

Film Art

1. Handout on Taking Film Notes
2. Example of Film Notes (*The Remains of the Day*)
3. Excerpts from Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art*:

Cover + Brief Contents

xvi	Preface: overall questions about studying film
26-27	Making Movies in the Digital Era
54-55	<i>The Wizard of Oz</i> : plot segmentation example
61-62	Focus on diegesis (61), plot vs story (61-2)
72	range of narration/restricted vs. unrestricted
79-80	<i>Citizen Kane</i> : plot segmentation example
90	Questions to ask about narrative in a movie
95-97	genre and genre conventions in film
156	Mise-en-scene (be able to define)
164-168	Lighting
175	more on mise-en-scene
218-220	Framing the shot : angle, level, height and distance
224-225	The mobile frame: camera movement
245	summary re: mise-en-scene and the film shot
249-251	Editing (cuts, different kinds of shots)
255-256	describing shots (example from <i>The Birds</i>)
262-266	continuity editing and the 180-degree system
305	diegetic vs nondiegetic sound
329-332	Analyzing film style
429-434	Glossary of Film terms

Guidelines for Taking Notes on Narrative Films
(from a handout by Patricia White and Sharon Ullman)

You **MUST** take notes to refer to the film, but you need to be selective or you will miss it. Watching the films a second time is highly recommended. See also Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing About Film*.

Head your sheet with title, director, year, and note main character names and the names of the actors who play them.

You may want to divide your sheet into vertical columns and reserve one for distinctive stylistic elements—framing (sketches help) lighting effects or sound/music, cutting or décor, arrangements of figures—and one for noting narrative events and dialogue.

Narrative films divide rather easily into segments unified by time, place, action, characters. These segments are often divided by a fade or a dissolve. Do a running “segmentation or narrative breakdown of the film as you watch, numbering the major narrative units.

Pay close attention to the opening and closing scenes. How does the film establish its “story world” or diegesis? How does it bring about closure?

What characterizes the film’s lighting, mise-en-scene (what’s in the shot), use of music, acting, cutting, framing, camera movement? Are these codes subordinate to the story or do they call attention to themselves? Use symbols and abbreviations to note framing, direction of character or camera movement.

Does the film use voice-over? Is it authoritative?

Does the film make extensive use of point-of-view shots to maintain our identification with a particular character?

Is the narrative linear or temporally complex? Character driven?

Does the film belong to a recognizable genre? What iconography, settings, themes, tell you so?

What affective (emotional) response does the film produce—pleasure, terror, humor? When and how?

[Note: if you are interested in learning more about the formal elements and production of film, see *Film Art: An Introduction*, by David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson]

FILM NOTES

The Remains of the Day

19 Nov 1993

Dir: James Ivory

~~Wrote~~ Novel: Kazuo Ishiguro

Screenplay: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

Anthony Hopkins: ~~James~~ Stevens

Emma Thompson: Miss Kenton

Christopher Reeve: Jack Lewis

Hugh Grant: Reginald Cardinal

~~Lord~~ ~~Stanton~~ ~~James~~

Stevens

walking

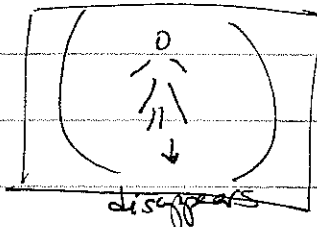
looks into hole in door

POV shot

we see ~~Emma~~ Emma Thompson

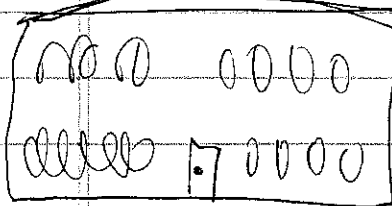
through the door window

but she disappears



opening shot: house facade

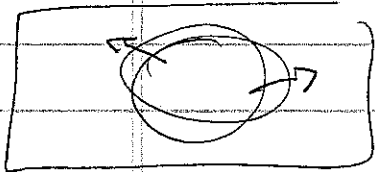
Sketch/plan



opened out as if penetrated, bursting

burning thru into color

From boring drab yellow



following road

following cars down the road

to a house

same house as in the opening shot

later 9 speech by German women impressed to have been with spirit of goodwill of this conference

speech by French aristocrat will do utmost to change policy

speech by Americans neither would we care for peace at any price but deflected by via TOASTS

decent, honorable & well-meaning but you are all of you gentlemen-
awaken

Europe = arena of Realpolitik propose a toast to the professors what you describe amateurism I call honor

Mr Stevens father passed

very busy

- permit me to close his eyes?

- father would have wished to carry on

- German woman singing 10 silhouette

- movie stops as well to enjoy

- ret b/w Germ & Eng figured as an aristocratic courtship

- obtrusive maudlin banal convoluted

- my dear good thing always nature enjoyed a good, clean fight

- (you all right?) Not pursued

- lingering his watch; from stroke → Fin feet

Mr Stevens, my condolences 11

ton tourism Present Moment 12

Film Art An Introduction

Sixth Edition

David Bordwell
Kristin Thompson
University of Wisconsin

[2001]



New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá Caracas
Lisbon London Madrid Mexico Milan Montreal
New Delhi Paris San Juan Singapore Sydney Tokyo Toronto

BRIEF CONTENTS

Preface xv

PART ONE

Film Production, Distribution, and Exhibition

CHAPTER ONE Film Production, Distribution, and Exhibition 2

PART TWO

Film Form

CHAPTER TWO The Significance of Film Form 39

CHAPTER THREE Narrative as a Formal System 59

PART THREE

Types of Films

CHAPTER FOUR Film Genres 94

CHAPTER FIVE Documentary, Experimental, and Animated Films 110

PART FOUR

Film Style

CHAPTER SIX The Shot: Mise-en-Scene 156

CHAPTER SEVEN The Shot: Cinematography 193

CHAPTER EIGHT The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing 249

CHAPTER NINE Sound in the Cinema 291

CHAPTER TEN Style as a Formal System 327

PART FIVE

Critical Analysis of Films

CHAPTER ELEVEN Film Criticism: Sample Analyses 352

How does a film get from the planning stages to the screen? To understand film as an art, we must first understand how people create the artifact and disseminate it to audiences. This question leads to a study of film production, distribution, and exhibition (**Part One**).

How does an entire film function? We assume that, like all artworks, a film may be understood as a *formal* construct. That is, it is made up of parts that relate to one another in specific and deliberate ways in order to have an effect on an audience. In **Part Two**, we examine what film form is and how it affects us. We also introduce the most familiar type of film form—the narrative.

How do we classify films? We seldom go to the movies without having some idea of the kind of film we will be seeing. **Part Three** looks at two ways of classifying films. One way is by *genre*, such as when we label a film as a Western, a musical, or a horror film. Another way is by our assumptions concerning the filmmakers' intentions and the way in which the film was made. In addition to live-action narrative films, we recognize documentaries, experimental films, and animated films.

How do film techniques contribute to film form? Film is a specific medium, and every film contains a distinctive combination of many stylistic techniques that combine to create a whole. In **Part Four**, we examine the artistic possibilities of the four primary film techniques: mise-en-scene, cinematography, editing, and sound. In each case we also analyze how these techniques contribute to a film's overall form.

How may we analyze a film critically? Armed with both a conception of film form and a knowledge of film technique, we can go on to analyze *specific films* as artworks. We analyze several important films of various kinds as examples (**Part Five**).

How does film art change through history? Although a thorough history of cinema would require many volumes, here we can suggest how the formal aspects of film work within historical contexts. We survey the most noteworthy *periods and movements in film history* to show how understanding form helps us define films' larger context (**Part Six**).

This approach to the entire film resulted from several years of teaching introductory film courses. As teachers, we wanted students to see and hear more in the films we studied, but it was evident that simply providing the "lecturer's view" would not teach students how to analyze films on their own. Ideally, we decided, students should master a repertory of *principles* which would help them examine films more closely. We became convinced that the best way to understand cinema is to use general principles of film form to help analyze specific films. Our success with this approach led us to decide that this book should be skills-centered. By learning basic concepts of film form and technique, the reader can sharpen his or her perception of any particular film.



Making Movies in the Digital Era

Over the last 20 years, all phases of film production have been changed by computer technology. There is software to help draft screenplays, prepare budgets and schedules, draw storyboards, prepare set designs, test make-up, and diagram camera placement. Composers can prepare first drafts of scores directly on digital synthesizers and send the results to the director for fast synchronization with edited sequences. Cinematographers can “previsualize” complicated camera movements in “virtual sets.” Filmmakers speak of the “digital backlot,” software programs which can put performers into artificially composed settings which automatically change the angle of sunlight or the texture of rain or fog. For the final storm in *The Truman Show*, shots of the hero’s sailboat in a studio tank were blended with a vast seascape created digitally.

The arrival of digital, or “nonlinear,” editing has drastically changed the assembly process. Databases enable editors to keep track of every take and bit of sound. In the days when editors cut directly on film, they had to splice and resplice the footage if they wanted to try out different arrangements. Now, with all takes stored on the hard drive,

shots can be rearranged in seconds. Neil Travis, editor of *Patriot Games*, prepared the sequence in which Jack Ryan watches in horror as a satellite transmits infrared images of a commando raid on a terrorist camp. With the aid of digital editing, Travis began trimming two frames off every shot, again and again, until he pared the shots down to mere flashes. To do all this by hand would have been discouragingly slow, since Travis would have had to order many reprints of the shots and to keep track of dozens of bits of film. Now that fast cutting is easy, the pace of movie editing has picked up. In *Armageddon*, which has nearly 4000 shots, the average shot lasts only 2.3 seconds.

Other phases of postproduction have been transformed by **computer-generated imagery** (“CGI”). By transferring photographed film to digital form and then back to film, it is now easy to delete distracting background elements, to clone a character (as in *Multiplicity*), or to build crowds out of only a few spectators (in several scenes of *Forrest Gump*). Flying characters are filmed suspended from cables, which are then digitally erased. Digital compositing

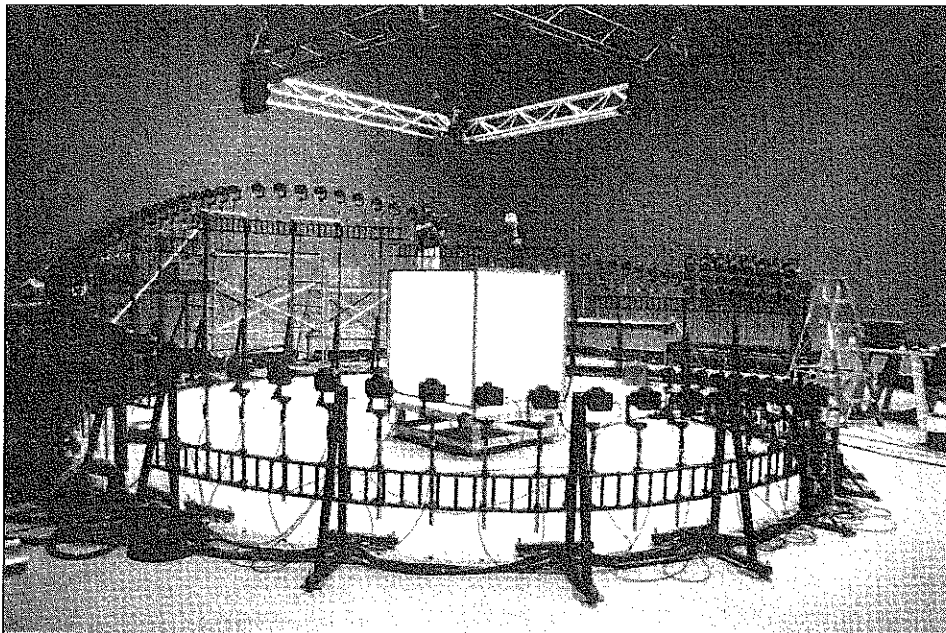


Figure 1.29 For *The Matrix* a ring of still cameras captured all aspects of figures in flight . . .

can construct virtual characters like Jar Jar Binks in *The Phantom Menace* and create wounded soldiers, as in *Saving Private Ryan*'s Omaha beach assault.

The natural home for CGI is fantasy and science fiction. For *The Matrix*, still photographs were digitized to create virtual sets seen in smoothly changing three-dimensional perspectives, as if filmed by a moving camera. Software added lens distortions, color shifts, light flare, and even film grain. Directors Larry and Andy Wachowski wanted midair combats in which the camera could glide rapidly around gunmen who are frozen in place or floating

in slow motion. The effect was achieved through surrounding the wire-suspended actors with 120 still cameras and feeding the separate images to a high-speed computer's motion-capture system. The filmmakers had already "pre-visualized" the fighters' movements on computer and were able to provide the system information about every twist and leap. The software then created synthetic in-between images based on the frames on either side, so that the shot could vary the speed of the action at will. The result was larger-than-life movement in a virtual world (Figs. 1.29, 1.30).



Figure 1.30 . . . permitting the final shot to move around characters hovering in space.

In order to analyze a film's pattern of development, it is usually a good idea to make a **segmentation**. A segmentation is simply a written outline of the film that breaks it into its major and minor parts, with the parts marked by consecutive numbers or letters. If a narrative film has ten scenes, then we can label each scene with a number running from one to ten. It may be useful to divide some parts further (for example, scenes 6a and 6b). Segmenting a film enables us not only to notice similarities and differences among parts but also to plot the overall progression of the form. Accompanying is a segmentation for *The Wizard of Oz*.



THE WIZARD OF OZ: PLOT SEGMENTATION

C. Credits

1. Kansas

- a. Dorothy at home, worried about Miss Gulch's threat to Toto
- b. Running away, Dorothy meets Professor Marvel, who induces her to return home
- c. A tornado lifts the house, with Dorothy and Toto, into the sky

2. Munchkin City

- a. Dorothy meets Glinda, and the Munchkins celebrate the death of the Wicked Witch of the East
- b. The Wicked Witch of the West threatens Dorothy over the Ruby Slippers
- c. Glinda sends Dorothy to seek the Wizard's help

3. The Yellow Brick Road

- a. Meeting the Scarecrow
- b. Meeting the Tin Man
- c. Meeting the Cowardly Lion

4. The Emerald City

- a. The Witch creates a poppy field near the City, but Glinda rescues the travelers
- b. The group is welcomed by the City's citizens
- c. As they wait to see the Wizard, the Lion sings of being king
- d. The terrifying Wizard agrees to help the group if they obtain the Wicked Witch's broomstick

5. The Witch's Castle and Nearby Woods

- a. In the woods, flying monkeys carry off Dorothy and Toto
- b. The Witch realizes that she must kill Dorothy to get the Ruby Slippers
- c. The Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion sneak into the Castle; in the ensuing chase Dorothy kills the Witch

6. The Emerald City

- a. Although revealed as a humbug, the Wizard grants the wishes of the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion
- b. Dorothy fails to leave with the Wizard's hot-air balloon but is transported home by the Ruby Slippers

7. Kansas—Dorothy describes Oz to her family and friends

E. End credits

Plot and Story

We make sense of a narrative, then, by identifying its events and linking them by cause and effect, time, and space. As viewers, we do other things as well. We often infer events that are not explicitly presented, and we recognize the presence of material that is extraneous to the story world. In order to describe how we perform such activities, we can draw a distinction between **story** and **plot** (sometimes called “story” and “discourse”). Since this distinction is basic to understanding narrative form, we need to examine it in a little more detail.

We often make assumptions and inferences about events in a narrative. For instance, at the start of Alfred Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* we know we are in Manhattan at rush hour. The cues stand out clearly: skyscrapers, congested traffic (Fig. 3.1). Then we watch Roger Thornhill as he leaves an elevator with his secretary, Maggie, and strides through the lobby, dictating memos (Fig. 3.2). On the basis of these cues, we start to draw some conclusions. Thornhill is an executive who leads a busy life. We assume that before we saw Thornhill and Maggie, he was also dictating to her; we have come in on the middle of a string of events in time. We also assume that the dictating began in the office, before they got on the elevator. In other words, we infer causes, a temporal sequence, and another locale even though none of this information has been directly presented. We are probably not aware of having made these inferences, but they are no less firm for going unnoticed.

The set of *all* the events in a narrative, both the ones explicitly presented and those the viewer infers, constitutes the story. In our example the story would consist of at least two depicted events and two inferred ones. We can list them, putting the inferred events in parentheses:

(Roger Thornhill has a busy day at his office.)

Rush hour hits Manhattan.

(While dictating to his secretary Maggie, Roger leaves the office and they take the elevator.)

Still dictating, Roger gets off the elevator with Maggie and they stride through the lobby.

