

# FILM EDITING

Film Studies



# Editing

- Editing is part of the post-production of a film. Usually, it begins immediately after principal photography.
- Editing is the art of assembling shots together to tell the visual story of a film.
- The editor gives final shape to the project. They are called the third storytellers of a movie because, after the writer and director, the editor will truly define the story that audience will see.



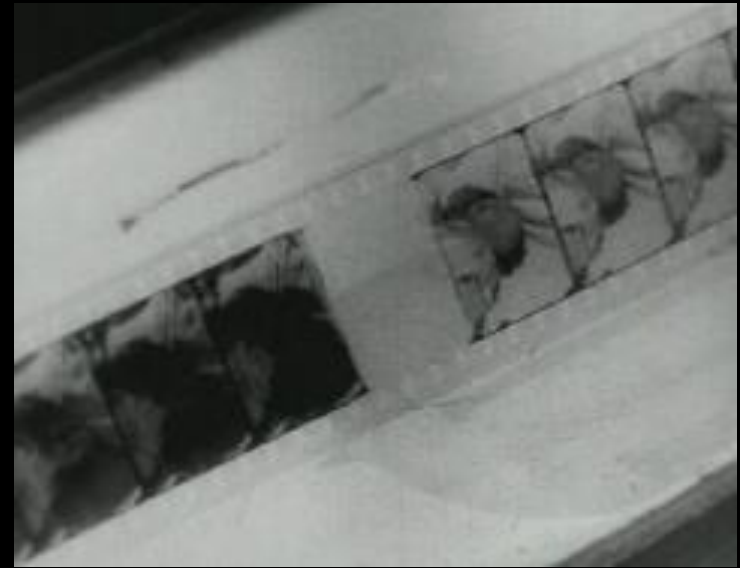
# History of Editing

- During cinema's infancy, films had no cuts or edits whatsoever. The camera ran for as long as the film reel was.
- During screening, the 1-reel footage was shown in its entirety to a paying audience. Soon, viewers got bored.
- Editing was the solution. Edgar S. Porter, an early film pioneer, experimented heavily on the two main principles of editing: ellipsis and cross cutting.
- Both techniques contributed for his achievements with the movies *Life of an American Fireman* (1903), and *The Great Train Robbery* (1903).



# Transitions

- The shot is defined by editing but editing also works to join shots together.
- In film editing, a transition refers to how one shot ends and the next begins, and the filmic device that bridges one to the other.
- Many different types of transitions have been employed since the early years of cinema.
- Some are outdated, but others are still often used today.





# The Cut

- The most basic and common type of transition is the cut. A cut happens when one shot instantly replaces the other. Cuts are so widely used that feature movies normally count thousands of them.
- Although most cuts exist simply for a technical need, the abrupt replacement of one shot by the other often demands a certain interpretation from the viewer, creating a juxtaposition, for example.
- Cuts became industry standard for two reasons: First, during the early years of cinema, when editing actual film, the editor could very easily cut the celluloid strip with a blade or scissors and splice it together. Any other type of transition would require further processing from a specialized lab, therefore increasing costs.
- Second, other types of transition can be distracting to the audience



On this shot, Dr. Lappe informs his secretary that Turner is late again.



The second shot cuts to the exterior of a busy street, showing a man driving a motorcycle.

# Fade In/ Out

- Fade ins and fade outs are common transitions
- Fade outs happen when the picture is gradually replaced by black screen or any other solid color. Traditionally, fade outs have been used to conclude movies. Fade ins are the opposite: a solid color gradually gives way to picture, commonly used in the beginning of movies.
- An average feature film will usually only have a couple of fades. Fades are used sparingly because they imply the end of a major story segment. Fades are also utilized when allowing the audience time to catch their breath after an intense sequence.



# Dissolve

- Also known as **overlapping**, a dissolve is when one shot is gradually replaced by the next.
- For a few seconds, they overlap, and both are visible.
- Dissolves can be used as a fairly straightforward editing device to link any two scenes, or in more creative ways, for instance to suggest a hallucinatory state.



