop students’ critical understanding of how media communicate meaning, reflect cultural values, and influence audiences. One year later, in 2000, the model of ‘cineliteracy’ has been readapted in *Moving Images in the Classroom: A Secondary Teacher's Guide to Using Film and Television*<sup>111</sup>, a guide for educators who are interested in using and working with moving images to show how they can contribute to improving students’ creativity and critical thinking skills, as they broaden their cultural experience. To demonstrate film’s relevance in media education, I will draw on their actualization of the ‘cineliteracy’ model. To do so, I have slightly modified and arranged the model’s content to present a table summarizing its learning outcomes.

<b>‘CINELITERACY’ MODEL: <i>Becoming Cineliterate</i></b>	
<b>At Stage 1, learners should be able to:</b>	
The Language of Moving Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify and talk about structuring features such as music, changes in location, interior/exterior settings, actors and presenters.</i></li> <li>• <i>Refer to elements of film language when describing events in a story.</i></li> <li>• <i>Talk about character types and refer to clues such as dress, casting, performance etc.</i></li> </ul>
Producers and Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use credits, video covers and posters to identify titles and actors’ names, likely audience category, and theme or genre.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify broad categories of intended audience, e.g. ‘this is for little children’, and give reasons.</i></li> </ul>

<sup>110</sup>David Buckingham, “Chapter Three of Media Education,” ...

<sup>111</sup>British Film Institute (2000) *Moving Images in the Classroom: A Secondary Teacher's Guide to Using Film and Television* London: British Film Institute.  
[https://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca/schools/recit/tlaptop/Mliteracy/mic\\_all.pdf](https://www.swlauriersb.qc.ca/schools/recit/tlaptop/Mliteracy/mic_all.pdf)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify common features between film, video and television, book and game versions of generic texts, e.g. myth, fairytale, space adventure etc.</i></li> </ul>
Message and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify and talk about different levels of 'realism', e.g. naturalistic drama vs. cartoon animation.</i></li> <li>• <i>Refer to elements of film language when explaining personal responses and preferences (e.g. shot, cut, zoom, close-up, focus).</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify devices such as flashback, dream sequences, exaggeration – discuss why they are needed and how they are conveyed.</i></li> </ul>
<b>At Stage 2, learners should be able to:</b>	
The Language of Moving Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Describe how sound contributes to the overall meaning of a moving image sequence.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain how a film, video and television sequence is constructed.</i></li> </ul>
Producers and Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Distinguish between different moving image delivery systems.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify and distinguish some production roles.</i></li> <li>• <i>Suggest reasons why different responses to the same film, video and television text.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain why some film, video and television may cost a lot of money to make.</i></li> </ul>
Message and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify ways in which film, video and television can show things that have not 'really' happened, such as violence or magic.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explore reasons for and against censorship, age classification and the broadcasting 'watershed'.</i></li> </ul>
<b>At Stage 3, learners should be able to:</b>	
The Language of Moving Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify and discuss differences between film, video and television genres.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain how meaning is created through editing of image and sound.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain some of the ways in which film styles have changed over time.</i></li> </ul>

Producers and Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify and distinguish between a wider range of production roles.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain basic differences between processes of pre-production, production, post-production and exhibition.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain some of the ways film, video and television are marketed and promoted to audiences.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify and discuss factors that may contribute to success of a film, video and television text (e.g. star, genre, theme etc.)</i></li> </ul>
Message and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain how social groups, events and ideas are represented in film, video and television, using terms such as 'stereotype', 'authentic' and 'representation'.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain and justify aesthetic judgements and personal responses.</i></li> <li>• <i>Argue for alternative ways of representing a group, event, or idea.</i></li> </ul>
<b>At Stage 4, learners should be able to:</b>	
The Language of Moving Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify and describe some major film, video and television styles and narrative forms, using terms such as 'mainstream', 'surrealist', 'avant-garde' etc.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain how elements of film, video and television styles may relate to technologies, such as portable cameras and editing software.</i></li> </ul>
Producers and Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify and discuss some of the factors in the production process that may affect the final shape and meaning of a film, video and television text.</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe some of the risks and costs involved in film, video and television production, distribution and exhibition.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain some of the possibilities and limitations of audience research.</i></li> </ul>
Message and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Discuss and evaluate film, video and television texts with strong social or ideological messages, using terms such as 'propaganda' and 'ideology'.</i></li> </ul>
<b>At Stage 5, learners should be able to:</b>	
The Language of Moving Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Explain how film, video and television styles and narrative forms can relate to authors, production context, social and cultural context.</i></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Use film language to construct moving image narratives.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify and describe the contributions of different skills in a film, video and television text.</i></li> </ul>
Producers and Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Describe and explain how authors, genres and stars are meaning-bearing systems and how they can be used to market film, video and television.</i></li> <li>• <i>Identify and describe some of the ways in which film, video and television institutions relate to social, cultural and political contexts.</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe the economic organization of film, video and television institutions and the relationship between producers, distributors, exhibitors and audiences.</i></li> </ul>
Message and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Discuss and evaluate ideological messages in mainstream film, video and television texts, using terms such as 'hegemon' and 'diegesis'.</i></li> <li>• <i>Describe and account for different levels of realism in film, video and television texts.</i></li> <li>• <i>Explain relationships between aesthetic style and social/political meaning.</i></li> </ul>

Figure 2: A table containing the outcomes of the model of 'cineliteracy', which I have a bit adapted from the *Moving Images in the Classroom: A Secondary Teacher's Guide to Using Film and Television*.<sup>112</sup>

As it can be seen in Figure 2, in this model, media literacy is divided into three main conceptual areas, which are the Language of Moving Images, Producers and Audiences, and Messages and Values. These three areas reprise the different learning outcomes that are expected for each five stages of learning progression. Indeed, the model of 'cineliteracy' defines five stages that represent what learners should be able to do, as they progress from more functional literacy, such as recognizing basic film techniques, to being able to interrogate production processes, the messages conveyed in films and how audiences interpret them. In the third chapter of *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*, David Buckingham also explains that these stages represent ages, going from stage one that corresponds to 5-7 years old until stage 5, which represents 16-18 years old. Through the three defined conceptual areas, films are not considered neutral or transparent reflections of reality but rather as media that are shaped by values and specific choices. Still in the same chapter, Buckingham particularly emphasizes the relevance of the conceptual area of Messages and

<sup>112</sup>British Film Institute (2000) *Moving Images in the Classroom*, 52-56.



Values, as this is where the connection to media education is the most apparent. In Message and Values, the learning outcomes revolve around being able to understand and notice films' messages, ideologies, and social and political contexts. For instance, at the end of stage 5, learners should be able to discuss ideological and political messages but also discuss the link there can be between aesthetic style and social and political meaning. This illustrates that films are well-thought-out, that they convey messages, and that some messages can be embedded in various techniques, including aesthetic style. Similarly, stage 3 aims to empower learners to be able to discuss representation and stereotypes in films, meanwhile stage 4 deals with the notions of propaganda and ideology, and guides learners to discuss and evaluate social and ideological messages that film productions can contain. Even at earlier stages in the conceptual area of Messages and Values, learners are already training their capacity to recognize and analyze messages and values that film vehiculate at stage 1, notably when they discuss different levels of realism and plot techniques such as flashback, and what meaning it can carry. At stage 2, they are introduced to censorship, age classification and the broadcasting 'watershed'. By doing this, these notions are discussed not only as regulations but also as ways of understanding the messages and values that society considers acceptable or unacceptable in media. Students could talk about who decides these limits, why they exist, and how they affect what audiences can watch. This would let them reflect on their own opinions and think about how such regulations shape the content and values shown in film.

However, even if the conceptual area of Messages and Values is the one where the link to media education is the most obvious, it does not mean that the two other conceptual areas are unrelated to media education perspectives. Indeed, the two other conceptual areas fall within the four critical concepts established in the United Kingdom's media education curriculum in the late 1980s. In his manifesto, Buckingham explains that these four critical concepts can be applied to all kinds of media, even to the most recent ones, as they deal with aspects present in all media, such as *media language*, *production*, *audience*, and *representation*.<sup>113</sup> For example, *media language* refers to the codes and conventions used to construct meaning, such as camera angles, editing techniques, or musical choices. As Buckingham explains for the case of Television, but it can also be applied to film, it is a medium that has its own set of languages to convey messages, such as verbal and written language, but also visual language and the language of sound. *Representation* concerns how people, events, and issues are selectively portrayed, often reflecting particular values or perspectives. *Production* highlights the

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<sup>113</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*.

economic, institutional, and technological conditions under which media are created, while the aspect of *audience* explores how different groups are targeted, addressed, and interpret media in diverse ways. This illustrates how the conceptual areas of The Language of Moving Image and Producers and Audience in the ‘cineliteracy’ model also deserve to be part of media education programs, as they help learners critically engage with not only what media communicate but also how and why they are made and received. This can be observed in the model of ‘cineliteracy’, in Producers and Audience, learners discuss the possibility of audiences having different interpretations, but also the relationship between producers and audiences. Throughout the five stages, learners also discuss aspects of film related to economy, profit, and institutions. All this echoes what Buckingham explains in *The Media Education Manifesto* regarding the critical concept of *production*, where he states that analyzing media production refers to examining “[...] the companies that buy and sell media, and how they make profit [...] and how media reach audiences, and the amount of choice and control audiences have.”<sup>114</sup> Finally, within the conceptual area of The Language of Moving Image, learners are expected to recognize various film features, which include music, shifts in location, actors, costume, and even performance. In this conceptual area, learners are expected to understand that film productions are constructed texts and that they rely on specific codes and conventions, which shape the messages and meanings they convey. For instance, at earlier stages, students should be able to reflect on the effects a certain sound can have on a sequence. As they progress, the learning outcomes become more refined and learners are expected to be able to both analyze and explain how film styles and narrative forms relate to authors, production context, and social and cultural context. Students should also be able to use terms such as ‘mainstream’ and ‘surrealist’ and provide examples that justify such classifications of moving image productions. All this aligns with what Buckingham explains in his manifesto regarding textual analysis, which is considered a fundamental dimension of media education pedagogy, as it allows for close and critical analysis of media language.

For these reasons, this model is a pertinent example of how film can be integrated into media education programs to foster reflection and critical thinking about moving image productions. Indeed, the model of ‘cineliteracy’ encourages learners to go further than simply identifying film features, and it can be considered a great foundation for media education to critically interrogate films’ messages and production processes. However, according to Buckingham, this model also presents some limitations, such as the mechanical sequence of

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<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, 61-62.

stages.<sup>115</sup> Organizing the learning outcomes by stages implies that all children develop in the same straight, predictable path, which favors certain critical judgments while overlooking others. In the previously mentioned third chapter, Buckingham also criticizes the fact that the BFI document considers the ‘cineliteracy’ model hypothetical and does not mention research in this area.<sup>116</sup> However, according to Buckingham, there has been research on these issues within many academic disciplines, which could have been mentioned in the model. Furthermore, as it can be observed in Figure 2, there are no concrete activities, which can be somewhat disconcerting because it lacks course content and defined examples to illustrate how these learning outcomes could be achieved. The guide, *Moving Images in the Classroom*, mentions the absence of concrete activities and justifies it by explaining that their objective was not to provide a syllabus or a curriculum, but rather “[...] a hypothetical model which some teachers, departments and schools may wish to use as a framework for discussion and reflection.”<sup>117</sup> The fact that the learning outcomes are well-detailed fill the gap that the lack of activities could have presented, since the details they provide make the model of ‘cineliteracy’ a valuable resource for media educators who would like to use it as a basis for their own curriculum.

### **3.2.1. Examples of Film-Based Media Education Programs**

Media education organizations around the world have developed curricula and workshops to discuss and analyze movies as a way to develop critical thinking and reflection. Such media educational initiatives notably uncover how films can present messages, stereotypes, and ideologies, and they consider films as resources that can be used to develop skills in media literacy, creativity, and social action. For instance, the Media Education Lab has developed a workshop called “Deconstructing Disney”, in which dialogue and reflection are promoted through seven activities around Disney Culture.<sup>118</sup>

The Media Education Lab, founded in 2003 by Renee Hobbs, is an online community dedicated to advancing media literacy through research, professional development, and global collaboration. The Lab is not a traditional physical institution, but it connects educators, researchers, and students worldwide who work together, intending to strengthen media literacy inside and outside the classroom. A key part of the Media Education Lab’s philosophy is its

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<sup>115</sup>David Buckingham, “Chapter Three of Media Education.”

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>117</sup>P. 51.

<sup>118</sup>The Media Education Lab. *Deconstructing Disney*. <https://mediaeducationlab.com/index.php/deconstructing-disney-0>

“create-to-learn” approach, which treats media production, such as making videos, podcasts, or digital stories, not only as creative expression but also as a powerful way to learn. To support this, the Lab offers an extensive range of resources, including lesson plans, books, workshops, and regular webinars on topics like copyright, smartphones, and more. All these resources are easily accessible on the Media Education Lab’s website, and most of them are available for free. However, some of them, for instance, published books are not free, but the Lab still has a variety of other available resources without paying. Some of the resources are available in languages other than English, and in the last few years, people working for the Media Education Lab have started to translate or propose more resources in varied languages. Indeed, since 2023, under the leadership of Executive Director Yonty Friesem, the Lab has continued to expand its international reach, working with educators across continents and building a vibrant global community committed to media literacy education.<sup>119</sup>

In February 2018, Renee Hobbs and Pam Steager presented their workshop “Deconstructing Disney”, which aims to consider Disney and its characters, brands, and films to debate and discuss them critically. Some of the learning goals focus on recognizing stereotypes and value messages embedded in Disney content. The workshop primarily targets teenagers and youth, as they are the main audience for Disney films and are most likely to be interested in discussing films they enjoy and that evoke nostalgia. Among the workshop’s learning outcomes are the ability to discuss the positive and negative aspects of Disney films, particularly regarding the value messages conveyed in entertainment, as well as to reflect on personal attitudes towards Disney, such as the comfort of childhood nostalgia. However, librarians and educators can also benefit from this workshop, gaining confidence to tackle the topic of Disney with learners and deepening their understanding of how critical questioning can enhance learning. As of today, the workshop’s material remains accessible for free on the Lab’s website, which provides both lesson plans and curriculum resources.<sup>120</sup> In order to illustrate how this workshop serves as a relevant example of using film, in this case Disney films, in media education, I have created a table outlining the workshop’s lesson plans, which carefully describes the guidelines for each of the seven activities.

