ON THE MEANING OF A CUT: TOWARDS A THEORY OF EDITING

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Abstract

I confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own and the work of other persons is appropriately acknowledged.

This thesis looks at a variety of discourses about film editing in order to explore the possibility, on the one hand, of drawing connections between them, and on the other, of addressing some of their problematic aspects. Some forms of fragmentation existed from the very beginnings of the history of the moving image, and the thesis argues that forms of editorial control were executed by early exhibitors, film pioneers, writers, and directors, as well as by a fully-fledged film editor. This historical reconstruction of how the profession of editor evolved sheds light on the specific aspects of their work. Following on from that, it is proposed that models of editing fall under two broad paradigms: of montage and continuity. These are not meant to be mutually exclusive categories, but rather umbrella terms for co-existing approaches that are governed by different principles. A re-evaluation of the concept of *découpage* complements this perspective. It is argued that reinstituting this notion, with its many variants, can help us think separately about issues of film form normally addressed at earlier stages of production, and conceptually distinct from the tasks of an editor. Their specificity, it is suggested, can be examined more productively by honing in on a very narrow set of procedures used in editing. The spiral model of editing proposed here is an intervention that addresses a common issue with theorising editing, the fact that the scope of the activity cuts across a number of categories related to film form. Using historical, theoretical, and pragmatic lenses, the thesis offers a new elucidation of what it is we mean when we talk about editing.

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Introduction

What happens when a film is being edited? I mean this question first in a technical sense. A group of shots, or nowadays, to be precise, a batch of digital files are collected. They undergo a selection. Next, they are manipulated and put into an order. These very acts transform what initially was a collection of fragments into a coherent whole. The unsorted pieces of film material cease to be individual shots and when cobbled together become scenes, beats, sequences, plots, works of art, essayistic montages, factual programmes; essentially, a film in its many forms[1]. This transition can be understood in many ways. Assuming that the moving images are a form of utterance, the most fundamental aspect of that process is concerned with the emergence of a structure that is intended to communicate something to a spectator.[2] Yet this simple premise already suggests a direction, one of many. Are all films letters addressed to a spectator? Do all editors practice audio-visual semiotics? The question of editing touches on the very understanding of the cinematic medium. At the same time what the editor does is tangibly concrete, unavoidable and surprisingly universal.

If one were to suggest the most basic definition, one could say that editing is about cutting and splicing shots in order to produce a film text.[3] This (trans)formation at the mechanical level is usually followed by the creation of a narrative. The conjunction of spatiotemporal coherence and plot construction can be considered the core tenet of *continuity editing*, a crucial concept in many discussions of editing. However, as soon as we propose that minimal formula a few problems arise. While the 'shot' can be defined in purely technical terms, the 'scene,' to take one of the basic terms as an example, is a unit of narrative development. The former is understood intuitively by anyone who has had a camera in their hands, but only by referring to a concept of plot construction (or

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[1] I use the word 'film' as a synonym of the moving images without specifying its material basis or ontological status. It is a matter of convenience. I am aware that even as broad and tempting definition as Cavell's 'film is a succession of automatic world projections' might leave out almost all of the contemporary cinema which is digital. Unless we agree with Gunning that the digital has not affected the indexical status of film at all, in which case Cavell's definition holds true. Quoting Stan Brakhage 'the most aesthetically hopeful definition of Film I've found is Bill Wees' "Light Moving in Time."' (Stan Brakhage, 'In Consideration of Aesthetics,' *Chicago Review* 47/48, no. 4, no. 1 (Winter 2001 – Spring 2002): 60.

[2] See Francesco Casetti, *Inside the Gaze* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 136.

[3] 'Editing may be thought of as the coordination of one shot with the next' according to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction,* 8th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2008), 218.

indeed harking back to Aristotle's unities) can we describe what the scene is. This conceptual move towards storytelling takes us away from the physical properties of film material, whether celluloid or digital, and forces us to look to narratology for the answers to the question of editing. But at what precise moment have we made this decisive step? What exactly happened to those shots that we no longer refer to them as 'mere' shots but as the elements of a film narrative? And crucially: is it really necessary to invoke the theoretically charged notion of 'narrative' to discuss something as ubiquitous as cutting and splicing moving images?

One of the threads followed in this thesis is an observation that the critical transformation of shots into a narrative (or a visual argument, or a work of art) has something to do with the dualism in the notion of editing, the split that permeates its many aspects. This dualism is clearly visible at the juncture of film's materiality as an object and immateriality as an act of communication. In the celluloid era, 'editor's scissors' could metonymically refer to the process of constructing a film, that is, they were both physical tools used in cutting and stood for cinematic storytelling, or, more often, for the intervention of a censor. An editor could leave an actor's performance 'on the cutting room floor' meaning that strips of film featuring their acting were discarded from the edit which led to the actor's vanishing from the *diegesis*. 'Cutting' and 'the room floor' belong to the physical realm, whereas *diegesis* by its very nature is a psychic entity. The latter is, therefore, constructed by the editor, for the spectator, from the material which is nothing but raw ingredients. The *constructedness* of that editing-induced world of a film is something usually missing from the accounts of editing that see it as one of the aspects of film form, equal to mis-en-scène, acting or lighting. But in fact, it would not be an overstatement to say that editorial decisions are the *sine qua non* of any sort of filmic experience in a way that is fundamentally different than the role played by other creative contributions to the film. To edit, as we are reminded by the etymology, is to make known to the world.

An intimation of that central place of editing features strongly in some earlier strands of film theory. The resemblance of the two-tier structure of a filmic utterance to the binary nature of a linguistic sign has been a powerful

inspiration for filmolinguistics and structuralist film theory.[4] Although looking for the cine-language proved to be a maddeningly arduous task (precisely where is double articulation in cinema?), if not ultimately futile, editing still seems to be an area of film theory where semiotic questions are as urgent as ever. Can we define editing as a process that produces a 'filmic sentence'? What would be the relationship between that cutting-induced utterance and Bazinian indexicality of the cinematic image? As will be investigated in the second part of the thesis, theories influenced by semiotics were fuelled by the unsettling question of whether film was more of a symbolic than an indexical medium. While the iconicity of the cinematic sign emerged as the middle-ground compromise, editing lay in the background of these considerations.

The already mentioned dualism of materiality and expression produces not only large theoretical dilemmas but also paradoxes in the inner workings of editing. A particular cut can be a disruptive, Eisensteinian attraction or can work to uphold the impression of overall continuity. Editing can be rhythmical and abstract in a musical fashion and/or stringently semiotic with, arguably, the clarity of a verbal utterance. It plays on emotions and reason. It can use metaphors to express lofty ideas and/or plunge the spectator into a carnal spectacle. A cut, quite literally, albeit paradoxically, separates and joins at the very same time. To introduce the terminology suggested here, a cut belongs either to the paradigm of continuity, or to the paradigm of montage. Sometimes it could also be merging the principles of both.

In short if only provisionally at this stage, four elementary actions of the editor: *selecting*, *arranging*, *cutting* and *blending* have multiple functions, and the now digital 'scissors' is a simple, yet surprisingly potent tool of not only storytelling, but also persuasion, artistic expression and emotional impact. That said, the mechanism through which these goals are met is difficult to define as editing cuts across a number of categories and sprawls beyond film aesthetics in a narrow sense.

A large part of this thesis is devoted to scoping the many ways in which we can talk about filmic fragmentation. Some formulae like *continuity editing* privilege the mainstream narrative model at the expense of documentary, essayistic, artistic and other forms of audiovisual culture, which, as varied as

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[4] Warren Buckland, 'Semiotics of Film,' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, ed. Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland (London: Routledge, 2015), 425 – 429.

they are, share one fundamental feature: they use editing. Other concepts, such as *montage*, tend to be reserved for certain periods in film history or art practices. Complicating matters even further, numerous testimonies of practitioners suggest that editing encompasses a broad spectrum of creative decisions, including performance, mise-en-scène, lighting, colour, dialogue and affect to name just a few. Editing considerations often do not conform neatly to any job descriptions or even the basic division between form and content.

However, another factor that needs to be taken into account is that, depending on the context, the word 'editing' assumes different meanings. Despite the purported *obviousness* of the activity, it can be referred to using four different terms with intricately overlapping semantic fields: *cutting*, *editing*, *montage* and *découpage*. These words sometimes are used synonymously (like *cutting* and *editing*). Occasionally they are language-specific equivalents (*montage* in Slavic and Romance languages means *editing* in English), the translation of which frequently leads to confusion. One famous example is that Bazin's *découpage* was often translated as editing when Bazin's use of the concept referred rather to conceptual editing and camera angles.[5] Moreover, their denotations have also undergone changes in the course of film history, which have made some of them, like *découpage*, almost obsolete.

The picture becomes even more complex if one takes into account that most theories of cinematic form at least implicitly refer to editing, sometimes without making a clear distinction between the practical process and the signifying structures that result from it. Hence, Christian Metz's Grand Syntagmatique, for example, could be justifiably called a filmolinguistic theory of editing, just as Deleuze's concepts of time-movement and movement-image are typologies largely based on editing procedures inflected by a phenomenological perspective.[6] Jean-Pierre Oudart's concept of suture makes explicit claims about continuity style. It is a style that hides the fragmentation inherent in montage to stave off the threat of the cut inevitably, in this theory, evoking castration.[7] Not to mention that neo-formalist formulae of continuity editing and enhanced continuity editing make spatiotemporal organisation of narrative a focal point of the classical Hollywood model, a subject which has

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[5] See Timothy Barnard, *Découpage* (Montreal: caboose, 2014).
[6] Ibid; Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
[7] Sean Cubitt, 'Suture,' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, 453–456.

loomed large over film theory for decades.[8] How can a line be drawn then between editing theory and film theory in general? Or rather the question should be: is there any point in making broad, theoretical statements on editing while so much has been already written about film form? It is valid to see editing as a process contributing to the formal elements of cinema, so, arguably, it can be subsumed under the subject extensively covered by film theory.

In this thesis, however, I argue that a careful and detailed examination of the practice of editing is important for three main reasons, which at the very same time reveal points of difference between established film theories and the attempt undertaken here. First, a tendency to conflate various aspects of editing into one convenient term 'continuity editing' is seemingly based on a number of assumptions about the nature of classical cinema, or the dominant structures of storytelling, or the Institutional Mode of Representation to use Noël Burch's term.[9] It is not the aim of this thesis to discuss the latter in depth. Quite the contrary, its objective is to disentangle the concept of editing from the discourse surrounding Hollywood cinema, to narrow down the scope of investigation and to separate it from the more general issue of narrative film form. In other words, I hope to reclaim the concept of editing by severing it from the classical system. In this respect, the organising research questions are: what are the principles of editing which one can discern across the widest possible spectrum of filmmaking? What is unique about editing that is not directly related to any culturally specific form of entertainment? As a film practitioner, I'm interested in the nuts and bolts of the profession and how we can generalise observations about certain procedures used in fictional, factual, artistic or purely utilitarian filmmaking in order to conceptualise editing as a distinct practice and a mode of thinking about filmic material.

Secondly, alongside the history of film theory per se one can discern a parallel history of theoretical thinking that has originated among practitioners or has been used in professional training. These two simultaneous lines of development do have important convergences in the works of Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin to name just the most historically influential figures.

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[8] David Bordwell, 'The classical Hollywood style, 1917–60,' in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, (London: Routledge, 1988), 56–57; David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 121.
[9] See Noël Burch, 'Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response,' *October*, vol. 11 (Winter 1979): 77–96.

Often it is precisely the subject of editing that is the point of that convergence. However, with a few notable exceptions different agendas and vocabularies separate those two strands. On the one hand, there is a distinct tradition of practice-led thinking about editing that began with the Soviet School of Montage and was popularised in the English-speaking world by enthusiastic handbooks like *A Grammar of the Film* by Raymond Spottiswoode.[10] Karel Reisz refers to that approach in his seminal *The Technique of Film Editing* and the Soviet ideas finally found their way into contemporary manuals for film practitioners and are very much reflected in Walter Murch's influential writings.[11] This tradition retains a lot of the *montagist approach* to editing. It stresses dramatism and affect in film structures, which are, perhaps not surprisingly, conceived as products of intentions and conscious decision-making. On the other hand, the way that editing has been conceptualised in film theory has closely followed the ebbs and flows of broader theoretical debates. Depending on the current wave, the idea of editing has been successively re-shaped and amalgamated with semiotic, structuralist, psychoanalytical and cognitive models sharing precepts, but also necessarily the limited perspectives. The question of editing became a testing ground for influential theoretical divisions, including a split proposed by J. Dudley Andrew between formalists like the Soviet School and Béla Balázs and realists including Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin.[12] The question of editing styles became central for the advocates of auteurism seeking to transpose differences between editing and mise-en-scène into an aesthetic typology and a merit system.[13] It is still the pivotal issue in the definitions of narrative cinema preferred by neoformalists.[14]

This thesis attempts to find common threads through these concepts of editing, looking for them on both sides of the theory versus practice divide. But it also tries to bypass the pitfalls of adhering to one theoretical model and to avoid bending the concept of editing to fit more general and variegated concepts of the spectator, ideology or narrative. The preferred approach is that of Bakhtinian

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[10] Raymond Spottiswoode, *A Grammar of the Film. An Analysis of Film Technique* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935).
[11] Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing* (London: Focal Press, 1966); Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye* (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001).
[12] J. Dudley Andrew, *The Major Film Theories: an Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).
[13] John Gibbs, *Mise-en-scène. Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Walllflower, 2002), 55–66.
[14] See David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 121.

dialogism advocated in the context of film studies by Robert Stam.[15] An editing theory should be perhaps as multifaceted as the notion itself.

Thirdly, some histories of editing assume the evolution of cutting techniques, a perfection of a set of norms, if not a 'language'. This approach is visible in Dancyger's *The Technique of Film and Video Editing* and Fairservice's *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, both very comprehensive and thorough accounts of editing practice.[16]

I would argue that it is necessary to heed the risk of a teleological distortion here. There is extensive literature of the revisionist film historians of the late 1970s and 1980s who criticised approaches in film studies that sought to post-rationalize the *evolution* of film form. It seems that the accounts of 'continuity editing' are strangely immune to the historicizing impetus which has yielded admirable results in relation to spectatorship, production and technological history of film.

Charles Musser, Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault, among others, propose that the first two decades of film history were governed by a distinct, and yet fully-fledged set of aesthetic principles.[17] It was not necessarily a 'primitive' stage, as implied by Burch's rather demeaning term, but one markedly different from the coming age of cinema dominated by plot-based feature-length forms. Although their main concern is films pre-1917, indeed frequently pre-1907, the implications of their propositions reach further than the period of early cinema. To a certain degree, they offer a perspective on film history that eschews the myth of aesthetic 'development' and chooses to investigate discrete cinematic forms as bound in a myriad of ways to their historical period. This thesis follows a similar logic of 'non-continuity,' arguing that rather than looking for a linear evolution in editing, one should analyse divergent practices paying attention to their idiosyncratic traits and the particular cultural forms that influenced them.

In response to the criticism of my earlier approach, the parameters of the investigation here are set in a very narrow way. To some extent, they are

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[15] Robert Stam, *Film Theory. An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 327.
[16] Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing* (Boston: Focal Press, 1997); Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).
[17] See Thomas Elsaesser, 'General Introduction. Early Cinema: From Linear History to Mass Media Archeology,' in *Early Cinema: Space, Time, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 5–6.

themselves the subject of examination, since one of the recurring questions is how we can productively generalise observations about editing practice. The thesis is concerned decisively with the problems of film construction and does not address film reception.

Because of these restrictive parameters, digital editing is not treated as a *conceptually* different form of editing than cutting celluloid. The aforementioned four basic procedures of an editor (*selecting*, *arranging*, *cutting* and *blending*) are equally applicable to physical activities at an editing bench as virtual operations when using an editing software. However, I will examine specific issues of digital editing in the third part of the thesis. In the first section I am focusing on classical film theory and the developments that led to the formation of a profession of the film editor. I am also interested in those aspects of editing practice that are often seen as immutable. This is an intentional return to the silent cinema in a search for traces of commonality between the classical film and 'today's intermedial mash-up' of … the "kinematic" in the polyphony of contemporary hypermedia.'[18]

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first one is largely historical and it looks not only at practices of fragmentation in the early period and the first three decades of the twentieth century, but, more importantly, at the ways that cutting was conceptualised by the contemporaries and the later film historians. Throughout the thesis I am interested in the juncture between editing practices and discourses surrounding them. The emphasis, however, is on concepts rather than films. The first part begins by examining instances of editing that often fall outside the scope of investigation. The argument then continues with a proposition that something that can be referred to as 'editorial control' can be recognised in the role of the early exhibitor, the film pioneer, the writer, the director, and finally, also the studio producer. The last chapter of that part traces the increasing importance of a profession of the film editor.

Following on from the historical part, the second section of the thesis addresses more specific issues arising from the proposed distinction between the four concepts of editing (*montage*, *cutting*, *editing* and *découpage*). First, it attempts to formulate the paradigm of montage as an umbrella term for various models of *montagist* thinking. This is followed by a re-construction of Bazinian

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[18] André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, *The Kinematic Turn. Film in the Digital Era and its Ten Problems* (Montreal: caboose, 2012), 35.

concepts of *découpage* and, finally, an analysis of continuity system as described by both neoformalist theorists and film editors. The overarching argument here is that what is often described as editing frequently refers to the conceptual stage of filmmaking preceding the principal photography and the work of the director itself. Hence, it is more adequately covered by the notion of *découpage*. Consequently, editing itself can be defined in a more rigorous, and, paradoxically, also more inclusive way as a particular practice based on a unique set of principles pertaining to the decisions made after the film rushes have been produced. While certain considerations made at the *découpage* stage are mirrored in editing (in fact the latter can be thought as the stage of re-creating, testing and elaborating on *découpage*), in this thesis I will focus on a few selected practices characteristic for the editing stage in the narrow sense.

Finally, the third part of the thesis is centred on a case study: the documented process of editing a film titled *An Insignificant Man* (2016) will form the basis for a proposed new model of editing. It is intended to be a heuristic rather than a theory, which sees editing as a spiral and hermeneutic process, which on the one hand strives to create a coherent network of cultural associations, and on the other leads the spectator through an embodied and affective experience. The proposed model connects the established concepts about editing grouped under the umbrella terms of continuity and montage paradigms with the idea of four distinct activities involved in editing, which go through a process that is largely non-linear in nature and based on something I call here cultural mapping.

METHODOLOGY

The scope of the subject matter is enormous, and it is neither feasible nor desirable to even sketchily propose something like a theory of editing. I am intentionally avoiding the pattern suggested in books by Ken Dencyger, Don Fairservice and in many other accounts that refer to editing as an equivalent word for film construction. My aim here is rather to examine the discourse around the concepts of *editing*, *cutting*, *montage* and *découpage*, and only occasionally look directly at films as such. Following from that, the last section of the thesis suggests a few interventions in those areas of film practice which are rarely theorised, largely because they fall outside the scope of the 'film grammar' approach.

   The methodology employed in this thesis is based on the comparative analysis of theoretical observations coming from film scholars, writers of trade journals and practitioners. However, a backdrop is provided by the methodology of cultural studies with its interest in 'experience' in a broad sense, and more specifically with its focus on investigating cultural producers.[19] Following this methodological framework, I am analysing discourse originating in the creative industries, comparing it with its academic counterpart, and occasionally discussing the moving image outputs to which they refer. Hence, there is an emphasis on ways of conceptualising the practice of editing, trying to look at it from a number of perspectives without privileging any one of them. That is also the reason why recurring notions in the thesis are: heuristics, models and metaphors. As understood in linguistics and cognitive studies they are structures for approaching every day, practical decision-making or, simply put, for making sense of the world. The term is also used in studies in the psychology of creativity.[20] By a 'concept' I mean something closer to a Deleuzian 'tool box' or a 'crowbar' than an *a posteriori* concept à la Kant.[21] In this particular case, I try to draw attention to theoretical observations that originate from various sources, but in particular those coming from practitioners, and deal with decisions made in the cutting room.

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[19] See Michael Pickering, ed., *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 17, 53.

[20] Robert J. Sternberg, ed., *The Nature of Creativity: Contemporary Psychological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 6.

[21] See André Pierre Colombat, 'A Thousand Trails to Work with Deleuze,' *SubStance*, vol. 20, no. 3 (1991): 10–23.

The notion of heuristics as developed by Herbert A. Simon, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman suggests that in problem-solving we usually operate under the conditions of 'bounded rationality,' we attack issues by intuitively finding ways of reducing their complexity, creating solutions that are 'good enough.'[22] Theorising among practitioners seems prone to heuristic thinking, as exemplified by Pudovkin's ideal observer principle, a popular concept that was influential precisely because of its value as an intuitive solution to the problem of spatiotemporal fragmentation of the profilmic. Following this line of thinking, in the last section I will be also using methods of autoethnographic research.[23] The terms 'models' and 'metaphors' are used in reference to the cognitive linguistics of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, and are deployed to name and organise the wealth of practical knowledge shared among film editors, who try to understand their craft and art.[24]

It is worth stressing that the investigation presented below is written from a *production perspective* and focuses on the *form* of moving images. Both of these fairly loose terms are cogently defined by Peter Kiwitt in *What is Cinema in a Digital Age?*[25] Kiwitt seeks to separate issues of production form, technology and exhibition medium in a gesture that both points at an insoluble connection between conception and reception and elegantly resolves a thorny issue of the impact of the digital revolution on cinema. The importance of the latter is unquestionable. However, from a production perspective to examine 'a form of expression composed of edited live-action moving images' is to engage in a different discourse than the one that deals with its technological determinants.[26]

Lastly, the objective here is to venture an investigation into the *praxis* of editing, defined by Raymond Williams as '*practice* informed by theory and also, though less emphatically, theory informed by *practice*, as distinct both from

[22] See Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic and Amos Tversky, *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
[23] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview,' *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (2011). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095 (accessed 1 September).
[24] See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).
[25] Peter Kiwitt, 'What is Cinema in a Digital Age? Divergent Definitions from a Production Perspective,' *Journal of Film and Video* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 3-22.
[26] Ibid., 9.

practice uninformed by or unconcerned with theory and from theory which remains theory and is not put to the test of practice.'[27]

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[27] Raymond Williams, *Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Fontana Press, 1983), 318.

I.   From fragmentation to editing

EARLY FRAGMENTATION

The earliest films are often thought to be unedited.[1] As Jacques Aumont suggests, cinema was predestined to be 'a machine to produce images, views that were continuous, unbroken, lengthy.'[2] Noël Burch insists: 'the general rule in the Lumière films and in the subsequent "Lumière school" was that the film (the shot) ended when there was no film left in the camera.'[3] Burch's unqualified wording is telling: according to him the 'Lumière school' is characterised by the equation between the shot and the film as a result of constraints imposed by the very cinematic apparatus. Indeed, Auguste and Louis Lumière's Cinématographe was designed to record, develop and project one continuous 56-foot take lasting about 50 seconds.[4] Their actuality films were sometimes as short as 15 seconds and firmly rooted in Lumière's family trade and the source of their wealth: still photography. At their nascence 'living pictures,' as they were soon called, presented themselves as instances of momentous temporality and novel extensions of the photographic medium.

The story of early cinema, however, is not complete without referring to techniques of cutting celluloid and *editorial decisions* film pioneers were most certainly making. The difference between the earliest forms of editing and the period when cutting film reached maturity only to some extent hinges on the lack of technical capabilities of the early cinematographic equipment. The more substantial hindrance, I would argue, was the initial lack of a conceptual framework, or rather the intimidating influence of earlier, more established entertainment models.

When on the 22nd March 1895 Louis Lumière was delivering a lecture to the Society for the Encouragement of the National Industry he is said not to have expected what a technically minded Parisian audience would find most

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[1] Richard Meran Barsam, *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 26.
[2] Jacques Aumont, 'The Variable Eye, or the Mobilization of the Gaze,' in *The Image in Dispute*, ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin: The University of Texas Press), 199.
[3] Noël Burch, 'A Primitive Mode of Representation?,' in *Early Cinema: Space, Time, Narrative,* 222.
[4] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 8.

remarkable in his presentation.[5] It was not his astounding experiments with colour, but a single, black-and-white 'animated photograph' of workers pouring out of his factory doors in Lyon. To understand Lumière's surprise and their infamous lack of faith in cinema, one needs to imagine the horizon of nineteenth-century popular culture with its reference points made up of vaudeville, magic lantern shows, mechanical curiosities and photography.[6] These forms of entertainment informed the way early films were produced and consumed and, consequently, what kind of *editorial* decisions were within the grasp of the first filmmakers. The limits were dictated as much by technological restrictions as by their conceptual horizon inevitably tied to the contemporary backdrop of the late nineteenth-century amusements, something that Charles Musser calls the 'tradition of screen entertainment.'[7]

It is fair to guess that for Lumière, colour photography, undoubtedly an important invention in its own right, must have been a sure bet. It was an improvement applied to the already existing medium, which, coincidentally, had a long lineage of ancestry in painting, drawing and other forms of two-dimensional representation. Moving images were not a medium yet. Their future was as uncertain as a flickering shadow. Since 'living pictures' were not *vehicles* for anything, they initially signalled the sheer ingenuity of the very optical illusion they were based on. The content was dictated by what the camera could do. In consequence, from today's perspective the question of editing needs to be re-framed in the context of early cinema. Editing based on the principles of narrative continuity, something that we are now familiar with, emerged and began to evolve in tight conjunction with the medium of plot-based cinema. In contrast to that, early films were diverse explorations of the possibilities of the medium in its raw stage. Experimenting with the spatio-temporal dissection of the profilmic, a sign of cinematic advancement according to most accounts, was just one of the routes that film pioneers could take. But cinematic editing was still an open field.

To examine that expansive landscape of early cinema, let us first focus on the emergence of editing practice looking at both the advances in

[5] Jacques Aumont, 'Lumière Revisited,' *Film History* 8, no. 4 (1996): 416.
[6] See Walter Murch, 'A company of ghosts, playing to spectral music: Gesamtkunstkino and the future of digital cinema,' in Patricia McDonnell, ed., *On the edge of your seat. Popular theatre and film in early twentieth-century American art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 191.
[7] Jan Campbell, *Film and Cinema Spectatorship* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 135

cinematographic technology and the discourse that was accompanying and commenting on these developments. In this context, André Gaudreault sees in both the physical design of the Cinématographe and its institutional bearings a limitation that the first camera operators wrangled with inventively.[8] He imagines those pioneers of film practice craftily modifying (hacking) a device constructed by the Lumière brothers to be a novelty form of photography.[9] If this was the case with the mobile French camera, inventions originating in Edison's studio were doubly grounded in and crippled by pre-cinematic forms of entertainment: peep shows, amusement parks and vaudeville. When Edison's company turned to Vitascope and began projecting images on screen, the famous Black Maria studio was both an effective technological aid to produce correctly exposed images and a burdensome aesthetic constraint.[10] W.K.L. Dickson, writing from the insider's perspective of someone employed in the Orange Laboratory, illustrates his enthusiastic diary cum advertising brochure with stills from such early titles as: 'Carmencita, the Spanish Queen of Dancers,' 'Gaiety Girls,' 'Buffalo Bill' and 'Eugen Sandon, the Modern Hercules.'[11] In these recreations of vaudeville acts, a single shot suffices to present their subject in all its tantalising sheen of the 'realistic' representation of movement. The premise of a curiosity act made the earliest American films viable as a commercial venture, and at the same time determined their content by making them reliant on the established tropes. The first Edison films were then stage-bound for both cultural and technological reasons. Because the kinetoscope needed electricity, Edison's camera tended to be an immobile gazing eye recording whatever was staged between its light-hungry lenses and a black, contrasting backdrop. It was a sort of trap, for the light and the bodies under its beam, built into the very mechanics of that first camera.

To some extent, the diversity and the lack of narrative coherence of early cinema reflected the manifold nature of the vaudeville show itself, which is well

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[8] André Gaudreault, 'Fragmentation and Assemblage in the Lumiére Animated Pictures,' *Film History*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2001): 76.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 78.

[11] W.K.L Dickson and Antonia Dickson, *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope and Kinetophonograph* (New York: Albert Bunn Imprimatur, 1895; facsimile ed. by The Museum of Modern Art, 2000), 17-35.

captured by Tom Gunning's concept of the 'cinema of attractions.'[12] Each title is an attraction, single and self-contained that is driven by the logic of surprise, shock or outrageous contrast. As Leo Charney writes, 'vaudeville laugh was an abrupt, violent response to a stimulus – and that stimulus resulted, as in the cinematic effect, from the force of an unexpected juxtaposition.'[13] However, Dickson's writings also suggest that for some of its most imaginative inventors the gist of cinematic attraction lies in its realism, and so their fantasies of its future development reached far beyond the horizon of nineteenth-century screen entertainment.[14]

I am intentionally here crisscrossing between technologies of production and the kinds of content they were employed to make. This might help put into relief the intersection between technological determinants and the developments of editing. While cutting celluloid and joining two strips together in technical terms was mastered very quickly, the ideas around cutting and its function were subject to multiple shifting conditions: the demands of the entertainment format, the expectations of the audience, and, increasingly, the practical observations of filmmakers. To understand the emergence of editing practice, one needs to imagine a moment in film history when making a cut was a cumbersome, additional step between exposing a negative and projecting its developed print to an audience for a fee. There must have been a clear reason to do something that was time-consuming and fiddly. The method of splicing at the time required a number of precise steps and is well described in one of the first filmmaking manuals by Cecil M. Hepworth:

> Two pieces of celluloid can be joined together by painting the surfaces to come in contact with a convenient solvent of celluloid, and then pressing them together until they adhere. A space of a quarter of an inch is ample to make a thoroughly strong joint in celluloid film, and after a little practice it will be found that a joint with half that amount of lap or even less can be made perfectly satisfactory. It is necessary to remove the gelatine coating from the surface of one of the films to be joined for this distance from its edge, for a satisfactory junction can only be effected when celluloid comes in contact with celluloid.[15]

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[12] Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde,' in *Early Cinema: Space, Time, Narrative,* 56–62.

[13] Leo Charney, 'In order: fragmentation in film and vaudeville,' in Patricia McDonnell, ed., *On the edge of your seat. Popular theatre and film in early twentieth-century American art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 117.

[14] W.K.L Dickson and Antonia Dickson, *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope and Kinetophonograph*, 52.

[15] Cecil M. Hepworth, 2nd ed., *Animated Photography. The ABC of the Cinematograph* (1900; repr., New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1970), 85.

As a solvent, one could either use a solution of celluloid and acetone, amyl or acetate, or just the latter chemical on its own.[16] In another account we find a more detailed description of the tools needed:

> Slightly moisten the emulsion side of the overlap with the tongue, and then, using the steel rule as a guide, scrape away with a penknife all the emulsion so as to leave the overlap quite clean and free from gelatine. Now, with the camel-hair brush, paint this overlap with acetate of amyl, and also the corresponding area of the back of the other piece of film.[17]

Although, as Hepworth reassures his readers, '[it] is not by any means a difficult matter to join celluloid films,' there is one important rule to observe.

> [One needs to] cut the film before joining it that the picture or space in which the join occurs shall be a whole picture's breadth; otherwise when the second animated photograph comes to be projected on the screen, it will be found to be displaced, with respect to the mask of the instrument, and probably the photograph will appear cut in half and the halves transposed.[18]

As this illustrates, each editing intervention was made up of four steps: cutting the celluloid, scraping the gelatine coating, applying the solvent and finally pressing two strips of celluloid together in a way that preserves equal distances between consecutive frames. The fact that Hepworth confidently writes about this process as early as 1897 suggests that the technique of cutting and splicing celluloid was almost as old as the invention of moving pictures cameras themselves. This should not come as a surprise. In the aforementioned brochure by Dickson published in 1895 one finds stills showing the author in a double-exposure trick film and allusions to the first attempts at 'the presentation of an entire play' rather than just 'detached subjects.'[19]

The perception that early films are based on some sort of integrity of the film strip is almost logically wrong – the invention of cinema hinges after all on apparent motion, the illusion of seeing movement in a rapid succession of still images. It is in itself a trick involving a number of photographs spliced together.[20] In fact, cinema has never escaped the stillness of a single frame. It is

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16 Ibid., 87.
17 *The Modern Bioscope Operator* (London: Ganes Limited, 1911), 13.
18 Ibid., 84–85.
19 W.K.L Dickson, Antonia Dickson, *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope and Kinetophonograph*, 14, 48.
20 As Walter Murch writes 'The truth of the matter is that film is actually being 'cut' twenty-four times a second. Each frame is a displacement from the previous one – it is just that in a continuous shot, the space/time displacement from frame to frame is small enough (twenty

in Godard's 'truth' and Mulvey's 'death' – all happening 24 times per second.[21] The fascination with a single frame is the result of its antithetical relationship with the impression of movement. The eeriness of gazing at the long-dead actors singing, laughing and lighting cigarettes is doubly chilling when you bring the playback to a halt. They are dead. Press play, and they are alive again.

All in all, whatever the intentions of the inventors were, there is enough evidence to suggest that actually very soon various forms of fragmentation began to be practiced. The first instance of editing was happening in-camera and the first editor was the cameraman. According to Gaudreault, employees of the Lumières' company sent out globally to capture slices of modern life quickly realised that events unfolding in front of their cameras have periods of stasis, disrupted beginnings or endings.[22] One of the most commonly adopted solutions was to stop cranking and wait for the appropriate moment when resuming rolling would produce a more interesting image. In modern terms this produced a jump cut, although with certain types of shots this shift from one shot to another is less noticeable than with others. The earliest British film stored in the National Film Archive made by Birt Acres in 1895 contains two jump cuts that compress time after horses run past the winning post during a race in Derby.[23] In 1900, Hector Maclean writes in the epilogue to the already quoted manual by Hepworth:

> However promising the beginning may be, long before the end all interesting incident may have given out. In which case, perhaps the best thing to do is to at once leave off turning, without moving the instrument, and resume turning when suitable incidents recur.[24]

Maclean gives his advice in the already second edition of 'Animated Photography. The A B C of the Cinematograph' by Cecil M. Hepworth originally published in 1897 and updated by Maclean three years later. Writing about the choice of subjects he distinguishes between those which may be

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milliseconds) for the audience to see it as motion within a context rather than twenty-four different contexts a second.' Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye*, 6.

[21] Laura Mulvey writes about the 'fundamental, and irreconcilable, opposition between stillness and movement that reverberates across the aesthetics of cinema.' Moving images are associated with the narrative drive of mainstream fictional films, and stillness with the avant-garde project of bringing 'the mechanism and the material of film into visibility.' Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 67.

[22] André Gaudreault and Jean-Marc Lamotte, 'Fragmentation and Segmentation in the Lumière *Animated Views*, *The Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 115.

[23] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 12.

[24] Hector Maclean, 'Notes on Cinematography 1900,' in Cecil M. Hepworth, 2nd ed., *Animated Photography. The ABC of the Cinematograph*, 127.

classified as 'known' and those which are 'unknown.'[25] The parade of the Grenadiers to St. James's Park every morning at 10.30 can be relied upon to repeat itself. It can be 'noted and timed', which means that 'when the moment arrives the operator will know when to begin in order that the interest is maintained to the end of the film.'[26] When staging a shoot, Maclean recommends having an assistant, which would be 'a kind of combination of stage manager, drill sergeant, and time-keeper.'[27]

In these distinctions and recommendations, one senses that for early writers on film a reel of celluloid was the basic unit, of time and expression. The entirety of action was supposed to be contained within it. However, it is also clear that action is already perceived in terms of its dramatic interest. Beginnings, ends, and the flow of happenings in front of a camera form a kind of Promethean narrative structure, which filmmakers working in the first five years of cinema were acutely aware of. Maclean recommends a sort of factual mise-en-scène, a technique of anticipating what will happen in front of the camera in order to record it from the best vantage point.

Gaudreault goes even further in comparisons between these early attempts and narrative cinema suggesting that 'every shot tells a story merely by means of iconic analogy (and will continue to do so for as long as the cinema exists).'[28] For him, cinema is doomed to be a narrative medium. This is the first layer of narrativity built into the machine of the moving images.[29]

While cutting on continuous action is not yet imaginable or is considered a mistake, filmmakers resort to a careful staging of action within the given time span. 'Selection' and 'arranging,' essential elements of the developed forms of editing are already in place, but they apply to elements of mise-en-scène, which occur in the time it takes to expose one reel of film. As Deutelbaum notes the Lumière actualities do not present 'naïve or an unmediated record of reality' but rather 'each presents a process, largely described by the film's title.'[30] One just needs to recall *Le jardinier et le petit espiegle* (1895) to see the mechanics of that

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[25] Ibid., 128.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] André Gaudreault, 'Film, Narrative, Narration. The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers,' in *Early Cinema. Space, Time, Narrative*, 71.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Marshall Deutelbaum, 'Structural patterning in the Lumiere films,' in *Film before Griffith*, ed. John L. Fell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 305.

mise-en-scène-driven, time-constrained and gag-shaped narrative: towards the end of the film the gardener seems to be urged by someone off-screen to go back to his hose as if running out of film was imminent and the closure, the stasis of the narrative had to be rushed in. In other Lumière films their beginnings typically coincide with the start of the action, which then continues uninterrupted (or so it seems) to the last frames of the celluloid loaded in the camera, sometimes fizzling out without a definite resolution, like in *Repas de bébé* (1895), but often with a natural closure as in *Bataillle de boules* (1896) or *Leaving Jerusalem by Railway* (1896). At times in films like *Pompiers à Lyon* (c. 1896) we are offered a few gratuitous seconds after the action has completed, which only underscores how most other early films are precisely timed to capture only the action of some interest to an audience. In this film a few carts with firemen dart past the camera, which constitutes the entirety of the action. When they are already gone we are left with an unassuming view of a street in Lyon, fascinating to the modern eye in its randomness, a slice of 'life caught unawares' seemingly just to fill up the few remaining frames in the film load.

The earliest films had traditionally been thought to rely on mis-en-scène due to the theatrical provenance of cinema. Their stage-bound character identified by Georges Sadoul and later analysed by Jean Mitry and Noël Burch has been questioned since the late 1970s.[31] The turning point was the Conference of the International Federation of Film Archives held in Brighton in 1978, during which archivists and invited film historians viewed as many films of the early period as possible reaching a conclusion that early filmmakers borrowed from a variety of non-theatrical sources: short stories, novels, lantern slides, political caricatures, strip cartoons, wax museums and fireworks displays.[32] More recently, Pierre Jenn, Gaudreault and Gunning prefer to talk about 'the unity of viewpoint' than about 'the proscenium arch,' the latter tainted with a slavish copying of the more established medium.[33] Monstration instead of narration, showmanship rather than erasing traces of storytelling and the 'particular mode

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[31] Elizabeth Ezra, *Georges Méliès. The birth of auteur* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 24; Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs, *Theatre to Cinema: Stage Pictorialism and the Early Feature Film* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Tom Gunning, '*Primitive* Cinema A Frame-up? Or the Trick's on Us?,' in *Early cinema. Space, Frame, Narrative*, 99–101.

of address of the spectator' are thought to distinguish early cinema from its later, plot-driven formulae.[34]

As much as I agree with Gunning and Gaudreault, perhaps a practical argument could complement those art historical propositions, which still seem to hinge on the assumption of some sort of aesthetic, top-down coherence of the first filmmakers. From the pragmatic point of view and by applying the 'principle of least effort,' it might have seemed sensible for them to fragment action into shot-sized chunks and, more generally, to think about narration in a minimalist way making best use of the structure of a gag, a news item, a travelogue scene or a short vaudeville act. I use here the notion of 'narration' in a broad sense following Gaudreault's among others propositions.[35]

As already suggested, cutting celluloid did not pose technical challenges in a general sense. It was, however, an arduous task. At the same time, with a careful mise-en-scène filmmakers felt able to fill the frame with action entertaining enough for their immediate purpose. It is reasonable to assume that production expediency was as important a determinant as aesthetic predilections. What is more, short-form entertainment privileged certain tropes and modes of address. As Hepworth puts it: 'Little made-up comedies, carefully arranged and well acted (there is the rub!) make perhaps the most pleasing of all subjects for the living photographs.'[36] Eileen Bowser suggests that while non-fiction films dominated early cinema, the majority of the fiction films made between 1900 and 1906 were comedies 'employing slapstick humour' and 'full of vulgarity, sex and violence.'[37] This format is not conducive to developing techniques of spatiotemporal breakdown. As Alexander Mackendrick, for example, postulated decades later: 'comedy plays best in the master-shot.'[38] The creative objective of focusing on body performance, crude, if any, psychological motivation and the durational constraint could be seen as predicated on the exhibition system prevalent at the time with music halls and makeshift venues still dominating the film exhibition landscape. The expediency of producing short-form and popular

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[34] Ibid., 98.
[35] André Gaudreault, 'Film, Narrative, Narration. The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers,' 68–73.
[36] Cecil M. Hepworth, *Animated Photography. The ABC of the Cinematograph*, 98.
[37] Eileen Bowser, 'Preparation for Brighton – the American contribution,' in *Cinema 1900-1906. An analytical study by the National Film Archive (London) and the International Federation of Film Archives* (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), 5-6.
[38] Alexander Mackendrick, *On film-making. An introduction to the craft of the director* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 41.

entertainment must have been a significant factor in determining whether and how to cut. These determinants also make spatial scene dissection seem like too large a leap for the first filmmakers to make. Henry Jenkins suggests that 'what vaudeville communicated was the pleasure of infinite diversity in infinite combinations.'[39] Early films conformed to the prescribed vaudeville format, in which single items were arranged into a larger, light-hearted, often comic and risqué, curated show. This does not mean, however, that editorial decisions, or even what we could call *montagist thinking* were absent from these forms of entertainment. Producing 'the pleasure of infinite diversity' required tactics which were not miles away from the more mature styles of editing.

An area where those strategies were most visible was exhibition practice. A catalogue of The Charles Urban Trading Company from 1903 is a good indicator of the spectrum of film entertainment available to British exhibitors in the first decade of cinema.[40] Charles Urban at the height of his career was one of the leading film businessmen in Britain producing his own films as well as being 'the exclusive British Agent' for G. Mieles' Star Films and distributing Lumière brothers' prints among those of many other producers.[41] His catalogue is divided into sections corresponding to production companies, each of them then methodically listing available films showing first their catalogue number, a title, a summary of the action punctuated with a sales spiel, and finally the length in feet. The way the films are organised suggests that a film commodity among British exhibitors in 1903 was still largely 'a subject,' a 'view' or a series of views between 50 and 200 feet long. The catalogue suggests that subjects can be arranged into series. Frequently it stipulates that individual shots can only be sold as part of a series. This approach is noteworthy because alongside simple, one-shot subjects in the same catalogue we find quite a few multi-shot films like Bioscope's *Joan of Arc* 'in 12 scenes' and with the total length of about 800 feet, or Williamson's comedies, short but well-advanced in their film techniques.

Notwithstanding, the overall film distribution model in the Britain of 1903 seems to be that exhibitors were invited to pick and mix from a very diverse selection of 'subjects.' This is confirmed by Hepworth in his

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[39] Henry Jenkins, *What Made Pistachio Nuts? Early Sound Comedy and the Vaudeville Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 63.
[40] The Charles Urban Trading Company Catalogue, *We Put the World Before You by Means of the Bioscope and Urban Films* (London, 1903).
[41] http://www.charlesurban.com/history.html (accessed 1 September 2017).

autobiography, where he gives another reason why fragmentation was the dominant marketing strategy in early distribution. While by 1903 a lot of subjects demanded films to be longer, those lengthier works tended also to be less sellable.[42] Therefore, for example, 800 feet films like Hepworth's *Alice in Wonderland* (1903) would still be sold as a series of shots, which exhibitors could purchase separately to both economise and make the programme snappier.[43]

The principle of one-subject formatting is evident in the two early films of the production company run by Hepworth himself, who not only penned one of the earliest manuals of filmmaking but was later an instrumental figure in establishing the British film industry. *How It Feels to Be Run Over* (1900) and *Explosion of a Motor Car* from the same year are blatant one-shot gags. They both start off with a car appearing in the far distance and at the edge of the frame. The beginning of the film is the beginning of the action and the action itself comes into being at the edges of the visible. However, this does not mean that they were made without the aid of cutting. Hepworth, true to his form, displays in both films a knack for inventive playfulness with the possibilities of the medium itself. After the car hurls into the camera in the first of them, a seemingly handwritten sentence appears on the black leader: 'Oh, mother will be pleased.' The punchline is delivered by a sarcastic narrator, but this addition necessitates a splice: a title card is added at the end of the first shot. Hence, the narrative of this short film spills over to the next shot incorporating a non-diagetic humorous commentary. *Explosion of a Motor Car* has a similarly static camera and picks up on the same theme of the perilous invention of the automobile. Here a car explodes, a policeman immediately appears and begins to write a report, while at the same trying to avoid a downpour of dummy limbs and pieces of wardrobe falling from the sky. The effect of the blow-up is achieved by a meticulous cut in the shot of the car approaching, and then a splice with another shot taken from exactly the same position of the camera and under the same lighting conditions, a process referred to in the literature as 'stop motion substitution.'[44] The second shot of Hepworth's film begins with a puff of smoke

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[42] Cecil M. Hepworth, *Came the dawn: memories of a film pioneer* (London: Phoenix House, 1951), 63.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Frank Gray, 'The Edited Film in England,' in *The Silent Cinema Reader*, ed. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (London: Routledge, 2004), 61.

in the place of the car, which soon reveals the rubble of assorted pieces of metal. The trick is convincing, and combined with the clever use of the off-screen space at the top of the frame makes the comic effect punchy. Its execution required a preconceived staging of the action and then a painstaking process of finding the best cutting point between the two strips of film.

Rather than being a 'primitive,' seemingly one-shot piece of light entertainment, Hepworth's film displays a mastery of trick cutting. Alongside Méliès' unsurpassed feats of illusionism it shows how early cinema exploited the idea of total continuity of the 'shot-film,' or, as Tom Gunning describes it following Burch 'the unicity of viewpoint.'[45] At the same time, those films are evidence that the so-called 'one-shot' film should more accurately be referred to as the 'one-subject' piece as it is not uncommon for them to be made up of more than one shot.

While trick films could be considered already fairly elaborate and labour-intensive experiments with film cutting and splicing, the technical or creative hurdles of working with 'the unknown' yielded other early forms of editing. Next to stopping cranking and resuming after a certain period of time, another practiced fix for the unpredictability of live events was moving the camera to a different position, which gave a more effective vantage point for capturing the action. Gaudreault is quick to notice that these practices do not constitute an early form of the spatiotemporal breakdown, which would later evolve into the continuity editing of narrative cinema.[46] While he is certainly right, it is also worth considering more carefully what we mean by 'continuity editing' or indeed just by referring to the notion of 'editing' without any descriptor. Stephen Bottomore, in another influential essay, offers a convincing argument that the 'real origins of film editing' lie with actuality films.[47] The unpredictability of live events, he says, forced filmmakers to move the camera and to cut when nothing interesting was happening in front of it. These experiences from factual filmmaking were later, as Bottomore suggests, translated into staged productions.[48] Bottomore tacitly assumes that the developed form of editing is

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[45] Tom Gunning, '*Primitive* Cinema A Frame-up? Or the Trick's on Us?,' 99.
[46] André Gaudreault, 'Fragmentation and Assemblage in the Lumiére Animated Pictures,' *Film History*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2001): 78.
[47] Stephen Bottomore, 'Shots in the Dark,' in *Early Cinema. Space, Time, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 104 – 110.
[48] Ibid.

predicated on the spatiotemporal breakdown and requires some form of its conscious staging. This view is certainly justified, but one might equally ask: how to describe and refer to other forms of fragmentation, so prevalent in the first decade of cinema? Is staging events a necessary requirement for editing?

FIRST CUTS

One could notice that chronologically the first form of editing (in the general sense which does not assume spatiotemporal dissection of a scene) is the one that attempts to rectify the temporal continuity of a shot-film with a cut that is practically imperceptible, hardly visible or presented as negligible. In this category we can put: 'technical cuts' eliminating fogged frames, a common feature of hand-cranked cameras; 'resumptive cuts,' a simple way of presenting more action in the limited screen time without the change of the framing: and finally 'trick cuts,' frequently used throughout the first decade of cinema and a signature mark of Melies' films. In a rather paradoxical way, these kinds of editing can be described as the most rigorous instances of 'continuity editing,' in which cutting is used to create an illusion of total continuity of a filmstrip. As mentioned, a 'one-shot' film technically speaking was sometimes made up of multiple shots meticulously joined together in a more or less seamless fashion. Tom Gunning makes this point lucidly:

> …[E]arly film-makers were concerned with issues that traditionally they are thought to have ignored, those of precise continuity of action over a splice…. While later classical editing can be referred to as 'invisible editing' only metaphorically, such 'substitution splices' are nearly literally invisible, having passed for the last eight decades for the most part without notice.[1]

However, it is worth adding that the Méliès-style gimmicks that Gunning talks about hinge on the make-believe of the audience willing to see them as an unbroken record of a pro-filmic event. The spectacular and the surprising at a plot level are, in these films, founded on a rigorous and highly-crafted continuity in their visual presentation. Hence, editing is doubly implicated in their workings: 'stop motion substitution' requires laborious cutting *and* it works only as long as the audience finds enjoyment in the subversion of their expectation of seeing the cinematic apparatus produce an empirically accurate representation of movement. The latter might be seen as predicated on the notion of a 'continuity of action', guaranteed by an 'unedited' strip of celluloid; reality seemingly untampered with.

