

Editing **IS** Storytelling

A few different ways to use editing to tell a story.

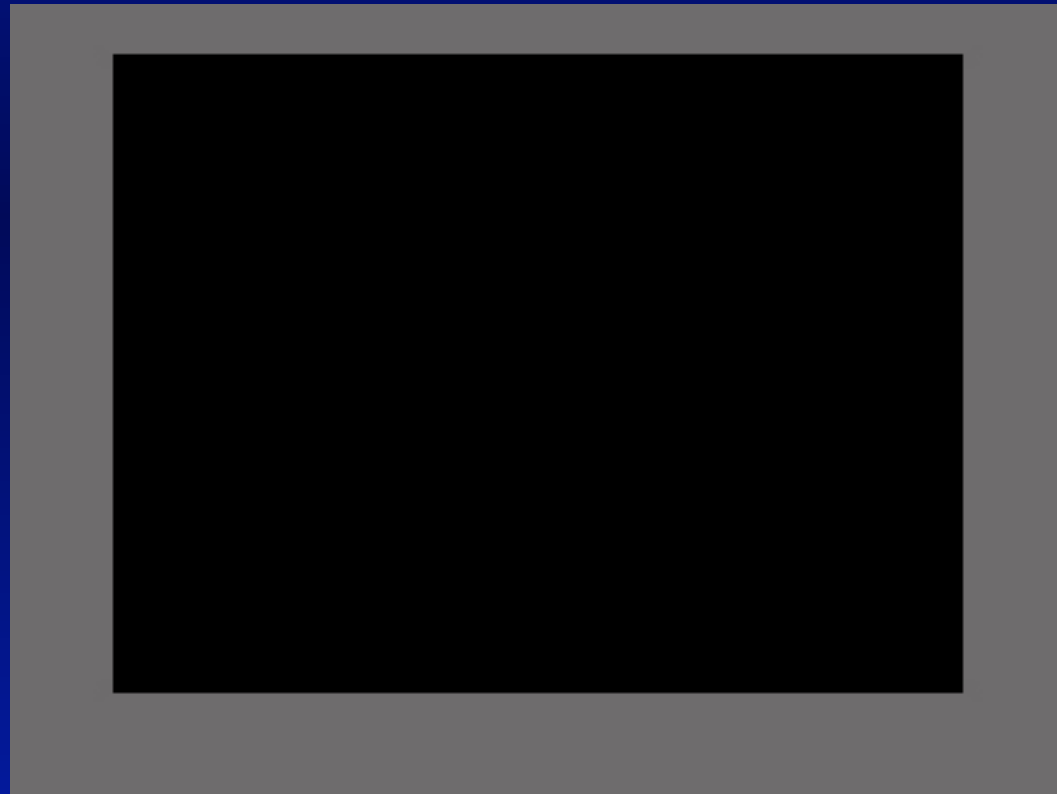
Cutting Out the Bad Bits

- Editing is the coordination of one shot with the next.
- One cuts all the superfluous frames from the beginning and end of the best take then joins the desired shots together, the end of one to the beginning of another.