# Wipe

- A transition between shots in which a line passes across the screen, eliminating the first shot as it goes and replacing it with the next one.
- A very dynamic and noticeable transition, it is usually employed in action or adventure films. It often suggest a brief jump in time and a direct connection between the two images.
- Wipes were fashionable during the 1950s-60s.





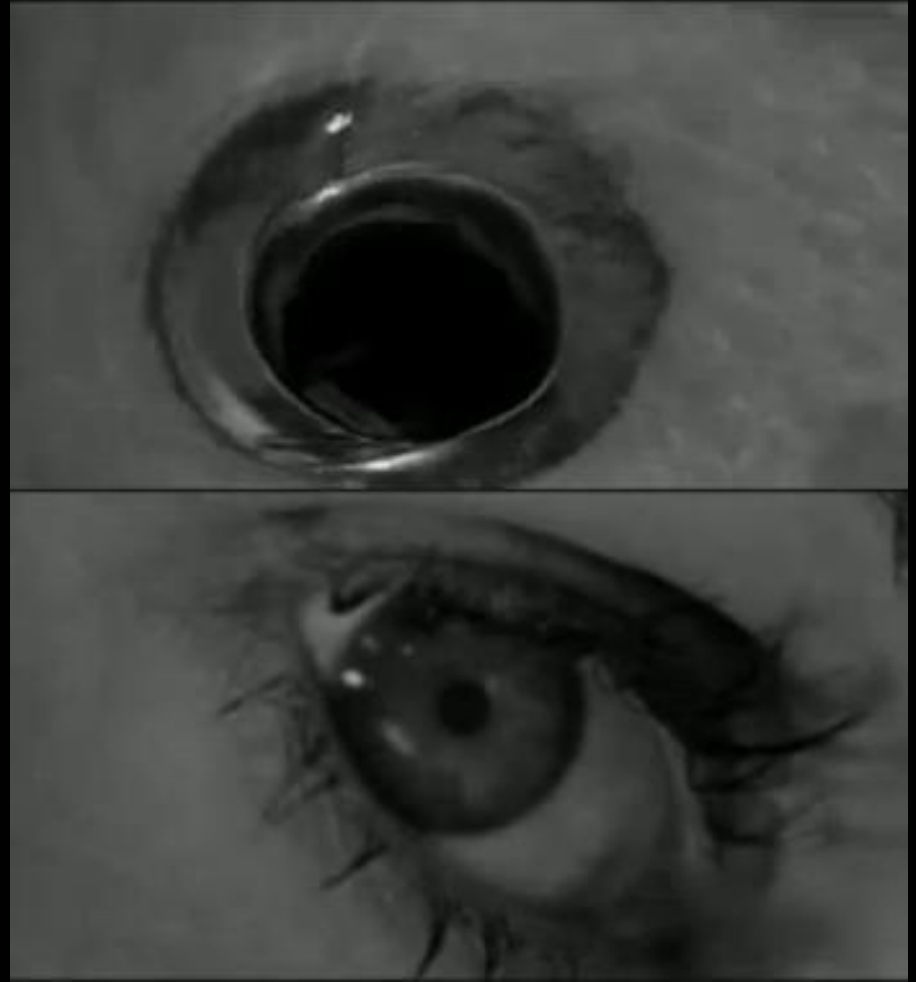
# Iris

- A round, moving *mask* that can close down to end a scene (iris-out) or emphasize a detail, or it can open to begin a scene (iris-in) or to reveal more space around a detail.
- Iris is a common device of early films (at a time when some techniques like zooming were not feasible), so much so that when it is used after 1930 it is often perceived as charmingly anachronistic or nostalgic.



# Matches

- Editing matches refer to techniques that join as well as divide two shots by making some form of connection between them.
- That connection can be inferred from the situation portrayed in the scene (for example, eyeline match) or can be of a purely optical nature (graphic match).