   This might be the first intimation of the thorny issue of how editing-based continuity was capable of producing realism in cinema. In the case of trick films it was a playful 'realism' of the filmmaker-illusionist. Its make-believe aspect lay

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[1] Tom Gunning, '*Primitive* Cinema A Frame-up? Or the Trick's on Us?,' 98.

with the manipulation of the perceived continuity of a physical movement. Editing styles developed later in the continuity system shunned the mechanical illusionism and supplanted it with the make-believe world of a psychologically motivated narration. In the latter case the editing-produced verisimilitude of movement in space warranted the plausibility of action, which in turn fortified the impression of narrative 'realness'.

As we have seen there are a few particular characteristics of fragmentation in early cinema. It is dictated by the conceptual horizon of the nineteenth-century tradition of screen entertainment, which leads filmmakers and their audiences to treat the film as a singular item. But this does not preclude filmmakers form cutting celluloid, employing labourious techniques of manipulation and carefully staging the action within the frame.

Trick films seem to point at a fascination of early filmmakers with the possibilities of film manipulation. From today's perspective the sped-up action is a barely noticeable commonplace, and in the case of early cinema can be attributed to a misleading difference in projection speed between the original 16 frames per second and the contemporary standard of 24 frames per second. However, some early films were in fact intended to produce a humorous effect of frantic haste when projected at 16 frames per second, without relying on the increase in the projection speed. The universally adopted method of obtaining that required cutting out every other frame of the footage and then re-joining the produced pieces of celluloid. By reducing the length of the film by half, its projection at the standard speed of 16 frames per second produced the effect of a double-speed action.[2] As contemporary Frederick A. Talbot wrote this method was 'a tedious and delicate process, because joining together properly a series of images measuring only three-quarters of an inch in depth [demanded] skill and patience.'[3] Despite that, creating 'curious and bewildering' effects must have significantly outweighed the inconvenience of laborious cutting since this and many other visual tricks were a staple in cinema for almost a decade.

Due to the fragmentary evidence, any statistics related to the early cinema need to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, on the basis of a sample of 690 fiction films produced between 1900–1906, Eileen Bowser estimates that at the

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[2] Frederick A. Talbot, *Moving Pictures. How They Are Made And Worked* (London: William Heinemann, 1912), 219.
[3] Ibid., 220.

beginning of that period about 26% of world cinema was trick films. This proportion dropped slightly in the coming three years, and then after 1906 the trick genre is said to disappear almost completely.[4] This goes to show on the one hand how culturally significant and popular this type of editing in early cinema was, and on the other hand how confidently those techniques were mastered. While their novelty value waned with time, in 1912 Talbot still devoted six chapters of his manual of filmmaking to trick films detailing the rather complex technical issues of: 'stop and substitution movement,' double exposure, 'manipulation of the film' (speeding up the film) and 'reversal of action.'[5]

One finds a remarkable example of resumptive cutting in the oft-referenced *Fire!* by Williamson from 1901, which is already a multi-shot film and at one point intercuts between interior and exterior shots of a firemen's rescue operation. Williamson's film contains four noticeable jump-cuts in the second scene of the film set in front of a fire station in Hove. They are clearly aimed at compressing time while keeping in frame only the lively action of carts rushing off to save people's lives while omitting the clumsy harnessing of the horses. One can discern jump-cuts which could be technical or intentionally elliptic in today's available prints of the Lumière brothers' *Arrivée des Congressistes à Neuville-sur-Saône* (1895) and the famous *Arrivé d'un train en gare à La Ciotat* (1895).

Gaudreault estimates with some degree of certainty that 8.5% of the Lumières' total output contains something which is called here a 'resumptive cut,' and which Gaumont calls a *reprise*.[6] When faced with the problem of drawn-out live action Lumière's cameramen would stop cranking and resume rolling after a while without changing the position of the camera. This intervention necessitated additional work at the point of making a positive print for exhibition to eliminate fogged or flash frames that resulted from overexposing celluloid at the moment when the cameraman stopped cranking or was cranking at a slower speed. Taken annually, the proportion of Lumières' actualities that are 'fragmented' climbed to 53.8% in 1905, the last year of their production.[7] Gaudreault concludes his statistics suggesting that 'resumption is

[4] Eileen Bowser, 'Preparation for Brighton – the American contribution,' in *Cinema 1900-1906. An analytical study by the National Film Archive (London) and the International Federation of Film Archives*, 6–7.
[5] Frederick A. Talbot, *Moving Pictures. How They Are Made And Worked*, 197–263.
[6] André Gaudreault, 'Fragmentation and Assemblage in the Lumiére Animated Pictures,' 77.
[7] Ibid.

nothing but a form of *découpage* on the very site of the shooting, *in vivo*, directly on the negative before it is developed.'[8]

The last quote is significant for meta-theoretical reasons as well as for its intended meaning. The evidence presented above suggests that some forms of editing have existed since the very beginning of cinema. However, many scholars writing about that period, and who have gathered precisely that evidence, are at pains to avoid the word 'editing.' It seems a loaded term. In the previously mentioned essay, Gaudreault first offers an off-the-cuff definition saying that editing 'consists of the combination of fragments made up of clusters of images.'[9] Then he clarifies that up to that point he had 'avoided conflating the notions of *matching* or *editing* with the segmentation of the film strip achieved by stopping the camera.'[10] Instead, Gaudreault insists, he used the term 'fragmentation,' but now he is proposing to call these kinds of actions 'assemblage.' He wants to

> differentiate between an institutionally legitimised activity – which editing was soon to become, *a terminus ad quem*, so to speak – and those activities dealt with here, which at least initially depended on local initiative and represent in some way *the terminus a quo* of editing – sometimes happening against the grain of the very constraints of the system and those who managed it.[11]

As soon as Gaudreault makes this distinction he observes as an afterthought that actually magic lantern and other optical toy operators had for decades combined viewpoints and, hence, made use of a 'curious' kind of editing.[12] 'Zootropic montage' that was based on sequences of alternating plates could be compared to parallel editing.[13] He finally proposes that 'montage in pre-cinematographic devices is probably more frequent than might be assumed.'[14] It is rather striking that to approach the subject of the Lumières' cameramen trying to make the best use of their 55-foot load, Gaudreault needs almost all available terms related to film manipulation, such as *editing* (with various qualifications), *montage*, *assemblage* and *découpage*.

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[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid., 78.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 78-79.
[14] Ibid., 79.

Similarities, differences and overlaps between those terms will be the subject of the next chapter. For now, it is worth noting how problematic the very concept of editing is. It seems that for some historians of early cinema it instantly connotes the 'institutionally legitimised' continuity style of narrative Hollywood cinema.[15] While Gaudreault and Gunning pay due attention to the specificity of the first films and painstakingly avoid teleological explanations, they seem to see the term 'editing' as earmarked only for the next epoch of cinema history. Is it perhaps burdened and tarred to some extent with the complexities of the dominant mode of representation?

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[15] Ibid., 78.

THE DISCONTINUITY OF EARLY CINEMA

Gunning in his earlier essay on the topic lists seven 'anomalies' of early cinema which make it distinct from the later 'continuous narrative form.'[1] These are: the engagement of the audience by the actor; two-shot films with a bold ellipsis in action; repeated action edits; the anthology format; the mixture of documentary and fictional footage; the use of the tableau; and the use of introductory shots.[2] In his later essay 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity' Gunning's thinking evolves in the direction of classifying the films of the first 15 years of cinema into four ciné-genres: single-shot narratives, narrative of non-continuity, genre of continuity and of discontinuity.[3] In both cases, he elegantly sidesteps referring to the development of editing preferring to talk about style and narrative, and only towards the end of the second essay he points to 'parallel editing' as a specific formal device.

However, already in his first analysis one can see just how unavoidable the question of editing is. The use of ellipsis and repeated actions reveal that early filmmakers were at least conscious of the narrative implications of their editing choices. By 'the introductory shot' Gunning means 'a free-floating image' (or the 'emblematic' shot as Burch calls it), which could be used either at the beginning of a film or as an epilogue.[4] The most famous of those, the medium close-up of 'Barnes, leader of the outlaw band' in *The Great Train Robbery* is almost an icon of cinema itself. But it is not a unique image of its kind, and in fact introductory shots were extremely common in early multi-shot films. Charles Musser suggests the shot of Barnes could have been used as an abrupt segue in Hale Tours-type screenings linking panoramic views of the passing landscape with the sudden appearance of the plot-driven prototypical western.[5] In the context of amusement park entertainment, a gun pointed at the spectator addressed the very concrete viewer seated in a make-believe railway carriage/cinema. Hence, the Barnes shot transcended the diegesis of the accompanying film while at the same time luring the spectator into it. Typically

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[1] Tom Gunning, 'The non-continuous style of early film (1900-1906),' in *Cinema 1900-1906. An analytical study by the National Film Archive (London) and the International Federation of Film Archives* (Brussels: FIAF, 1982), 222.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Tom Gunning, 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity. A Theory of Genres in Early Films,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 89.
[4] Tom Gunning, 'The non-continuous style of early film (1900-1906),' 227.
[5] Charles Musser, 'The Travel Genre in 1903-1904,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 130.

for early cinema, influenced strongly by vaudeville, that single shot alongside the series of shots presenting the action was embedded into a larger narrative of the show. It pointed outwards: to the physical infrastructure of the venue and the viewing situation. Importantly, the convention of the floating image suggests that despite the growing number of multi-shot and self-contained narratives in those early years films were still largely treated as disparate views, which exhibitors had at their disposal to create a coherent programme. Inevitably then, some form of editing had to happen at the point of exhibition.

In a somehow uncanny way, the fact that introductory shots were usually closer shots than usual for early cinema wide angles makes them seem harbingers of the continuity system with its use of close views for dramatic reasons. However, we can only make this judgment with the privilege of hindsight and only assuming some sort of an evolution of a 'film language,' or at least a set of norms. In fact, the idiosyncrasies of early cinema are often considered from the perspective of the fully-fledged Hollywood system. This happens despite the fact that similarities between the two do not necessarily mean that there were any straightforward causal relations between the earlier forms and their classical iterations. Rick Altman makes a similar argument in relation to the question of sound accompaniment of early films, criticising what he calls the connect-the-dots approach, 'making history shine with the luster of utter clarity.'[6] Developments in editing certainly tend to be explained using linear trajectories. For example, the genre of phantom rides itself, of which Hale Tours were the most organised instance, was later incorporated into travel films, which in turn can be retrospectively seen as proto-narratives.[7] In the same vein, the idea of action continuity is said to be forged in the genre of chase films a few years later.[8]

However, without dismissing attempts at drawing connections between the conventions of the early and the classical period, there is also another way of looking at those 'anomalies' – not as transient phenomena but as examples of diverse editing practices. Trials and errors in combining shots in an entertaining,

[6] Rick Altman, 'The Silence of the Silents,' *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 80, no. 4 (Winter, 1996): 655.
[7] André Gaudreault, *American cinema, 1890-1909* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 75.
[8] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith & the Origin of American Narrative Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 67; Pat P. Miller, *Script Supervising and Film Continuity* (Burlington: Focal Press, 2013), 142.

and at the same time expedient, way led in many directions which did not always converge in the classical system. Some of the idiosyncrasies of early cinema, such as the one-subject programming executed by exhibitors, could be said to re-surface in television, or most recently in YouTube or Vimeo channels and playlists. While there is certainly a history of progression towards the narrative continuity system, an account of the notion of editing should also gesture at how early cinematic works were part of a broad multimedia mosaic of popular amusements: photography, magic lantern lectures, peep shows, phantom rides and vaudeville programmes. These formats, as Gaudreault himself notices, incorporated editorial or montage-like activities to a certain degree, so purely cinematic developments can be seen as arising from a fertile ground with already established ideas around editing.[9] As Marta Braun shows, even in Muybridge's seemingly scientific work one can discern manipulations and substitutions imbuing it with narrative considerations.[10] Gaudreault calls these interventions 'a genuine photogrammatic *montage*.'[11] When the continuity system finally arrived, it was not so much a revolutionary and film-specific breakthrough but rather a coming together of multiple lines of development originating in many cultural forms, including stage plays, novels and magic lantern lectures.

Additionally, the cultural backdrop of rapidly advancing consumerism going hand in hand with a shift towards a fast-paced urban lifestyle suggests a direction which is rather at odds with the aesthetic of the mature classical system catering for the taste of the comfortable middle class. American culture at the turn and the beginning of the twentieth century was marked with the rapturous forces of modernity, complete with the inundation of the urban sensorium. As William R. Taylor notices about the period: 'each new genre of commercial culture compressed a representation of city life into its format. These new genres had in common a seemingly random, potpourri organization that continued to dramatize the discontinuity, the kaleidoscopic variety, and the quick tempo of city life, as in the vaudeville revue.'[12] The discontinuity of early cinema was then in a sense congruent with the spirit of the times.

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[9] André Gaudreault, 'Fragmentation and Assemblage in the Lumiére Animated Pictures,' 79.
[10] Marta Braun, *Picturing Time: The Work of Etienne-Jules Marey 1830–1904* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 247–249.
[11] André Gaudreault, 'Fragmentation and Assemblage in the Lumiére Animated Pictures,' 79.
[12] William R. Taylor, 'The Launching of a Commercial Culture: New York City, 1860-1930,' in *Power, Culture, and Place: Essays on New York City*, ed. John Hull Mollenkopf (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1988), 108.

This becomes clear when one looks at idiosyncrasies of the early period, which did not transform into more advanced techniques of narrative continuity. These cul-de-sacs were abandoned for complex reasons, but not necessarily because there was anything primitive in their characteristics. For example, early cinema tended to be far more intertextual than the classical system, the latter being very consciously designed for narrative self-containment. As Charles Musser writes, in the first decade, cinema was profoundly dependent on 'other cultural forms, including the theatre, newspapers, popular songs, and fairy tales.'[13] Understanding of the particular plot often hinged on the audience's prior knowledge of the contemporary cultural references, which the film only alluded to. Edison's *The 'Teddy' Bears* from 1907 is cited as an example of a film whose oddities can only be understood if one knows of the popular at the time newspaper story about Theodor Roosevelt's hunting trip, during which he spared a bear cub.[14] The film itself is modelled on a comic strip. One probably also needs to acknowledge that, for its contemporary audiences, the film's dark, sarcastic sense of humour disguised in an apparently child-friendly film might have been more palatable than it is now. In the film, Goldilocks is chased by a family of very anthropomorphic bears. Roosevelt saves the girl by killing the adults on the spot, while sparing their little child-cub and letting Goldilocks get away with stealing a teddy bear from their house. As far as editing is concerned, intertextual pointers and the assumption that the audience will understand them eliminated pressure on the filmmakers to develop self-contained plot-driven structures, which arguably necessitated more advanced editing techniques like the use of inter-titles or closer types of shots. The fact that in the middle of the film the action is suddenly suspended to make space for an animated set piece displaying dancing teddy bears seems awkward from the perspective of the fully-fledged system of rigorous narrative continuity. However, it is completely befitting the model of the cinema of attractions with its lack of restraint in flaunting trick cutting.

Another interesting example of that kind of open-ended textuality is *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* (1905, dir. G.W. Bitzer). The opening scene of the film, its costumes and scenery are based on William Hogarth's 'Southwark Fair'

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13 Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 2.
14 Ibid., 463.

(1733).[15] As Musser points out, historians inspired by Ken Jacobs' reworking of the film in 1967 argued that early filmmakers had not yet mastered organising pro-filmic elements in the frame and hence films like *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* were bound to confuse their contemporary viewers.[16] However, according to Musser, this argument ignores the fact that the arrangement of signifiers in that first scene was a sophisticated reference to Hogarth's engraving and a poem inviting the viewer to decipher the film's narrative by scanning the entirety of the frame.[17] And if that failed, there was probably also a lecturer to aid with the understanding. [18]

Nevertheless, there is no denying that certain editing methods were becoming more prevalent and with time more codified as industry standards. It seems to me that there are two significant and often overlooked developments in the period of early cinema which are editing-centred and *contributed* to the development of something I call here *classical découpage* without necessarily suggesting that there is any sort of strong causality between the emergence of the latter and early editing practices. One is the role of the exhibitor in creating programmes based on the 'one-subject' format. Tied with it is another important development: the emergence of documentary editing.

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[15] William Hogarth, 'Southwark Fair,' https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/400729 (accessed 3 October 2018).
[16] Ibid. 383.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.

THE EXHIBITOR AS EDITOR

Hepworth sees very clearly a problem that abruptly appears when you finish projecting a one-subject film. The projection is done and the operator needs a few minutes to change the reel. How to entertain the audience during that break? 'You may continue to turn the handle of the machine after the film has run through, and half blind the audience with the flickering, brilliant white disc.'[1] After sniggering at this and a few other ideas, he proposes two principal alternatives:

> One is to fasten all the films together in one length, and show them continuously without a break. You will require to be moderately rich in films, seeing that about sixty will be wanted to fill up an hour; and when the show is over, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have spoilt some excellent pictures by having too many of them. Undoubtedly the best plan is to show one or two lantern slides between each animated photograph. The still picture… gives the entertainer the opportunity of stringing his pictures together with an attempt at natural sequence, which, if properly carried out, will do more to create a good impression in the minds of the audience than the most excellent photographs in the world shown higgledy-piggledy.[2]

The paragraph above indicates, first, how early cinematic exhibition was intricately linked with the tradition of magic lantern shows; secondly, that hour-long programmes made up of about sixty short films joined together were conceivable as early as in 1897. But thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the reason why Hepworth thought switching between lantern slides and animated photographs was the most advantageous seems to be an acknowledged need for 'stringing pictures together with an attempt at natural sequence.' Hepworth argues against the hotchpotch of curiosities sold as a cinema show, something which perhaps was a common practice of the time, and instead recommends creating some sort of coherence between presented films. In this suggestion one might sense a homage to the trade of his father, Thomas Cradock Hepworth, a famous magic lantern showman, but this influence only highlights that the arrangement of one-subject films into 'narrative' was a natural outgrowth of the tradition of nineteenth-century screen entertainment and its already indicated *montagist* tendencies.[3]

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[1] Cecil M. Hepworth, *Animated Photography. The ABC of the Cinematograph*, 73.
[2] Ibid., 74.
[3] I use the adjective 'montagist' following Jacques Aumont's use of the term 'montagism' in his book on editing. See Jacques Aumont, *Montage* (Montreal: Caboose, 2014).

Those influences lasted longer than the narrative of a linear trajectory of the evolution of film form might lead us to believe. As late as 1909 a trade journal for exhibitors, *The Bioscope*, raved about the appeal that illustrated songs had among cinema patrons. The format was allegedly invented by George H. Thomas in 1893 and it evolved into a singing act accompanied by an illustrative narrative presented using magic lantern slides.[4] In 1908 the editor of *The Bioscope* advised a cinema manager who had posted a letter to the column Questions Worth Answering: '[it] seems strange at this time of day to be asked if the inclusion of illustrated songs in a program is advisable. Stranger still to hear that you, a manager of an admittedly successful show, have never seen song slides used with a picture show. By all means turn on some pictorial vocalism as soon as you can.'[5] Interestingly, illustrated songs had film equivalents in 'song films' such as a series produced by Lubin in 1903: *Dear Old Stars And Stripes Good-Bye*, *Only A Soldier Boy* and *Every Day Is Sunshine When The Heart Beats True*. Each of these films contained at least four shots and was meant to be projected with an accompanying vocal performance.[6] The use of illustrated songs in British 'bioscope shows' mirrored the growing popularity of cinema in American vaudeville theatres. In both cases, short films were integral parts of a show mixing live and pre-recorded entertainment. However, once the Trojan horse of cinema was let into the vaudeville, the process of the latter's erosion began. In the United States from about 1906 nickelodeons started gaining prominence. They were later replaced by national chains, which eventually ushered in an era when cinema entertainment was largely conceived as a self-contained experience.

Projectors sold by Bioscope (Charles Urban's company) at the beginning of the century were capable of holding reels with the capacity of 1,000 feet.[7] This length became a standard to such an extent that in 1915 a scriptwriting manual confidently mixed narrative notions with the length of celluloid: 'A reel contains about 1000 feet of film. If there are two stories or subjects on one reel, it is known as a split reel. Often it requires two or more reels to tell a single story and

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[4] *The Bioscope*, no. 148 (12 August 1909): 47.
[5] *The Bioscope*, no. 101 (18 September 1908): 10.
[6] Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, 361.
[7] The Charles Urban Trading Company Catalogue, *We Put the World Before You by Means of the Bioscope and Urban Films*, 172–173.

these are called Multiple Reel Subjects.'[8] One reel then, depending on the speed of projection, which was by no means constant as Kevin Brownlow reminds us,[9] provided between 11 and almost 17 minutes of screening time. It is safe to assume that projectionists preferred to have screen reels making use of the full capacity of the spool, which means they either had to splice together a few shorter films themselves or had them delivered in a joined form by a distributor. Hepworth, for example, had earlier noted:

> One very excellent plan by which the trying pauses and waits can be avoided is to join a number of films together in one continuous length, and wind upon one big spool. Between each picture there should be six or eight inches of blank film, so that the audience does not get a foretaste of the joy to come before there is time to stop turning the handle…[10]

There is some evidence to suggest that a British bioscope programme in 1908 could run for about 6000 feet, which is remarkably close to the later feature-length standard.[11] It is noteworthy that the sudden rise of nickelodeons in the States is tied with the growing popularity of one-reelers as the basic film commodity of the time.[12] A marked tendency, which began with nickelodeons, towards 11-17 minute fiction films could be explained by the convenience for the exhibitor of not having to cement films together but simply relying on the product supplied by the production company.

Before that happened, one-subject formatting required a lot of splicing in order to produce a workable programme of a decent length. Urban's catalogue from 1903 reveals how early exhibitors were encouraged to string individual subject-films together. For example, among Urban's own productions is a series titled 'The King and the President.' It is made up of seven 'subjects' numbered 1000a, 1000b, 1001, 1002, 1002b, 1003 and 1004.[13] While it might seem at first that each subject is a single, continuous shot, on closer look their descriptions reveal that at least some of them contain cuts and are closer to edited short films than one-shot animated photographs. Subject 1001, *Arrival of King and*

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[8] *How to write moving picture plays. A course of Practical Instruction in the Art of Writing Photoplays* (Hull: Success School, 1915), 3.

[9] Kevin Brownlow, 'Silent Film – What was the right speed,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 282-292.

[10] Cecil M. Hepworth, *Animated Photography. The ABC of the Cinematograph*, 84.

[11] *The Bioscope*, no. 101 (18 September 1908): 10.

[12] Thomas Elsaesser, 'The Institution Cinema: Industry, Commodity, Audiences. Introduction,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative,* 166.

[13] The Charles Urban Trading Company Catalogue, *We Put the World Before You by Means of the Bioscope and Urban Films*, 5.

President Loubet at the Vincennes Review Grounds, May 2ⁿᵈ 1903 begins with:
'I. The drive past with escort.' The film then continues with: 'II. The King and
President stepping from their carriage,' and finishes off with a third shot showing
the panorama 'of the Reviewing Pavilion, with King Edward in the Royal Box.'
While each subject is sold separately and ranges from 75 feet (1000a shows the
arrival of the royal train) to 275 feet (1002 showcases 'sections of every branch
of the French Army'), taken together they form a coherent narrative in the
newsreel style. The series begins with a popular early trope of a train arrival,
proceeds with the shots of King Edward visiting the British embassy and
reviewing the marching military, and then concludes with a lighter subject
presenting the monarch enjoying a horse race at Longchamps. The numbering
which includes 'a' and 'b' versions of the same subject seems to reinforce the
suggestion of a prescribed order. The 'b' subjects appear to be additional shots,
which the exhibitor could include if they wanted to make the show longer, but
were not necessary as far as the arrangement of the episodes went.

Documents like Urban's catalogue illustrate how active early exhibitors
were in exerting editorial control over their film programmes. Exhibitors'
selection and arrangement of one-subject pieces shaped the overall narrative of
their shows, meaning that each cinema was a unique, local 'broadcaster.'

In the American context, Charles Musser proposes a temporal breakdown
of the early period into: 1897–1900 when it was the exhibitor who played a
creative role and 1900–1905 characterised by the fact that the production
company began to assume creative dominance.[14] Musser notices that the first
programmes after the novelty period fall into three distinct genres: boxing
matches, passion plays and travel lectures.[15] Tellingly, the latter two formats
interwove slides and films, which is reminiscent of Hepworth's
recommendations and is another sign of the hybridism of early cinema. Musser
then elaborates that actually all exhibitors of that period 'held important creative
responsibilities.'[16] While initially, programmes organised slides and films largely
following the 'principle of variety,' later shows offered a significantly higher
degree of continuity. A leading company of the time, Biograph, for example, was
famous for their 'war views' exploiting the propagandist appeal of the events of

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[14] Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907*, 193, 297.
[15] Ibid., 194–223.
[16] Ibid., 258.

the Spanish-American War of 1897–1898.[17] The war series about the explosion on the USS Maine would include: views of the wreck, divers at work, a charge of cavalry and subjects about President McKinley among other thematically related items. When moving pictures became a permanent fixture of vaudeville shows at the turn of the twentieth century, Vitagraphs's actuality programmes had a clear narrative coherence. Musser gives an example of another war series commemorating Admiral Dewey's triumphant arrival in New York.[18] The programme begins with a 'panoramic view of the Olympia' (an establishing shot?) and logically concludes with the most climactic episode: presentation of the sword to Dewey by Secretary Long and President McKinley.[19]

These examples of early programmes, I suggest, support the argument that defining editing without resorting to later narrative forms of mainstream fiction allows us to recognise among early film practices methods of forging narrative coherence that are not only worth studying on their own, but are also indicative of some of the general issues of editing practice, such as selection and arrangement of fragments.

However, before the ideas of classical *découpage* and montage are discussed, it is worth pausing on another development in early cinema touching upon the meaning of the word 'editing' tied with the medium of news journalism. In *Moving Pictures. How They are Made and Worked*, Frederick Talbot writes extensively about the glowing prospects for the 'animated' newspapers. 'Why not,' he asks, 'secure short lengths of film on various subjects of passing interest, and join them together to form one film between 200 and 350 feet in length, to provide a regular weekly topical feature?'[20] Talbot goes on to describe, in detail, phases of production of *The Gaumont Graphic*, a silent British newsreel issued between 1910 and 1932. He uses the word 'editor' referencing a position held by a person running a newspaper. Talbot explains:

> There must be an *editor* to direct operations and to prepare the film. He must possess a large and scattered staff, so that no part of the world is left uncovered by a cinematograph… [In] due course the small lengths of exposed film filter in by train and post. So soon as they arrive they are developed and printed. Proofs are handed over to the *editor* to be scanned and revised, sections which he considers the most suitable and likely to

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[17] Ibid, 244.
[18] Ibid., 273.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Frederick A. Talbot, *Moving Pictures. How They Are Made And Worked* (London: William Heinemann, 1912), 277.

interest the public being snipped from each film-proof, by the aid of the indispensable scissors… [As] the pieces of each film are *selected*, they are "*pasted" together*, and each incident receives its full explanatory title and sub-title. These revised proofs are connected up so as to form a continuous length of film, and copies are reeled off in the printing, developing, and drying rooms at tip-top speed, the operation corresponding with the printing machine room of the newspaper. The first complete proof is submitted to the editor's approval by being projected on the screen just as it will be submitted to the public. Further revision may be requisite, in which event the film undergoes another *trimming* process with the scissors, or possibly some late news has been received, and space has to be found for its inclusion at the expense of some other item.[21]

Until the 1960s when television picked up the baton, newsreels such as Pathé News (1910–1956), Paramount News (1927–1957) or Universal Newsreel (1929–1967) were a staple of cinema exhibition.[22] A newsreel item was typically projected before the main feature. Hence from the perspective of a cinemagoer between 1910 and the late 1950s, the experience of cinema entailed both factual montage and classical editing. Throughout that period the escapist linearity of fiction editing was usually introduced by an assault of documentary montage.

Although stylistically divergent, both newsreels and fictional features, it has been suggested, represented a uniform propagandist front, which could be seen as an aspect of 'editorial control' in an ideological sense.[23] A curious example of an intervention which illustrates the mentioned crossover between the role of an exhibitor and a newsreel editor is a 1937 screening of two films about the war in Abyssinia. Staged on 5th December in London by the intellectually influential Film Society it was nominally a double bill titled 'Record of War: Two Films,' a dovetailed projection of a Soviet film *Abyssinia* (1935, dir. Ilya Kopalin) and an Italian documentary called *The Path of the Heroes* (1936, dir. Corrado d'Errico).[24] Thorold Dickinson, later a notable director and editor, was responsible for the programme, which made use of the most common projection technique of 35mm prints to make significant and politically charged editorial changes to the shown films. Since the standard for the features was to be split between a number of reels, making a screening run

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[21] Ibid, 279 [emphases added].

[22] 'Newsreel,' https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newsreel (accessed 1 September 2017).

[23] A.J.P. Taylor says '[newsreels] presented current events in the same intense, dramatic way [so that] life was itself turned into a spectacle.' Quoted in Henry K. Miller, 'The Fog of War,' *Sight & Sound* (June 2017): 14.

[24] Henry K. Miller, 'The Fog of War,' *Sight & Sound* (June 2017), 14–15.

smoothly without interruptions required a system of two projectors, which could be switched between imperceptibly for the audience. Following this technical principle, Dickinson was able to cut live, in a sense, between two perspectives on the fascist invasion of Ethiopia. Reels depicting the Abyssinian life before the war and the subsequent mobilisation were shot in a warmly sympathetic and personal way by a small Soviet crew. These were contrasted with a bombastic and impersonally spectacular presentation of the Italian war machine of Mussolini dropping chemical weapons on an African nation. The transitions between films, enacted essentially by switching projectors, were concealed also by an English translation of both commentaries spoken over the images.

In order for the Film Society to continue enjoying exemption from censorship, its members framed their activities as non-political. Dickinson's decoy in this case lay in the suggestion that the changes he made to those films were purely technical in nature, to 'portray most clearly… features of contrast.'[25] In the programme he states though in a slightly faux-honest way that he made a few 'minor trims of no consequence' to *Abyssinia* to avoid repetition.[26] The impact of the screening was, however, as intended, enormous. 'Record of War' was not screened again until 1969, and the Italians soon decided not to promote *The Path of the Heroes* in Britain.[27] Dickinson's experiment was of course a subtle extrapolation of the idea of montage, which in the 1930s was more than an aesthetic but almost a call to arms. It also brings together a few of the recurring themes of this chapter. By turning the act of projecting a film into a live editing performance, Dickinson positions himself in the tradition of early cinema shows, weaving a narrative out of fragments, freely moving between propagandist fictions and underlying facts, manipulating images in a way which is (almost) imperceptible to the viewer. His earlier article about editing published in *Cine-technician* in 1935 indicates that Dickinson was at the time well aware of the nuances in editing conventions and their potency in influencing spectators.[28] It is noteworthy that a month after the screening of 'Record of War' he went to Spain to make fundraising documentaries for the Republican faction. Many years later

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[25] The Film Society, *Programme Seven: The Abyssinian Crisis*, 17 November 1937.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Henry K. Miller, 'The Fog of War,' 14–15.
[28] Thorold Dickinson, 'A Cutter in the Clouds,' *Journal of the Association of Cine-Technicians*, vol. 1, no. 2 (August 1935): 27.

it was Dickinson again who wrote the introduction to the seminal *The Technique of Film Editing* by Karel Reisz.[29]

The subject of fictional versus non-fictional narratives is too broad to be tackled here. Complex interactions between those two models are a staple of broadcast productions.[30] What I would like to focus on here is rather the historical moment when the notion of the 'editor' begins to take shape. The argument, which will come to the fore towards the end of this section, is that at the beginning of the twentieth century the word had stronger associations with the written media than with film. Those associations, however, did have a significant effect on the way that the film role was perceived and began to develop.

A newsreel editor, according to the Talbot's account, is a role akin to that of an editor working in a newspaper. These work environments are analogous to such an extent that Talbot refers to 'proofs' and compares the film lab to the printing machine room. It is also worth noting how he separates two stages of editing. The first selection, focused on individual subjects, is followed by the revision in a projection room when final decisions about trimming film-proofs or adding new subjects need to be made.

In the later parts of the thesis I will be elaborating on the phases of editing and suggesting that the process is more spiral than linear. The quote above seems to indicate that factual editors very early discovered those practicalities of sourcing, sifting through and refining the selection of film material. It suggests that influences from other media – newspaper editing in this case – streamlined and gave a framework to those discoveries.

One should not underestimate the importance of the idea of trimming and discarding of the material that has less interest or lower quality as one of the fundamental considerations in the editing process. Since factual filmmaking often deals with the unpredictability of events that have not been staged for the camera, it is inevitably bound with 'post-selection' and 'post-arrangement.' This is in contrast to staged productions, which are to some extent 'pre-selected' and 'pre-arranged,' and, therefore, in the early period could be seen as more heavily reliant on influences coming from performative media.

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[29] Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing* (London: Focal Press, 1966), 7–10.
[30] See John Ellis, *Visible Fictions. Cinema: Television: Video* (London: Routledge, 1982), 145-159.

In Hepworth's advertisement published in *Showman* in 1901 one reads: 'Kindly note there is no "padding" to these pictures. We only publish 500ft, though over 2,000 ft of film are exposed, for all the least interesting portions have been removed.'[31] Eliminating 'padding' must have resulted from the existence of some sort of critical agency who could discern what deserved the viewer's attention and what was extraneous. Not only was editorial control a necessary condition of the process, but its unremarkability hides the fact that it encompassed a number of decisions that encroached on the issues of narrative and spatiotemporal continuity. As was noted before, cutting out frames without changing the position of the camera produced a jump cut. Was this acceptable for the spectator at the beginning of the twentieth century or did it create a moment of confusion about the temporal order of events? Did trimming the beginning of an activity hinder its legibility? How soon can one cut away from the action? Dealing with those elementary questions triggered a chain reaction, which according to Stephen Bottomore, significantly contributed to the development of film editing, by which he means 'the joining together of sections of film to *recreate* space and time.'[32] He argues that 'editing…originated less with drama than with the actuality films of real events' and points out the 'liberating effect of exterior filming.'[33] In Edison's *Taking President McKinley's Body from the Train at Canton, Ohio* (1901), for example, a cutaway shot is inserted that looks away from the main action, which according to Bottomore, is intended to avoid a jump in linking separate views of the coffin being carried.[34] In the same film, one also finds a cut into a closer shot and a reverse angle. These standard devices used in the developed forms of editing seem to originate, first, from the inventiveness of cameramen trying to cover unstaged action from varied points of view, and secondly, from later editorial attempts at *recreating* space and time as witnessed by the filmmaker.

A related argument is put forward by Charles Musser who hones in on the travel films produced in 1903-1904, suggesting that works of that genre were

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[31] Quoted in Stephen Bottomore, 'Shots in the Dark. The Real Origins of Film Editing,' in *Early Cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 115.
[32] Stephen Bottomore, 'Shots in the Dark. The Real Origins of Film Editing,' in *Early Cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 104
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 109.

formative in the establishing of the norms of narrative editing.[35] If not for anything else, their influence was far-reaching because of their popularity. About 50% of Vitagraph's subjects in 1903 were travel documentaries. Edison followed suit and in the same year that saw *Life of an American Fireman*, 61 out of 62 copyrighted films produced by the Edison studio were travel subjects. Musser gives an example of two Porter films: *Rube and Mandy at Coney Island* (1903) and *Boarding School Girls* (1905) to illustrate the move towards 'the basic rules of classic cinema, particularly the need for a seamless mimetic consistency.'[36] The first film shows a couple of vaudeville comedians on their tour of Luna Park. While the subject of the film could potentially be covered by a series of documentary views, Porter adds here a narrative linkage and a series of comedic attractions. 'The couple often mediate the audience's experience of the amusement park and tie together a series of potentially discrete views as they move from one ride to the next.'[37] This example not only shows how porous the boundary between fictional and documentary conventions in early cinema was, but also how the development of narrative editing can be tied with the suturing of the spectator into escapist sceneries.

Actualities were also influential thematically. After Edison's studio failed to secure permission to film the execution of Leon Czolgosz, President McKinley's assassin, Porter decided to stage it in front of the camera.[38] However, careful to add the aura of authenticity, Porter starts the film panning across the walls of a prison where the electrocution was carried out. The description in Edison's catalogue explains that the panoramic shot was taken on the morning of the gruesome event. Although the title, *Execution of Czolgosz, with panorama of Auburn Prison*, and the catalogue description do not hide the fact that the action is recreated, the film is clearly staged and edited with an eye to verisimilitude. The latter, which is a significant feature of the developed mainstream narrative cinema, can be again seen as springing from the embrace of authenticity that early factual cinema offered.

Importantly, a central argument of Musser's film about Edwin S. Porter *Before the Nickelodeon: The Early Cinema of Edwin S. Porter* (1982) is that the

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[35] Charles Musser, 'The Travel Genre in 1903-1904. Moving towards Fictional Narrative' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 123.
[36] Ibid., 125.
[37] Ibid., 124–125.
[38] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 29.

filmmaker credited with 'inventing' editing had a successful career as a moving image operator and exhibitor prior to making his landmark *Life of an American Fireman* (1903) and *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Musser sees in Porter's stylistic developments a logical progression from a crafted by the exhibitor programme of 'war views' to his later films employing fast-paced editing to dramatise fictional action.

To give two concrete examples from the British cinema, *A Visit to Peek Frean and Co.'s Biscuit Works* (1906) produced by Cricks and Martin can be seen as a liminal work straddling the format of a series of one-subject views, similar to the ones we find in Urban's catalogue, and an edited documentary film.[39] As with Lumière actualities the activity itself provides a skeleton of the narrative structure, and so the film begins with the intertitles 'Getting Up Steam' and 'Milk & Flour Arriving,' which are duly followed by shots presenting workers preparing a steam engine, wheeling in cans of milk and bagfuls of flour. But then comes an intertitle with a rather technical description, 'Making Biscuits. General View,' which precedes a panning shot of the factory floor. The consecutive shot titled 'Rolling Out Dough' is indeed a closer view showing a section of the space covered by the previous shot. Later in the film there is one more title that includes the modifier 'General View,' as if they were both directly copied from the catalogue description of a series of subject-views showing the workings of Peek Frean and Co. Despite these telling anachronisms, the whole process of making biscuits is clearly divided into representative activities, which are then further split up into general views followed by either closer ones or shots of the same action taken from a different angle.

Four years later, in *A Day in the Life of a Coalminer* (1910) by Kineto Production Company we see a full array of editing techniques. A narrative structure of 'a day in the life of a representative character' organises the story, which has a perfunctory protagonist, a coalminer who leaves home in the morning bidding farewell to his wife and two kids and returns at dusk, with an epilogue presenting a well-off family enjoying the warmth of a fireplace. Shots are varied as to their type, very often joined in a way to avoid the jump-cut effect. However, there are also many resumptive cuts clearly aimed at discarding action of less visual interest. At one point, we see a stunning medium-close up of

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[39] See also a description by Michael Brooke on Screenonline.
http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/711535/index.html (16 September 2017)

a coal-faced woman, a boy behind her and a bustle of coal carts further in the distance. The woman and the boy are staring straight into the camera in a pose strikingly reminiscent of a contemporary documentary portrait shot. A section titled 'Women industry' offers a wide and detailed presentation of the work carried out by women in sorting coal and loading logs of wood. The argument suggested in the title is illustrated with both wide-angle shots and closer views. With its attention to women's working conditions and the last scene contrasting them with bourgeois domestic felicity one can read into *A Day in the Life of a Coalminer* an understated social commentary.[40] More relevantly for the argument here, the editing devices employed in this film are very much recognisable in much later documentaries. While the compositional virtuosity and the symphonic orchestrating of shots in Grierson's *Drifters* (1929, editor John Grierson) are some distance away, early non-fictional filmmaking, by virtue of the fact that it was geared towards presenting events and locations in a multi-angled and selective way is surprisingly close to more contemporary films. It might be because there are a limited number of practical solutions to the problems of factual film construction, and they have not changed that much since the dawn of cinema. However, the issue could also lie with how we construe the notion of editing and its progression towards more developed forms.

For example, speaking about pioneers of fictional cinema, Don Fairservice points at a paradox related to the question above. He writes: 'it may seem strange, when looking at these very early British films, that what we recognise as evidence of a mature form, did not lead immediately to a rapid development of a sophisticated film language.'[41] Fairservice then suggests that Smith, Williamson, Haggar and others were merely an avant-garde of the new art form exploring its possibilities. They pushed the boundaries of the medium through formal experiments but their works failed to capitalise on them simply because they were 'too ahead of their time.'[42]

What Fairservice has in mind are films like G.A. Smith's *Mary Jane's Mishap* (1903), a short misogynist comedy containing a number of close views of the protagonist played by Laura Bayley, cuts on action and clear attempts at the avoidance of jump cuts. Looking purely at the editing techniques employed

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[40] See also Patrick Russell's description on Screenonline. http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/809895/ (16 September 2017).
[41] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 35.
[42] Ibid.

by Smith, *Mary Jane's Mishap* is well advanced on a linear trajectory towards classical editing, if one conceives the development of editing in this way. However, the actor addressing the audience (evident monstration), the planar composition of the shots, the characteristic style of gags, performance and trick cutting – all contribute to making Smith's film look decisively pre-classical. It is clearly a case of Primitive Mode of Representation, to use Burch's term.[43]

This might suggest that either the developments of editing need to be put into a wider context of the changes in cinematic genres, tropes and visual styles or that we should re-formulate what the concept of editing designates. Fairservice's surprise at not seeing a quick move towards a 'sophisticated film language' from such clearly successful experiments in editing, comes from an understandable difficulty with differentiating between techniques of cutting and other aspects of film form, often covered by a baggy notion of 'film language.' Smith cuts to a closer shot of Laura Bayley to show the grimace of her face donning a shoe polish moustache, just as in *The Little Doctor* (1901) when he inserts a close-up of a kitten being spoon fed because the charm of this image is the main attraction of the film. He is after an attraction that works in the particular film, looking for a solution to the problem of presenting the action in a way that fully realises its humorous or otherwise potential. As Fairservice rightly notices, a close-up for Smith is a solution to the problem of emphasis.[44] While his editing decisions do not conform to any set of established norms of the time, the outcome, for us having the privilege of hindsight, seems like a move in the right direction. However, it is us who are connecting the dots. For Smith it was most likely a matter of using the right trick at the right time.

A decade or so later, psychologically motivated plot structures will demand the use of so-called 'busts,' close-ups which allow the viewer to recognise an emotion on the face of an actor.[45] The technique is roughly the same, to some extent the basic reasoning behind its use is similar, but busts in the plot-based pantomimic cinema will be motivated in a more systematic and consistent way. Handbooks of scriptwriting that codify their use will tie them with the flow of signifiers guaranteeing that the viewer is able to follow the

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[43] See Nöel Burch, 'A Primitive Mode of Representation?,' in *Early Cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 220.
[44] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 33.
[45] *How to Write Moving Picture Plays. A Course of Practical Instruction in the Art of Writing Photoplays* (Hull: Success School, 1915), 3.

vagaries of a plot.[46] That way, the close-up ceases to be a trick and becomes an element of characterisation embedded into a narrative structure.

However, a theoretical problem that presents itself here is that the apparent milestone in the development of editing such as the use of a close-up for dramatic reasons cannot be really separated from the changes in cinematic storytelling. As we have seen, experiments in cutting, inventive tricks and solutions to spatial dissection were already quite advanced by 1903. However, it took a decade for some of those successful endeavours to be properly put into practice once the developments in cinematic narrative caught up with the experiments in editing.

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[46] Stuart Blackton, *The Photodrama: the Philosophy of its Principles* (New York: The Stanhope-Dodge Publishing Company, 1914), 59.

THE FILM PIONEER AS EDITOR

The issue of the correct delineation between film form and editing begins precisely when we try to create a historical narrative around *advances*, *changes* and *developments* in editing. These words connote the idea of progress in the history of cinema. It is a move towards what, and of what? I am certainly not suggesting here that it is possible, or even preferable, to completely separate notions of film form and editing. Neither do I suggest that classical editing is not a very sophisticated set of conventions. I would rather like to draw attention to a few assumptions that crop up whenever one traces the history of editing practice.

Ken Dancyger in *The Technique of Film and Video Editing*, for example, freely reiterates the general history of American and world cinema, the history of style and genre theory before finally, in the last section of the book discussing principles specific to editing per se.[1] This approach seems to tacitly suggest that editing and film construction are closely intertwined, which is beyond doubt. But it inadvertently also results in relegating formal and largely idiosyncratic aspects of editing, such as pace, use of sound, the spatiotemporal orientation of the viewer and the technology of cutting to the last positions on a list of concerns, which begins with arguably more fundamental ones, such as narrative and continuity. Not only does this shift the balance towards a linear explanation of film history, and particularly of narrative filmmaking, but that entanglement between form and editing poses a risk that the issues of editing as a distinct practice become conflated with the question of cinematic narration, and the equally broad issue of film style. This is also evident in Don Fairservice's very thorough *Film Editing. History, Theory and Practice*. Although Fairservice is laudably very careful to discuss only the formal elements of film construction, his close analyses of sequences from *Nosferatu* (1922, dir. F.W. Murnau), *Greed* (1924, dir. Erich von Stroheim, editors Erich von Stroheim, Frank Hull, Rex Ingram, Grant Whytock, June Mathis and Joseph W. Farnham) or *The Birth of a Nation* (1915, dir. D.W. Griffith) inevitably deal with their narratives, the national and individual styles of their creators and how they influence each other.[2]

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[1] Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing. Theory and Practice* (Boston: Focal Press, 1997).
[2] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 89–104, 137–142.

It is worth stressing that I do not argue against the kind of textual analysis that brings together questions of editing, narrative and style. Both mentioned books are very valuable contributions to the history of editing styles. What this thesis attempts to do, however, is to pose a very particular question: what is the actual subject of the discourse about editing? Is it even possible to separate theories of editing from examinations dealing with film form, narrative and style? And what issues are specific to editing and not shared with other aspects of filmmaking?

In this section I am going to look at the most typical discourse around the developments in film editing. It has its heroes, well-trodden paths and, in my view, some blind alleys. But this narrative is also evidence of the centrality of the question of editing in film history. This approach has two prongs: one is the cinematic narrative and the second is the spatiotemporal dissection of the profilmic. I am going to examine both directions in order to help me understand whether it is possible to discuss them separately. This subject will be picked up on later in the thesis, when I am going to look at the complexities of the continuity system.

As indicated, it is often in the accounts of innovation in filmmaking that we find discourse on the temporal arrangement of events in the plot and the dissection of the profilmic space.[3] When discussed, these developments are seen as something unique to cinema, and since editing is typically considered the one thing that differentiates film from other art forms, they are routinely attributed to the growing sophistication of editing conventions. While in the later parts of the thesis I will be elaborating on the idea of *découpage* as a useful term to describe the 'editing' that happens before or during exposing celluloid/recording digital images, I would suggest here that the expansiveness of the notion of editing has a lot to do with its perceived unique character as something intrinsic and exclusive to cinema. It is a kind of editing-focused essentialism. Therefore, the 'evolution' of a film narrative, as something distinctively different than a literary narrative, becomes almost indistinguishable from the development of that one thing that written and verbal stories lack: the art of cutting and splicing fragments of recorded (or artificially created) reality.

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[3] Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing*, 4–13.

If we take a cursory look at secondary sources, in most we will find a suggestion that Edwin S. Porter was one of the most instrumental figures in the early development of editing norms.[4] This view is largely based on the perceived importance of parallel editing, although there is much more to Porter's films than his alleged ability to cut between two related actions taking place simultaneously in order to heighten the tension.[5] His achievements are unquestioned, but they have more to do with the pace and audacity of narrative presentation than the manipulation of cinematic time.

In fact, there is a considerable amount of controversy around the question of whether Porter actually mastered parallel editing due to differences between existing copies of *Life of an American Fireman:* the version conforming with the paper print deposited for copyright registration in the Library of Congress in 1903 is significantly different from the one discovered in the Pathé archive in 1944 and later acquired by the Museum of Modern Art.[6] The latter cuts dynamically between the exterior and the interior scenes of the rescue, presenting them as temporally parallel. The former shows one temporally closed sequence after another with both covering the same time span. Gaudreault after carefully balancing existing evidence concludes that Porter was indeed able to 'elaborate at least the initial stage of cross-cutting' both in *Life of an American Fireman* (1903) and in *The Great Train Robbery* (1903).[7] Whether Porter's story of the train robbery contains parallel editing is another controversial matter, since the sequence in question showing the telegraph office can be interpreted as either sequential or parallel, especially when viewed by a contemporary spectator primed to decode it in a parallel fashion.[8] Gaudreault, however, doubts that the Pathé version of *Life of an American Fireman* comprising parallel editing could be authentic, arguing that if it was, Porter would surely cut *The Great Train Robbery* using the same technique of temporal alternation as used in that more

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[4] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 42.