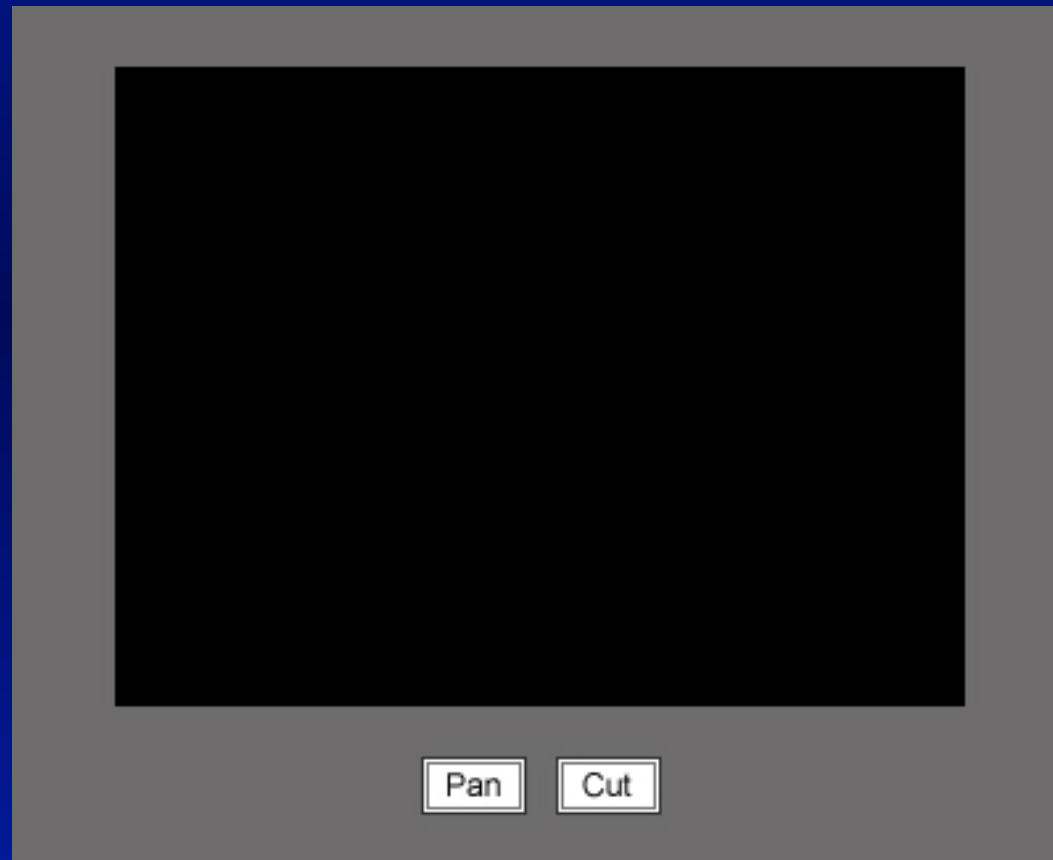
Editing

- These joins can be of different sorts.
 - Fade-out
 - Fade-in
 - Dissolve
 - Wipe
 - Push
 - Etc...
 - The most common means of joining two shots is the cut.

Transition Index



Pans vs Cuts



- The essence of cinema is editing. It's the combination of what can be extraordinary images of people during emotional moments, or images in a general sense, put together in a kind of alchemy.

– **Frances Ford Coppola**

Three Basic Editing Styles

- Montage
- Mise-en-scene:
 - a French term for "staging," or "putting into the scene or shot". In film, refers to all the elements placed (by the director) before the camera and within the frame of the film -- including their visual arrangement and composition; elements include settings, decor, props, actors, costumes, makeup, lighting, performances, and character movements and positioning; lengthy, un-cut, unedited and uninterrupted sequences shot in real-time are often cited as examples of *mise-en-scene*.
 - Mise-en-scène is used when the director wishes to give an impression of the characters or situation without vocally articulating it through the framework of spoken dialogue, and typically does not represent a realistic setting. The common example is that of a cluttered, disorganized apartment being used to reflect the disorganization in a character's life in general, or a spartanly decorated apartment to convey a character with an "empty soul"
- Classic Continuity

Montage

- **Sergei Eisenstein** made the case that since editing was the most intrinsically filmic technique, it was at the root of all artistic expression.
- He expanded on the principles of the Kuleshov Experiment and stated that when you edit shots 1 and 2 together, you end up with something greater than 3, a completely new idea or emotion.
- The juxtaposition of the two images creates a gestalt, something beyond the individual elements.