# Eye-line Match

- In an eye-line match, a shot of a character looking at something cuts to another shot showing exactly what the character sees. The camera temporarily becomes the character's eyes.
- In many cases, when the sequence cuts to the eye-line, camera movement is used to imply movement of the character's eyes. For example, a pan from left to right would imply that the character is moving his/her eyes or head from left to right.
- Because the audience sees exactly what the character sees in an eye-line match, this technique is used to connect the audience with that character, seeing as we practically become that character for a moment.
- Eye-line matches can be a very persuasive tool to construct space in a film, real or imagined.



# Graphic Match

- In a graphic match, two successive shots are joined so as to create a strong similarity of compositional elements (e.g., color, shape, size).
- Graphic matches can also be used to create smooth transitions or make metaphorical associations.





# Match on Action

- **Match on Action** is an editing technique that cuts two alternate views of the same action together at the same moment in the action in order to make it seem uninterrupted.
- This allows the same action to be seen from multiple angles without breaking its continuous nature. It fills out a scene without jeopardizing the reality of the time frame.
- A match on action adds variety and dynamism to a scene, since it includes two movements: the one that actually takes place on screen, and an implied one by the viewer, since his or her position is shifted.



# Shot Duration

- Only since the introduction of editing to the cinema at the turn of the 20th century has not-editing become an option.
- The decision to extend a shot can be as significant as the decision to cut it.

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## FILM EDITING FACTS #3

### AVERAGE SHOT LENGTH (ASL) OF 8 STANLEY KUBRICK FILMS

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1. Dr. Strangelove	(ASL) = 8.0 seconds
2. Spartacus	(ASL) = 8.3 seconds
3. Paths of Glory	(ASL) = 8.6 seconds
4. Full Metal Jacket	(ASL) = 10.9 seconds
5. A Clockwork Orange	(ASL) = 11.5 seconds
6. The Shining	(ASL) = 12.6 seconds
7. 2001	(ASL) = 13.0 seconds
8. Barry Lyndon	(ASL) = 13.3 seconds

# Long Take

- A shot that continues for an unusually long time before the transition to the next shot.
- Most contemporary films tend to have faster editing rates than earlier films, especially after the influence of MTV.
- In general, any shot above one minute can be considered a long take.
- Unless shot at a fixed angle, with a fixed camera and no movement, long takes are extremely hard to shoot. They have to be choreographed and rehearsed to the last detail, since any error would make it necessary to start all over again from scratch.
- Sophisticated long takes are often seen as marks of virtuosity.
- Aside from the challenge of shooting in real time, long takes decisively influence a film's rhythm. Depending on how much movement is included, a long take can make a film tense, stagnant and spell-binding, or daring, flowing and carefree.



# Overlapping Editing

- Cuts that repeat part or all of an action, thus expanding its viewing time and plot duration.
- Most commonly associated with experimental filmmaking, due to its temporally disconcerting and purely graphic nature, it is also featured in films in which action and movement take precedence over plot and dialogue: sports documentaries, musicals, martial arts, etc.





# Rhythm

- The perceived rate and regularity of sounds, series of shots, and movements within the shots.
- Rhythm is one of the essential features of a film, for it decisively contributes to its mood and overall impression on the spectator. It is also one of the most complex to analyze, since it is achieved through the combination of mise-en-scene, cinematography, sound and editing.
- Lastly, rhythm is, almost by definition, intrinsically related to music and sound.



# Crosscutting/ Parallel Editing

- Parallel editing (cross cutting) is the technique of alternating two or more scenes that often happen simultaneously but in different locations. If the scenes are simultaneous, they occasionally culminate in a single place, where the relevant parties confront each other.
- In most but not all cases of this technique, these lines of action are occurring at the same time.
- These different sequences of events are shown simultaneously because there is usually some type of connection between them. This connection is either understood by the audience throughout the sequence, or will be revealed later on in the movie.



# Jump Cut

- An elliptical cut that appears to be an interruption of a single shot. Either the figures seem to change instantly against a constant background, or the background changes instantly while the figures remain constant.
- Jump cuts are avoided in classical Hollywood continuity editing, but feature prominently in avant-garde and radical filmmaking.
- When the French New Wave films of the 1960s made jump cuts an essential part of their playful, modern outlook, many directors from around the globe started to use jump cuts --either creatively or in a last ditch attempt to become “hip.”
- More recently, jump cuts are more commonly associated with music videos, video or alternative filmmaking, like Lars Von Trier's Dogma films.
- Rather than presenting a film as a perfectly self-contained story that seamlessly unfolds in front of us, jump cuts call attention to both the artificiality and the difficulties of telling such a story.