[5] I use here the terms crosscutting and parallel editing interchangeably. It is worth noting, however, that Kristin Thompson makes a distinction between crosscutting, which 'moves between simultaneous events in widely separated locales' and parallel editing, where two events intercut are not simultaneous. See David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985), 210.

[6] André Gaudreault, 'Detours in Film Narrative. The Development of Cross-Cutting,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 133.

[7] Ibid., 144.

[8] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 46.

elaborate version of *Life of an American Fireman*.[9] Since *The Great Train Robbery*, strictly speaking, does not contain any rigorous temporal parallels, Gaudreault argues, Porter was probably not aware of the great invention of parallel editing at the time when he was editing *Life of an American Fireman*.[10]

I am pausing here on the issue of parallel editing because it is exemplary for a certain way of conceptualising editing history. Rather than taking sides in the debate mentioned above, I would like to draw attention to the assumptions underlying Gaudreault's thinking, but also those of Lewis Jacobs whose *The Rise of The American Film: A Critical History* (1939) first brought into the spotlight Porter's attempts at cross-cutting. Gaudreault's argument hinges on the view that parallel editing is something of a syntactic rule in the 'language' of cinema. Its appearance marks a new stage in its development. The absence of parallel editing in *The Great Train Robbery* is seen by Gaudreault as a significant omission, because the tale of the Barnes gang robbery 'cries out for cross-cutting.'[11]

It is certainly possible that Porter missed an opportunity for introducing cross-cutting. However, it is equally likely that our contemporary assessment of certain film techniques might not be congruent with how they were used in other historical periods or by some groups of practitioners. Parallel editing, for example, in one influential scriptwriting manual from 1913 is not discussed in its own right at all. Instead, Epes Winthrop Sargent refers to a *cut-back*, an important editing technique of breaking up a scene with another one, temporally parallel or not, with an aim of smartening up the action, avoiding awkward pauses or delaying the climax.[12] While parallel editing can be seen as a sub-category of the cut-back, the reasoning behind the use of the latter is much more related to the *dramatisation* of action than simply an interest in the temporal dissection of a narrative. The time aspect is of secondary importance. But the difference in conceptualising 'parallel editing' and the cut-back is significant: the former is a narrative-heavy device which points to the development of cinema as a storytelling vehicle, the latter seems to originate in the cutting room – it solved the problem of long-winded scenes, replaced the break leader which Sargent considered too obtrusive an interruption, allowed the film not to show actions

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[9] André Gaudreault, 'Detours in Film Narrative. The Development of Cross-Cutting,' 145.
[10] Ibid.
[11] André Gaudreault, 'Detours in Film Narrative. The Development of Cross-Cutting,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 140.
[12] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay*, 3rd ed. (New York: The Moving Picture World, 1916), 175, 182.

that would be censored.[13] The frequency with which the term features in *Technique of the Photoplay* suggests that it was the key concept in the evolution of classical editing understood as an art of dramatisation. Sargent eventually arrives at the essence of the technique saying that its function is 'to reduce the apparent length of the scene and to *centre the attention of the spectator* upon the proper action.'[14] It was then a tool of editing-specific emphasis, anticipating the fully-fledged concepts about classical editing expressed much later by Margaret Booth and others.

One could also note that the formation of the classical system should perhaps be considered in the context of the increasing prominence of a particular type of storytelling, not solely as an 'evolution' of editing per se. This calls for a term that foregrounds the connection with plotting, and this is the reason why I will later be arguing in favour of *classical découpage* as a useful notion for discussing the history of editing. In other words, a cut-back can be described as an essential tool of *classical editing*, but the demand for it sprang from the conventions of *classical découpage,* which was an art of film-specific dramatization by means of scripted action and camerawork.

The perceived importance of parallel editing as a stepping-stone is to some extent tainted with the mythologised assessment of Griffith's narrative inventions as the core influence on the continuity system. Griffith's formal inventions are beyond doubt crucial sources of inspiration for his contemporaries in the United States and abroad. His output at Biograph by its sheer scale laid the ground for plot-based cinema. But Griffith's legacy is complex. It has been suggested, for instance, that under closer scrutiny his narrative techniques reveal paradoxes, problematising the positioning of him unequivocally on the side of the classical continuity system.[15]

A well-known aspect of Griffith's style is his disregard for continuity matching. Brownlow in *The Parade's Gone By…* cites an editor who knew Griffith's cutter Jimmy Smith:

> Griffith had a great habit of shooting everything in long shots. He'd then sit in the projection room and decide where he wanted close-ups. Jimmy often bemoaned the fact that Griffith just never gave a damn about matching. He'd pick out where he wanted his close-ups and then he'd go

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[13] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay,* 170, 182, 268.
[14] Ibid., 175.
[15] Tom Gunning, 'Weaving a Narrative. Style and Economic Background in Griffith's Biograph Films,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 336.

on to any stage with any background and get these beautiful art close-ups and cut them in.[16]

His propensity to use parallel editing is just one aspect of Griffith's very singular approach to cinematic narrative marked with dialectic tensions and oppositions: between stereotyped villains (the stereotype was often racial) and flawless heroes, between the male and the female. The battle to protect patriarchal, puritan values endangered by the combined forces of modernity and women's emancipation is, in Griffith's films, paralleled with the juxtaposition of spatial and temporal articulations. His visual system props up the narrative preoccupations, but neither of them is, strictly speaking, pointing towards the classical transparency of the storytelling agent. To add a slightly provocative angle hinted at by Gunning: Griffith eschews the American self-effacing cut-back, and instead uses parallel editing with the vigour of Soviet montage.[17]

Indeed, this should not be surprising if one recalls how Eisenstein himself fantasised about the camaraderie of film form between him and Griffith: 'Montage, whose principles underlay American film culture, but which owed its full development, definitive interpretation and world recognition to our cinema. Montage, which played a vital role in Griffith's works, and brought him his most glorious triumphs.'[18]

Actually, Griffith's excessive and at times confusing use of cross-cutting is said to have put him at odds with the Biograph's executives, which resulted in his departure in 1913. When Griffith took the logic of parallel editing a step further in *Intolerance* (1916, editors D.W. Griffith, James Smith and Rose Smith), the commercial failure that ensued could largely be attributed to the fact that the father of Hollywood storytelling radically transgressed the norms of the emerging continuity system. Here then we see again that looking at editing practices alone does not give us a full picture.

In fact, the narrative device of parallel editing can be considered a significant development for a very different reason than its spatio-temporal sophistication. Gunning makes a convincing argument, placing cross-cutting in the history of the formation of the cinematic narrator, an extra-diegetic

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[16] Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By…* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), 282.
[17] Tom Gunning, 'Weaving a Narrative. Style and Economic Background in Griffith's Biograph Films,' 346.
[18] S. M. Eisenstein, 'Dickens, Griffith and Ourselves,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume III, Writings 1934–47* (London: BFI Publishing, 1996), 199.

manipulator who overtly mingles plot lines suggesting psychological links, thematic parallels or building climactic concatenations.

The development of classical narrative is too broad an area of study to discuss here. But I would like to point to a few observations pertinent to the argument of its connection with the history of editing practice.

While Griffith's films embraced cross-cutting and tested its liminal areas, the history of parallel editing is also closely tied with changes to American fiction cinema and its social and economic conditions. Attempts to entice middle-class patrons by borrowing from the psychological respectability of novels and stage plays found its natural outlet in pitting moral deeds against vice in a parallel fashion.

Gunning points out that that the back-story to Griffith's Biograph years (1908 – 1913) is the push among companies forming the 'Film Trust' (the Motion Pictures Patents Company) to bring the narrative structure of their films 'in line with the traditions of bourgeois representation.'[19] That meant adapting famous plays, novels and poems rather than exploiting burlesques sketches.[20] In the 1910s and 1920s the tendency was strengthened with the expansion of national exhibition chains, which planted cinemas in more reputable neighbourhoods, used modern managerial methods of maximising profits and, consequently, contributed to the commodification and standardisation of cinematic output.[21] Hence, there is a clear, if rather complex, connection between the socially conditioned demand for certain types of plots and the very concrete responses of filmmakers who begin to work within a prescribed framework of the industry standards, including those concerning temporal and spatial articulations. Gunning suggests that Griffith's alternating patterns illustrate that well. By linking the psychological motivation of characters with parallel editing Griffith creates 'a sort of psychological space.'[22]

We could conclude that paradoxically among the most lasting achievements of Griffith's cinema is his nonchalant attitude to editing: it is cutting for psychological effect rather than spatial coherence. This creates a

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[19] Tom Gunning, 'Weaving a Narrative. Style and Economic Background in Griffith's Biograph Films,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 339.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasure. A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 34–56.
[22] Tom Gunning, 'Weaving a Narrative. Style and Economic Background in Griffith's Biograph Films,' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 343.

sense of intimacy with the storyteller and the world that unfolds on screen, based on a reliance and trust in the narrative agency. It is a safe space of bourgeois values and representations separated from the carnal spectacle of earlier cinema by means of the physical infrastructure of the film industry (the cinema theatre) and the equally commodified space of a film's diegesis (the escapist plot).

Indeed, the need for what Musser terms the history of screen practice, enabling understanding of the interrelation between film form and the socio-economic history of cinema, becomes evident when one tries to explain even the most rudimentary aspects of the history of editing. It is also, broadly speaking, the approach taken by Bordwell, Thomson and Staiger in their analysis of the classical Hollywood cinema, although some particular aspects of neoformalism, like their fairly rigid and ahistorical concept of narrative, clash with the perspective suggested by Gunning and Musser.[23]

Let us pause here and look critically at the established discourse about the 'evolution' of editing. Despite the best attempts at singling out the developments of editing *per se*, we end up facing two different but equally puzzling conundrums. On the one hand, the logic of the argument leads us to discuss the evolution of the cinematic narrative rather than editing as such. On the other hand, some particular aspects of film form lend themselves to narrow examination, so in literature there is also a tendency to shape the history of editing practice into a narrative of discovery, with breakthroughs and a sense of evolutionary trajectory towards a somewhat terminal stage of 'continuity editing.'

For example, next to presenting two related lines of action intermittently, other stepping stones in the history of editing are thought to be: dissecting space into closer views, experimenting with the reverse-shot and POV structures, cutting in when action is already unfolding and cutting out before it is finished and oblique staging which avoids planarity of composition.[24]

George Albert Smith is credited with using close-ups on a regular basis in such films as *Grandma Threading her Needle* (1900), and the aforementioned *The Little Doctor* and *Mary Jane's Mishap*. Keyhole spying films like Pathé's *Par le trou de serrure* (1901) are thought to represent primitive POV structures,

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[23] For a critical analysis of this aspect of neoformalism, see Robert Stam, *Film Theory. An Introduction*, 195–200.
[24] Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing: History, Theory, and Practice*, 3–38.

in which a masked shot has a thematic motivation. Sometimes the framing of those films simulates a view through the telescope lens, like in Ferdinand Zecca's *Scenes from my Balcony* (1901).[25] Edison's *Gay Shoe Clerk* released two years later will offer pure voyeurism without any thematic pretence. James Williamson's *Attack on the China Mission* (1900) is said to contain one of the earliest examples of the shot-reverse-shot technique while *Desperate Poaching Affray* (1903) by William Haggar is notable for the tightening of editing: on a few occasions in the film a cut to the next shot comes before the action in the previous one is completed.

The genre of chase films, which Haggar's film exemplifies, is considered in itself a milestone in the development of continuity of action. In an attempt to extend the time of action covered with one position of the camera those films are also frequently staged in depth. Hepworth's *Rescued by Rover* (1905, dir. Lewin Fitzhamon), described as the first true British narrative, makes an effective use of the z axis in the visual composition of the scenes which follow a scheme of the chase film.[26] However, for a modern eye it also reveals how *not* cutting on movement slows down the pace of editing.[27]

The problem with the mentioned narratives presenting a linear trajectory of editing evolution is that they underscore those aspects of editing techniques which can be seen as harbingers of classical *découpage*, while ignoring features of early fragmentation that are particular to the period and to editing practice in general. This kind of narrow interpretation of chase films such as James Williamson's *Stop Thief!*, or the masterpiece of the genre, Pathé Frères' *Le cheval emballé* (1907), which boasted parallel editing in the first sequence of the film, seems a red herring. They are surely experimenting with continuity, but what comes to the fore looking closely at them is the idea of continuity as an *attraction*. The core appeal of those films lies in following a continuous movement across different locations, something that will be curiously mirrored in Griffith's melodramatic rescue sequences.

Later, as with Smith's emphatic close-up, a device that was conceived as an editing trick became remodelled into a mature feature of classical editing

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[25] Don Fairservice, *Film Editing: History, Theory and Practice*, 38.
[26] See Michael Brooke's entry on Screenonline. http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/514859/index.html (accessed 1 September 2017).
[27] Interestingly, Hepworth never made that decisive step towards the classical system and his later features were marred with editing decisions considered anachronistic for his contemporaries.

style. But the important question that arises is whether this new rendering of the close-up did not retain something of its primordial characteristic, again, as an attraction. The legacy of the pioneer filmmakers was perhaps the idea that the spatio-temporal dissection of the pro-filmic material was in itself the greatest visual trick cinema had to offer. Rather than the potential for invisibility in cutting, what sparked interest and experimentation was the recognition that the camera had the liberty of moving between locations, and the only narrative trigger needed to keep popular interest going could be something as coarse as the act of stealing a slab of meat. The ensuing slapstick action had infinite possibilities for development while supplying the audience with undemanding, hypnotic pleasure.

What is more, certain film techniques traditionally attributed to editing, like the close-up, were so culturally influential that can be seen as a disruption in the linear history of film narrative. Their standalone importance was equal to, if not outweighed, their acknowledged role in the development of the continuity system. Writers on film of the 1920s banded together under Annette Michelson's term 'euphoric epistemology' saw in the close-up the 'soul of the cinema.'[28] For Epstein that elusive concept of the 'decisive moment' was tied with the idea of photogénie.[29] In those high-spirited writings, cutting to a closer view was understood in terms of embodiment and a more visceral perception than that of other arts. Epstein wrote that in cinema 'we experience hills, trees, faces as a new sensation.'[30] It is not only the sensual effect that closer views brought, in plot-driven filmmaking the advantages were related to their dramatic value. Hence Béla Balázs would soon unequivocally state: 'in a truly artistic film the dramatic climax between two people will always be shown as a dialogue of facial expressions in close-up.'[31] These sensory metaphors coming from avant-garde artists and the sweeping declarations of early theorists seem a long way from the close-up of a spoon-fed kitten.

But to be precise, a close-up on Emil Jenkin's face in *The Tragedy of Love* (1923, dir. Joe May), that Balázs was so fascinated with, is the same editing

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[28] Quoted in Mary Ann Doane, 'The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema,' *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 91; See Robert Stam, *Film Theory. An Introduction*, 35.
[29] Mary Ann Doane, 'The Close-Up: Scale and Detail in the Cinema,' 89.
[30] Quoted in Robert Stam, *Film Theory. An Introduction*, 36.
[31] Béla Balázs, *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory*, ed. Erica Carter (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 37.

(or rather *découpage*) device as any other closer view filmed earlier or later. The important difference is the fact that with each actualisation of this technique a historical context impresses on the given film its own significance. For Balázs and his critically-minded contemporaries the close-up opened up a new territory of art comprised of 'the little things of life,' of entire dramas encircled in single frames radiating with warmth, tenderness and 'naturalism.'[32]

As we can see, the evolution of film form, if one is to use the word, cannot be considered as something purely internal within the cinema, but rather as multifaceted and actually going in a few directions. By the mid-1920s it became clear that the cinematic form was capacious enough to contain newsreels, feature-length melodramas and the abstract animations of Walter Ruttmann among other types of filmmaking. Cutting as a feat of the artful collision of rhythmic shots reached one of its highest points ever with Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929, editors Dziga Vertov and Yelizaveta Svilova).

This only goes to show that there is plenty of evidence suggesting that the 'narrative' of editing history has more than one thread. On the one hand, the spatiotemporal dissection of the profilmic became in the 1910s a method of conveying narrative information and as such was tied with the emergence of plot-based cinema. On the other hand, editing techniques kept evolving towards something that could be called a paradigm of montage, which retained something of the early filmmakers' exhilaration about the creative and epistemological potential hidden in the ordinary close-up, the shot-reverse-shot or parallel editing.

If a certain codification of film form happened, the impulse for that did not originate at a cutting bench but at a writer's desk.

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[32] Ibid., 36–39.

THE WRITER AS EDITOR

There are hardly any manuals of editing dating from the silent era but the 1910s saw a sudden surge in publishing activity targeted at prospective scenario writers. Photoplay writing manuals were usually prescriptive and very narrowly focused on what could be called the norms of *classical découpage*. As Yuri Tsivian writes, they offered the 'cradle space of film theory.'[1]

Much more will be written about the history of the word *découpage* in the next section. For now I would like to introduce the idea of using a different word from editing to refer to the conceptual stage of dissecting the pro-filmic space, the temporal organisation of the narrative and other decisions that are typically made during the pre-production and production stages but which are directly correlated with editing. The reason for making this distinction largely springs from historical evidence. Photoplay manuals laid the groundwork for the continuity system of classical Hollywood cinema. It is in these works that we will find the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of crafting engaging and sellable scripts. These books also frequently stress the need for continuity of action and economy in narrative presentation. In the rigorously plot-driven classical cinema whatever happened at the cutting stage was, at least in the ideal scenario, a refinement or a correction of the structure that took shape right at the beginning. If leaving 'the face on the cutting-room floor' was an act of cruel *rejection* of the actor's work, it was because the editor was not 'mounting' anything substantially new. Unlike in the montage paradigm, the diegesis of *classical découpage* was already in the rushes, and the job of the cutter was to put its fragmented parts together for everyone to see. This use of the term is close to how Bazin understands it, when he identifies, in *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema*, a Hollywood practice of breaking down a scene into a series of viewpoints.[2]

The increasing importance of scriptwriting on the creative side of film production in the 1910s is reflected in the use of the word 'editor.' One photoplay manual describes his role in the following way:

> It is he who will read the manuscript you send to the various moving picture manufacturers. He will pass upon the merits or faults and will

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[1] Yuri Tsivian makes a similar argument about the importance of scriptwriting manuals in a brilliant entry to *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory,* which has a title confusing and telling in equal measure: *Montage Theory I (Hollywood Continuity)*. See Yuri Tsivian, 'Montage Theory I (Hollywood Continuity),' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, ed. Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland (London: Routledge, 2015), 307.

[2] André Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema,' in *What is Cinema? Volume 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 23–40.

reward you with a cheque or rejection. He is generally a man of experience both in literary and motion picture work. It is his work to discern the interesting story from the boresome one. He is often a writer and prepares Photoplays on his own account.[3]

According to another guide, 'nearly every company has a scenario editor.'[4] A budding writer needs to spark their interest with a synopsis.[5] This text is supposed to be less than 300 words long, and in some companies might be first read by a 'play reader' before being passed to the editor.[6] After the editor accepts the scenario, they turn it over '(perhaps with some changes and suggestions) to the stage director.'[7] It seems that the scenario editor held a markedly senior position in the company. According to British scenario manuals, it was him or her who decided to purchase the script, perhaps after consulting with the head of the company.[8] Sargent, who had a prolific career writing for American studios, describes the Editor (written with a capital 'e') as the head of the manuscript department in charge of a staff of writers and 'reconstructors.' The latter were staff-writers who improved scenarios with promising stories usually by creating 'a new continuity of action.'[9] The task of the Editor was to provide a steady supply of material to the producers and directors. It seems that the shooting turnover at the time was such that despite having a team of contracted writers, scenario editors were eager to receive unsolicited scripts from freelancers.[10]

The backdrop of this scriptwriting activity is rapid growth in the number of narrative films in circulation and the increased demand for stories and scripts. Between 1908 and 1910 these were mainly one-reelers like those which Griffith was churning out for the Biograph Company in the hundreds. From 1911, a multi-reel film gradually moved in to become the basic commodity in the American film industry.[11] Britain soon followed suit and by 1914 'feature stories have swept the photo-play world by storm, conquering everything before

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[3] *How to write moving picture plays*, 3.
[4] Leona Radnor, *The photoplay writer* (New York: The Quaker Press, 1913), 6
[5] Eustace Hale Ball, *Photoplay scenarios; how to write and sell them* (New York: Hearst's International Library Co., 1915), 16.
[6] Ernest A. Dench, *Playwriting for the cinema. Dealing with the writing and marketing of scenarios* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1914), 34.
[7] Leona Radnor, *The photoplay writer*, 4.
[8] Ernest A. Dench, *Playwriting for the cinema. Dealing with the writing and marketing of scenarios,* 17.
[9] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay*, 8.
[10] Ibid., 6.
[11] Janet Staiger, 'Combination and Litigation. Structures of US Film Distribution, 1896–1917' in *Early cinema. Space, frame, narrative*, 198.

them.'[12] By 1919 the single reel format was relegated to slapstick comedies and documentaries.[13] Scriptwriting manuals acknowledged, however, that crafting multi-reel stories demanded greater skill and was reserved for seasoned photoplay writers.[14]

Writing a scenario required a certain level of knowledge about the formal conventions of cinema – about the 'technique.' One of the manuals explains that 'technique' is 'the skilled system of treating the idea in the approved scenario form.'[15] This treatment of a plot idea, transforming it into a successful scenario was, on the one hand, modelled on the established practices of fiction writing, on the other hand, it had to consider the specificity of the new medium. As Sargent puts it, 'the Editor is generally a man of sound knowledge of general literature and familiar with current production of stories and photoplays.'[16] The point of juncture was then crucially Janus-faced, and so the role of the scenario editor was not only that of a gatekeeper winnowing the most promising stories, but also a storytelling engineer trained in the new techniques of the motion pictures and charged with revising submitted scripts and nurturing scriptwriting culture through books and trade articles.

Importantly for the argument here, the technique of writing a script for a motion picture, described in one of the manuals as 'a short story told in "photographic action," instead of in words,' incorporated terms usually attributed to editing. [17] It particularly relied on the understanding of emerging conventions of narrative cutting. The issues that needed to be clarified were often those that marked a difference between photo-plays and stage plays. A scene in film, as one manual stresses, is constituted every time there is a need to move the camera or it is necessary to change the background of the picture. In today's terms that meaning of a scene would be matched by the notion of a shot. Scenario manuals pay much attention to the close-up, which is very often described in semiotic terms. An expressive close-up can substitute an explanatory leader. They also

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[12] Ernest A. Dench, *Playwriting for the cinema. Dealing with the writing and marketing of scenarios*, 54.

[13] A. vam Buren Powell, *The photoplay synopsis* (Springfield, Mass.: The Home Correspondence School, 1919), 6.

[14] C. E. Graham, *How to Write Cinema Picture Plays* (London: Cinema Playwriting School, 1913), 3.

[15] Ernest A. Dench, *Playwriting for the cinema. Dealing with the writing and marketing of scenarios*, 17.

[16] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay*, 6.

[17] C. E. Graham, *How to write cinema picture plays*, 2.

devote quite a few pages to discussing inserts: letters, notes, telegrams, newspaper clippings, etc. Similarly to the role of the close-up, this is related to a certain semiotic poverty of silent cinema. The form relied heavily on the signifying potential of pantomime. An insert such as a newspaper clipping would pass as a 'natural' solution, as it could compensate for the lack of written or verbal information while flaunting a narrative motivation. Using parallel editing is recommended when the action takes place in two different places: 'for example, if the good brother and the wayward brother have gone two different ways and you are depicting the nobility of the one and the folly of the other.'[18]

The role of the Reconstructor of Scenarios (another position written in capitals) was essentially related to the relative difficulty of writing, especially by someone who was not a staff writer, in a way that complied with all the practical norms of production. Especially significant was the need to present almost all of the narrative material in silent action. It is noted in one manual that very few scripts were 'workable,' meaning that they could be produced without any alterations.[19]

Scenario writing in the 1910s can be seen as an incubator for classical *découpage*. The 'technique' incorporated editing conventions accumulated over the first decade, but then harnessed them in the service of a psychologically motivated plot formula. The latter, however, was not a uniquely cinematic invention but was directly inherited from the established norms of popular fiction and plays. The relevance of these prescriptions for editing practice is a theme that will be picked up in the second part of this thesis, when I discuss their entanglement with the concept of continuity editing.

A comparison between the advice found in the books targeting playwrights and scenarists respectively serves as a good illustration. Alfred Hennequin in *The Art of Playwriting* published first in 1890 defines a play in the following way: 'a complete and unified story of human life acted out on the stage in a series of motivated incidents so arranged as to excite the greatest amount of interest and pleasure in the spectator by means of novelty, variety, contrast, suspense, surprise, climax, humor, pathos.'[20] He goes on to explain that the most

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[18] Ibid., 7.
[19] Ernest A. Dench, *Playwriting for the cinema. Dealing with the writing and marketing of scenarios*, 21.
[20] Alfred Hennequin, *The Art of Playwriting. Being a Practical Treatise on the Elements of Dramatic Construction* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897), 83.

important feature of a play is the story, which in turn relies on the presentation of one or more self-consistent characters, who are driven by some sort of a purpose.[21] Obstructions to achieving that goal enacted or personified by another set of characters constitute a series of incidents, which are the true substance of the play. The story must be 'complete,' that is, it should not leave any loose narrative threads at the end, and be 'unified,' by which Hennequin means one of the three unities distinguished by the 'French critics of the seventeenth century' following Aristotle's *Poetics*.[22] In further parts of the manual, Hennequin elaborates on the ideas mentioned in the definition of the play. He stresses the importance of suspense, surprise and climax and suggests a triangular diagram of the plot structure. Some of his theoretical constructions are intriguingly pedantic in prescriptiveness: he distinguishes the 'tying of the knot' part, which then leads to the 'highest point of interest' moment, which sums up all the preceding climaxes while at the same time is a consequence of the action which directly precedes it.[23]

What is rather striking is that most of Hennequin's propositions sound very familiar and rather obvious – indeed they were translated almost verbatim into cinema scriptwriting techniques. Sargent, in his photoplay manual, gives a lot of weight to the idea of a triad: 'The idea of a triad still further suggests itself. A plot should consist of struggle, suspense and climax; the centuries-old definition of Aristotle declares that a play must have a beginning, a middle and an end. We have, too, the Greek triad of time, place and action.'[24] However, compared with the advice for playwrights, the recommendations for photoplay authors seem to narrow down the scope of available plot structures. The emphasis is on production expediency, streamlined narrating and wide appeal. Sargent offers this surprisingly timeless suggestion about the choice of a plot. It needs to be:

> Simple and direct.
> Not complicated by counter-plot.
> Told by few active characters.
> Centred directly upon one objective.
> Inexpensive in production.
> Not calculated to give offense.
> Not broken by an excess of time jumps.

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[21] Ibid., 85-86.
[22] Ibid., 89.
[23] Ibid., 118-119.
[24] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay*, 26.

> Capable of being made in one locality at one time.
> Provided with a happy ending.[25]

'Plot is to photoplay', according to Sargent, 'at once the skeleton upon which the flesh of incident is hung and the spirit which animates that flesh, for plot comprises both the outline of incident and the idea which that incident seeks to tell.'[26] In another fragment, he refers to ideas animating the plot as 'punches' and insists that each scene should have a punch, something that we know stands behind the action. Sargent also offers this characteristically calculating and often repeated paraphrase of Aristotle: 'it is better to offer a plausible fiction than a possible but improbable fact. Truth may be and often is stranger than fiction, which is precisely why fiction is preferred.'[27] The insistence on plausibility of action and building suspense through carefully limiting or exposing of narrative information are again signs of the precociousness of early scriptwriting practice – it seems already highly codified years before, say, *Broken Blossoms* (1919, dir. D.W. Griffith, editor James Smith) or *Fool's Paradise* (1921, dir. Cecil DeMill, editor Anne Bauchens).

The first edition of Sargent's book was published in 1913 and he was specifically writing about one-reel films, plots lasting 1,000 feet or slightly less. With the second edition from 1916 he is at pains to argue that the new standard of a multi-reel story, a feature, does not constitute any substantial change to the techniques he depicts. It just means that the writer needs to invent more 'plot-action,' and not necessarily extend the plot. I find it quite a remarkable line of defence, especially in light of his other suggestion when he recommends Robert Wilson Neal's book on writing short stories as a valuable supplement to his manual. Neal himself draws parallels between short stories, or 'contes' with one-act plays. He writes that they are practically the same regarding their dramatic principles with one difference that a conte is narrated, while a play is acted.[28] By 1921 Henry Albert Phillips will be able to confidently announce that the standard of the day is a five-reeler, the 'Feature Photoplay' and in terms of its 'depth,

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[25] Ibid., 67.
[26] Ibid., 25.
[27] Ibid., 37.
[28] Robert Wilson Neal, *Short Stories in the Making* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1914), 8.

weight, substance, breadth and length' it compares with 'the average Novel or Stage Play.'[29]

All in all, it seems that the core influences in the early period of classical American scriptwriting were established, dramatic principles of popular short stories, one-act plays, with increasing aspirations to canonic novels and drama as well.[30] Thematically, according to Sargent the spectrum ranged from the dramatic genres such as drama, historical, costume, problem, purpose and propaganda plays, melodrama ('a form of drama in which the visual effect is of greater importance than strict probability') and comedy drama to the comedic genres such as comedy, farce and slapstick.[31] In terms of career paths, Sargent suggests that directors were usually recruited among theatre people, although some may have already learnt their profession in the film industry.[32]

I'm intentionally stressing the creative make-up of scriptwriting activities to highlight how the conditions for classical *découpage* were forged. While Sargent's book draws heavily on stage and fiction writing traditions when it comes to the general matrix of plotting, in the crucial parts of the book his attention is directed towards film-specific methods of signification and spatiotemporal dissection. At all times there is a direct, functional connection between the two. *Découpage* serves the purpose of presenting a simple, direct and inexpensive plot in a way that maintains the highest dramatic tension throughout the film.

Close-up for Sargent has a few functions. It can be used to break up scenes that are too long; it may emphasise some action that would otherwise be lost; thirdly, a close-up 'creates a feeling of intimacy between the spectator and the players.'[33] He suggests something almost identical to what Balázs says – a photoplay tells its story in facial expressions.[34] The difference between editing and mise-en-scène is not clear in this account. Sargent, in the same breath as writing about the close-up, discusses 'playing [actors] to the front,' that is

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[29] Henry Albert Phillips, *The Feature Photoplay* (Springfield: The Home Correspondence School, 1921), 17.
[30] See also Kristin Thompson, 'The formulation of the classical style, 1909–28,' in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960,* David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, 163–173.
[31] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay*, 267.
[32] Ibid., 13.
[33] Ibid., 173.
[34] Ibid., 174.

bringing them closer to the camera by arranging the action in such a way that it is seems natural for the actors to move towards the lens.[35]

In some discourses on editing like Valerie Orpen's *Film Editing: the Art of the Expressive* a suggestion that editing might cover some aspects of mise-en-scène is presented as a bold, controversial move; and it seems so, if we take at face value the polemics around auteur cinema or Bazin's 'montage oblitéré, montage interdit.'[36] Those two notions seem to fundamentally exclude each other. But the categorical tension between them is resolvable, if one approaches the subject from the perspective of scriptwriting practice, or as I once more insist, as a *découpage* and not an editing problem. The close-up and 'playing to the front' are in paradigmatic relation to each other, but they can co-exist within one syntagmatic structure; a director can switch between both techniques with an eye to rhythm and dramatic punctuation but knowing that both methods largely fulfil the same function. What brings them together is largely their semiotic aspect, something that should not be underestimated in the search for stylistic traces of differentiation between film trends or individual directors.

In another photoplay manual from 1915, we find a description of the term 'register,' which refers to 'impressing the fact upon the audience.'[37] Its author explains that 'in your Scenario, for instance, you might say "John registers fear." This would show to the producer that it was positively necessary for the actor to give unmistakable signs in pantomime of his great fear so that the spectator would surely understand.'[38] Apart from everything else, in fiction cinema the camera moved closer to the action simply because it was increasingly important that the audience clearly understood a given emotion expressed on the actor's face. This was a prerequisite for following the plot conveyed mostly using a pantomimic performance.

Sargent, in his own book, goes on to give an example of a scene breakdown, which can be described as nothing less than fully-fledged 'analytical editing,' the classical way of breaking down the pro-filmic space into separate shots.

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[35] Ibid.
[36] I use here the term mise-en-scène in a narrow sense, just like Orpen does in her book. However, quite often it is used in a much broader way, which will be discussed later in this chapter. See Valerie Orpen, *Film Editing: the Art of the Expressive* (London: Wallflower, 2003), *115.*
[37] *How to write moving picture plays*, 3.
[38] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay,* 174.

You may have a restaurant scene. In a restaurant persons do not wander about. They sit and eat or drink. You may have several groups of players at their respective tables. You cannot get them all so close to the camera that their expressions are clearly registered. You move the camera about, returning now and then to the big scene to preserve the atmosphere. It is precisely as though you built up the large sets out of several smaller sets.[39]

From this account, the reasoning behind spatial breakdown appears to be related to the mentioned importance of facial expressions in conveying the narrative substance of the film. However, Sargent does caution against overusing busts, which belong to 'a little bag of tricks' and, therefore, need to be employed sparingly to remain effective. This shows again that the techniques of spatial dissection were in the 1910s still largely seen as tricks and attractions. At the same time, thanks to the influences from plot-driven fiction and stage writing, there is a clear aspiration for the impression of seamlessness in storytelling. Sargent calls this desired effect 'charm,' which 'is the absence of visible and conscious effort.'[40]

It is significant that in this early filmmaking manual, written purely with American commercial cinema in mind, we find a well-developed idea which will become one of the core preoccupations of the Soviet thinking about montage. In Eisenstein's writings it is the concept of a shot is a part of a larger, organic whole, of a 'monistic ensemble of affects.'[41] Sargent first gives his account on the origins of the already mentioned cut-back:

In the beginning the cut-back was made merely to reduce the length of some scenes. The director would take a long strip of film and cut it up, then join in bits of another scene, working back and forth. He found that he gained suspense and smartened the action. Many, indeed most, directors still follow the same scheme of making long scenes and cutting them up, for it is not easy for the players to get into full swing for a five or ten second scene…[42]

But then he takes a wider look and considers the composition of scenes in relation to each other, the pattern that emerges as an outcome of the cut-back technique. He writes:

In cutting back each section of the action should gain in contrast with the other half. Do not write action that merely tells your story by advancing

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[39] Ibid., 174.
[40] Ibid., 63.
[41] Sergei Eisenstein, 'An Unexpected Juncture,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings 1922 – 34* (London: BFI, 1988), 117.
[42] Ibid., 186.

the plot. Plan to have your scenes help each other as well. *The individual scene is like one of the bricks of which a house is built.* It takes the mortar of inter-relationship to hold them together. You must make each brick perfect in itself and then seek to make the bricks a concrete mass through their combination of interests. It is partly for this reason that cutting back possesses such a marked value. It brings the scenes into more intimate relationship through the closeness of contact. No part of the action is left alone long enough to be forgotten, however slightly.[43]

In Sargent's view then, maintaining continuity of action is not the main effect of the *découpage* technique. 'Advancing the plot' is an elementary part, but the real objective is to create a sense of closeness between the scenes by stressing contrasts and combining interests.

In the last section of the thesis I will come back to this metaphor of film structure as intricate brickwork: a cathedral is another image suggested by some.[44] It points to an intuition about editing work signalled by numerous practitioners: its character as a non-linear assemblage of closely interrelated elements. Interestingly, the metaphor of a 'film-brick' features also in the writings of Eisenstein's adversary Dziga Vertov, who wrote: 'Film-Truth is made of material as a house is made of bricks. Using bricks, one can make an oven, the Kremlin wall, and many other things. From the filmed material [shots], one can construct different film-things.'[45] When it came to their visions of montage, Eisenstein and Vertov were often at odds with each other, but the idea of a film as a system of intimately linked elements seemed to cross all theoretical boundaries.

For the moment, though, let us stay with the concept of *découpage* and see how it sheds a different light onto the stages of editing understood now in the narrow sense as the procedures involved in post-production. Sargent writes that the first print of the positive film is sent to 'the joining room' where various strips are put together according to a 'joining slip,' a document prepared by the director's assistant including information about the exposed pieces of negative, the corresponding actions that were played in those scenes, and their order according to the script.[46] For convenience and speed, smaller scenes (shots) might be filmed together in one set.[47] The joining slip will then have a note

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[43] Ibid., 194, [emphasis added].
[44] See Stanley Schofield, 'They Built a Cathedral,' *Sight & Sound*, no. 14 (winter 1945-46): 129.
[45] Quoted in Vlada Patrić, *Constructivism in Film. The Man with the Movie Camera. A Cinematic Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 14.
[46] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay*, 14.
[47] Ibid., 15.

telling 'the cutter' where to separate the film with the same negative number. The joining stage recreates *découpage* as it was envisioned by the writer and with modifications introduced during the shooting. In modern terms, the print leaving the joining room is an 'assembly.' The latter is, according to Sargent, transferred to the cutting room, where *a cutting editor* or the director, or both look it over.

In a few sources, one finds a suggestion that the director was routinely responsible for making at least a rough cut of the film. Royal Lee writes in 1920:

> The *director or the cutter*, it varies in the different studios, retires to the cutting room where he proceeds to assemble the entire story. With this task finished the temporary titles are inserted and a preview of the photoplay is staged. Very few of the stories reach this stage of the production in such perfect condition that they are accepted. Some times additions to the story are found necessary and many titles are rewritten or changed. At this point the *film editor* takes a hand in the game and endeavors to improve the standard of the photoplay by adding and cutting here and there.[48]

It seems, then, that in the 1910s and 1920s the terminology on editing is quite fluid. This reflects the initially undefined nature of a new profession coupled with the growing recognition that assembling shots to produce a motion picture is a task burdened with a great deal of creative responsibility. Therefore, it is sometimes seen as an extension of the director's role. The most common word used in this context is still usually *cutting*. Sargent, in a glossary to his scriptwriting manual, distinguishes between the 'editor of film' and the 'editor of plays.'[49] However, in the book itself he prefers to use the term 'cutting man,' with which Sargent also bluntly explains who the film editor is: 'a cutting man. A person who assembles the components of a story for public presentation by taking from or adding to the original negative.'[50] The author of another practical manual from the 1920s asserts that the cutting and assembling are the most difficult aspects of producing of a film.[51] This is connected with the idea of a movie being 'made in the cutting.' This commonplace begins to emerge with the growing emancipation of the editing practice, but it is the director again who is considered the most responsible for that part of the production. 'If the director is

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[48] Royal Lee, *The romance of motion picture production* (Los Angeles: Royal Publishing Company, 1920), 42.
[49] Epes Winthrop Sargent, *Technique of the Photoplay,* 361.
[50] Ibid.
[51] See Carl Louis Gregory, *Motion Picture Photography* (New York: Falk Publishing Company, 1927), 204.

a good film cutter and can follow the action of his picture on a pair of rewinders, the producer has something to be thankful for.'[52] D.W. Griffith, Thomas Ince, Edwin Carew, George Tucker and Edgar Lewis are offered as examples of great directors who mastered the art of cutting.[53]

In trade journals of the 1910s and 1920s, *cutting* and *editing* appear alongside each other as if they were separate activities.[54] Often they are accompanied by a third term: *titling.* This distinction, on the one hand, might have been used to express the fact that post-production entailed two stages: cutting was associated with splicing the negative into individual shots, while editing was more about assembling them into a coherent plot. On the other hand, as the quotes above suggest, the whole process was often subjected to a division of labour. Cutting negatives required less skill than assembling shots according to a continuity slip. These menial jobs were given to *cutters*, *patchers*, *splicers* or *joiners*.[55] By the same token, the last stages of the work on the print called for the most experienced staff member – a *film editor* mentioned by Royal Lee. Hence, the difference between those terms mirrors the duality of the process as a whole: the technical groundwork gives way to the creative effort, with both stages inextricably tied to each other.[56] It is also a transition from cutting, that is assembling a straightforward result of the *découpage*, to editing, which begins to connote an art in its own right.

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] *The Moving Picture World* (July 24, 1920): 465; *Variety* (September 7, 1917): 28.
[55] *Camera Craft,* no. 2 (San Francisco: Photographers' Association of California, 1918): 79.
[56] Karel Reisz retains a distinction between cutting and editing in his handbook. See Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing*, 216.

THE DIRECTOR AS EDITOR

In 1926, *Moving Picture World* applauded the rise of the career of Dorothy Arzner: 'Hollywood has given the megaphone to a woman. Dorothy Arzner, the girl who single-handedly cut and edited "The Covered Wagon" and "Old Ironsides," two of the most successful photoplays in screen history, was today signed to a long-term contract as a Paramount director.'[1] The article is remarkable for a few reasons. The first three decades in Hollywood represent a regressive history of female exclusion from the creative industry. Initially, women often played key roles as directors, producers and scriptwriters. Among the leading film pioneers was Alice Guy-Blaché. Later Mary Pickford was a towering figure of early cinema not only as an actress but as a shrewd producer and the founder of the United Artists as well. Lois Weber was one of the most prominent and best paid directors of the 1910s, and the most renowned scriptwriters of the 1920s and 1930s were Frances Marion and June Mathis.[2] However, the 1930s saw a sudden disappearance of women from the ranks of the behind-the-camera creative contributors. Over the next decades the most important exception to male dominance were editing jobs, almost never in the limelight but appreciated in industry circles. One could speculate about the social and gender dynamics that pushed women out of sound cinema, increasingly a money-generating playground for muscular Taylorism, but a fact remains that editing departments were, to a limited extent, bastions of resistance to that trend, and the best known editors of all time have been women.

As David Muel suggests, handling celluloid, somehow akin to sewing, became 'gendered' to some degree.[3] Although in recent times only a slim 20 percent of the members of the Motion Picture Editors Guild have been women, there is no doubt that Anne Bauchens, Viola Lawrence, Margaret Booth, Barbara McLean and Dorothy Spencer were instrumental in forging Hollywood editing practice.[4] This influence continued with New Hollywood and the legacy of Dede Allen, Verna Fields, Anne V. Coates and Thelma Schoonmaker.[5]

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[1] *Moving Picture World* (December 18, 1926): 497.
[2] See also Shelley Stamp, *Lois Weber in Early Hollywood* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).
[3] David Muel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2016), 10; See also Robert Stam, *Film Theory. An Introduction*, 172.
[4] David Muel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema*, 16.
[5] Ibid., 15.

One of the last female directors of the classical period that came to prominence in the 1920s was precisely Dorothy Arzner. Her career path is exemplary for the suggested connection between *découpage* and editing. Arzner entered the industry in 1919 as a script typist. She then rose in the ranks to become a 'script clerk,' whose role was to 'hold a script' keeping an eye on preserving continuity on the set.[6] Next came a job of a cutter, followed by that of a writer, and then she 'returned to editing, at the insistence of James Cruze, to do what is declared to be one of the most nearly perfect examples of film editing in screen history on "Old Ironsides"'[7]

Kevin Brownlow points out that when Arzner was working as a 'script girl' she would often discuss the scripts with the cutters. It was then a natural transition to progress from 'holding scripts' to editing.[8] The path of Arzner's career perfectly mirrors the development of the classical system: its norms are ironed out somewhere on the route between the text of the script and the pragmatics of a film shoot. The importance of editing gradually comes to the fore so much so that Arzner is considered the master of this new art gaining enough kudos to allow her to become a director. Arzner's skills in 'editing,' as opposed to run-of-the-mill 'cutting,' are seen as transferable to the role involving *découpage* decisions.

What the *Moving Picture World* article does not say though is that 'Hollywood has given the megaphone to a woman' because she threatened to leave Famous Players unless she was given an A picture to direct in two weeks. By the time Arzner debuted with *Fashions for Women* (1927, editor Marion Morgan) she had been credited on eight films, including the classic *Blood and Sand* (dir. Fred Niblo, 1922) starring Rudolph Valentino. In fact, according to Arzner herself she cut many more lesser-known films. 'I cut something like thirty-two pictures in one year at Realart, a subsidiary of Paramount… I also supervised the negative cutting and trained the girls who cut negative and spliced film by hand. I set up the filing system and supervised the art work on the titles.'[9] Her break came when Arzner saved Paramount $50 000 that the studio was planning to spend on a double-exposure trick which would matte Valentino into

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[6] Donna R. Casella, 'What Women Want: The Complex World of Dorothy Arzner and Her Cinematic Women,' *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media,* vol. 50, no. 1/2 (Spring & Fall 2009): 262.
[7] *Moving Picture World* (December 18, 1926): 497.
[8] Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 286.
[9] Ibid.

a bull arena in Madrid. She spliced together stock footage of three bull fights and asked for a few close-ups of the 'Latin lover.'[10] Arzner then matched the long shots with the close-ups following the same principle that guided Kuleshov when in 1920 he was joining a close-up of a handshake shot near the Bolshoi Theatre with a shot of the White House lifted from an American picture.[11] Pudovkin called this technique 'creative geography.'[12]

While honing her skills as an editor she was aware, however, that her ambitions went further than the cutting room. Arzner herself later recalled being on the set of a Cecil B. DeMille film: 'I remember making the observation, "if one was going to be in the movie business, one should be a director because he was the one who told everyone else what to do. In fact, he was *the Whole Works*."'[13] This matter-of-fact statement hints at the related issues of editorial control and power dynamics on the set, which extend to the cutting room. Arzner's success as a female director (working later with women editors and scriptwriters) is exceptional, but it touches on a number of areas where editing and directing meet: gender roles, the importance of collaboration, and creative control.

Almost every interview with an editor inevitably steers toward the subject of their working relationship with a director.[14] Clashes of personalities and life-long collaborations are the running motifs of the narratives around decision making in the cutting room. Famously, Anne Bauchens worked with Cecil B. DeMille between the late 1910s and the late 1950s editing every single one of the 39 films DeMille directed.[15] A similar long-standing collaboration formed between Thelma Schoonmaker and Martin Scorsese.[16] One of its outcomes, *Raging Bull* (1980), for which she won an Oscar, is frequently quoted as a model

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[10] Ibid.

[11] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting* (London: Vision Press, 1954), 60. Footage of that experiment later re-emerged and is now one of the few historically verified and documented 'Kuleshov effects.' It is called *The Created Surface of the Earth* and features a handshake between Aleksandra Khokhlova and Leonid Obolensky. The shot of the White House is though still missing. Ekaterina Khokhlova, "News concerning the 'Kuleshov effect,'" *Film History* 8, no. 3, Cinema and Nation – II (1996): 365.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Donna R. Casella, 'What Women Want: The Complex World of Dorothy Arzner and Her Cinematic Women,' 235.

[14] See, for example, Anne Voase Coates recalling her work with David Lean. Justin Chang, *Editing* (Lewes: Ilex, 2012), 26.

[15] David Muel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema,* 26.

[16] Roger Crittenden, *Film and Video Editing* (London: Routledge, 1995), 151.

of best editing practice.[17] An issue that instantly springs to mind in relation to these examples is how much an editor's contribution influences the overall shape of a film. And how do considerations of their role impact on the question of authorship?

The problem tends to be treated in two divergent ways. At one pole of the spectrum are narratives centred on individuals and their seemingly unhindered execution of creative vision. Editors are conceptualised as midwives, director's confidants who help (usually) him deliver the film.[18] The other extreme is the neoformalist model of the classical system as a monolithic, anonymous structure yielding products that conform to a set of norms.[19] The former position is often aligned with filmic para-texts and consciously projected by the industry image of itself.[20] Film critics writing under the auspices of auteur theory (at least before its structuralist inflection) and/or subscribing to the mise-en-scène analysis have also drifted in that direction. The latter, the approach based on formalism and early cognitive studies, has a tendency to see the text in its symptomatic and systematic manifestations rather than a result of individual intentions. Editing practice, intrinsically bound with one-off decisions, intuition and emotions remains something of a puzzle for the paradigm fashioning itself on positivist rationalism.[21] Whatever perspective we choose though, the cutting room can be seen as precisely the place, the battleground, where profound and minute decisions alike are fought over by the creative individuals or where they crystallise as a result of the implementing of narrative norms.

A middle-ground approach would be to suggest that in editing, various models of *découpage* are tested, amended, rejected or meticulously followed through. Sidelining the question of the individual's claim to authorship, it is possible to see in editing a stage of the re-evaluating and binding of the *découpage* plan. Both phases are highly collaborative and at the same time

[17] 'Legendary Editor Thelma Schoonmaker Breaks Down 'Raging Bull' at the Tribeca Film Festival,' http://nofilmschool.com/2014/04/editor-thelma-schoonmaker-breaks-down-raging-bull-tribeca-film-festival (accessed 17 September 2017).
[18] Roy Perkins and Martin Stollery, *British Film Editors* (London: BFI, 2004), 54–60.
[19] David Bordwell, 'The classical Hollywood style 1917–60,' in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 4–7.
[20] John T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).
[21] Robert B. Ray, *How a Film Theory Got Lost and Other Mysteries in Cultural Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 31.

shaped by a range of determinants, including industry norms and economic pressures.[22]

Despite the fact that practically they are separate creative activities, certain theoretical perspectives freely merge the editing and the director's work. For Sergei Eisenstein and Jean-Luc Godard editing was nothing less than a Bergeresque 'different way of seeing,' or an equation: 'the cinema is montage.'[23] Both of them spent lifetimes elaborating on the misleading truism emblazoned on those statements. Dziga Vertov asserted adamantly: 'Kino-eye production is subject to montage from the moment the theme is chosen until the film's release in its completed form. In other words, it is edited during the entire process of film production.'[24] Pudovkin, despite being personally and creatively adversarial to both Vertov and Eisenstein, was equally earnest about the significance of editing when proclaiming: 'editing is the basic creative force, by power of which the soulless photographs (the separate shots) are engineered into living, cinematographic form.'[25]

What is more, the notion of *mise-en-scène* is quite often used in an expansive way covering all aspects of film style, including editing. This is exactly how Godard actually defines the relationship between the two terms in his *Cahier du Cinema* article *Montage, Mon Beau Souci* – 'montage is above all an integral part of mise-en-scène.'[26] The concept of *dispositif*, re-formulated by Adrian Martin, draws on that understanding of mise-en-scène, while proposing to see the former as 'the integrated arrangement of form and content elements at all levels, from first conception to final mixing and grading.'[27]

Dispositif, alongside the all-encompassing theoretical approaches of the Soviets, Godard and Bazin, speaks as much about cinema as a vehicle for narrative signification as about its epistemological status. In that sense, Godard,

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[22] The last chapter of the thesis will discuss this in detail.