“The images in our dreams are much more fragmented, intersecting in much stranger and more abrupt ways than the images of making reality, ways that approximate, at least, the interaction produced by cutting. Perhaps the explanation is as simple as that: we accept the cut because it resembles the way images are juxtaposed in our dreams. ”

Walter Murch

Editor/Sound Designer/Director

Casino Royale (2006)



Mise-en-scene

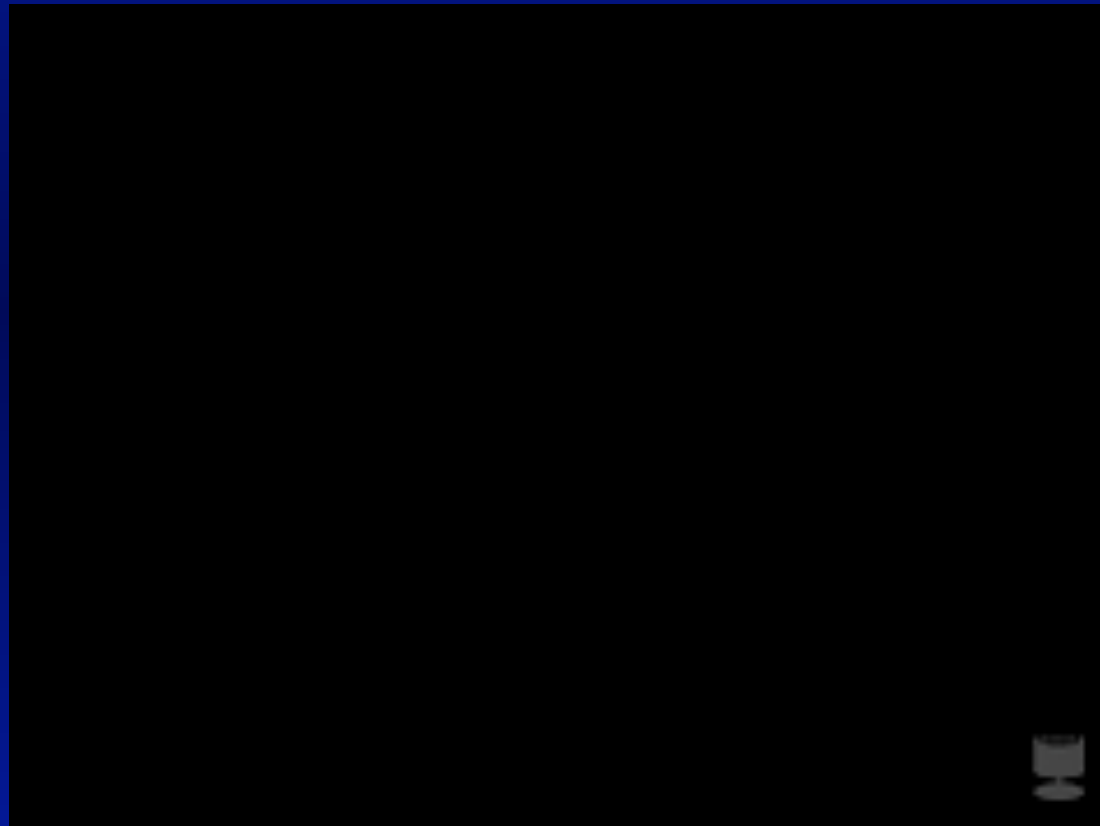
- Through the 1950's and 60's, **Andre Bazin**, founder of the Cahiers Du Cinema and a huge influence on film theory, argued film's magic was in it's ability to show reality.
- For Bazin, editing was practically blasphemy, because it was a temporal and spatial violation, and because it was didactic.

Mise-en-scene

- Bazin celebrated long, uninterrupted takes in deep focus. He argued that they force the audience to take a more active role in the film viewing experience.
- He believed multiple people could experience different things from the same shot, and this ambiguity mirrors reality.

Classic 'mise-en-scene' example

La Ronde, Max Ophuls, (1950)



Modern 'mise-en-scene' example

Children of Men, Alfonso Cuarón, (2006)