<h2>Deconstructing Disney   Workshop Activities</h2>
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<sup>119</sup>The Media Education Lab. *What We Do*. <https://mediaeducationlab.com/about/what-we-do>

<sup>120</sup>The Media Education Lab. *Deconstructing Disney*.

*Set the stage by playing a montage of Disney films to activate prior knowledge. Then use one or more of the following activities to stimulate discussion and dialogue.*

### **1. Favorite Disney Characters (pair-share)**

*Who is your favorite character? Describe the character and explain why it's your favorite.*  
Take-away message: People interpret media messages differently and identification with characters is a key pleasure of the viewing experience.

### **2. The Disney Empire (lecture-discussion)**

*Review slides and then discuss: Should we be concerned about the scope of the Disney empire? Why or why not?* Take-away message: As the 2nd largest media company in the world, the Disney empire shapes people's experience of childhood, a profound power that comes with great social responsibility.

### **3. Disney Merchandising (discussion)**

*How many of us own something branded with a logo from the Disney empire? What kinds of feelings might be activating by owning and using Disney-branded products?* Take-away message: People buy branded merchandise for the pleasurable feelings, not the products themselves.

### **4. Close Analysis (viewing & discussion)**

*Select a Disney clip to analyze and use five questions to critically analyze the content and format:*

- *Who is the author and what is the purpose of this film?*
- *What techniques are used to attract and hold attention?*
- *What lifestyles, values and points of view are presented?*
- *How might different people interpret this message?*
- *What cultural knowledge is needed to support the interpretation of this message?*

Take-away message: Critically analyzing entertainment media helps reveal its values.

### **5. Four Corners with Character Cards (character card activity)**

*Each participant receives a character card and tries to explain the character to someone else. Trade cards with someone if you're not familiar with the character. Then identify four corners of the room with the categories: hero, villain, helper and victim. Participants move to the corner and explain why they've selected this category, noting similarities and*

*differences between the characters. Take-away message: Stereotypes are part of storytelling and may also influence how we see people in the real world.*

## **6. Question, Conflict or Meme (pair-share)**

*Using the character cards, describe the essential conflict of a Disney film to someone else. What is the primary question or conflict that the character faces? Alternate activity: compose a fun way to communicate your opinions of the conflict in the form of meme. Take-away message: Conflict is an essential element of storytelling and people may perceive narrative conflicts and themes differently.*

## **7. Walk The Line (activity)**

*Participants stand up and are shown an imaginary line that ranges from “strongly agree” to “no opinion” to “strongly disagree.” They move to a point on the line that represents their opinion each statement below is read aloud.*

- *Childhood would not be childhood without Disney films*
- *Disney is common culture - something we can all talk about and relate to*
- *Disney never strays from a simplistic formula*
- *Stereotypes never hurt anyone - they’ve always been part of storytelling*
- *The Disney empire is dangerous because they’re too dominant in our culture*
- *Disney, Inc. exploits the relationship between parents and children*

*Take-away message: People’s attitudes about Disney are based on a number of complex factors and it is important to respect and understand the wide range of attitudes that people have about this important part of our culture.*

Figure 3: A table of the seven activities from the Media Education Lab’s workshop entitled “Debunking Disney”<sup>121</sup>

As it can be seen in Figure 3, among the seven activities, some of them explicitly rely on Disney films, such as the fourth activity, which consists of analyzing film clips by answering the five key questions of media literacy. This activity precisely illustrates that films convey messages and ideologies, and that they can be analyzed in similar ways other types of media are analyzed. Indeed, this activity makes use of the five key questions of media literacy, and it is interesting to point out that they have been adapted to the specific activity. The last question, “*What cultural knowledge is needed to support the interpretation of this message?*”, replaces the usual fifth question, “*What is omitted?*” This adaptation reflects the workshop’s aim of not

<sup>121</sup>*Ibid.*

only analyzing the messages conveyed in Disney films but also exploring the cultural context required to interpret them. Other activities go beyond the analysis of specific scenes and consider diverse aspects, such as merchandizing and viewers' attitudes towards Disney, which can also be associated with how these films are received and perceived by their viewers. Through this set of engaging activities, participants develop their critical understanding of Disney films, as a form of moving image media, but also as mass media. According to Buckingham, media education also deals with enhancing critical understanding, which "[...] demands in-depth knowledge, rigorous analysis and careful study [...]"<sup>122</sup>, but also requires reflection on "[...] our personal uses of these media and our emotional investments in them [...]"<sup>123</sup>. This workshop enables participants to reflect on media that they already know, since most people have grown up with Disney movies, and through these activities, participants are asked to interrogate and reevaluate these familiar films. Another interesting aspect of "Deconstructing Disney" is that by using Disney films, it can target both youth and anyone who likes Disney, which can generate more engagement and interest, as it combines factors such as entertainment and nostalgia with media education purposes. This workshop begins with an introduction in which participants discuss, and as Buckingham explains in *The Media Education Manifesto*, "[...] beginning with student's existing knowledge, and with their own direct experience, is likely to prove much more engaging and effective."<sup>124</sup> The Media Education Lab, with this workshop, perfectly reaches up to develop a critical understanding, but it does not really lead to action, which, according to both Buckingham and Hobbs, taking action is part of media literacy's learning processes.<sup>125</sup> However, this workshop remains a relevant example of how films, here Disney films, can be used to develop media literacy, as it enables its participants to discuss and think critically about films as more than just entertainment, and rather as media that create meaning through storytelling, shape values, and require active questioning.<sup>126</sup>

Other organizations, such as Common Sense, emphasize the important role films play in fostering media literacy among youth. Common Sense is an American nonprofit organization founded in 2003 by Jim Steyer, an expert on issues related to children, education, and media and technology in the United States. Common Sense's goal is to provide parents and educators with information, resources, and education to help children navigate safely in today's digital

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<sup>122</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 6.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>125</sup>Renee Hobbs, "What is Media Literacy?," 5.

<sup>126</sup>The Media Education Lab. *Deconstructing Disney*.

world.<sup>127</sup> The website Common Sense offers comprehensive information and resources on media content, digital literacy, online safety, and parenting in the digital age. Lots of lessons and activities about various topics are provided, and there is also access to movie reviews and articles guiding parents and educators through different categories. Indeed, the website seems to accord an important interest in reviewing and rating films, but also apps, games, and books. The website advocates for positive media experiences for children and addresses issues present in young people's interconnected lives, such as excessive screen time, cyberbullying, and inappropriate content. Common Sense's target audience is large, and is not limited to only educators, but it also targets parents, who have a category of the website dedicated to them, where they can rate and review media, including films, podcasts, books, and more. A part of the website, which is called "Common Sense Education", is also dedicated to educators who are seeking tools and lessons that would be useful to guide youth in today's digital media landscape. By doing so, Common Sense is more inclusive, with a website that is accessible to different people, which enables education to not take place at school but also at home, thanks to the resources and information parents are provided with. In "Common Sense Education", educators have to sign in, which is free, to have access to a variety of lessons and activities dealing with various topics related to media and technology. The website tries to be more accessible, offering free lessons and even a version in Spanish of the website for the part dedicated to parents. However, as of today, the part dedicated to educators is not available in Spanish, but that could change in the future, since individuals at Common Sense seem to be interested in making their website accessible to various audiences.

In 2024, the website Common Sense elaborated a list of 25 films that can be used to "[...] boost media literacy skills."<sup>128</sup> These films have been carefully selected to support media literacy discussions, as some chosen films cover diverse elements of media literacy. Questions are also developed to allow for critical discussions about these films, such as questions regarding ethics, representation, creation, and media. Among the selected films, some of them are documentaries dealing with topics that are deeply related to media education, such as artificial intelligence, social media, and misinformation. However, in this list, there are also movies like Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* (2021) and Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998), which are used to discuss, on one hand, authentic representation in media and on the other hand, reality shows and advertising. To illustrate the kind of questions used during

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<sup>127</sup>Common Sense. <https://www.commonsense.org/>

<sup>128</sup>Christine Elgersma, "25 Movies to Discuss Media Literacy," *Common Sense Education*. (2024) <https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/25-movies-to-discuss-media-literacy>



discussion and to examine their relevance to media educational perspectives, the following table has been developed.

<p><i>West Side Story</i> (2021)</p>	<p><b>Discussion Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The original version, made in 1960, had White actors playing people from Puerto Rico. In what ways does it make a difference that the 2021 version features more Latino actors? Why does it matter to have authentic representation in media?</i></li> <li>• <i>What other changes did you notice between the versions? Why do you think Spielberg made those changes?</i></li> <li>• <i>Do you think they serve a purpose? Why or why not?</i></li> <li>• <i>If the movie were set today, how do you think the internet and social media would have changed the story?</i></li> </ul>
<p><i>The Truman Show</i> (1998)</p>	<p><b>Discussion Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How is the TV show in the movie paid for? Have you seen this kind of advertising in other places?</i></li> <li>• <i>How are reality shows similar to and different from the Truman Show that people are watching in the movie? What's real and not real?</i></li> <li>• <i>It seems like some characters watching Truman have a hard time disconnecting from the show. Do you ever feel that way about any kind of media?</i></li> </ul>

Figure 4: A table containing two examples of discussion questions for two films from the list of 25 Movies to Discuss Media Literacy<sup>129</sup>

As Elgersma explains, this movie list can be valuable for educators “looking to cover particular facets of media literacy, showing a movie (or selected clips) while encouraging active viewing is a great way to get those discussions going.”<sup>130</sup> The questions are interesting to develop critical thinking around films, which are not considered mere entertainment media. For example, the first question about *West Side Story* (2021) addresses points that are common in media education, such as the fact that films. In this question, both versions of *West Side Story* are compared, the one from Steven Spielberg that got released in 2021, and the original version produced by Jerome Robbins and Robert Wise in 1961. The question aims to discuss representation and how it has changed through time, which would make learners reflect on historical and contextual contexts. As the question makes clear, the actors chosen to portray

<sup>129</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*

Puerto Rican characters, notably Natalie Wood and George Chakiris, were White people, erasing authentic representation by excluding Latino actors from these roles. This question can create a debate around representation and the role of films in addressing the right representation on screen. This kind of question is even more relevant today, with all the backlash on social media about the actress cast as Ariel in Disney's live-action film, Rob Marshall's *the Little Mermaid* (2023)<sup>131</sup>, and more recently, about the actress portraying the role of Snow White in Disney's 2025 live-action remake, as both actresses were women of color rather than white.<sup>132</sup> The rest of the questions from the discussion around this film enable educators to guide the conversation with learners, as they ask if they notice other changes in Steven Spielberg's version and also interrogate the purpose of the changes the director has made. This example of discussion questions illustrates how media education and films can be connected to discuss messages, stereotypes, and values present in media productions. The second example I have selected from the list of 25 films is Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998), a film about a man who ignores that he is living in a reality TV show. The questions around this film may seem less related to media education, as they do not address misrepresentation or stereotypes in media, which tend to be what would come first to mind when thinking about the use of film in media education. However, the questions are still pertinent in a media education context, the film serves as a point of discussion about learners' use of media, using the story of Truman Burbank as an example of how hard it can be to disconnect from media. By doing so, the discussion focuses on young people's own media experiences and could address important topics of media education, such as media addiction, dependency, and the challenge of distinguishing media from real life. Other questions still address representation, though less explicitly than in the discussion questions about *West Side Story*, as they encourage discussion about how the film portrays reality television programs and how accurate this portrayal is, helping learners critically reflect on media representations. The same applies to the question asking whether learners have encountered this kind of advertising before, as it allows them to compare the film with reality.

These types of discussion questions are essential to activate young people's critical thinking and prevent them from watching films passively without thinking about what they encompass. The list of 25 movies is a good example of how film could be used to enhance

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<sup>131</sup>Tayo Bero, "The global backlash against The Little Mermaid proves why we needed a Black Ariel," *The Guardian*, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/jun/09/the-little-mermaid-global-backlash-black-ariel>.

<sup>132</sup>Olivia B. Waxman, "Why Disney's *Snow White* Remake Is Creating Controversy," *TIME*, 2025, <https://time.com/7267440/snow-white-disney-rachel-zegler-gal-gadot/>.

children and teenagers' critical thinking, helping them to become more media-literate individuals. However, while these questions are effective, they still lack depth and could be expanded deeper to foster richer learning outcomes. Indeed, incorporating a greater variety of activities or different types of questions, such as questions involving creativity and critical thinking, could make the list more complete. These questions still remain a good basis for educators who want to address these films, or certain topics, and they are free to address them the way they would like, which could lead to more dynamic and critical discussions.

Similarly, the Media & Learning Association (MLA), a nonprofit association cofounded by the European Union, promotes the use of audiovisual media to develop critical digital skills.<sup>133</sup> Also known as the MEDEA, the Media & Learning Association was established in 2012 under Belgian Law, with the mission to improve innovation, creativity, and media literacy skills through the use of media and digital technologies. Individuals and organizations, including universities, school networks, and ministries of education work together to use media effectively for learning at all levels of formal and informal education, sharing good practices, developing media and digital literacy strategies, and encouraging new ways of teaching through media tools and resources. Through its activities, which include the annual Media & Learning Conference, online workshops, the MEDEA Awards, and active participation in European projects, the association fosters collaboration and provides resources on topics such as media literacy, extended reality, and artificial intelligence in education.

In an article available on the Media & Learning Association, Andrea DeGett highlights her work on Media Literacy through Filmmaking, emphasizing how creating films helps learners understand and critically engage with media.<sup>134</sup> According to her, media literacy skills can be gained through the process of creation. This approach—considering creation as essential to developing media literacy—is common in the field of media education. Indeed, “to create” is also one of media literacy’s learning processes, as Hobbs explains it in the first chapter of *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*.<sup>135</sup> Andrea DeGett explains that there is a vocabulary of film narrative and that it must adapt to technological changes, for then being “[...] added to the tenets of Media Literacy Through Filmmaking.”<sup>136</sup> As Buckingham suggests in his Manifesto, creative production provides “[...] a space to reflect on the personal and emotional

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<sup>133</sup>The Media & Learning Association. <https://media-and-learning.eu/>

<sup>134</sup>Andrea DeGett, “Media Literacy through Filmmaking,” *Media & Learning*, 2024, <https://media-and-learning.eu/subject/ar-vr/media-literacy-through-filmmaking/>.

<sup>135</sup>Hobbs, “What is Media Literacy?” 5.