[23] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Charlie the Kid,' in *S.M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume III: Writings 1934–47* (London: BFI, 1996), 243; See Michael Witt, 'Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph,' in *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard, 1985–2000*, ed. Michael Temple and James S. Williams (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 33.

[24] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, ed. Annette Michelson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 88.

[25] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, xv.

[26] Jean-Luc Godard, 'Montage, Mon Beau Souci,' in Roger Crittenden, *Fine Cuts: The Arts of European Film Editing* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2006), 1.

[27] Adrian Martin, *Turn the Page. From Mise en scène to Dispositif*. http://www.screeningthepast.com/2011/07/turn-the-page-from-mise-en-scene-to-dispositif/ (accessed 3 April 2017).

borrowing from André Malraux a belief in art as a *replacement* of reality, responds to the same impulse as Bazin, even though their views about editing are usually presented as opposing.[28]

Dispositif seems to arise from the conceptual parallelism between the particular manifestation of the cinematic system in a given film and Foucault's understanding of *apparatus/dispositif* as a 'system of relations' and 'a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, laws…'[29] *Dispositif* represents then a textual system of elements that is embedded in a larger, socio-political one. It is this connection that is brought to the fore when cinema is described 'as the extension of a *dispositif* that usurped human minds and psyches as movement-chronograph,'[30] or when Erika Balsom writes that 'at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one witnesses the dissolution of a certain phase of image production and apprehension that had dominated for a century – the traditional cinematic *dispositif*.'[31]

On the other hand, catch-all notions are convenient tools of stylistic analysis: the pervasiveness of mise-en-scène as a Swiss Army knife of film criticism is the clearest example. Frequently, their backdrop is an avant-garde sensibility and they apply most convincingly to clear-cut examples of film art. *Dispositif*, in a sense that Adrian Martin uses the term, can describe a rule-based individual style of a filmmaker who employs an arbitrary constraint in their film's visual system; it is George Perec's virtuoso pedantry transposed to cinema.[32]

Whichever term is chosen, however, editing is inexorably one of the core tenets of any of these notions. *Ten* (2002, editors Vahid Ghazi, Abbas Kiarostami and Bahman Kiarostami) and *Shirin* (2008, editors Abbas Kiarostami and Hamideh Razavi) by Abbas Kiarostami, both films mentioned by Adrian Martin, are very much works that demonstrate how idiosyncratically Kiarostami merges film form with his individual style. Editing decisions, therefore, are integral parts

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[28] On Malraux's influence on Godard see Michael Witt, "Archaeology of 'Histoire(s) du Cinéma,'" in Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television* (Montreal: caboose, 2014), xxii.

[29] Michael Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books), 194.

[30] Ute Holl, *Cinema, Trance and Cybernetics* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 30.

[31] Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 105.

[32] Adrian Martin, *Turn the Page. From Mise en scène to Dispositif.*

of Kiarostami's *dispositif* alongside his (or in *Shirin* perhaps his cinematographer Mahmoud Kalari's) choice of a camera angle and position of the characters. Even the purest form of *découpage* like a shot/reverse-shot exchange between two people in a car, which constitutes *Ten*, cannot eliminate editing decisions, although it will inevitably limit the choice at the cutting desk and foreground the spatiotemporal breakdown at the stage of cinematography. One can watch a later Iranian film by Jafar Panah *Taxi* (2015, editor Jafar Panahi) as a bold, whimsical response to the *dispositif* of *Ten*, and one can watch Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993, sound designer Marvin Black, colorist Tom Russell) with its absence of either conventional mise-en-scène, or visual editing, prodded by questions about the film's fundamental editorial premises. Why is the frame of Jarman's last work filled with International Klein Blue? Is the answer to be found in biographical facts about the last years of Jarman's life? Does it have anything to do with the divine ultramarine made of rare lapis lazuli and used as a pigment for St Mary's robes? What is the significance of *not* seeing but listening?

These questions pull us viewers into the realm of editing decisions. They force us to immerse our senses and intellect in a vision which is already structured by someone else and initially completely foreign. A certain overtness of form highlights the fact that the world on screen is intentionally *cut up* so that we see it in a very particular way. What is left out, in other words, what is edited out against our conventional expectations is as important as what is included in the film's diegesis. In the case of *Blue* we as spectators respond aesthetically to the filmmaker's work in its concrete, projected or displayed manifestation, but we are also invited to participate in Derek Jarman's very own *découpage*, as for 79 minutes he lays claim to our senses. A part of the contract between an artist filmmaker and their audience is that the art film has a certain spatiotemporal (but also cultural) autarchy. It is permitted to be the 'other' space.

Naturally, on the opposite side of the spectrum there are attempts at form's invisibility. In the light of *découpage* analysis, the zero-style illusion is achieved by creating the impression that diegesis is not *cut out* but rather *cut in*. That is, all narratively pertaining elements of the film world are there on display. Nothing is concealed from view. A *découpage* that we expect from the particular film, following our generic preconceptions, is what it is offering us. The efforts to create and maintain that illusion have often been the subject of extensive textual analysis, which touched upon techniques usually attributed to editing.

For example, the oft-quoted analysis by Raymond Bellour of a sequence from *The Big Sleep* (1946, dir. Howard Hawks, editor Christian Nyby) in the *The Obvious and the Code* is a well-known illustration of the shot/reverse shot technique in classical cinema.[33] But what exactly is the subject of Bellour's examination? Is it a clinical dissection of classical editing or the Hollywood practice of mise-en-scène. Or is Bellour perhaps discussing classical *dispositif* as Martin would suggest? If the *dispositif* of that car sequence from *The Big Sleep* is so different from that of *Ten*, even though the narrative situation is very similar, what exactly does the stylistic difference do to the way we read those two film texts?

The issue of rigorous terminology is not easily resolved. But I would suggest there is a clear need for an analytical term that describes film-specific fragmentation. Not an editing technique which belongs to the post-production toolkit, but a process through which the narrative space is dissected: conceptually first and then in a very tangible way by means of laborious production activity.

What is rather striking when comparing the composition of shots in Kiarostami's *Ten* and the noir love scene from Hawk's movie is the palpable absence of human agency in the former film. It is an effect to be sure, designed by the filmmaker, and bringing in an element of documentary-like verisimilitude. But it does suggest a conscious rejection of a certain form of narration hinging perhaps precisely on that human touch that classical *découpage* seems to offer. There is a strong theoretical tradition of conceptualising that anthropomorphic aspect of the camerawork, which also extends to the way of cutting.

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[33] Raymond Bellour, 'Obvious and the Code (on the Big Sleep),' in *The Analysis of Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 200), 69–75.

THE IMAGINARY OBSERVER

A 1924 article in *American Cinematographer* titled 'Natural Angles for Goldwyn Director' marvels at the working methods of the director Erich von Stroheim as evidenced on the set of *Greed*.[1] It appears that the article was published before he gave up on his masterpiece, and before Goldwyn merged into Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer confronting von Stroheim with his old-time nemesis Irving Thalberg, and before he got into a kerfuffle with Louis B. Mayer, who disliked the film's bleak ending.[2] The article based on an announcement from the press department of Goldwyn claims that von Stroheim 'is extending the naturalism and utter realistic qualities with which he produced "Greed" to the manner in which he is cutting the picture.'[3] He is said to believe that a film can lose its realistic qualities if the cutting is not executed under the same tenet as the production. The demand for overarching directorial control is enough of an interest here, although it is not exceptional as studios by that time were already seasoned in dealing with strong-willed individuals such as Griffith, Chaplin, Pickford, Valentino or deMille. The essential suggestion of the article though is the existence of 'natural angles:'

> This naturalism in editing and cutting, it is announced, consists of the manner in which the onlooker will view each scene of "Greed." Von Stroheim is placing in the finished picture only those "shots" of scenes which are photographed from a "practical" angle. That is to say, angles from which a *human being* would see the scene in real life. If the scene is taken in a small room the characters are not shown from an elevated position, as though the onlooker was perched on the chandelier or draped on the picture moulding.[4]

The paragraph above is very much an expression of the 'invisible observer theory' preceding V.I. Pudovkin's most clear articulation of it in *Film Technique* (1926). David Bordwell, who suggested the existence of a coherent concept and examines it in *Narration in the Fiction Film*, contends that its influence on the

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[1] 'Natural Angles for Goldwyn Director,' *American Cinematographer*, vol. 4, no. 10 (January 1924): 22.
[2] Richard Koszarski, *The Man You Loved to Hate. Erich von Stroheim and Hollywood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 143.
[3] 'Natural Angles for Goldwyn Director,' *American Cinematographer*.
[4] Ibid. Although it is worth adding that von Stroheim's practice sometimes contravenes his postulates. One of the best-known scenes in *Greed*, the wedding of Trina and McTeague contains a shot showing the newlyweds kneeling in front of a priest. Cinematographer William H. Daniels filmed the scene precisely from the position of a chandelier probably because this was the only angle that allowed to contain in the same frame, both the wedding and a funeral procession outside. Staging a long depth of field shot, partly lit by daylight and without masking, was cinematographically one of the most challenging feats of the period.

classical system was far-reaching and persistent.[5] Clearing the ground for his own model of classical narrative, Bordwell eventually dismisses the idea as inadequate, lacking 'coherence, breadth, and discrimination,' but even his own description of Pudovkin's theory speaks of its seminal role in answering all the theoretical problems of classical theory concerning space, point of view, authorship, and narration.[6] The Soviet concept of camera/observer provided arguments for the proponent of the *cinema of cutting*, while still leaving marks on the way Bazin imagined the spectator's engagement with narrative space.

Pudovkin, it is fairer to say, did not seem to intend for the analogy between the camera lens and the eye of the observer to be an 'all-purpose answer.' I would suggest that he put more emphasis on 'the construction of filmic form in editing,' which implied the principles of organisation and arrangement that were more fundamental for the Soviet School.[7] As I will elaborate in the second part of the thesis, the montage paradigm had broad ramifications for the Soviet filmmakers both in their thinking and in what they did as practitioners. Montage put emphasis on the *constructedness* of the cinematic space. The 'invisible observer theory' as a practical set of instructions fitted perfectly well into a paradigm geared towards 'mounting' shots with a view of creating a coherent whole.

Amy Sargeant suggests that Soviet theorising in the 1920s was part of a broader culture of public discourse between filmmakers, critics and their audience. Polemics were encouraged and the written outcomes, like Pudovkin's texts, later revised and compiled had at the time the character of 'a collection of workshop receipts' rather than a comprehensive theory.[8] While the scale and breadth of Eisenstein's writings is exceptional in that respect, he too was often participating in a polemical discourse rather than constructing a consistent theoretical system.

Nevertheless, or perhaps precisely because of its features of an applied, efficient solution, Pudovkin's metaphor was flexible enough to cover a lot of ground. It painted a picture of the historical transformation of the camera from being a motionless, 'theatrical' spectator to an active, attentive observer moving

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[5] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 9.
[6] Ibid. 10
[7] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, 85, 87.
[8] Amy Sargeant, *Vsevolod Pudovkin: Classic Films of the Soviet Avant-Garde* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), xxv.

from angle to angle, and from nearer to further with an aim of 'acquiring as complete and exhaustive as possible a picture of the phenomenon under review.'[9] According to Pudovkin, each shot focuses the attention of a viewer on the elements that are important for the understanding of the action. A change from one scene to another corresponds 'to the natural transference of attention of an imaginary observer (who, in the end, is represented by the spectator).'[10] The camera/observer is not apathetic in relation to the recorded reality, but reacts to it emotionally: changes to the point of view can be calm or rapid and sudden (staccato).[11] The rhythm of cutting can communicate emotions and Pudovkin notably gives Griffith's films as an example (in other places he contrasts structural mistakes in *The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* [dir. Lev Kuleshov, 1924] with the storytelling excellence of Griffith's *Intolerance*).[12]

For all its theoretical shortcomings and advocated agendas, Pudovkin's concept presciently touches on core issues of cognitivism: the spatio-temporal orientation of the viewer and the guiding of their attention. His observations, by extension, deal with affect and are harbingers of the concept of suture. They have clearly resonated with other filmmakers. Preston Sturges, master of fast-paced sound cinema, spoke in the 1940s of the 'natural law of cutting.'[13] For Sturges it was the spectator who had the characteristics of an attentive observer, ghostly present in the diegesis. The director, actually present during the pro-filmic event, stands in for the prospective viewer and the filmmaker's skill lies in their ability to predict the direction of the spectator's gaze (and curiosity, and desire). Sturges says:

> [T]here is a law of natural cutting and this replicates what an audience in a legitimate theater does for itself. The more nearly the film cutter approaches this law of natural interest, the more invisible will be his cutting. If the camera moves from one person to another at the exact moment that one in the legitimate theatre would have turned his head, one will not be conscious of a cut. If the camera misses by a quarter of a second, one will get a jolt. There is one other requirement: the two shots must be approximately of the same tone value. If one cuts from black to white, it is jarring. At any given moment, the camera must point at the exact spot the audience wishes to look at. To find that spot is absurdly

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[9] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, 54.
[10] Ibid., 43.
[11] Ibid., 86.
[12] Ibid., 86, 18–19.
[13] Preston Sturges, *Preston Sturges by Preston Sturges: His Life in His Words* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 275.

easy: one has only to remember where one was looking at the time the scene was made.[14]

While the last sentence certainly has a tongue-in-cheek tone, Sturges, similarly to Pudovkin, links the filming stage with the cutting. The latter recreates moments of heightened attention during the shoot and centres the viewer's gaze on their objects.

Needless to say, the gaze of a camera suturing the spectator into diegesis was later approached from many theoretical positions, of which Laura Mulvey's essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' is perhaps the most influential.[15] The 'laws of natural interest' are often natural only to the extent that we spectators identify with the gender, sexual and cultural positions that the director tries to impose on us or just tacitly assumes that we share with 'him.' Following a radically different paradigm to the 'male gaze' approach, more recent cognitive studies strive to prove that the classical system exploits universally recognisable salient points of the screen to attract our attention.[16] Cognitive studies in general are based on a more generic model of the spectator and suggest that our responses are largely uniform. Finally, in classical theories, and the practice-focused writing such as that by Walter Murch, those cutting points guiding our attention correspond to decisive moments, epiphanies of photogénie.[17]

A similar perspective to Pudovkin's, albeit routed through a more pragmatic account of the ideal observer can be found in Alexander Mackendrick's lectures given in the 1970s when he was teaching at the California Institute of the Arts. Mackendrick does not settle for any one adjective and instead talks about 'The Invisible Imaginary Ubiquitous Winged Witness.'[18] Much the same as Sturges he suggests that 'the director becomes [the] audience whilst making' their film.[19] Tellingly, in his choice of words Mackendrick consistently deploys the idea of fragmentation that suggests *découpage*: the director's 'mind is fragmented,' they 'screen out everything not relevant to the as

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, ed. (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 833-44.

[16] Tim Smith, *An Attentional Theory of Continuity Editing*, https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/1076 (accessed 1 September 2017).

[17] Walter Murch, *In the Blink of An Eye. A Perspective on Film Editing*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 2001), 32–42.

[18] Alexander Mackendrick, *On film-making: an introduction to the craft of the director,* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2005), 197.

[19] Ibid.

yet not-present world of the story being told.'[20] The director 'is busy arranging in [their] head the short, narrow segments, those disorientated pieces of this soon-to-be-assembled reality that will be seen and heard through that open window of the cinema screen.'[21] Essentially, the process entails a personification of the narrative apparatus mixed with working towards identification and a linear, progressive distribution of signifiers. Mackendrick writes: '…every single decision related to camera position, image size and editing pattern is determined by the question 'What do I need to see now?' – with the 'I' being that which exists only in the future: the potential audience.'[22] At the same time, it is clear from his description that the entire concept is an abstraction; that it is shorthand that should not be taken too literally. The Witness is 'a strange disembodied and mythic creature' with 'magical features' and 'oblivious to time and space.'[23] It can hover outside a skyscraper, look through solid walls or fly in close enough to someone's face to record every wince betraying their private thoughts.

Von Stroheim's 'natural angles,' Pudovkin's ideal observer, Sturges' 'natural cutting' and Mackendrick's Invisible Imaginary Ubiquitous Winged Witness suggest the classical system's self-conscious efforts at naturalising film form. These concepts throw a bridge between the filmmaker and the audience, promising a pact of trust: you, the spectator will see everything that you need to see at the given moment, but only if you follow my invisible hand that points you in the right direction and only if you wilfully ignore everything that is left out (spatially and conceptually). A second bridge that those concepts create is between framing and editing: both work in conjunction to 'determine the eye-path of the viewer.'[24] In one of the filmed interviews Mackendrick says that 'editing has got to be done on the floor and conceived in the script. Cutting doesn't.'[25] A brilliant cutter refines the assembled, already *edited* film with little adjustments that can give the material 'extraordinary richness.'[26] As Thorold

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[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 198.
[23] Ibid., 199.
[24] Ibid., 200. See also educational documentary 'Mackendrick on Film,' ed. Paul Cronin, available https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyfMzuhEjcY&list=PLuntSxVsd5TNh8KJJysrDZCV8cz-ptFXI&index=10 (accessed 20 September 2017).
[25] 'Mackendrick on Film. Sequence 8,' ed. Paul Cronin, at 14'33", available: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyfMzuhEjcY&list=PLuntSxVsd5TNh8KJJysrDZCV8cz-ptFXI&index=10 (accessed 20 September 2017).
[26] Ibid.

Dickinson expressed it much earlier, 'a good script is one which *edits* the subject before production.'[27]

Mackendrick uses the word 'editing' figuratively referring to the director's work, that is *découpage*, but contemporary digital methods have rendered his suggestion literal. It is now customary in commercial cinema for post-production to coalesce with the production stage: an editor is present on the set and assembles shots on the fly in order to immediately give feedback and flag up potential problems.[28]

Something rather less appreciated about classical editing is the fact that at the core of the naturalising effect is the laborious work of a director and/or editor who are tasked with constructing a complete artifice. As Mackendrick writes 'the motivations for every cut should always be *built* into the preceding angle.'[29] Narrative space is always constructed; embryonic cuts are planted at the *découpage* stage. An editor then looks for that emergent cut which coincides with a precise moment when a motive appears to move the frame within space and time. But the essential effect is that of complete congruity between the fragmentation of the spatiotemporal continuum and the fragmentation of the plot. As I will be arguing later, continuity is often not the main objective of this kind of editing. It is rather a sense of cohesion, an agreement between the movements of the camera, actors, the pace of cutting and the dramatic movements of the narrative.

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[27] BFI, *Film Appreciation and Visual Education* (London, 1944), 6.
[28] See 'Cutting to the Chase of Baby Driver,' an interview with Paul Machliss available: http://connect.avid.com/Discover-Media-Composer-Baby-Driver.html (accessed 11 August 2017).
[29] Alexander Mackendrick, *On film-making: an introduction to the craft of the director*, 198.

CLASSICISM VS MONTAGISM

I would suggest that the emphasis on this cohesion of formal and narrative elements in classical editing has a lot to do with the modernist interest in the methods specific for the given art form. The heuristics of classical cinema are compulsively focused on the correct form, that is the structuring and fragmentation of the profilmic space in a way that is the most *cinematic*. The search for 'invisibility in cutting' is driven by the same impulse that made impressionists turn to colour as the true essence of the art of painting.

This is related to an aspect of Pudovkin's theory which sticks out and makes him an easy target for those who want to relegate his writings to the gawky nascence of film theory. He insists that cinema is an art because of the difference between reality and its filmic record.[1] This difference is created precisely in editing, which is an act of assembling elements of natural events by altering the laws of time and space and, hence, building 'a new reality proper only to itself.'[2] According to Malcolm Turvey, this obsession – typical for classical theory – with 'Film als Kunst' (Rudolf Arnheim) situates Pudovkin as a modernist, a prime example of the theorising filmmaker who believes that art forms have techniques specific for them and that deploying them allows an artist to eschew naïve mimesis and reach for an authentic representation of reality.[3] Pudovkin, listed among other modernist writers on cinema such as Hugo Münsterberg, Lev Kuleshov, Sergei Eisenstein and the French Impressionists of the 1920s, is pitted against realist film theory and its most important exponent, André Bazin.

The consequences of this pigeonholing are far-reaching, facilitated by the fact that the oppositional pairing of Pudovkin vs Bazin lends itself to further extrapolations: the idea of editing is contrasted with the principle of staging long shots with the tools of mise-en-scène. The Soviet School of Montage is seen as an alternative to the invisible style of Hollywood cinema, with its mastery brought into focus by critics of the auteur theory. This epistemological interest in the powers of the medium to uncover (by constructing) reality can be contrasted with Bazin's ontology, his conviction that cinema is not an illusion but an object, an automated reproduction.

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[1] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, 56.
[2] Ibid., 62.
[3] Malcolm Turvey, 'Modernism versus Realism' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, ed. Edward Branigan and Warren Buckland (London: Routledge, 2014), 300–302.

Those clear-cut juxtapositions, however, obstruct certain important commonalities. Both Bazin and Pudovkin are modernists in the sense that they seek the medium-specificity of cinema, even if they define it differently. Malcolm Turvey sees in the writings of Epstein (impressionist), Vertov (*montagist*), Balázs and Kracauer (realist) a shared distrust of human vision paralleled with a euphoric belief in the revelatory power of cinema.[4] Finally, theories originating in Soviet Russia, and to a certain degree influenced by American filmmaking, fed back into Hollywood practice thanks to their translation into English, their immediate popularity among leftist Western elites, and their subsequent settlement in filmmaking manuals. *Film Technique* was available in English and German by 1930.[5] Pudovkin's reputation for lucid and accessible writing was such that Ivor Montagu, who translated *Film Technique,* for decades asked him repeatedly for new material and revisions.[6] Pudovkin's theory crops up in practice-focused books by Raymond Spottiswoode (*A Grammar of the Film*), Andrew Buchanan (*Films: The Way of the Cinema*) and Karel Reisz's *The Technique of Film Editing*.[7]

It is possible to think about classicism and *montagism* as two facets of the modernist tendency in cinema. But it can also be the case, as Dai Vaughan argues, that cinema is inseparable from the aesthetics of modernism. Vaughan posits that

> [film] has a built-in modernism, since the irreducible materiality of its signs is a given… It is no mere coincidence that Eisenstein was abducting the Chinese ideograms as protomontage at just the time when Ezra Pound was drawing avant-garde, *imagiste* conclusions from Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium of Poetry*.[8]

Despite opposing predilections, the advocates of both American and Soviet cutting were driven by the same quest for techniques specific for the moving

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[4] Malcolm Turvey, *Doubting Vision. Film and the Revelationist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

[5] Vance Kepley Jr., 'Pudovkin and Continuity Style: Problems of Space and Narration,' *Discourse* 17, no. 3, Views from the Post-Future/Soviet & Eastern European Cinema (Spring 1995), 85.

[6] Amy Sargeant, *Vsevolod Pudovkin: Classic Films of the Soviet Avant-Garde*, xv-xvi.

[7] Raymond Spottiswoode, *A Grammar of the Film. An Analysis of Film Technique,* 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1955); Andrew Buchanan, *Films: The Way of the Cinema* (London: Sir. I. Pitman & Sons, 1932); Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing* (London: Focal Press, 1966) [Here and on other pages, I am referring to the original text published for the first time in 1953. In 1969 the book was enlarged with four chapters written by Gavin Millar. The additions, however, left the previous chapters intact and in the thesis I refer only to those parts of the book].

[8] Dai Vaughan, 'A Light Not Its Own,' in *For Documentary. Twelve Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 202.

images. According to Clement Greenberg, what defines a modernist painting is the spirit of self-interrogation in pursuit of essential norms.[9] We can see the same preoccupation with the inherent methods of cinema among the early filmmakers and theorists. They sought *film-things*, like Vertov or *film-charm* like Sargent, and the commonality of goals made for occasional crossbreeding, exemplified by the popularity of a montage sequence in the style of Slavko Vorkapich.[10] The montage paradigm tended to fit well into film movements leaning towards modernism, while classical styles of editing were constantly under the threat of sliding into arid academicism.[11]

However, it is worth adding, Pudovkin's case is exemplary in its paradoxical convulsions. Mirroring the vicissitudes of Soviet politics, Pudovkin's theoretical and creative convictions followed the current preferences of the Party, ultimately exposing him to the accusations of spineless obsequiousness by his peers.[12] While his colleagues were being slated for formalism or 'barren intellectualism,' Pudovkin was ready to make readjustments and eager to concentrate on themes safer than film form, like the art of acting and Stanislavsky's method. The looming political agenda was, to some extent, congruent with his interest in plot-based cinema, in reality much more palatable to the Soviet masses than the ideologically correct but formally challenging films of Eisenstein. With time, western audiences' perception of the Soviet cinema began to change and the Stalinist films were increasingly seen as disavowing modernist principles in exchange for narrative clarity, if not an outright philistine mentality.[13] The western idealisation of the promising revolutionary cinema of the 'free 1920s,' superseded by the 'shackled 1930s' is considered by Ian Christie a distorted view ignoring the fact that filmmakers of the period did not in fact present a uniform front, and the 1930s saw an expansion in the distribution of films which were revolutionary, both formally and ideologically.[14] What did change more radically was the western perception of the political face of the communist regime.

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[9] Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist painting,' http://www.yorku.ca/yamlau/readings/greenberg_modernistPainting.pdf (accessed 6 October 2018).
[10] More about this in the next section.
[11] See Thorold Dickinson remarks in 'A Cutter in the Clouds,' 27.
[12] Amy Sargeant, *Vsevolod Pudovkin: Classic Films of the Soviet Avant-Garde*, vi.
[13] Ian Christie, 'Introduction,' in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896–1939,* ed. Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (London: Routledge, 1994), 2.
[14] Ibid., 3.

Despite the complexities sketched here, I am here more interested in these mythologies as they mark cultural influences, which frequently translate into practice. In this case, the idea of montage is intricately tied with the political aesthetics of the time. The abandoning of avant-garde principles in the Soviet cinema of the 1930s onwards, whether real or just commonly assumed by western intellectuals, was perceived as something of a betrayal, breaking the promise that the montage paradigm seemed to offer. Spottiswoode remarks bitterly in the preface to the second edition of his book: 'the first edition of this book appeared some 20 years ago. At that date, as a glance at the first pages will show, both the sound film and the author were in their first youth. It was a time when a theoretical approach to film aesthetics seemed more promising than it does now, and when the cinema itself, emerging from the avant-garde period, gave a promise of experiment which it has not fulfilled.'[15] It was not only Soviet cinema that was in decline. Spottiswoode certainly has Europe in mind with its Murnaus, Langs and Gances as well.

In the 1920s, the influence of the theoretical ideas of Pudovkin and Eisenstein was facilitated by western intellectuals' exposure to their works, and reached far. Soviet cinema gave a respite from the triviality of an average Hollywood production immersed in a nineteenth-century cultural outlook.[16] Films like *Potemkin* or *The Mother*, bracketed with Futurism, Constructivism, Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, embraced by both Einstein and Joyce, chimed with the sensibilities of the machine age and urban life. *Potemkin* was more successful abroad than domestically, which is epitomised by the fact that Douglas Fairbanks (of all the film people) hailed it as 'the greatest cinema of modern times.'[17] As Christie notices, Hollywood in the 1920s was also fertile ground for filmmaking innovation as the industry competed fiercely for dominance on international markets and was eager to poach new talent, as evidenced by several Hollywood studios vying to sign a contract with Eisenstein in 1929.[18] He was not exceptional; a number of European filmmakers such as Ernst Lubitsch, Victor

[15] Raymond Spottiswoode, *A Grammar of the Film. An Analysis of Film Technique,* 14.
[16] Ian Christie, 'Introduction,' in *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896–1939*, 4.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Graham Petrie, *Hollywood Destinies: European Directors in America, 1922–1931* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), ix-x.

David Sjöström and Fitz Lang among others were employed by Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s with varying degrees of success.[19]

This context laid the foundation for the growing importance of editing among intellectual elites and film practitioners. The clearest manifestation of this trend was something that Jacques Aumont calls suggestively *montagism*: 'the rallying cry of all those in the 1920s and beyond who wanted to create a cinematic art freed from theatre and literature.'[20] In a 1933 issue of the high-brow "Close-up" we find a 'manifesto on Eisenstein's Mexican film,' which begins with a paragraph written in block capitals. In a truly modernist fashion the article shouts from its pages:

> WE DECRY THIS ILLEGITIMATE VERSION OF "QUE VIVA MEXICO!" AND DENOUNCE IT FOR WHAT IT IS – A MERE VULGARIZATION OF EISENSTEIN'S ORIGINAL CONCEPTION PUT FORTH IN HIS NAME IN ORDER TO CAPITALIZE ON HIS RENOWN AS A CREATIVE ARTIST. WE DENOUNCE THE CUTTING OF "QUE VIVA MEXICO!" BY PROFESSIONAL HOLLYWOOD CUTTERS AS AN UNMITIGATED MOCKERY OF EISENSTEIN'S INTENTION. WE DENOUNCE "THUNDER OVER MEXICO" AS A CHEAP DEBASEMENT OF "QUE VIVA MEXICO!"[21]

The author explains then the difference between the 'professional Hollywood cutting' and the 'mounting' of a film à la Eisenstein:

> As all students of the cinema are aware, Eisenstein edits ("mounts") his own films. Contrary to the methods generally employed by professional directors in Hollywood, Eisenstein gives final form to the film in the cutting room. The very essence of his creative genius, and of his oft-quoted theory of the cinema, consists in the editing of the separate shots after all the scenes have been photographed. Virtually every film director of note has testified, time and again, to the revolutionary consequences of Eisenstein's montage technique on the modern cinema…[22]

There seems to be a conviction in this early cinephile article, only accurate to some extent, that in Hollywood cinema 'creative editing' happens before the photography. The 'final form' of a film is already in its script. 'Professional cutters' are seen as craftsmen lacking artistry and it becomes a pejorative term

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Jacques Aumont, *Montage* (Montreal: Caboose, 2014), 33.
[21] 'To Our Readers,' *Close Up,* vol. 10, no. 1 (March 1933): 210–211.
[22] Ibid., 211.

for the employees of the studio.[23] And it is the latter that supposedly calls the shots.

The case of *Thunder over Mexico*, and the critical narrative around its production very much echo the troubled editing of the aforementioned *Greed* by von Stroheim. The film based on the Frank Norris novel *McTeague* was initially edited by the director himself together with his old-time collaborator Frank Hull.[24] After the production period lasting 198 days, cinematographer William Daniels had shot 446,103 feet of negative, which in early 1924 von Stroheim assembled into a rough cut.[25] He then began showing it to selected journalists and friends. According to one account, the running time of that first cut was nine and a half hours; that is 45 reels.[26] The reception of the film among that trusted group of people was exuberant: *Greed* was being compared to the novel *Les Miserables*, its 'psychological hypothesis' was likened to *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920, dir. Robert Wiene), and overtones had something of *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922, dir. Fritz Lang).[27] However, it was clear to everyone that the length of the film needed to come down. By 18 March von Stroheim and his editor had trimmed the film to 22 reels. However, soon after that the ailing Goldwyn Company merged with Marcus Loew's Metro Pictures Corporation and von Stroheim became anxious that under Irving Thalberg his labour of love would be taken away from him just as had happened with *Foolish Wives*, his previous Metro production which had ended up with a similarly bloated quantity of rushes. In an attempt to avoid that, von Stroheim sent the edited print to his friend Rex Ingram who was also under contract with Metro and held sway with the executives. Ingram turned the print over to his collaborator Grant Whytock, editor of one of von Stroheim's previous films, *The Devil's Pass Key*. Ingram and Whytock proposed to split the film into two sections, an eight-reel and a seven-reel instalment, screened over two consecutive nights.

Somehow along the way June Mathis, who was the head of the editorial department at Goldwyn, also became involved in the process of cutting *Greed*.[28]

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[23] Notably, Eisenstein refers to them 'people who cut up *Que Viva México!* (what they did cannot be called montage).' S. M. Eisenstein, 'Montage 1937,' in *Selected Works. Volume II. Towards a Theory of Montage* (London: BFI Publishing, 1991), 46.

[24] Richard Koszarski, *The Man You Loved to Hate. Erich Stroheim and Hollywood*, 140.

[25] Ibid., 140–141.

[26] Ibid., 141.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Leonard H. Gmuer, *Rex Ingram. Hollywood's Rebel of the Silver Screen* (Berlin: Impressum, 2013), 356.

According to information from the M-G-M collection at the University of Southern California, she had prepared a 13-reel version of the film in January 1924, a few days before she was called to Rome to supervise the production of *Ben Hur*.[29] Mathis later abandoned the project, although she is credited as one of the editors for contractual reasons. Interestingly, her role at Goldwyn involved nominally 'editing' scripts, not cutting celluloid.

In the end, unhappy with everything that von Stroheim was proposing, the studio lost patience and handed the film over to Joseph W. Farnham. But again, a curious fact is that he was not a professional editor in today's sense. Farnham's background was play- and scriptwriting, and he was best known for penning titles.[30] This specialty won him an Oscar in 1929, the only one ever awarded in this category.[31] In the particular case of *Greed*, however, the titles added by Farnham had a disastrous effect on the grotesquely tragic film. Title cards like 'Such was McTeague' and 'Let's go over and sit on the sewer' were apparently received with laughter. Despite their clumsiness, Farnham's version of the film released in December 1924 was, as desired by the studio, 10-reel in length. Von Stroheim later distanced himself from this cut and described the project in the most bitter terms.

The legend of *Greed* has it that the film was butchered by the unscrupulous studio and its minions. Von Stroheim's most important work was later joined in the ranks of lost masterpieces by Eisenstein's Mexican film and Orson Welles' *The Magnificent Ambersons* (1942) and *Touch of Evil* (1958). Koszarski notices how the myth of *Greed* was, for decades, tied to critical and political trends, which had little to do with the film itself.[32] In 1962, in a wave of Hollywood-bashing, a *Sight and Sound* poll ranked *Greed* the 'greatest silent film of all time' rivalled only by *Potemkin*. Ten years later, von Stroheim's film was not even in the 23 finalists, as the top spots were grabbed by such studio vehicles as *Vertigo*, *The Searchers* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*.[33] As Koszarski observes, the curious thing about this is that the celebrated *Greed* is really 'the

[29] Richard Koszarski, *The Man You Loved to Hate. Erich Stroheim and Hollywood*, 142.
[30] Debra Ann Pawlak, *Bringing Up Oscar: The Story of the Men and Women Who Founded the Academy* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2012), 301.
[31] 'Joseph W. Farnham,' http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0267868/ (accessed 20 September 2017).
[32] Richard Koszarski, *The Man You Loved to Hate. Erich Stroheim and Hollywood*, 147.
[33] Ibid.

uncut *Greed*, a film none of those voting had ever seen.'[34] Von Stroheim's greatest work is a phantasmatic *découpage*, which had a short-lived existence as an ephemeral rough cut sometime in January 1924.

I am drawing attention to the story of *Greed* as it touches upon a number of points already discussed in this section. Von Stroheim's signature mark, as well as his projected public image, was that of an iron-fisted perfectionist exacting from his crew and actors sacrifices and performance that precisely matched his standards and vision. Before the shoot he had prepared a detailed 300-page script of film, which included camera movements, composition of the frame and suggestions about tint.[35] In a sense then, a meticulous *découpage* of *Greed* existed even before any negative was exposed. The fragmentation and detailed technical descriptions in von Stroheim's script were precisely what Pudovkin calls 'editing of the scenario.'[36] Writing about this type of editing, Pudovkin is also quite clear about the significance of maintaining dramatic continuity of action throughout the film, which implies the perceived limits on its total length and the need for a pronounced climax towards its end. 'To prepare the spectator, or, more correctly, preserve him, for this final tension, it is especially important to see that he is not affected by unnecessary exhaustion during the course of the film.'[37] Pudovkin states that a picture should not be longer than 6,500 – 7,500 feet. This is an even more conservative recommendation than what von Stroheim's contract with Goldwyn stipulated, allowing him to make films running for 8,500 feet.

Despite the legend of a genius crippled by the Hollywood system, the problem that von Stroheim faced and could not resolve on his own was that he wrote and shot a *découpage* structure for a film much longer and more demanding than any exhibition format of commercial cinema of the time. However, he was of course working within the parameters of classical *découpage*, norms that Pudovkin so clearly depicts in his book on film technique and which span the issues of plotting, camera work and cutting, and that put the emphasis on affect and the viewer's attention. There was a certain irresolvable contradiction hanging over the whole editing process.

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[34] Ibid., 148.
[35] Ibid., 122–128.
[36] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, 45.
[37] Ibid., 46.

While still struggling to edit his film with Frank Hull, von Stroheim at one point confessed to his friend: 'I could take out sequences and thus get the job over in a day. That would be child's play. But I can't do it. It would leave gaps that could only be bridged through titles. When you do such a thing you have illustrated subtitles, instead of a motion picture.'[38] Editing *Greed* essentially posed a problem of plotting: there is a limit to what even the most skilled editor can do by trimming scenes that build the core dramatic structure. Ingram and Whytock reached that limit at 15 reels, after which, according to von Stroheim's recollection, they announced that cutting another foot would be unforgivable.[39] While contemporary editing has more narrative devices at its disposal, and might use montage cutting to elide several plot events into one sequence, in 1924 the only viable solution within the classical style was titles.[40] This is precisely what the studio resorted to – the ill-fated Farnham's explanations of action allowed for more drastic cuts in the visual layer by preserving the skeleton of dramatic continuity.

This is only one aspect of the editing work – its narrative component, which in fiction cinema is largely tied with the film's *découpage*. It is noted that the fragmentation of the pro-filmic space was also hugely important for von Stroheim, and his quoted views on 'natural angles' are a testimony to that. His, emphasis, and that of the editors working with him, on building up a scene through a series of close-ups was picked up on by von Stroheim's contemporaries. Andrew Buchanan called him, in 1932, a 'montage director,' which I find significant as this connection with the Soviet School highlights commonalities in the two approaches to editing.[41]

Jacques Aumont, throughout his monograph titled *Montage*, rather daringly roams between discussing editing of narrative continuity and montage as if they only differed in the degree of expressiveness, as if they were essentially the same notion. The fact that the text is originally written in French perhaps adds to that conflation. Although I do think there are good theoretical reasons to retain the use of these terms as separate concepts, Aumont is clearly right about

[38] Don Ryan, 'Erich von Stroheim, the Real Thing,' *Picture Play* (June 1924): 27.

[39] Richard Koszarski, *The Man You Loved to Hate. Erich Stroheim and Hollywood*, 144.

[40] Montage is here used in the narrow sense, as a popular technique of the classical system. A contemporary example of an extended montage sequence used in the role of a narrative summary can be found in the climactic parts of *High Rise* (2015, dir. Ben Wheatley, editors Amy Jump and Ben Wheatley).

[41] Richard Koszarski, *The Man You Loved to Hate. Erich Stroheim and Hollywood*, 82.

the bilateral influences between the two paradigms. In France, the release of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Cheat* (1916) is considered a watershed moment for the European fascination with American cutting. Traces of Griffith in Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's work are abundantly clear. Aumont points out that when Lev Kuleshov asserts that 'the essence of cinema, the means to achieve an artistic impression, is editing' he is in fact speaking of the Hollywood practice of the fragmentation of the pro-filmic space, something I insist on calling classical *découpage*.

At the same time, one should not lose sight of the actual use of those terms by contemporaries. Ian Dalrymple – who worked in Ivor Montagu's company, so one can expect from him certain familiarity with Soviet ideas – declared in 1933 that montage was 'something that happens to Russian films, a few German and French pictures, and the entire output of the Empire Marketing Board. All other films are "cut."'[42]

It seems that the apparent confusion surrounding that tangled pair of concepts editing/montage in their historical vagaries is not just a matter of terminology. Much more is at stake here. Pudovkin's theory of the 'ideal observer' is a case in point. His notion of editing, despite being rooted in the Soviet paradigm of montage, neatly reflects the already established norms of American classical *découpage*. Pudovkin's editing encompasses all stages of film production assuming that it is a director, or rather a film technician, who is in charge of the process. The analogy of the camera lens being an attentive observer seems a practical illustration of the ways in which the pro-filmic space can be fragmented, how it can be broken down into vantage points offering a selection of information. But the process of fragmentation begins already with a script. The photoplay manuals of the 1910s, analysed earlier, circle around the same ideas. And yet, the montage paradigm never disappears from Pudovkin's sight. Nor does it disappear from his films.

Vance Kepley, writing about spatial orientation in Pudovkin's films, concludes that the theorist 'who popularised the notion of the ideal observer, employs a scenographic space which would frustrate even that observer's most ideal observations.'[43] Pudovkin, at times, plays with the stability of spatial

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[42] Roy Perkins and Martin Stollery, *British Film Editors*, 123.
[43] Vance Kepley, Jr., 'Pudovkin and the Continuity Style: Problems of Space and Narration,' *Discourse*, vol. 17, no. 3, Views from the Post-Future/Soviet & Eastern European Cinema (Spring 1995): 99.

relations between objects driven by the usefulness of the given effect for the momentary narrative tension. Most often, he employs minimal plausibility for the scenographic space privileging the 'act of narration.' The main task at hand is to issue necessary plot information rather than to construct a complete, realistic space. Kepley references Noël Burch's analysis in 'The Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response,' which points to linearisation of signifiers in Soviet cinema, allowing objects to float free in an undefined, flat space.[44] Both Kepley and Burch find these aspects of the Russian films paradoxical. Burch links them with Soviet attempts at negotiating between the breaking of the spatial continuum that reduces a spectator's command of the diegetic space and the use of tableaux preserving the spatial continuum and the relative freedom of the viewer in directing their attention.[45] It is suggested that the outcome of this give and take is a series of 'key fragments,' close-up shots that pull the narrative along a chain of unequivocal signs.[46]

However, in this context, one could also argue that a tendency towards the semiotisation of the individual shot was evident in the thinking among early film writers and filmmakers from both sides of the Atlantic. Soviet filmmakers were more radical in that respect and took the logic of a 'bust' further but can be situated on the same axis as deMille and von Stroheim. The Austrian-American director certainly shares with the Soviets the aesthetic of linear signification, although his films more decisively make use of the diegetically coherent *découpage* typical of the classical system.

The 'ideal observer' principle, it could also be argued, is not a theory but a heuristic. In an actual shooting situation, like the sequence from *End of St. Petersburg* (1927) examined by Kepley, it seems that Pudovkin is ready to forgo the whole idea and is more concerned with building the dramatic continuum of signifiers, following his other metaphor, that of film technique as a language.

This is in turn related to production expediency: staging scenes in a more realistic, three-dimensional fashion is time-consuming, necessitates overcoming scenographic hurdles and limits the composition of the frame, in which the Soviet cinema excelled and on which it was not eager to compromise.[47] It is

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[44] Noël Burch, 'The Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response,' *October*, vol. 11 (Winter 1979): 81.
[45] Vance Kepley, Jr., 'Pudovkin and the Continuity Style: Problems of Space and Narration,' 87.
[46] Ibid.
[47] See Alexander Mackendrick, *On film-making: an introduction to the craft of the director*, 227–228.

understandable why higher Hollywood budgets and more developed studio resources were conducive to developing the spatially more coherent style of mature American cinema. In Hollywood, the heuristic of the 'ideal observer' was simply easier to implement.

EDITING MISE-EN-SCÈNE

Film criticism from the 1950s onwards, rather than talking about 'natural' angles and cutting, has been much more absorbed by the idea of mise-en-scène. It is significant as it can be seen as a reaction to the obsessive 'naturalisation' of the spatiotemporal continuum in the classical cinema, a way of seeking out deviations to the perceived predictability of the system. But it is the director again who is seen as in charge of that individualisation and 'subversion.'

As with the concept of editing, what mise-en-scène designates has been tied up with competing discourses around film form and their historical moments of prominence and waning. In this context, Adrian Martin distinguishes 'between mise en scène as an artistic or professional practice…and mise en scène as an idea, theory, or approach.'[1] Frank Kessler is similarly cautious and concludes his monograph saying that now mise-en-scène 'may appear even more protean than when [its] journey spanning more than a century of film theory and practice began… Talking about mis en scène demands instant clarification as to the meaning and scope one wants to attribute to the term.'[2] Having made that caveat, both Kessler and John Gibbs retain the basic understanding of the term as a way of indicating that, at the core of mise-en-scène practice, there is something undeniably simple and clear.[3] As Kessler says, 'whenever an event is being staged in front of a camera, be it for a fiction film or for a documentary, we necessarily have mis-en-scène.' This formula does not go further than a literal meaning of the term, 'to put on stage,' but it catches the essential element: the unavoidability of a filmic practice akin to that of a theatrical *metteur en scène.* (Incidentally, when Truffaut sought to denigrate the 'scriptwriters' films' he scornfully categorised as Tradition of Quality, he called their directors *metteurs en* scène.).[4] Similarly, David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson in *Film Art* opt for a restrictive definition that includes only those elements which retain the theatrical provenance of the term, so mise-en-scène for them means casting, performance, sets, costumes, make-up and lighting.[5]

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[1] Adrian Martin 'Mise en scène,' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Film Theory*, 297.
[2] Frank Kessler, *Mis en scène* (Montreal: caboose, 2014), 48.
[3] Ibid; John Gibbs, *Mise en scène. Film Style and Interpretation* (London: Wallflower, 2002), 5.
[4] Francois Truffaut, 'A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema,'
http://wikifoundryattachments.com/RhZgj_V9GoTsmOcMN9mGrw205669 (accessed 12 September 2017).
[5] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art. An Introduction*, 8th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 112.

However, for most of its history, this basic definition was just a point of departure. As Kessler writes, the notion of auteur is inextricably bound with one of mise-en-scène.[6] The *Cahiers du Cinéma* critics used it to justify claims that certain Hollywood directors escape the overbearing supervision of the studios by developing discernible styles, their signature marks are sneaked into their works past the scriptwriting and editing gatekeepers.[7] In Britain the journal *Movie* and student papers like *Oxford Opinion* espoused similar ideas. As a representative case, the films of Nicholas Ray were reviewed by both V.F. Perkins and Foreydoun Hoveyda with a similar polemical fervour: the former writing that 'the quality of [Ray's] films is not literary, since it owes little to the original script, but cinematic; it results from the subjection of a frequently banal narrative to an idiosyncratic mise-en-scène'[8] and the latter asking rhetorically '*Party Girl* has an idiotic story. So what?' In the words of Hoveyda from the same review summarising the stance of the 'auteur theory' critics on the subject of film form, 'it is mis-en-scène which gives expression to everything on the screen, transforming, as if by magic, a screenplay written by someone else into something which is truly an author's film.'[9]

There is a striking similarity between Perkin's use of the word 'cinematic' as a weapon against the literary and the Kuleshov's glorification of editing. At face value they refer to two different practices but the nature of the argument is the same. It is a quest for the same modernist Holy Grail, an attempt to pinpoint the unique feature of cinema by winnowing the literary, the theatrical and everything that is nonessential. Looked at closely, there is a significant convergence. For writers of the Soviet School, the essence of the cinematic lies with montage, but actually it is editing in a broad sense, which includes director's *découpage*. For auteur critics it is mise-en-scène, but understood also in an extended way, which includes at least *découpage*, if not the entire post-production.