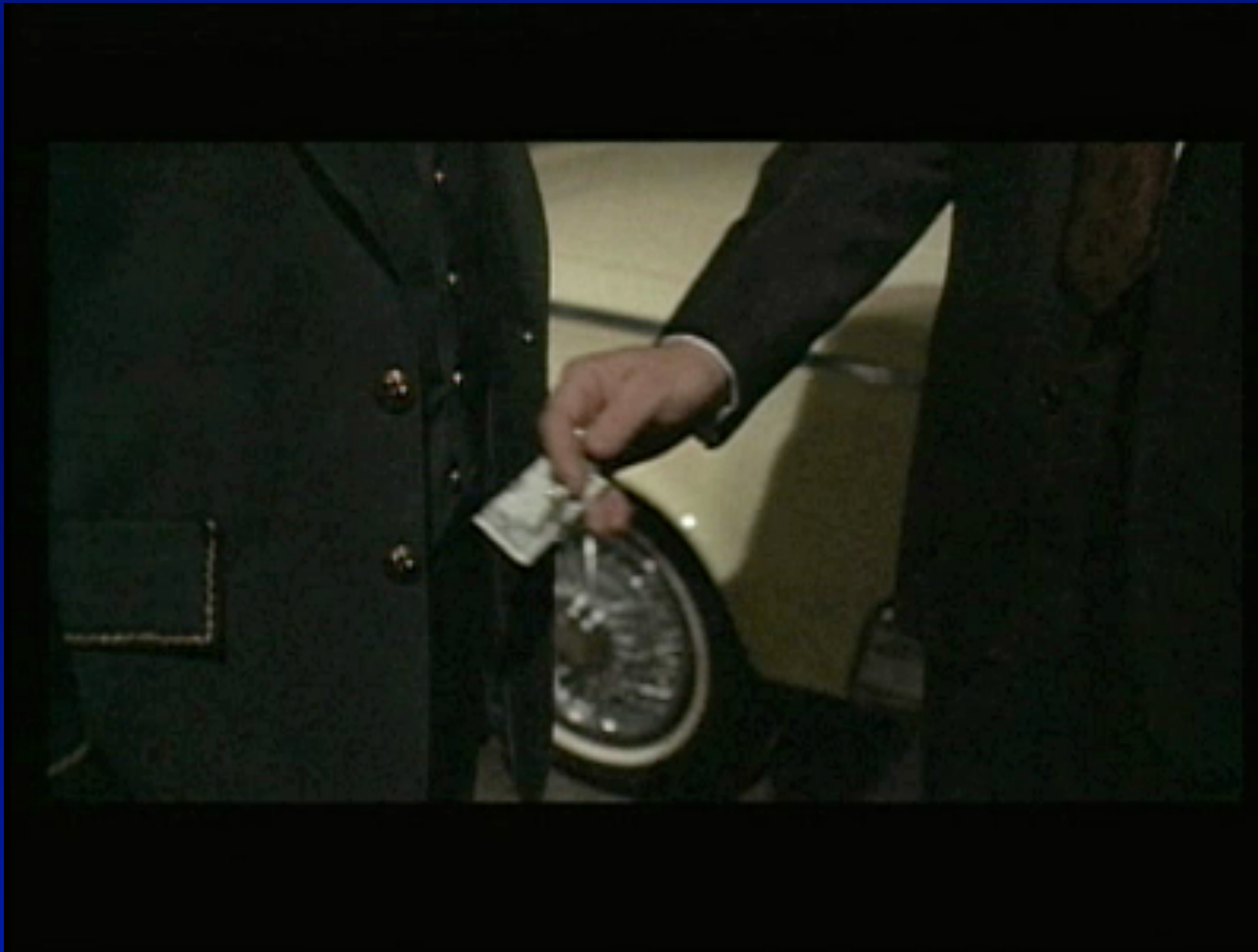
Mise-en-scene as narrative

Goodfellas, Martin Scorsese, (1990)



Mise-en-scene revealing character

Goodfellas, Martin Scorsese, (1990)



Editing Styles

- Using this simple theoretical overview, film editing styles available to directors can be broken into two basic categories:
- Ones that are highly edited and ones that involve longer uninterrupted takes and/or classic continuity editing.

Mainstream films between
1930 and 1960 consisted of
roughly 300 to 500 shots.

Today an average Hollywood film has between 1000 and 2000 shots.

Action films will have 3000 or more shots.