<sup>136</sup>DeGett, “Media Literacy through Filmmaking.”

dimensions of media use”<sup>137</sup> and through this process, “[...] some of the most complex and challenging learning can take place.”<sup>138</sup> DeGett’s view on filmmaking and creation as ways to gain media literacy skills thus aligns with Buckingham’s idea that combining creation and reflection deepens students’ critical understanding. She also adds that “[...] media literacy via digital creation forces the awareness of a writer, camera, editing, text, music, etc. into the creator’s present and future.”<sup>139</sup>

This example cannot be analyzed like the two others I have selected because this workshop is not published yet, nor is it accessible at the moment I write this work. Andrea DeGett presented her program “Media Literacy Through Filmmaking” at the 2024 International Media Literacy Research Symposium, a conference that takes place every two years, as she explains on the International Council for Media Literacy.<sup>140</sup> However, I still decided to introduce it because it had a different approach than both previous examples of how media education can make use of filmmaking to enhance learners’ media literacy skills. From the premises of this workshop, it can be observed that DeGett’s goal with her future program is to demonstrate how creating media can be the key to becoming media literate. Indeed, she explains that the “[...] act of writing, shooting, editing, producing, directing, [...] scripting, [...] all demonstrate the process by which the student creating the work will comprehend how the media came to be.”<sup>141</sup> According to DeGett, through filmmaking, students will learn about the construction of their media productions and will, then, be able to assign that same construction to media that they consume. Similar views are shared by Buckingham, who explains in *The Media Education Manifesto*, that “[...] it is in creative production that some of the most complex and challenging learning can take place.”<sup>142</sup> He also explains that creative media production has been celebrated but also doubted by some advocates of Media Studies. Indeed, some people consider that activities involving students producing their own media is not productive, and that students would just copy mainstream media forms. However, Buckingham explains that, even if students might create media inspired by dominant media forms, they are still learning from them, as they “[...] play with them and use them for their own purposes.”<sup>143</sup> Another positive aspect of creative work is that it tends to interest students more than more

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<sup>137</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 73.

<sup>138</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup>Andrea DeGett, “Media Literacy through Filmmaking.”

<sup>140</sup>International Council for Media Literacy. <https://ic4ml.org/about-us/>

<sup>141</sup>Andrea DeGett, “Media Literacy Through Filmmaking: International Media Literacy Research Symposium 2024,” *International Council for Media Literacy*, 2024, <https://ic4ml.org/journal-article/media-literacy-through-filmmaking-international-media-literacy-research-symposium-2024/>.

<sup>142</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 73.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*

traditional critical analysis exercises. According to Buckingham, media production should also involve reflection on the personal and emotional dimensions of media use, as well as critical analysis. This can be challenging but having more distanced critical reflection must be part of the process to make creative work activities more valuable in media education pedagogy.<sup>144</sup> For these reasons, DeGett's program might become, in the future, a relevant example of how media literacy skills can be achieved through filmmaking. Her ideas align with Buckingham and with other media educators who believe in the potential that production represents for media education.

These three instances of resources demonstrate that films are used within media education, and that they can serve as powerful tools to develop critical thinking, creativity, and social awareness. There are other examples of workshops and curricula that make use of films to help learners become more media literate. The use of films to promote media literacy can take different approaches, as it can be seen through these examples. Some focus on analyzing and deconstructing films to understand stereotypes and embedded messages, while others emphasize the process of creation as a way to deeply engage with media. Indeed, depending on the activities, films can help learners question representation, explore ethical issues, reflect on their own media consumption, and even learn technical skills.

### **3.2.2. Integrating Media Education into Film Education**

Although the close link between media education and film education seems evident and logical to many scholars, it does not mean that media education is implemented in film studies. Indeed, in 2022, Alexis Romero Walker published an article entitled "A more equitable film pedagogy: Including media literacy in higher education film classrooms to result in better media practitioners", in which she criticizes the minimal convergence of theory and practice within film education.<sup>145</sup> Romero Walker thinks that it has to change and that media literacy should be implemented in film education for future filmmakers to be more media literate. She considers that it is crucial for filmmakers to be media literate in order to ensure diversity, inclusion, and good representation in film productions. According to her, higher education films remain biased as students are taught "[...] an age-old set of skills that do not engage in critical analysis."<sup>146</sup> This is where media education approaches should be considered, as they allow for critically analyzing theories and methods used in film education. Integrating media education within film education could be the key to interrogating political and ideological messages and values that

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<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup>Alexis Romero Walker, "A More Equitable Film Pedagogy," 153-167.

<sup>146</sup>*Ibid.*, 153.

are present in film, but also in the way moving images are created. Romero Walker insists that even if practitioners are technically competent, it does not mean they are media-literate practitioners, as some of their technical skills can be the source of potential biases. This aligns with what Buckingham explains in his manifesto regarding the relevance of four different aspects, including media language, production, audience, and representation, to think critically and reflect on film within media education.<sup>147</sup> Indeed, drawing from his insights into film language, such as the codes and techniques used in film production, this media educational approach equips future filmmakers and students with the necessary critical thinking skills to stop passively continuing to use practical methods that involve underlying biases and ideological problems.

In her article, Romero Walker argues that developing media literacy skills could be the solution to avoid repeating constructions that are accepted in film theory, which sometimes are discriminatory and problematic. She explains that film theory closely followed the widespread diffusion of moving images in society and introduced modes of film language. As it has previously been explained in 3.2., film language refers to “[...] organizational techniques adopted and used in the cinema for years.”<sup>148</sup> According to her, undergraduate film programs in the US still rely on codes, such as shot composition and placement, that are accepted and used in Hollywood cinema, yet sometimes, deeply rooted in classical Western film theory that reinforces systems of exclusion. These long-accepted techniques are not neutral and can contain prejudices, which should be addressed and questioned. For instance, she points out how some lighting techniques, such as the three-point lighting, do not work well for all skin colors, and favors only light skin tones, yet this technique is still a widely taught standard in film education.<sup>149</sup> This is when media education would be relevant to address traditional techniques that pose problems but still continue to be taught. Romero Walker explains that discussions regarding the implications of these techniques are rare in high education classrooms, and that when critical media literacy is considered, it often occurs after content has been produced. She thinks that media literacy discussions should take place at earlier stages than after the production stage itself. For instance, these discussions could happen when the educators introduce traditional techniques or during the production process. By doing so, it would allow for reflecting on traditional techniques and ways in which students can be more inclusive as filmmakers.

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<sup>147</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*.

<sup>148</sup>Alexis Romero Walker, “A More Equitable Film Pedagogy,” 155.

<sup>149</sup>*Ibid.*, 157-158.

Romero Walker suggests that this could be achieved by integrating contemporary film theories in skill courses, since their implementation could disrupt the potential discrimination lying in some filmmaking techniques. Contemporary film theories examine how certain people have been marginalized and misrepresented due to traditional film language. Several examples of contemporary film theories are mentioned in Romero Walker's article, such as Mulvey's male gaze theory, which she defines as a "[...] mainstream popular cinematography [...] inherently masculine."<sup>150</sup> The male gaze theory refers to how women on screen are objectified and sexualized by the way they are filmed. Romero Walker, drawing on Laura Mulvey, explains that the male gaze "[...] emphasizes that film has a defined language – in this case to objectify and gaze at the female on screen – representing a particular group unfairly."<sup>151</sup> According to her, by showing and explaining to students what the male gaze is, educators can help them avoid reproducing technical methods that reinforce it. She adds that this is also a way to explore techniques related to point of view, while encouraging critical reflection and discussion on how women are represented by men in cinema, which should not be overlooked.

Romero Walker also thinks that heteronormative storytelling should be addressed, notably Michael Green's critique of heteronormativity in screenwriting. By doing so, it allows for considering screenwriting, another essential aspect of filmmaking that shapes how stories and characters are developed. She explains that screenwriting is often where the most biases and stereotypes emerge, which is why integrating media literacy into screenwriting classrooms is crucial. Although biases and misrepresentations continue to be present in cinema narratives, screenwriting classrooms still overlook media literacy approaches, which could help learners create more inclusive and authentic portrayals.<sup>152</sup>

All of Romero Walker's suggestions regarding how media education could be useful in higher film education can be supported by what Renee Hobbs wrote in *Media Literacy in Action*. In the first chapter of her book, entitled "What is Media Literacy", Renee Hobbs dives into the topic of messages and meanings, but also representation and realities, which are central in media education.<sup>153</sup> She explains that when analyzing messages, it also entails analyzing production techniques. The creation and the interpretation of symbols are what shape the meaning of productions. According to Hobbs, the very form of communication has its own production techniques that attract and hold audience attention. For instance, each film depends

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<sup>150</sup>Laura Mulvey (1980) in Alexis Romero Walker, "A More Equitable Film Pedagogy," 157.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup>Romero Walker, "A More Equitable Film Pedagogy," 158.

<sup>153</sup>Hobbs, "What is Media Literacy?" 26.

on various elements, such as dialogue, characters, and special effects, which the filmmaker chooses carefully to reach the intended narrative storytelling. After illustrating the correlation between media messages and production techniques, Renee Hobbs also adds that media messages contain “[...] values, ideology, and specific points of view”.<sup>154</sup> She even says that, despite trying to be unbiased and more neutral, every media creation will contain the creator’s point of view and values. This is why reflecting on technical practices is important in order to avoid discrimination and stereotypes that could result from them, which is what Romero Walker advocates for in this article.

### 3.3. The Medio-Pragmatic Approach

In the book *De L’enseignement du cinema à l’éducation aux medias: Trajets théoriques et perspectives pédagogiques*, Barbara Laborde, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Media at Sorbonne Nouvelle University, introduces what she calls the medio-pragmatic approach.<sup>155</sup> It is an approach she considers essential to broaden film education to encompass media education, developing critical thinking and media literacy competencies, which are “[...] intended for encouraging and defining the challenges of taking a critical and theoretical distance from the social and cultural environment.”<sup>156</sup> Her book is divided into three chapters, which are necessary to reach the medio-pragmatic approach she proposes in her work.

The first chapter discusses what she considers the notions of “cinéma”, “média” and “médium”, which I have adapted and summarized in the first chapter of my dissertation, in the section entitled “1.5. Media”. She explains that traditional definitions of cinema need to be interrogated, since the term cinema can be confused with “[...] other media, disrupting usages that extend to an entire socio-technical and economic universe.”<sup>157</sup> For this reason, Barbara Laborde suggests redefining cinema considering both “médium” and “média” notions, which contribute to reporting socio-technical changes, for instance, the shift from cinema screens to phone screens, as well as new economic contexts, such as streaming companies like Netflix that continuously broadcast content but also produce their own new content. Distinguishing “médium” and “média” when discussing cinema helps to address the historical, technological, and pragmatic transformations that unsettle many discourses around cinema.

The second chapter of her book examines diverse assumptions surrounding the exclusive view of cinema as a form of art, a reductive vision that Barbara Laborde contests

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<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> Laborde, *De l’enseignement du cinéma à l’éducation aux médias*.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 81, (My translation).

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 21, (My translation).



because it can have pedagogical consequences. While she does not deny that cinema is a form of art, she deplores the tendency to judge the quality of a production on the basis of its author, which overlooks the role of the spectators. According to her, the education sector also tends to privilege this discourse instead of introducing the notions of “médium” and “média”, since some consider that there is a potential risk of diminishing productions’ artistic value. Through the different postulates she identifies in this chapter, Laborde demonstrates that intellectuals and artists continue considering cinema superior to productions vehiculated by other media, such as radio, television, and even the internet. In this chapter, Barbara Laborde criticizes this too-narrow conception of cinema education, which persists even in some programs that seek to bring film education closer to media education. She argues that broadening the teaching of cinema to encompass media education is often considered a means of protecting against the dangers of media. According to Laborde, such considerations neglect the fact that spectators are not only passive and manipulated individuals. Indeed, she interrogates the place of the audience, whom she considers active since they are not just watching film productions, they also construct the meaning of what they are watching, in function of various aspects, such as their knowledge, their culture, their socio-technical environments, and personal experiences.<sup>158</sup>

The third chapter, which is the one that will be closely analyzed, advocates for a medio-pragmatic approach, which “aims to spread out the pedagogical perspectives offered by cinema defined as “média” and “médium”, and encourages a fruitful shift from the teaching of cinema as art education to the teaching of cinema as media education.”<sup>159</sup> Indeed, from the beginning of her book, Barbara Laborde makes it clear that she believes that there could be an intricate connection between cinema and media education. She explains that it is, actually, the hypothesis of a possible convergence between the teaching of cinema and media education that is at the origin of this work, “[...] on the condition that a certain number of representations are questioned and that the hypothesis of new forms of cinephilia is proposed.”<sup>160</sup> The medio-pragmatic approach proposed by Barbara Laborde for teaching cinema reconsiders cinema not primarily as an art form, but as audiovisual content that has become labile in the digital environment.<sup>161</sup> This approach leads to teaching about cinema through the key concepts of media education, while maintaining a distinction between “médium” and “média”, which correspond to the concepts of language, representation, and meaning effects, as well as the ones

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<sup>158</sup>*Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 17-18. (My translation)

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, 44. (My translation)

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.

of industry, technique, and audiences, all situated within a given socio-economic context of media reception. The medio-pragmatic approach examines how both “média” and “médium” shape audiovisual content, and how audiovisual content also influences “media” and “médium”.

The medio-pragmatic approach consists of analyzing audiovisual productions through three dynamics, including the audiovisual production itself, the modalities of its framing, and its reception. This approach cannot be considered entirely new, as Barbara Laborde explains, previous theories had already discussed similar ideas before her. The medio-pragmatic approach is not about “[...] establishing a discipline, but rather opening up questions and, [...] framing them within an educational project, [...] with the aim to teach and transmit knowledge and skills.”<sup>162</sup> Indeed, this approach allows for questions regarding film’s place in culture, various techniques, audience and producers, but also institutions and industries.