The total world of the story action is sometimes called the film’s **diegesis** (the Greek word for “recounted story”). In the opening of *North by Northwest*, the traffic, streets, skyscrapers, and people we see, as well as the traffic, streets, skyscrapers, and people we assume to be offscreen, are all diegetic because they are assumed to exist in the world that the film depicts.

The term plot is used to describe everything visibly and audibly present in the film before us. The plot includes, first, all the story events that are directly depicted. In our *North by Northwest* example, only two story events are explicitly presented in the plot: rush hour and Roger Thornhill’s dictating to Maggie as they leave the elevator.

Second, the film’s plot may contain material that is extraneous to the story world. For example, while the opening of *North by Northwest* is portraying rush



Figure 3.1 Hurrying Manhattan pedestrians in *North by Northwest*.



Figure 3.2 Maggie takes dictation from Roger Thornhill.



Figure 3.3 A theatrical flop in *The Band Wagon* . . .

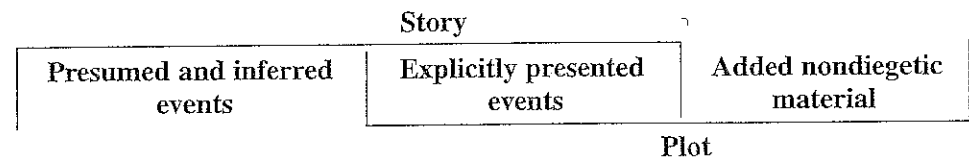
hour in Manhattan, we also see the film's credits and hear orchestral music. Neither of these elements is diegetic, since they are brought in from *outside* the story world. (The characters cannot read the credits or hear the music.) Credits and such extraneous music are thus **nondiegetic** elements. In Chapters 8 and 9 we will consider how editing and sound can function nondiegetically. At this point, we need only notice that the film's plot—the totality of the film—can bring in nondiegetic material.

Nondiegetic material may occur elsewhere than in credit sequences. In *The Band Wagon*, we see the premiere of a hopelessly pretentious musical play. Eager patrons file into the theater (Fig. 3.3); there then appear three black-and-white images (Figs. 3.4–3.6) accompanied by a brooding chorus. These images and sounds are clearly nondiegetic, inserted from outside the story world in order to signal that the production was catastrophic and “laid an egg.” The plot has added material to the story for comic effect.

In sum, story and plot overlap in one respect and diverge in others. The plot explicitly presents certain story events, so these events are common to both domains. The story goes beyond the plot in suggesting some diegetic events which we never witness. The plot goes beyond the story world by presenting nondiegetic images and sounds which may affect our understanding of the story. A diagram of the situation would look like this:



Figure 3.4 . . . is presented by three comic nondiegetic images . . .



We can think about these differences between story and plot from two perspectives. From the standpoint of the storyteller, the filmmaker, the story is the sum total of all the events in the narrative. The storyteller can present some of these events directly (that is, make them part of the plot), can hint at events that are not presented, and can simply ignore other events. For instance, though we learn later in *North by Northwest* that Roger has a mother, we never learn what happened to his father. The filmmaker can also add nondiegetic material, as in the example from *The Band Wagon*. In a sense, then, the filmmaker makes a story into a plot.

From the perceiver's standpoint, things look somewhat different. All we have before us is the plot—the arrangement of material in the film as it stands. We create the story in our minds on the basis of cues in the plot. We also recognize when the plot presents nondiegetic material.

The story-plot distinction suggests that if you want to give someone a synopsis of a narrative film, you can proceed in two ways. You can summarize the story, starting from the very earliest incident which the plot cues you to assume or infer and running straight through to the end. Or you can tell the plot, starting with the first incident you encountered in watching the film.

Our initial definition and the distinction between plot and story constitute a set of tools for analyzing how narrative works. We shall see that the plot-story distinction affects all three aspects of narrative: causality, time, and space.



Figure 3.5 . . . of two bleak landscapes . . .

[Range of narration / restricted vs. unrestricted]

"In the first section [of *Reservoir Dogs*], up until Mr. Orange shoots Mr. Blonde, the characters have far more information about what's going on than you have—and they have conflicting information. Then the Mr. Orange sequence happens and that's a great leveller. You start getting caught up with exactly what's going on, and in the third part, when you go back into the warehouse for the climax you are totally ahead of everybody—you know far more than any one of the characters."

Quentin Tarantino

In fact, across a whole film, narration is never completely unrestricted. There is always something we are not told, even if it is only how the film will end. Usually, therefore, we think of a typical unrestricted narration as operating in the way that it does in *The Birth of a Nation*: The plot shifts constantly from character to character to change our source of information. Similarly, a completely restricted narration is not common. Even if the plot is built around a single character, the narration usually includes a few scenes that the character is not present to witness. Though *Tootsie*'s narration remains almost entirely attached to actor Michael Dorsey, a few shots show his acquaintances shopping or watching him on television.

The plot's range of story information creates a *hierarchy of knowledge*, and this may vary somewhat depending on the film. At any given moment, we can ask if the viewer knows more than, less than, or as much as the characters do. For instance, here is how hierarchies would look for the three films we have been discussing. The higher someone is on the scale, the greater his or her range of knowledge:

<i>The Birth of a Nation</i>	<i>The Big Sleep</i>	<i>North by Northwest</i>
(unrestricted narration)	(restricted)	(mixed and fluctuating)
viewer	viewer—Marlowe	the Agency
all characters		viewer
		Thornhill

An easy way to analyze the range of narration is to ask, "Who knows what when?" The spectator must be included among the "whos," not only because we may get more knowledge than any one character but also because we may get knowledge that *no* character possesses. We shall see this happen at the end of *Citizen Kane*.

Plot and Story in *Citizen Kane*

In analyzing a film, it is often helpful to begin by segmenting it into sequences. Sequences are often demarcated by cinematic devices (fades, dissolves, cuts, black screen, and so on) and form meaningful units. In a narrative film, the sequences constitute the parts of the plot.

Most sequences in a narrative film are called *scenes*. The term is used in its theatrical sense, to refer to distinct phases of the action occurring within a relatively unified space and time. Our segmentation of *Citizen Kane* appears on page 80. (In segmenting films, we will label the opening credits with a "C," the end title with an "E," and all other segments with numbers.) In this outline, numerals refer to major parts, some of which are only one scene long. In most cases, however, the major parts consist of several scenes, and each of these is identified by a lower-case letter. Many of these segments could be further divided, but this segmentation suits our immediate purposes.

Our segmentation lets us see at a glance the major divisions of the plot and how scenes are organized within them. The outline also helps us notice how the plot organizes story causality and story time. Let us look at these factors more closely.

CITIZEN KANE: PLOT SEGMENTATION**C. Credit title****1. Xanadu: Kane dies****2. Projection room:**

- a. "News on the March"
- b. Reporters discuss "Rosebud"

3. El Rancho nightclub: Thompson tries to interview Susan**4. Thatcher library:**

*First
flashback*

- a. Thompson enters and reads Thatcher's manuscript
- b. Kane's mother sends the boy off with Thatcher
- c. Kane grows up and buys the *Inquirer*
- d. Kane launches the *Inquirer's* attack on big business
- e. The Depression: Kane sells Thatcher his newspaper chain
- f. Thompson leaves library

5. Bernstein's office:

*Second
flashback*

- a. Thompson visits Bernstein
- b. Kane takes over the *Inquirer*
- c. Montage: the *Inquirer's* growth
- d. Party: the *Inquirer* celebrates getting the *Chronicle* staff
- e. Leland and Bernstein discuss Kane's trip abroad
- f. Kane returns with his fiancée Emily
- g. Bernstein concludes his reminiscence

6. Nursing home:

*Third
flashback*

- a. Thompson talks with Leland
- b. Breakfast table montage: Kane's marriage deteriorates
- c. Leland continues his recollections

*Third
flashback
(cont.)*

- d. Kane meets Susan and goes to her room
- e. Kane's political campaign culminates in his speech
- f. Kane confronts Gettys, Emily, and Susan
- g. Kane loses election and Leland asks to be transferred
- h. Kane marries Susan
- i. Susan's opera premiere
- j. Because Leland is drunk, Kane finishes Leland's review
- k. Leland concludes his reminiscence

7. El Rancho nightclub:

*Fourth
flashback*

- a. Thompson talks with Susan
- b. Susan rehearses her singing
- c. Susan's opera premiere
- d. Kane insists that Susan go on singing
- e. Montage: Susan's opera career
- f. Susan attempts suicide and Kane promises she can quit singing
- g. Xanadu: Susan bored
- h. Montage: Susan plays with jigsaw puzzles
- i. Xanadu: Kane proposes a picnic
- j. Picnic: Kane slaps Susan
- k. Xanadu: Susan leaves Kane
- l. Susan concludes her reminiscence

8. Xanadu:

*Fifth
flashback*

- a. Thompson talks with Raymond
- b. Kane destroys Susan's room and picks up paperweight, murmuring "Rosebud"
- c. Raymond concludes his reminiscence; Thompson talks with the other reporters; all leave
- d. Survey of Kane's possessions leads to a revelation of Rosebud; exterior of gate and of castle; the end

E. End credits

In looking at any narrative film, such questions as these may help in understanding its formal structures:

1. Which story events are directly presented to us in the plot, and which must we assume or infer? Is there any nondiegetic material given in the plot?
2. What is the earliest story event of which we learn? How does it relate through a series of causes and effects to later events?
3. What is the temporal relationship of story events? Has temporal order, frequency, or duration been manipulated in the plot to affect our understanding of events?
4. Does the closing reflect a clear-cut pattern of development that relates it to the beginning? Do all narrative lines achieve closure, or are some left open?
5. How does the narration present story information to us? Is it restricted to one or a few characters' knowledge, or does it range freely among the characters in different spaces? Does it give us considerable depth of story information by exploring the characters' mental states?
6. How closely does the film follow the conventions of the classical Hollywood cinema? If it departs significantly from those conventions, what formal principle does it use instead?

Usually when we go to a movie theater, we see a live-action, fictional narrative film that conforms to classical norms to a large extent. Yet there are ways of specifying the *types* of films we see. One is by **genre**, as when we attend a Western, musical, or science-fiction film. Another way is by *mode* of filmmaking: documentary, experimental, or animation. Such films can all use narrative form, but they are made in distinctive ways, arouse specific expectations, and often employ formal principles other than narrative. We shall examine genres and modes of filmmaking in Chapters 4 and 5.

UNDERSTANDING GENRE

Defining a Genre

Audiences know the genres of their culture very well, and so do filmmakers. The intriguing problem comes in defining just what a genre is. What makes a group of films a genre?

Most scholars now agree that no genre can be defined in a single hard and fast way. Some genres stand out by their subjects or themes. A gangster film centers on large-scale urban crime. A science-fiction film features a technology beyond the reach of contemporary science. A Western is usually about life on some frontier (not necessarily the West, as *North to Alaska* and *Drums Along the Mohawk* suggest).

Yet subject matter or theme is not so central to defining other genres. Musicals are recognizable chiefly by their manner of presentation: singing, dancing, or both. The detective film is partly defined by the plot pattern of an investigation that solves a mystery. And some genres are defined by the distinctive emotional effect they aim for: amusement in comedy, tension in suspense films. Apparently no strictly logical distinctions can capture the variety of factors which create the genres we have.

The question is complicated by the fact that genres can be more or less broad. There are large, blanket genre categories that fit many films. We refer commonly to “thrillers,” yet that term may encompass horror films, detective stories, hostage films like *Die Hard* or *Speed*, and many others. “Comedy” is a similarly broad term that includes slapstick comedies like *Liar Liar*, romantic comedies like *Groundhog Day*, parodies like the “Naked Gun” series, and even, more recently, “grossout” comedy like *There’s Something about Mary*. Thus subgenres can be devised by critics, viewers, or filmmakers to try to describe more precisely what films are like.

Still, there are limits to the precision with which the concept of genre can be applied. Any category contains both undeniable instances and fuzzy cases. *Singin’ in the Rain* is a prime example of a musical, but David Byrne’s *True Stories*, with its ironic presentation of musical numbers, is more of a borderline case. And an audience’s sense of the core cases can change over history. For modern audiences, a gory film like *The Silence of the Lambs* probably exemplifies the thriller, whereas for audiences of the 1950s a prime example would have been an urbane Hitchcock exercise like *North by Northwest*.

In other cases, films may seem to straddle two genre classifications. Is *Groundhog Day* a romantic comedy or a fantasy? Is *Psycho* a slasher film or a detective thriller? (As we shall see, mixing formulas like this is one important source of innovation and change in genres.) And finally, some films seem so distinctive that critics and audiences have trouble assigning them to a genre. When *Being John Malkovich* appeared in 1999, TV interviewers joked with the cast and crew about how impossible the film was to describe—hinting that they simply could not find a genre to fit it.

How are genre categories used? They are certainly one guideline by which industry officials decided what sorts of films to make. While big-budget musicals were commonly produced in the 1960s, they are out of fashion now, and few companies would be likely to make one. On the other hand, horror and action films are currently popular, and executives would be more likely to green-light projects perceived to fit into those genres.

For the vast publicity system that exists around filmmaking, genres are a simple way to characterize film. In fact, reviewers are often central in gathering and crystallizing notions about genres. If you read popular reviews or watch television coverage of entertainment, you will notice that reporters make frequent reference to films' genres, because they know that most members of the public will easily understand them.

You may also find that some reviewers tend to dismiss genre films as shallow and trivial, assuming them to be simply formulaic: It's "only" a Western, "just" a horror film. Undoubtedly many films in such genres are cheaply and unimaginatively made. Yet some of the greatest films also fall into genres. *Singin' in the Rain* is a musical, but it is arguably also one of the best American films ever made. The important classic *Grand Illusion* is a war film; *Psycho* is a horror film. On the whole, genre is a category best used to describe and analyze films, not to evaluate them.

For viewers, genre often provides a way of finding a film they want to see. If a group plans an evening together at the movies, they may debate which film to see by expressing their preferences for a science-fiction film or a thriller or a romance and then negotiate from there. Some filmgoers consider themselves fans of a specific genre and may seek out information and exchange via magazines, Internet sites, or conventions devoted to that genre. Science-fiction aficionados are one example of such a group, with subgroups pledging allegiance to the *Star Wars* or the *Star Trek* series.

At all levels of the filmmaking and film viewing processes, then, genres help assure that most members of a society share at least some general notions about the many films that compete for our attention.

Analyzing a Genre

As we have seen, genres are based on a tacit agreement among filmmakers, reviewers, and audiences. What gives films of a type some common identity are shared *genre conventions* which reappear in film after film.

Certain plot elements may be conventional. We anticipate an investigation in a mystery film; revenge plotlines are common in Westerns; a musical will find ways to provide song-and-dance situations. The gangster film usually centers on the gangster's rise and fall as he struggles against police and rival gangs. We expect a biographical film to trace major episodes in the main character's life. In a cop thriller, certain characters are conventional: the shifty informer, the comic sidekick, the impatient captain who despairs of getting the squad detectives to follow procedure.

Other genre conventions are more thematic, involving general meanings that are summoned up again and again. The Hong Kong martial arts film commonly celebrates loyalty and obedience to one's teacher. A standard theme of the gangster film has been the price of criminal success, with the gangster's rise to power portrayed as a hardening into egotism and brutality. The screwball comedy traditionally sets up a thematic opposition between a stiff, unyielding social milieu and characters' urges for freedom and innocent zaniness.

Still other genre conventions involve characteristic film techniques. Sombre lighting is standard in the horror film and the thriller (**Fig. 4.1**). The action picture often relies on rapid cutting and slow-motion violence. In the melodrama, an emotional twist may be underscored by a sudden burst of pathetic music.

As a visual medium, cinema can also define genres through conventional *iconography*. A genre's iconography consists of recurring symbolic images that carry meaning from film to film.



Figure 4.1 *I Walked with a Zombie*: Looming silhouettes and mysterious landscapes are stylistic conventions of the horror film.

Objects and settings often furnish iconography for a genre. A close-up of a tommygun lifted out of a 1920s Ford would probably be enough to identify a film as a gangster movie, while a shot of a long, curved sword hanging from a kimono would place us in the world of the samurai. The war film takes place in battle-scarred landscapes, the backstage musical in theaters and nightclubs, the space-travel film in starships and on distant planets. Even stars can become iconographic—Judy Garland for the musical, John Wayne for the Western, Arnold Schwarzenegger for the action picture, Bill Murray for comedy.

By knowing conventions, the viewer has a pathway into the film. Such landmarks allow the genre movie to communicate information quickly and economically. When we see the weak sheriff, we strongly suspect that he will not stand up to the gunslinger. We can then focus attention on the cowboy hero as he gets slowly drawn into helping the townspeople defend themselves.