Kessler and Gibbs approach the subject of a definition with some reservations. Nevertheless, they still point to the logical inevitability of understanding mise-en-scène in a way that covers aspects of editing and

[6] Frank Kessler, *Mis en scène,* 28.
[7] Susan Hayward, *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 220-21.
[8] V.F. Perkins, 'Nicholas Ray,' *Oxford Opinion* (1960): 31.
[9] F. Hoveyda, 'Nicholas Ray's Reply: Party Girl,' *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 107, in *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1960's*, ed. J. Hiller (New York: Routledge, 1985), 123.

narrating. Gibbs underscores the coherence and interrelation of the contents of the frame, which form 'a consistent pattern of decisions within the film.'[10] He admits that in some cases it might not be possible to talk about mise-en-scène decisions without referring to editing.[11] Mise-en-scène analysis looks for markers of stylistic consistency throughout a film, not only in a single scene. For Kessler, the practice of staging has three functions: shaping and giving body to the diegesis, articulating narrative space and time, and presenting narrative action.[12] He arrives at this conclusion somehow surprised by its implications and obliged to refer to the concept of *découpage* in relation to the second objective and to Eisenstein's idea of montage as a layered system entailing *mise en jeu* and *mise en geste* at the theatrical stage and *mise en cadre* when the performed action is transposed onto screen.[13] *Découpage*, understood in the way that Timothy Barnard writes about in his monograph and I use here, overlaps with Kessler's second function of mise-en-scène.[14]

Eiseinstein elaborates a complex breakdown of the art of film direction in one of the last essays before his death in 1948 'Mise en Jeu and Mise en Geste.'[15] This late text needs to be read in the context of his protracted and never finished work on a treatise under the general title *Directing*, which was initially meant to go in tandem with a three-year course for budding filmmakers at the State Institute of Cinematography.[16] In the schematic plans for the project, Eisenstein divides the craft of directing into three stages: 'composing for the stage (*mise-en-scène*), composing for the 'vertical plane' of the film screen (*mise en cadre*), and composing in 'expressive movement' (*mise en jeu* and *mise en geste*).'[17]

Judging from the known fragments, it seems that Eisenstein used the notion of *mise-en-scène* in two ways. In the narrow sense it designated for him the most rudimentary work of directing actors: blocking their positions and staging action to represent the literal meaning of a scene. This was followed by a figurative plane, or a broad understanding of mise-en-scène, which entailed also two component activities: embodiment in action (*mise en jeu*) and directing

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[10] John Gibbs, *Mise en scène. Film Style and Interpretation*, 39, 39–41.
[11] Ibid., 65.
[12] Frank Kessler, *Mis en scène*, 33–39.
[13] Ibid., 38–40.
[14] See Timothy Barnard, *Découpage* (Montreal: caboose, 2014).
[15] See Sergei Eisenstein, *Mise en Jeu and Mise en Geste* (Montreal: caboose, 2014).
[16] Sergey Levchin, 'Translators Afterword,' in Sergei Eisenstein, *Mise en Jeu and Mise en Geste*, 57.
[17] Ibid., 57–58.

actor's gesture and movement (*mise en geste*).[18] The first stage aims at generating 'a unit of action, embodying and revealing the internal emotional mechanisms of particular characters in particular circumstances' and follows the textual basis of the staging. The second one is focused on minute details of the acting, seeking out the most expressive facial and body movements. The key word in Eisenstein's thinking here is 'transposition.' In both cases the director performs an act of translation looking for the cinematic equivalents of the essential qualities of a given scene, a character, the work as a whole. Eisenstein, throughout his essay, gives examples of possible ways of staging literary works and he ultimately strives to find the best, that is, the most expressive and the most artistic ways of translating textual meanings into performative gestures. This essentially theatre-like phase of working with an actor, a text and a stage leads to the next step called *mise en cadre*, encompassing composition of the frame and montage. In an earlier essay from 1937 he wrote: 'The *mis en cadre* is a leap from the mise-en-scène. It is, as it were, a 'second-stage' mise-en-scène, when the mise-en-scène of changing camera positions is superimposed upon the broken lines of the mise-en-scène's displacement in space.'[19]

Eisenstein looks at a passage from *Eugene Onegin* discussing possible camera effects, length of shots and their types, but seeing in the film technique primarily methods of capturing and orchestrating Pushkin's figures of speech. The 'magnificence' of Istomina is delivered by the sensation of radiance, evoked through a medium, soft-focus shot, 'blurred at the edges.' 'The plastic trajectory of successive shots' creates further sensations, which are not possible to represent in a single shot.

All in all, in this late Eisensteinian model of film form, the elements of mise-en-scène are subordinated into a larger montage structure of a 'succession of shots, flowing one after another.' In *Montage 37* he quite simply states that 'the concept of montage composition is inseparable from shot composition: one cannot exist without the other.'[20] The end point, however, is curiously close to the core issue of the mise-en-scène approach as identified by Gibbs. Eisenstein too is mostly concerned with compositional unity that ties together all the elements of the film form in order to make sensible the essential qualities of a

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[18] Sergei Eisenstein, *Mise en Jeu and Mise en Geste* (Montreal: caboose, 2014), 10.
[19] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montage 1937,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume II: Towards a Theory of Montage* (London: BFI Publishing, 1991), 15.
[20] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montage 1937,' 11.

text, of a character, of a moment. In other texts he calls this quality 'a generalisation about an object' or 'an image of the idea.'[21]

While Eisenstein's system of *mise en jeu*, *mise en geste* and *mise en cadre* had, until recently, been unknown in the English-speaking world, the auteur critics' focus on film direction had far-reaching ramifications. Gibbs points out that the association of mise-en-scène with Hollywood had two significant results. It made it possible to seriously discuss aesthetics of popular cinema, but simultaneously suggested that its quality is only revealed when examined in terms of mise-en-scène.[22] The auteur theory absolved Hollywood but only as long as American films fitted the prescribed model of cinema as an art of mise-en-scène. Sidelining editing or seeing it as an artless craft of preserving continuity of action was perhaps an inevitable side effect of this position, although in fact orchestrating a succession of shots according to the criteria of stylistic coherence, which might be called editing, has never been lost from the picture. Editing was simply absorbed by the paradigm of mise-en-scène becoming a part of the director-centred analysis.

It is noted that the lasting legacy of the concept of mise-en-scène outstrips the arguments about authorship that it was meant to support.[23] It allowed critics to engage with the medium in its own right, as a visual and sensory experience with coherent interrelations between a set of formal elements and its meanings. In a sense Adrian Martin follows on from that observation by proposing the term *dispositif*, not only as a way of bringing in another layer of associations (Foucault, Agamben), but also as a reformulation of the tradition of the mise-en-scène criticism that rightly paid attention to 'film as film,' to use V. F. Perkin's formula.[24]

This re-orientation of film criticism instigated by mise-en-scène analysis shares with *montagism* a provenance in the idea of authorship. Both positions see the director as the Author, a single creative agency giving an artistic shape to the plot (even if it is the banal product of a hired scriptwriter) or the raw, untreated material of reality (as Eisenstein would see it). The concept of singular authorship seems then to be a common ground for the two most significant

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[21] Ibid., 28, 32.
[22] John Gibbs, *Mise en scène. Film Style and Interpretation*, 65–66.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Adrian Martin, *Turn the Page: From Mise en scène to Dispositif*; V.F. Perkins, *Film As Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972).

theoretical approaches that are classified as classical. Later theories based on structuralism, semiotics, psychoanalysis and cognitivism tended to supplant the Author with the text, and then replace the text with the spectator, which made the question of editing fit uneasily into their theoretical frameworks. Editing, seen as a textual effect or a device (in neoformalism), became a technical aspect of film form. With the growing academisation of film theory, the Soviet School's heuristic approaches to film form and auteur-centred criticism were increasingly seen as woolly and all too obvious. The emphasis shifted away not so much from practice, as it is inexorably tied with film form, but from the idea of *intentionality*. As Sarah Kozloff writes: 'Since about 1970, the dominant strain of film theory has proclaimed that filmmakers have little control over their works. Filmmakers – like novelists – have been seen merely as conduits for broad ideological currents.'[25] John Caughie in his anthology of writings on authorship writes about the dissolution of the concept of the 'the author as a self-expressive individual.'[26]

Although this is a dominant trend, one can point at certain voices of discontent such as an interest in enunciation, dating from the 1980s and inspired by Benveniste, and the semio-pragmatics advocated by Francesco Casetti and Roger Odin, a theory speaking of the 'communicative pact' between the producer and the spectator.[27]

I am bringing up the subject of authorship as it often seems a stumbling block for discussions of editing. The postmodern conviction that the writer dies as soon as their words are committed to paper puts a damper on any attempts to rigorously describe what exactly happens when the author is still alive.[28] From the analytical perspective, the problem appears when we begin to include biographical or anecdotal information while interpreting film works. This produces sometimes reductive readings, or fantastical impositions. Often, however, biographical criticism can be an enlightening avenue of inquiry, which should not be dismissed on the principle of interpretative purity. In a gesture that 'graciously [welcomes] biography back in' Sarah Kozloff declares that she believes that 'art works are made *by people* operating (struggling) within their

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[25] Sarah Kozloff, *The Life of the Author* (Montreal: caboose, 2014), 4.
[26] John Caughie, ed., *Theories of Authorship* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.
[27] Francesco Casetti, *Inside the Gaze: The Fiction Film and Its Spectator* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 39.
[28] See Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author,' in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 142–148.

historical moment.'[29] Here I am not so much concerned with how we read films, but rather how to interpret what the editor does. The difference is important because in order to understand editing *as a process* we need to elicit, at least tentatively, the figure of a person responsible for making decisions that constitute that process. Interpreting happens when semiosis is frozen in a settled text. Its author can be included in the analytical proceedings, or not. But if we want to make general observations about the creative process, there is no escape from dealing with the idea of human agency, even if only provisionally. At that stage nothing is settled yet. What we are trying to examine is not a text, but a pool of potential editing decisions.

I would suggest this has important ramifications for how we theorize editing. A certain split between film theories originating in academia and in creative practice has a lot to do with their difference in approaching creativity and the idea of authorship. The theorising observations of practitioners assume that the filmmaker's actions are intentional and result in certain cinematic effects. Following on from that, the teaching in film schools has for decades drawn on such texts as Pudovkin's *Film Technique* and Karel Reisz's *The Technique of Film Editing* looking in them for pragmatic guidance written from the creator's point of view. Despite the emphasis in academic film studies on continuity editing as a coherent normative system, students learning the craft of filmmaking from Reisz's book have been exposed to concepts that prioritise the art of *dramatisation*. This paradigm, expressed well in Mackendrick's lectures, follows the tradition of Soviet theorising, with a preference for Pudovkin, full acceptance of Kuleshov's experiments, some commonsensical scepticism about Eisenstein and a large contribution from the norms of classical *découpage* expressed in scriptwriting manuals. In a survey conducted in 1962 among American universities teaching film production, the recurring sources were Reisz's handbook on editing, two works inspired by Eisenstein – Spottiswoode's *A Grammar of the Film*, and Vladimir Nilsen's *The Cinema as a graphic art: on a theory of representation in the cinema* – and naturally Eisenstein's *Film Form* and *Film Sense*.[30]

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[29]Sarah Kozloff, *The Life of the Author*, 35.
[30] Don G. Williams, 'Teaching Programs in Film Production in the U.S.,' *Journal of the University Film Producers Association*, vol. 14, no. 4 (1962): 6–7.

In industry teaching the connection between editing and directing is reformulated in a way that takes into account the dynamics of career paths and the process of learning the narrative norms as a craft. A recurrent piece of advice is that apprenticeship at a cutting bench is the best preparation for the role of a director.[31] An editor needs to understand the mechanics of narrative structure and as the last person in the production process has a unique opportunity to learn what works and what does not. As an entry role in the industry, editing was a career route taken by: David Lean, who initially worked on Gaumont-Britain newsreels, the already mentioned Thorold Dickinson, Charles Ainslie Crichton, who had an equally stellar career as an editor for Alexander Korda and as a director in Ealing Studios, Edward Dmytryk, a prolific American director, notable also for his books and teaching at the University of Southern California, but also Robert Wise (awarded an Oscar nomination in Best Film Editing for *Citizen Kane*), Hal Ashby, whose last film projects failed precisely due to his erratic editing routine, and Don Siegel, director of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), who began his career in the Montage Department of Warner Bros. and cut the opening sequence of *Casablanca* (1942).[32]

It is worth adding that in documentary productions distinctions between the director's contribution and that of an editor are frequently blurry.[33] The editor might be physically doing the cutting, but the sphere of editorial decisions is so broad and so crucial in shaping an overall structure of the documentary that anyone involved creatively in that stage has a valid claim to co-authorship. This is also why it is not uncommon for documentary directors to feature in credits also as the editors as a reflection of their actual contribution to the film.[34] Needless to say, some documentary filmmakers like Frederick Wiseman always edit their own films.

So far, I have presented a largely historical account of the shifting conceptions around editing that originated among people engaged in film production and those commenting on it. This meta-critical 'narrative' was occasionally broken up by more theoretical conclusions that circumscribe the area of editing practice while respecting its changing historical context.

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[31] Ken Dancyger, *The Technique of Film and Video Editing*, 81.
[32] See also ibid. 81–96.
[33] For a discussion of the director-editor relationship see Jacob Bricca, *Documentary Editing. Principles & Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 26–29.
[34] For example *The Corporation* (2003, dir. Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, editor Jennifer Abbott).

This account has demonstrated that the techniques of cutting celluloid appeared very early in the history of cinema. Fixing technical blemishes with the aid of a pair of scissors, avoiding longueurs using resumptive cutting and enhancing entertainment value with visual tricks were very much part of the standard toolkit of the first filmmakers. I have also set out to stress the role of a broad sphere of *editorial decisions* in shaping the developments of editing and how factual filmmaking was instrumental in circumscribing the tenets of spatiotemporal dissection. This perspective allows us to see important influences coming from a variety of sources, such as newspaper journalism, exhibition practices and popular culture, but it also brings into the spotlight some underappreciated determinants of editing like the division of labour and the expediency of production practices. Lastly, it was suggested that many editing conventions settled thanks to the creative heuristics elaborated among scriptwriters (the expressive close-up, the cut-back) and directors (the invisible observer theory). The last point is tied with a call for reinstating the notion of *découpage*, which allows us to differentiate between the fragmentation of the profilmic that happens during the production and the specific set of issues arising at an editor's desk.

Returning to the historical perspective for a moment, from the 1930s onwards one can discern a growing realisation and acceptance that 'cinematic language' has reached a stage of maturity. With the codification of classical *découpage* came also a conviction that editing too adheres to a set of norms, and a professional editor is someone who is most adept in employing them.

TOWARDS CLASSICAL EDITING

Alexander Mackendrick's notes from teaching at the California Institute of the Arts, mentioned earlier, are well suited to illustrate sources of trade knowledge, and the sometimes conflicting models of creative expression in classical cinema.

CalArts, established thanks to the generosity and vision of Walt and Roy Disney, has had an unusual position among American film schools as it has traditionally straddled the artistic ambitions of independent cinema and the pragmatism of Hollywood.[1] While its students thought of themselves as artists, as graduates they did not shy away from the allures of commercial work. Mackendrick's response to that environment was a natural outgrowth of his own professional experiences spanning a 10-year period at Ealing Studios where he directed such classics as *Whisky Galore!* (1949, editor Joseph Sterling), *The Man in the White Suit* (1951, editor Bernard Gribble) and *The Ladykillers* (1955) and his Hollywood episode, which produced a cult noir portrayal of the tabloids, *Sweet Smell of Success* (1957, editor Alan Crosland Jr.).[2] Mackendrick felt most comfortable and flourished in the regimented working conditions of a British studio, which allowed him to concentrate on crafting a film in scriptwriting and be insulated from the logistics and commercial pressures. On the one hand, he construed filmmaking as a creative collaboration between a scriptwriter and a director. On the other hand, he readily ridiculed the concept of auteurism and, for the 1970s generation imbued with American New Cinema, Mackendrick represented the old guard. Often advising against the trends of the day he insisted on the importance of learning the ropes before deciding whether one wants to follow industry norms or dismiss them.

Perfectly positioned to express the ideals of classicism (because he had some sympathy for assaults on them), he divided his teaching into two parts: dramatic construction and film grammar. His advice on scriptwriting has a few telling influences. Mackendrick is very taken by the writings of Rudolf Arnheim, author of *Film as Art*, which leads him to see in silent movies a model of visual and 'kinetic' language.[3] Sound is just an auxiliary addition, while cinema is essentially a 'pre-verbal' medium. By saying that narrative meaning should primarily be conveyed through the 'complex and intricate organization of

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[1] Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making. An Introduction to the craft of the director*, xv.
[2] Ibid., xiv.
[3] Ibid., 8.

cinematic elements' Mackendrick references an Aristotelian commonplace about the dramatic as the art of showing, not telling.[4] Here also are echoes of Pudovkin's understanding of editing a script as exactly that: the organisation of cinematic signifiers. In his classes Mackendrick frequently quoted D.W. Griffith writing in 1917: 'Today the "close-up" is essential to every Motion Picture for the near view of the actors' lineaments conveys intimate thought and emotion that can never be conveyed by the crowded scene.'[5] His underscoring of the externalisation of emotion in acting, giving weight to reaction shots and expressive set-ups suggests indebtedness to the aesthetic of silent cinema and the thinking of such theoreticians as Arnheim, Eisenstein and Epstein among others.

In a sense, it is paradoxical since Mackendrick's films have brilliant, lively dialogue and what he was trying to impress on his students was a model of well-crafted and fully developed film classicism. But he was neglecting neither sound, nor dialogue, and was not prone to dew-eyed nostalgia. What Mackendrick was clear about, and this is representative for a certain vision of the classical film, is that cinematic narrative needs a subtext, ambiguity and something that is not only unsaid, but cannot possibly be verbalised. Film technique plays a central role in conveying that. As Mackendrick writes, again linking shooting with editing,

> the film camera and cutting bench, able to manipulate both space and time so efficiently… can do much to express those things unsaid by the characters. Between internal thought (the uncensored and unselfconscious impulse) and deliberately delivered words there may be some contradiction… The best lines of film dialogue are sometimes those in which the real meanings lie between the words, where the spoken lines mask the true and unadulterated feelings of the speaker.[6]

Editing in the narrow sense, the cutting that happens in post-production, is according to this model an art of finessing the pre-verbal 'meaning' of a film, something that Deleuze calls pure semiotics: 'pre-verbal intelligible content.'[7] For Mackendrick this is exactly what constitutes *the cinematic*. In this assertion he is seconded by an unlikely ally. To Mackendrick's probable chagrin, Dede Allen's ground-breaking editing showmanship displayed in *Bonnie and Clyde*

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[4] Ibid., 3.
[5] Quoted in Joyce E. Jesionowski, *Thinking in Pictures: Dramatic Structure in D.W. Griffith's Biograph Films* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 40.
[6] Ibid., 5.
[7] Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1. *The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), ix.

(dir. Arthur Penn, 1967) was what must have excited most of his students at the CalArts. But Allen agrees with him on the subject of the essence of editing: 'When I start cutting a movie, I always cut with ambivalence.' She explains that:

> I have a definite intention, a definite starting point: the thematic function of the scene, the psychology of the characters, etc. But, when I become absorbed in the material, I suddenly see all the possibilities the material contains – the unexpected, intended and unintended possibilities… I milk the material for all the small possibilities I see in it – a look, a smile I see after the director has said "Cut," an unintentional juxtaposition of two images. Afterwards, I form a general view again. But it is in the ambivalence, in the collision between the general strategy and the pleasant abstractions along the way that constitutes editing as art.

While there is a world of difference between the gracious classical flow of *The Ladykillers* and the aggressive juxtapositions of *Bonnie and Clyde,* there is also something that they share: that quality of cutting that leaves something unanswered, a missing piece, which arrests our attention. Curiously, this trait in editing can be found both in bold independent cinema, where it becomes a stylistic manifestation and in well-crafted classical films, like those of Mackendrick, in which editing adds to the dramatic tension.

The second influence in Mackendrick's lectures is equally significant. Explaining dramatic principles he draws on manuals for playwrights, in particular William Archer's *Play-Making, A Manual of Craftsmanship* from 1912. Predictably, the recommendations revolve around the significance of dramatic crisis and around engendering, maintaining, heightening and resolving a state of tension. In fact, there is a striking sense of continuity in thinking about narrative form in practical manuals of scriptwriting that spans the entire classical period, and arguably extends to contemporary times as well. Much of what Mackendrick recommends in the 1970s can be also found in John Yorke's *Into the Woods* from 2014. In addition, Yorke not only recycles Christopher Vogler's adaptation of Joseph Campbell's concept of a monomyth, but also quotes the classic advice for novelists by E.M. Forster, refers to the influence of a 5-act structure of the nineteenth-century plays by Eugène Scribe on Ibsen and Shaw, and interprets the Kuleshov Effect as a filmic method of imposing order on the world.[8] When it comes to plotting, the contemporary heuristics that circulate

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[8] John Yorke, *Into the Wood* (London: Penguin, 2014), 42, 53, 113.

among scriptwriters seem very conservative.[9] They reinforce the model of classical *découpage*.

Mackendrick also offers an interesting examination of the related question of 'rules,' whether it is possible to draw up rules for writing a play or a script. The playwright, William Archer, suggests that the only area that lends itself to systematisation is 'the art of structure,' a 'comparatively mechanical and formal part' of the dramatist's work.[10] Mackendrick is not even sure about that and recommends that a prospective scriptwriter simply examines how successful writers have resolved problems of dramatic structure and then takes a leaf out of their book.[11]

This approach is important as 'rules' and 'norms' crop up in most accounts of 'film grammar' and editing. Some grammar-orientated handbooks take the meaning of the word in a definite, bounded way formulating their recommendations as dos and don'ts, usually with a caveat that a certain rule can sometimes be broken. A much more sophisticated use of the term can be found in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson's *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*. They describe Hollywood style as a set of norms and support their argument by referencing Jan Mukařovský's concept of aesthetic norms.[12] However, they do recognise that each classical film is an 'unstable equilibrium' of classical norms.[13] They supplement Mukařovský's work with three levels of description focusing on: devices, systems and relations of systems.[14] Their analysis of Hollywood style, while listing individual devices, also assumes that they are organised into three interrelated systems depending on the function that is assigned to each device. 'A system of narrative logic' typically dominates over 'a system of cinematic time' and 'a system of cinematic space.'[15] The neoformalist model is flexible and all-encompassing enough to persuasively dissect classical Hollywood cinema from an analytical perspective. However, it seems that the heuristics used in professional teaching of filmmaking are based on a more fluid approach which

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[9] See also Mike Figgis' rendition of *The 36 Dramatic Situations* by George Polti. Mike Figgis, *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations* (London: Faber & Faber, 2017).
[10] Quoted in Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making. An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, 99.
[11] Ibid.
[12] David Bordwell, 'The classical Hollywood style 1917–60,' 4.
[13] Ibid., 5.
[14] Ibid., 6.
[15] Ibid., 7.

recognises that some areas of practice, like plot structure, can be normalised in a fairly rigid way, while other aspects of film construction, like maintaining dramatic tension in a scene, elude formulaic treatment.

It would be difficult to compare and find parallels between the neoformalist model and, for example, Mackendrick's concepts, since they use different distinctions. For Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, narrative logic 'depends upon story elements and causal relations and parallelisms among them.'[16] For Mackendrick 'strong plots are built on *tension* of cause and effect,' which feeds into the dramatic.[17] The central idea of that practice-focused approach is a slogan which Mackendrick always had on display in his classroom: 'drama is anticipation mingled with uncertainty.'[18] While neoformalist thinking organises aesthetic devices into sets of paradigmatic options, for Mackendrick, just like for the mise-en-scène critics, the crucial thing was the interdependence of 'technical devices' and dramatic effects.

For instance, when writing about types of shots, Mackendrick references a theory of proxemics developed by Edward T. Hall. a popular American psychologist who proposed that we all have a sense of 'psychological distance.'[19] Although Mackendrick doubts the scientific rigour of the theory, he nevertheless believes it to be a useful shorthand for discussing differences between two-shots in wide angles, that suggest remote, public and social distance, and closer views, that signify personal space, a 'one-on-one' relationship and intimate proximity involving physical contact.[20] The fact that framing suggests certain types of relationships is related to the way Mackendrick deconstructs plots as maps of bonds between characters in a film. Illustrating this, he creates a map of relationships for *The Third Man* (1949, dir. Carol Reed, editor Oswald Hafenrichter). Mackendrick's intriguing suggestion finds commonality with other scholarship on literary narrative. Peter Brook, for example, writes in his *The Empty Space*: 'Experimentally, we can approach *[King] Lear* not as a linear narrative, but as a cluster of relationships.'[21] I will come back to this model of narrative mapping in the last section of this thesis.

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making. An Introduction to the Craft of the Director*, 43.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid., 222.

[20] Ibid., 223.

[21] Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 91.

Analytically, one can certainly deploy the neoformalist lens to describe psychologically motivated framing as evidence of the narrative subordination of such an aesthetic device as camera work. However, this kind of analysis does assume an understanding of narrative in a less 'formalist' and a more 'dramatic' fashion. Mackendrick refers here to the point of view of his anthropomorphic narrator, the Invisible Imaginary Ubiquitous Winged Witness, a construct that the neoformalist formula of narration vigorously opposes. In Mackendrick's model, cinematography in conjunction with cutting are not only the vehicles for a narrative, but they have a number of equally important functions, like switching between narrative points of view (focalisation), contributing to characterisation and essentially giving shape to the actor's performance.

Let me again take stock focusing this time on the division of labour and the question of authorship. I have so far shown that Soviet film theories, mise-en-scène criticism, and practice-centred ideas on film form tend to merge the director's work with that of an editor. Conceptually, it is not easy to separate them, if one hones in on the spatiotemporal fragmentation of the diegetic continuum or the stylistic aspects of a film. Decisions concerning these aspects of film form span the entire production process and involve many members of the crew. In theories recognising intentionality in film construction, those activities are typically attributed to the director, less often to the scriptwriter; although, as I indicated, narrative fragmentation in a script gives an essential blueprint to any fictional film.

However, despite the conceptual lack of clarity, editing has been unanimously and almost unquestionably recognised as a separate and important activity, so obvious that it does not need to be defined. What stands behind this intuition? What are the core differences between the imaginary cutting happening in the head of the Winged Witness personified by the director and the very real use of a film guillotine in the hands of an editor? One response to that is an argument for the concept of *découpage* to cover precisely that director-led and scriptwriter-led process, happening on paper and in camera. But perhaps the most important reason for employing that notion is the historical evolution of the role of an editor as someone with a distinctive set of creative tasks and methods.

THE RISE OF THE FILM EDITOR

There is evidence that some division of labour existed even at the artisanal stage of cinema. Hepworth recollects that in his 1903 film *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice was played by Mabel Clark, 'the little girl from the cutting room.'[1] Certainly, for quite a long time filmmaking roles were switchable. According to David Lean British films produced in the late 1920s were still cut by their directors.[2] The home-grown film industry is said to have been influenced by Hollywood in terms of production values and efficiency, although, as has been noted, in American studios of the period the practice was also quite fluid.[3] In the more efficient studios, a custom of creating a continuity slip during the production allowed directors to be released from the burden of splicing film themselves. Instead, scores of negative joiners and cutters, very often women, were employed to assemble at least a rough cut according to the notes taken on the set.[4]

Before the introduction of editing machines after 1924 splicing shots was an onerous task. The director and the senior crew members viewed rushes first in a studio's projection theatre. The celluloid was then taken to a cutting room where the cutter/director would look at it through a magnifying glass pressed against an illuminated glass screen.[5] Editing was very much guesswork – the editor looked at a series of stills, not the moving image. The tangibility and the laborious nature of the process were conducive to developing rules of thumb, which remedied initial difficulties with previewing the effects of cuts. Lean describes, matter-of-factly, a rule for cutting on movement in the following way: 'As the actor starts to sit in the chair in the long shot, you'd go to the last three or four pictures [frames] of his bottom taking his seat in the medium shot and it looked as smooth as anything, and it still does.'[6] Francis Ford Coppola recollects a lesson given to him by Dorothy Arzner: 'She told me that in the old days, when she used to cut silent, she would cut in hand. You'd extend a length of film in your hand, and you knew that one arm was a certain amount of time those

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[1] Cecil M. Hepworth, *Came the dawn: memories of a film pioneer*, 63.
[2] Kevin Brownlow, *David Lean: a biography* (New York: A Wyatt Book for St. Martin's Press, 1996), 54.
[3] Ibid., 53.
[4] Karen Ward Mahar, 'Doing a "Man's Work,"' in *The Classical Hollywood Reader* (London: Routledge, 2012), ed. Stephen Neale, 89.
[5] Kevin Brownlow, *David Lean: a biography*, 54.
[6] Ibid.

images would be on screen. So if a kiss lasted two arm-lengths, that was a good kiss. But if it was three arm-lengths, that was a very sexy kiss.'[7]

The first machine that allowed for easy footage review in the cutting room was the Moviola invented by Iwan Serrurier.[8] By design it was a home movie projector with a small screen, but its usefulness for editing was soon recognised by an editor working for Douglas Fairbanks. In 1924, Serrurier adapted his invention and sold the first model to Fairbanks for $125.[9] The Moviola became indispensable in every cutting room until around the 1970s, when it lost ground to flatbed systems like PipSync, Steenbeck and KEM, which offered significant improvements in speed, sound quality and the size of their viewing monitors.[10] Francis Ford Coppola was one of the first directors who realised the advantages of flatbed systems over the Moviola. According to Walter Murch, *The Rain People* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1969) was edited on a Steenbeck. Murch adds that: 'the ground we broke creatively and technically with *The Rain People* was continued with *THX* (dir. George Lucas, 1971) and *American Graffiti* (dir. George Lucas, 1973).'[11]

Editors usually started working as soon they were given celluloid. On feature productions the negative was often developed overnight so that a print was ready for a screening session the next day. The screening of dailies (rushes) allowed making adjustments during the production and flagged up continuity errors.

Those working on newsreels in the 1920s and 1930s were cutting under the pressure of quick turnarounds and modest budgets and so they applied cuts directly to the original negative.[12] As soon as the edit was ready, hundreds of positive prints were sent out to cinemas as each newsreel company competed for the reputation of being the quickest in conveying the latest news. Lean boasts that when working in Gaumont Sound News, he had his newsreel about the University Boat Race on a screen in Shepherd's Bush within three hours of the boats crossing the finish line.[13] There was little room for a mistake and plenty of

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[7] Quoted in Scott Kirsner, *Inventing the Movies: Hollywood's Epic Battle Between Innovation and the Status Quo, from Thomas Edison to Steve Jobs* (CinemaTech Books, 2008), 77.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 78.
[11] 'Steenbeck,' *Dead Media Archive*, http://cultureandcommunication.org/deadmedia/index.php/Steenbeck (accessed on 1 September).
[12] Kevin Brownlow, *David Lean: a biography,* 62.
[13] Ibid., 69.

things could go wrong. Lean tells a story of an editor who got fired for a Graf Zeppelin disaster: a shot of the German ship was upside down on a negative, which was then instantly processed into 400 prints.[14] On any productions that could afford it, the cutting was performed on a positive print and the 'fully-fledged editor' worked with a team of assistant cutters, often women. At the height of his editing career in the late 1930s David Lean was the best paid editor in Britain and at British & Dominions was treated to the aid of four cutting assistants.[15]

In technical terms throughout its more than century-long history, the process of cutting celluloid was fairly crude. It entailed watching hours of footage on a small Moviola or Steenbeck screen, then marking cutting points with a grease pencil, lining up the celluloid in a splicer, and guillotining it with a razor blade.[16] Separated strips of film were then hung on hooks over a 'trim bin' that contained coils of film underneath. Over time, methods of splicing progressed from those described by Hepworth in the nineteenth century. Welding celluloid together with the help of film cement was still used for making permanent splices when working with the negative or preparing rolls for printing, but during the editing itself it was far more preferable to create temporary joints which could be easily undone.[17] Hence, it became a standard to use transparent adhesive tape for joining shots together with either a Guillotine type splicer that took clear Mylar tape or a Rivas splicer, which needed perforated tape.[18]

Editing as a profession was gradually taking shape in the 1920s and 1930s. The word 'editor,' as Rachael Low observes, 'emerged from an uneasy shuffling of the functions of editing the script, writing the titles, sticking the film together, and doctoring an unsatisfactory film with scissors and cement.'[19] In other words, it was not about 'mounting a film,' which was a privilege and the director's burden and it was not about constructing a narrative, which in fiction cinema was expected to be a writer's job. An ordinary 'cutter' of the 1910s was merely putting together a film by meticulously following the script and the

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[14] Ibid., 62.
[15] Ibid., 102.
[16] Bruce Manner, *Film Production Technique: Creating the Accomplished Image*, 5th ed. (Belmont: Wandsworth Cengage Learning, 2009), 406.
[17] Ibid., 366.
[18] Kathryn Ramey, *Experimental Filmmaking: Break the Machine* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2016), 16.
[19] Rachael Low, *The History of the British Film*, 1918–1929 (London: Routledge, 1997), 268.

continuity slip. A fully-fledged editor, two decades later, was *treating* the footage, fixing its blemishes and inadequacies and improving it over the level of a simple reconstruction of the *découpage* structure. There was an added value attached to his or her work in comparison to what was already in the rushes.

In many respects, the pathway of David Lean is exemplary for the transitions in the field of editing that were occurring in the 1930s. As an enthusiastic young man, Lean first dabbled in various junior roles in the fledging British industry but soon he was recognised as the most productive in the cutting room due to his motivation to work long hours. He first cut newsreels in Gaumont Sound News and Movietone, where Lean's ingenuity won him praise. As Brownlow notices, a notorious problem of editing newsreel productions, which in fact applies to all films across time, is coverage.[20] Limited resources and the required speed of turnover meant that a given event was usually covered by a single cameraman, who was often oblivious to the need for cutaways. Editing an exciting piece of news by cutting up a continuous shot recorded from one angle was, and still remains, the most ungrateful task, which, if done successfully, was a testament to the skills of the editor.

Lean soon graduated to 'quota quickies' and features. One peculiar aspect of the British film industry of the period was a legal framework introduced by two Cinematograph Acts in 1927 and 1938, which established incremental quotas for the exhibition of British films.[21] The first act defined 'film' as anything over 3000 feet and did not make any demands for the producer to be British. The legislation was aimed to counter the domination of Hollywood, but one of its inadvertent effects was the flooding of British cinemas with American films produced locally at minimum cost and not much longer than the duration of 30 minutes stipulated by the Cinematograph Act.

Although 'quota quickies' were infamous for their poor quality, the 'positive' outcome was that, similarly to newsreels, those films offered a great opportunity for eager editors to develop particular skills needed in the developed forms of editing. Lack of sufficient coverage, continuity mistakes, bad or mismatched performances posed challenges that called for inventiveness and an intimate understanding of what constitutes smoothness in cutting. The norms of classical *découpage* hinge on resources: both money and time are needed to

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[20] Kevin Brownlow, *David Lean: a biography*, 76.
[21] Roy Perkins, Martin Stollery, *British Film Editors* (London: BFI, 2004), 70.

produce enough shots from varied angles and enough takes with a satisfactory performance for an editor to have a set of choices. Failing that, it is then left to the editor's ingenuity to carve spatiotemporal continuity and dramatic tension out of material that lacks both. What was, however, essential was that in the 1920s practical experience was incrementally gathered through various production models: Soviet montage theory and films would not be possible without state funding; British editors were schooled in newsreels, quota quickies and shoestring features and in the States the platform was provided by the fast-growing studio system.

In British studios, working conditions nurtured collaboration and the heads of editing departments or producers exerted significant influence over the establishing of industry practices. For David Lean, the most important mentor was the American, Merrill White, who had been a cutter for Ernst Lubitsch.[22] Lean recalls how they worked together:

> We used to take the 'quickies' – he'd take the first four reels and we'd work together until midnight, and then we'd go over to a feature film and I'd take the first three reels and he'd take the next three reels and we'd spend two or three hours and go home at God knows what time in the morning… Merrill taught me that you can *make any cut look smooth –* whether it matches or not. And I can do that even now. I can take mismatches and I can make them look as if they match.[23]

What Lean suggests then is that it is the director's responsibility to create the potential for a matched cut; but, according to his boast, a skilled editor can trick the spectator's eye and make a mismatch look correct. He does not elaborate how though. One answer can be found in a lesson that Charles Crichton, while working on Alexander Korda's London Films, received from William Hornbeck, later editor of the Christmas fixture *It's a Wonderful Life* (dir. Frank Capra, 1946). Hornbeck claimed that 'matching doesn't matter in sequences where *continuity of thought* is more essential.'[24]

In Korda's company, it was the producer himself who would often intervene and closely supervise the editing. Crichton recalls an episode with Korda, which illustrates not only the dynamics of work relationships but also the fluid nature of the decision-making that yields a narrative in the edit.

> When I became one of the editors on *Things to Come* [William Cameron Menzies, 1936], I showed him a rough cut of a sequence showing London

[22] Kevin Brownlow, *David Lean: a biography*, 84.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Quoted in Roy Perkins, Martin Stollery, *British Film Editors* (London: BFI, 2004), 76.

under attack from the air…The sequence was full of violence, gunfire, bombs, people running for their lives…Alex said, 'Charlie, you have made a bloody mess of this. It should be that everyone is standing there worried, waiting because they know something is going to happen, and you haven't put that in the cut at all.' And I said, 'But the director didn't shoot such a scene.' So he said, 'You're a bloody fool, Charlie! You take the bits before he has said 'Action!' and you take the bits after he has said 'Cut!' and you put them together and you make a marvellous sequence. What's wrong with you?… I was beginning to learn that a script is not the Bible, it is not a blueprint which must be followed precisely, word for word, to the very last detail.[25]

Ealing Studios exemplify another model of creative control, in which a supervising editor moulds the 'house style' of a studio. In Michael Balcon's production company, it was Sidney Cole who played that role in the 1940s and early 1950s.[26] His contribution was not necessarily reflected in the credits. However, he would normally view rushes and discuss with the key creators the approach to the editing; sometimes he would cut a sequence himself, and he would generally oversee the whole process. From the mid-1940s, his involvement in production was translated into an associate producer or producer credit. In his own view, the role of the producer was to 'be there all through the editing process, including the dubbing stage, to the final print.'[27] Tellingly, this was precisely what Irving Thalberg had done in MGM. In some cases, like the post-production of Mackendrick's *Whisky Galore*, not only was Cole involved but also Crichton and Peter Tanner, who says that they 'all had a hand' in editing the film (by 'all' meaning the top echelon of creative artists in Ealing, separated from technical employees through class divisions among other things).[28]

Next to the stimulating studio environment, and the challenges of an ill-funded industry in Britain, the second significant influence on the development of editing practice in the 1930s was the introduction of sound. The hysterical reaction of contemporary theorists and filmmakers to sound cinema has traditionally been seen with a mixture of derision and disbelief. How could they not see the wealth of audiovisual potential that was suddenly within everyone's reach? However, Edward Dmytryk's typically exaggerated observations speak of certain valid anxieties that permeated the industry at the beginning of the decade: 'Sound did a great deal of harm to many aspects of Hollywood, some of which

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[25] Brian McFarlane, *An Autobiography of British Cinema* (London: Methuen, 1997), 152.
[26] Roy Perkins, Martin Stollery, *British Film Editors*, 82.
[27] Brian McFarlane, *An Autobiography of British Cinema*, 137.
[28] Roy Perkins, Martin Stollery, *British Film Editors*, 83.

have not yet been corrected… It obviously killed concentration on imagery, rather than on the word. It almost destroyed photography for a long time. It absolutely killed editing, which has never come back.'[29] What he refers to has both an aesthetic and a technical aspect. As Brownlow writes, editors were initially daunted by the new equipment, which slowed down an already tedious process, most importantly by necessitating the synchronisation of sound and image.[30] It is noted that the change also heralded an influx of people new to the industry, with little prior experience of cinema but with now prized engineering skills. As Margaret Booth bitterly complained: 'sound was their background, and they all knew everything. And they didn't know a damn thing, but they "knew everything."'[31] This is also the moment when male dominance in the industry quickly began to gain ground.

Lean, after the advice of Merrill White, responded to the challenge by adopting 'a nonchalant attitude to sound.'[32] He realised that the sound track could be read and searched for musical cues. He also got into a habit of learning the dialogue by heart and lip-reading the actors' performance, which meant that he could delay the moment of syncing the footage until later, when the rough cut was trimmed down. This technique allowed Lean to 'throw the film about with the old abandon.'[33]

A significant consequence of the introduction of sound was that the practice of editing became more specialized. Since the flexibility of silent editing was to some extent lost, directors were forced to rely on the experience of the regular inhabitants of the cutting room. Margaret Booth recalls: 'In the old days directors did their own cutting when production was finished. Now with the addition of the sound track – a thin celluloid strip which has to be synchronized with and added to the cut film – the work has become too arduous.'[34] Editors who successfully made the transition, like Lean or indeed Booth, were valued and sought after. Their reputation, earned on initially intimidating sound movies or 'quota quickies' in Britain, also led to the emergence of the position of 'film

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[29] Edward Dmytryk, William McRae, 'Dmytryk on Film,' *Journal of the University Film and Video Association*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 10.
[30] Kevin Brownlow, *David Lean: a biography*, 61.
[31] Behlmer, Rudy. 'Interview with Margaret Booth,' *Academy Oral History Program. Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences* (1976): 37.
[32] Kevin Brownlow, *David Lean: a biography,* 84.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Margaret Booth, 'The Cutter,' in *Behind the Screen. How Films Are Made*, ed. Stephen Watts (London: Arthur Barker Ltd, 1938), 149.

doctor.' Eventually, Lean was called in by various studios when a film was too long or had significant structural problems. His job was to re-cut it and rescue the production. Two other important later British 'film doctors' were Jim Clark, who started off in Ealing Studios and wrote an anecdote-filled memoir appropriately titled *Dream Repairman: Adventures in Film Editing* and Stuart Baird, who is perhaps best known for numerous credits on high-grossing action movies.[35] In the case of Lean the fact that he was able to recognise issues with the edit that could have been avoided during production urged him to think seriously about directing.

The third development to have an impact on editing that happened in the 1930s and coincided with sound technology was the acceleration of the studio system in America.[36] While already in 1924 the merger creating the behemoth of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios was a sign of increasing consolidation and the rude health of the industry, by the time Irvin Thalberg produced *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935, dir. Frank Lloyd, editor Margaret Booth) the studio system was in full swing. The close working relationship between Thalberg and Margaret Booth is evidence of how important the editing department was in the formation of the tradition of 'quality entertainment' that is credited to MGM under the command of 'the wonder boy.'[37]

Margaret Booth learnt from Griffith's most trusted cutters Jimmie and Rose Smith, who, along with Griffith, edited *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Intolerance* (1916).[38] Thalberg was a prototype of the creative producer. Although never credited on films that were released during his life, he is said to have closely supervised most of MGM's major films in the 1930s.[39] His lasting innovation was the institution of a story conference with writers, whose role was to hammer out a detailed, infallible script. According to some sources, 'Thalberg directed the film on paper, and then the director directed the film on film.'[40] He was not afraid to call re-shoots, if rushes were not to the required standard. It

[35] Jim Clark, *Dream Repairman. Adventures in Film Editing* (Crockett: Landmark Press, 2010).
[36] Dauglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin, *Movie History: a Survey* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 146–153.
[37] Douglas Gomery, 'A Mature Oligopoly,' in *The American Film Industry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 325; Gabriella Oldham, *First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 259.
[38] David Muel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema*, 59.
[39] Mark A. Vieira, *Hollywood dreams made real: Irving Thalberg and the rise of M-G-M* (New York: Abrams, 2008), 7.
[40] Ibid, 59.

should then not be surprising that one of his closest collaborators in the studio was Margaret Booth, one of the most experienced editors in MGM. According to Cari Beauchamp, '[Thalberg] depended on her as much as [he did on] any writer. The two of them would go to a screening and sit next to each other, making plans for how the re-shoot would be done and how it would be edited.'[41] The outcome was a certain regimentation of the production. The *découpage* approved by Thalberg was sent off; went through the turmoil of being filmed and then came back to the studio where it landed in Booth's cutting room. The joint effort of the tight control executed by the producer and the most senior editor led to consistency in quality and style. MGM productions were renowned for glossiness, precision of storytelling and cinematography, for 'projecting a seductive image of American life brimming with vitality.'[42] This was largely achieved in editing, which in combination with an ironclad script and ample coverage offered studio executives enough leverage to shape the film according to their arbitrary standards. It is said that Thalberg's death was such a shock to the studio's management that in a bid to shore up MGM, Booth was promoted to the position of supervising editor.[43] This was a way of preserving Thalberg's legacy.

For the next three decades, Margaret Booth was one of the most powerful employees in MGM and a guardian of the classical system. She reported directly to Louis B. Mayer, whom she knew from the times when he was an independent producer in the late teens. Sydney Lumet, reeling from run-ins with Booth when he worked for the studio, said to a group of young filmmakers in the late 1960s: 'When I complete a film for Metro, I have to get blood on the floor to protect it from a lady by the name of Margaret Booth. She was Irving Thalberg's cutter, and to this day she checks every movie made for Metro-Goldwyn and can stop you at any point, call off your mix, and re-edit herself. She *owns* your negative.'[44] A similar role was played by Viola Lawrence in Columbia, who was a supervising editor from the 1930s until 1962, and Barbara McLean in 20th

[41] Claudia Luther, 'Margaret Booth, 104; Film Editor Had 70-Year Career,' *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 2002. http://articles.latimes.com/2002/oct/31/local/me-booth31 (accessed on 3 September 2017).
[42] Roland Flamini, *Thalberg: the last tycoon and the world of M-G-M* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1994), 3.
[43] David Muel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema*, 61.
[44] Sidney Lumet, *Making Movies* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 153.

Century Fox working also from the 1930s through the 1960s.[45] The fact that their long-standing careers in the American studios coincide with the era of classical Hollywood might suggest a causal relationship between the two. That is, the systematic consistency of the Hollywood output examined by Bordwell et al in the period up to 1960 might have been, to some extent, influenced by a small group of senior editors who learnt their skills in the crucial period when the norms of classical editing were being forged, and then preserved those conventions through the 1940s and 1950s.

It seems that both in Britain and the United States from the late 1930s all the conditions for the editing profession to have its identity, principles and methods were in place. In a relevant context, speaking about the evolution of the film language, Bazin claims that 'by 1939 the cinema had arrived at what geographers call equilibrium-profile of a river. Having reached this equilibrium-profile, the river flows effortlessly from its source to its mouth without further deepening its bed.'[46] In 1938, Eisenstein announced the end of the heady days of impassioned polemics, when montage was either everything or nothing by saying 'it is time to approach [montage's] problems afresh and with an open mind.'[47] I take it as a signal that editing practice by that time had largely settled; which forced this admission by its most prolific theorist.

However, it would be misleading to think about the editing techniques of the classical system as an immutable syntax. Two accounts from both sides of the Atlantic suggest that some important aspects of the practice were founded on concepts escaping easy delineation.

In 1938, Margaret Booth contributed a chapter to a book of testimonials from leading practitioners in Hollywood, *Behind The Screen. How Films Are Made*. Although she titles her chapter 'The Cutter,' already in the very first paragraphs Booth explains the nature of her profession by referring to editing. She writes: '[S]haping and editing of photographs into dramatic narrative form is the function of the film editor. He or she juggles with photographs as another kind of editor does with words – to make them tell a story.'[48] According to some accounts, Thalberg was the first person to use the word 'editor' to describe

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[45] David Muel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema*, 46.
[46] André Bazin, 'The evolution of the Language of Cinema,' in *What Is Cinema? Volume 1*, 31.
[47] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montage 1938,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume II: Towards a Theory of Montage*, 296.
[48] Margaret Booth, 'The Cutter,' in *Behind the Screen. How Films Are Made*, 146.

someone employed to cut a film, which was a gesture aimed at lending to the profession some of the prestige ascribed to script editors.[49] This shift in terminology betrays a core characteristic of classical editing – it is conceived as a complementary stage of narrative scriptwriting. In the studio system, both of these stages are safely predictable and easy to place under executive control – the studio is the ultimate Editor of words and images.

Booth seeks to reduce the procedure to the most rudimentary elements. She explains that what she is getting from the director are scenes taken from three angles: long shot, intermediate shot and close-up.[50] Then the 'question for the cutter is how to intermingle the best of each version of each scene so that its dramatic value is enhanced.'[51] As examined earlier, the dramatic value of a scene is also at the forefront of classical scriptwriting practice. In a sense, then, the editor in this case works on already pre-dramatized footage. This can be contrasted with documentary editing that often requires the laborious sculpting of a dramatic skeleton using footage often lacking inherent dramatic values.[52] Booth continues concentrating on what is specific for the profession:

> My first principle, as a film editor, is to aim for smoothness and rhythm. The constant changes of camera position which give the modern motion picture its action must not be noticeable. There must be no jerk or break to hamper illusion or impede the telling of the story. But there is something subtler than that. A good picture has an underlying rhythmic beat, almost like music. Only good editing can bring that out.[53]

This statement can be compared with the article written by Thorold Dickinson in 1935 'A Cutter in the Clouds.' The context of its publication is significant. Dickinson wrote for the second issue of the *Journal of the Association of Ciné-Technicians*, which was the organ of the film technicians' union. Having edited about 20 films, Dickinson was already a seasoned film industry worker and played a leading role in the union.[54]

Dickinson writes confidently, as if editing had reached a state of maturity allowing him to reflect on the mistakes of the past. He points out that '"cutting"

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[49] David Muel, *Women Film Editors: Unseen Artists of American Cinema*, 60.
[50] Margaret Booth, 'The Cutter,' in *Behind the Screen. How Films Are Made*, 147–8.
[51] Ibid., 148.
[52] More about this subject in the last part of the thesis.
[53] Margaret Booth, 'The Cutter,' in *Behind the Screen. How Films Are Made*, 148.
[54] In the United States editors formed their own union organisation *The Society of Motion Picture Film Editors* in 1937 and within a year managed to negotiate a 10% increase of wages. In 1944, the society underwent a change of name and became the *Motion Picture Editors Guild* in the following years publishing trade journals *The Leader* and for the last 40 years *CineMontage Magazine*.

is an awkward term for putting a film together. "Jointing" is a better description.'[55] The concept of 'jointing' replacing 'cutting' seems a fruitful intervention as it sheds light on the *constructedness* of editing. Dickinson suggests that the illusion of a third dimension is created by lighting, cinematography, but also by a 'joint' between two shots.[56] He explains:

> These joints are only of value to a film if they appear effortless and inevitable, and if dramatically they give point to the telling of the story. The dual purpose of the joint is too often neglected by the fledgling editor, who tries to kid the spectator by aiming at visually smooth joining and neglecting to give the joints any emotional–i.e., dramatic– significance at all. The cult of smoothness for smoothness's sake is selfish and cowardly…[57]

Here is then a clear expression of the dual function of a cut/joint. On the one hand, it serves the spatiotemporal cohesion of a scene. On the other hand, it needs to have emotional, that is dramatic significance. The equation between *the emotional* and *the dramatic* opens up a vista onto the notion of *affect*, a broad and multifaceted discourse in film studies, which has its antecedents in Eisenstein's writings.