“Armageddon” = 3700 shots

“Moulin Rouge” = 4000+

Dimensions of Editing

- Four Basic Dimensions
 - Graphic relations between shots
 - Continuous & Discontinuous
 - Rhythmic relations between shots
 - Spatial relations between shots
 - Temporal relations between shots

Graphic relations between shots

- Two shots may be edited to achieve smooth continuity or abrupt contrast.
- Shots are linked by graphic similarities.
- Shapes, colors, overall composition, or movement in shot A may be picked up in shot B.

Filmmakers often call attention to graphic matches at transitional moments.



Graphic relations between shots

- Approximate graphic continuities from shot A to shot B is typical of most narrative cinema.
 - Seven Samurai (dynamic graphic matches)



Graphic relations between shots

The Spanish Prisoner



Graphic relations between shots

- Editing need not be graphically continuous.
- Another kind of graphic edit is discontinuous.
- Two shots clashing together can create anxiety, anticipation, or uneasiness.



Rhythmic relations between shots

- Adjusting the length of shots in relation to one another, controls the rhythmic potential of editing.
- When shot lengths begin to form discernable patterns you begin creating rhythms in a scene.
- Rhythmic relations create dynamic pace. Steadily lengthening shots create a slowing tempo, while successively shorter shots create an accelerating one.
- Rhythm is a fundamental tool of the editor, particularly with fast cutting to build up excitement during action sequences, advertisements, or a music video.

Rhythmic relations between shots



Spatial relations between shots

- Editing allows the filmmaker to relate any two points in space through similarity, difference, or development.
- The director may start with a shot that establishes a spatial whole and follow this with a shot of a part of the scene.
- Parallel editing, or crosscutting, is a common way film's construct a variety of spaces.
 - Classic example of parallel editing from the Godfather

Baptism scene from *The Godfather* (1972)



Temporal relations between shots

- Editing can control the time of any action.
- Editing creates order, duration, and frequency.
- Most narrative editing follow the story events in a 1-2-3 order.
- Flashback and flash forward are techniques to mix that order up.

Temporal relations between shots

Two ways to expand or compress time.

- Elliptical editing presents an action in such a way that it takes less time on screen than it does in the story.
- Overlapping editing is used for temporal expansion. It prolongs an event. It takes more time on screen than in reality. Action movies use this technique all the time to slow the action down so it's READABLE to the viewer.

Elliptical Editing

Three ways to contract time.

- Film a man climbing a flight of stairs, but don't show the actual entire duration.
 - ✓ Director could simply use a conventional “punctuation” shot change. Dissolve or wipe from shot of the man at the bottom of the stairs to a shot of him reaching the top.
 - ✓ Show the man begin climbing the stairs at the bottom and let him walk out of frame, hold briefly on the empty frame, then cut to an empty frame of the top of the stairs and let the man enter the frame.
 - ✓ Or you could do a cutaway: a shot of another event elsewhere that will not last as long as the action. Start the man climbing then cut to a women in her apartment. Cut back to the man reaching the top .