Alternatively, a film can revise or reject the conventions associated with its genre. *Bugsy Malone* is a gangster musical in which children play all the traditional adult roles. *2001: A Space Odyssey* violated several conventions of the science-fiction genre: beginning with a lengthy sequence set in prehistoric times, synchronizing classical music to outer-space action, and ending with an enigmatically symbolic fetus drifting through space. Filmmakers may seek to surprise or shock viewers by breaking their expectations that a certain convention will be followed.

Audiences expect the genre film to offer something familiar, but they also demand fresh variations on it. The filmmaker may devise something mildly or radically different, but it will still be based on tradition. The interplay of convention and innovation, familiarity and novelty, is central to the genre film.



CHAPTER SIX

The Shot: Mise-en-Scene

WHAT IS MISE-EN-SCENE?

In the original French, *mise-en-scène* (pronounced “meez-ahn-sen”) means “putting into the scene,” and it was first applied to the practice of directing plays. Film scholars, extending the term to film direction, use the term to signify the director’s control over what appears in the film frame. As you would expect from the term’s theatrical origins, *mise-en-scène* includes those aspects of film that overlap with the art of the theater: setting, lighting, costume, and the behavior of the figures. In controlling the *mise-en-scène*, the director *stages the event* for the camera.

Any of the types of films we have examined so far can use *mise-en-scène*. While the *cinéma-vérité* director tries to capture events without controlling them, makers of other sorts of documentaries often arrange at least some events, with vivid examples including *The Thin Blue Line* (Color Plate 2; we shall analyze this film further in Chapter 11). Animated and abstract films may control *mise-en-scène* to a degree impossible with performers shot in real time—as is seen not only in drawn or puppet animation but also in computer graphics. Most often when we think of *mise-en-scène*, however, we think of fictional narratives, and most of our examples here will be drawn from such films.

Mise-en-scène usually involves some planning, but the filmmaker may be open to unplanned events as well. An actor may add a line on the set, or an unexpected change in lighting may enhance a dramatic effect. While filming a cavalry procession through Monument Valley for *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, John Ford took advantage of an approaching lightning storm to create a dramatic backdrop for the action. The storm remains part of the film’s *mise-en-scène* even though Ford neither planned it nor controlled it; it was a lucky accident that helped create one of the film’s most affecting passages. Jean Renoir, Robert Altman, and other directors have allowed their actors to improvise their performances, making the films’ *mise-en-scène* more spontaneous and unpredictable.



Figure 6.27 In *The Cheat*, Cecil B. DeMille suggested a jail cell by casting a bright light on a man's face and body through unseen bars.



Figure 6.28 Robert Bresson's *Pickpocket*.

"Light is everything. It expresses ideology, emotion, colour, depth, style. It can efface, narrate, describe. With the right lighting, the ugliest face, the most idiotic expression can radiate with beauty or intelligence."

Federico Fellini, director

Lighting

Much of the impact of an image comes from its manipulation of lighting. In cinema, lighting is more than just illumination that permits us to see the action. Lighter and darker areas within the frame help create the overall composition of each shot and thus guide our attention to certain objects and actions. A brightly illuminated patch may draw our eye to a key gesture, while a shadow may conceal a detail or build up suspense about what may be present. Lighting can also articulate textures: the soft curve of a face, the rough grain of a piece of wood, the delicate tracery of a spider's web, the sheen of glass, the sparkle of a faceted gem.

Lighting shapes objects by creating highlights and shadows. A highlight is a patch of relative brightness on a surface. The man's face in **Figure 6.27** and the edge of the fingers in **Figure 6.28** display highlights. Highlights provide important cues to the texture of the surface. If the surface is smooth, like glass or chrome, the highlights tend to gleam or sparkle; a rougher surface, like a coarse stone facing, yields more diffuse highlights.

There are two basic types of shadows, each of which is important in film composition: *attached* shadows, or *shading*, and *cast* shadows. An attached shadow occurs when light fails to illuminate part of an object because of the object's shape or surface features. If a person sits by a candle in a darkened room, patches of the face and body will fall into darkness. Most obviously, the nose often creates a patch of darkness on an adjoining cheek. This phenomenon is shading, or attached shadow. But the candle also projects a shadow on the wall behind. This is a cast shadow, because the body blocks out the light. The shadows in **Figure 6.27**, for example, are cast shadows, made by bars between the actor and the light source. But, in **Figure 6.28** the small dark patches on the hand are attached shadows, for they are caused by the three-dimensional curves and ridges of the hand itself.

As these examples suggest, highlights and shadows help create our sense of a scene's space. In **Figure 6.27**, a few shadows imply an entire prison cell. Animated films can use the same cues to one degree or another. In *Color Plate 20*, from *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*, human and cartoon figures display both cast shadows and attached shadows, or shading.

Lighting also shapes a shot's overall composition. One shot from John Huston's *Asphalt Jungle* welds the gang members into a unit by the pool of light cast by a hanging lamp (**Fig. 6.29**). At the same time, it sets up a scale of importance, emphasizing the protagonist by making him the most frontal and clearly lit figure.

A shot's lighting affects our sense of the shape and texture of the objects depicted. If a ball is lit straight from the front, it will appear round. If the same ball is lit from the side, we will see it as a half-circle. Hollis Frampton's short film *Lemon* consists primarily of light moving around a lemon, and the shifting shadows create dramatically changing patterns of yellow and black. This film almost seems designed to prove the truth of a remark made by Josef von Sternberg, one of the cinema's masters of film lighting: "The proper use of light can embellish and dramatize every object."

For our purposes, we can isolate four major features of film lighting: its *quality*, *direction*, *source*, and *color*.

Lighting *quality* refers to the relative intensity of the illumination. "Hard" lighting creates clearly defined shadows, crisp textures, and sharp edges, whereas "soft" lighting creates a diffused illumination. In nature, the noonday sun creates hard light, while an overcast sky creates soft light. The terms are relative, and many lighting situations will fall between the extremes, but we can in practice easily recognize the differences (**Figs. 6.30, 6.31**).



Figure 6.29 Attached shadows on faces create a dramatic composition in John Huston's *Asphalt Jungle*.



Figure 6.30 In this shot from Satyajit Ray's *Aparajito*, Apu's mother and the globe she holds are emphasized by hard lighting, while . . .



Figure 6.31 . . . in another shot from the same film, softer lighting blurs contours and textures and makes for more diffusion and gentler contrasts between light and shade.

The *direction* of lighting in a shot refers to the path of light from its source or sources to the object lit. "Every light," wrote von Sternberg, "has a point where it is brightest and a point toward which it wanders to lose itself completely. . . . The journey of rays from that central core to the outposts of blackness is the adventure and drama of light." For convenience we can distinguish among frontal lighting, sidelighting, backlighting, underlighting, and top lighting.

Frontal lighting can be recognized by its tendency to eliminate shadows. In **Color Plate 21**, a shot from Godard's *La Chinoise*, the result of such frontal lighting is a fairly flat-looking image. Contrast **Figure 6.32**, from *Touch of Evil*, in which Welles uses a hard *sidelight* (also called a *crosslight*) to sculpt the character's features.

Backlighting, as the name suggests, comes from behind the subject filmed. It can be positioned at many angles: high above the figure, at various angles off to the side, pointing straight at the camera, or from below. Used with no other sources of light, backlighting tends to create silhouettes, as in **Figure 6.33**. Combined with more frontal sources of light, the technique can create an unobtrusively illuminated contour. This use of backlighting is called *edge lighting* or *rim lighting* (**Fig. 6.34**).

Underlighting suggests that the light comes from below the subject. In **Figure 6.35**, the underlighting suggests an offscreen fire. Since underlighting tends to distort features, it is often used to create dramatic horror effects, but it may also simply indicate a realistic light source, such as a fireplace. As usual, a particular technique can function differently according to context.

Top lighting is exemplified by **Figure 6.36**, where the spotlight shines down from almost directly above Marlene Dietrich's face. Von Sternberg frequently used such a high frontal light to bring out the line of his star's cheekbones. (Our earlier example from *Asphalt Jungle* in **Figure 6.29** provides a less glamorous instance of top lighting.)

Lighting can also be characterized by its *source*. In making a documentary, the filmmaker may be obliged to shoot with the light available in the actual surroundings. Most fictional films, however, use extra light sources to obtain greater control of the image's look. In most fictional films, the table lamps and street lights you see in the mise-en-scene are not the principal sources of illumination for the filming. Such visible sources of light, however, will serve to motivate the lighting decisions made in production. The filmmaker will usually strive to create a lighting design that is consistent with the sources in the setting. In **Figure 6.37**, from

"When taking close-ups in a colour picture, there is too much visual information in the background, which tends to draw attention away from the face. That is why the faces of the actresses in the old black and white pictures are so vividly remembered. Even now, movie fans nostalgically recall Dietrich . . . Garbo . . . Lamarr . . . Why? Filmed in black and white, those figures looked as if they were lit from within. When a face appeared on the screen overexposed—the high-key technique, which also erased imperfections—it was as if a bright object was emerging from the screen."

Nestor Almendros, cinematographer



Figure 6.32 *Touch of Evil*: Sidelight creates sharp attached shadows by the character's nose, cheek, and lips, while long cast shadows appear on the file cabinets at the left.

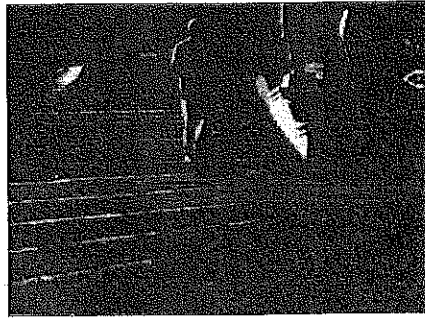


Figure 6.33 Backlighting in Welles' *Citizen Kane*.



Figure 6.34 In *Wings*, a narrow line of light makes each actor's body stand out from the background.



Figure 6.35 Underlighting in Ivan Mosjoukin's *Le Brasier ardent*.



Figure 6.36 Top lighting in Josef von Sternberg's *Shanghai Express*.



Figure 6.37 Apparent and hidden light sources in *The Miracle Worker*.

The Miracle Worker, the window in the rear and the lantern in the right foreground are purportedly the sources of illumination, but you can see the many studio lights used in this shot reflected as tiny white dots in the glass lantern.

Directors and cinematographers manipulating the lighting of the scene will start from the assumption that any subject normally requires two light sources: a **key light** and a **fill light**. The key light is the primary source, providing the dominant illumination and casting the strongest shadows. The key light is the most directional light, and it usually corresponds to the motivating light source in the setting. A fill is a less intense illumination which "fills in," softening or eliminating shadows cast by the key light. By combining key and fill, and by adding other sources, lighting can be controlled quite exactly.

The key lighting source may be aimed at the subject from any angle, as our examples of lighting direction have indicated. **Color Plate 28**, from *Ivan the Terrible*, shows underlighting as the key source, while a softer and dimmer fill falls on the setting behind the figure.

Figure 6.38 shows a frame from Abel Gance's *La Roue*. The bold backlighting is complemented by a key light from the left side. This casts attached shadows on the left side of the actress's face, notably by the nose and eye. The fill light comes from the right, thus ensuring that this side of her face will not appear completely dark, as does part of the face in Figure 6.32.



Figure 6.38 While key and fill light show the actress's face in *La Roue*, backlighting makes her blond hair glow.

Figure 6.39 shows a shot from *Bezhin Meadow*, in which Eisenstein uses a number of light sources and directions. The key light falling on the figures comes from the left side, but it is hard on the face of the old woman in the foreground and softened on the face of the man because a fill light comes in from the right. This fill light falls on the woman's forehead and nose.

Classical Hollywood filmmaking developed the custom of using at least three light sources per shot: key light, fill light, and backlight. **Figure 6.40** shows the most basic arrangement of these lights on a single figure. The backlight comes from behind and above the figure, the key light comes diagonally from the front, and a fill light comes from a position near the camera. The key will usually be closer to the figure or brighter than the fill. Typically, each major character in a scene will have his or her own key, fill, and backlight. If another actor is added (as in the dotted figure in Figure 6.40), the key light for one can be altered slightly to form the backlight for the other and vice versa, with a fill light on either side of the camera.

In **Figure 6.41**, the Bette Davis character in *Jezebel* is the most important figure, and the three-point lighting centers attention on her. A bright backlight from the rear upper right highlights her hair and edge-lights her left arm. The key light is off left, making her right arm brightly illuminated. A fill light comes from just to the right of the camera. It is less bright than the key. This balanced lighting creates mild shading, modeling Davis's face to suggest volume rather than flatness. (Note the slight shadow cast by her nose.) Davis's backlight and key light serve to illuminate the woman behind her at the right, but less prominently. Other fill lights, called *background* or *set lighting*, fall on the setting and on the crowd at the left rear.

Three-point lighting emerged during the studio era of Hollywood filmmaking, and it is still widely used. In **Color Plate 23**, from Woody Allen's *Purple Rose of Cairo*, the two figures are modeled by a strong key light from the left side, a fill light from off right of the camera, and a trace of edge lighting to pick out their clothes. The office behind the couple is lit more dimly and softly, as is typical with background light.

You may have already noticed that this "three-point" lighting system demands that the lamps be rearranged virtually every time the camera shifts to a new framing of the scene. In spite of the great cost involved, most Hollywood films will have a different lighting arrangement for each camera position. Such variations in the light sources do not conform to reality, but they do enable filmmakers to create clear compositions for each shot.

Three-point lighting was particularly well suited for the **high-key lighting** used in classical Hollywood cinema and other filmmaking traditions. High-key lighting refers to an overall lighting design which uses fill and backlight to create low contrast between brighter and darker areas. Usually, the light quality is soft, making shadow areas fairly transparent. The frames from *Jezebel* (Fig. 6.41) and from *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (Color Plate 23) exemplify high-key lighting. Hollywood directors and cinematographers have relied on this for comedies, adventure films, and most dramas.

High-key lighting is not used simply to render a brightly lit situation, such as a dazzling ballroom or a sunny afternoon. High-key lighting is an overall approach to illumination that can suggest different lighting conditions or times of day. Consider, for example, two frames from *Back to the Future*. The first shot (**Fig. 6.42**) uses high-key illumination matched to daylight and a brightly lit malt shop. The second frame (**Fig. 6.43**) is from a scene set in a room at night, but it still uses the high-key approach, as can be seen from the lighting's softness, its low contrast, and its detail in shadow areas.



Figure 6.39 *Bezhin Meadow*.

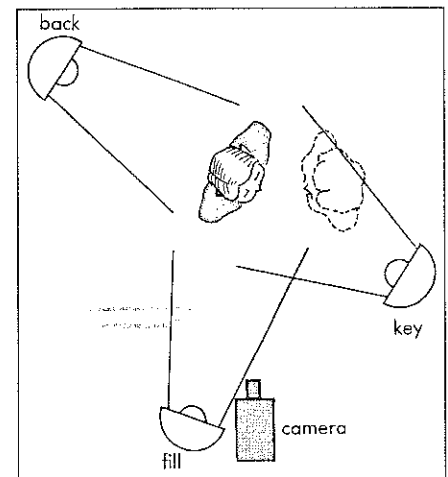


Figure 6.40 Three-point lighting, one of the basic techniques of Hollywood cinema.



Figure 6.41 The three-point system's effect as it looks on the screen in *Jezebel*.

“When I started watching films in the 1940s and 1950s, Indian cinematography was completely under the influence of Hollywood aesthetics, which mostly insisted on the ‘ideal light’ for the face, using heavy diffusion and strong back-light. I came to resent the complete disregard of the actual source of light and the clichéd use of back-light. Using back-light all the time is like using chili powder in whatever you cook.”

Subrata Mitra, cinematographer

Low-key illumination creates stronger contrasts and sharper, darker shadows. Often the lighting is hard, and fill light is lessened or eliminated altogether. The effect is of *chiaroscuro*, or extremely dark and light regions within the image. An example is **Figure 6.44**, from Andrzej Wajda’s *Kanal*. Here, the fill light and background light are significantly less intense than in high-key technique. As a result, shadow areas on the left third of the screen remain hard and opaque. In **Figure 6.45**, a low-key shot from Welles’s *Touch of Evil*, the key light is hard and comes from the side. Welles eliminates both fill and background illumination, creating very sharp shadows and a dark void around the characters.



Figure 6.42 *Back to the Future*: day . . .



Figure 6.43 . . . versus night.



Figure 6.44 In *Kanal*, low-key lighting creates a harsh highlight on one side of the woman’s face, a deep shadow on the other.