Barbara Laborde explains that the medio-pragmatic approach “[...] is constantly reflexive and opens up pedagogical perspectives that are richer than the assertion of a single, immanent meaning.”<sup>163</sup> According to her, the medio-pragmatic approach involves acquiring knowledge and competencies. She explains that her approach can “[...] find its relevance based on the competencies that would be assigned to teaching cinema as a “medium”,”<sup>164</sup> aligning with media education’s ambitions. Barbara Laborde defines four competencies that the medio-pragmatic approach can develop regarding cinema. The first one is called “technical competency” and involves gaining technical, or “functional” skills, by analyzing films. According to her, not everyone knows how a film is made, and it is important to consider growing social inequalities, as well as gender inequalities, which impact practices and representations. She considers that it is the role of educational institutions to reduce the gaps in technical skills that can be applied to audiovisual content. Barbara Laborde also highlights a relevant debate, which is whether it is required to understand how films are made to be able to watch and understand film production. The second competency, called “critical competency”, encourages what Buckingham calls a “web evaluation”.<sup>165</sup> This competency examines various aspects, including the context of diffusion, the socio-technical dimension, and the factors influencing its reception. It entails examining the economic dimensions of “média” and “médium” in order to help learners understand the political, economic, and social contexts that shape audiovisual content and the ways in which this content adapts to them. This critical

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<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, 72. (My translation)

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, 77. (My translation)

<sup>164</sup>*Ibid.*, 80. (My translation)

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, 83.

competency also involves understanding concepts such as copyright and age restriction, which the medio-pragmatic approach facilitates. The third competency is called “reading competency” and also considers cinema with the double notions of “média” and “médium”. This competency specifically refers to taking into consideration representations, conventions, and codes present in film, from a semiological, historical, sociological, or aesthetic perspective, depending on the specified perspective. The “competency of reception” is the last one and focuses on “[...] delimiting the role of the receiver in the production of meaning to lead each learner to ask themselves [...]”<sup>166</sup> who they are as a spectator, as well as who the intended audience is, and how and why. This competency involves understanding the concept of reception and what a film can convey depending on the media vehicle through which it is delivered.<sup>167</sup>

These competencies encompass several areas of study, including “média”, “médium”, meaning effects, and the pragmatic dimension. The first area deals with the economic, political, and legal dimensions of cinema as a “média”. The medio-pragmatic approach makes it possible to examine the economic environments of audiovisual content, as well as taking into account both “média” and “médium” aspects. This first axis addresses key concepts such as copyright, production, professional roles and their status, distribution, and the economics of cinema, along with its current transformations. As an example for this axis, Barbara Laborde proposes an analysis of the marketing strategy for *House of Cards*, which tackles, for instance, the management of temporality, brand logic, and integration into social media. She explains that the medio-pragmatic approach allows for the analysis of all these aspects, as well as the product placement in the series with the game Monument Valley, which boosted its sales. Another point of interest for learners could be the algorithm used by Netflix for this series to analyze the audience’s viewing habits and thus influence the choice of cast and director. These reflections enabled by the medio-pragmatic approach raise questions about the use of these strategies in the creative industries, such as “Are they an obstacle to free creation?” or “What place can the viewer have in this scheme?”, which are questions that connect film education to media education.<sup>168</sup>

The second area focuses on the ‘médium’ and opens up questions regarding audiovisual content, more specifically questions addressing its support, its format, and its modes of distribution.<sup>169</sup> Here, learners are perceived as situated viewers, whose reception of film and

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<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*, 83. (My translation)

<sup>167</sup>*Ibid.*, 83-84.

<sup>168</sup>*Ibid.*, 91-92.

<sup>169</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

series depends on their environment and personal experiences. This axis of the medio-pragmatic approach combines a socio-technical perspective on uses with a reflection on the users, considering how content can circulate, be displaced, and relocated, which can modify their meaning. According to Laborde, going back to their original version allows for a better understanding of the audiovisual content as well as their reception. This study and analysis of such media migrations constitutes a form of media education that is coupled with “[...] an understanding of the aesthetic, technical, economic, and social issues surrounding audiovisual content and its “médiums”.”<sup>170</sup> The example Barbara Laborde provides for this axis considers observing the viral spread of film content in GIF format. A GIF can not only emphasize and caricature certain scenes but also change their original meaning.<sup>171</sup> Within this axis, the medio-pragmatic approach involves looking back at the source material in order to better understand the content and its meaning.

The third axis focuses on analyzing discourse rather than making aesthetic judgments or assessing “good taste,” which brings out the effects of meaning. The effects of meaning can be studied through audiovisual analysis similar to film analysis, drawing on various theoretical approaches such as semiology, narratology, and Cultural Studies, as well as tools from cognitive science and social psychology to understand how viewers receive and interpret messages. The medio-pragmatic approach shifts the focus from cinema as art to cinema as discourse. Indeed, Barbara Laborde explains that the emphasis in both theory and pedagogy should be on communication when it is studied as discourse, rather than on what is considered good taste in film. According to Laborde, studying discourse and its reception, while considering the audience, does not mean “neglecting the work” itself, nor does it diminish its importance.<sup>172</sup> Barbara Laborde uses stereotypes as a concrete example to show how cinema has changed from being an art to being a discourse. The study of stereotypes in audiovisual content through the medio-pragmatic approach involves, for instance, identifying them and the power relations they reflect, understanding where they come from and their evolution, as well as placing them in a specific socio-historical context.<sup>173</sup> In this axis, Barbara Laborde also integrates the dimension of entertainment into cinema studies, which is often linked to popular culture and taken less seriously. The aim would be to consider cinema on several dimensions, including the aesthetic, formal, and discursive dimensions, without forgetting the one of entertainment. This involves

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<sup>170</sup>*Ibid.*, 95. (My translation)

<sup>171</sup>*Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>172</sup>*Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>173</sup>*Ibid.*, 105.

choosing works based on the pleasure they bring to learners, adapting curricula to popular successes, and making use of film analysis to understand how a film can address ethical issues while being entertaining. Therefore, the role of the medio-pragmatic approach would be to “[...] engage with popular audiovisual productions, without discrimination, and analyze them with the same tools that are used to analyze more legitimate works.”<sup>174</sup>

The fourth, and last axis of the medio-pragmatic approach focuses on the audience and their reception, with an emphasis on the communities and cultural factors that shape how a work is received. From this perspective, the viewer is not seen as a passive consumer but an active, participatory, and critical agent who navigates a media environment in which the exchange and confrontation of opinions influence the meaning of cultural works.<sup>175</sup> In this axis, Barbara Laborde makes clear the connection between media education and her medio-pragmatic approach, which aims to “[...] enable learners to participate in public debate, while also understanding that it is the media that provide them with the main body of information available to them [...]”<sup>176</sup> The analysis of reception, whether based on online forums, social media, or platforms like IMDb, Allociné, and SensCritique, reveals the co-construction of meaning, the relativity of judgments, and the identity representations they convey. For example, Barbara Laborde suggests comparing audience reactions to Philippe de Chauveron’s *Qu’est-ce qu’on a fait au Bon Dieu?*, a French comedy that provoked very distinct opinions, or analyzing critical responses in France and the United States to Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano’s *Intouchables*, which illustrates how cultural factors can influence interpretation.<sup>177</sup> This axis makes learners reflect on why they give a certain meaning to a text, but also on the communities of meaning they do identify with or do not. Analyzing the circulation of opinions entails the exploration of these dynamics and encourages critical thinking about the connections between cultural consumption, social context, and civic engagement.

## Chapter 4: The Case of Artificial Intelligence in Media education

### 4.1. Introduction

Since this work examines films generated by generative artificial intelligence from a media educational perspective, it is necessary to address how media education and AI have been

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<sup>174</sup>*Ibid.*, 101. (My translation)

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, 107-108.

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*, 107. (My translation)

<sup>177</sup>*Ibid.*, 109-113.

connected in recent years. Indeed, artificial intelligence has been at the center of media educational discussions and curricula, making it essential to first explore the intersection of AI and media education before turning to the specific case of AI-generated films, which is the focus of this work. This connection is significant, as AI is increasingly shaping how media is produced, distributed, and experienced.

In this chapter, I will follow a similar approach to the one adopted in the previous chapter. I will begin by examining how the topic of artificial intelligence has been integrated into media education and how educators aim to help learners understand this new and constantly evolving technology. Media education plays a fundamental role in a context where artificial intelligence appears in various sectors, including classrooms and professional environments. Media education can be the key to equipping individuals to navigate the complexities of artificial intelligence and foster critical thinking about how this technology could be used responsibly. To do so, I will use a chapter from *The Handbook of Media Education Research*, which explains the different stages of media education, with a focus on media education 3.0, where artificial intelligence is one of the technologies challenging the field.<sup>178</sup> I will also draw on Buckingham's media educational approach to artificial intelligence, which he develops on his blog, and on Selin Akgun and Christine Greenhow's article, which addresses ethical challenges of AI in education and how media education curricula are necessary to enhance critical thinking, understanding, and reflection on AI.<sup>179</sup>

Finally, I will explore three examples of curricula dealing with artificial intelligence in order to illustrate how media educational activities can be useful to empower learners to think and reflect critically on this new technology. This will be done in a similar way to Chapter 4, where I have described instances of media educational resources that make use of film to develop media literacy skills.

## **4.2. Understanding and Integrating AI in Media Education**

In the chapter "Media Education 3.0? How Big Data, Algorithm, and AI Redefine Media Education" from *The Handbook of Media Education Research*, Grzegorz Ptaszek explains how media education is a field that has gone through different phases of development since the 1980s, which marks the beginning of its first phase.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, this chapter quotes Masterman,

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<sup>178</sup>Grzegorz Ptaszek, "Media education 3.0? How Big Data, Algorithms, and AI Redefine Media Education," in *The Handbook of Media Education Research*, ed. Divina Frau-Meigs et al. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 229-238, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119166900.ch21>.

<sup>179</sup>Selin Akgun and Christine Greenhow, "Artificial intelligence in education: Addressing ethical challenges in K-12 settings," *AI Ethics* 2, 431-440 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-021-00096-7>

<sup>180</sup>Ptaszek, "Media education 3.0?"

who said in 1989 that “[...] media education is committed to the principle of continuous change”<sup>181</sup> and must adapt continuously to these technological and social changes as well as to new media and all that they encompass. Media education, therefore, can be considered through three distinct stages, including media education 1.0, media education 2.0, and media education 3.0, which are all shaped by the media and technological and social contexts of their time. The first phase of media education principally focuses on mass media, and among the dominant media of that time could be found television, radio, and print. Media education 1.0 was influenced by critics of modern society and culture, such as Foucault, McLuhan, Adorno, and many others, whose ideas “[...] have laid the foundation for a critical analysis of media transmission and the media environment as a whole.”<sup>182</sup> This first phase of development aimed to help individuals think critically about the media and its reception. Its main goal was to help uncover the hidden meanings of media messages and understand the importance of context, which includes understanding who creates media messages and why, and reflecting on how the recipients’ attitudes can affect the way they interpret media. Media education 2.0 was marked by the democratization of the internet, going from Web 1.0, which was mostly static, to Web 2.0 in the early 2000s, which was more participatory. This second phase of development, which enabled participation, “[...] had the potential to facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge as well as undermining hierarchical social, cultural, and political control of information flows.”<sup>183</sup> The beginning of the twenty-first century saw not only the internet growing and new media practices related to active participation appearing, such as unlimited self-expression, but also information and communication technologies evolving, notably with the emergence of social media. Due to all these changes, media education had to be reconceptualized to be able to understand and discuss young people’s experiences and use of digital media and new communication technologies. To do so, media education 2.0 had to extend “[...] their interests into new forms (the internet, mobile phones, video games, and mobile devices), new sources of information (search engines, blogs) and new social and economic issues (identity and anonymity, privacy, and surveillance).”<sup>184</sup> Finally, the latest and current evolution of media education, known as media education 3.0, is a response to Web 3.0, an internet phase driven by algorithms, artificial intelligence, and Big Data, which actively shape what users see, read, and even think. These new technologies impact today’s media-

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<sup>181</sup>*Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid.*, 232.

<sup>183</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>184</sup>*Ibid.*, 234.

saturated society but also change how individuals access information, challenging media education to adapt to these shifts. Media education 3.0 aims to guide individuals in critically engaging with the algorithmic media ecosystem, which notably includes how platforms collect and use data, filter information, and influence behavior, such as surveillance capitalism, profiling, and computational propaganda. Ptaszek explains that this new stage of media education “[...] continues the longer traditions of media education [...],”<sup>185</sup> but it also adds many challenges, such as how algorithms shape both the control and circulation of information and content, as well as their impact on research, creativity, learning, and identity. As it was the case in previous stages, media education emphasizes the importance of analyzing production, ideology, and representation, and in media education 3.0, this can also be applied to “[...] the new media context—an environment managed by algorithms, but populated by humans.”<sup>186</sup> Indeed, media education 3.0 emphasizes developing algorithmic literacy, which entails understanding how these systems work, and helping learners to critically think about challenges, such as misinformation, biased content, and the hidden influence of algorithms.

In media education 3.0, as it has been explained in the previous paragraph, artificial intelligence is challenging the field, which needs to adapt itself to this new technology and what it encompasses. In his blog, David Buckingham wrote “Artificial Intelligence in Education: A Media Education Approach”, a blog post in which he discusses the potential implications of artificial intelligence for the media and media educators.<sup>187</sup> In the first part of his blog post, Buckingham explains how AI “[...] is already widespread in many arenas: image recognition software, search engines, file-sharing platforms and retailers’ ‘recommender’ systems [...],”<sup>188</sup> Buckingham then explains, in his blog post, that he wants to focus on the specific case of generative artificial intelligence. He begins by explaining that he has noted different reactions towards GenAI, with individuals who celebrate this new technology and all the possibilities it brings, meanwhile others think that generative artificial intelligence is a danger for education, since students can cheat more easily or even plagiarize without being caught. Buckingham also goes through other different issues and fears beyond the ones associated with education, which include, for instance, job losses, deepfakes, cheating, data theft, algorithmic bias, and environmental consequences. The second part of his blog answers the following question: “*How might media educators respond to these developments?*” The question is deeply related

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<sup>185</sup>*Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>186</sup>*Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>187</sup>David Buckingham, “Artificial Intelligence in Education: A Media Education Approach,” *David Buckingham*, 2023, <https://davidbuckingham.net/2023/05/27/artificial-intelligence-in-education-a-media-education-approach/>.

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.*



to this chapter, which aims to examine how media education could be necessary to empower individuals to discuss and reflect critically on artificial intelligence. According to Buckingham, media education does not need to drastically change its approaches but rather extend its key concepts to the case of GenAI. He draws a parallel with social media, explaining that the arrival of AI, like social media before it, brings new curriculum content while still allowing educators to build on existing critical frameworks and classroom approaches. Typical questions used in media education regarding ‘older’ media could be used to think critically about AI, for instance, questions about business, work, and regulation, as well as questions dealing with representation, reliability, and trust. Buckingham insists on the relevance of these questions and the familiarity they can evoke, which can affect the way students will explore and debate these questions.

Buckingham warns against using AI as an instrumental tool for learning, since media education refers to teaching *about* media, which should not be confused with teaching *with* and *through* media. He also argues that it is necessary to take a critical distance from artificial intelligence and to de-familiarize it in order to start a critical discussion about it. For these reasons, it is important to think about effective ways in which AI could be actively used in education, which would not become educational media or glorify what can be done with this technology, risking making critical discussion about artificial intelligence more difficult or not possible. According to Buckingham, teaching about AI goes beyond showing how it works. Indeed, he suggests instead what he calls “the practical simulation”, a long-standing approach in media education, which involves students producing different versions of a media text, according to a defined brief, and then comparing and analyzing what they created. For example, each group of students would be given different parameters, such as the target audience, or would be asked to make different prompts, and then compare the resulting outcomes.