Elliptical Editing = Time Compression

A most elegant and sophisticated example in Citizen Kane



Overlapping Edit = Expanded Time

The plate scene from Battleship Potemkin



Temporal editing

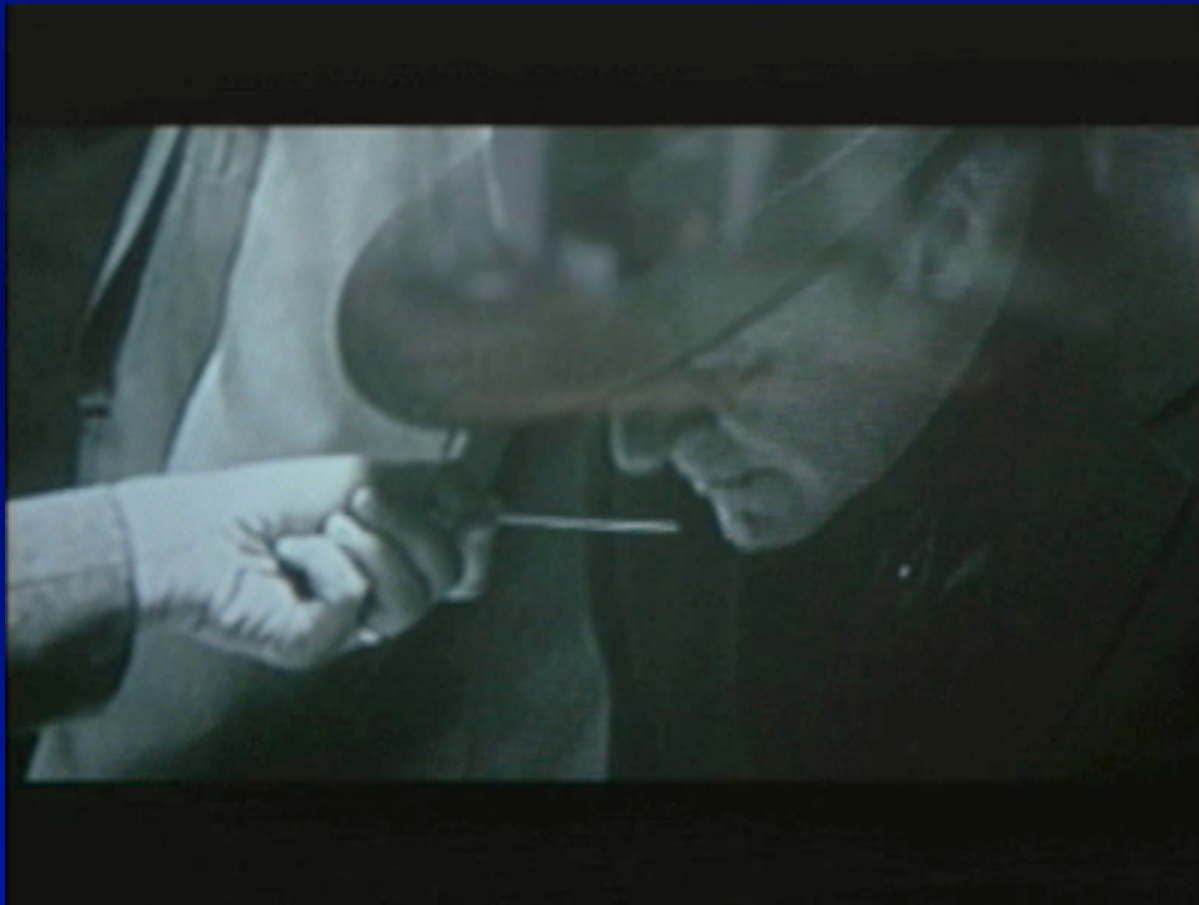
Memento, Chris Nolan, (2000)

editor: Dody Dorn



Hannibal (2001)

Director: Ridley Scott Editor: Mark Helfrich



Classic Continuity Editing

- It is the common form of narrative filmmaking.
- The basic purpose of the continuity system is to create a smooth flow from shot to shot.
- The classic continuity style of editing seeks to tell a story coherently and clearly.