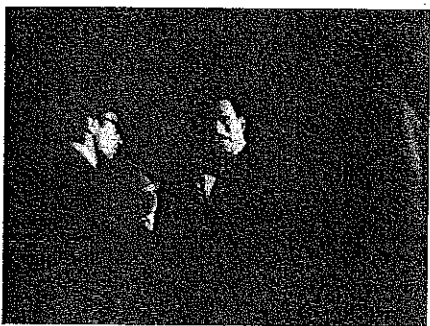


Figure 6.45 Key light used by itself in *Touch of Evil*.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: MISE-EN-SCENE IN SPACE AND TIME

Setting, costume, lighting, and staging—these are the components of mise-en-scene. Yet one element seldom appears in isolation. Each usually combines with others to create a specific system in every film. The general formal principles of unity, disunity, similarity, difference, and development will guide us in analyzing how specific elements of mise-en-scene can function together. What are some ways in which mise-en-scene affects our attention? What pulls our eye to a portion of the frame at a given moment?

Most basically, our visual system is attuned to perceiving *change*, both in time and space. Our eyes and brains are better suited for noticing differences than for concentrating on uniform, prolonged stimuli. Thus aspects of mise-en-scene will attract our attention by means of changes in light, shape, movement, and other aspects of the image.

Moreover, looking is purposeful; what we look *at* is guided by our assumptions and expectations about what to look *for*. These, in turn, are based upon our previous experiences of artworks and of the real world. In viewing a film image, we frame expectations on the basis of many factors.

One general factor is the total organization of the film's form. In a narrative film, characters and their actions offer strong cues. If a shot shows a crowd, we will tend to scan it looking for a character we recognize from earlier scenes. In **Figure 6.64**, although there are several people in the foreground of this shot from *Tootsie*, we will likely notice Julie (Jessica Lange) and Dorothy Michaels (Dustin Hoffman) quickly, since they are our main characters. Similarly, we will notice Les, seen here for the first time, because he and Dorothy are exchanging smiles. Similarly, sound can become an important factor controlling our attention. As we shall see in Chapter 9, sound can draw attention to areas of the image in various ways. Written language can also shape the viewer's expectations, as when an intertitle cues us what to look for in the next shot. In what follows, we shall concentrate on another source of hypotheses: the elements and patterns in the mise-en-scene itself. Mise-en-scene contains a host of purely spatial and temporal factors to guide our expectations and hence shape our viewing of the image.



Figure 6.64 Narrative expectations guide our eye to the main characters in *Tootsie*.

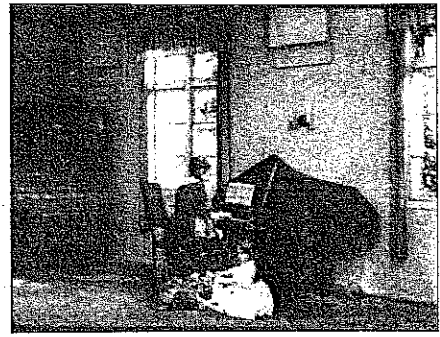


Figure 7.84 A straight-on angle in *The Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach*.

Angle, Level, Height, and Distance of Framing

The frame implies not only space outside itself but also a position from which the material in the image is viewed. Most often, of course, such a position is that of the camera filming the event, but this need not always be true. In an animated film, the position implied by the drawn frames is not necessarily the same position that the camera occupies during the making of the film. Shots in an animated film may be framed as high or low angles, or long shots or close-ups, all of which simply result from the perspective of drawings selected to be photographed. Still, in what follows, we shall continue to speak of “camera angle,” “camera level,” “camera height,” and “camera distance,” with the understanding that these terms refer simply to what we see on the screen and need not always conform to what occurred during production.

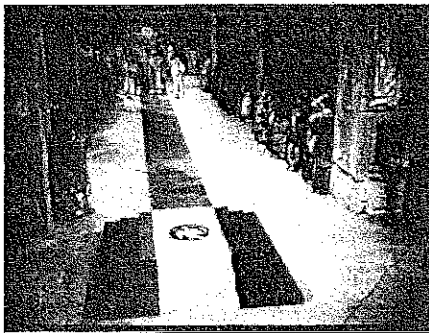


Figure 7.85 A high-angle framing from *Ivan the Terrible*.

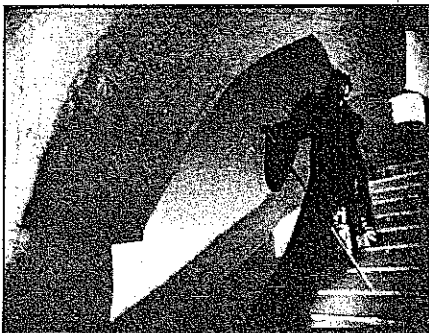
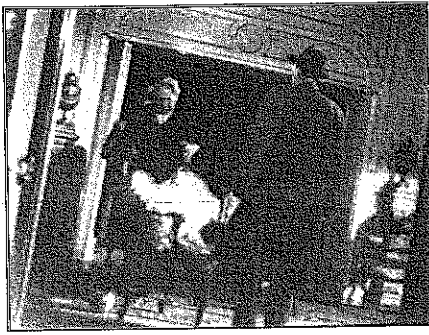
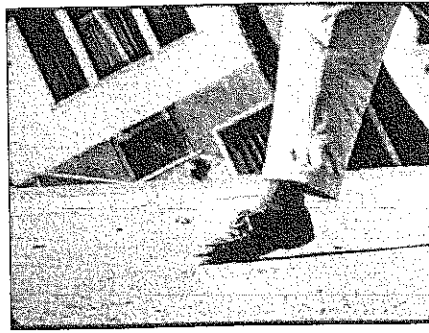
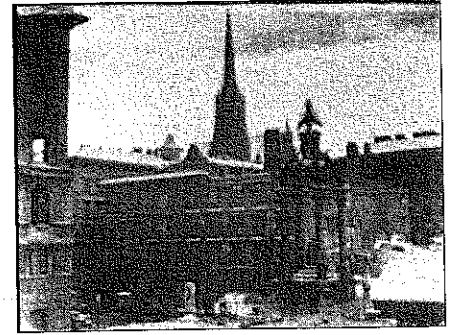


Figure 7.86 A low-angle framing from *Ivan the Terrible*.

Angle. The frame implies an **angle of framing** with respect to what is shown. It thus positions us at some angle onto the shot’s mise-en-scene. The number of such angles is infinite, since there is an infinite number of points in space that the camera might occupy. In practice, we typically distinguish three general categories: the straight-on angle, the high angle, and the low angle. The straight-on angle is the most common (Fig. 7.84). The high angle positions us “looking down” at the material within the frame, as in Figure 7.85. The low-angle framing positions us as “looking up” at the framed materials (as in Fig. 7.86).

Level. We can also distinguish the degree to which the frame is “level.” This ultimately bears on the sense of gravity governing the filmed material and the frame. Assume that we are filming telephone poles. If the framing is level, the horizontal edges of the frame will be parallel to the horizon of the shot and perpendicular to the poles. If horizon and poles are at diagonal angles, the frame is **canted** in one manner or another.

The canted framing is relatively rare, although a few films make heavy use of it, such as Orson Welles’s *Mr. Arkadin* and Carol Reed’s *The Third Man* (see Fig. 7.87). In Christopher Maclaine’s *The End*, a canted framing makes a steep street in the foreground appear level and renders the houses in the background grotesquely out of kilter (Fig. 7.88).

Figure 7.87 *The Third Man.*Figure 7.88 A startling canted framing in *The End*.Figure 7.89 *The Third Man*: extreme long shot.

Height. Sometimes it becomes important to indicate that the framing gives us a sense of being stationed at a certain **height**. Camera angle is, of course, partly related to height: To frame from a high angle entails being at a vantage point higher than the material in the image.

But camera height is not simply a matter of camera angle. For instance, the Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu often positions his camera close to the ground to film characters or objects on the floor (see **Color Plates 41, 62, and 63**). Note that this is not a matter of camera angle, for the angle is straight on; we still see the ground or floor. Filming from such a low height with a straight-on angle is an important quality of Ozu's visual style, as we shall see in Chapter 11.

Distance. Finally, the framing of the image stations us not only at a certain angle and height and on a level plane or at a cant but also with respect to distance. Framing supplies a sense of being far away or close to the *mise-en-scène* of the shot. This aspect of framing is usually called camera distance. In what follows, we shall use the standard measure—the scale of the human body—but any other filmed material would do as well. The examples are all from *The Third Man*.

In the **extreme long shot**, the human figure is barely visible (**Fig. 7.89**). This is the framing for landscapes, bird's-eye views of cities, and other vistas. In the **long shot**, figures are more prominent, but the background still dominates (**Fig. 7.90**). Shots in which the human figure is framed from about the knees up are called **medium long shots** (**Fig. 7.91**). These are very common, since they permit a nice balance of figure and surroundings.

The **medium shot** frames the human body from the waist up (**Fig. 7.92**). Gesture and expression now become more visible. The **medium close-up** frames the body from the chest up (**Fig. 7.93**). The **close-up** is traditionally the shot showing just the head, hands, feet, or a small object. It emphasizes facial expression, the details of a gesture, or a significant object (**Fig. 7.94**). The **extreme close-up** singles out a portion of the face (eyes or lips), isolates a detail, and magnifies the minute (**Fig. 7.95**).

Note that the size of the photographed material within the frame is as important as any real "camera distance." From the same "camera distance," you could film a long shot of a person or a close-up of King Kong's elbow. We would not call the shot in **Figure 7.96** (from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*) a close-up just because only Jeanne's head appears in the frame; the framing is that of a long shot because in scale her head is relatively small. (If the framing were simply adjusted downward, her whole body would be visible.) In judging camera distance, the relative proportion of the material framed provides the basic determinant.



Figure 7.90 Long shot.



Figure 7.91 Medium long shot.



Figure 7.92 Medium shot.



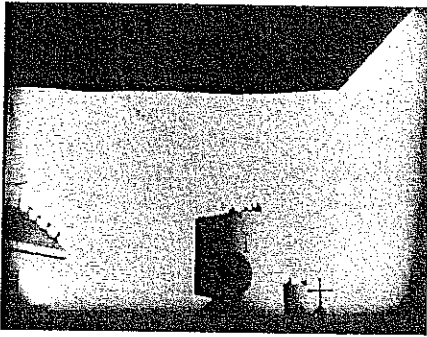
Figure 7.93 Medium close-up.



Figure 7.94 Close-up.



Figure 7.95 Extreme close-up.

Figure 7.96 *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*.

Common confusions exist about framing. First, categories of framing are obviously matters of degree. There is no universal measure of camera angle or distance. No precise cut-off point distinguishes between a long shot and an extreme long shot, or a slightly low angle and a straight-on angle. Moreover, filmmakers are not bound by terminology. They rightly do not worry if a shot does not fit into traditional categories. (Nevertheless abbreviations like MS for medium shot and CU for close-up are regularly used in screenplays, so filmmakers do find these terms useful in their work.) In most cases, the concepts are clear enough for us to use them in talking about films. It is not of great importance whether the shot that cuts John Wayne off slightly above his waist is to be called a “true” medium shot or a “true” medium close-up. What is important is that we use the term consistently, so that we can analyze how that framing functions in the particular film.

Functions of framing. Another problem is more important. Sometimes we are tempted to assign absolute meanings to angles, distances, and other qualities of framing. It is tempting to believe that framing from a low angle automatically “says” that a character is powerful and that framing from a high angle presents him or her as dwarfed and defeated. Verbal analogies are especially seductive: A canted frame seems to mean that “the world is out of kilter.”

The analysis of film as art would be a lot easier if technical qualities automatically possessed such hard-and-fast meanings, but individual films would thereby lose much of their uniqueness and richness. The fact is that framings have no absolute or general meanings. In *some* films angles and distance carry such meanings as mentioned above, but in other films—probably most films—they do not. To rely on such formulas is to forget that meaning and effect always stem from the total film, from its operation as a system. The context of the film will determine the function of the framings, just as it determines the function of mise-en-scene, photographic qualities, and other techniques.

“I don't like close-ups unless you can get a kick out of them, unless you need them. If you can get away with attitudes and positions that show the feeling of the scene, I think you're better off using the close-up only for absolute punctuation—that's the reason you do it. And you save it—not like TV where they do everything in close-up.

Howard Hawks, director



Figure 7.111 During a shot in Dreyer's *Ordet*, the camera pans right . . .



Figure 7.112 . . . to keep the figures in frame as they cross a room.

The Mobile Frame

All of the features of framing we have examined are present in paintings, photographs, comic strips, and other sorts of pictures. All framed images furnish instances of aspect ratios, in-frame and out-of-frame relations, angle, height, level, and distance of the frame's vantage point. But there is one resource of framing that is specific to cinema (and video). In film it is possible for the frame to *move* with respect to the framed material.

"**Mobile framing**" means that within the image, the framing of the object changes. The mobile frame thus produces changes of camera height, distance, angle, or level *during* the shot. Further, since the framing orients us to the material in the image, we often see ourselves as moving *along with* the frame. Through such framing we may approach the object or retreat from it, circle it or move past it.

Types of mobile framing. We usually refer to the ability of the frame to be mobile as **camera movement**. Very often the term is accurate, for usually mobility of framing is achieved by moving the camera physically during production. The camera, as we know, usually rests on a support while filming, and this support may be designed to move the camera. There are several kinds of camera movement, each one of which creates a specific effect onscreen.

The **pan** (short for "panorama") movement rotates the camera on a vertical axis. The camera as a whole does not displace itself. Onscreen, the pan gives the impression of a frame horizontally scanning space. It is as if the camera "turns its head" right or left (Figs. 7.111, 7.112).

The **tilt** movement rotates the camera on a horizontal axis. It is as if the camera's "head" were swiveling up or down. Again, the camera itself does not change position. Onscreen, the tilt movement yields the impression of unrolling a space from top to bottom or bottom to top (Figs. 7.113, 7.114).

In the **tracking shot** (or **dolly** or **trucking**), the camera as a whole does change position, traveling in any direction along the ground—forward, backward, circularly, diagonally, or from side to side (Figs. 7.115, 7.116). Note how the figures remain in the same basic relationship to the frame as they stroll along a sidewalk, while the front of the house which they hope to buy remains visible behind them.

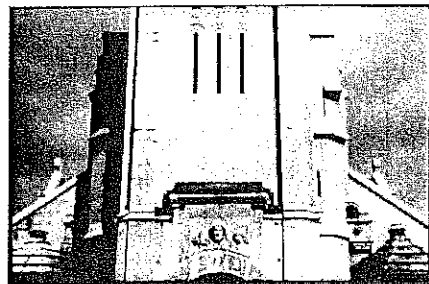


Figure 7.113 François Truffaut's *The Bride Wore Black* begins with a tilt down a church spire . . .

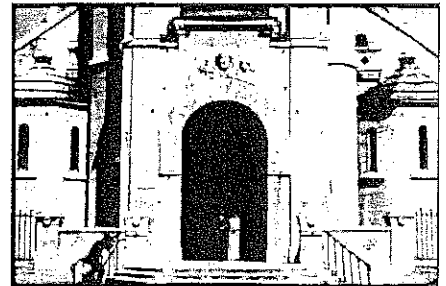


Figure 7.114 . . . to the church door.



Figure 7.115 During this lateral tracking shot in Erich von Stroheim's *Greed*, the camera moves rightward . . .

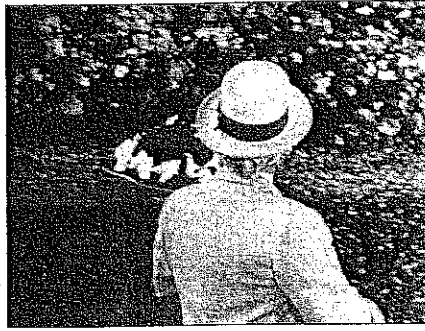


Figure 7.116 . . . along with the two characters.



Figure 7.117 *Ivan the Terrible*: From a high-angle view of the bier, the camera cranes down . . .

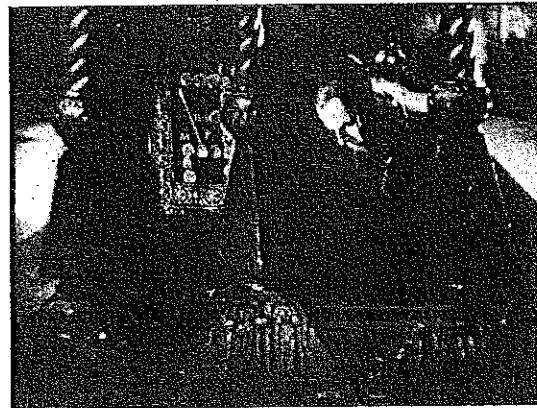


Figure 7.118 . . . to end with a straight-in framing of Ivan seated at the bier's base.