In 2022, Selin Akgun and Christine Greenhow published an article entitled “Artificial intelligence in education: Addressing ethical challenges in K-12 settings”, which discusses both the benefits and ethical challenges of integrating AI in the classroom.<sup>189</sup> According to their study, AI presents various advantages for enhancing students’ learning experiences and supporting teachers’ practices. These include facilitating instruction in mixed-ability classrooms, providing students with feedback on their writing, and implementing automated assessment systems that could reduce teachers’ administrative work. However, the use of AI in K-12 educational contexts also poses various societal and ethical issues, which should be addressed to ensure both awareness and critical thinking. The first risks of integrating artificial

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<sup>189</sup>Akgun, S., Greenhow, C. “Artificial intelligence in education: Addressing ethical challenges in K-12 settings,” *AI Ethics* 2, 431–440 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-021-00096-7>

intelligence in education that they highlight in their article are bias and discrimination. Indeed, with the use of AI comes the risk of perpetuating existing systemic inequalities, reinforcing unfair treatment of students from disadvantaged and marginalized groups, and amplifying racism, sexism, and other types of injustice. Other ethical drawbacks, including privacy violations and surveillance, are emphasized in the article.

These ethical concerns point to the necessity to prepare both students and teachers to navigate the implications of AI in education. Selin Akgun and Christine Greenhow argue that “[...] academics, scientists, and citizens have a responsibility to educate teachers and students to recognize the ethical challenges and implications of algorithm use.”<sup>190</sup> To support this, various nonprofit institutions and research groups have created open-access resources. These generally include lesson plans and hands-on activities, as well as professional learning materials, such as virtual learning sessions that help teachers bring AI and ethics into their classroom. In the article, they analyze three resources, which include both “AI and Ethics” curriculum and “AI and Data Privacy” workshop from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab, and Code.org’s “AI and Oceans” activity. By doing so, Selin Akgun and Christine Greenhow demonstrate that such media education materials can help students and teachers benefit from AI while critically addressing ethical issues. They also think that succeeding in empowering future generations for ethical engagement with AI involves more than just the creation of curriculum and resources, and that expanded professional development for K-12 teachers is also necessary. For example, sustained professional learning sessions could provide teachers with the knowledge and space to work with curriculum resources and experiment with new teaching strategies, while also forming communities of practice where they share experiences, collaborate with other educators, and critically reflect on their approaches.

#### **4.2.1. Examples of AI-focused Media Education Programs**

These last few years, media education organizations have begun creating resources, including curricula, workshops, and lesson plans, to help educators introduce students to the complex topic of artificial intelligence and all that this new technology involves. These resources are fundamental tools to critically uncover AI and various issues and challenges related to it. The emergence of artificial intelligence, as Buckingham wrote in his blog post, provides educators with a large quantity of curriculum materials, in which numerous things can be tackled, ranging

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<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*

from copyright and intellectual property issues to the potential bias present in AI productions.<sup>191</sup> I have selected three examples of activities about artificial intelligence, and each of them is from a distinct organization.

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) recently collaborated with Roblox to offer two resources aiming to help both teenagers and parents understand generative artificial intelligence.<sup>192</sup> NAMLE is an important media literacy organization in which educators have collaborated to advance media literacy education since 1997. NAMLE's educators aim to help individuals of all ages become active citizens and media literate in today's media-saturated world, as well as to expand media literacy in and out of school. On the organization's website, resources on various media-related topics can be found, and they can be accessed for free. NAMLE also has its own official journal, called the Journal of Media Literacy Education (JMLE), which is an online, open-access, peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal that supports the development of research, scholarship, and the pedagogy of media literacy education.<sup>193</sup>

Among both resources NAMLE developed in collaboration with Roblox, a platform for immersive connection and communication, one of them specifically targets teenagers, and this is the one that will be analyzed in this work. It is still worth mentioning that the second resource is for parents who would like to help their children navigate safely in a world influenced by artificial intelligence. The resource targeting adolescents is entitled "Understanding Generative AI, a guided activity for teens" and can be found on NAMLE's website for free.<sup>194</sup> It is a guide of seven pages organizing the necessary steps leading to practical activities, involving generative artificial intelligence and prompts analysis. Indeed, the guide starts by introducing what generative artificial intelligence is, what it can do, as well as both its advantages and disadvantages. For instance, the guide says that GenAI is useful for brainstorming and generating innovative ideas, meanwhile it also criticizes how this technology can be used with bad intentions and produce misleading and biased content. Then, NAMLE's guide also explains how important media literacy is when exploring artificial intelligence and insists that constantly asking questions to better understand AI is necessary, and that it is a great way to develop media literacy skills. Examples of critical questions are provided in the resource, such as "*How might*

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<sup>191</sup>David Buckingham, "Artificial Intelligence in Education: A Media Education Approach."

<sup>192</sup>The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). *Understanding Generative AI | Roblox*. <https://namle.org/understanding-generative-ai/>

<sup>193</sup>The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). *Journal Of Media Literacy Education*. <https://namle.org/journal-of-media-literacy-education/>

<sup>194</sup>The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE). *Understanding Generative AI, a guided activity for teens*. <https://namle.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/genai-teens.pdf>

*different people understand this message differently?”* and *“What is left out that might be important to know?”*, which are directly based on the five key questions of media literacy. Other questions deal with credibility, bias and the sources of information and production AI tools provide their users with. The guide highlights that individuals who use GenAI should be aware of the fact that false and biased information can be generated by the technology, which is why double-checking and confirming information is necessary. After all this introductory part, NAMLE’s resource proposes two activities, which focus on the one hand, on text-based GenAI, and on the other, on visual-based GenAI. These activities aim to demonstrate the importance of being able to prompt effectively. Prompting refers to the text users provide to the AI tool, which gives the information that artificial intelligence requires to produce content. It is up to the individuals who use GenAI to adapt their prompts in order to obtain the results they want, which is why the capacity to prompt rightfully is essential when it comes to using artificial intelligence. For this analysis, I will solely focus on the activity about text-based AI, since this is more related to my dissertation’s topic, and also because the questions do not change much between both activities.

<b>Prompt #1:</b>  “Can you write a haiku for my mom’s birthday card?”	<b>Prompt #2:</b>  “My mom is very funny. Can you make the haiku funnier?”	<b>Prompt #3:</b>  “My mom loves dogs and baseball. Can you write a funny haiku with dogs and baseball for her?”
<b>GenAI’s Response:</b>  “Of course! Here’s a haiku for your mom’s birthday card:  In your warm embrace,  Love blossoms with each heartbeat,  Mother, forever”	<b>GenAI’s Response:</b>  “Certainly! Here’s a funnier haiku for your mom’s birthday card:  Laughs fill the air, Mom.  Jokes dance in your lively eyes,  Forever young, wow!”	<b>GenAI’s Response:</b>  “Absolutely! Here’s a funny haiku combining your mom’s love for dogs and baseball:  Bases loaded, woof!  Fido catches every ball,  Mom’s MVP pup”
<b>Reflection Questions:</b>	<b>Reflection Questions:</b>	<b>Reflection Questions:</b>

<i>Was the response what you wanted? Anything you would like to change? Should your prompt have been more specific? What assumptions did the tool make about the tone and spirit of the haiku?</i>	<i>Did the tool give you what you want? If not, is there anything you could add to the prompt to help? Or do you want to change directions? Are you noticing anything about the limitations of the tool?</i>	<i>Now that you have given it a few options, are you finding the tool effective? What do you notice about the way in which the tool is responding to your prompts?</i>
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Figure 4: A table containing NAMLE's activity about text-based GenAI and prompting (the source has been slightly adapted).<sup>195</sup>

As it can be observed in Figure 4, this activity focuses on three different prompts and the responses generated by the GenAI tool. The prompts slightly change and become more specific, which impacts the results provided by generative artificial intelligence. This activity involves comparing different prompts and their associated responses. As teenagers compare these prompts and their outputs, they critically examine the relationship between input and output. To guide this activity, the guide provides reflection questions designed to develop critical thinking around prompting and AI generation. This exercise aligns with what Buckingham describes as “the practical simulation” in a blog post, which was mentioned in the previous point of the dissertation. This well-established approach in media education involves students producing different versions of a media text according to a defined brief and then comparing and analyzing their creations. In the case of this activity, it can be noted that each prompt is given specific parameters, such as the target audience (e.g. a mother), the tone (e.g. funny), or other details like the fact that the mother likes baseball. Learners are expected to compare the different prompts and then evaluate the resulting outputs. The reflection questions in this activity are effective in fostering critical thinking, as they include questions related to personal reaction, such as “*Was this what you wanted?*”, as well as questions that entail critical analysis and reflection, such as “*What assumptions did the tool make?*”. Even if these questions aim to foster media literacy skills and empower teenagers with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate AI, there is still room for improvement. The reflection questions could go a bit further, for instance, they could push learners to interrogate why AI makes certain assumptions, such as gendered or tonal biases, but also consider how the three different responses generated by AI might influence or affect different individuals. Integrating such questions could enhance the activity's relevance for media literacy, encouraging teenagers to engage more critically with AI-generated content. However, the fact that the guide provides

<sup>195</sup>*Ibid.*

questions and interesting information regarding media literacy and AI helps make the guide feel incomplete and engaging for teenagers.

Common Sense, which I have already mentioned and introduced in the previous chapter, also has its own curricula about artificial intelligence. Indeed, the “Collection of AI Literacy lessons for Grades 6-12” is accessible through Common Sense’s website for free.<sup>196</sup> This collection is divided into eight lessons that deal with different topics related to artificial intelligence. Most of the lessons last between 15 and 20 minutes, and target students between the ages of 11 and 18 years old. This collection of lessons begins with basic information providing some context about AI, stating that “Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the world we live in. From using generative AI for schoolwork to dealing with misinformation and befriending AI chatbots, students have a lot to consider when it comes to this ever-evolving technology.”<sup>197</sup> The aims of these lessons are also displayed in the introduction to this collection of lessons, and notably include helping students understand what AI is and how it works, and having them consider AI’s potential benefits and risks while thinking critically about how they can be responsible and ethical users of AI.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I will focus on the lesson dedicated to bias in AI, since it is to some extent related to the topic of my work, which addresses the presence of potential bias in AI-generated film scripts. This lesson is entitled “How AI Bias Impacts Our Lives” and targets grades 6-12, which correspond to students aged between 11 and 18 years old.<sup>198</sup> The learning objectives of this lesson include being able to understand that AI bias can impact people in different ways and to reflect on the negative impacts of AI bias. As for the materials needed for the lesson, there are PowerPoint slides, which contain all the questions educators will ask throughout the lesson. There is also a handout that students have to complete after reading a scenario that explains what AI bias is. Teachers can also access their own version of the handout, which contains the expected answers. This is everything that educators need to make this lesson happen, since most of the lesson involves oral conversations and debates, which can be accompanied and supported by the PowerPoint slides.

## **How AI Bias Impacts Our Lives: Lesson Plans**

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<sup>196</sup>Common Sense, “AI Literacy Lessons for Grades 6-12,”

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/collections/ai-literacy-lessons-for-grades-6-12>

<sup>197</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup>Common Sense, “How AI Bias Impacts Our Lives,” <https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/lesson/how-ai-bias-impacts-our-lives>.

<p><b>1. Ask:</b> <i>What is AI bias? How does it happen?</i> (Slide 4)</p>
<p><b>2. Project Slides 5-6</b> and explain that <b>AI bias</b> happens <i>when an AI tool makes a decision that is wrong or problematic because it learned from training data that didn't treat all people, places, and things accurately. And <b>training data</b> is the information given to an AI to help it learn how to do a specific task.</i></p>
<p><b>3. Say:</b> <i>AI bias impacts how reliable, fair, and trustworthy AI tools are. And it can also have an impact on individuals or groups of people, even if they didn't choose to use the tool in the first place. Let's take a look at a scenario</i> (Slide 7).</p>
<p><b>4. Distribute</b> the <b>Trick-or-Treat AI student handout</b> and read through the scenario (Slides 8-9).</p>
<p><b>5. Explain</b> to students that the candy dispenser is operating with AI bias, and that they are going to have a chance to reflect on how that AI bias is impacting others.</p> <p><b>Have</b> students complete the questions with a partner, and then invite students to share out. Use <b>Slides 10-18</b> to guide the discussion, or refer to the <b>Teacher Version</b> of the handout.</p>
<p><b>6. Project Slide 19</b> and have students reflect on what people can do if they notice or experience AI bias.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Once Ms. Igwe learns about this issue, what should she do?</i></li> <li>• <i>What can the creators of the candy dispenser do to make their product fairer for everyone?</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Say:</b> <i>Reporting AI bias can help companies improve their products. In this case, the creators of the candy dispenser could work on adding more training data so that it could better identify as many different kinds of Halloween costumes as possible</i> (Slide 20).</p>
<p><b>8. Ask:</b> <i>AI is trained on real-world data that people give it, and if that data contains biases (or is incomplete), the AI can end up being biased too. What are some of the negative impacts and consequences of AI bias?</i> (Slide 21)</p> <p><b>Invite</b> students to respond, then project <b>Slide 22</b> and review some of the negative impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unfair treatment:</b> If an AI tool is biased, it might make decisions that are unfair to certain groups of people</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continuing stereotypes:</b> If an AI tool learns from data that includes stereotypes (e.g. race or gender), it might make decisions that are based on those prejudiced ideas.</li> <li>• <b>Unequal opportunities:</b> AI bias can also limit opportunities for some people by unfairly favoring another group.</li> <li>• <b>Misinformation:</b> If an AI tool learns from biased information, it can end up creating and spreading false or incomplete information.</li> </ul> <p>If time permits, this is a great opportunity to share and discuss <b>a real-world example of the negative impacts of AI bias.</b></p>
<p><b>9. Say:</b> <i>Knowing about AI bias can help us think critically and act responsibly if and when we use AI. If we notice AI bias having a negative impact on someone or something, we can help by reporting it to the company (Slide 23).</i></p>

Figure 5: A table containing the lesson plans for Common Sense’s lesson entitled “How AI Bias Impacts Our Lives”<sup>199</sup>

The lesson starts with two introductory questions, asking students if they know what AI bias is and how it happens. Beginning the lesson with such questions aligns with what Buckingham says in his Manifesto about how educators should start a lesson with what the students already know to make their media education pedagogy effective.<sup>200</sup> This is the case in this lesson about AI bias, since students are asked about the topic and their prior knowledge. Then, after having let students reflect and talk about what they already know regarding AI bias, educators explain what it is and what it encompasses. Educators go through the impacts that bias generated by AI can have, such as issues related to reliability and discrimination. In the third point of the lesson plans, it can be observed that educators provide students with a scenario, which is a good way to exemplify concretely by using a story as an example to help students understand what AI bias refers to. The scenario is written on the PowerPoint slides and appears in the form of a narrative story. To sum it up, it deals with Mrs. Igwe, who broke her leg for Halloween, and therefore had to use a candy dispenser, which is supposed to only give candy to kids who are dressed up. However, the machine is biased as it only gives out candy to children wearing caps or hats, when these are not the only things people can wear as costumes. By doing so, educators simplify the meaning of AI bias, as it makes it easier to understand with a concrete example, which can be associated with real-life events and things they know. To realize this activity, students can use a handout containing several questions that encourage critical thinking. The four questions are the following ones: “*Did the candy dispenser work the*

<sup>199</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>200</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 71.