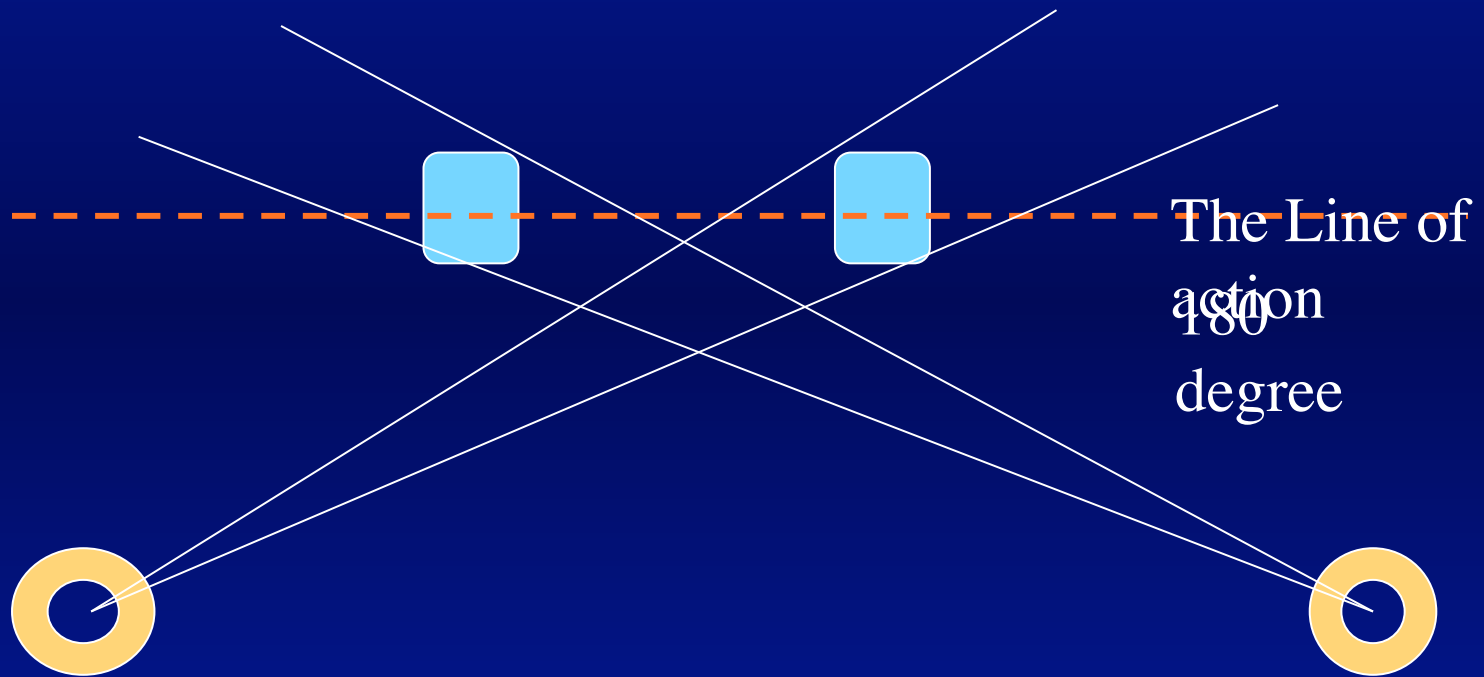
Classic Continuity Editing

- Graphic qualities are usually kept roughly continuous from shot to shot.
- The figures are balanced and symmetrically deployed in the frame.
- Overall lighting tonality remains constant.
- The action always occupies the central zone of the screen.

Continuity

- Maintaining the established flow of visual and audio production detail between takes, shots and scenes.
 - ✓ Content
 - ✓ Movement
 - ✓ Position
 - ✓ Sound
 - ✓ Dialogue

180° Rule



180° Rule



Continuity of Movement



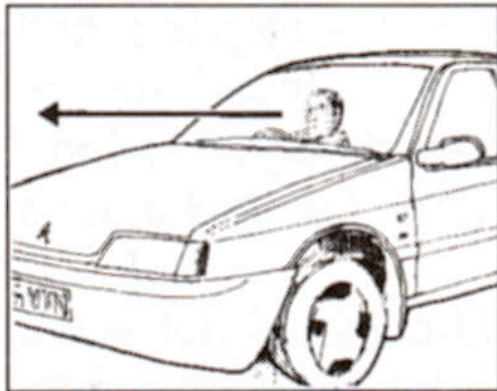
Continuity of Movement



Continuity



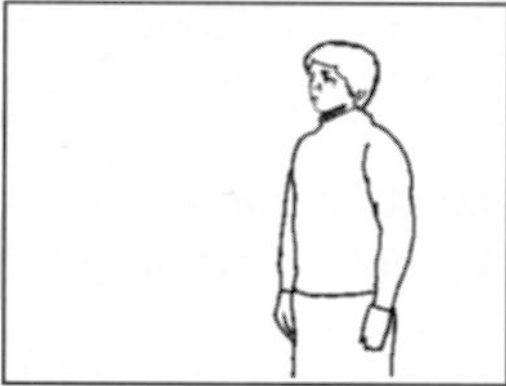
When the subject is the same, then the continuity of the arm movement must be similar in both shots.