In the **crane shot** the camera moves above ground level. Typically, it rises or descends, often thanks to a mechanical arm which lifts and lowers it. The mourning scene in *Ivan the Terrible* begins with a crane downward (Figs. 7.117, 7.118). A crane shot may move not only up and down, like an elevator, but forward and backward or from side to side (Figs. 7.119, 7.120). For *The Thin Red Line*, Terrence Malick used a crane with a 72-foot arm to let the camera slither over tall grass during battle scenes. Variations of the crane shot are helicopter and airplane shots.

Pans, tilts, tracking shots, and crane shots are the most common framing movements, but virtually any kind of camera movement can be imagined (somersaulting, rolling, and so on).

SUMMARY

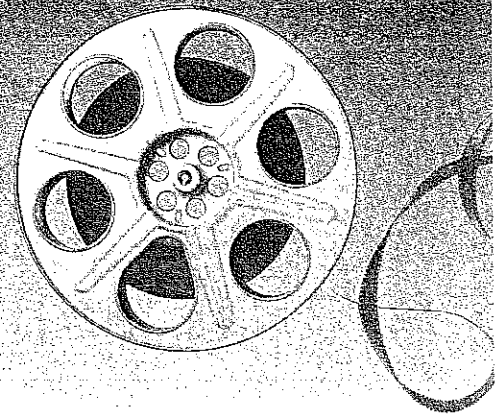
The film shot, then, is a very complex unit. *Mise-en-scene* fills the image with material, arranging setting, lighting, costume, and figure behavior within the formal context of the total film. Within that same formal context, the filmmaker also controls the cinematographic qualities of the shot—how the image is photographed and framed, how long the image lasts on the screen.

You can sensitize yourself to these cinematographic qualities in much the same way that you worked on *mise-en-scene*. Trace the progress of a single technique—say, camera angle—through an entire scene or film. Become conscious of when a shot begins and ends, observing how the long take may function to shape the film's form. Watch for camera movements, especially those that follow the action (since those are usually the hardest to notice). In short, once we are aware of cinematographic qualities, we can move to an understanding of their various possible functions within the total film.

Film art offers still other possibilities for choice and control. Chapters 6 and 7 have focused on the shot. The filmmaker may also juxtapose one shot with another through editing, and that is the subject of Chapter 8.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Relation of Shot to Shot: Editing



Since the 1920s, when film theorists began to realize what editing can achieve, it has been the most widely discussed film technique. This has not been all to the good, for some writers have mistakenly found in editing the key to good cinema (or even *all* cinema). Yet many films, particularly in the period before 1904, consist of only one shot and hence do not depend on editing at all. Experimental films sometimes deemphasize editing by making each shot as long as the amount of film a camera will hold, as with Michael Snow's *La Région centrale* and Andy Warhol's *Eat, Sleep, and Empire*. Such films are not necessarily less "cinematic" than others that rely heavily on editing.

Still one can see why editing has exercised such an enormous fascination for film aestheticians, for as a technique it is very powerful. The ride of the Klan in *The Birth of a Nation*, the Odessa Steps sequence in *Potemkin*, the hunt sequence in *The Rules of the Game*, the shower murder in *Psycho*, the train crash in *La Roue*, the diving sequence in *Olympia*, Clarice Starling's discovery of the killer's lair in *The Silence of the Lambs*, the tournament sequence in *Lancelot du Lac*—all of these celebrated moments derive much of their effect from editing.

Perhaps even more important, however, is the role of editing within an entire film's stylistic system. An ordinary Hollywood film typically contains around a thousand shots; a film centering on rapid action can have two thousand or more. This fact alone suggests that editing strongly shapes viewers' experiences, even if they are not aware of it. Editing contributes a great deal to a film's organization and its effects on spectators.

WHAT EDITING IS

Editing may be thought of as the coordination of one shot with the next. As we have seen, in film production a shot is one or more exposed frames in a series on a continuous length of film stock. The film editor eliminates unwanted footage, usually by discarding all but the best take. The editor also cuts superfluous frames, such as those showing the clapboard (p. 23), from the beginnings and endings of shots. She or he then joins the desired shots, the end of one to the beginning of another.

These joins can be of different sorts. A **fade-out** gradually darkens the end of a shot to black, and a **fade-in** accordingly lightens a shot from black. A **dissolve** briefly superimposes the end of shot A and the beginning of shot B (Figs. 8.1–8.3). In a **wipe**, shot B replaces shot A by means of a boundary line moving across the screen, as in *Seven Samurai* (Fig. 8.4). Here both images are briefly on the screen at the same time, but they do not blend, as in a dissolve. In the production process, fades, dissolves, and wipes are "optical effects" and are marked as such by the editor. They are typically executed in the laboratory.

"Editing is the basic creative force, by power of which the soulless photographs (the separate shots) are engineered into living, cinematographic form."

Vladimir Pudovkin, director

"You can definitely help performances in the cutting room, by intercutting reaction, maybe re-recording lines, adding lines over reaction shots. And you can help a film's structure by moving sequences about and dropping scenes that hold up pacing. And sometimes you can use bits and pieces from different takes, which also helps a lot. What you can do in the editing room to help a film is amazing."

Janie Foster, actor and director



Figure 8.1 The first shot of *The Maltese Falcon* leads to . . .



Figure 8.2 . . . a dissolve to . . .

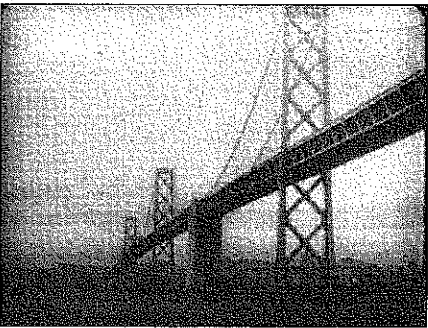


Figure 8.3 . . . the second shot.

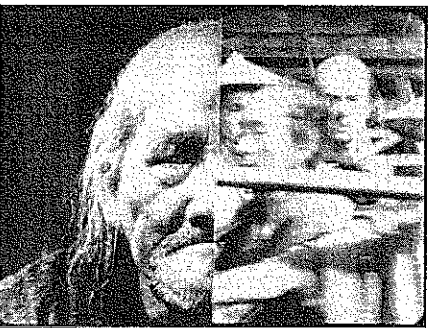


Figure 8.4 A wiper joins the last shot of one scene with the first of the next in *Seven Samurai*.

The most common means of joining two shots is the **cut**. In the production process a cut is usually made by splicing two shots together by means of cement or tape. Some filmmakers “cut” during filming by planning that the film will emerge from the camera ready for final showing. Here the physical junction from shot to shot is created in the act of shooting. Such “editing in the camera,” however, is rare and is mainly confined to experimental and amateur filmmaking. Editing after shooting is the norm. Today much editing is done by means of video transfers stored on discs or a hard drive, so that the cuts (or *edits*, in video terminology) can be made without touching film. Nevertheless the final version of the film will be prepared for printing by cutting and splicing the negative footage.

As viewers, we perceive a shot as an uninterrupted segment of screen time, space, or graphic configurations. Fades, dissolves, and wipes are perceived as gradually interrupting one shot and replacing it with another. Cuts are perceived as instantaneous changes from one shot to another.

Consider an example of cutting, four shots from the first attack on Bodega Bay in Alfred Hitchcock’s film *The Birds* (see **Figs. 8.5–8.8**):

1. *Medium shot, straight-on angle.* Melanie, Mitch, and the Captain standing by the restaurant window talking. Melanie on extreme right, bartender in background (Fig. 8.5).
2. *Medium close-up.* Melanie by Captain’s shoulder. She looks to right (out offscreen window) and up, as if following with eyes. Pan right with her as she turns to the window and looks out (Fig. 8.6).
3. *Extreme long shot.* Melanie’s point of view. Gas station across street, phone booth in left foreground. Birds dive-bomb attendant, right to left (Fig. 8.7).
4. *Medium close-up.* Melanie, profile. Captain moves right into shot, blocking out bartender; Mitch moves right into extreme foreground. All in profile look out window (Fig. 8.8).

Each of these four shots presents a different segment of time, space, and pictorial information. The first shot shows three people talking. An instantaneous change—a cut—shifts us to a medium close-up shot of Melanie. (Hitchcock could have used a fade, dissolve, or wipe instead, with a slower change from shot to shot, or he could have handled the scene as one continuous shot, as we shall see presently.) In the second shot, space has changed (Melanie is isolated and larger in the frame), time is continuous, and the graphic configurations have changed (the arrangements of the shapes and colors vary). Another cut takes us instantly to what she sees. The gas station shot (Fig. 8.7) presents a very different space, a successive bit of time, and a different graphic configuration. Another cut returns us to Melanie (Fig. 8.8), and again we are shifted instantly to another space, the next slice of time, and a different graphic configuration. Thus the four shots are joined by three cuts.

Hitchcock could have presented the *Birds* scene without editing. Imagine a camera movement that frames the four people talking, tracks in and rightward to Melanie as she turns, pans rightward to the window to show the dive-bombing gull, and pans leftward back to catch the group’s expressions. This would constitute one shot, although the camera movements, no matter how fast, would not present the

marked and abrupt shifts that cuts produce. Now imagine a deep-space composition that presents Mitch in the foreground, Melanie and the window in the middle ground, and the gull attack in the distance. Again, the scene could now be played in one shot, for we would have no abrupt change of time or space or graphics. And the movements of the figures would not yield the jumps in time, space, and composition provided by editing.

Viewers sometimes assume that films are shot with several cameras running simultaneously, and that editing is principally a matter of picking the best shot to show at a given moment. Some big-budget films do employ this *multiple-camera* technique. Sometimes a filmmaker will use several cameras to capture a performance from several different angles and distances; such was the case with Marlon Brando's scenes in *Apocalypse Now*. Contemporary filmmakers may employ an "A" camera for a master shot and a "B" camera for closer views, as James Cameron frequently does. More often, multiple-camera shooting is used for recording spectacular or unrepeatable actions: explosions like the one in the opening of *Lethal Weapon* or stunts like Jackie Chan's slide through several stories of department-store decorations in *Police Story*.

Nevertheless, throughout film history, most sequences have been shot with only one camera. In *The Birds* scene, for example, the shots were taken at different times and places—one (shot 3) outdoors, the others in a sound stage (and these perhaps on different days). A film editor thus must assemble a large and varied batch of footage. To ease this task, most filmmakers plan for the editing phase during the preparation and shooting phases. Shots are taken with an idea of how they will eventually fit together. In fictional filming, scripts and storyboards help plan cuts, while documentary filmmakers often frame and film with an eye to how the shots will be cut.



Figure 8.5 *The Birds*: Shot 1.

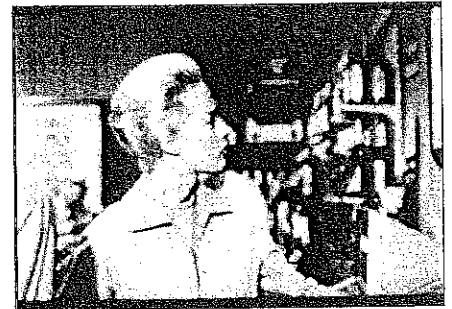


Figure 8.6 Shot 2.

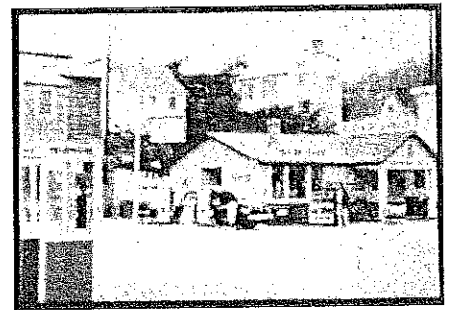
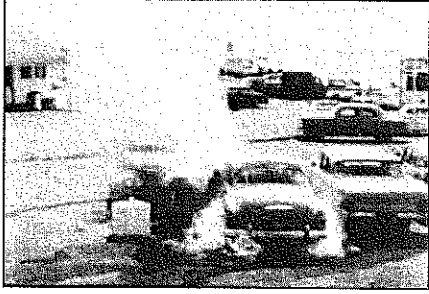
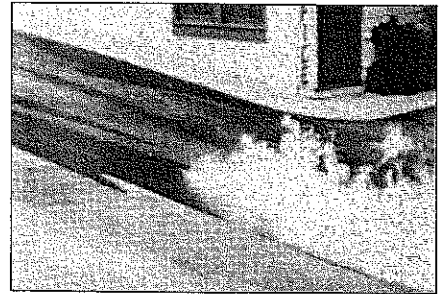
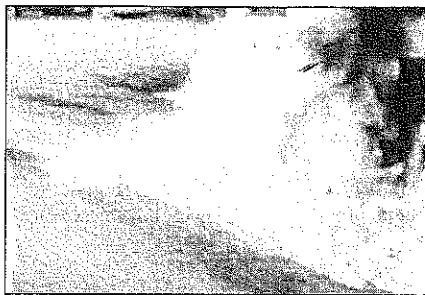
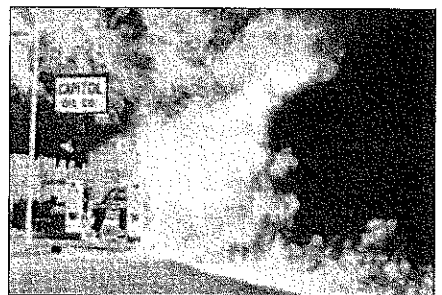
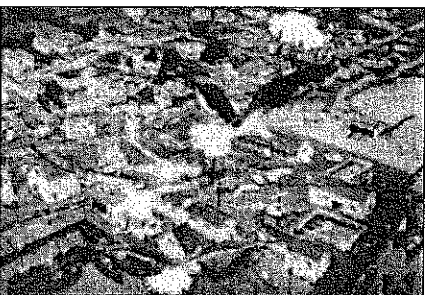


Figure 8.7 Shot 3.

30.	(ls) High angle. Melanie's POV. Flaming car, spreading flames.	73 frames
31.	(mcu) Straight-on angle. Melanie, immobile, looking off left, mouth open.	20 frames
32.	(ms) High angle. Melanie's POV. Pan with flames moving from lower right to upper left of trail of gasoline.	18 frames
33.	(mcu) as 31. Melanie, immobile, staring down (center).	16 frames
34.	(ms) High angle. Melanie's POV. Pan with flames moving from lower right to upper left.	14 frames
35.	(mcu) as 31. Melanie, immobile, looking off right, staring aghast.	12 frames
36.	(ls) Melanie's POV. Gas station. Flames rush in from right. Mitch, sheriff, and attendant run out left.	10 frames
37.	(mcu) as 31. Melanie, immobile, stares off extreme right.	8 frames
38.	(ls) as 36. Melanie's POV. Cars at station explode.	34 frames
39.	(mcu) as 31. Melanie covers her face with her hands.	33 frames
40.	(els) Extreme high angle on city, flaming trail in center. Gulls fly into shot.	

[match
with
images
on
256]

In graphic terms, Hitchcock has exploited two possibilities of contrast. First, although each shot's composition centers the action (Melanie's head, the flaming trail), the movements thrust in different directions. In shot 31 Melanie looks to the lower left, whereas in shot 32 the fire moves to the upper left. In shot 33 Melanie is looking down center, whereas in the next shot the flames still move to the upper left, and so on.

Figure 8.29 *The Birds*: Shot 30.Figure 8.30 *The Birds*: Shot 31.Figure 8.31 *The Birds*: Shot 32.Figure 8.32 *The Birds*: Shot 33.Figure 8.33 *The Birds*: Shot 34.Figure 8.34 *The Birds*: Shot 35.Figure 8.35 *The Birds*: Shot 36.Figure 8.36 *The Birds*: Shot 37.Figure 8.37 *The Birds*: Shot 38.Figure 8.38 *The Birds*: Shot 39.Figure 8.39 *The Birds*: Shot 40.

CONTINUITY EDITING

Around 1900–1910, as filmmakers started to use editing, they sought to arrange their shots so as *to tell a story* coherently and clearly. Thus editing, supported by specific strategies of cinematography and mise-en-scene, was used to ensure *narrative continuity*. So powerful is this style that, even today, anyone working in narrative filmmaking around the world is expected to be thoroughly familiar with it.

The basic purpose of the continuity system is to create a smooth flow from shot to shot. All of the possibilities of editing we have already examined are turned to this end. First, graphic qualities are usually kept roughly continuous from shot to shot. The figures are balanced and symmetrically deployed in the frame; the overall lighting tonality remains constant; the action occupies the central zone of the screen.