*way it was supposed to? Please explain*", *"Who are ALL of the different people or groups involved in this scenario? List each person"*, *"How do you think each of them is feeling?"*, and *"Was everyone impacted by this candy dispenser in the same way? Please explain"*.<sup>201</sup> These questions enable students to reflect on the consequences AI bias can have on people, how it can affect them, and how it can be interpreted by different people who are in distinct situations. This activity gives students the opportunity to reflect on these questions as they complete the handout, which makes them participate actively in the lesson. Then, teachers explain that AI is based on real-world data from humans, which can be biased or incomplete, and that will make the AI produce bias as well. Educators ask students if they can name some negative impacts related to AI bias, and after listening to students' answers, teachers mention some examples, such as unfair treatment, perpetuating stereotypes, unequal opportunities, and misinformation. If time allows it, educators are encouraged to illustrate them with concrete real-life examples, which can make it easier for students to visualize these impacts, deepen their understanding, and see how AI bias influences the media and digital content they encounter. The lesson concludes with teachers explaining the importance of knowing about AI bias in order to be able to think critically and use AI responsibly. Educators also remind students that they can report instances of AI bias if they notice potentially harmful impacts, which serves as a call to action, a fundamental element in media education, since acting is part of becoming an active and responsible digital citizen.

This lesson is a good example of how the topic of bias in AI can be addressed in order to guide students to ask themselves critical questions about that issue. The lesson presents positive aspects, but there are some aspects that pose problems. For instance, the target audience is too extensive, as it targets students ranging from 11 to 18 years old. Indeed, 11-year-old students do not think the same way, nor do they have the same prior knowledge as someone who is 18. When analyzing the content of the lesson, the content seems to be better suited for a younger audience, since the way bias in AI is addressed is sometimes done by infantilizing the explanations. Indeed, it can be observed in the activity that involves a scenario to clarify what the term bias refers to. This scenario oversimplifies what AI bias is, and older teenagers do not need explanations to be that simple to understand them. However, by doing that, the lesson can reach a bigger audience, which was probably the goal of Common Sense. Then, another issue related to this lesson lies in the lack of diversity in the activities. Most of the lesson relies on educators providing information, a bit of discussion, and a handout. Adding a video or making

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<sup>201</sup>Common Sense, "How AI Bias Impacts Our Lives."

students check if GenAI tools can be biased, as they play with different prompts, could have been interesting in the lesson. This would have added the so-called “practical simulation” approach, which Buckingham mentions in his blog post about AI and media education. Despite these little remarks, the lesson remains a relevant tool for educating students on artificial intelligence, and more precisely on AI bias. This can help students understand what biases are and guide their reflection regarding their impacts and how they can react against them. The fact that this lesson is only one among a collection of eight lessons also has to be taken into consideration, since it provides educators with more AI-related content to educate their students. There is even another lesson that also focuses on AI bias, which is entitled “Understanding AI Bias” and it aims to help students to think critically about the fact that AI can be biased and consider possible ways to reduce AI bias. The lesson “How AI Bias Impacts Our Lives” demonstrates that classic media education approaches can be applied to the case of artificial intelligence. For instance, when students interrogate themselves on how AI bias could affect and be interpreted by different individuals, it can be connected to key questions of media literacy, including *“How might different people understand this message differently?”* and *“What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented?”*. However, it could also be argued that this lesson adopts a protectionist approach, as it primarily emphasizes the potential harms of AI bias and encourages students to report these harms, which could be interpreted as the lesson’s way to demonize AI tools. This tendency is, nevertheless, counterbalanced by the fact that the wider collection of lessons on AI includes other activities that are less protectionist, discuss the positive aspects of AI, and invite students to form their own opinions. This broader context allows for a more nuanced exploration of artificial intelligence, combining awareness of risks with opportunities for critical and independent thinking.

Finally, the last instance of the selected media educational resources on artificial intelligence comes from MIT RAISE (Responsible AI for Social Empowerment and Education), which stands for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s project to teach AI literacy to students, teachers, and communities around the world. Leading faculty and educators worked together to develop the “Day of AI Curriculum”, which aims to empower students with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate the constantly changing world they live in.<sup>202</sup> This curriculum is available for free, but an email login is required in order to access all content and materials. According to people working at MIT RAISE, their curriculum “[...] follows a spiral curriculum approach, as outlined in the UNESCO AI Competency Framework for

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<sup>202</sup>Day of AI, “Day of AI Curriculum,” MIT RAISE. <https://dayofai.org/curriculum/>

Students.”<sup>203</sup> Learners gradually build AI knowledge and skills instead of just learning isolated topics here and there. Key AI concepts are revisited over time with more complexity, making sure that students get a solid foundation through repeated exposure and real practice. In the “Day of AI Curriculum”, each lesson tends to last around 30 to 60 minutes and is organized by recommended levels and ages for implementation. Indeed, the curriculum offers an extensive set of free AI literacy curricula for students between the ages of 8 and 18 years old, designed to support learners who have diverse backgrounds and abilities. Different units are available, some aim to improve students’ AI literacy skills and allow them to explore and question AI tools and ethical concerns further, while others go beyond AI literacy and include topics such as data activism, creativity with AI, and building chatbots. All these units provide educators with the opportunity to tackle a variety of topics related to artificial intelligence, ranging from “AI for Early Elementary” to “ChatGPT in Schools” and “Understanding AI in Social Media”. Each unit includes PowerPoint slides, an educator guide or lesson plans, and relevant student materials.

The selected unit to analyze for this dissertation is entitled “AI and the Creative Arts” and targets students aged between 8 and 11 years old.<sup>204</sup> I have chosen to analyze this curriculum in depth, since it is in certain aspects connected to the topic of this work, as film is a form of creative arts more and more impacted by GenAI. The lead creator of the chosen curriculum is Safinah Ali, an assistant Professor at NYU, and she collaborated with other people on this media educational resource. The learning objectives of this curriculum include students being able to understand how AI can be used in diverse artistic fields, to use AI themselves to create their own artistic projects, as well as to debate and discuss ethical issues and benefits related to the growing relationship between AI and the arts. This curriculum is divided into three lessons, which all focus on different activities and specific subtopics. The first lesson starts by introducing AI-generated art, asking students to compare human and AI creativity, as they make them reflect on their own artistic capabilities. The second lesson deals with ethical questions, encouraging students to think critically about the impact of the technology on intellectual property, bias and misinformation. The last lesson of the unit makes students use AI tools to produce artistic content, with the aim to enhance their understanding of how AI can participate in the creation process. For instance, the final lesson proposes an activity in which students have to create self-portrait with GenAI. As a whole, this unit offers a set of dynamic and engaging activities where critical thinking, creativity, and ethical inquiry are at their core.

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<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Ali, S. et al. AI and the Creative Arts. *MIT RAISE (Day of AI)*. <https://dayofai.org/curriculum/aiandart/>

To ensure the lesson proceeds effectively, the educator guide outlines the necessary “activity steps”, which are usually called lesson plans.

I will only focus in depth on the second lesson, which is entitled “Exploring Ethics in the Creative Arts”, since this lesson can be related to my work’s topic, notably when considering bias in AI-generated production, but also because this lesson is a great introduction to ethical considerations regarding the use of AI in the arts. This lesson, as it can be seen in Figure 6, is divided into nine parts, all corresponding to distinct activities. The learning objectives of the lesson two contain students being able to analyze some ethical implications of AI-generated art, including artists’ rights, attribution, and bias, as well as to critically engage with real-world scenarios. A list of necessary vocabulary is provided, with the corresponding definitions, which includes the terms ethics, prompt, bias, copyright, and attribution. Other resources are furnished in the educator guide, and they include the PowerPoint slides, but also a handout to create a poster on AI, art ethics, and fairness.

<p><b>Lesson 2: Exploring Ethics in the Creative Arts</b></p> <p><i>Activity Steps</i></p>
<p><b>1. Warm Up:</b> Tell students you will focus on ethics and AI for the lesson. Ask students to explain what is happening in the illustration and what the word ethics means to them. Students should conclude that someone is returning a lost wallet in the picture. Explain that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ethics are a set of beliefs that help us decide what is right and wrong.</li> <li>b) It guides how people should behave to ensure fairness, respect, and kindness in their actions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.</b> Next, present to students the 2 images generated by a real AI that was prompted to create an image of an artist painting a picture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Students may notice that only men are shown, and all appear to have facial hair. You can ask students to think about why the AI-generated these images to represent artists (the AI was likely trained mostly on images of men painting/being artists).</li> <li>b) While there is no conclusive evidence (from just 2 images), the training data may be biased.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.</b> Ask students: <b>Why might it be harmful if AI mainly shows certain types of people in certain roles, and does AI see everyone fairly?</b> Share the definition of bias.</p>
<p><b>4.</b> The next topic will deal with copyrights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ask students if anyone can use an AI image generator to create images of famous characters.</li> <li>b) You can ask students how they would feel if an AI unfairly used their original characters without permission. Students may identify a difference between an AI-generating an image and a student drawing an image of Mario in their notebook.</li> </ul>

Still, you can point out some differences in that scenario (how many will see the image, how “real” it looks, the intentions behind the drawing, etc.).
<p><b>5.</b> The next topic will deal with copyrights. Students may be surprised to learn that a copyright automatically protects one’s work (without needing to register or file paperwork).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Ask students what may happen if an AI learns from copyrighted art.</li> <li>b) Students' responses may include the following: the original artist doesn’t receive credit or monetary compensation for their efforts, and others can create new artwork of copyrighted work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6.</b> Next, share the slide explaining Lily and her school project. Ask students who should get credit for the cat drawing. Attribution deals with the idea of giving credit to the creator of something. In the case of AI systems, ask students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Who they believe should receive credit for AI-generated art: the artists whose work was used to train the AI, the AI companies who collected the data and trained the AI (likely spending a lot of time and money to do so, but possibly also infringing on copyrights), the AI artists who entered the prompts that led to the creation of the image, or no one (possibly)?</li> </ul>
<b>7.</b> Show the slide with Lily and the cat drawing. Point out that it has now been labeled “AI-Generated Image.” Explain to students that they could also include which chatbot was used in the label.
<b>8.</b> Review the ethical concerns discussed in the lesson.
<p><b>9.</b> Explain to students that they will now complete a Poster Design activity where students cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Which ethical concerns about AI worry you?</li> <li>b) How would you best communicate those ethical concerns to your friends who do not know? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Think of what content to cover.</li> <li>ii. Think of what visuals would be compelling.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c) Piece them on Google Slides (or Canva) and create your posters!</li> </ul>

Figure 6: A table comprising the lesson steps for the second lesson from Day of AI’s curriculum, “AI and the Creative Arts”<sup>205</sup>

The second lesson begins with educators telling students that they will focus on ethics and AI and asking them to explain what the term ethics means. To help students define that word, educators make use of an illustration on the corresponding PowerPoint slide. By doing so, students are provided with a visual example, which can make it easier for them to draw suppositions on what ethics could refer to. This introductory activity approaches the lesson topic in a way that enables students to think by themselves instead of passively assimilating knowledge or being influenced by educators, which is a method that Buckingham does not recommend to educators in the field of media education. Indeed, according to him, media education has to provide learners with the necessary autonomy in order to make them critically

<sup>205</sup>*Ibid.*, 7-8.

think and reflect on their own, which is the key to becoming active citizens and media literate.<sup>206</sup> It is only after having let the students reflect on the meaning of ethics that educators give them explanations and definitions, as theory is still necessary to transmit knowledge to students, but activities should not only revolve around educators lecturing and transmitting information. In the second activity, the purpose of this specific curriculum's lesson becomes more concrete, as students are directly interrogated about bias in AI productions. The activity deals with two AI-generated images whose prompt was to create an image of an artist painting a picture. Both images display men painting, which can lead to questions related to gender bias in generative artificial intelligence. The aim of this activity is to guide students to think critically about how GenAI can be biased and generate stereotypes, which can sometimes be harmful or lead to both misrepresentation and discrimination. This activity specifically fosters questions about representation in GenAI productions, which is a central topic in media education, as it has been explained in this dissertation several times. However, the lesson plan specifies that this activity is only an example and must be interpreted with caution, as two images do not represent enough data to determine whether an AI tool is biased. It remains a relevant example to explain and exemplify that AI can be biased, as it has already been the case with AI tools that privilege certain genders or skin colors when generating specific images. For instance, in 2024, a study entitled "Demographic Representation of Generative Artificial Intelligence Images of Physicians" demonstrated that some popular AI text-to-image platforms, including Imagine AI Art Generator, Jasper Art: AI Art Generator, and Text-to-Image, were demographically biased when generating images of physicians.<sup>207</sup> The researchers identified that White and male physicians were overrepresented, while other ethnicities, such as Latino and Asian, as well as female physicians, lacked representation. Such bias in AI risks reinforcing stereotypes that have long existed in society and media and have actively challenged for years. For this reason, the example provided in the second activity is meaningful since such things are known to happen nowadays, and the example suggested simplifies these real-life issues as it adapts them to their target audience, who are kids between 8 and 11 years old. The activity that follows goes even deeper by having educators ask students the reasons why it might be harmful if AI mainly shows certain types of people in certain roles. They also ask learners if they think AI sees everyone fairly. These kinds of questions allow for debates and critical thinking related to representation

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<sup>206</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*.