In *Towards a Theory of Montage*, he proposes that emotion is 'the primary phenomenon of cinema.'[58] It is because cinematic 'movement is created out of two motionless cells. Here, a movement of the soul, i.e. emotion (from the Latin root motio = movement), is created out of the performance of a series of incidents.'[59] According to the cognitive interpretation of Greg M. Smith, montage 'structured as a series of uncompleted incidents' effectively 'calls on us to finish the actions mentally, and for Eisenstein this internal movement of filling in the gaps is emotion, a movement of the soul.'[60]

Emotion emerges then from a sort of mental fissure, an enigma in the causal chain that makes us look for the answer in the next scene, or the sensation that there is a pre-verbal significance to the shot, which we cannot fully grasp. Dickinson offers another compelling metaphor comparing editing with the technique of ballet. He suggests that the most effective cutting happens 'in

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[55] Thorold Dickinson, 'A Cutter in the Clouds,' 27.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Laocoön,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume II: Towards a Theory of Montage*, 145.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Greg M. Smith, 'Moving Explosions: Metaphors of Emotion in Sergei Eisenstein's Writings,' http://www2.gsu.edu/~jougms/Eisenstein.htm (accessed on 20 September 2017).

anticipation of facts – and most facts on the screen involve movement.' He writes:

> A dancer is first trained in certain conventional movements or gestures, and a simple dance is merely a chosen succession of these movements carried out without pauses between the various gestures. A ballet in all its amazing complexity is actually a series of such 'successions,' chosen and invented by the choreographer. It is a matter of doing one thing at a time with a series of effortless joints between each 'thing.' An efficiently jointed film can always be spotted by analysing each shot and finding out if each one begins with a new idea, no matter how seemingly unimportant – whether movement, gesture or physical reaction – and finishes with at least a hint of the completion of that idea.[61]

It is worth asking: can we extrapolate what Margaret Booth, Karel Reisz, Alexander Mackendrick and Thorold Dickinson wrote about cutting for *dramatic* values onto understanding film-going experience as the elicitation of affect in the audience? Torben Grodal, Greg M. Smith and Carl Plantinga conceptualise the movement of the narrative as a uni-directional flow of perception, cognition and emotional processing.[62] If one is to make an unlikely alloy of the classical writings on editing and certain voices in contemporary cognitive film studies, the conclusion would be that successful film editing hinges on a sense of congruity between the smoothly constructed three-dimensional space of the diegesis and the flow of narratively induced emotions, between the actions of the performers and the movement of the 'soul.'

This observation runs counter to the more established ways of defining classical cinema as a system flaunting invisibility of style, a zero-degree set of norms crafted as a transparent vehicle for narration.[63] The accounts of practitioners brought up here suggest that the core of classicism is a search for the *right* style, not necessarily for its absence. It is a style of editing that fully realises the dramatic potential of the film's *découpage*. The editor is expected to reconstruct the profilmic space with an eye to its coherence, and at the same time to find emotional cues in the material and use editing-specific tools to put emphasis on them. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the heuristic of the invisible observer spanning the entirety of the production process was something

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[61] Thorold Dickinson, 'A Cutter in the Clouds,' 27.

[62] See Carl Plantinga and Greg Smith, ed., *Passionate views: film, cognition, and emotion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999).

[63] See David Bordwell's critical analysis of Burch's use of the term 'zero-degree' film in David Bordwell, *On the History of Film Style* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), 90.

that both classicists and advocates of *montagism* readily subscribed to. It was because it resolved the problem of fragmentation, which was to a large degree an inescapable aspect of the medium based on a combination of shots. The classical style in editing relied on a sense of harmonious alignment between the dissection of the profilmic, the fragmentation of a narrative and the distribution of affective moments. A seamless merger of these layers of fragmentation required a particular set of skills from a person responsible for editing. Hence, the profession of an editor emerged as a role on the nexus between technical and creative aspects of filmmaking.

Without doubt, editing practices have been changing historically. It is clear that already in the 1930s the role of the editor was very complex and involved distinct methods. Among them was enhancing the dramatic value of something that was in the rushes, a *découpage*, but also composing pictorial rhythm, resolving plot-related issues, giving body to the actor's performance, and importantly – using semiotic techniques that we can associate with the notion of montage. The etymological connection with the editing of literary works resonated with the fact that a film editor re-assessed the work previously done by other creative contributors and made judgments with profound consequences for the overall shape of the work. In the studio system, therefore, editing could easily be turned into a tool of control and homogenisation.

To sum up, this first part of the thesis has traced the ways in which cutting was conceptualised in the first decades of cinema and what the subject of that conceptualisation was. I started from examining historical accounts of early cinema to tease out certain terminological issues but also theoretical approaches that in my view successfully identify practices of fragmentation. Cutting celluloid was not only a very early invention, but very quickly became a sophisticated method of creating cinematic effects that audiences responded to. Trick films, short comedies, factual pieces and exhibitors' programmes often employed highly developed editorial strategies, which are recognisable throughout cinema's history. The spatiotemporal fragmentation of the profilmic, the use of close-ups, and at the more fundamental level the process of selecting, arranging and trimming were all present surprisingly early in the development of film form. What differentiates early silent films from the cinema of narrative continuity is the lack of classical *découpage*, which emerged and was quickly codified only once scriptwriting practice translated the demands of popular plot

construction into film-specific narrative fragmentation. When this happened in the early teens, cutting was on track to becoming an independent craft with its own distinctive methods.

Importantly, one can discern two parallel veins of its development, which often are discussed as opposites: American editing (or cutting) and Russian montage as they were referred to in the sources from the 1930s onwards.[64] Although stylistic differences are clearly visible in the analysis of the actual works as Burch points out in his oft-quoted essay, there is also evidence of mutual influence.[65] It seems that Pudovkin's heuristics of the ideal observer and an expansive understanding of editing are equally applicable to Soviet as well as American productions. Eisenstein's understanding of mise-en-scène does not necessarily contravene its classical iteration, but rather elaborates on it.

It is also worth noting that the parallels between classicism and *montagism* are more pronounced at the conceptual level and they do not always translate into practice. Pudovkin's idea of a 'film technician' involved in the fragmentation at the stage of scriptwriting, who sees the film through to the last phases of editing is a model to which equally Sergei Eisenstein, Alexander Mackendrick and Irving Thalberg would subscribe – although the films they were involved in represent wildly divergent styles. It is a model of certain *editorial control* combined with an emphasis on the dramatic values of film form. But the latter is an open-ended concept, which only suggests that the organising objective of the narrative is eliciting the flow of emotional response in the viewer.

Finally, I would argue that it is useful to use two separate notions of *découpage* and *editing* to describe the full spectrum of decisions concerning the spatiotemporal fragmentation of the profilmic. The norms of classical *découpage* were established very quickly and, because they are so intimately connected with plotting, have proved extremely resistant to stylistic changes. As indicated, commercial scriptwriting has a lineage dating back to the nineteenth century and seems entrenched in classicism. Bordwell, not without good reason, recognises in

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[64] See *Experimental Cinema, vol. 1, no. 1* (February 1930): 48–52; Roy Perkins and Martin Stollery, *British Film Editors,* 126–130.

[65] Noël Burch, 'The Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response,' *October*, vol. 11 (Winter 1979): 77–96.

contemporary cinema the same set of principles of fragmentation and spatial cohesion that governed an average Hollywood production of the Golden Age.[66]

In the next two parts of the thesis I will be referring to the paradigms of continuity and montage. They certainly originate in the classicism and *montagism* of the 1930s. However, in taking them out of their historical context, I intend those paradigms to have a more theoretical quality, which should make them useful tools in analysing past as well as present editing practices.

In the next section 'From cut to continuity' I will look closely at terms traditionally used to designate splicing shots together: montage, *découpage,* and continuity editing. The remit of the editor's work might appear clear, but it seems that editing has meant different things to different people in the course of its history.

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[66] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 12–18.

MONTAGE

The term montage has been used and discussed in so many, often conflicting ways that the concept appears to lose its contours. My aim in this chapter is to suggest delineation between models rather than discussing them in depth. The premise here is that it is possible to discern montage-thinking and montage-practice as something distinctly separate from film construction in general, and from a narrative continuity system in particular. Admittedly, this is not the only available approach. Some theoreticians, such as Jacques Aumont and Luis Fernando Morales Morante, seem to understand montage and editing as synonyms.[1] The other perspective is that of American neoformalism, which prefers an expansive notion of continuity editing as the bedrock of all analysis of a spatiotemporal breakdown of the diegesis. Montage, according to that model, is seen as either a historical concept or a convention of 'montage sequence.'[2] Despite the subject matter being ostensibly the same, each of these views leads to shifts in emphasis, which translate into overall conclusions. One difference is related to the scope. If one takes montage/editing to mean the 'syntax of a language that begins to pursue its development'[3] or as Morante proposes 'creative technical process involving a series of steps aimed at constructing an audiovisual message,' then there is not much that differentiates such a notion from that of film form.[4] This also means that ideas of Eisenstein, that are very specifically related to montage, are bracketed with the theories of Rudolf Arnheim, Bèla Balázs, Jean Mitry or the semiotic model of Christian Metz.[5] On the other hand, the concept of 'continuity editing' is usually treated in a technical, restricted way, and only by extension can it take into account more expressive methods of cutting ('intensified continuity') or simply other styles of editing.[6] The other difference lies in the emphasis. Neoformalism privileges

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[1] Luís Fernando Morales Morante, *Editing and Montage in International Film and Video* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 5.

[2] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 12, 14.

[3] Antonio del Amo quoted in Luís Fernando Morales Morante, *Editing and Montage in International Film and Video, 3*.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 36–45.

[6] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 120.

editing understood as one of the aspects of the continuity system. Morante's 'theoretical model of editing/montage,' Aumont's syntactic, semantic and rhythmic functions of editing or Marcel Martin's idea that montage is the basis of cinematographic language are all slanted towards semiotic and expressive modes of film fragmentation.[7] Perhaps, partly due to semantic associations – editing in many languages translates as montage – those continental theorists seem to understand editing in terms of something I call here *montage paradigm*. But if there is something specific about the idea of montage, and I would argue that there is, how can we define it?

There seems to be little controversy about the basic understanding of Eisenstein's 'montage of attractions' but what does Edward Landler mean when in the context of Gregory La Cava's *Stage Door,* a run-of-the-mill RKO's production starring Katharine Hepburn and Ginger Rogers, he writes: 'Brief *rhythmic montages* of close-ups and two-shots of specific characters set up early in the story are echoed much later to resonantly convey dramatic shifts in their relationship?'[8] The film from 1937 is well within the norms of the classical system, and Landler does not refer here to the convention of 'montage sequence,' which in classical cinema was a pronounced segment clearly separated from the scenes based on dramatic continuity. I think he means something else and we intuitively understand what it is, but to come closer to defining the scope of the notion of montage one needs to approach it from a number of perspectives. In the following section, I explore the concept of montage guided by two interrelated influences: avant-garde aesthetics and Eisenstein's writings.

AVANT-GARDE

Aumont in his monograph at one point situates montage in the tradition of avant-gardes.[9] For their proponents the ideal of *montagism* was a way out of the hegemony of a plot-based cinema, compromised by its bourgeois ideology and its structures of representation. I find this a promising entry point as it brings forward a sentiment haunting the relationship between montage and the

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[7] Luís Fernando Morales Morante, *Editing and Montage in International Film and Video* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 39–41, 46, 87–96.
[8] Edward Landler, 'The Ladies of the Footlights Club,' *Cinemontage. Journal of the Motion Picture Editors Guild.* http://cinemontage.org/2017/08/13448 (accessed 15 August 2017).
[9] Jacques Aumont, *Montage* (Montreal: caboose, 2014), 37.

'invisible' cutting. At its roots, the concept of montage connotes art, collage, constructivism, urbanism, machines, progress, experiment, revolution and, with all of those things, a sense of extremity. It is a deviation from academicism, which in cinema is espoused by the classical norms of Hollywood. It is also a modernist utopia of the medium-specific method. And with that formal exploration comes a belief in the epistemological dimension of cinema twinned with a renunciation of the mimetic. As Annette Michelson observes in a different but relevant context:

> Art now takes the nature of reality, the nature of consciousness in and through perception, as its subject or domain. As exploration of the conditions and terms of perception, art henceforth converges with philosophy and science upon the problem of reality as known and knowable.[10]

Alexander Rodchenko claims, 'I reduced painting to its logical conclusion and exhibited three canvases: red, blue, and yellow. I affirmed: it's all over.'[11] Tatlin designs his *Monument for the Third International* calling it 'nothing other than a construction of the materials, iron and glass.'[12] And Kasimir Malevich concludes that Tatlin's iron spiral takes the concept of pure, spatial, pictorial expression to a limit, a terminal point.'[13] It is then logical that for Dziga Vertov the method of Kinoglaz ('Kino-Eye') lies in 'the art of organizing the *necessary movements* of objects in space as a rhythmical artistic whole, in harmony with the *properties of the material* and the internal rhythm of each object.'[14] Vertov is looking inwards at the material and its pulsating rhythms arranged in a way that is absolute, self-terminating. In parallel to the quoted painters, he seeks to reduce and define the essential elements of his medium.

This is not to say that montage is just an avant-garde technique: it certainly is, but we can also see that its use is much broader. I rather want to suggest that wherever the idea of montage is taken, whether it is Bazin's scepticism or Godard's enthusiasm, it seems to be trailed by a set of associations, which point to its origins in the avant-garde. After all, montage is said to be its

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[10] Annette Michelson, 'Bodies in Space: Film as Carnal Knowledge,' http://focorevistadecinema.com.br/jornalkubricken.htm (accessed 20 August 2017).
[11] Arifa Akbar, 'Drawing a blank: Russian constructivist makes late Tate debut,' Independent.co.uk, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/drawing-a-blank-russian-constructivist-makes-late-tate-debut-1516801.html (accessed 17 August 2017).
[12] Kasimir Malevich, *Essays on Art: 1915 – 1928* (Copenhagen: Borgen, 1968), 77.
[13] Diga Vertov, *Kino-Eye. The Writings of Dziga Vertov,* Annette Michelson, ed. and introduction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xxxii.
[14] Diga Vertov, *Kino-Eye. The Writings of Dziga Vertov,* 8 [emphases added].

grounding principle.[15] Eisenstein's sometimes very refined distinctions feed into, but also push much further, that basic intuition. The fact that Eisenstein was gradually moving away from the high-spirited polemics of the 1920s is one of the reasons why it is difficult to deduce one coherent model from his theory of montage. As much as we would like to find a clearly defined category, his mature concepts have less to do with avant-garde aesthetics, but instead they drift towards a philosophy of cinema.

If we attempted to sketch out a *paradigm of montage*, as an umbrella term covering a sphere of influences and individual models, it would be quite a broad church but with a distinct streak of similarities in thinking. It is recognisable in photo-montage artists such as Hannah Höch, John Heartfield, Alexander Rodchenko, Raoul Hausmann and painters like El Lissitzky and László Moholy-Nagy.[16] The novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* by Alfred Döblin has a clear montage-like premise, which is followed through in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's television adaptation from 1980, highlighting a connection between literary modernism and the aggressive aesthetic of the New German Cinema.[17] Similarly, Bertold Brecht's Epic Theatre, so steeped in the 1920s and 1930s is a core inspiration of the Dziga Vertov Group formed in the significant year of 1968 by Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin.[18] Annette Michelson extends this influence to Jean-Marie Straub, Jean Rouch and Chris Marker, who 'in the name of a Vertovian cinema free of seductive ambiguities and servitudes of dominant production' propose Brecht's model 'as vivifying and determining their assault upon the established codes of cinematic representation.'[19]

The theme of a city, with its vivacity and sensory overload is representative for the period and becomes reflected in a number of works that can be associated with the montage paradigm. Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) has a decidedly musical, plotless structure with only the passage of time from dawn to dusk as an organising factor. Jean Vigo's *À propos de Nice* (1930) systematically uses juxtapositions to make a social

[15] Jürgen Bländsdorf, 'Montage, Intertextualität, Gattungsmischung, Kontamination?,' in Horst Fritz, ed., *Montage in Theater und Film* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 1993), 1.
[16] Jacques Aumont, *Montage*, 37.
[17] Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (London: Penguin Books, 2018); *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, (1980, dir. Reiner Werner Fassbinder, editor Juliane Lorenz).
[18] See Wheeler Winston Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 89–108.
[19] Diga Vertov, *Kino-Eye. The Writings of Dziga Vertov,* Annette Michelson, ed. and introduction (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), l.

commentary. A city symphony about New York *Manhatta* (1921) is a result of collaboration between painter Charles Sheeler and photographer Paul Strand, while Walt Whitman's writing provides intertitles. Alberto Cavalcanti made a poetic prototype of the city symphony genre with *Rien Que les Heures* (1926) and then in the 1930s worked in John Grierson's GPO Film Unit, instilling an attention to visual mastery into the British documentary movement. In all of those films, the dynamism of montage is aligned with the rhythms of the city space, and construed often as a mediated response to the totalising effects of the urban sensorium.

I am drawing attention to the documentary works of the 1920s and 1930s because they feature clear influences from both Soviet montage cinema and avant-garde aesthetics. Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* emerges as the pivotal work of the period, which gave rise to many documentary tropes and techniques that were later absorbed by other filmmakers.[20] But this historical perspective is intended here only as a starting point. The paradigm of montage is an ahistorical concept, and its entanglement with the principles of documentary becomes all the more lucid, if we accept Dai Vaughan's proposition that 'documentary is the taproot of cinema, even of those forms most remote from it.'[21] This is, therefore, an inquiry into montage-thinking, acknowledging the fact that individual works that I classify as examples of the montage paradigm are also shaped by a broad range of codes, conventions and generic norms.

Aumont invokes Walter Benjamin's Das *Passagen-Werk* as the culminating achievement of the montage thinking of the period, all the more relevant thanks to Benjamin's claim that cinematic montage, like other nineteenth-century image production inventions, has an epistemological value revealing 'new regions of consciousness.'[22] *The Arcades Project*, with its 'play of distances, transitions, and intersections, its perpetually shifting contexts and ironic juxtapositions' is after all a passage cobbled with a collage of quotations that outnumber the commentaries.[23] Benjamin says himself: 'Method of this project: *literary montage*. I needn't say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no

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[20] See Graham Roberts, *The Man with the Movie Camera* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000), xiii.
[21] Dai Vaughan, 'From Today, Cinema is Dead,' in *For Documentary. Twelve Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 192.
[22] Jacques Aumont, *Montage*, 37.
[23] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), xi.

valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them.'[24]

Images come into their own in essay films. Agnès Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (2000, editors Jean-Baptiste Morin, Laurent Pineau and Agnès Varda) is a model lesson in the method of that burgeoning 'genre.'[25] Varda traces the history of gleaning hand in hand with exposing and interrogating her filmmaking practice, which embodies the same modest principles that drove poor agricultural workers to collect what others discarded. She too is a *montagist* picking up shots here and there, and weaving them into a colourful tapestry of references, anecdotes and musings.

Laura Rascaroli, touching on many issues raised here in relation to montage, proposes to define the essay film as a field of 'in-between' occupied by fissures in the text, gaps that are opened by the method of juxtaposition characteristic for essayistic works.[26] These Deleuzian 'interstices' lodged between images speak of the essential incommensurability of relations between shots that emerges as the core feature of films described as 'heresy of both form and thought.'[27] Rascaroli's inspired readings of Harun Farocki's *Respite* (2007) and Arnaud des Pallières's *Drancy Avenir* (1997) compel us to see in films dealing with the trauma of Holocaust those voids of the imaginary that can be described by Didi-Huberman's concept of 'image-lacunea.'[28] In *Respite*, the archival images of Jews, leaving the peaceful station in Westerbork in apprehension that their journey eastward is their last, fail to depict the horror. It cannot be otherwise as the horror of genocide is essentially unrepresentable. The essayistic filmmaker, cognisant of that failure, accentuates fissures in the film text and makes us face their unsettling qualities.

Rather than gaps in representation my account of montage-thinking stresses the effort on the part of filmmakers to undermine the ascendancy of conventional narration, and to present themselves instead as mere engineers at the service of the material, taming its fragmentation and mastering its unavoidable complexity. The subject of the filmmaker's work is porous, fissured

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[24] Ibid., 460.
[25] See Laura Rascaroli's discussion of the problems with a 'genre' of the film essay. Laura Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 69–72.
[26] Laura Rascaroli, *How the Essay Film Thinks*, 10.
[27] Ibid., 69.
[28] Ibid., 52–67.

and unruly. A *montagist*, or an essayist for that matter, respects the fragmentary nature of images and does not attempt to impose edifices of cohesion on them. This approach brings to mind a dissolved subject from Deleuze's writings, not a storyteller but an always-differentiating process that produces *collective assemblages of enunciation*. The Benjaminian montage is a rhizome that 'ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.'[29]

Benjamin sees montage as the principle of construction of those temples of modernity like the Eiffel Tower, like the iron work of arcades themselves, where a 'colossal span of spiritual energy, which channels the inorganic energy into the smallest, most efficient forms and conjoins these forms in the most effective manner.'[30] It is then an accumulation of energy in composed, welded and bolted fragments that is at the heart of the concept. Both the Eiffel Tower and Tatlin's unrealised design for *Monument for the Third International* are symbols of the joint forces of social revolution and scientific progress reduced to iron and glass constructions. In a sense, they stand as self-referential monuments to modernity, signs not pointing to anything else but to the very fact that human ingenuity conjured their existence. This follows the role of the earliest films as signalling objects for the nascent cinema apparatus and precedes how today's VR experiences are, before anything else, tributes to the idea of virtuality.

The irony of Tatlin's design, apart from the fact that only small-scale models were made, is that constructivism abhorred the idea of art and was driven by a fantasy of the utilitarian purpose of the revolutionary artists' work. This paradox features in the theory of montage itself – its artistic provenance became for Soviet filmmakers something of a lingering pang of conscience leading to fervent discussions and accusations of 'formalism.' In 1925, Eisenstein berated Vertov's cinema precisely for purported 'passionless representation' and constituting a 'symbol of contemplation.'[31] 'But we need not contemplation but action,' Eisenstein asserts. 'It is not a 'Cine-Eye' that we need but a 'Cine-Fist.'[32]

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[29] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 7.
[30] Ibid., 160.
[31] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings 1922 – 34* (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), 64.
[32] Ibid.

The appeal of the concept of montage, its primacy in the Soviet cinema ('the nerve of film'), hinged on its etymology, which grounded *montazh* in manual labour.[33] In French, the word originally was also used in relation to machinery and plumbing.[34] The promise was then that the montage method could go beyond art practice in a similar fashion that the communist system was understood as naturally superseding capitalism, which produced conditions for its own abolition. The second hope was that montage, unlike bourgeois representation, was non-illusionistic. Vertov well verbalises this tight conceptual knot that wraps around the idea of montage:

> All who love their art seek the essence of technique to show that which the eye does not see – to show truth, the microscope and telescope of time, the negative of time, the possibility of seeing without frontiers or distances; the tele-eye, sight in spontaneity, a kind of Communist decoding of reality… Almost all art film workers were enemies of the kinoks. This was normal… Kinopravda was *made with materials as a house is built with bricks*.[35]

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[33] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Dramaturgy of Film Form (The Dialectical Approach to Film Form),' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings 1922 – 34*, 163.
[34] Jacques Aumont, *Montage,* 5.
[35] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye. The Writings of Dziga Vertov,* xxx.

MONTAGE OF AFFECTS

We might consider the presented modernist ideas as a backdrop against which a number of models of montage appeared. However, there is one more theoretical concept that is worth bringing up in this context. In the essay 'Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street' Miriam Hansen situates the concept of *mimetic innervation* at the centre of Benjamin's thinking.[1] The term is thought of as an antidote to the alienating aspects of modern technology. Mimetic innervation awakens our sensory experience and memory, and can hence undo the numbing effects caused by the mass-mediated modernity. According to Hansen, it is 'a neuropsychological process that mediates between internal and external, psychic and motoric, human and mechanical registers.'[2]

Mimetic innervation seems not only imbricated with the many concerns of the period, but as a positive vision capable of resolving a seeming antagonism between technology and the experience seems well placed to shed light on the cinematic affect. I would like to place this idea next to Eisenstein's theories of montage and look for parallels and more contemporary approaches to the subject.

Hansen explains the concept by turning to the particular antinomies of Benjamin's thinking.[3] First, in the afte rmath of the World War I Benjamin welcomed the new technologies of inscription – photography, film, gramophone and radio – as facilitating 'liquidation' of the bourgeois-humanist art and its decaying aura. In his writings, Benjamin promoted a new positive, collectivist 'barbarism.' This position is associated with his famous 'The Artwork in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility' and dominates Benjamin's reception in film studies.[4] However, the rise of fascism foreshadowing another war introduced a more pessimistic strain to his essays on Baudelaire, Proust and Leskov, in which Benjamin lamented 'the decline of experience' signifying for him the loss of memory and 'the disintegration of the aura in the experience of shock.'[5] According to this second position, visual media simply proliferated shock generated by 'Taylorized labor, city traffic, finance capital, and industrial warfare, by thickening the defensive shield with which the organism protects

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[1] Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street,' *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 2, 'Angelus Novus': Perspectives on Walter Benjamin (Winter, 1999): 306–343.
[2] Ibid., 313.
[3] Ibid., 309.
[4] Ibid., 310.
[5] Ibid.

itself against an excess of stimuli.'[6] However, it is precisely at this juncture that the film takes its historic role and establishes 'a balance between humans and technology.'[7] Cinema can save us from the damaging and inevitable cycle of shock-anaesthetics-aestheticization perpetuated by industrial capitalism. Benjamin's concerns and hopes are echoed by his contemporaries – Matthew Biro argues for the importance of a related concept of cyborg for Weimar culture, and in particular for such artists László Moholy-Nagy, Kurt Schwitters and Marianne Brandt.[8] Montage appears to be a symptom and a remedy at the same time. Benjamin's techno-utopia responds to the threat of modernity by proposing to harness technology and turn the weapon against the very process that produced it. The salvation is in 'a bodily collective innervation,' which integrates body- and image-space.[9]

Innervation, as an empowering and two-way process, for Benjamin is not a psychoanalytic concept, but he borrows it from perceptual psychology, acting theory, and, in particular, from the discussions around biomechanics that prominently feature in the Soviet montage theories. In *The Montage of Film Attractions*, when examining expressive movements, Eisenstein refers to Ludwig Kluge, H. Nothnagel and G.B. Duchenne's *Physiology of Motion*.[10] Hansen points out that Eisenstein, following his teacher Vsevolod Meyerhold, adopts William James' axiom that 'emotion follows upon the bodily expression' ('we feel sorry because we cry').[11] For Benjamin, the connection between body, emotion and technological stimulation is clear. When he states 'no imagination without innervation' the allusion is to Aristotle, Schopenhauer, vitality and will.[12] The image with which he illustrates his utopian project comes from developmental psychology: 'the child learns to grasp "by reaching for the moon the same way she or he reaches for a ball."'[13] In this metaphor, haptic experience stirs up cognitive engagement more by an effusive potential than a promise of actual realisation.

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[6] Ibid., 311.
[7] Ibid., 312.
[8] Matthew Biro, *The Dada Cyborg. Visions of the New Human in Weimar Berlin* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 1.
[9] Ibid., 313.
[10] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Film Attractions,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings 1922 – 34*, 51.
[11] Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One-Way Street,' 318.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 321.

I find this Benjaminian perspective a productive line of interpretation for Eisenstein's theory of attractions, not only because they have commonalities but also because mimetic innervation extends Eisenstein's line of thinking. A definition of attraction that Eisenstein provides in his earlier essay *The Montage of Attractions* from 1923 is, to some extent, misdirection, although it is quite often used to define a concept of attraction. Writing in direct reference to his experience at the Moskow Proletkult Theatre he says:

> An attraction (in our diagnosis of theatre) is any *aggressive movement* in theatre, i.e. any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific *emotional shocks* in the spectator in their proper order within the whole. These shocks provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion.[14]

Only a year later, this time writing specifically about cinema in *The Montage of Film Attractions*, Eisenstein's thinking is more nuanced and the emphasis shifts away from the shock value of an attraction. He seems to distance himself from superficial, formal mastery of montage that 'grabs you through the attraction of its themes' exemplified by his favourite creative foe responsible for *Cine-Pravda*.[15] In fact, montage of attractions in cinema is 'the comparison of facts' and 'tendentious selection,' 'free from narrowly plot-related plans and moulding the audience in accordance with its purpose.'[16] Importantly, the comparison of subjects is deployed for powerful, emotional and thematic effect. He gives an example of the montage resolution of *The Strike*: the associational comparison between the mass shooting and a slaughterhouse.[17] Surprisingly, these statements serve only as an introduction leading to a large section of the essay devoted to expressive movements of an actor, in which he recalls the mentioned discourse on biomechanics. For Eisenstein 'the work of the model actor' is an *affective factor* and its value:

> lies not in the figurativeness of the actions of the model actor but in the degree of his motor and associatively *infectious capabilities* vis-á-vis the audience (i.e. the whole process of the actor's movement is organised with the aim of facilitating the *imitative capacities* of the audience).[18]

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[14] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' in *S. M. Eisenstein. Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings 1922 – 34*, 34.
[15] Ibid., 41.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 43.
[18] Ibid., 50.

Rather than a combination of shocks, the 'montage of attractions' appears to rely on a careful selection of contrasting facts and an expressive use of the human movement in affecting audience's reactions. Eisenstein quite literally refers here to what contemporary psychology calls 'emotional contagion,' described as an automatic mimicry of one person's movements, expressions, vocalisations, postures with those of someone else.[19]

Amy Coplan in 'Catching Characters' Emotions: Emotional Contagion Responses to Narrative Fiction Film' applies the concept to narrative films arguing that some of our affective responses to the cinematic stimuli are involuntary, pre-cognitive and do not involve beliefs, imagination or more sophisticated feelings like empathy.[20] When we see faces of soldiers in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998, dir. Steven Spielberg, editor Michael Kahn) we react with fear and anxiety before we get to know their identities or personal stories. And when we look into the semi-human face of an alien monster in Jean-Pierre Jeunet's *Alien: Resurrection* (1997, editor Hervé Schneid), saddened and terrified by a betrayal of his own mother, Ripley, we cannot but not experience feelings of sadness and fear, mixed with a more conscious satisfaction with the annihilation of the murderous creature.[21] Coplan's essay is intended as a corrective to a significant strand in cognitive film theory that examines our affective responses to film narratives but is usually concerned with more sophisticated reactions which include conscious processing. For example, Murray Smith proposes a model centred on what he calls 'the structure of sympathy' that entails three types of engagement with narrative characters: recognition, alignment and allegiance.[22] Carl Plantinga posits that filmmakers elaborated techniques of eliciting viewer's emotions by focusing their attention on the actor's face. Those methods include the use of extreme close-ups, shallow depth of field and varied point-of-view structures. An important factor for him is the length of the shot, which needs to be longer than the average, which by 1981

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[19] Elaine Hatfield, John T. Cacioppo and Richard L. Rapson, 'Primitive Emotional Contagion,' in Margaret S. Clark, ed., *Emotion and Social Behavior* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1992), 151.
[20] Amy Coplan, 'Catching Characters' Emotions: Emotional Contagion Responses to Narrative Fiction Film,' *Film Studies* 8 (Summer 2006): 26–38.
[21] Ibid., 34.
[22] Murray Smith, *Engaging characters: fiction, emotion, and the cinema* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

was about 10 seconds.[23] Nöel Caroll examines affective states that are not as discreet as emotions and argues that moods are an important factor in engaging viewers' psychological response to narratives.[24]

The aforementioned theories of Plantinga, Smith and Carroll presume that we are cognitively active – spectators recognise characters' emotional states and beliefs and align them with their own. Coplan, on the other hand, suggests that at the more basic level our responses are sometimes involuntary and largely corporeal. Nevertheless, they instantly lead to a registered emotion, according to the quoted James' dictum that emotions follow the bodily expression.

These cognitive theories of affect in the first place re-route the neoformalist cognitivism of the 1980s with its strong emphasis on plot structures and rationalist sensibility. In a move away from Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film*, cognitivists of the 1990s extend their understanding of the narrative to include emotions and our engagement with the characters.

Here I would like to draw attention to a productive connection between theories of affect and Eisenstein's interest in biomechanics, his montage of attractions and ideas of pathos and ecstasy. Some elements in his theory are echoed in research coming from both cognitive theorists and those understanding affect in a Deleuzian way.[25] Carl Plantinga's most recent turn towards 'audience pleasure' and the use of 'folk psychology' is symptomatic. He recognises among five essential sources of 'pleasure' in mainstream films: 'cognitive play,' 'visceral experience,' sympathy' and 'satisfying emotional trajectories rooted in narrative scenarios.'[26] Naturally, Eisenstein tackles the subject from a perspective of a creator who is tasked with constructing that 'emotional trajectory,' but what both approaches have in common is a recognition that certain cinematic effects rely on triggering a precise psychological response in the spectator, a feeling, which is then connected with another one forming a pattern, a flow or a map of connections.

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[23] Carl Plantinga, 'The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film', in ed. Carl Plantinga and Greg M. Smith, *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion* (Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 239–255.

[24] Nöel Caroll, 'The Nature of Horror' The Journal of Aethetics and Art Criticism 46, no. 1 (Autumn 1987), 55–59.

[25] Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener write: 'While dismissing or ignoring Deleuze, Anglo-American cognitivism also arose out of a similarly profound dissatisfaction with conceptualising cinema in terms of the mirror… of language, signs and the look.' Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An introduction through the senses* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 160.

[26] Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 21.

Theories of affect often take heed of Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of art as 'a bloc of sensations, that is to say, a compound of percepts and affects,'[27] As Brian Massumi clarifies in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* the roots of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking are in Spinoza's dual concept of affect/affection. Massumi offers an important gloss to the book explaining that affect in Deleuze's work is not a subject-related feeling, but, in congruence with his philosophical system, it denotes 'a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act.'[28] In this model, affect differs from emotion by the fact that it is non-personal and potential. It re-enacts the experiential difference.

Presciently, Eisenstein in 'Montage 1938' conjures imagery that speaks to the 'affective turn' in film theory. He makes a distinction between narratives comprised of objective, logical statements of facts and *narratives of affective type*.[29] Referring to a text by Maupassant he writes that a montage-like construct in his account of striking clocks 'will evoke in people's perceptions … not information about the time of night but an awareness of the *emotional meaning* of that particular midnight.'[30] That image in the spectator's mind will be 'his own,' alive and intimate. Eisenstein adds enigmatically: 'The image conceived by the author has become *flesh of the flesh of the spectator's image* … which was created by me, the spectator. Thus the process is creative not only for the author, but also for me, the spectator, in whose mind it has also taken shape.'[31] This writerly position of the viewer is another form of embodiment, and from a semiotic perspective it throws the spectator into the text. A work of *signifiance* engages the subject in the inter-play between images and their affective resonances.[32]

Similar ideas of cinema as a space of embodiment feature strongly in contemporary film theory. Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener in Film *Theory: An Introduction Through Senses* propose a reinterpretation of the field by

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[27] Deleuze, 1994, 164

[28] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, xvi.

[29] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montage 1938,' 310.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Stephen Heath, 'Translator's note,' in Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 10.

arranging film concepts according to sensual metaphors that correspond with their preoccupations. The picture that emerges from their book is that of film theory and its object in a mutual fascination with the sensual, haptic, kinetic and embodied manifestations of space and time in the filmic treatment of two-dimensional plane. Cinema is at the same time: window and frame, screen and threshold, mirror and face, look and gaze, skin and touch, acoustics and space, mind and body. Paraphrasing Didier Anzieu, the spectator is wrapped in the visual and sonic envelope of the film-womb, screened from the world and, simultaneously, intimately connected to it through the body that has an anthropomorphic existence.[33]

Discussing the metaphor of 'cinema as brain' Elsaesser and Hagener refer to Annette Michelson's essay 'Bodies in Space: Film as Carnal Knowledge,' in which she examines Kubrik's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968, editor Ray Lovejoy). I would suggest that their reading of Michelson's text captures a significant trope in the discourse on spatiotemporal articulations in a certain strain of avant-garde that are echoed in a number of arthouse works:

> This drama between things 'seen' and things 'felt,' between the coordinates of embodied and disembodied perception, between sensation and cognition, translates in Kubrick into the difference between physical groundedness and a feeling of weightlessness, which for Michelson becomes 'the sub-plot of the film.'… 2001 is therefore a film that teaches the spectator how it wants to be seen and understood, ideally acquiring the ability to orient oneself in space and time differently as body and consciousness.[34]

Films like Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979, editor Lyudmila Feyginova) or *Solaris* (1972, editor Lyudmila Feyginova) use a method Kubrick has perfected in *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It is a mode of addressing the viewer that turns the spatiotemporal continuum into a site of consciousness. To engage in a Tarkovsky film is to inhabit more than just the narrative space as something screened in front of us, but actually also the perception of that space within the diegesis. *Experiential* cinema overtly disrupts boundaries between what is represented and how we sense the representation. We must accept parameters of this embodied perception as the preconditions of narrative engagement. The challenge that

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[33] Didier Anzieu, *The Skin-Ego* (London: Karnac, 2016), 184.
[34] Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An introduction through the senses* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 162.

comes with watching these films comes from the cognitive impositions that are a direct result of their visceral, all-embracing *découpages.*

However, art cinema is not the only territory of the 'enveloping spectacle' of embodiment, or the dissolved subject from Deleuzian writings. It is something more fundamental as Michelson herself suggests. As with many film concepts, the origins can be found in Eisenstein's writings. In 1928, under the influence of the Kabuki theatre, Eisenstein enthused about a 'monistic ensemble' of affects.[35] He made a distinction between methods of a traditional, Moskow theatre or an opera with its 'nasty' synthesis of expressive forms and a Japanese theatre, which offers a total, sensual stimulation. *Monism of ensemble* means that 'sound, movement, space and voice *do not accompany* (or even parallel) one another but are treated as *equivalent elements.*'[36] He writes that a Japanese theatre artist is aiming for the 'the final sum of stimulants to brain' disregarding where they come from.[37] It is a case of 'the *transference* of the basic *affective intention* from one material to another, from one category of 'stimulant' to another.'[38] There is nothing to suggest that Eisenstein uses the word 'transference' in a Freudian way, but even if coincidental his intuition is rich in a wide range of connotations. What he is certainly getting at is a phenomenon of synaesthesia (to 'hear light and see sounds' as he explains), which Eisenstein mentions here in passing, but will come back in a more substantial way a decade later. In 'Vertical Montage' he develops what is perhaps the crowning model of his theory, although the earlier concept of overtonal montage is a good indication of his thinking.[39]

Vertical montage is explicitly based on a polyphonic arrangement of three layers of *inner synchronicity*: first between sound, picture and movement, then between 'the image and the meaning of the sequences,' which are finally combined to disclose 'the basic image of the theme.'[40] The key word in this formula is *synchronicity*, which Eisenstein reiterates a number of times trying hard to specify its significance. It is a synesthetic synergy that is inherent to the

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[35] Sergei Eisenstein, 'An Unexpected Juncture,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings 1922 – 34*, 117.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 118.
[39] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1I: Towards a Theory of Montage*, 327–399.
[40] Ibid., 336.

film and relates to its rhythm, music and tonal dominant in the first place, but also to its semiotic and thematic elements. It is a 'total, polyphonic, reciprocal 'sensory' resonance' of the film.[41] In the last section of the thesis I will come back to that image, as it evokes an idea of mapping and constructing a network of connections, which I find a constructive way of conceptualising the work of the editor.

One striking aspect of Eisenstein's overall trajectory of thinking about montage is how often this holistic view of film form re-appears. Montage for him is more of a principle of coordination of fragments than any one specific technique. Deleuze seems to follow this intimation when writing that 'montage is the determination of the whole.' [42] Montage presupposes Bergsonian movement-images and is indirectly 'the image *of* time.'[43] Every now and again, we see a heady universalism in Eisenstein's remarks, which leaves on them a phenomenological stamp bringing his montage theory closer to Deluze and Marleau-Ponty. The idea proposed here of the montage paradigm as an umbrella term pays tribute to this recurring streak in Eisenstein's thinking.

The second overall feature of Eisenstein's theory is a certain dualism – one can discern two distinct directions of the montage paradigm: one is concerned with emotions, senses and attractions. We can call it here the 'montage of affects.' The second one is more focused on themes, 'ideas that make up the content of the work,' in short, with semiotic aspects of a film. This could be called the 'montage of images,' which I mean in the Eisensteinian sense as elements of montage that signify something.[44] Despite the clear progression from the essay about film attractions (1924) to the later theories stressing a thematic aspect of montage, both strands of his thinking are present throughout Eisenstein's theoretical work. The emphasis shifts and by the time he writes about 'intellectual montage' he is already dismissive of 'primitively physiological' resonances.

Yet, it would be reductive to read into his theoretical development an evolution from putting emphasis on emotion to proclaiming the supremacy of

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 29.

[43] Ibid.

[44] In 'Montage 1938' referring to cinema and acting Eisenstein writes: 'In both cases, static elements – either given or invented – and their juxtaposition gives rise *dynamically* to an emotion or an image.' Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montage 1938,' 315.

reason. On the one hand, as we've seen with his early essay, an attraction is always a result of the visual juxtaposition that gives rise to a simile: strikers are slaughtered *like* cattle. Making this intellectual connection is essential for the attraction to work. On the other hand, his thinking about affective factors, such as an actor's performance examined in that first text, has a continuation in the idea of the ensemble of sensations and the polyphonic dimension of the vertical montage.

This dualism in Eisenstein's approach is evident in *The Fourth Dimension in Cinema* from 1929. Here he brings discreet elements together by suggesting four *methods of montage*: metric, rhythmic, tonal and overtonal.[45] They are construed as primarily formal and affective devises: 'both visual and sound overtones are totally physiological sensations.'[46] But then, towards the very end of the text, Eisenstein adds a fifth category, which is of the next order: intellectual montage. This more refined level comprises 'intellectual overtones,' which is an analogous category to 'overtonal montage.' They are parallel in method it seems, because while the overtonal montage is 'the furthest organic development' of all those types of montage that produce sensual stimulants, the intellectual montage causes the same reaction 'in the centres of higher nervous activity.' Eisenstein writes:

> Whereas in the first case under the influence of 'tap-dance montage' (*chechëtochnyi montazh*) the hands and feet quiver, in the second case this quivering, provoked by an intellectual stimulant combined differently, produces an identical reaction in the tissues of the higher nervous system of the thought apparatus.[47]

Montage of affects is centred on sensory stimulation and causes emotional contagion, montage of images targets conscious cognitive processing. Although these are theoretically distinct strands of Eisenstein's thinking, he sees them organically linked.

This dual structure sets a blueprint for other theoretical examinations of montage. I'm looking at them separately, because differences between these models create productive tension, but I do not want to lose sight of the fact that in cinema perception, emotion and cognition are tied in an indissoluble way.

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[45] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Fourth Dimension in Cinema,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings, 1922 – 34*, 186–192.
[46] Ibid., 186.
[47] Ibid., 193.

For instance, Deleuze adapting Bergson's theory of movement-image discerns three 'avatars' of that idea: *perception-image* ('the thing and the perception of the thing are one and the same thing'), *action-image* ('one passes imperceptibly from perception to action') and *affection-image*, which occupies the 'interval,' a concept he borrows from Vertov.[48] The latter is 'the way in which the subject perceives itself, or rather experiences itself or feels itself 'from the inside.'[49] For Deleuze then, montage is the *assemblage* of perception-images, action-images and affection-images. These distinctions serve also a typology of cinema based on which variant of movement-image is dominant: Griffith invented montage of action; Dreyer in *The Passion of Joan of Arc* is the master of affect; Vertov is the pioneer of a perception-image and with it the whole experimental cinema.[50]

Deleuze finds a correspondence between types of shots and the variants of movement-image. The long shot is suited for a perception-image, an action-image is played out in medium shots and the close-up is a device of an affection-image.[51] Yet, he concludes invoking Eisenstein again, 'each of these movement-images is a point of view on the *whole of the film*, a way of grasping this whole.'[52] Eisenstein's polyphonic, vertical montage features here as a strong reference, in particular his postulate that the theme of a film is reflected equally in its discreet parts as in their combination: every cell of a film contains a DNA of the whole. Or as Deleuze writes: 'each [movement-image ceases] to be spatial in order to become itself a 'reading' of the whole film.[53]

It is worth adding, there is a metaphysical underlining of those concepts. For Deleuze image *is* matter, it is not hidden behind it. Therefore, with cinema, the world becomes its own image: 'the material universe, the plane of immanence, is the *machine assemblage* of movement-time.'[54] The concept of the plane of immanence is related to Spinoza's single substance, which could be God or Nature and it allows Deleuze to reject the construct of the subject and the dualism of a self-contained mind and body. Hence, his importance for theorists interested in embodiment as a tool of analysis finds its roots here, just as a

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[48] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1. The Movement-Image*, 64 – 65.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid., 70.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 59.

slightly paradoxical convergence of his theory with modern cognitivism. Deleuzian metaphysics suggest that *assemblage* is a principle of ordering images in the subject-less world, and this primordial montage has neither an author, nor overseer, but acts upon itself. Montage, therefore, supplements his basic category of *difference*.

A radical creative illustration of Deleuzian concepts can be found in Godard's *Histoire(s) du Cinema*, a project described by Jean-Louis Leutrat as 'protoplasmic oeuvre,' 'the constant circulation of matter from one constituent work to the next.'[55] Godard firing on an electronic typewriter is the montage itself personified, anchored within the screen and weaving its web of associations connected horizontally through dissolves and vertically by stacking layers of signification that assault us all at once. The subject of this total assemblage is the history of cinema (the image) and the history of the 20th century (the world), both un-differentiated, melted into the plane of immanence. In that respect cutting, differentiating, imposing a *frame* assumes a role of an epistemological tool, and Godard seems to be well aware of it. In his Montreal lectures he says:

> What's interesting are the boundaries, the limits, because only through limits can we understand – our totality is too great – our desire for a lack of limits, in both senses of the word, and understand reality. In this sense the cadre, the frame, is extremely interesting. Everything is *cadre*, everything is framed. But whether the frame is round or square, the image is an image of life, and representation is a particular frame, the same way we too have *a physical frame we call our body*.[56]

According to Godard, both American cinema and Russians were looking for editing. But what Griffith really discovered was a close-up, and what Eisenstein stumbled upon, mistaking it for montage, was an angle.[57] Whether this allusion to Eisenstein's *mis en cadre* is conscious or not, Godard positions himself in a long list of filmmakers who have been searching for editing. Its apparent invisibility is puzzling and unnerving. From this perspective, the idea of montage is not an imposition of artificiality as Bazin would have it, but a desperate attempt at fleshing out the organising principle of fragmentation in cinema, also in life.

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[55] Michael Witt, 'Archeology of Histoire(s) du cinema,' in Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television* (Montreal: caboose, 2014), xviii.
[56] Jean-Luc Godard, *Introduction to a True History of Cinema and Television* (Montreal: caboose, 2014), 292.
[57] Ibid.