Second, the rhythm of the cutting is usually made dependent on the camera distance of the shot. Long shots are left on the screen longer than medium shots, and medium shots are left on longer than close-ups. The assumption is that the spectator needs more time to take in the shots containing more details. In scenes of physical action like the fire in *The Birds*, accelerated editing rhythms may be present, but the shorter shots will tend to be closer views.

Since the continuity style seeks to present a story, however, it is chiefly through the handling of space and time that editing furthers narrative continuity.

Spatial Continuity: The 180° System

In the continuity style the space of a scene is constructed along what is called variously the “**axis of action**,” the “center line,” or the “180° line.” The scene’s action—a person walking, two people conversing, a car racing along a road—is assumed to take place along a discernible, predictable line. This axis of action determines a half-circle, or 180° area, where the camera can be placed to present the action. Consequently, the filmmaker will plan, film, and edit the shots so as to respect this center line. The camera work and mise-en-scene in each shot will be manipulated to establish and reiterate the 180° space.

Consider the bird’s-eye view in **Figure 8.48**. We have a girl and a boy conversing. The axis of action is that imaginary line connecting the two people. Under the continuity system, the director would arrange the mise-en-scene and camera placement so as to establish and sustain this line. The camera can be put at any point as long as it stays on the same *side* of the line (hence the 180° term). A typical series of shots would be: (1) a medium shot of the girl and boy; (2) a shot over the girl’s shoulder, “favoring” the boy; (3) a shot over the boy’s shoulder, favoring the girl. But to cut to a shot from camera position X, or from any position within the tinted area, would be considered a violation of the system because it *crosses* the axis of action. Indeed, some handbooks of film directing call shot X flatly “wrong.” To see why, we need to examine what happens if a filmmaker follows the 180° system.

The 180° system ensures that relative positions in the frame remain consistent.

In the shots taken from camera positions 1, 2, and 3, the characters remain in the same positions in the frame relative to each other. Even though we see them from

“The way Hawks constructs a continuity of space is remarkable, and generally holds you ‘inside’ it. There is no possible way of escape, unless the film decides to provide you with one. My theory is that his films are captivating because they build a sense of continuity which is so strong that it allows the complete participation of the audience.”

Slabodan Sijan, director

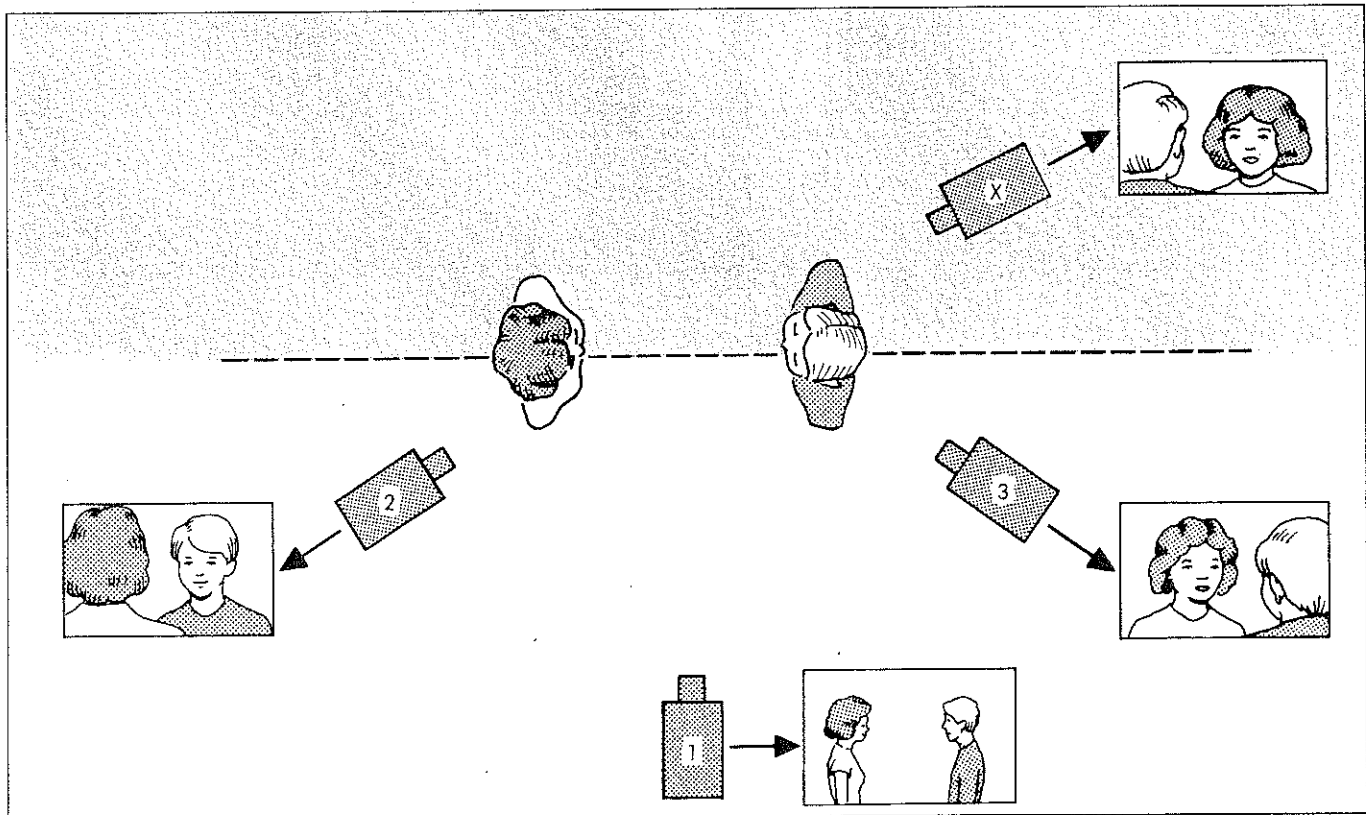


Figure 8.48 A conversation scene and the axis of action.

different angles, the girl is always on the left and the boy is always on the right. But if we cut to shot X, both characters will switch positions in the frame. An advocate of traditional continuity would claim that shot X confuses us: Have the two characters somehow swiveled around each other?

The 180° system ensures consistent eyelines. In shots 1, 2, and 3, the girl is looking right and the boy is looking left. Shot X violates this pattern by making the girl look leftward.

The 180° system ensures consistent screen direction. Imagine now that the girl is walking left to right; her path constitutes the axis of action. As long as our shots do not cross this axis, cutting them together will keep the screen direction of the girl's movement constant, from left to right. But if we *cross* the axis and film a shot from the other side, the girl will now appear on the screen as moving from *right to left*. Such a cut could be disorienting.

Consider a similar situation to that in Figure 8.48, a standard scene of two cowboys meeting for a shootout on a town street (Fig. 8.49). Cowboy A and Cowboy B form the 180° line, but here A is walking from left to right and B is approaching from right to left, both seen in the shot taken from camera position one. A closer view, from camera position two, shows B still moving from right to left. A third shot, from camera position three, shows A walking, as he had been in the first shot, from left to right.

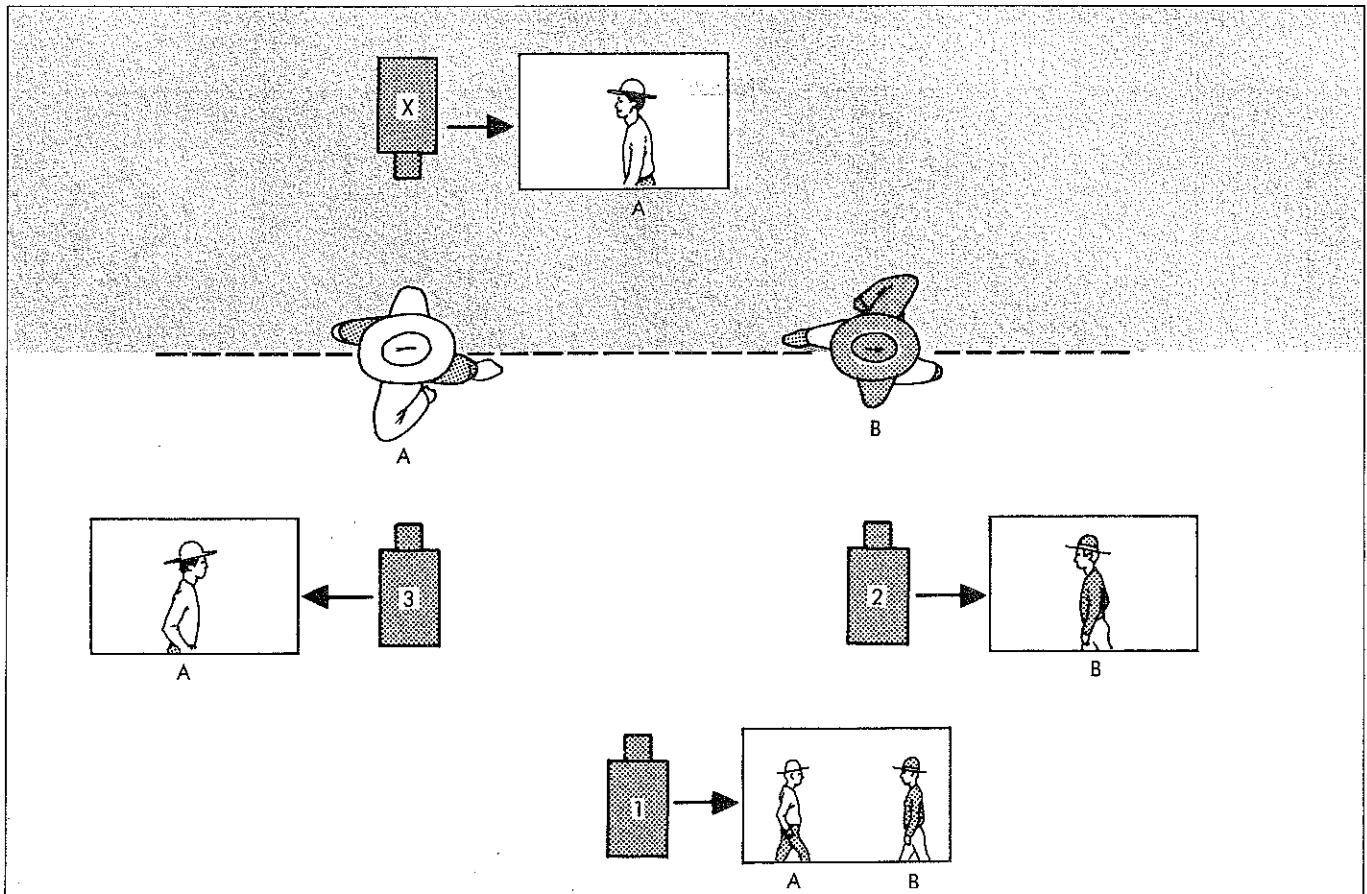


Figure 8.49 A Western shootout and the axis of action.

But imagine that this third shot was instead taken from position X, on the opposite side of the line. A is now seen as moving from right to left. Has he taken fright and turned around while the second shot, of B, was on the screen? The filmmakers may want us to think that he is still walking toward his adversary, but the change in screen directions could make us think just the opposite. A cut to a shot taken from any point in the colored area would create this change in direction. Such breaks in continuity can be confusing.

Even more disorienting would be crossing the line while establishing the scene's action. In our shootout, if the first shot shows A walking from left to right and the second shot shows B (from the other side of the line) also walking left to right, we would probably not be sure that they were walking toward each other. The two cowboys would seem to be walking in the same direction at different points on the street, as if one were following the other. We would very likely be startled if they suddenly came face to face within the same shot.

The 180° system prides itself on delineating space clearly. The viewer should always know where the *characters* are in relation to one another and to the setting. More important, the viewer always knows *where he or she is* with respect to the story action. The space of the scene, clearly and unambiguously unfolded, does not jar or disorient, because such disorientation, if it is felt, will distract the viewer from the center of attention: the narrative chain of causes and effects.

Continuity Editing: A Case Study

We saw in Chapter 3 that the classical Hollywood mode of narrative subordinates time, motivation, and other factors to the cause-effect sequence. We also saw how mise-en-scene and camera work may present narrative material. Now we can note how, on the basis of the 180° principle, filmmakers have developed the continuity system as a way to build up a smoothly flowing space which remains subordinate to narrative action. Let us consider a concrete example, the opening of John Huston's film *The Maltese Falcon*.

The scene begins in the office of detective Sam Spade. In the first two shots this space is established in several ways. First, there is the office window (shot 1a, Fig. 8.50) from which the camera tilts down to reveal Spade (shot 1b, Fig. 8.51) rolling a cigarette. As Spade says, "Yes, sweetheart?" shot 2 (Fig. 8.52) appears. This is important in several respects. It is an **establishing shot**, delineating the overall space of the office: the door, the intervening area, the desk, and Spade's position. Note also



Figure 8.50 *The Maltese Falcon*:
Shot 1a.



Figure 8.51 *The Maltese Falcon*:
Shot 1b.



Figure 8.52 *The Maltese Falcon*:
Shot 2.



Figure 8.53 *The Maltese Falcon*:
Shot 3.



Figure 8.54 *The Maltese Falcon*:
Shot 4.

that shot 2 establishes a 180° line between Spade and his secretary, Effie; Effie could be the girl in Figure 8.48, and Spade could be the boy. The first phase of this scene will be built around staying on the same side of this 180° line.

Once laid out for us in the first two shots, the space is analyzed into its components. Shots 3 (Fig. 8.53) and 4 (Fig. 8.54) show Spade and Effie talking. Because the 180° line established at the outset is adhered to (each shot presents the two from the same side), we know their location and spatial relationships. In cutting together medium shots of the two, however, Huston relies on two other common tactics within the 180° system.

The first is the **shot/reverse-shot** pattern. Once the 180° line has been established, we can show first one end point of the line, then the other. Here we cut back and forth from Effie to Spade. A reverse shot is not literally the “reverse” of the first framing. It is simply a shot of the opposite end of the axis of action, usually showing a three-quarters view of the subject. In our bird’s-eye view diagram (Fig. 8.48), shots 2 and 3 form a shot/reverse-shot pattern, as Figures 8.53 and 8.54 do here. Earlier examples in this chapter of shot/reverse-shot cutting are Figures 8.23, 8.24 and 8.25, 8.26.

The second tactic Huston uses here is the **eyeline match**. That is, shot A presents someone looking at something offscreen; shot B shows us what is being looked at. In neither shot are *both* looker and object present. In the *Maltese Falcon* opening, the cut from the shot of Effie (shot 3, Fig. 8.53) to the shot of Spade at his desk (shot 4, Fig. 8.54) is an eyeline match. The shots from *The Birds* of Melanie watching the bird attack and fire also create eyeline matches, as do the examples of editing balancing frame compositions (Figs. 8.23, 8.24 and 8.25, 8.26).

Note that shot/reverse-shot editing need not employ eyeline matches. You could film both ends of the axis in a shot/reverse-shot pattern without showing the characters looking at each other. One character might have her hands over her eyes, the other might have his back to her. (Note that in Figure 8.54, Spade is not looking at Effie.) On the whole, however, most shot/reverse-shot cuts also utilize the eyeline match.

The eyeline match is a simple idea but a powerful one, since the *directional* quality of the eyeline creates a strong spatial continuity. To be looked at, an object must be near the looker. The eyeline match presumably created the effects Kuleshov identified in his construction of false spaces through editing. That is, the expressionless actor seems to be looking at whatever is in the next shot, and the audience assumes that the actor is reacting accordingly.

Within the 180° system, the eyeline match, like constant screen direction, can stabilize space. Note how in shot 3, Effie’s glance off right reiterates Spade’s position even though he is not onscreen. And though Spade does not look up after the cut to shot 4, the camera position remains adamantly on the same side of the axis of action (indeed, the position is virtually identical to that in shot 1b). We know that Effie is offscreen left. Thus the breakdown of the scene’s space is completely consistent, this consistency ensured by adherence to the 180° system. Thanks to the shot/reverse-shot pattern and the eyeline match, we understand the characters’ locations even when they are not in the same frame.

The spatial consistency is reaffirmed in shot 5, which presents the same framing as did shot 2. The office is shown again (shot 5a, Fig. 8.55), when the new character, Brigid O’Shaughnessy, enters. Spade stands to greet her, and the camera reframes his movement by a slight tilt upward (shot 5b, Fig. 8.56). Shot 5 is a **reestablishing shot**, since it reestablishes the overall space that was analyzed into shots 3 and 4. The pattern, then, has been *establishment/breakdown/reestablishment*—one of the most common patterns of spatial editing in the classical continuity style.



Figure 8.55 *The Maltese Falcon*:
Shot 5a.