<sup>207</sup>Lee, S. W., Morcos, M., Lee, D. W., & Young, J. (2024). Demographic Representation of Generative Artificial Intelligence Images of Physicians. *JAMA Network Open*, 7(8), e2425993. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.25993>

in AI, as well as how bias can be interpreted by different people. Discussing these questions aims to improve students' fundamental media literacy skills, such as being able to critically evaluate media messages, bias in AI, and the consequences they pose. To conclude the topic of AI bias, educators provide students with a definition of bias, which is available on the slides and states that bias refers to "the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing or category of people or things in an unfair (and often hidden) way."<sup>208</sup>

The next topic of the lesson deals with copyrights and addresses the fact that using someone else's work without their consent is unfair. Educators ask students if they think that anyone can use an AI image generator to create images of famous characters. They provide examples of famous characters, such as Mario, Barbie, and Iron Man, to make students relate more to the questions and have something concrete in mind as they think about this issue. By doing so, students could be more interested, since they know these characters and appreciate them. Educators also ask learners how they would feel if an AI unfairly used their original characters without permission, encouraging them to put themselves in the shoes of creators who see their work being used to train artificial intelligence or tainted by AI slops. Students are also asked if they think that there are differences between an image generated on an AI platform and a student drawing an image of Mario in their notebook. Educators are expected to point out some differences in that scenario, such as how many people will see the image, how close to the original it looks, and the intentions behind the drawing. All these questions are useful to address the impacts behind these AI practices, which students may have considered fun before considering what AI-generated images inspired by their favorite characters might involve. After having discussed these questions, educators introduce the concept of copyright, explaining that it is what automatically protects any human's creative work from being used or copied. In the fifth activity, students also explore the idea of giving proper credit to creators, and they are asked questions, such as "*Do you think a copyright is important?*" and "*What may happen if an AI learns from copyrighted art?*". The expected responses from students include points like the original artist not receiving credit or financial compensation for their work, as well as the possibility of anyone generating new artwork based on copyrighted material. In the sixth activity, educators focus on the complexity of giving credit when AI-generated productions are considered. To help students understand this complex issue, educators provide them with the example of a girl, Lily, who used a GenAI tool to generate a cat drawing. They ask students who the author is and who should be credited, relevant questions for media education that are

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<sup>208</sup>Ali, S. et al. AI and the Creative Arts. *MIT RAISE (Day of AI)*. <https://dayofai.org/curriculum/aiandart/>, p. 7.

inspired by key questions of media literacy, such as the ones asking who the author is and what is omitted, which in this case would be the fact that the AI tool does not disclose the copyrighted material used for this task. Educators also use this activity to highlight the importance of clearly indicating when a work has been generated by artificial intelligence, since proper attribution is required when AI is involved. It also encourages students to think critically about AI-generated media, considering not only what they see but how it was created and the intellectual property issues involved. This exercise further emphasizes ethical responsibilities around attribution and transparency when using GenAI tools.

This lesson concludes with a summary reprising all the fundamental points from the lesson and with a final activity, which involves both creativity and activism. Summarizing the lesson's content is important in education, since it allows for repeating, reformulating and recontextualizing what has been said, which helps students assimilate better the notions that has been tackled throughout the lesson. The last activity that students are asked to complete is about designing a poster that would cover the ethical concerns related to use of AI in the arts of their choice. By doing so, students are participating in some kind of activism, since they are expected to denounce through a medium, in this case through a poster, ethical issues posed by GenAI. This approach is fundamental in media education, since it corresponds to two learning processes of media literacy, which are creating and taking action.<sup>209</sup> In *The Media Education Manifesto*, Buckingham also shares the same thoughts regarding the importance of creative work, as he states that it “[...] can offer a space to reflect on the personal and emotional dimensions of media use, and this can then feed back into critical analysis.”<sup>210</sup> Indeed, this exercise proposes an approach that encourages students to use creativity and activism to reflect on what artificial intelligence encompasses. The fact that students are designing a poster can be engaging and more interesting for students, as it lets students use their imagination and ideas to express themselves about AI. These types of activity can increase students' engagement and interest in topics that might otherwise fail to capture their attention, which is why incorporating such activities in media educational programs is valuable.

These three examples illustrate that artificial intelligence is a topic that is relevant and more topical than ever in the field of media education. The three selected resources confirm what David Buckingham explained in his blog post regarding the fact that long-standing approaches to media education could be used for educating students on AI.<sup>211</sup> Indeed, some

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<sup>209</sup>Hobbs, “What is Media Literacy?,” 5.

<sup>210</sup>David Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 73.

<sup>211</sup>Buckingham, “Artificial Intelligence in Education.”



activities tackle fundamental points of media education, such as critical analysis of media messages and understanding the influence of technology on society. Others rely on the “practical simulation” approach, for instance, when students are taught how to prompt efficiently. Common Sense’s “AI Literacy Collection” and MIT RAISE’s “Day of AI” show that AI is a complex topic and that lessons should go beyond simply explaining what it is and what its use implies. Both offer a variety of lessons dedicated to various aspects of artificial intelligence, such as bias, ethics, and even the use of AI in the arts. Together, these resources demonstrate how media education can provide students with the critical tools needed to navigate today’s AI-driven world.

## **Chapter 5: The Potential of AI-Generated Film in Media Education**

### **5.1. Introduction**

Building on these foundations, I will finally discuss how the implementation of artificial intelligence in film production presents both opportunities and challenges for media and film education. Through this chapter, I will address why media education could be necessary in a context where AI becomes increasingly prevalent in the film industry, but also how media education must adapt to these technological shifts regarding films. I aim to show how media education could potentially address AI-generated film productions to prepare people not only to understand how AI works in the creative sector but also to critically interrogate the ethical, social, and ideological implications behind its use in film production. This chapter will address the following questions: “Should media education tackle AI-generated films?” and “How can media education help analyze and deconstruct the biases inherent in these technologies?”, which are two of the three questions that make the essence of this work.

To answer these questions, I will also suggest a renewed media educational framework that integrates traditional film education, critical media literacy, and digital ethics, empowering future filmmakers and media practitioners to better understand the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence in cinema.

Then, I will attempt to apply Barbara Laborde’s medio-pragmatic approach to the case of AI-generated films. To do so, I will adapt the four competencies and each axis she suggested in her book in order to check if the approach could make sense in a context where AI influences film production.

A part of this chapter is also dedicated to the specific case of the use of generative artificial intelligence in scriptwriting, which represents one of the focuses of this dissertation. I will refer to Susan Cake's article entitled "Artificial Intelligence as a Collaborative Tool for Script Development", which provides a valuable example of how the generation of script with AI could be addressed in the field of media education.

## 5.2. The Case of AI-Generated Film

The two previous chapters of this work have explored in depth how media education addresses film and artificial intelligence, notably by analyzing what has been said in the field but also implemented through the form of curricula or workshops. AI-generated film sits at the intersection of media education approaches to film and artificial intelligence. Drawing on the established approach to film in media education, which was outlined in chapter 3, learners must continue examining how films convey messages and values, and through representations can shape the way individuals see the world. However, the integration of artificial intelligence at different stages of filmmaking, going from pre-production to post-production, adds new layers of complexity that media education should take into consideration. Indeed, with AI-generated films, the notion of authorship is blurred, the role of human creativity is redefined, and both concepts of art and originality become harder to consider. Critical questions of media literacy, such as "*Who is the author and what is the purpose?*", "*What lifestyles, values, and points of view are depicted?*", or "*What is omitted?*" remain relevant, but they now demand a critical understanding of how AI systems participate in production. The fact that GenAI can be used at every stage of production, including scriptwriting, special effects, and even for actor or animal replicas, provides media educators with so many topics to unpack to explore issues of copyright, ethics, bias reproduction, and representation, engaging learners in active, critical reflection.

As Buckingham explains in his manifesto, adopting a defensive or protectionist approach is not recommended.<sup>212</sup> Media education should avoid portraying GenAI as wholly harmful. According to him only discussing the dangers is counterproductive, and media education should also address why certain technologies are used by some individuals and for which purposes. A balanced pedagogy should examine both downsides and benefits, for instance, the fact GenAI tools train on data without original creators' consent but using AI for some filmmaking parts can facilitate the process or make it quicker. It is important to acknowledge that there are different levels of using GenAI in scriptwriting. According to Fatima Dayo, Ahmed Ali Memon, and Nasrullah Dharejo, some AI systems facilitate

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<sup>212</sup>Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 32.

scriptwriting by extracting key elements such as characters, locations, and dialogues from stories, while others assist scriptwriters in maintaining “[...] a continuous flow in their writing, which is particularly beneficial for those learning English as a foreign language.”<sup>213</sup> When addressing all the ways AI can be involved in film productions, media educators have to address that transparency is essential, no matter how small the use of AI is.

Practical applications involving the use of AI tools already exist in several media education curricula. For example, the “Day of AI” curricula, which I have analyzed earlier in this work, contain a lesson dedicated to having learners actively collaborate with AI tools across image, music, and storytelling domains. Students are encouraged to create content, work on prompts, and reflect on biases or misalignments, such as unintended skin tones, inaccurate settings, or stereotypical characterization. These activities situate bias recognition within the creative process, making it experiential rather than abstract. Such activities could be adapted to AI-generated cinema, where students might work with AI for script segments, scene visualization, or shot list. This idea of collaborating and experimenting with AI tools is shared by Stuart Marshall Bender, who argues that integrating generative AI into screen media education is particularly relevant. He suggests that this integration could boost students’ employment opportunities, while motivating them “[...] to refine their articulation skills by rehearsing with Gen-AI and reflecting on the process.”<sup>214</sup> However, these practices should be accompanied by sustained and comprehensive media education programs to ensure AI technologies are not only known for how they work, but also for what they encompass. As Buckingham insists in his manifesto, being media literate “[...] is not simply a matter of knowing how to use particular devices, whether in order to access or to create media messages.”<sup>215</sup> It also means that learners should critically reflect on how GenAI tools work in film production and interrogate AI-generated films in terms of what they communicate, how they represent the world, and how they are produced and used.

Building on this, Elisa Farinacci argues that a critical approach in media education must uncover the power dynamics inherent in media distribution and production. This involves examining how global media conglomerates and streaming platforms integrate AI into their workflows, and how these practices could reinforce existing hierarchies of visibility and voice.

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<sup>213</sup>Fatima Dayo, Ahmed Ali Memon, and Nasrullah Dharejo, “Scriptwriting in the Age of AI: Revolutionizing Storytelling With Artificial Intelligence,” *Journal of Media & Communication (JMC)* (ILMA University, Pakistan, 2023): 29, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

<sup>214</sup>Stuart Marshall Bender, “Coexistence and Creativity: Screen Media Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence Content Generators,” *Media Practice and Education* 24, no. 4 (May 9, 2023): 362, <https://doi.org/10.1080/25741136.2023.2204203>.

<sup>215</sup>Buckingham, *The Media Education Manifesto*, 3.

Indeed, AI systems are not neutral, and they are trained on data curated by corporations and shaped by their economic interests, political agendas, and regulatory contexts. This critical approach, encouraged by media education, raises important questions for learners, such as “*Who programs and controls the AI used in audiovisual production?*” or “*Whose perspectives are amplified through these algorithmic logics, and whose remain marginalized or silenced?*”

### 5.2.1. Adorno’s Critique of Culture Industry

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I mentioned one additional question, which was the following one: *Can the lack of originality and potential biases in AI-generated films affect the audience’s critical thinking?* This question refers to how the use of AI in filmmaking poses risks to standardize film productions, notably through the use of AI engines predicting what should be done to make more profit. As it was explained in Pei-Sze Chow’s article, AI tools can provide film directors with a list of actors to cast and even information regarding the audience, which could help produce films that would attract a larger audience, optimizing therefore engagement and revenue. However, this issue of standardization can also be addressed in the context of AI-generated scripts, which as it has been said earlier, reproduce tropes, themes and conventions from other scripts on which GenAI tools are training to create new ones. When the idea of AI standardizing the film industry is considered, a connection with the notion of Culture Industry can be established. This notion made its first appearance in an essay about Jazz music written by Adorno in the 1930s, and then was developed in the 1940s in Adorno and Horkheimer’s *Dialectics of Enlightenment*.<sup>216</sup> These two figures from the Frankfurt School influenced Media education 1.0 with their critique of modern society and culture, which serves as some kind of foundation for a critical analysis of media transmission and the media environment.<sup>217</sup>

Adorno’s critique of the mass media discusses how audiences’ expectations and actions are influenced by industrialized cultural production. He maintained that viewers can be influenced and manipulated by the uniform and standardized depictions of the world that are frequently presented by mass media. According to him, audiences lose their ability to think critically, as they become passive consumers of repetitive media content, constantly pursuing narratives they can predict rather than challenging themselves. In the current era of AI-generated movies, where algorithms forecast box office successes, viewer preferences, and even

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<sup>216</sup>Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Social Studies Association, Inc, 1944.

<sup>217</sup>Ptaszek, “Media education 3.0?,” 232.

which actors or storylines will most likely captivate audiences, this concept is especially pertinent. This is where media education should come as a key solution. Indeed, media educators could contribute in counteract this passivity by teaching audiences how to analyze, question, and critically engage with media, as they provide them with a set of activities and initiatives, which are essential in the field. Media education can help individuals to develop their critical thinking skills and therefore empower them to recognize underlying patterns, biases, and manipulations in AI-generated film.

### **5.3. Applying the Medio-Pragmatic Approach to AI-Generated Film**

Barbara Laborde's medio-pragmatic approach represents a fundamental framework for discussing film from a perspective similar to media education.<sup>218</sup> This section aims to go through the four areas of her medio-pragmatic approach and their associated competencies, to see if they could be applied in the specific case of AI-generated film.

In the first axis, Barbara Laborde focuses on key concepts such as copyright, production, professional roles, distribution, and the economics of cinema, along with its ongoing transformations. In the context of AI-generated film, this axis becomes particularly relevant, as AI tools influence production decisions, from scriptwriting to casting or even marketing strategies, while algorithms used by streaming platforms can shape audience engagement. As noted in "Applied Artificial Intelligence in Business", AI can predict audience preferences through recommendation systems, sentiment analysis, and other techniques, collecting data on tastes, interests, behaviors, and even social media activity.<sup>219</sup> Such insights allow studios to design content for precise target audiences, increasing profit and reducing financial risk. However, this also raises questions, which echo Barbara Laborde's own questions, about the limits of creative freedom and the role played by the viewer in this process. It can bring back questions about the standardization of the media and the lack of originality, which can be paralleled to Adorno's critique of unified and standardized content. The "technical competency" associated with this axis involves gaining technical, or "functional" skills, by analyzing films. For AI-generated productions, this means understanding how AI tools operate and for which specific tasks they are used. Yet, as Buckingham argues, simply knowing how to prompt ChatGPT for a script or use DALL-E for visuals is not enough for media literacy. Such

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<sup>218</sup>Laborde, *De l'enseignement du cinéma à l'éducation aux médias*.