Following an Eisensteinian-Deleuzian line of inquiry, Térésa Faucon most recently conceptualises montage as a method of generating and circulating energy in images.[58] She grounds her theory in the phenomenological observation that energy is not representable, it has no character, no face ('reste sans figure').[59] But it can be measured, and one can observe the effects it has on the material. Montage, therefore, is a vibration of images, which has its origin in the 'ballistic' understanding of the mechanical energy, which is both conserved and put into motion.[60]

The embodiment, referred to by Eisenstein, hinted at by Godard and a key component of the theories of affect, has recently also been a strong feature of a discipline called by Uri Hasson 'neurocinematics.'[61]

In this context, it is worth drawing attention to Karen Pearlman's *Cutting rhythms. Shaping the Film Edit*.[62] Her main argument is that the editor makes a decision about when to cut rhythmically based on two factors: one is the editor's experience of rhythms in the world, the other is the sense of rhythms in her body.[63] She describes the role of the editor in phenomenological terms: 'the editor is a material, physical, rhythmical entity that accrues rhythmic knowledge of the world.'[64] The premise of her approach is that rhythmic considerations underpin all aspects of the editor's work, which allows one to see analogies between cutting and choreography and music.[65] Since rhythm is tied with movement, next to physical rhythms one can discern emotional, and event rhythms corresponding to the movement of story and emotions.[66] While Pearlman's categories certainly add an interesting perspective on the affective and rhythmic aspects of an editor's work, they seem to avoid discussing codes and conventions as the important factors in editing. The spiral model of editing that is suggested here addresses this issue by referring to cultural schemas and by

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[58] Térésa Faucon, *Théorie du montage. Énergie, forces et fluids* (Paris: Armand Colin/Recherches, 2013), 10–11.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., 219.
[61] Uri Hasson, Ohad Landesman, Barbara Knappmeyer, Ignacio Vallines, Nava Rubin and David J. Heeger, 'Neurocinematics: the Neuroscience of Film,' *Projections* 2, issue 1 (Summer 2008): 1–26.
[62] Notably, in the first edition of her book from 2009, Pearlman was emphasising the role of rhythm in editing. The second edition published seven years later comes with a different subtitle: *Intuitive Film Editing* and a few changes to the original text. Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing* (New York: Focal Press, 2016).
[63] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing*, 14–15.
[64] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Shaping the Film Edit* (New York: Focal Press, 2009), 15.
[65] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing*, 30–34.
[66] Ibid., 87–94.

using more general distinctions which are aimed at taking into account also the context of a film's reception.

Her concept of 'mirroring rhythm' is supported by two theories from cognitive studies. Kinesthetic empathy relies on something that Arnold Modell calls *corporeal imagination*.[67] It is a process that gives meaning and feeling to movements that are registered in our innate physical reflexes. The second concept is a phenomenon of *mirror neurons*. These studies largely give neuroscientific credence to the earlier psychological theories, such as the mentioned 'emotional contagion' idea and seek to explain empathy in terms of brain activity.

The theory of mirror neurons, now widely cited in the context of humanities, is originally based on experiments conducted on monkeys by Italian neuroscientists Vittorio Gallese, Giacomo Rizzolatti and Leonardo Fogassi in the 1990s.[68] Examining patterns of their brain activation, they discovered that certain neurons responded not only when a monkey was performing a given action but also when it was observing someone else doing a similar thing. The team of neuroscientists in Parma called these neurons 'mirror neurons' as they had a double function: perception and acting on the perceived action. In those first experiments a particular neuron located in the premotor cortex was activated when a monkey was grasping a raisin, but also when the animal saw a person doing it, which was surprising as the more traditional theory would expect to see an activation in a different area of the brain, the temporal visual cortex responsible for processing perception.[69] This discovery led to further research, which began to explain the process of learning, human empathy and some aspects of cognition as a sort of mimicry of our neural circuits, which respond to the external stimulus by practicing the same patterns of activation as the ones that are used when performing a particular action.

This process of neural 'dry firing' has also been used to explain viewers' reactions to a cinematic spectacle. Vittorio Gallese's concept of embodied simulation applies with the same degree to social interactions as to our interactions with the screen, eerily evoking the Deleuzian world-image.[70] Gallese

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[67] Ibid., 18–19.
[68] Christian Keysers, *Emphatic Brain. How the Discovery of Mirror Neurons Changes our Understanding of Human Nature* (Lexington: Social Brain Press, 2011), 13.
[69] Ibid., 15.
[70] Vittorio Gallese, 'Embodied simulation: From neurons to phenomenal experience,' *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* (2005) 4: 23–48.

explicitly situates it within the phenomenology of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty to indicate that our construct of the self is already a consciousness of, and towards something. Merleau-Ponty suggested that space is '…not a sort of ether in which all things float … The points in space mark, in our vicinity, the varying range of our aims and our gestures.'[71] Therefore, Husserl's 'tactile lived body' is already located spatially, and this is a foundation of our 'epistemic self-referentiality.'[72]

Gallese defines embodied simulation as 'an automatic, unconscious, and pre-reflexive functional mechanism, whose function is the modelling of objects, agents, and events.'[73] This modelling also governs the awareness of our own body – the body-schema that we apply to orient ourselves in the inter-subjective space. It is 'an *unconscious* body map, which enables us to program and monitor the execution of actions with the different body parts.'[74] As he later states, this kind of simulation is paramount for our understanding of people's intentions because to successfully *perceive* social interactions we need to be able to predict sensory aspect of events. We *feel* emotions of other people, and, therefore, we *know* what they are likely to do. This prediction depends on neural states which are largely unconscious.'[75]

There are two equally significant upshots of Gallese's theory, if we consider it in the context of cinema. First, it provides hard evidence for a perhaps unsurprising observation that many aspects of our engagement with film are unconscious and automatic. Secondly, it postulates that the *perception* of cinematic narratives is both embodied and affective. The latter observation has been picked up by other scholars, semi-ironically referring to themselves as neurohumanists. For example, Hannah Wojciechowski writes about the Feeling of Body in relation to the experience of literary narrative.[76] Siri Hustvedt culls neuroscience, Freud and phenomenology to argue that 'a core bodily, affective, timeless self is the ground of the narrative, temporal self, of autobiographical memory and of fiction.'[77]

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[71] Ibid., 27.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 41.
[74] Ibid., 24.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Hannah Wojciehowski and Vittario Galese, 'How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology,' California Italian Studies, 2 (1): 2011, 7.
[77] Siri Hustvedt, 'Three Emotional Stories: Reflections on Memory, the Imagination, Narrative and the Self,' *Neuropsychoanalysis* 13(2) (2011): 187.

Some of the more promising studies in this area deploy empirical methods of gauging spectators' brain activity during watching a film, such as using magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). In the article 'Neurocinematics: The Neuroscience of Film' Uri Hasson, Ohad Landesman, Barbara Knappmeyer, Ignacio Vallines, Nava Rubin and David J. Heeger describe a series of experiments that used fMRI and were designed to assess similarities in viewers' responses to spatiotemporal stimuli. The premise of their research was that inter-subject correlation analysis (ISC) could produce quantitative data giving an insight into the impact of different styles of filmmaking on viewers' brain activity.[78] The most advanced study compared ISC gathered for Sergio Leone's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966, editors Eugenio Alabiso and Nino Baragli) with the results obtained for an episode of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*: *Bang! You're Dead* (1961, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, editor Edward W. Williams), an episode of Larry David's *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000) and a 10-minute unedited shot of Washington Square Park.[79] Although the selection does seem rather arbitrary, the results showed very significant differences as to how homogenous, or not, responses of viewers were. The variations were dependent on the way the films were edited. The Hitchcock episode produced similar responses in 65% of the cortex across all viewers. *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* also evoked a fairly uniform response of 45%. Larry David's observational comedy scored 18%, and an unedited footage sample produced similarities in only a small fraction of the cortex: less than 5%.[80]

As the researchers admit themselves, any firm conclusions from the study need to be qualified. In particular, the results obtained from a sample group of college students might differ from tests conducted on subjects with more varied social backgrounds or belonging to a different age group. However, what seems clear from the study is that editing in all its forms exerts significant control over the processes in both sensory brain areas and those responsible for more complex cognitive functions. The degree of that cognitive grip seems very high in some instances.

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[78] Uri Hasson, Ohad Landesman, Barbara Knappmeyer, Ignacio Vallines, Nava Rubin and David J. Heeger, 'Neurocinematics: the Neuroscience of Film,' 1.
[79] Ibid., 14.
[80] Ibid.

The result of 65% of ISC in the case of a Hitchcock film suggests, in plain terms, that all of the viewers watching the film responded to the audiovisual stimulus in more or less the same way. The low score of the unedited shot means that without editing structures viewers' attention was guided by their own individual mental processes. The differences between the three examined editing styles could be explained by the overall emphasis in the classical style of editing on the precise control of the viewer's attention. But the differences seem also to suggest that the spatiotemporal coherence (the so called 'continuity editing') is not the only prerequisite of a uniform reception. *Curb Your Enthusiasm,* while its spatiotemporal comprehension should not pose any problems and should be similar across all viewers, is shot in a mockumentary style, and plays on ambiguities and cultural codes. This might explain why viewers understand Larry David's antics in a more idiosyncratic way. *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, edited by Eugenio Alabiso and Nino Baragli, is in many ways a hybrid. A distinct feature of its visual style is cutting between long shots and extreme close-ups. Its mis-en-scène is built around expressiveness, and reaction shots are often longer that it is needed to convey a narrative motivation.

The characteristic aspect of a diagram showing how the viewers' ISC changed over the course of watching *Bang! You're Dead* was how closely it followed the obligatory moments of tension and release that were recommended by scriptwriting manuals. In particular, the climax of the film, as certainly planned by Hitchcock, was the moment when every viewer was *feeling and thinking* the same thing. This does not mean that viewers were less cognitively active in other parts of the film, it just suggests that their reactions in those other sections were more individualised.

The overall conclusion based on the distinctions proposed here could be that classical *découpage*, exemplified by a Hitchcock film, is a style of plot-based cinema that aims at the highest degree of homogeneity in the sensory, affective and cognitive reactions of the audience. This statement mirrors the conclusions from the section where I attempted to describe classical style on the basis of selected observations coming from editors working in the 1930s. The neurocinematic angle gives us, however, an additional core characteristic of classicism – it is geared towards homogeneity of reception. Again, this does not necessarily mean any sort of *obviousness* of formal devices alone. In actual fact,

the purely technical aspects of the spatiotemporal dissection are of secondary relevance as exemplified by the results for Larry David's comedy. It does mean, however, that the overall principle of classical style requires an editor to be attuned to the cultural codes of the mainstream audience, which circumscribe generic expectations and arrest viewers' attention with recognisable tropes and types of behaviour. In the last chapters of the thesis I will elaborate the idea of cultural mapping as a way of making an account of that important aspect of the editor's work.

As we have seen, traces of Eisenstein's montage of affects can be seen in a wide range of theoretical debates. Neurocinematics seems to be the latest trend that has its conceptual roots in his writings. While this trajectory of thinking begins with the attraction and evolves to consider the affect and embodiment, the second strand in Eisenstein's texts is grounded in dialectics and his idea of collision.

MONTAGE OF IMAGES

Eisenstein himself was well aware of the two veins in his theory. In 1935 when writing a programme for a course in film directing he made a distinction between 'Types of Montage Classified by Semantic Sequence' and 'Types of Montage Classified by Kinetic Sequence.'[1] Among kinetic types are: metric, rhythmic, tonal (melodic), overtonal and intellectual, with a caveat that the latter is 'a new quality in the development of overtonal montage towards significating overtones.' *Semantic montage* on the other hand is broken down into: the one that gives simple information, presents a few actions simultaneously ('parallel montage'), 'an image-forming montage' and 'concept-forming montage.'[2] I propose to use the term 'montage of images' as a way of circumscribing the broad area of Eisensteinian theory that has at its core the semiotic aspect of montage. *Image* seems appropriate, as it is a key term in that respect, although Eisenstein understands it in a rather idiosyncratic way.

When in 'Montage 1938' he offers a self-criticism of his earlier radical belief in dialectics of image, Eisenstein does not completely climb down but proposes a compromise. He admits that the mistake of his youth was exaggerating the importance of juxtaposition and paying insufficient attention to the material that was its basis. Yet his ultimate way out of the conundrum is not necessarily to revoke the principle of montage, but instead to redefine its object. Montage-formation applies to shots, sequences, phenomena, physiological sensations, individual dominants, signs, images and rhythms among other things. Montage is then a method of connecting elements, in which dialectics play its role too. He writes:

> It was and remains correct that the juxtaposition of two montage sequences resembles not so much their sum as their product… the result of juxtaposition always differs qualitatively (in dimension, or if you like in degree)…The women… is depicted; the woman's black dress is depicted, and both are capable of *objective representation*. 'Widow,' however – the concept which arises from juxtaposition of the two depictions – is not capable of being objectively represented; it is a new perception, *a new concept, a new image*.[3]

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[1] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Sound-Film Montage. [Rhythm],' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1I: Towards a Theory of Montage*, 228.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Montage 1938,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1I: Towards a Theory of Montage*, 297.

I would suggest that Eisenstein's understanding of montage lies in this particular and rather mysterious leap that happens through editing: from *objective representation* to the emergence of a concept, an image. The concept *is* the image. This equation is further evidence making Eisenstein a precursor of cognitivism: modern psychologists tend to refer to *mental images* rather than thoughts.

Later in the same text, Eisenstein explains the difference between *depiction* (*izobrazhenie*) and *image* (*obraz*) giving an example of a clock. 'A white circular disc of moderate dimensions with a smooth surface divided around its circumference into sixty equal segments' is a depiction.[4] But when this geometric surface is provided with a mechanism that makes two metal arms move at a certain rate, and when we infer the function of this object, it acquires a new significance – it becomes *an image of time*.

One can notice how topics Eisenstein is at pains to tackle are reflected in the vocabulary of film semiotics. He writes about *image* in a way that suggests he is thinking about *symbol* but wants to avoid the word. But in fact, his initial example of someone reading time turns the clock into an *index* – there is an existential bond between the object and what it refers to, the time of day. On the other hand, when Eisenstein returns to this example writing about 'emotional significance of midnight' in an excerpt from Maupassant, he seems to evoke the symbolic spectrum of signification.[5] Just as in *The Hourglass Sanatorium* (1973, dir. Wojciech Jerzy Has, editor Janina Niedzwiecka) based on Bruno Schulz's masterpiece shots of stopped clocks do not indicate sloppiness of their owner but symbolise suspension of time.

Eisenstein was not alone in his interest for cinematic semiosis. Later critics, however, brought into discourse more established categories forged by Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Peirce. The latter in his famous typology of signs looks at the etymology of the word *symbol* only to reject it and return to the original use of the word by Greeks.[6] Etymologically, symbol can be understood as 'a thing thrown together.' In that sense, to make a symbol is to conjuncture, juxtapose two things in a montage-like manner. However, when Greeks used the word 'sumballein' ('throw together') they frequently referred to making a

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[4] Ibid., 299.
[5] Ibid., 304.
[6] Charles Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover Publications, 2012), 113.

contract or convention.[7] Therefore, for Peirce, symbol has primarily that original meaning, that is, of a conventional sign. I would argue this is exactly what Eisenstein does not want to associate montage with. Collision of depictions is not meant to produce an image that slides into a cliché. But image, in his understanding, is not exactly a pure index either. Image is perhaps more like *mental signs* that Peirce talks about. They are 'of mixed nature; the symbol-parts of them are called concepts.'[8]

When Peter Wollen enthusiastically brings attention to Peirce's semiology and its rehabilitation in Roman Jakobson's work, he sees its strength in the fact that those categories can overlap and complement each other, which Peirce explicitly acknowledges when he explains that in reasoning we use a mixture of all. Therefore, the triadic model well suits the analysis of cinema, which 'contains all three *modes* of the sign: indexical, iconic and symbolic.' For Wollen this elegantly resolves the theoretical battle between Bazin, Barthes and Metz. Their focus has been too narrow, because they 'have seized on one or other dimension and used it as the ground for an aesthetic firman.'[9]

This direction of thinking is certainly evident in Eisenstein's theories. He too is neither satisfied with the purely indexical or the evidently symbolic rendition of the cinematic sign. On his part, Wollen suggests the iconic as the underappreciated element of the triad. It 'is the most labile; it observes neither the norms of convention nor the physical laws which govern the index, neither *thesis* nor *nomos*.'[10] As an illustration, he quotes Metz's interpretation of a shot from *Que Viva Mexico!,* in which we see three peasants buried in the sand, their heads trampled by horses, their faces peaceful in death. While at the denotative level the image conveys defeat, the composition connotes something opposite: 'the grandeur of the Mexican people, the certainty of final victory, a kind of passionate love which the northerner feels for the sun-drenched splendour of the scene.'[11] The shot is iconic in a sense that its compositional elements and staging evoke all these ideas Metz writes about in a way that makes them inferable by an attentive viewer. It happens because of the resemblance of the cinematic effects to the abstract quality of 'grandeur' and 'splendour.'

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[7] Ibid., 114.
[8] Ibid., 115.
[9] Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (London: BFI, 2013), 104.
[10] Ibid., 130.
[11] Ibid.

While for Wollen this might be an iconic image, Roland Barthes would probably call this an example of *the third meaning*.[12] His semiotic approach differs slightly from the ones cited above. According to Barthes, the photograph is an analogon that constitutes 'a message without a code.'[13] However, a pure image carrying denotation only is a Utopia. The literal level of 'what it is' is immediately followed by a connotation, engendered by techniques of fixing the unruly polysemy and stabilising the 'floating chain of signifieds.'[14] A Panzani advertisement boasting a cornucopia of its products is more than a bagful of pasta, peppers, onions, a tin and a pocket of parmesan. It is an *image* of 'Italianicity.'[15] Eisenstein's *depiction* is, according to this terminology, a denotation, while a collision of images would produce connotative results, which is congruent with Barthes' analysis of a series of images, textual anchoring and editorial contexts of photography. Framing, lighting and focus are all interventions also of the connotative order.

As becomes clear, the fragmentation of the profilmic – the ostensible subject of the editor's interventions – lends itself easily to a description in semiotic terms. The key argument of Barthes in 'Rhetoric of the Image' is actually a statement on montage-structures of bourgeois representation: 'the *syntagm* of the denoted message… naturalizes the system of the connoted message.'[16] The syntagm in the sense that Barthes uses the word here works by associating elements without any system; it is a natural flow of an 'iconic discourse.'[17] It is a deception of course and a Soviet montage à rebours. This kind of rhetoric is like a classical editing that effaces crafted elements of the storytelling invariably imbued with ideology and the spectacle by presenting them as a flow of icons.

Eisenstein does aim for naturalisation, and even his wording is strangely similar to the Barthes' 'total system of the image.'[18] Yet he means it in an operational, almost gullible, way. 'The basic image' is the theme of the work visualised in an embodied and affective matrix of montage-structures. Barthes

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[12] See Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning,' in *Image, Music, Text*, 56.
[13] Roland Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image,' in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 36.
[14] Ibid., 139.
[15] Ibid., 34.
[16] Ibid., 51.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., Eisenstein writes about 'the totality of each shot' (Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage 1938," 398) and the basic image of the theme' (Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage 1938," 336).

expands on Eisensteinian ideas, while bracketing them with the sinister workings of ideology. The editing-induced impression of a natural flow of images conceals the presence of a codified system of representation. The brilliance of the cinematic technique distracts our attention from the cultural assumptions that prop up the network of connotative meanings.

What is more, it is also Eisenstein who provokes the idea of *the obtuse*. In the essay 'The Third Meaning: research notes on some Eisenstein stills' Barthes develops a concept of the meaning superseding the obvious and the symbolic levels. That third meaning, which he recognises in a scene of ritual baptism by gold in *Ivan the Terrible*, is a phase of *significience*; it resides in details ('the closed eyelids, the taut mouth, the hand clasped on the breast')[19]; it is disguised. The obtuse meaning carries emotion.[20] In many ways, Barthes tiptoes here around the Eisensteinian approach to affect and intellectual overtones. But the conclusion he reaches resonates with other positions already discussed. The third meaning subverts the story; it suspends the continuity flow, but this is precisely where the 'filmic' emerges. Barthes writes: 'The filmic is that in the film which cannot be described, the representation which cannot be represented. The filmic begins only where language and metalanguage end.'

I find it significant that this, similar to Mackendrick's and Eisenstein's position, imagines the 'filmic' as a non-linear and a pre-verbal (or rather post-verbal) aspect of the moving images. From this perspective, it is montage rather than classical editing that appears predestined to foreground 'the cinematic.' Indeed, the quest for filmic essence is a recurrent trope of the avant-garde, from Germaine Dulac to Maya Deren to Hollis Frampton.[21] Despite that, we see again that both *montagism* and classicism seem driven by the same inward look at the medium. While montage theory attempts to formulate conditions for the escape from the verbal in an overt way, Mackendrick locates the truly cinematic in the moments of ambivalence, in fissures splintering the naturalised flow of iconic images. It is as if the classical form fed off the inherent tension between seamless transparency and the yawning gaps of incoherence, unexpected concatenations and moments when linearity is disrupted by the sheer brilliance of the fleeting image.

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[19] Roland Bartes, 'The Third Meaning,' in *Image, Music, Text,* 57.
[20] Ibid., 59.
[21] David James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde. History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 42.

To those ideas connected to the Eisensteinian montage and well established in film semiotics, I would like to add one more concept from cognitive linguistics. Although Pierce understands symbol as a conventional sign, he also recognises its dynamic character and the possibility of its creative formation. 'Symbols grow' out of other symbols or icons, or mixed signs. 'A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples. In use and in experience, its meaning grows.'[22] This dynamic model of symbol is similar to how George Lakoff and Mark Johnson understand the use of *metaphor* in everyday life. Not only is their model flexible and has wide applications, but it absorbs many ideas that have already been discussed in relation to the montage of images.

According to Lakoff and Johnson, 'metaphors,' next to being devices of a poetic language, also 'structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people.'[23] The scope of metaphorical thinking is very wide and is, at the one end, grounded in structural metaphors, like the ones about time: *time is a resource*, which maps out to: 'time is a kind of (abstract) substance; can be quantified fairly precisely; can be assigned a value per unit; serves a purposeful end; is used up progressively as it serves its purpose.'[24] At the other end are complex metaphors that arise out of a coherent structuring of our experience that connects many metaphors in a network-like manner. An example is: *love is a collaborative work of art*.[25] While it is not a conventional conjuncture, its premises are widely shared at least in Western culture's constructs about love, such as *love requires dedication*; *involves creativity*; *cannot be achieved by formula*, etc.[26]

Just like Pierce's mental signs then, metaphors largely constitute our abstract thought. However, their structure has a double nature – there is an intellectual aspect to them, but they also have a natural dimension based on our sensory experiences, such as colour, shape, texture, sound, etc. These natural observations give rise to experiential gestalts. According to Lakoff and Johnson, 'metaphor is a matter of imaginative rationality. It permits an understanding of

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[22] Charles Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, 115.
[23] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 3.
[24] Ibid., 66.
[25] Ibid., 139–141.
[26] Ibid.

one kind of experience in terms of another, creating coherence by virtue of imposing gestalts that are structured by natural dimensions of experience.'[27]

Not only does the Lakoff and Johnson's notion of metaphor complement the discourse about montage, it also connects it with the area of cultural associations and structures of knowledge. The scene from *Ivan the Terrible* analysed by Barthes can serve as a good example.

Our understanding of the image of courtiers in that scene, of the compactness of their make-up, its thickness and insistency, their 'pale complexion,' 'lank blondness' and 'finely traced eyebrows,' while itself dependent on a set of metaphors concerning psychological traits revealed by physiognomies, will in turn give rise to another metaphor, or a mental image, of that whole scene.[28] The scene itself is loaded with conventional symbols. Historically, the act of Ivan's anointment identified the tsar with Christ and bestowed a sacral status onto him. Eisenstein's rendition of the event is already a treatment of a highly metaphorical act, which he turns into a proclamation of Russian unity and a condensed exposition of all the conflicts in the film.[29] Ivan's baptism by gold seems to be saturated with a sense of (and this is precisely a 'poetic grasp,' an obtuse not a symbolic level) theatricality, excess, sacrum mixed with the banal, autocracy, premonition of betrayal, and all this combines into a more basic metaphor of power, which underlines the whole film.

I am not suggesting there is one statement that can be assigned to this film text, although the fact that Stalin endorsed Eisenstein's project might mean that he saw in the story of Ivan a fitting metaphor of his rise to power. As Yuri Tsivian argues, and Kristin Thompson concedes, Eisenstein might be displaying an array of ostentatious symbols, but what he is really interested in is a montage method: a play of irreconcilable conflicts.[30] A drift towards understanding power in terms of ruthless oppression in the second part of *Ivan the Terrible* was met with Stalin's sharp disapproval. However, on the part of Eisenstein it was nothing more than a shift in metaphorical connections that he wanted to underscore.

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[27] Ibid., 235.
[28] Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning' in *Image, Music, Text*, 53.
[29] Andrei Pavlov and Maureen Perrie, *Ivan the Terrible* (London: Routledge, 2013), 88.
[30] Yuri Tsivian, *Ivan the Terrible* (London: BFI, 2002), 29; Kristin Thompson, 'Review of Ivan the Terrible,' *Screening the Past*, http://www.screeningthepast.com/2014/12/ivan-the-terrible/ (accessed 23 September 2017).

Eisenstein's fascination with synaesthesia seems also driven by its radical metaphorical dimension, which in this case is almost tactile: one sensual domain is mapped onto another. Eisenstein recalls statements of composer Rimsky-Korsakov, who claimed that sharp keys evoked in him impressions of colours,

> whereas flat keys conjured up moods or an impression of different degrees of *heat*; and that the alternation of C sharp minor with D flat major in 'Egypt' scene from his opera *Mlada* was no coincidence, but that on the contrary he had purposely used it in order to convey *a sense of heat*, just as *red* colours always suggest the notion of heat, whereas *blues and violets* are associated with *cold and darkness*.[31]

Mapping sensual stimulants and overlapping them with concepts seems a recurring theme in Eisenstein's theory. Perhaps his Utopia of the highest form of montage would be some sort of intellectual synaesthesia, where concepts inconspicuously blend with images that carry them. In the last section I will discuss the idea of synchronicity from the perspective of cultural mapping, which is an attempt to elaborate on the role of cultural knowledge in determining editing decisions.

Overall, for theoreticians interested in film semiotics like Eisenstein, Metz, Barthes and Wollen the crucial element of semiosis seems to be the movement from objective representation to a new image. It is an interest in the way the obvious slips into the obtuse and in the balancing act between the indexical and the iconic. The theory of the conceptual metaphor responds to the same preoccupations. Without using the term *sign*, it attempts to explain structures of coherence in the knowledge that surrounds us.

In the light of semiotic film theory and cognitive linguistics, montage could be then be described as a combination of sensual experiences, presented in a cinematic form, which through structures of metaphorical mapping engender 'the basic metaphor' of the theme of a film.

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[31] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1I: Towards a Theory of Montage*, 348.

MONTAGE IN PRACTICE

In the previous sections, I attempted a conceptual history of montage, looking for an urtext for the more contemporary uses of the term. The unquestioned source texts are theoretical writings of Soviet filmmakers, such as Eisenstein, Vertov and Kuleshov. However, what is perhaps less obvious and I hope became clear from the argument so far is how ubiquitous montage-thinking is. Eisenstein elaborated a number of models of montage (of attractions, rhythmic, metric, tonal, overtonal, intellectual, vertical, etc.), but there is also something quite consistent in his approach.[1] Eisenstein's is an essentially holistic view of film form, but split into two constitutive components: affect and thought. In 1930 he wrote:

> It is a matter of producing a series of images that is composed in such a way that it provokes an affective movement which in turn triggers a series of ideas. From image to emotion, from emotion to thesis. In proceeding in this way there is obviously a risk of becoming symbolic: but you must not forget that cinema is the only concrete art that is at the same time dynamic and can release the operations of the thought process… I think this task of intellectual stimulation can be accomplished through cinema. This will also be the historic artistic achievement of our time because we are suffering from a terrible dualism between thought (pure philosophical speculation) and feeling (emotion).[2]

Risking some reductionism, but hopefully gaining in conceptual clarity, we can trace two lineages of thinking about montage from Eisenstein's statement. One leads to the affective turn, cognitive theories of spectatorship and neurocinematics. The other one was explored extensively by film semiotics. Montage principle has a marked presence in film philosophy of Deleuze. However, the cultural origins of the concept reside firmly in modernist trends of the first decades of the 20th century. In that respect, Benjamin's concept of mimetic innervation is symptomatic for certain anxieties and hopes yielded by modernity. But how did the idea of montage fare in filmmaking practice?

The first caveat, which needs to be made, is that I will focus on a small selection of explicit references to the montage principle outside Soviet cinema. It is possible to see traces of montage in all genres and all types of filmmaking. Arguably, in the documentary montage is a more common style than analytical

[1] See also Ian Aitken, *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 27–46

[2] Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Principles of the New Russian Cinema,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1: Writings, 1922 – 34*, 199.

editing. If we follow Reisz and Millar's suggestion that the documentary 'is concerned with the exposition of a theme,' we should conclude that montage-thinking is something intrinsic to that form.[3] Siegfried Kracauer praises documentary realism of Ruttmann's Berlin symphony linking it precisely with the Vertovian montage.[4] As Charles Wolfe argues, social documentary and montage filmmaking under the auspices of avant-garde have 'a history of recurring affiliations' dating back to the 1920s and 1930s.[5]

Here I am more concerned with a clear-cut case when montage is understood as a method distinctly different from narrative continuity. This will then help me find a vantage point on the paradigm of montage – a concept more than a particular style of filmmaking.

It is worth stressing that Soviet film theory has a lasting legacy in mainstream filmmaking, which is only indirectly related to the grandiose theories of montage. It took a form of a Hollywood convention of the 'montage sequence.' Bordwell well defines its basic nature when he says that 'montage sequence' is 'a series of images that stands for a whole process – crossing the Atlantic, making a suit of armor, spending wonderful days of with a lover.'[6] Already by 1927, montage sequences were very common in Hollywood cinema.[7]

Editor and theorist Slavko Vorkapich (Slavoljub 'Slavko' Vorkapić) is often credited with making the 'montage sequence' a staple of a classical production.[8] Although most active between 1928 and the late 1940s, Vorkapich's influence reaches well into the contemporary editing thanks to his teaching and successful disciples like Peter Ballbusch and Don Siegel. In the classical period, his style was so distinct that studio executives commissioned for their features' 'Vorkapiches' rather than penny plain 'montage sequences.'[9] In Production Encyclopedia from 1948, 'montage' is a credit separate from cutting and editing. Vorkapich's colleague John Hoffman, William Hornbeck and the

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[3] Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing*, 124.
[4] Siegfried Kracauer, 'Montage (1947),' in *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 143–146.
[5] Charles Wolfe, 'Straight Shots and Crooked Plots,' in *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana, 229–234.
[6] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 14.
[7] David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 29.
[8] David James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*, 72
[9] The editor of *Better Call Saul*, Kelley Dixon, recalls using the term when pitching the style of editing: 'what if this is like a Vorkapich?' See David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 29.

aforementioned Don Siegel and Peter Ballbush are credited as creators of montages, sometimes more specifically as 'directors of montage.'[10]

Vorkapich arrived in Hollywood in 1921 and initially made a living as a painter and photographer. By that time he had already had a clear idea of what cinema was, or could be, influenced by the European high modernism to which he had been exposed to during his Parisian years.[11] The visual aesthetic of Edvard Much, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, the music of Igor Stravinsky, the poetry of Guillaume Apollinaire made him see cinema as a new distinct art of physical and mental *motions*.[12] Hollywood, the gravitational centre of the new medium was, as he called it, 'Athens of this and future centuries.'[13]

In 1926, Vorkapich gave a series of lectures in the American Society of Cinematographers, which were followed by articles in *The Film Mercury* and *American Cinematographer*. As evidenced by Hollywood careers of European directors, the industry in the mid-1920s was receptive to more adventurous approaches to film form. Characteristically, Vorkapich's first small acting roles were with another Hollywood maverick Rex Ingram. The expressionistic style of Murnau's *The Last Laugh* (1924), with dollying shots and dizzying, subjective cinematography was a big influence on Vorkapich and in his writings he elaborates a notion of 'kinesthesis' using Murnau's masterpiece as a point of reference.[14] Writing about the opening scene of the film, in which a camera descends in an elevator and tracks forward towards a revolving doors Vorkapich observes:

> [All] these actions were composed into a *real symphony of motions*. It was not confusion. There were five or six distinct motions excellently orchestrated. Optically speaking, the movie patterns of black and white on the screen were pleasing and intriguing to the eye! Mentally speaking, they gave a convincing picture of a hotel. It was throbbing with life and artistically true.[15]

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[10] Audrey Kearns, ed., *Motion Picture Production Encyclopaedia* (Los Angeles: The Hollywood Reporter, 1948).
[11] David James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*, 70.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Sheri Chinen Biesen, "'Kinesthesis' and Cinematic Montage: An Historical Examination of the Film Theories and Avant-Garde Mediation of Slavko Vorkapich in Hollywood,' *Studies in Visual Arts and Communication: an international journal* 4, no. 1 (2015): 5.
[15] Quoted in David James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*, 71.

It is worth pointing out here that the metaphor of music is ubiquitous among montage artists: the genre of city films took symphony as its organising principle exploring its potential both as a loose narrative structure and sometimes an opportunity to illustrate a musical score. This is evident in a film like Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* and was also an approach taken by Vorkapich and Hoffman in their avant-garde shorts made in the 1940s. But more fundamentally, taking heed of Vertov's prototype *Man with a Movie Camera* (which is not a symphony of any one city technically speaking), montage filmmakers incorporate musical rhythms in cutting. It is again a kind of synaesthesia, a monistic ensemble of sensations, where music is seen in the rhythmic dance of images. A rigorous metric montage or treating movements as notes spliced between intervals might risk formal fetishism, but in some city symphony films like Vigo's *À propos de Nice* this was well counterbalanced by social commentary.

Notably, this musical quality has been picked up more recently in pieces that share characteristics of the city symphonies, but take the aesthetic a step further by offering a birds-eye-view perspective on global issues and flaunting a minimalist score by Philip Glass: *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance* (1982, dir. Godfrey Reggio, editors Ron Fricke, Alton Wolpole), *Powaqqatsi: Life in Transformation* (1988, dir. Godfrey Reggio, editors Iris Cahn, Alton Walpole), *Naqoyqatsi: Life as War* (2002, dir. Godfrey Reggio, editor Jon Kane). Like Ruttmann's *Berlin*, the latter film is composed of movements in reference to a symphonic structure. Reggio's trilogy is complemented by similar in tone 'global symphony' films directed by his cinematographer Ron Fricke: *Baraka* (1992, editors Ron Fricke, Mark Magidson and David Aubrey) and *Samsara* (2011, editors Ron Fricke, Mark Magidson).

Those instances of 'symphonic' filmmaking share a certain modernist 'formalism' in tone. It is something that was also evident in the ideas that Vorkapich expounded. As Sheri Chinen Biesen notices, they were reminiscent of the Soviet writings, and in particular the 'kino-eye' idea.[16] Vorkapich writes emphatically 'you have to give more freedom of action to this magical eye: the camera… to allow… more agility.'[17] When he defines 'kinesthetic responses' as

[16] Sheri Chinen Biesen, '*Kinesthesis* and Cinematic Montage: An Historical Examination of the Film Theories and Avant-Garde Mediation of Slavko Vorkapich in Hollywood,' 4.
[17] Ibid.

'implicit motor impulses' which respond to 'seen movements,' Vorkapich is implying the mechanism of mirror neurons simulation, a popular intuition among Soviet theorists.[18] But Eisenstein's theories on intellectual and vertical montage feature also strongly when Vorkapich writes that 'poetic values can be achieved only if the referential aspects and literal content of shots are transcended so that they acquire multilevel meanings which cannot be verbally described.'[19] There is little that sets him apart from other montage theorists, but the crux of the matter is how those ostensibly avant-garde ideas, so characteristic for the European and Russian cinema, got absorbed by the Hollywood classical system.

According to Bordwell, the montage sequence arrived in Hollywood earlier than Soviet influences thanks to the fascination with German expressionism and the general tendency in the American industry for a selective assimilation of avant-garde ideas.[20] Most surprisingly, studio executives sometimes would invite modernist, atonal composers like George Antheil and Miklós Rózsa to add psychosis, neurotic tension or an element of deviation to the overall tone of the film.[21] But they also did not mind occasionally having some 'Ufa stuff,' that is unusual camera angles and movements and low-key lighting associated with the productions in the famous German studio.[22]

Vorkapich's work can be seen as representative for those influences because it is exemplary for the reasons of their success. It was a combination of formal novelty, functional efficiency and narrative subordination. Despite being already an industry insider for a number of years, Vorkapich had a clear break in 1927 with *Life and Death of 9413 – A Hollywood Extra*. He made this extraordinary film with Robert Florey and Gregg Toland in his own kitchen and living room with a budget of $97.[23]

A Hollywood Extra is a grotesque and bitter satire on the dream factory, about how Hollywood entices with promises of fame and riches but more often than not spits unlucky newcomers out after subjecting them to a humiliating ordeal of rejection and poverty. The protagonist, an aspiring actor known only by a number written with charcoal on his forehead, after a series of vicissitudes is

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 5.
[20] David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 72–74.
[21] Ibid., 72.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Bruce Posner, *Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant-garde Film 1893–1941* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 2001), 46.

hounded by his creditors and drops dead. Yet the apotheosis of the film sees his spirit in heaven, where a divine hand erases the dreaded number.

One of the remarkable things about the film, as Bruce Posner suggests, is how well it navigates a critical tone and a clearly experimental, complex aesthetic while placing itself not outside the industry but within it. Thematically, it comes out of a cycle of films made after the Arbuckle scandal that inverted the trope of rags-to-riches, a trend that was started by the release of *Hollywood* (dir. James Cruze, 1923).[24] *Life and Death of 9413 – A Hollywood Extra,* although considered an experimental film, had a commercial distribution in 700 cinemas in the US and Europe. Douglas Fairbanks financially supported its production, and the finished film was promoted by Charles Chaplin who showed it to his guests, who included D.W. Griffith, Ernst Lubitsch, Josef von Sternberg, and Mary Pickford.[25]

What really stands out when watching it, and explains the film's popularity and the overall success of the montage sequence as a convention, is the way in which Vorkapich and Florey isolate essential elements of the montage principle and render them into narrative devices. *A Hollywood Extra* is a feat of the clever use of shoestring props and a minimal mis-en-scène. Cardboard skyscrapers filmed against chiaroscuro lighting suffice for an opening display of Los Angeles in full glamour. The heaven is made of paper cut-outs, cigar boxes, tins, toy trains and a motorised Erector Set.[26] The expressionistic pantomime of Jules Raucourt speaks volumes about his illusions and disappointments, and distils a plot into a series of close-ups and medium shots filmed against an Edison-style black backdrop. One of the more memorable scenes depicts trying for success and failing with a staccato montage of Raucourt climbing up a staircase and not reaching anywhere, and stumbling and falling.

The publicity around the film stressed its low costs as industry distributors certainly recognised that part of the film's appeal was its paratextual charm as an unglamorous representation of the glamorous world.[27] However, I would also argue that *A Hollywood Extra* film must have chimed with Hollywood luminaries' appreciation for well-crafted stories and their pragmatic understanding of film form. With simple means, Vorkapich, Florey and Toland

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[24] Ibid., 47.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

were able to find narrative substitutes for a plot that, if treated in an industrial way, would require scores of actors, décor, locations and cinematographic apparatus. The same characteristics were present in Vorkapich's montage sequences. As Biesen concludes, Vorkapiches were immensely popular among Hollywood executives because they saved costs and offered an effective way of introducing a visually dynamic interlude.[28]

However, as David James notices, the relation between the montage sequence – essentially an embellishment and a narrative condensation in a nutshell – and the plot it is embedded within is a complex one. The montage sequence is dispensable, but when it is truly effective, the narrative becomes dispensable as well.[29] Karel Reisz when writing about the *montage sequence* is markedly cautious, as for him it has a purely utilitarian function as a convenient way of presenting facts that have no emotional import.[30] It is a sort of bastardised intellectual montage. But because the montage sequence operates on a 'different plane of reality,' it poses a risk of distracting the audience and taking away from the authenticity of the narrative.[31] For Reisz, the adamant believer in the dramatic, the montage sequence is too often used as a flimsy shortcut to convey clichéd narrative segues, like the passage of time or the journey of a character. However, it seems that despite its popular iterations, at the core of what Vorkapich represented, was something more rebellious and more Eisensteinian than Reisz cared to appreciate.

Notwithstanding its Soviet provenance, the montage sequence straddled two seemingly opposing tendencies, which Bordwell is well aware of when describing this convention in *The classical Hollywood Cinema*.[32] It made the narration overt, which ran against efforts at reducing the visibility of narrative markers in the Hollywood style. But at the same time, the montage sequence helped with the smooth flow of plot continuity, which was arguably a priority for the classical system. Finally, it was also a transposition of prose conventions into film form. It was an instance of narrative 'telling,' which completes its

[28] Sheri Chinen Biesen, '*Kinesthesis* and Cinematic Montage: An Historical Examination of the Film Theories and Avant-Garde Mediation of Slavko Vorkapich in Hollywood,' 9.
[29] David James, *The Most Typical Avant-Garde: History and Geography of Minor Cinemas in Los Angeles*, 75.
[30] Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing*, 112–115.
[31] Ibid., 114.
[32] David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 29

paradoxical position in a system so clearly organised around the principles of mimesis, that is 'showing.' Bordwell concludes that:

> what keeps the montage sequence under control is its strict codification: it is, simply, the sequence which advances the story action in just this overt way. Flagrant as the montage sequence is, its rarity, its narrative function, and its narrowly conventional format assure its status as classical narration's most acceptable rhetorical flourish.[33]

After the success of *A Hollywood Extra*, Vorkapich created about 25 montage sequences for all five studios (Paramount, Columbia, Warner Bros, RKO and MGM)[34] He worked on George Cukor's *What Price Hollywood?* (1932, editors Del Andrews and Jack Kitchin) rehashing a similar theme, and later also with Frank Capra on *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939, editors Al Clark and Gene Havlick) and *Meet John Doe* (1941, editor Daniel Mandell).[35] One of his best known interventions is a sequence 'The Furies' from Ben Hecht's melodrama *Crime Without Passion* (1934, editor Arthur Ellis).[36] Although Vorkapich never managed to secure funding for a Hollywood feature, he did make a couple of influential, entirely music-led, avant-garde shorts with John Hoffman: *Moods of the Sea* (1941) and *Forest Murmurs* (1947).

In *A Hollywood Extra*, Vorkapich's method has a full realisation in the form of a standalone film. Another clear case study is his war propaganda short produced for RKO Radio Pictures *Conquer by the Clock* (1942).[37]

The Vorkapich montage combines a rigorously musical cutting rhythm with a sharply defined semiotic charge of each frame. To be more precise, in his choice of content Vorkapich is blatantly unambiguous. Each frame has a clear iconic or symbolic value that seems to arise naturally out of its graphic composition. He takes a leaf of Eisenstein's montage theory, but not necessarily from the Soviet director's practice, which, as Karel Reisz complains, sometimes verged on obscurity.[38] In his teaching, Vorkapich developed these ideas further, and in a vein reminiscent to the polyphonic breakdowns from Eisenstein's *Vertical Montage* he writes about details of the composition:

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Bruce Charles Posner, *Unseen Cinema*, 46
[35] Sheri Chinen Biesen, '*Kinesthesis* and Cinematic Montage: An Historical Examination of the Film Theories and Avant-Garde Mediation of Slavko Vorkapich in Hollywood,' 6–9.
[36] 'Vorkapich Montage Sequences,' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SerPYgyggCg (accessed 25 August 2017).
[37] 'Conquer by the Clock,' https://archive.org/details/Conquerb1943 (accessed 25 August 2017).
[38] Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing*, 40.

> The diagonal, dynamic motion suggests power, overcoming obstacles by force. A battle sequence may be made very effective by using short sharp diagonal clashes of arms: flags, guns, bayonets, lances and swords cutting the screen diagonally, soldiers running uphill, flashes of battle shot with slanting camera.

From the furies hovering menacingly over a city to the V-shaped arms of a clock in *Conquer by the Clock*, diagonal lines seem to be the hallmark of Vorkapich's style. The intended effect is an inconspicuous entanglement of purely graphic elements with the underlying connotation of the image, made all the more convincing if both are made into a coherent feature through syntagmatic concatenation. In *Conquer by the Clock* the diagonal motif is evident in slanted shots of factory machinery, in the way two images are often obliquely composited into one frame, and in the propagandist climax, when the message is hammered home by a triple exposure linking the arms of a clock, with the letter V and the image of a marching forest of bayonets. A sense of coherence spans the entirety of this montage film, which comes across with full force when the commentary adds to the visual chorus of unequivocal messaging: 'The production rate of our factories and the firing rate of our guns are synchronised by one machine – the clock. Your hands need to be as relentless as the hands of your clocks.' This synchronisation occurs on many levels as Vorkapich creates a system of associative joints: the mechanism of a clock ties the war effort with the factory work and a moral duty of civilians to make their best on the 'home front' is directly related to the military outcome. Unlike some of Eisenstein's efforts though, the film remains within a widely recognisable set of metaphors. As intended, 'victory' seems inevitable, unstoppable just as 'the march of time,' which was incidentally also a title of the landmark magazine newsreel of the period produced by Time Inc.

Vorkapich's ideas had a wider impact than just Hollywood montage sequences. In an introduction to his book *The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media*, Bruce Block suggests a lineage of influences in the teaching at the University of Southern California. Vorkapich was briefly a head of film department there in the 1950s. His classes were then taken over by Lester Novros, a painter who in the late 1930s worked at Disney. Novros taught at the USC for over four decades and thousands of students took his popular module 'Filmic Expression,' based on fine art theories and the ideas of Eisenstein and Vorkapich. His former student George Lucas wrote: 'The first

time I truly understood the unique quality of film was when I took Les Novros'
class. Stressing that film is a kinetic medium, Les has kept the Eisensteinian
flame burning at USC, and it is a tradition that has strongly influenced my
work.'[39] Notably, Block, who is also an accomplished producer of commercial
cinema, situates himself in the same Eisensteinian legacy and his whole book is
organised around highly abstract concepts that link the graphic properties of an
image with the narrative and affective impact of the film.

A key idea in *The Visual Story* is the principle of *contrast and affinity*.[40]
The premise of Block's book is that contrast leads to 'greater visual intensity'
and affinity to 'lesser visual intensity'. This formula translates into types of
emotional engagement of the audience – a given visual structure can be either
soothing and reassuring or agitating and so intense that it tenses up viewer's
muscles.[41] More specifically, contrast and affinity applies to all components of
visual organisation in film. Four types of space: deep, flat, limited and
ambiguous can be treated either according to the principle of contrast or affinity,
although as a rule deep space, for example, is inherently more intense.[42]
Similarly, the rhythm in composition and in editing, the plot structure, the
movement (of an object, the camera and, interestingly, also of 'the audience's
point-of-attention') are also governed by the same principles.[43] All these visual
elements of film construction can intensify or calm down the kinetic experience
of watching a film.

Overall, Block's concepts pay homage to the Eisenstein's dialectics of the
image and their focus on stimulating affective responses of the spectator.
However, he is more interested in practical methods of kinetic stimulation than
semiotic theories. The influence of Vorkapich's montage is clearly there, most
evident in passages when he finds signification in formal elements of
composition, such as lines. Block writes:

> Generally speaking, a straight line is associated with these characteristics:
> direct, aggressive, bland, honest, industrial, ordered, strong, unnatural,
> adult and rigid. A curved line often is associated with these

[39] 'Lester Novros,' https://article.wn.com/view/2000/10/26/Lester_Novros/ (accessed 26 August
2017).
[40] Bruce Block, *The Visual Story: Creating the Visual Structure of Film, TV and Digital Media,*
2nd ed. (New York: Focal Press, 2013), 9.
[41] Ibid., 11.
[42] Ibid., 58–59, 80–82.
[43] Ibid., 172, 210, 234.

characteristics: indirect, passive, pertaining to nature, childlike, romantic, soft, organic, safe, and flexible.[44]

This perhaps takes us to the limits of the montage paradigm. More than with editing, Block is concerned with the visual organisation of the pro-filmic, but his ideas essentially hark back to Eisenstein's *mis en cadre* and his analysis of Alexander Nevsky, in which musical phrases correspond to graphic gestures.[45]

The answer to the question from the beginning of this chapter: what did Gregory La Cava mean by drawing attention to the rhythmic montages of two-shots in *Stage Door* is by necessity just an interpretation of someone else's words, but a common association of montage technique is the practice of foregrounding formal elements of the composition combined with an acute attention to the editing rhythm and the semiotic linkage between shots. It is an edit that wants to tell us something and does not hide itself behind the narrative.

What all the examined concepts around montage have in common is an attitude to film form as an overt vehicle for meaning and affect. This basic trajectory of thinking branches out into a few different directions. There is a narrative utilitarianism of the 'montage sequence,' which is embedded into a storytelling continuity. But there is also a broad understanding of montage as an instance when the cut and the frame are visible. When Buster Keaton's *Sherlock Junior* (192) is quoted as a visualisation of montage, it is because the outrageously funny adventures of Keaton in the storyworld of the film within a film thoroughly exploit the unrealness of both: the frame that reveals and hides at the same time, and the cut which is exposed as a purely whimsical, arbitrary intervention. *Sherlock Junior* is already a post-trick film that draws laughs from a parody of the attractional fragmentation in early cinema.