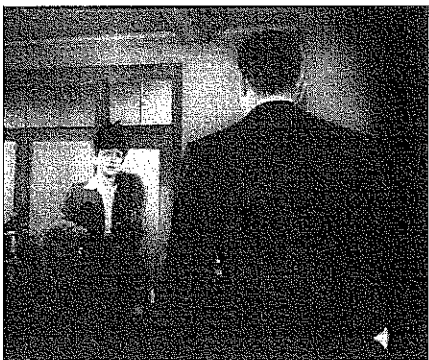


Figure 8.56 *The Maltese Falcon*:
Shot 5b.

Diegetic versus nondiegetic sound. For purposes of analyzing narrative form, we described events taking place in the story world as *diegetic* (p. 61). For this reason, **diegetic sound** is sound which has a source in the story world. The words spoken by the characters, sounds made by objects in the story, and music represented as coming from instruments in the story space are all diegetic sound.

Diegetic sound is often hard to notice as such. It may seem to come naturally from the world of the film. But as we saw in the sequence of the Ping-Pong game in *Mr. Hulot's Holiday*, the filmmaker may manipulate diegetic sound in ways that are not at all realistic.

On the other hand there is **nondiegetic sound**, which is represented as coming from a source outside the story world. Music added to enhance the film's action is the most common type of nondiegetic sound. When Roger Thornhill is climbing Mount Rushmore in *North by Northwest* and tense music comes up, we do not expect to see an orchestra perched on the side of the mountain. Viewers understand that the "movie music" is a convention and does not issue from the world of the story. The same holds true for the so-called omniscient narrator, the disembodied voice that gives us information but does not belong to any of the characters in the film. An example is *The Magnificent Ambersons*, in which the director Orson Welles speaks the nondiegetic narration.

ANALYZING FILM STYLE

As viewers, we register the effects of film style but seldom notice it. If we want to understand how these effects are achieved, we need to look and listen more carefully than we usually do. Since the previous four chapters have shown how we can pay attention to stylistic features, we can now set forth four general steps in analyzing style.

1. Determine the organizational structure of the film, its narrative or nonnarrative formal system.

The first step is to understand how the film is put together as a whole. If it is a narrative film, it will draw on all the principles we have discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. That is, it will have a plot that cues us to construct a story; it will manipulate causality, time, and space; it will have a distinct pattern of development from opening to closing; it may use parallelism; its narration will choose between restricted and more unrestricted knowledge at various points.

If the film is not a narrative, the analyst should seek to understand what other type of formal organization it uses. (See Chapters 3 and 5.) Is the film unified as a set of categories, or an argument, or a stream of associations? Or is it structured by an abstract set of technical features? In understanding either narrative or nonnarrative form, making a segmentation is usually helpful. Grasping the logic that underlies the whole film supplies a context for its use of film techniques.

2. Identify the salient techniques used.

Here the analysis will draw upon our survey of technical possibilities in Chapters 6 through 9. You need to be able to spot things such as color, lighting, framing, cutting, and sound, which most viewers don't consciously notice. Once you notice them, you can identify them as techniques—as nondiegetic music or as a low-angle framing.

But noting and naming are only the beginning of stylistic analysis. The analyst must develop an eye for *salient* techniques. Salience will partly be determined by what techniques the film relies heavily on. The jerky forward zoom in *Wave-length* and the rapid, discontinuous editing of *October* invite scrutiny because they play a central role in creating the overall effect of the film.

In addition, what is salient depends on the analyst's purpose. If you want to show that a film's style is typical of one approach to filmmaking, you may focus on how the technique conforms to stylistic expectations. The 180° editing of *The Maltese Falcon* is not obvious or emphasized, but adherence to rules of classical continuity is a characteristic aspect of the film's style. Our purpose in Chapter 8 was to show that the film is typical in this respect. If, however, you want to stress unusual qualities of the film's style, you can concentrate on the more unexpected technical devices. Bresson's use of sound in *A Man Escaped* is unusual, representing choices that few filmmakers would make. It was the originality of these sonic devices that we chose to stress in Chapter 9. From the standpoint of originality, costume in *A Man Escaped* is not as salient a stylistic feature as sound because it is more in accord with conventional practice. The analyst's decision about what techniques are salient will thus be influenced partly by what the film emphasizes and partly by the analyst's purpose.

3. Trace out patterns of techniques within the whole film.

Once you have identified salient techniques, you can notice how they are patterned. Techniques will be repeated and varied, developed and paralleled, across the whole film or within a single segment. Chapters 6 through 9 have shown how this occurs in some films.

You can "zero in" on stylistic patterns in two ways. First, you can reflect upon your responses. If a scene begins with a track-in, do you expect that it will end with a track-out? If you see a character looking left, do you assume that someone or something is offscreen and will be revealed in the next shot? If you feel a mounting excitement in an action scene, is that traceable to a quickening tempo in the music or to accelerating editing?

A second tactic for noticing stylistic patterns is to look for ways in which style reinforces patterns of formal organization. Filmmakers often deliberately design the film's stylistic system to underscore developments in the drama. For *Amistad*, Steven Spielberg and his cinematographer Janusz Kaminski traced the slaves' progress toward freedom by lighting and shooting the four courtroom scenes in markedly different ways, from greenish, smoky light and somewhat scattershot camerawork to a final scene in the Supreme Court, with crisp illumination and smooth camera movements. In designing *Portrait of a Lady*, Jane Campion and her cinematographer Stuart Dryburgh keyed colors to the protagonist's maturation. Isabel starts as an idealistic and somewhat headstrong young woman, and the background is an English summer, with bright green and yellow tones dominating; in Siena, as she becomes captivated by the sinister fortune hunter Ormond, the palette is richer and warmer, with orange and coral. Years later, she is unhappily married to Ormond, and the color scheme is steeped in pale blues. The closing scenes return to the English countryside, recalling the opening, but now, as the wiser, remorseful Isabel confronts her future, the snowy landscape is bathed slightly in blue, suggesting that memories of her marriage still haunt her.

Even within a shorter span, style can create a subtle sense of narrative progression. A scene will usually have a dramatic pattern of encounter, conflict, and outcome, and the style will often reflect this, with the cutting becoming more marked and the shots coming closer to the characters as the scene progresses. In

The Silence of the Lambs, for example, the scenes between Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter tend to begin with conventional shot/reverse-shot conversations. The characters, filmed in medium shot, look off to the right or left of the camera (Figs. 10.1, 10.2). As their conversations become more intense and intimate, the camera positions move closer to each one and shift subtly toward the axis of action until each person is looking directly into the lens (Figs. 10.3, 10.4).

As we saw in *Grand Illusion*, style may create associations between situations, as when the camera movements suggest the prisoners' unity. It may also reinforce parallels, as do the tracking shots comparing Rauffenstein's war trophies and Elsa's. Later we shall see how style can also reinforce the organization of nonnarrative films.

Sometimes, however, stylistic patterning will not respect the nonnarrative or narrative structure of the film. Style can claim our attention in its own right. Since most stylistic devices have several functions, a technique may interest the analyst for different reasons. In Color Plates 62 and 63, a cut from a washline to a living room acts as a transition between scenes. But the cut is of more interest for other reasons, since we do not expect that a narrative film will treat objects as flat patches of color to be compared across shots. Such attention to graphic play is a convention of abstract form. Here, in a passage from Ozu's *Ohayu*, a stylistic choice "comes forward" because it goes beyond its narrative function. Even here, though, stylistic patterns continue to call on the viewer's expectations and to draw the spectator into a dynamic process. Anyone who notices the graphic match on red objects in *Ohayu* will most likely be delighted and amused at such an unconventional way of editing. And, if stylistic patterns do swerve off on their own, we still need a sense of the film's narrative or nonnarrative organization in order to show how and when that happens.

4. Propose functions for the salient techniques and the patterns they form.

Here the analyst looks for the role that style plays in the film's overall form. Does the use of camera movement tend to create suspense by delaying the revelation of story information, as in the opening of *Touch of Evil*? Does the use of discontinuous editing create a narrational omniscience, as in the sequence we analyzed in *October*? Does the composition of the shot tend to make us concentrate on a particular detail (as in Figure 6.80, the shot of Anne's face in *Day of Wrath*)? Does the use of music or noise create surprise?

A direct route to noticing function is to notice the effects of the film. Style may enhance *emotional* aspects of the film. Rapid cutting in *The Birds* evokes shock and horror, while the Mozart music in *A Man Escaped* ennobles the communal routine of emptying slop buckets.

Style also shapes *meaning*. For example, in *Grand Illusion* the contrast between Rauffenstein and Elsa is heightened by Renoir's parallel tracking shots. We should, however, avoid "reading" isolated elements atomistically, taking them out of context. As we argued on p. 220, a high angle does not automatically mean "inferiority," just as a low angle does not automatically mean "power." There is no dictionary to which you can turn to look up the meaning of a specific stylistic element. Instead the analyst must scrutinize the whole film, the patterns of the techniques in it, and the specific effects of film form.

Meaning is only one type of effect, and there is no reason to expect that every stylistic feature will possess a thematic significance. One part of a director's job is to direct our attention, and so style will often function simply *perceptually*—to get us to notice things, to emphasize one thing over another, to misdirect our attention, to clarify, intensify, or complicate our understanding of the action.



Figure 10.1 During the initial conversation in *The Silence of the Lambs*, shooting in depth with the foreground character's head prominent in the frame . . .



Figure 10.2 . . . emphasizes the distance between the pair.



Figure 10.3 Later in the scene, closer shots . . .



Figure 10.4 . . . deemphasize that distance.

"There's no scene in any movie that fifty different directors couldn't have done fifty different ways."

Paul Mazursky director

One way to sharpen our sense of the functions of specific techniques is to *imagine alternatives* and reflect on what differences would result. Suppose the director had made a different technical choice; how would this create a different effect? *Our Hospitality* creates its gags by putting two or more elements into the same shot and letting us observe the comic juxtaposition. Suppose Keaton had instead isolated each element in a single shot and then linked the two elements by editing. The meaning might be the same, but the perceptual effects would vary: Instead of a simultaneous presentation that lets our attention shuttle to and fro, we would have a more "programmed" pattern of building up the gags and paying them off. Or, suppose that Huston had handled the opening scene of *The Maltese Falcon* as a single take with camera movement. How would he then have drawn our attention to Brigid O'Shaughnessy's and Spade's facial reactions, and how would this have affected our expectations? By focusing on effects and imagining alternatives to the technical choices that were made, the analyst can gain a sharp sense of the particular functions of style in the given film.

GLOSSARY

abstract form A type of filmic organization in which the parts relate to one another through repetition and variation of such visual qualities as shape, color, rhythm, and direction of movement.

Academy ratio The standardized shape of the film frame established by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. In the original ratio, the frame was $1\frac{1}{3}$ times as wide as it was high (1.33:1); later the width was normalized at 1.85 times the height (1.85:1).

aerial perspective A cue for suggesting represented depth in the image by presenting objects in the distance less distinctly than those in the foreground.

anamorphic lens A lens for making widescreen films using regular *Academy ratio* frame size. The camera lens takes in a wide field of view and squeezes it onto the frame, and a similar projector lens unsqueezes the image onto a wide theater screen.

angle of framing The position of the frame in relation to the subject it shows: above it, looking down (a high angle); horizontal, on the same level (a straight-on angle); looking up (a low angle). Also called "camera angle."

animation Any process whereby artificial movement is created by photographing a series of drawings (see also *cel animation*), objects, or computer images one by one. Small changes in position, recorded frame by frame, create the illusion of movement.

aspect ratio The relationship of the frame's width to its height. The standard *Academy ratio* is currently 1.85:1.

associational form A type of organization in which the film's parts are juxtaposed to suggest similarities, contrasts, concepts, emotions, and expressive qualities.

asynchronous sound Sound that is not matched temporally with the movements occurring in the image, as when dialogue is out of synchronization with lip movements.

auteur The presumed or actual "author" of a film, usually identified as the director. Also sometimes used in an evaluative sense to distinguish good filmmakers (*auteurs*) from bad ones.

axis of action In the *continuity editing* system, the imaginary line that passes from side to side through the main actors, defining the spatial relations of all the elements of the scene as being to the right or left. The camera is not supposed to cross the axis at a cut and thus reverse those spatial relations. Also called the "180° line." (See also *180° system*.)

backlighting Illumination cast onto the figures in the scene from the side opposite the camera, usually creating a thin outline of highlighting on those figures.

boom A pole upon which a microphone can be suspended above the scene being filmed and which is used to change the microphone's position as the action shifts.

camera angle See *angle of framing*.

canted framing A view in which the frame is not level; either the right or left side is lower than the other, causing objects in the scene to appear slanted out of an upright position.

categorical form A type of filmic organization in which the parts treat distinct subsets of a topic. For example, a film about the United States might be organized into fifty parts, each devoted to a single state.

cel animation Animation that uses a series of drawings on pieces of celluloid, called "cels" for short. Slight changes between the drawings combine to create an illusion of movement.

CGI "Computer-generated imagery": Using digital software systems to create figures, settings, or other material in the frame.

cheat cut In the *continuity editing* system, a cut which presents continuous-time from shot to shot but which mismatches the positions of figures or objects.

cinematography A general term for all the manipulations of the film strip by the camera in the shooting phase and by the laboratory in the developing phase.

close-up A framing in which the scale of the object shown is relatively large; most commonly a person's head seen from the neck up, or an object of a comparable size that fills most of the screen.

closure The degree to which the ending of a narrative film reveals the effects of all the causal events and resolves (or "closes off") all lines of action.

continuity editing A system of cutting to maintain continuous and clear narrative action. Continuity editing relies upon matching screen direction, position, and temporal relations from shot to shot. For specific techniques of continuity editing, see *axis of action*, *crosscutting*, *cut-in*, *establishing shot*, *eyeline match*, *match on action*, *reestablishing shot*, *screen direction*, *shot/reverse shot*.

contrast In cinematography, the difference between the brightest and darkest areas within the frame.

crane shot A shot with a change in framing accomplished by having the camera above the ground and moving through the air in any direction.

crosscutting Editing that alternates shots of two or more lines of action occurring in different places, usually simultaneously.

cut 1. In filmmaking, the joining of two strips of film together with a splice. 2. In the finished film, an instantaneous change from one framing to another. See also *jump cut*.

cut-in An instantaneous shift from a distant framing to a closer view of some portion of the same space.

deep focus A use of the camera lens and lighting that keeps both the close and distant planes being photographed in sharp focus.

deep space An arrangement of mise-en-scene elements so that there is a considerable distance between the plane closest to the camera and the one farthest away. Any or all of these planes may be in focus.

depth of field The measurements of the closest and farthest planes in front of the camera lens between which everything will be in sharp focus. A depth of field from five to sixteen feet, for example, would mean everything closer than five feet and farther than sixteen feet would be out of focus.

dialogue overlap In editing a scene, arranging the cut so that a bit of dialogue coming from shot A is heard under a shot which shows another character on another element in the scene.

diegesis In a narrative film, the world of the film's story. The diegesis includes events that are presumed to have occurred and actions and spaces not shown onscreen. See also *diegetic sound*, *nondiegetic insert*, *nondiegetic sound*.

diegetic sound Any voice, musical passage, or sound effect presented as originating from a source within the film's world. See also *nondiegetic sound*.

direct sound Music, noise, and speech recorded from the event at the moment of filming; opposite of *postsynchronization*.

discontinuity editing Any alternative system of joining shots together using techniques unacceptable within *continuity editing* principles. Possibilities would include mismatching of temporal and spatial relations, violations of the *axis of action*, and concentration on graphic relationships. See also *elliptical editing*, *graphic match*, *intellectual montage*, *jump cut*, *nondiegetic insert*, *overlapping editing*.

dissolve A transition between two shots during which the first image gradually disappears while the second image gradually appears; for a moment the two images blend in *superimposition*.

distance of framing The apparent distance of the frame from the mise-en-scene elements. Also called "camera distance" and "shot scale." See also *close-up*, *extreme close-up*, *extreme long shot*, *medium close-up*, *medium shot*, *plan américain*.

distribution One of the three branches of the film industry; the process of supplying the finished film to the places where it will be shown. See also *exhibition*, *production*.

dolly A camera support with wheels, used in making *tracking shots*.

dubbing The process of replacing part or all of the voices on the sound track in order to correct mistakes or rerecord dialogue. See also *postsynchronization*.

duration In a narrative film, the aspect of temporal manipulation that involves the time span presented in the *plot* and assumed to operate in the *story*. See also *frequency*, *order*.

editing 1. In filmmaking, the task of selecting and joining camera takes. 2. In the finished film, the set of techniques that governs the relations among shots.

ellipsis In a narrative film, the shortening of *plot* duration achieved by omitting intervals of *story* duration. See also *elliptical editing*, *viewing time*.

elliptical editing Shot transitions that omit parts of an event, causing an *ellipsis* in plot and story duration.

establishing shot A shot, usually involving a distant framing, that shows the spatial relations among the important figures, objects, and setting in a scene.

exhibition One of the three general areas of the film industry; the process of showing the finished film to audiences. See also *distribution*, *production*.

exposure The adjustment of the camera mechanism in order to control how much light strikes each frame of film passing through the aperture.

external diegetic sound Sound represented as coming from a physical source within the story space and which we assume characters in the scene also hear. See also *internal diegetic sound*.

extreme close-up A framing in which the scale of the object shown is very large; most commonly, a small object or a part of the body.

extreme long shot A framing in which the scale of the object shown is very small; a building, landscape, or crowd of people will fill the screen.

eyeline match A cut obeying the *axis of action* principle, in which the first shot shows a person looking off in one direction and the second shows a nearby space containing what he or she sees. If the person looks left, the following shot should imply that the looker is offscreen right.

fade 1. *Fade-in*: A dark screen that gradually brightens as a shot appears. 2. *Fade-out*: A shot gradually darkens as the screen goes black. Occasionally, fade-outs brighten to pure white or to a color.

fill light Illumination from a source less bright than the *key light*, used to soften deep shadows in a scene. See also *three-point lighting*.

film noir "Dark film," a term applied by French critics to a type of American film, usually in the detective or thriller genres, with low-key lighting and a somber mood.