# Shot/ Reverse Shot

- *Shot/Reverse Shot* is an editing technique in which multiple shots are edited together in a way that alternates characters, typically to show both sides of a conversation situation. There are multiple ways this can be accomplished, with common examples being over the shoulder shots, angled shots, left/right alternating shots, and often a combination of the three.
- These conventions have become so strong that they can be exploited to make improbable meanings convincing.





# Superimposition

- The exposure of more than one image on the same film strip.
- Unlike a dissolve, a superimposition does not signify a transition from one scene to another.
- The technique was often used to allow the same performer to appear simultaneously as two characters on the, to express subjective or intoxicated vision, or simply to introduce a narrative element from another part of the world of the story into the scene.



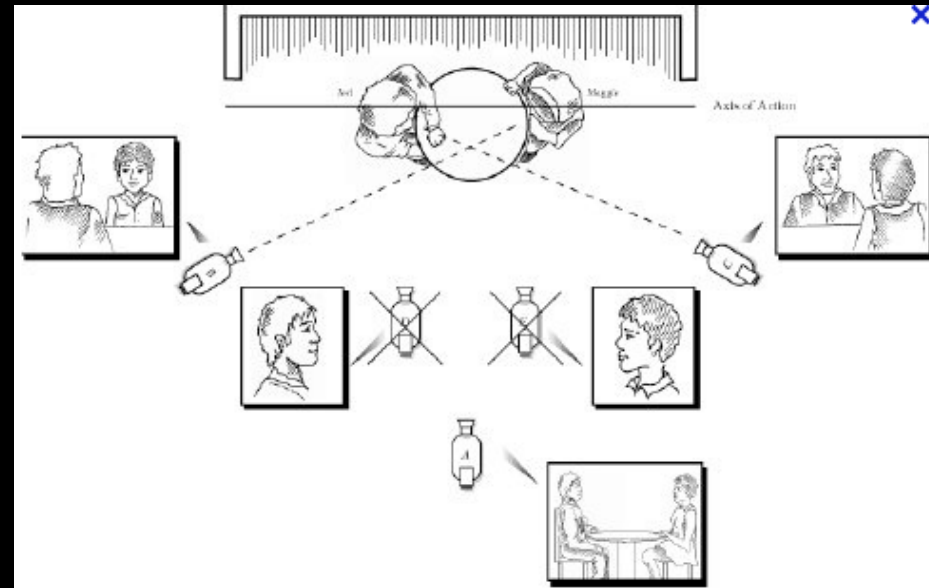
# Editing Styles

- The patterned use of transitions, matches and shot duration can be identified as a cinematic style.
- Editing styles are usually associated with historical moments, technological developments, nations, or particular directors



# Continuity Editing

- A system of cutting to maintain continuous and clear narrative action.
- Continuity editing relies upon matching screen direction, position, and time from shot to shot.
- The film supports the viewer's assumption that space and time are continuous between successive shots. Also, the story is more readily understood when directions on the screen match directions in the world of the film.
- Techniques like the 180 degree rule ensure that the audience understands the layout of the scene.
- This sense of a consistent space is reinforced by the use of editing techniques such as the eyeline match and match on action.



# Montage

- An approach to editing developed by the Soviet filmmakers of the 1920s.
- It emphasizes dynamic, often discontinuous, relationships between shots and the juxtaposition of images to create ideas not present in either shot by itself.
- Sergei Eisenstein, in particular, developed a complex theory of montage that included montage within the shot, between sound and image, multiple levels of overtones, as well as in the conflict between two shots.
- Soviet Montage proved to be influential around the world for commercial as well as avant-garde filmmakers.