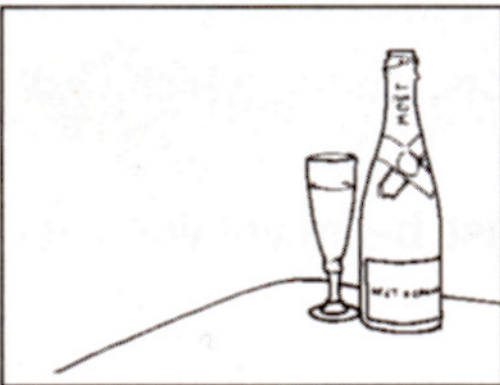
The direction of the movement must also be similar.



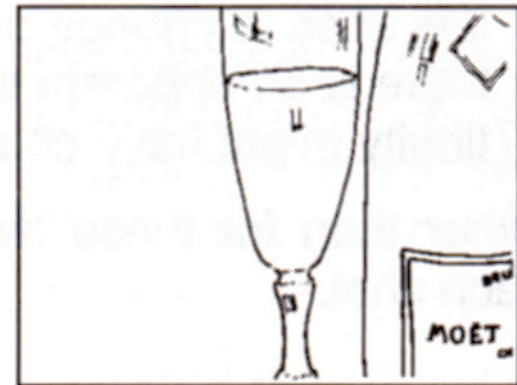
Continuity



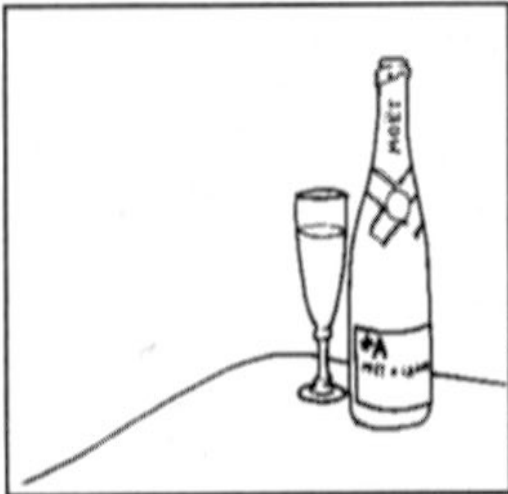
The position of the subject in the screen must be similar.



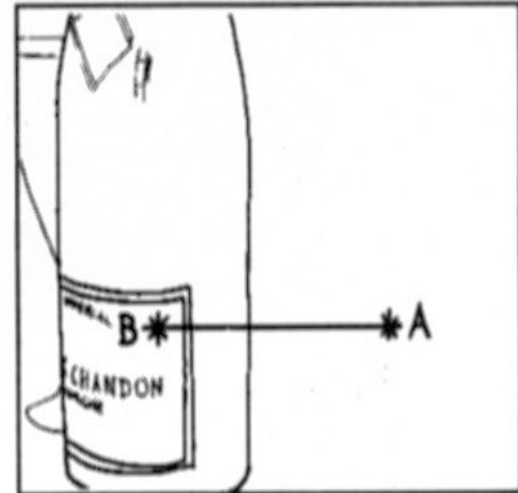
Even when there is no movement of an object, position continuity must be similar.



Continuity



If the continuity of position is reversed the eye will JUMP between the two shots from A to B.



Classic Continuity Editing

- The cutting rhythm is usually 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.
- Viewer needs more time to take in the shots containing more details.

Alternatives to Continuity Editing

- Continuity editing remains only one style, and many filmmakers have explored other editing possibilities.
- Films using abstract or associational form instead of narrative form give graphic and rhythmic dimensions of editing great weight.
- In other words, instead of joining shot A with shot B to better tell the narrative story, you could join them based purely on their graphic or rhythmic qualities.

Alternatives to Continuity Editing

- The more emphases given to pure graphic and rhythmic patterns the entire film's form changes.
- The narrative story elements will tend to recede, and the film will become more abstract in form.

Alternative style...

Brand Upon the Brain, Guy Maddin, (2006)