- film stock** The strip of material upon which a series of still photographs is registered; it consists of a clear base coated on one side with a light-sensitive emulsion.
- filter** A piece of glass or gelatin placed in front of the camera or printer lens to alter the quality or quantity of light striking the film in the aperture.
- flashback** An alteration of story order in which the plot moves back to show events that have taken place earlier than ones already shown.
- flashforward** An alteration of story order in which the plot presentation moves forward to future events, then returns to the present.
- focal length** The distance from the center of the lens to the point at which the light rays meet in sharp focus. The focal length determines the perspective relations of the space represented on the flat screen. See also *normal lens*, *telephoto lens*, *wide-angle lens*.
- focus** The degree to which light rays coming from the same part of an object through different parts of the lens reconverge at the same point on the film frame, creating sharp outlines and distinct textures.
- following shot** A shot with framing that shifts to keep a moving figure onscreen.
- form** The general system of relationships among the parts of a film.
- frame** A single image on the strip of film. When a series of frames is projected onto a screen in quick succession, an illusion of movement is created by the spectator.
- framing** The use of the edges of the film frame to select and to compose what will be visible onscreen.
- frequency** In a narrative film, the aspect of temporal manipulation that involves the number of times any *story* event is shown in the *plot*. See also *duration*, *order*.
- front projection** Composite process whereby footage meant to appear as the background of a shot is projected from the front onto a screen; figures in the foreground are filmed in front of the screen as well. This is the opposite of *rear projection*.
- frontal lighting** Illumination directed into the scene from a position near the camera.
- frontality** In staging, the positioning of figures so that they face the viewer.
- function** The role or effect of any element within the film's form.
- gauge** The width of the film strips, measured in millimeters.
- genres** Various types of films which audiences and filmmakers recognize by their familiar narrative conventions. Common genres are musical, gangster, and Western films.
- graphic match** Two successive shots joined so as to create a strong similarity of compositional elements (e.g., color, shape).
- hand-held camera** The use of the camera operator's body as a camera support, either holding it by hand or using a harness.
- hard lighting** Illumination that creates sharp-edged shadows.
- height of framing** The distance of the camera above the ground, regardless of the *angle of framing*.
- high-key lighting** Illumination that creates comparatively little contrast between the light and dark areas of the shot. Shadows are fairly transparent and brightened by *fill light*.
- ideology** A relatively coherent system of values, beliefs, or ideas shared by some social group and often taken for granted as natural or inherently true.
- intellectual montage** The juxtaposition of a series of images to create an abstract idea not present in any one image.
- internal diegetic sound** Sound represented as coming from the mind of a character within the story space. Although we and the character can hear it, we assume that the other characters cannot. See also *external diegetic sound*.
- interpretation** The viewer's activity of analyzing the implicit and symptomatic meanings suggested in a film. See also *meaning*.
- 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.
- 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. See also *ellipsis*.
- key light** In the three-point lighting system, the brightest illumination coming into the scene. See also *backlighting*, *fill light*, *three-point lighting*.
- lens** A shaped piece of transparent material (usually glass) with either or both sides curved to gather and focus light rays. Most camera and projector lenses place a series of lenses within a metal tube to form a compound lens.
- linearity** In a narrative, the clear motivation of a series of causes and effects that progress without significant digressions, delays, or irrelevant actions.
- long shot** A framing in which the scale of the object shown is small; a standing human figure would appear nearly the height of the screen.
- long take** A shot that continues for an unusually lengthy time before the transition to the next shot.
- low-key lighting** Illumination that creates strong contrast between light and dark areas of the shot, with deep shadows and little *fill light*.

mask An opaque screen placed in the camera or printer that blocks part of the frame off and changes the shape of the photographed image, leaving part of the frame a solid color. As seen on the screen, most masks are black, although they can be white or colored.

masking In exhibition, stretches of black fabric that frame the theater scene. Masking can be adjusted according to the *aspect ratio* of the film to be projected.

match on action A continuity cut which splices two different views of the same action together at the same moment in the movement, making it seem to continue uninterrupted.

matte shot A type of *process shot* in which different areas of the image (usually actors and setting) are photographed separately and combined in laboratory work.

meaning 1. *Referential meaning*: Allusion to particular items of knowledge outside the film which the viewer is expected to recognize. 2. *Explicit meaning*: Significance presented overtly, usually in language and often near the film's beginning or end. 3. *Implicit meaning*: Significance left tacit, for the viewer to discover upon analysis or reflection. 4. *Symptomatic meaning*: Significance which the film divulges, often "against its will," by virtue of its historical or social context.

medium close-up A framing in which the scale of the object shown is fairly large; a human figure seen from the chest up would fill most of the screen.

medium long shot A framing at a distance which makes an object about four or five feet high appear to fill most of the screen vertically. See also *plan américain*, the special term for a medium long shot depicting human figures.

medium shot A framing in which the scale of the object shown is of moderate size; a human figure seen from the waist up would fill most of the screen.

mise-en-scene All of the elements placed in front of the camera to be photographed: the settings and props, lighting, costumes and make-up, and figure behavior.

mixing Combining two or more sound tracks by recording them onto a single one.

mobile frame The effect on the screen of the moving camera, a *zoom lens*, or certain *special effects*; the framing shifts in relation to the scene being photographed. See also *crane shot*, *pan*, *tilt*, *tracking shot*.

monochromatic color design Color design which emphasizes a narrow set of shades of a single color.

montage 1. A synonym for *editing*. 2. 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. See also *discontinuity editing*, *intellectual montage*.

montage sequence A segment of a film that summarizes a topic or compresses a passage of time into brief symbolic or typical images. Frequently *dissolves*, *fades*, *superimpositions*, and *wipes* are used to link the images in a montage sequence.

motif An element in a film that is repeated in a significant way.

motion control A computerized method of planning and repeating camera movements on miniatures, models, and process work.

motivation The justification given in the film for the presence of an element. This may be an appeal to the viewer's knowledge of the real world, to genre conventions, to narrative causality, or to a stylistic pattern within the film.

narration The process through which the *plot* conveys or withholds *story* information. The narration can be more or less restricted to character knowledge and more or less deep in presenting characters' mental perceptions and thoughts.

narrative form A type of filmic organization in which the parts relate to each other through a series of causally related events taking place in time and space.

nondiegetic insert A shot or series of shots cut into a sequence, showing objects represented as being outside the space of the narrative.

nondiegetic sound Sound, such as mood music or a narrator's commentary, represented as coming from a source outside the space of the narrative.

nonsimultaneous sound Diegetic sound that comes from a source in time either earlier or later than the images it accompanies.

normal lens A lens that shows objects without severely exaggerating or reducing the depth of the scene's planes. In 35mm filming, a normal lens is 35 to 50mm. See also *telephoto lens*, *wide-angle lens*.

offscreen sound Simultaneous sound from a source assumed to be in the space of the scene but outside what is visible onscreen.

offscreen space The six areas blocked from being visible on the screen but still part of the space of the scene: to each side and above and below the frame, behind the set, and behind the camera. See also *space*.

180° system The continuity approach to editing dictates that the camera should stay on one side of the action to ensure consistent left-right spatial relations between objects from shot to shot. The 180° line is the same as the *axis of action*. See also *continuity editing*, *screen direction*.

order In a narrative film, the aspect of temporal manipulation that involves the sequence in which the chronological events of the *story* are arranged in the *plot*. See also *duration*, *frequency*.

overlap A cue for suggesting represented depth in the film image by placing closer objects partly in front of more distant ones.

overlapping editing Cuts that repeat part or all of an action, thus expanding its viewing time and plot duration.

pan A camera movement with the camera body turning to the right or left. On the screen, it produces a mobile framing which scans the space horizontally.

pixillation A form of single-frame animation in which three-dimensional objects, often people, are made to move in staccato bursts through the use of stop-action cinematography.

plan américain A framing in which the scale of the object shown is moderately small; the human figure seen from the shins to the head would fill most of the screen. This is sometimes referred to as a *medium long shot*, especially when human figures are not shown.

plan-séquence French term for a scene handled in a single shot, usually a *long take*.

plot In a narrative film, all the events that are directly presented to us, including their causal relations, chronological order, duration, frequency, and spatial locations. Opposed to *story*, which is the viewer's imaginary construction of all the events in the narrative. See also *duration*, *ellipsis*, *frequency*, *order*, *viewing time*.

point-of-view shot (POV shot) A shot taken with the camera placed approximately where the character's eyes would be, showing what the character would see; usually cut in before or after a shot of the character looking.

postsynchronization The process of adding sound to images after they have been shot and assembled. This can include *dubbing* of voices, as well as inserting diegetic music or sound effects. It is the opposite of *direct sound*.

process shot Any shot involving rephotography to combine two or more images into one, or to create a special effect; also called "composite shot." See also *matte shot*, *rear projection*, *special effects*.

production One of the three branches of the film industry; the process of creating the film. See also *distribution*, *exhibition*.

racking focus Shifting the area of sharp focus from one plane to another during a shot; the effect on the screen is called "rack focus."

rate In shooting, the number of frames exposed per second; in projection, the number of frames thrown on the screen per second. If the two are the same, the speed of the action will appear normal, while a disparity will create slow or fast motion. The standard rate in sound cinema is 24 frames per second for both shooting and projection.

rear projection A technique for combining a foreground action with a background action filmed earlier. The foreground is filmed in a studio, against a screen; the background imagery is projected from behind the screen. The opposite of *front projection*.

reestablishing shot A return to a view of an entire space after a series of closer shots following the *establishing shot*.

reframing Short panning or tilting movements to adjust for the figures' movements, keeping them onscreen or centered.

rhetorical form A type of filmic organization in which the parts create and support an argument.

rhythm The perceived rate and regularity of sounds, series of shots, and movements within the shots. Rhythmic factors include beat (or pulse), accent (or stress), and tempo (or pace).

rotoscope A machine that projects live-action motion picture frames one by one onto a drawing pad so that an animator can trace the figures in each frame. The aim is to achieve more realistic movement in an animated cartoon.

scene A segment in a narrative film that takes place in one time and space or that uses crosscutting to show two or more simultaneous actions.

screen direction The right-left relationships in a scene, set up in an establishing shot and determined by the position of characters and objects in the frame; by the directions of movement; and by the characters' eyelines. *Continuity editing* will attempt to keep screen direction consistent between shots. See also *axis of action*, *eyeline match*, *180° system*.

segmentation The process of dividing a film into parts for analysis.

sequence Term commonly used for a moderately large segment of film, involving one complete stretch of action. In a narrative film, often equivalent to a *scene*.

shallow focus A restricted *depth of field*, which keeps only one plane in sharp focus; the opposite of *deep focus*.

shallow space Staging the action in relatively few planes of depth; the opposite of *deep space*.

shot 1. In shooting, one uninterrupted run of the camera to expose a series of frames. Also called a *take*. 2. In the finished film, one uninterrupted image with a single static or mobile framing.

shot/reverse shot Two or more shots edited together that alternate characters, typically in a conversation situation. In *continuity editing*, characters in one framing usually look left, in the other framing, right. Over-the-shoulder framings are common in shot/reverse-shot editing.

side lighting Lighting coming from one side of a person or object, usually in order to create a sense of volume, to bring out surface tensions, or to fill in areas left shadowed by light from another source.

simultaneous sound Diegetic sound that is represented as occurring at the same time in the story as the image it accompanies.

size diminution A cue for suggesting represented depth in the image by showing objects that are further away as smaller than foreground objects.

soft lighting Illumination that avoids harsh bright and dark areas, creating a gradual transition from highlights to shadows.

sound bridge 1. At the beginning of one scene, the sound from the previous scene carries over briefly before the sound from the new scene begins. 2. At the end of one scene, the sound from the next scene is heard, leading into that scene.

sound over Any sound that is not represented as coming from the space and time of the images on the screen. This includes both nonsimultaneous diegetic sound and nondiegetic sounds. See also *nondiegetic sound*, *nonsimultaneous sound*.

sound perspective The sense of a sound's position in space, yielded by volume, timbre, pitch, and, in stereophonic reproduction systems, binaural information.

space Most minimally, any film displays a two-dimensional graphic space, the flat composition of the image. In films which depict recognizable objects, figures, and locales, a three-dimensional space is represented as well. At any moment, three-dimensional space may be directly depicted, as onscreen space, or suggested, as *offscreen space*. In narrative film, we can also distinguish between story space, the locale of the totality of the action (whether shown or not), and plot space, the locales visibly and audibly represented in the scenes.

special effects A general term for various photographic manipulations that create fictitious spatial relations in the shot, such as *superimposition*, *matte shots*, and *rear projection*.

story In a narrative film, all the events that we see and hear, plus all those that we infer or assume to have occurred, arranged in their presumed causal relations, chronological order, duration, frequency, and spatial locations. Opposed to *plot*, which is the film's actual presentation of events in the story. See also *duration*, *ellipsis*, *frequency*, *order*, *space*, *viewing time*.

storyboard A tool used in planning film production, consisting of comic-strip-like drawings of individual shots or phases of shots with descriptions written below each drawing.

style The repeated and salient uses of film techniques characteristic of a single film or a group of films (for example, a filmmaker's work or a national movement).

superimposition The exposure of more than one image on the same film strip.

synchronous sound Sound that is matched temporally with the movements occurring in the images, as when dialogue corresponds to lip movements.

take In filmmaking, the shot produced by one uninterrupted run of the camera. One shot in the final film may be chosen from among several takes of the same action.

technique Any aspect of the film medium that can be chosen and manipulated in making a film.

telephoto lens A lens of long focal length that affects a scene's perspective by enlarging distant planes and making them seem close to the foreground planes. In 35mm filming, a lens of 75mm length or more. See also *normal lens*, *wide-angle lens*.

three-point lighting A common arrangement using three directions of light on a scene; from behind the subjects (*backlighting*), from one bright source (*key light*), and from a less bright source balancing the key light (*fill light*).

tilt A camera movement with the camera body swiveling upward or downward on a stationary support. It produces a mobile framing that scans the space vertically.

top lighting Lighting coming from above a person or object, usually in order to outline the upper areas of the figure or to separate it more clearly from the background.

tracking shot A mobile framing that travels through space forward, backward, or laterally. See also *crane shot*, *pan*, and *tilt*.

typage A performance technique of Soviet Montage cinema whereby an actor is given features believed to characterize a social class or other group.

underlighting Illumination from a point below the figures in the scene.

unity The degree to which a film's parts relate systematically to each other and provide motivations for all the elements used.

variation In film form, the return of an element with notable changes.

viewing time The length of time it takes to watch a film when it is projected at the appropriate speed.

whip pan An extremely fast movement of the camera from side to side, which briefly causes the image to blur into a set of indistinct horizontal streaks. Often an imperceptible cut will join two whip pans to create a trick transition between scenes.

wide-angle lens A lens of short focal length that affects a scene's perspective by distorting straight lines near the edges of the frame and by exaggerating the distance between foreground and background planes. In 35mm filming, a wide-angle lens is 30mm or less. See also *normal lens*, *telephoto lens*.

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.

zoom lens A lens with a focal length that can be change during a shot. A shift toward the *telephoto* range enlarges the image and flattens its planes together, giving an impression of magnifying the scene's space, while a shift toward the *wide-angle* range does the opposite.