# The “Kuleshov Effect”

- Lev Kuleshov, a Soviet filmmaker, was among the first to dissect the effects of juxtaposition on the audience.
- Through his experiments and research, Kuleshov discovered that depending on how shots are assembled the audience will attach a specific meaning or emotion to it.
- In his experiment, Kuleshov cut the shot of an actor with shots of three different subjects: a girl in a coffin, a hot plate of soup, and a pretty woman lying in a couch. The footage of the actor was the same expressionless gaze. Yet the audience raved about his performance, saying first he looked sad, then hungry, then lustful.
- [Hitchcock on the Kuleshov Effect](#)



# Ellipsis/ Elliptical Editing

- **Ellipsis** is both a narrative device and also the most basic idea in film editing.
- Ellipsis describes the omission of a section of the story that is either obvious enough for the public to fill in or concealed for a narrative purpose, such as suspense or mystery.
- Most movies take place over at least a few days of story time. Many take place over several months and years. But how can a film be reduced to 100 minutes of running time?
- Alfred Hitchcock famously said: “What is drama but life with the dull bits cut out.”
- Ellipsis allows scenes that happen in different locations and periods of time to unfold side-by-side on the screen. Ellipsis can be combined with the Kuleshov Effect or Parallel Editing to strengthen the film’s narrative.



# Cheat Cut

- A cut which purports to show continuous time and space from shot to shot but which actually mismatches the position of figures or objects in the scene.
- Cheat cuts were also often used to disguise the relatively short stature of leading men in relation to their statuesque female co-stars.



# Videos

- [The History of Cutting: The Birth of Cinema and Continuity Editing](#)
- [The History of Cutting: The Soviet Theory of Montage](#)
- [The Cutting Edge: The Magic of Movie Editing](#)
- [Hitchcock on Editing](#)
- [10 Most Effective Editing Moments of All Time](#)
- [How to Cut a Film: The Secrets of Editing](#)
- [Editing Techniques in the Films of Scorsese](#)
- [The Evolution of Modern Non-Linear Editing – Part 1](#)
- [The Evolution of Modern Non-Linear Editing – Part 2](#)



# Film Editing: Examples

- In the following film clip, identify the effect the editing has on your experience of the scene.
- *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929)



# Film Editing: Examples

- In the following film clip, identify the effect the editing has on your experience of the scene.
- *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)  
17:00

An epic drama of  
adventure and exploration

Space Station One: your first step in an Odyssey that will take you to the Moon, the planets and the distant stars



**2001: a space odyssey** MGM PRESENTS A STANLEY KUBRICK PRODUCTION

Super Panavision® and Metrocolor





# Film Editing: Examples

- In the following film clip, identify the effect the editing has on your experience of the scene.
- *Rocky* (1976)  
1:30:00

His whole life was a million-to-one shot.

# ROCKY™



A ROBERT CHARTOFF-IRWIN WINKLER PRODUCTION • JOHN G. AVILSEN FILM • STARRING SYLVESTER STALLONE IN "ROCKY"  
ALSO STARRING TALIA SHIRE • BURT YOUNG • CARL WEATHERS • AND BURGESS MEREDITH • WRITTEN BY SYLVESTER STALLONE  
AS MICKY  
PRODUCED BY IRWIN WINKLER AND ROBERT CHARTOFF • DIRECTED BY JOHN G. AVILSEN • EXECUTIVE PRODUCER GENE KIRKWOOD • MUSIC BY BILL CONTI

# Film Editing: Examples

- In the following film clip, identify the effect the editing has on your experience of the scene.
- *Marie Antoinette* (2006)  
chapter 13