<sup>219</sup>Leong Chan, Liliya Hogaboam, and Renzhi Cao, "AI In Media and Entertainment," in *Applied Innovation and Technology Management*, 2022, 305–24, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-05740-3\\_20](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-05740-3_20).

technical skills must be paired with critical reflection on how algorithmic decisions shape creative and economic outcomes.

The second axis, which focuses on the “médium”, which refers to support, format, and modes of distribution, addresses questions of how audiovisual works circulate and are reinterpreted across different platforms and contexts. While these issues are significant in the broader field of media education, their direct application to the specific case of AI-generated films is less evident. Questions of authorship and originality could emerge when AI-generated works are redistributed or re-edited across platforms, where the concepts of copyrights and ownership would be particularly relevant to discuss.

The third axis of Laborde’s medio-pragmatic approach emphasizes analyzing film as discourse rather than solely as art, focusing on the effects of meaning through audiovisual analysis. In this axis, learners examine how viewers receive and interpret messages, considering aesthetic, formal, and discursive dimensions. Laborde provides the example of studying stereotypes, involving learners recognizing patterns in representation, but also understanding their origins and contexts, and reflecting the power relations they convey. The associated “reading competency” entails critically engaging with representations, conventions, and codes present in film while considering historical and sociological contexts. This competency is especially relevant for AI-generated film, where GenAI tools create scripts and audiovisual content by learning patterns from existing human productions. Learners can analyze what narrative conventions, archetypes, or tropes AI has adopted, allowing them to perform a close reading that reveals recurring patterns, potential biases, or stereotypical representations embedded in the generated content. Such analysis not only deepens the understanding of AI as a creative tool but also fosters critical reflection on the ethical, cultural, and social dimensions of media production, which are essential to discuss in the field of media education. The outcome of this close reading in the context of AI-generated film would be a nuanced understanding of bias, representation, and the ways algorithmic production can reinforce or challenge existing cinematic norms. This “reading competency” can be applied to other aspects of AI in filmmaking, since the technology is not limited to writing scripts. Indeed, analyzing films like *The Frost*, whose every shot was generated by DALL-E 2, with the aim of examining if the GenAI technology reproduced bias or prejudice in the visual content generated. In her study of stereotypes, Laborde emphasizes the importance of situating them in their broader context to understand their presence in productions. When applied to AI-generated films, this approach introduces additional complexity, particularly because these technologies blur the very concept of authorship. For instance, wondering where AI bias comes from highlights a central issue

regarding who the author is. Learners would ask themselves if the author was the AI engine itself, the person who prompted it, or the numerous human authors whose texts and films were used, without their consent, as training data. Bias in AI-generated scripts may stem from datasets that reproduce stereotypes from sources unknown to both creators and audiences, making authorship and copyright crucial considerations. Focusing on the contexts in which AI-generated films are made helps learners see how data, prompts, and industry practices can shape both meaning and stereotypes, while encouraging reflection on authorship, representation, and ethics in film production.

The fourth axis of the medio-pragmatic approach focuses on the audience and their reception, with an emphasis on the communities and cultural factors that shape how a work is understood. The viewer is seen as an active, participatory, and critical agent navigating a media environment where opinions influence the meaning of cultural works. Reception can be analyzed through online forums, social media, or platforms like IMDb. For example, Barbara Laborde suggests comparing audience reactions, contrasting opinions, and analyzing critical responses while considering the factors that could shape interpretation. The “competency of reception” highlights the receiver’s role in the production of meaning, encouraging learners to ask who they are as spectators, but also who the target audience is. Exploring opinions fosters critical thinking about the links between cultural consumption, social context, and civic engagement. This axis can also be used to look at how different audiences react to the use of AI in film productions. Comparing different opinions is interesting because it illustrates that some are in favor of or against the use of this technology in the film sector. For instance, Marcel Danesi, in his previously mentioned book, has an opinion that tends to differ from people who think GenAI should not be used in the film industry. Indeed, Danesi says that individuals could just “[...] accept an AI film as just another film genre, even if made by a machine”, comparing it to the case of animated films.<sup>220</sup> Analyzing reception means looking at how film productions are received by the public, but sometimes they are not even “received”. As I explained in the second chapter of this work, *The Last Screenwriter*, which was fully written by ChatGPT, had its premiere in London’s cinema canceled. This happened due to the numerous complaints, which could be analyzed in this axis, since it focuses on audience reception. Another example, reflecting another use of GenAI that is unrelated to the stage of scriptwriting, is Brady Corbet’s *The Brutalist*, which had been nominated for 10 Oscars. However, an important debate sparked

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<sup>220</sup>Marcel Danesi, “AI-Generated Cinema,” 52.

regarding the use of GenAI for fixing the Hungarian pronunciation in the film.<sup>221</sup> Different opinions can be compared, with individuals criticizing the use of generative artificial intelligence, while others do not consider using this technology for this purpose problematic.

Applying Barbara Laborde's medio-pragmatic approach to AI-generated film is feasible and provides valuable ideas and tools for analyzing questions of authorship, bias, and representation. Her approach offers a way to connect AI-generated films to media education, encouraging learners to reflect critically on how these technologies shape meaning and culture.

## 5.4. AI-Generated Scripts and Bias

Scripts represent one of the first stages of production where bias and stereotypes might appear. As it has been explained in chapter two, some screenwriters make use of narrative structures, themes, and tropes, but also create characters that present common and stereotyped traits or backgrounds. While some of these stereotypes are not harmful, others can perpetuate stereotypes and prejudices that already exist in our society, notably regarding gender, sexuality, or ethnicity. This opens debate regarding representations and their accuracy, but not every consumer interprets representations and messages the same way. Every individual has their own values, ideologies, and even background that will impact the way they interpret media messages.

The use of generative artificial intelligence in the process of writing scripts challenges everything, notably when the origins of stereotypes are considered. In theory, if GenAI trains on content that is biased or full of prejudices, it might reproduce them, as generative artificial intelligence reproduces patterns from the data it trains on. As for now, there are not many studies assessing whether these risks can be demonstrated in screenplays generated by AI. However, as it was mentioned in chapter 2, a large quantity of scientific articles considers bias a potential concern when addressing the integration of AI into scriptwriting, but they do not provide examples. More research should be conducted to check the veracity of this concern. Another option is that media education could address this topic through curricula and educational initiatives, which could provide educators, filmmakers, and even students with the necessary resources to reflect on the potential reproduction of bias and prejudices in AI-generated scripts. This could align with the competency aspect "AI Ethics", developed in UNESCO's *AI competency framework for students*, under the competency block "Understand:

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<sup>221</sup>Chris Murphy, "The Brutalist's AI Controversy, Explained," *Vanity Fair*, January 24, 2025, [https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/story/the-brutalists-ai-controversy-explained?srltid=AfmBOoryFAvnD5orp1Yhr5GPcDSw1zVw8vvVCsr\\_jhtajNyys7yV9vZg](https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/story/the-brutalists-ai-controversy-explained?srltid=AfmBOoryFAvnD5orp1Yhr5GPcDSw1zVw8vvVCsr_jhtajNyys7yV9vZg).



Embodied ethics”, where students are expected to have understood, internalized, and adopted the principle of “non-discrimination” in their reflective practices and uses of AI tools.<sup>222</sup> The “non-discrimination” principle is described as follows: “Students are aware of and are able to detect gender, ethnic, cultural and other biases embedded in AI tools or their outputs.”<sup>223</sup> In the case of AI in film production, this can be done by looking back on previous media educational approaches and resources, since similar critical questions can be asked regarding AI-generated scripts. For instance, the key question of media literacy, “What lifestyles, values, and points of view are depicted?” could be considered to allow for close reading, a fundamental dimension of media education.

Susan Cake, in “Artificial intelligence as a collaborative tool for script development”, proposes a creative practice-based approach focusing on how GenAI can be integrated into script development processes.<sup>224</sup> Her approach consists of writing and refining prompts to reflect critically throughout the script’s development, which combines critical reflection with creative practice itself. She divides her approach into five stages. The first one focuses on familiarization with the GenAI tool, ChatGPT, in her case, by providing it with prompts to analyze how it responds to them. She observes that ChatGPT reproduced conventional patterns of storytelling, such as the famous “Once upon a time”, and even without specifying the word length, it “[...] generated prose of roughly 450–500 words in past tense, written in third person.”<sup>225</sup> The second stage of her approach involves entering a prompt containing the characteristics of the scenarios learners used as a starting point to write their screenplay. ChatGPT’s response looks like a real script, with scene headings, dialogue separated, and even stage direction, which were all written in the present tense. However, Susan Cake also notes peculiar details in the generated script, such as the elementary school teacher being particularly mean to the main character, Lily, and her insistence on correcting Lily’s answers when she is answering questions correctly. The third stage revolves around refining and modifying the prompts to note what changes are made by ChatGPT, such as asking the AI tool to make the script funnier and analyzing how it proceeds to do that. Susan Cake points out that no matter what prompt she enters, the teacher remains a woman, and she thinks it could be linked to the still-existing gender imbalance in primary teaching. She considers the teacher represents the long-standing archetype of the mean and unlikable female. In stages four and five, she asks

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<sup>222</sup>AI Competency Framework for Students. UNESCO eBooks, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.54675/jkjb9835>. (accessed August 2025)

<sup>223</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup>Susan Cake,

<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

ChatGPT to first produce a critique of its script, and then to reflect on its critique to rewrite the screenplay. Susan Cake does not agree with ChatGPT's critique, since the AI did not mention negative points and described character depth that was not present in the script. When asked how the screenplay could be improved, however, ChatGPT outlined areas such as character development, conflict, dialogue, pacing, and resolution, which, according to Susan Cake, resemble feedback for student assessment. In the final stage, the AI rewrote the story to make Lily lose the competition but gain friendship instead, which can be seen as a lesson in resilience. Cake also points out that the AI assumed Lily's motivation came from being a migrant seeking acceptance and that it based the teacher on familiar archetypes from works like *Matilda*, showing both how ChatGPT can support reflection and how it risks reproducing stereotypes.

This approach of five stages that Susan Cake suggests could be useful in media educational curricula for the topic of AI-generated film, with an emphasis on the use of GenAI in screenwriting. Indeed, this can help students not only understand how AI generates conventional storytelling patterns but also reflect critically on issues such as bias, stereotypes, and cultural assumptions in character construction. By engaging with the tool's strengths and limitations, learners can develop both creative skills and critical awareness, which is essential for media education in an age when AI is increasingly part of creative practice. Playing and experimenting with prompts has been proved relevant, especially when accompanied by critical reflection, in some of the media educational resources analyzed in the previous chapter.

## Conclusion

This dissertation aimed to explore how artificial intelligence has impacted the film industry, and how this creates new challenges for media education to tackle film, since the use of AI in their production has changed many aspects. This conclusion will go through the research questions that constructed this work, and I will answer them.

The first question of this dissertation was *Can AI generate scripts without reproducing biases and stereotypes?* I started to seek research on the topic to see if it had been investigated, but nothing concrete had been studied or analyzed regarding the potential bias and stereotypes that could appear in AI-generated scripts. I found that pretty surprising, because I had seen this concern mentioned in various articles and book chapters. However, no one had researched it by analyzing AI-generated films closely. To provide an answer to that question, I selected three films whose scripts were entirely made by artificial intelligence. Since I needed to find a method for my close analysis, I chose to rely on Renee Hobbs, who has several chapters dedicated to

stereotypes and bias in her book *Media Literacy in Action: Questioning the Media*. This book helped me find out what could be analyzed, and in what ways. This research had lots of limitations, ranging from the fact that it was completely new to the lack of material. I do think investigating if there are biases in AI-generated film is pertinent, but as for now, there are not enough instances of scripts entirely produced by AI to present accurate results. Three scripts is not enough, so even if I encountered some stereotypes in the scripts I analyzed, I could not claim that AI-generated scripts are inherently biased. However, it is obvious that the fact that AI tools are reproducing the most basic conventions due to the fact they train on large datasets to learn patterns, which can sometimes lead to stereotypes and misrepresentations. *The Last Screenwriter* presented a female character limited to the role of being either a wife or a mother, which is definitely an instance of repetition of existing patterns that have been long existed in entertainment but also in society. My hypothesis before starting this dissertation was that I would find clear instances of bias, but this is not how it truly happened. This does not mean that further research should not take place, I think other methods of analysis or finding other films could be interesting.

After this analysis, I turned to the main question of this work: *Should media education tackle AI-generated films?*, which was accompanied by another question, which is: *How can media education help analyze and deconstruct the biases inherent in these technologies?* The second question was less developed through the work, since I did not obtain the results, I was expecting from my analysis of scripts. However, this question, even if not addressed immediately, has been answered several times. Indeed, media education could be useful to foster critical thinking and reflection regarding potential stereotypes, by asking questions regarding representations, the origins of the potential AI bias, as well as addressing how GenAI tools work to ensure awareness and understanding these tools, and what they encompass.

In the first question, two topics seem to be intertwined when looking at the word *AI-generated film*. One side stands for *AI*, and on the other stands for *film*. For this reason, I decided to go through how media has engaged with both AI and film more generally, before turning to the specific case of film generated by AI. My assumption was that analyzing how the field of media education and media literacy had previously addressed film in a broad sense, as well as the implications of AI, could provide valuable insights for understanding current challenges and opportunities. This assumption proved to be correct: the analysis did indeed highlight important perspectives, and this view is echoed and supported by several media educators.

Indeed, the way media education analyzes film through different dimensions, including the ones of close reading, discourse analysis, and semiotic approaches, can be applied to the

case of AI-generated scripts, for instance. Barbara Laborde's medio-pragmatic approach is also relevant when considering AI-generated film productions, notably through the competencies of close reading and reception. Using the key questions of media literacy is also pertinent, as they provide opportunities to start a debate around authorship and copyrights, messages, and also the lack of transparency that the use of GenAI represents. Indeed, it these technologies train on copyrighted content, without any consent from human artists.

Looking at the use of generative artificial intelligence through Adorno's critique of popular culture, since the use of AI in film could standardize productions and impact originality, notably through the use of AI to make predictions regarding the cast and plots that should be favored to ensure profit and success.

To conclude this dissertation, I would confirm that media education could tackle the specific case of AI-generated film, since they can create debates and opportunities to discuss various topics fundamental in the field. This could be done through media educational initiatives and workshops, with a variety of activities that draw on what has already been done for the case of traditional film and AI, while adding some twist.

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