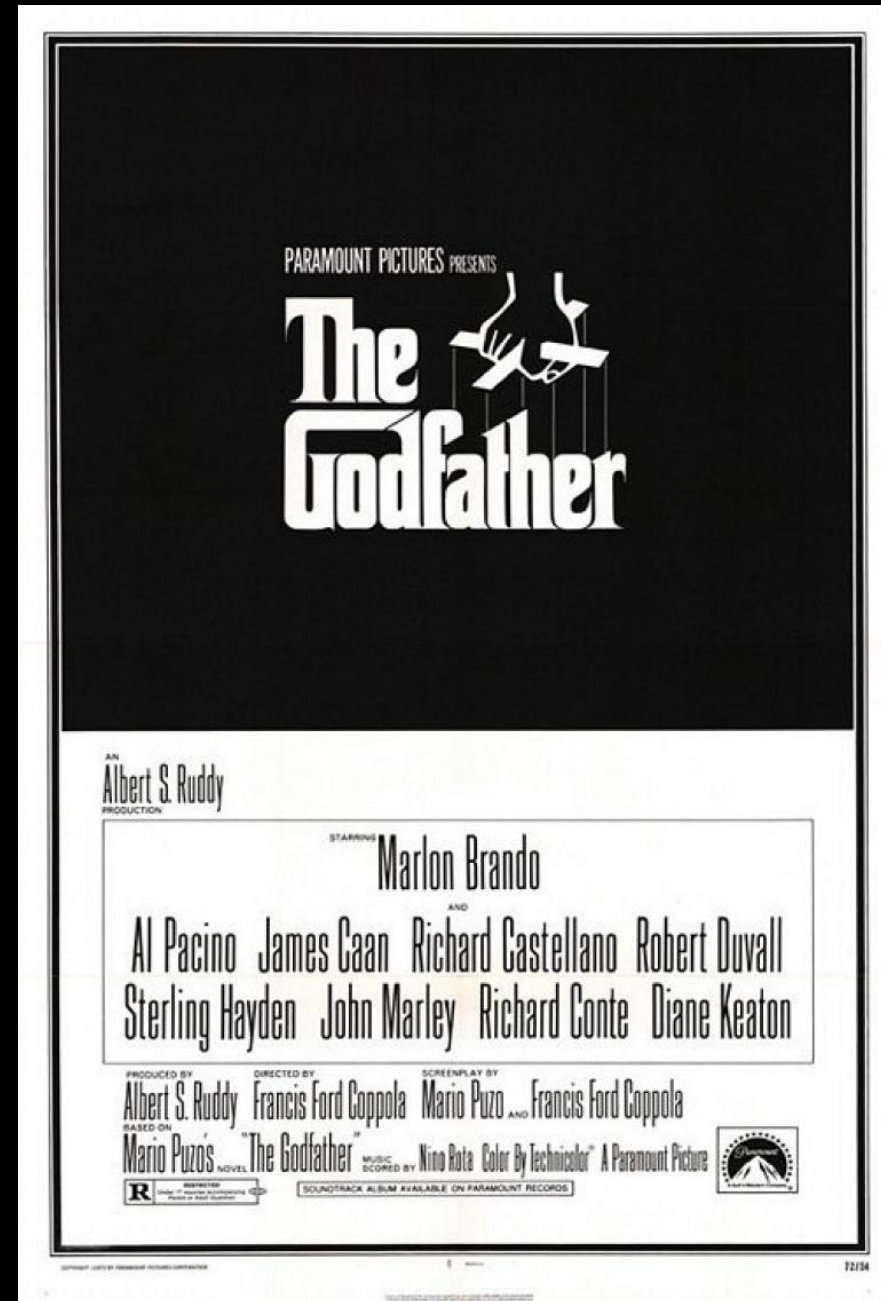
# Film Editing: Examples

- In the following film clip, identify the effect the editing has on your experience of the scene.
- *Silence of the Lambs* (1991)  
1:36:00



# Film Editing: Examples

- In the following film clip, identify the effect the editing has on your experience of the scene.
- *The Godfather* (1972)  
2:36:00





# Film Editing: Examples

- In the following film clip, identify the effect the editing has on your experience of the scene.
- *The Player* (1992) opening scene



# Editing Quiz

1. What is a Transition?
2. What is a Dissolve?
3. What is an Eyeline Match?
4. What is a Graphic Match?
5. What is Parallel Editing?
6. What is a Jump Cut?
7. What is Continuity Editing?
8. What is Montage?
9. What is the “Kuleshov Effect”?
10. What is Elliptical Editing?