According to Aumont, Eisenstein makes montage into a 'universal phenomenon,' recognisable in fine arts, poetry, music and architecture, which ultimately is about 'a transfer of the human soul through analysis and synthesis.'[46] While this is certainly the case, one can also notice that the tangible and lasting influence of the Soviet theory was that it gave a name to the avant-garde idea that the act of fragmentation reveals something of the depicted reality. This might sound epistemological, but more tangibly this observation points to

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[44] Ibid., 106.
[45] Sergei Eisenstein, 'Vertical Montage,' in *S. M. Eisenstein, Selected Works, Volume 1I: Towards a Theory of Montage*, 396–397.
[46] Jacques Aumont, *The Image* (London: BFI Publishing, 1994), 178.

the origin of the cinematic movement. As Sam Rohdie writes about Muybridge, '[he] first assumed a unity (the sequence he was to analyse), fragmented it into discrete fragments (the analysis), finally reconstituted it into a unified sequence again (reality restored).'[47] Montage paradigm seems then a logical extension of the very nature of the moving images understood as a sort of cognitive tool. Through montage, the substance, as an undifferentiated whole, is divided into discreet elements, which are then arranged and ordered into an *analogon*, an image of the substance. Muybridge discovered how to analyse human and animal movement. Filmmakers working within the paradigm of montage were fascinated by the cinema's potential to *construct* realities out of fragments. But the objective was not to build an escapist edifice but to reveal something important of reality itself.

Montage has also become an inspirational call to arms for all those who believed that cinema can break free from the shackles of the bourgeois representation, or advocates for a cinema whose form is less commodified than a regular product of the mainstream. This is the context, in which Godard can say that editing, by which he means montage, 'can restore to actuality that ephemeral grace neglected by both snob and film-lover or can transform chance into destiny.'[48] These words from the article 'Montage, Mon Beau Souci' are quoted by Walter Murch recalling how European cinema pushed him towards pursuing a career in the movies.[49] Watching Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* (1957, editor Lennart Wallén) made him realise that 'somebody has made that film,' while François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959, editor Marie-Josèphe Yoyotte) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (1960, editor Cécile Decugis) gave him a 'first glimpse of the power of *montage*.' Given the fact that Murch represents the heart of the continuity system, and editing style of his films is almost antithetical to what Godard did in his oeuvre, the utopic ideal of *montagism* seems a remarkable bridge between filmmakers of divergent aesthetic backgrounds.

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[47] Sam Rohdie, *Montage* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 5.
[48] Jean-Luc Godard, 'Montage, Mon Beau Souci,' in Roger Crittenden, *Fine Cuts: The Arts of European Film Editing* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2006), 1.
[49] Walter Murch, 'Foreword: The Transformation of Chance into Destiny,' in Roger Crittenden, *Fine Cuts: The Arts of European Film Editing* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2006), xi.

DÉCOUPAGE

It is far from my intention to quibble about wording. But one concept is inevitably tied with another, and when we follow through an intricate mesh of associations of one word we might find ourselves in a different place than if we did the same thing with its apparent synonym. To *montage* is to 'make a composite whole from fragments.'[1] To *cut* means to 'penetrate with an edged instrument which severs the continuity of the substance; to wound or injure.'[2] Cutting is about making an incision; it is to slash and gush.[3] To *edit* is to 'give to the world' something that previously existed.[4]

Evidently, these three words are not synonyms. One can see them as various facets of the process in which a set of rushes is turned into a film. But it is also possible to associate them with different ways of conceptualising that process. In montage paradigm, the pro-filmic is fragmented and its wholeness needs to be re-constituted. Cutting assumes the continuity of the substance: the subject matter, the story and the body. A cutter is a surgeon who makes precise incisions in something whose continuous nature is under no doubt. But then to edit is essentially to deliver the outcome of that operation to the spectator. The etymology of the word connects editing with the act of publishing. A literary editor prepares an original text and makes sure it meets certain socially agreed upon criteria. By analogy, a film editor can be imagined as an unbiased, external eye, a proxy for the spectator who has knowledge of the rules of the communicative pact that binds them with a filmmaker.

Yet there is something missing from that conceptual sketch. Unless we use them in a metaphorical way, those terms do not seem to describe the actual *fragmentation* of the spatiotemporal continuum at all. We can only montage, edit or cut something that has a material substance, something that is already differentiated. In order to have fragments that can be edited in and out, there needs to be a process that produces them in the first place. A word that describes this process, which has been surfacing and disappearing throughout the history of cinema is *découpage*.

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[1] 'montage, n. and adj.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, July 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/121764. Accessed 24 October 2018.

[2] 'cut, v.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, July 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/46341. Accessed 24 October 2018.

[3] Ibid.

[4] 'edit, v.' *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, July 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/59546. Accessed 24 October 2018.

Timothy Barnard in his excellent monograph of the concept offers a detective story of a sort, in which *découpage* is a victim of heinous translators and scholarly mistreatment, which led to its abandonment or mutilation beyond recognition.[5] Unlike Barnard, I recognise reasons behind the disappearance of the concept, but I entirely agree with him that *découpage* is the missing piece of puzzle in the model of film form.

His polemical history of *découpage* is in fact a study of four distinct but related concepts that evolved in film criticism. The first is the very idea of the spatiotemporal fragmentation, which was variedly described as *scene dissection*, *analytical editing*, *Bilderführung*, *Bildausschnitt*, *raskadrovka* and *mis en cadres*.[6] The second is the *découpage technique*, a French term that has an equivalent in the English-speaking countries in the shooting or continuity script. The third is *découpage* proper as a concept pertaining to, broadly speaking, imaginary editing. And the fourth is *découpage* in a sense that Burch used it referring to the underlying structure of a film.

An important theoretical part of Barnard's argument is that such writers as Pudovkin, Eisenstein, Balázs and even Bordwell and Thompson intuited an existence of something that should be properly called *découpage*, but for all sorts of reasons failed to express it clearly.

Their omissions, however, come from a whole spectrum of different positions. As discussed in the previous chapter, Pudovkin understood editing as a total process of film construction that begins with the script. If we substituted editing for *découpage* in the section of *Film Technique* titled 'The Action-Treatment of the Theme' we would arrive at a concept pretty much congruent with the French critics' understanding of *découpage*, like the one expressed by Roger Leenhardt in 1936: 'I have recently defined editing as being carried out after the fact on the exposed film and *découpage* as being carried out before the fact, in the filmmaker's mind, on the subject to be filmed.'[7] Additionally, Barnard points to fissures in the translation from Russian into English which expose how original intentions of Pudovkin got muddled in the Ivor Montagu's attempts at finding equivalents for *razbor* ('the parsing of a sentence in

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[5] Timothy Barnard, *Découpage* (Montreal: caboose, 2014).
[6] Ibid., 16.
[7] Roger Leenhardt, trans. Timothy Barnard, 'La Petite École du spectateur: 2. Le Rhythme Cinématographique,' *Chroniques de cinéma* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1986), 43.

linguistics'), *razbitie* (breaking down) and *razlozhenie* ('dissociation or chemical decomposition').[8] One of the offending fragments in Pudovkin's text reads:

> To create a filmic form, [the film director] must select those elements from which [filmic] form will later be assembled. To assemble these elements, he must first find them. And now we hit on the necessity for a special process of analysis of every real event that the director wishes to use in a shot. For every event a process has to be carried out comparable to the process in mathematics termed 'differentiation' – that is to say, dissection [*razbitie*] into parts or elements.[9]

Subverting slightly Barnard's argument I am treating those approaches to the spatiotemporal differentiation as something separate from *découpage*, because I think we cannot be sure if something like an objectively existing entity called *découpage* really exists. Believing in that would be a sort of transcendental realism. This concept is after all dependent on the people who use it for their own purposes and within their hermeneutic horizons. In other words, I do not find fault in attempting to depict spatiotemporal fragmentation as something other than *découpage*. It is valid though to examine how a particular term affects the way we think about its referent. Pudovkin's theory, although from today's perspective could be deemed an insightful thinking about *découpage*, was written in the context of the Soviet paradigm of montage – in opposition to Eisenstein's 'collision,' and in favour of 'linkage,' yet still within the same conceptual horizon. It is in itself illuminating to read *Film Technique* as a treatise on both: American-style *découpage* and narrative-driven Soviet montage at the same time.

Similarly, it should not really be surprising that in his later writings Eisenstein writes extensively about mis-en-scène and *mis en cadre(s)* with the latter notion sometimes closely approaching the idea of *découpage*. This line of thinking does not contradict the overarching principle of montage. According to his student Vladimir Nizhny's account, when teaching a film course in the 1930s Eisenstein employed the term *raskadrovka* to describe breaking up the action into shots.[10] He also dallied with a twin concept of *mis en cadre* (singular form): staging for the shot and *mis en cadres* (plural): staging for the sequence of shots. Barnard suggests that the latter, effectively an equivalent of *découpage* would be irreconcilable with Eisenstein's system; and for that reason, just before his death,

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[8] Timothy Barnard, *Découpage,* 35.
[9] V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique*, 66.
[10] Timothy Barnard, *Découpage,* 30.

Eisenstein decided to drop the plural form from his writings and only refer to *mis en cadre* in the context of putting into the frame.[11]

This might be the case, but one should also notice that montage was for Eisenstein much more than just a sequencing of shots. It was a universal principle of joining discreet elements, regardless of whether the subject of the juxtaposition were two pieces of celluloid or two expressive movements of an actor. With time, Eisenstein's position was increasingly nuanced but, in my view, a hypothetical discovering of the *découpage* was unlikely to tear down his montage theory. In fact, one can easily imagine *montagist découpage* – a dissection of the spatiotemporal continuum based on the principle of collision and employing dialectics of the image. The montage paradigm, the term proposed here, is intentionally broad enough to encompass both découpage and editing stage, partly because this is a logical extension of Eisentein's montage theory.

'Scene dissection' for Eileen Bowser begins to happen in multi-reel films, when producers transition from a single camera set-up to using different camera positions.[12] But, as Barnard notices, her discussion of editing assumes that camera angles are somehow determined when cutting celluloid. Similarly, 'analytical editing,' a term used in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* by Thompson, while it ostensibly refers to post-production, is in fact employed by her to discuss camera set-ups, which leads to such anthropomorphic conundrums as the 'figure' of analytical editing *moving us inside* the situation.[13] As for *Bilderführung* Barnard proposes that the term that Balázs used in his text from 1924 *Der Sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur* should in fact be translated as 'visual linkage' rather than montage as is routinely done by the English translators of *The Visible Man*. Balázs writes: '*Bilderführung* is the sequence of images and their tempo and corresponds to style in literature. Just as a story can be told in quite different ways and its real effects depend upon the conciseness and rhythm of the particular syntax, so too does *Bilderführung* give the film its rhythmic character.' Predictably, according to Barnard, what Balázs was scrambling for but could not pinpoint was 'sequencing as derived from camera

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[11] Ibid., 32.

[12] Eileen Bowser, *The Transformation of Cinema*, 1907–1915 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 260.

[13] Kristin Thompson, 'The formulation of the classical style, 1909–28,' in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960,* David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson (London: Routledge, 1985), 198–213.

set-up.' Here the wording of early film theoreticians can be compared to Burch's examination of découpage, this time as 'the fracture' or 'formal treatment of a film.'

Barnard argues furthermore that the translators' confusion is a result of the teleological, retrospective filling in the gaps in the areas of theory that resist comprehension in purely contemporary terms.[14] Since a decade later, everyone was talking about editing or montage; what else could Balázs mean when referring to the sequencing of shots? Yet Balázs, with the help of the revealing polisemy of a German word touches upon a blind spot of editing-centred theories when he writes: 'Each set-up [Einstellung] of the camera indicates an attitude [Einstellung] in the viewer's mind.'[15] A camera set-up then equals an attitude. A mis-en-scène critic would surely concur with that. This view can be also compared with Block's idiosyncratic idea of the *point-of-view* as an attitude of the filmmaker towards something (a subject, a character) expressed in the visual organisation of the frame.[16]

That blind spot suggested by Barnard hints at a broader issue faced elsewhere as well: once montage theories planted their seeds and editing became a distinct profession in the narrative continuity system in the late 1930s, accounts of film form began to gravitate towards describing the development of editing norms as a kind of syntax of cinema. Before this happened, theorists approached film form in a way that discussed fragmentation of the pro-filmic in a way that retained something of an 'innocence' of the *découpage* notion, a sensitivity to the woven texture of a film as it appears to our senses. Hugo Münsterberg, for instance, in 1916 knew neither the concept or editing nor montage. Yet he had little difficulty discussing temporal and spatial organisation of fragments of recorded reality when writing:

> With the full freedom of our fancy, with the whole mobility of our association of ideas, pictures of the past flit through the scenes of present. Time is left behind. Man becomes boy; today is interwoven with the day before yesterday. The freedom of the mind has triumphed over the unalterable law of the outer world… The photoplay shows us a significant conflict of human actions in moving pictures which, freed from the physical forms of space, time, and causality, are adjusted to the free play of our mental experiences and which reach complete isolation

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[14] Timothy Barnard, *Découpage*, 25.
[15] Ibid., 27–28.
[16] Bruce Block, *The Visual Story*, 254.

from the practical world through the perfect unity of plot and pictorial appearance.[17]

Münsterberg's theory is a harbinger of the phenomenology of cinema, alongside insightful depictions of plotting conventions in fiction. However, there is nothing to suggest that Münsterberg thought that cutting and joining celluloid was in any way more remarkable than any of the other aspects of the moving image. He talks about film form as if what he had in mind was Burch's rendition of *découpage* – 'the underlying structure of the finished film.'

To *découper* in French means to cut up, cut out, to carve (Collins Dictionary). The prefix 'de' contributes to an important difference from *couper*, which is a straight-forward equivalent of the verb 'to cut.' In contrast then to the three other discussed notions, *découpage* presupposes a continuity of the substance, but only momentary, because the act of *découper* subtracts something from it. The camera chips away slivers of reality. This etymological resonance explains why the word sometimes crops up in unexpected circumstances. It is a handy term whenever we imagine the profilmic as a spatial substance, which is carved by camera angles. Although *découpage* is not part of Bordwell's terminological tool kit, he does occasionally use the term to stress the fact that 'analytical editing' breaks down spatial continuum into shots.[18]

While its use in English sources is patchy and, according to Barnard, often inaccurate, in French criticism *découpage* has a traceable and solid history. The concept entered circulation in the late 1910s. A decade later its usage split into two connected forms: *découpage technique*, which meant a shooting script and *découpage* without the article, which began to be associated with film form.[19] However, this distinction was not always observed, and *découpage* without any descriptor might mean both of those things. In 1954, Henri Agel asserted: 'The choice of shots and of camera angles and movements is called *découpage*. The order and length of shots correspond to the task we call editing.'[20] The brevity of this formula risks perhaps some reductionism as one can imagine that the order of shots in some cases will be decided upon at a *découpage* stage, while the choice of takes is routinely the task of an editor. A

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[17] Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay. A Psychological Study* (New York: D. Appleton, 1916), 181,190.
[18] See David Bordwell, 'The classical Hollywood style 1917–60,' 60.
[19] Timothy Barnard, *Découpage*, 5.
[20] Henri Agel, *Le Cinéma*, [trans. Timothy Barnard], (Paris: Casterman, 1954), 67.

more precise definition originates with Jean Mitry, although he appears to be essentially describing a shooting script:

> The *découpage* is editing in theory. It is the film 'on paper.' These three operations – *découpage*, production, editing – differ only with respect to the craftsmen who carry plans and conceives the shots 'with a view to a certain kind of editing;' the editing is already contained in shots made 'with a view to a certain kinds of matches;' and the production continues in the editing, which completes and finishes the film… These three successive operations are different aspects of the same creative process.[21]

The most imaginative formula, which contains the kernel of Barnard's dreamed concept is found in nothing short of a *découpage* manifesto by Luis Buñuel'*Découpage* o segmetación cinegráfica:'

> The intuition of a film, embryonic photogénie, already throbs in that operation known as *découpage*. Segmentation. Creation. *Dividing a thing to turn it into something else*. What did not exist before now exists. The simplest and most complex way of reproducing, of creating. From amoeba to the symphony. The authentic moment in a film, creating through segmentation. A landscape, if it is to be recreated in cinema, must be segmented into fifty, a hundred or more bits. Later, these will follow on one after the other vermiculously, arranged in colonies, to compose the film – a great tapeworm of silence made out of material segments (editing) and ideal segments (*découpage*).[22]

A paradox appears here. Buñuel wrote those words in 1928, even before *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) made him a surrealist's darling, and for the rest of his life he remained faithful to the idea that the film 'is first projected inside the brain of the filmmaker,' because that is where miraculously fluid images become 'spontaneously and uninterruptedly classified, ordered, and compartmentalized within shots.'[23] In Buñuel's films long shots dominate. He is an artist of mis-en-scène. Buñuel's working style is said to be reminiscent of Hitchcock's meticulously planned sets, where a cinematographer shoots only what is needed, not leaving much room for manoeuvre in editing. In both cases they work with a very limited coverage.

Yet Buñuel's musings highlight aspects of *découpage* that make the concept befitting mainstream production tactics. The pragmatic objective of filming with full coverage, a method typical for classical Hollywood but not

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[21] Jean Mitry, 'Esthétique ey psychologie du cinema,' *Vol. 2*, *Les Formes*, [trans. Timothy Bernard] (Paris: Éditions universitaires, 1965), 19 [emphases added].
[22] Luis Buñuel, *An Unspeakable Betrayal: Selected Writings of Luis Buñuel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 131–132 [emphases added].
[23] Ibid., 134–135.

exclusive to it, is precisely to break up the profilmic space in such a way that at the editing stage there is the highest degree of flexibility in shaping a dramatic flow of the narration. This is also known as a 'shoot and protect' practice and it relies on covering the same action from multiple angles and using various types of shots.[24] A classical film is, without doubt, created through segmentation. This is exactly what Bazin refers to when using the term *découpage* in relation to the American cinema. In his seminal *L'evolution du langage cinématographique*, a text which in Hugh Gray's English translation substitutes *découpage* with editing, Bazin writes:

> The use of montage can be 'invisible' and this was generally the case in the prewar classics of the American screen. Scenes were broken down just for one purpose, namely, to analyze an episode according to the material or dramatic logic of the screen… But the neutral quality of this 'invisible' [*découpage*] fails to make use of the full potential of montage.[25]

How can we then square those two different understandings of *découpage*: one is more general and the other includes stylistic considerations? It seems that a distinction needs to be made between an 'operational' category of *découpage* that retains technical neutrality and the more specific uses of the term, which are tied with stylistic or narrative choices. To use an already established notion, the *découpage technique* could be defined as a process of fragmentation of the spatiotemporal continuum that cuts out discreet cinematic fragments, first conceptually and then with a camera. A shooting script is just a paper manifestation of a breakdown that goes through multiple stages, culminating in the concrete camera set-ups and framing that create diegesis by an act of separation, by severing the pro-filmic from inconsequential reality. The *découpage technique* is, therefore, a technical procedure equally applicable to carefully staged *That Obscure Object of Desire* (1977, dir. Luis Buñuel, editor Hélène Plemiannikov) and *The Birds* (1963, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, editor George Tomasini), as well as to any film by George Stevens, who was known for

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[24] David Bordwell, 'Cutting remarks: On THE GOOD GERMAN, classical style, and the Police Tactical Unit,' http://www.davidbordwell.net/blog/2006/11/15/cutting-remarks-on-the-good-german-classical-style-and-the-police-tactical-unit (accessed 4 September 2017).

[25] André Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 24; in original: 'L'utilisation du montage peut être "invisible"; c'est devenu dans le film américain classique d'avant-guerre le cas le plus frequent. Le morcellement des plans n'y a pas d'autre but que d'analyser l'événement selonla logique matérielle ou dramatique de la scène… Mais la neutralité de ce *découpage* "invisible" ne rend pas compte de toutes les possibilités du montage.' André Bazin, 'Qu'est-ce que le cinema?,' in *Ontologie et langage* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1958), 64.

shooting a scene from every possible angle.[26] Some filmmakers, like Buñuel and Hitchcock prefer to work with a *découpage technique* that is conclusive. Editing is then a mere stitching together of fully formed elements. More often, mainstream filmmaking employs a *découpage technique* of adequate coverage, in which fragmentation is excessive and overlapping. This allows an editor to re-constitute the spatial continuum with an eye to dramatisation, rhythm, protecting performances, emotional impact or any other editorial consideration that needs to be taken into account.

Let's not forget, however, about the other understanding of *découpage*, not as a production technique, but as a uniquely cinematic creative act, an attitude, Balázs's *Einstellung zur Einstellung*. Barnard seems to be more interested in rehabilitating that other, more ambitious concept. He locates intimations of a theory of *découpage* in the writings of Alexandre Astruc and André Bazin.[27] Although Astruc does not employ the word in his Caméra-Stylo manifesto, in an earlier article he does describe Orson Welles' style as having the advantage of obliging 'viewers to create their own *découpage* technique, to discover for themselves in a scene the dramatic lines that it is usually the job of the camera to reveal.'[28] This very much resembles Bazin's famous praises for Welles' long depth of field cinematography. Two years after Astruc he wrote in this context about a '*découpage* unit we might call the plan-séquence [the long take].'[29] In his most extensive exposition on the subject in the essay about William Wyler, Bazin takes the idea of the Caméra-Stylo further by making a connection between ambiguity of the long depth of field style and *découpage*. As with the already quoted excerpt referring to the invisible *découpage*, the styles of Welles and Wyler are contrasted with the analytical *découpage* of a typical Hollywood film. Bazin writes: 'the seeming psychological realism of analytical *découpage* [is] an illusion… Filmmakers who divide the action up for us are making the sorts of choices that are ours to make in real life.'[30] In *An Aesthetic of Reality* he makes his point clear, writing again about Welles: 'It is no longer the

[26] David Bordwell, 'Cutting remarks: On THE GOOD GERMAN, classical style, and the Police Tactical Unit.'

[27] Timothy Barnard, *Découpage*, 38–39.

[28] Quoted in Timothy Barnard, *Découpage*, 39.

[29] Jean Cocteau and André Bazin, *Orson Welles*, [trans. Timothy Barnard], (Paris: Chavane, 1950), 54.

[30] André Bazin, 'Wiliam Wyler, ou le janséniste de la mise-en-scène,' *Qu'est-ce que le cinema? Vol. 1,* [trans. Timothy Barnard], 158.

[editing] that selects what we see, thus giving it an *a priori* significance, it is the mind of the spectator which is forced to discern, as in a sort of parallelepiped of reality with the screen as its cross-section, the dramatic spectrum proper to the scene.'[31]

Here we then have two types of *découpage*: analytical that offers a selection of indubitable psychological facts about the dramatic content of a scene, and polysemic *découpage* of long takes and an extended depth of field exemplified by films by Welles, Wyler and Rossellini.[32] Bazin's vision of realism in those films hinges precisely on their segmentation that forces us to look for truth beyond the shallow psychological realism of analytical *découpage*.

It is worth looking closely at the essay 'William Wyler ou le Janséniste de la mise-en-scène' as Bazin's argument here draws connections between all of the discussed notions so far. Barnard's complaint about English translations of Bazin's text is clearly borne out by Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo's rendition of that essay, but, as already indicated, I find difficulties with finding an English equivalent of *découpage* revealing rather than irritating.

Bazin, right from the beginning, identifies Wyler's style with his – not mis-en-scène, and not editing as the English translation suggests – but precisely *découpage*. He writes: 'When one recalls the major scenes in Wyler's films, one notices that their dramatic material is extremely varied and that [*découpage*] of it is very different from one film to another.'[33] Bazin's evident admiration for Wyler comes from the fact that Wyler has only a style, which, unlike the visual systems of John Ford or Fritz Lang, is never in danger of slipping into mannerism.[34] It is largely because his mis-en-scène like Jansenists' austere way of life is self-effacing,' devoid of any aestheticising predilections. When comparing the use of deep focus photography by Welles and Wyler, Bazin points out that for the former the technique is an aesthetic effect in its own right, a

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[31] André Bazin, 'An Aesthetic of Reality,' in *What is Cinema? Vol. 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 28.

[32] Ibid., 38–39.

[33] André Bazin, *Bazin at Work: Major Essays & Reviews from the Forties & Fifties*, trans. Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo (New Yor: Routledge, 1997), 1. In original: 'Quand on évoque les scénes culminantes des films de Wyler, on s'aperçoit que la matiére dramatique en est très variée et que les trouvailles de *découpage* qui la mettent en valeur n'ont que peu de rapport entre elles.' André Bazin, 'Qu'est-ce que le cinema?,' 149.

[34] Ibid., 2.

formal embellishment, while Wyler uses the same devise for its purity, in a bid for 'science of clarity.'[35]

The essential part of the essay begins with an invocation of the 'realistic tendency' in the cinema existing ever since not only Louis Lumière, but even Marey and Muybridge. However, Bazin quickly establishes that 'there is not one realism, but several realisms.' Wyler in his films reaches beyond psychological and social truth *of action*. This is what analytical *découpage* strives for. Instead, he tries to find 'aesthetic equivalents for psychological and social truth in *the mis-en-scène*.' Bazin emphatically declares that there is no contradiction between 'aestheticism' and 'realism.' Rossellini's episodic *Paisan* (1946) is more 'aesthetic' than any other film. While cinema presents nothing more than 'representation' of reality, 'art can create an aesthetic that is *incorporated* in reality.'[36]

These statements need to be read in the light of Bazin's famous dictum 'montage interdit' and his nuanced analysis of the analytical as opposed to deep-focus *découpage*. He certainly believes in the evolution of the film language, but the endpoint is not an abolition of editing – this is not on the cards. It seems that in *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema* when Bazin writes *montage*, he means *montage,* not editing. It is a cutting à la Soviets as analysed in the previous chapter. Editing as such is not forbidden. How could it be, if the evolution of the cinema language is essentially a history of the developments in filmic fragmentation?
It is clear enough though that Bazin objects to a certain paradigm of editing.

According to him, the aesthetic of silent cinema was founded on montage, which was nothing more than a procedure for producing illusions. 'Montage as used by Kuleshov, Eisenstein, or Gance did not show us the event; it alluded to it.'[37] In the silent cinema 'the meaning is not in the image, it is in the shadow of the image projected by montage onto the field of consciousness of the spectator.'[38] Notwithstanding the clearly biased tone of his disparaging comments, Bazin's invocation of Plato's cave betrays his ontological convictions, which are consistent across his writings. Cinema can potentially give us access to the meaning *in* the image. This would be signification

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[35] Ibid., 17.
[36] Ibid., 6. In original: 'une esthétique *intégrante* de la réalité.'
[37] André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, 25.
[38] Ibid., 26.

incorporated in reality, evidenced in Wyler's perfect neutrality and transparency of style.'[39]

The next stage of the evolution of the cinema was completed around 1938 with the triumph of, not classical editing, but rather analytical or dramatic *découpage*. Bazin writes: 'In 1938 there was an almost universal standard pattern of [*découpage*]. If somewhat conventionally we call the kind of silent films based on the plastics of the image and the artifices of montage 'expressionistic' or 'symbolic,' we can describe the new form of storytelling 'analytic' and 'dramatic.'[40] Bazin then proceeds to describe a dissection of a hypothetical scene into an establishing shot, a series of close-ups followed by a re-establishing shot. The commonalities of that style of *découpage* are: 'the verisimilitude of space' and, most importantly, the fact that 'the purpose and the effects of the [*découpage*] are exclusively dramatic or psychological.'[41]

However, for Bazin this stage does not constitute an absolute culmination of the language of cinema. Far from it, analytical *découpage* is a mere progression towards a higher degree of realism. In the essay about Wyler he writes: 'the technique of [analytical *découpage*] tends to destroy in particular the *ambiguity* inherent in reality. It 'subjectivizes' the event to an extreme, since each shot is the product of the director's bias.'[42] Earlier in the text, Bazin explains that the classical method works on our unconsciousness – without knowing it we accept director's choices, 'because they conform to the seeming laws of *ocular attraction*.'[43]

The third phase is then the cinema of 'an aesthetics of reality.' What Bazin means by that is a certain refinement of cinematic devises, which do not anchor the meaning by saying to us 'look at that now,' but allow the spectator to make their own dissection of the spatial continuum. Jean Renoir, André Malraux, Orson Welles, Roberto Rossellini and William Wyler achieve that by a frequent use of depth of field or at least by employing a 'simultaneous mis-en-scène,' which is when we see a few actions happening simultaneously.[44]

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[39] André Bazin, *Bazin at Work: Major Essays & Reviews from the Forties & Fifties*, 9.
[40] André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, 31.
[41] Ibid., 31–32. In original: 'l'intention et les effets du *découpage* sont exclusivement dramatiques ou psychologiques.' André Bazin, 'L'évolution du langage,' in *Qu'est-ce que le cinema?*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2000), 72.
[42] André Bazin, *Bazin at Work: Major Essays & Reviews from the Forties & Fifties*, 8.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 12.

Naturally, Bazin's system offers a particular vision of 'true realism' in cinema, pitted against illusory deception of pseudorealisms and upheld by a conviction that it is possible to 'give significant expression to the world both concretely and *its essence*.'[45] Automatic means of producing photographic image guarantee for Bazin that existential, indexical link between the representation and the depicted world.[46]

I do not think this is the place to discuss criticism of Bazin's theory, which is extensive but not relevant to the type of argument pursued here, focused on the concept of *découpage* rather than the questions of film form in general. Except for two aspects of it that are perhaps worth investigating – the essentialism of his ideas and the indexicality of the photographic image that supports Bazin's vision of realism.

Nöel Carroll in *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* accuses theorists like Bazin, Rudolf Arnheim and V.F. Perkins of subscribing to a philosophical assumption about the essentialist nature of cinema as an art.[47] Without doubt, the classical theory is not only premised on that idea but also organised towards establishing what constitutes the core feature of the medium. Carroll in fact draws on Perkins' dismissal of earlier film theorists whom he classifies into two groups: 'creationists' (Carroll's coinage) including Arnheim, Balázs, Eisenstein, Lindgren, Pudovkin and Kuleshov posited that cinema was an art as long it could expressively present 'pictorial space' and re-arrange reality through editing.[48] According to this point of view, the camera creates rather than observes. The other group, which includes Kracauer and Bazin, responded to the creationists' paradigm by reversing their priorities. 'Realists' see the camera's nature of a mechanical recording eye as a unique privilege of cinema, not a drawback. Perkins and Carroll following him reject those two positions for their apparent shared sin: both creationists and realists guided by their own taste and critical inclinations impose restrictions on what counts as truly cinematic.[49] According to Perkins, the problem with the classical film theory is that it

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[45] André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Vol. 1*, 12.

[46] Ibid., 13.

[47] Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[48] V.F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1999), 19.

[49] Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 177.

conceives its role to be defining the essence of film art, whereas Perkins suggests that film has no single essence, but is a hybrid of potentials.[50] It is worth stressing that Perkins' complaint is largely meta-theoretical: realists and creations might be right regarding particular films they examine, but their localised observations cannot be generalised to a theory of film. This line of argument is picked up by Carroll in this book, and later made more prominent in a collection of essays edited with David Bordwell *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*. As Carroll observes: 'classical film theory tends toward the hypostatization of period-specific preferences by pursuing what might be called the Theory of Film.'[51] What Carroll recommends instead is construing 'film theorizing to be a matter of constructing theor*ies* about film – for example, theories of film suspense, of camera movement, of editing, of movie music, of the avant-garde, of the Art Cinema…'[52] In short, he postulates 'piecemeal theorizing' as 'a useful heuristic device.'[53]

It is possible to argue then, in a fashion of piecemeal theorizing although largely subverting Carroll's thinking, that Bazin's essentialism is a pragmatic strategy without which his historical account of the 'evolution' of cinema with its insightful description of analytical *découpage* would not hold together.[54] Bazin seeks logic in the stylistic shifts from the silent era to the classical sound film to his contemporary auteur-cinema, which takes him onto a path that inevitably has an aesthetically-driven direction. The medium-specificity of that account on the one hand belongs to the conceptual horizon of the period; on the other hand, it is congruent with his Platonism. The essentialism of his view of the cinema is the same as that of his worldview. In fact, Bazin was quite explicit about the fact that the occasionally occurring social realism of Hollywood cinema was not what he was advocating for. His own 'realism' invoked universals and the essence of things. *Abstract objects* are something that cinematic image reveals through its ambiguities and cannot be forced upon the spectator neither through artifices of

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 254–255.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Carroll acknowledges that sympathetic reading when he starts off his criticism with approving caveats. He writes: 'In the course of tracing the logic and structure of the evolution of film history, Bazin mobilized a battery of dubious philosophical and metaphysical presuppositions. It is possible, however, to reread Bazin while ignoring these excessive theoretical commitments so that his observations about the evolution of film style can be de-mythologized leaving us with several insights about the progress of film history that have lasting value.

montage nor by the controlling hand of a typical Hollywood director. Bazin's platonism, it could be argued, is a critical heuristic that allows him to imagine the possibility of cinema that retains the ambiguity of the image in order to peel off the illusionistic layers of representation and to strike at its core.

Bazin's idea of indexical realism has cropped up not only in theories directly influenced by the writing of the French critic, like Stanley Cavell's *The world viewed*, but also more recently in the context of the digital. Tom Gunning in *What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs* addresses the problem of indexicality in relation to the cinema made up of binary numbers.[55] He first dismisses some of the popular claims about the revolutionary break from the index that is allegedly heralded by digital filmmaking. Paul Willemen, for instance, without necessarily going as far as announcing a complete dissolution of the concept, points out the 'waning of the indexical dimension of the image and the consequent changes in its relation to the subjectivity.'[56] Gunning reminds us first that faking in photography has a long history. More importantly, he then argues that no matter whether the process is chemical or digital the 'visual accuracy' of the image is dependent on something he calls its 'truth claim' rather than an inherent property of the medium.[57] Photography has never actually been a direct transfer, an exact clone of the recorded reality. Even when looking at traditional photography, one cannot ignore the mediation of lens, stock, exposure, shutter rate, filters, the process of developing and printing, which profoundly shape the mechanical imprint. The digital image processing sometimes uses metaphorically and almost semi-ironically the same terms as traditional photography to describe, technically speaking, a very different process – in the image editing software one can 'develop' a raw digital image, although this has nothing to do with immersing a roll of film in a developing tank. The means of the transformation have radically changed, but the time-honoured concepts are still fully applicable. What did evolve drastically is the efficiency and speed of the processing and manipulation of the image.

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[55] Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs,' Plenary *Session II. Digital Aesthetics*. http://ncadjarmstrong.com/year-3-postmodern-moving/whats_the_point_of_an_index.pdf (accessed 20 September 2017).
[56] Paul Willemen, 'Reflections on Digital Imagery: Of Mice and Men,' in *New Screen Media. Cinema/Art/Narrative*, ed. Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 14.
[57] Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs,' 41.

However, these changes only highlight an issue with the index itself. Gunning has misgivings about the very usefulness of the concept in the context of photography. A passport photo has an indexical value only to the extent that it 'maintains something of the original image's visual accuracy and recognisability,' which leads him to conclude that our judgments about photographs are based in equal measure by iconicity.[58] Carroll in fact proposes a related argument when he suggests that Bazin's concept of representation does not account for *recognisability* of the image, which is not a simple result of the physical properties of cinema. He writes: 'An out-of-focus Brakhage close-up whose model even Brakhage can no longer remember or identify is still a projected imprint, and, therefore, still a Bazinian representation.'[59] However, while Carroll intends this as a critique of Bazinian realism, Gunning wants to reconstitute a phenomenological fascination with the relationship between the image and the world that is at the centre of Bazin's ontology. Rather than looking at what pictures depict, we should aim at explaining the effects they have on us. In this project of re-thinking Bazinian legacy, he looks back at Peter Wollen's semiotical glossing of *The Ontology of the Photographic Image*. Although it was a brilliant rendering of Bazin's concepts that made them understandable, it also linked in a slightly unhelpful way Bazinian realism with Peirce's concept of sign.[60] Thus, Wollen's reading has 'cut us off' from a different understanding of photographs' 'irrational power to bear away our faith.'[61]

Following Bazin's and Barthes's thinking, Gunning draws attention to the fact that when looking at a photograph we experience a *presence* of something. For Barthes, a photograph is an *emanation* of past reality.[62] The image is then neither a copy, nor a substitution as semiotics would have it. It has its own existence beyond signification. Its abundance of details, its perceptual overflow is what drives our attraction to the photographic image.[63]

I want to relate this discussion on the Bazinian ontology of the image back to the concept of *découpage* as they are connected to each other. Barnard laments that Bazin's use of the concept was not always consistent. However, the

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Noël Carroll, *Philosophical Problems of Classical Film Theory*, 164.
[60] Tom Gunning, 'What's the Point of an Index? Or, Faking Photographs,' 46.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 47–48

French critic's concluding remarks in *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema* are less ambiguous than they seem. Bazin writes:

> … [In] the silent days, montage *evoked* what the director wanted to say; in [the analytical *découpage*] of 1938, it *describes* it. Today we can say that at last the director *writes* in film. The image – its plastic composition and the way it is set in time, because it is founded on a much higher degree of realism – has at its disposal more means of manipulating reality and *modifying it from within*.[64]

Admittedly, *writing* in film might suggest mis-en-scène, a competing concept to *découpage*. After all, the growing popularity of mis-en-scène might be one of the reasons why *découpage* was abandoned in French critical circles, which coincided with a period when auteurist overtones of mis-en-scène were in favour. But the excerpt above is a culmination of an essay that consistently talks about *découpage* in opposition to montage. Linking Bazin's overall approach here with his article about Wyler, we can infer from those statements another category, that of caméra-stylo *découpage* of his preferred realist cinema.

What I find particularly significant is how he sees this more refined type of fragmentation as working *from within* the spatial continuum. This truly phenomenological reflection seems congruent with Bazin's philosophical stance, which imbues the image with the power of offering us 'a presence of something': of the concrete reality together with its Platonic essence. It is another piece of evidence that the fragmentation of the profilmic was one of the key preoccupations of Bazin's thinking. His was the ideal of *experiential cinema* mentioned before, a possibility that film can be a site of consciousness that brings together the mode of representation and its subject. For the auterist Bazin, however, this was less of an abstraction. The consciousness that we experience in a film is that of its director, whose *découpage* is the proper medium of cinematic storytelling.

As we have seen, next to the procedure of *découpage technique,* there are a few categories of *découpage* that we can extract from Bazin's writings. The most clearly defined is *analytical* (or *classical*) *découpage* of Hollywood cinema. By culling scattered remarks, we can also re-construct an idea of *caméra-stylo*

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[64] André Bazin, 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema,' 39–40. In original: '[Au] temps du muet, le montage *évoquait* ce que le réalisateur voulait dire, en 1938 le *découpage décrivait*, aujourd'hui en fin, on peut dire que le metteur en scène *écrit* directement en cinéma. L'image – sa structure plastique, son organisations dans le temps – parce qu'elle prend appui sur un plus grand réalisme, dispose ainsi de beaucoup plus de moyens pour infléchir, modifier du dedans la réalité.' André Bazin, 'L'évolution du langage cinématographique,' 80.

découpage of individual directors. The most ephemeral of Bazinian's *découpage*s is an idea that spatial dissection can potentially re-constitute the pre-existing world in its raw presence liberated from the semiotic impositions or the psychological preconceptions. His favourite directors inch towards that vision of cinema and Bazin's phenomenological ontology points in that direction as well. This kind of *découpage* 'contributes something to the order of natural creation instead of providing a substitute for it.'[65] The last sentence of *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* resonates with a sense of defiance and simultaneously an acquiescent resignation over that elusive project. After painting a broad, ambitious and definitive portrait of cinema as 'objectivity in time' Bazin adds a parting shot: 'On the other hand, of course, cinema is also a language.'[66] *Découpage* of presence, like the automatic imprint itself, stands apart from the question of cinematic syntax.

Without doubt, this is a modernist vision of cinema, criticised by Carroll. But it is worth pointing out that most of the theories discussed so far lean towards essentialism. This is particularly the case with heuristics used in teaching film practice, which frequently seek to establish a normative view of the medium. From the perspective of a creator, it is necessary in a sense to work with some sort of understanding, even if incomplete or inherently contradictory, of what constitutes the medium-specific method. This tendency is evident in the writings of Mackendrick, Pudovkin, Reisz and Millar, which spring out of a set of assumptions about what cinema is.

Like Soviet models of montage geared towards the specificity of the medium, *découpage* squarely belongs to the classical theory. However, as indicated, those early theoretical concepts left an indelible mark on the curricula in film practice. Curiously, it seems that teaching at the University of Southern California, one of the primary incubators of the creative workforce in Hollywood, for most of the 20th century was steeped in the theories originating in the first half of it, which, as Adam Simon points out, were imbued with the aesthetic of the silent era.[67] Simon, who graduated in 1989 recalls that he chose the University of Southern California over other film programmes because it 'embodied a core of practical knowledge and *techne* as it were from classic

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[65] André Bazin, 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image,' in *What Is Cinema? Vol. 1*, 15.
[66] Ibid., 16. In original: 'D'autre part le cinéma est un langage.'
[67] Adam Simon, private email received on 9th September 2017.

Hollywood. They were like an art academy still teaching the methods of the old masters while all around the modernists were taking over.'[68] The textbooks used in film practice teaching at that time included: Edward Dmytryk's very classicist *On film editing* and *On screen directing*, essays by Slavko Vorkapich, *The Five C's of Cinematography* by Joseph V. Mascelli and the ever present Reisz and Millar's *The Technique of film editing.*[69]

Although the idea of *découpage* would never feature in those texts, one can find in them ideas that approach that notion. Mascelli's 5 Cs are: camera angles, continuity, cutting, close-ups and composition.[70] Evidently, continuity is not discussed under the heading of 'editing.' Mascelli considers it an essential aspect of cinematography. In other words, in this industry textbook Mascelli without knowing it elaborates a theory of 'continuity *découpage*.'

[68] Ibid.
[69] Edward Dmytryk, *On film editing* (Boston: Focal Press, 1984); Edward Dmytryk, *On sceen directing* (Boston: Focal Press, 1984); Joseph V. Mascelli, *The Five C's of Cinematography* (Los Angeles: Silman-James Press, 1965); Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing.*
[70] Joseph V. Mascelli, *The Five C's of Cinematography.*

CONTINUITY SYSTEM

Of course, the established concept related to the style of invisible storytelling is not continuity *découpage* but rather *continuity editing*. I'm going to look now at the most common ways of defining this method in academic writing. This will then help me find correlations and points of disjuncture between that notion and the approaches to editing that feature in practice-oriented theorising, in particular in selected books such as Karel Reisz and Gavin Millar's *The Technique of Film Editing*, the writings of Walter Murch and Karen Pearlman's *Cutting Rhythms: Intuitive Film Editing*. This, in turn, should tease out a possibility of sketching a *paradigm of continuity*.

The term 'continuity editing' features widely in a variety of film- related texts. It is described as 'editing which is intended to flow so smoothly from one shot to the next that audiences are not even conscious of the shot transitions.'[1] In another introductory book '[continuity] editing is a set of editing practices that establish spatial and/or temporal continuity between shots.'[2] Ed Sikov clarifies this by adding that it is '*any of the various techniques* that filmmakers employ to keep their narratives moving forward logically and smoothly.'[3] An entry in *A Dictionary of Film Studies* defines continuity editing as 'a highly codified system of film editing which originated in the US in the early 20th century and which still operates today in a good deal of mainstream cinema as well as television drama.'[4]

The most common techniques associated with that style are: cuts matched on action, eye-line matches, shot/reverse shot pattern, graphic and sound matches, adherence to the 180° system (the axis of action) and to the 30° rule, and the observance of the direction of action.[5] However, already, in a sign of tension within that category, Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell add that 'continuity editing is *a total system* that requires film production and sound recording to be orchestrated in a certain way in order to ensure that an editor can find continuity in post-production.'[6] They list techniques of achieving that goal,

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[1] Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis, *Film: A Critical Introduction* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2005), 182.
[2] Ed Sikov, *Film Studies. An Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 63.
[3] Ibid., [emphasis added].
[4] Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, 'continuity editing,' *A Dictionary of Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94.
[5] Ibid.; Ed Sikov, *Film Studies. An Introduction, 63–6*; Valerie Orpen, *The Art of the Expressive*, 17.
[6] Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, 'continuity editing,' *A Dictionary of Film Studies*, 94.

among which are three-point lighting that aids with the illusion of consistent illumination throughout the film; sound design focusing on comprehensibility of the dialogue; elements of mis-en-scène such as blocking actors' positions in a way that privileges shot/reverse shot set-ups and adheres to the mentioned rules of spatial coherence, using standard shot types and 'restrained camera movement.'[7]

As we have seen from this account, in order to specify norms of continuity editing in a way that goes beyond the most elementary rules of matching cuts, it seems necessary to locate continuity techniques that feature in other stages of production and actually have little to do with cutting. A notion of continuity system, therefore, becomes instantly called forth.

A tension signalled above between the category of continuity editing and continuity system could also be found in neoformalist texts, which contain the most extensive elaboration of those concepts. In *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson address the issue of continuity in three slightly different ways.

The most fundamental construct for them is the idea of classical narration, which according to Bordwell is omniscient, omnipresent, predominantly motivated compositionally, unobtrusive, based on principles of causality and character-centred psychological motivation.[8] Causality operates as the dominant, in Roman Jakobson's sense, of the classical narration.[9] Bordwell refers to 'the tradition of the well-made play' to explain how Hollywood dramaturgy relies on time-honoured conventions for crafting 'battles of wits, thrusts and counter-thrusts, extreme reversals of fortune, and rapid denouement.'[10] Those formulas reinforce the overall sense of linear progression through a chain of causes and effects spanning obligatory moments of 'Exposition, Conflict, Complication, Crisis and Denouement.'[11] While classical narrative encompasses elements serving verisimilitude (realistic motivation), as well as generic markers and artistic embellishments (generic and artistic motivations), the unifying factor remains story causality (compositional motivation).[12] Narration tells us only things that are necessary for the story to

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[7] Ibid.
[8] David Bordwell, 'The classical Hollywood style 1917–60.' 24–33.
[9] Ibid., 12.
[10] Ibid., 17.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 19.

proceed. That also means that even if a character's actions are outrageously improbable, the narrative is still able to present them as plausible through a matrix of motivational coherence – psychological traits and goals of the character suffice to explain why certain events occur in the story world.

While *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* defines narration as an aspect of the plot, in *Narration in the Fiction Film*, Bordwell shifts the focus towards the activity of a spectator.[13] He combines a cognitive-perceptual approach developed in psychological constructivism with the categories of *fabula* and *syuzhet* coined by the Russian formalists.[14] In consequence, Bordwell arrives at a definition stating that '[in] the fiction film, narration is the process whereby the film's syuzhet and style interact in the course of cueing and channelling the spectator's construction of the fabula.'[15] There is here a clear attempt at creating a formalist framework capable of taking account of a variety of narrative structures, not just its classical variant, although the concept of fabula seems most befitting canonical stories, 'ordinary films,' as Bordwell calls the mainstream cinema.[16]

In both models – the classical and the more general – the idea of continuity is foregrounded and linked with a sense of coherence that underlies the construction (and the re-construction by the spectator) of the narrative. Neoformalists do recognise though that the gloss of classical storytelling is largely an artifice. For example, Bordwell has some reservations about calling the style invisible or transparent in a vein of Noël Burch's term 'the zero-degree style of filming.'[17] In *Breaking the Glass Armor* Thompson, analysing 'the ordinary film' *Terror By Night* (dir. Roy William Neill, 1946), notices that 'the apparent homogeneity of the film's style, and its apparent continuity, makes the information revealing and concealing functions of the individual devices difficult to differentiate.'[18] There is often a 'veneer of motivation,' which is meant to 'conceal considerable disparities and gaps in the plot.'[19] What is more, '[the]

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[13] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 29.
[14] Ibid., 32–33; 49.
[15] Ibid., 53.
[16] See ibid., 49.
[17] David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 24–25.
[18] Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor. Neoformalist Film Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 80.
[19] Ibid.

camouflaging motivations of the syuzhet tend to mask the ideological implications.'[20]

The idea of continuity presented above refers to the narrative level. However, the authors of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* approach the subject also at the level of formal devices. In the chapter titled 'The Continuity System', Thompson draws connections between the obsession with continuity of Hollywood scriptwriters and what she calls here 'analytical editing.'[21] Similar to other historical accounts of editing, she points to the use of establishing shots, the appearance of cut-ins which evolve into POV framing, and the shot/reverse shot structures. Throughout her analysis Thompson refers to analytical editing, bringing attention to the fact that it 'breaks a single locale into different views,' which she treats as a separate issue from crosscutting and linking contiguous spaces through a character's movement or glance.[22] However, she also underscores the narrative functionality of those techniques – they are all geared toward the psychology of the characters. In other words, all devices of analytical cutting are harnessed by the classical narrative.

This understanding of editing as a spatial breakdown (and linkage) is related to a discussion of 'anatomy of the scene' that features earlier in the book. Bordwell argues that while chase sequences, crosscutting and montage sequences were all part of the classical style, the 'building block' was constituted by something that Christian Metz called the 'ordinary scene'; that is, one that preserves the unity of time and space.[23] Its autonomy is relative: the classical scene both stands on its own and is part of a cause-and-effect chain. Each scene continues, develops or resolves previously introduced plot threads and potentially opens up new ones.

It is worth noting that Bordwell begins the same chapter by invoking Bazin and remarking that '[the] best term for the Hollywood practice [of editing] is… *découpage*: the parcelling out of images in accordance with the script, the mapping of the narrative action onto the cinematic material.'[24] He adds that *découpage* in the US is related to a quantitative method of production, as expounded by T.W. Adorno's description of the cultural industry.[25] The script

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[20] Ibid., 81.
[21] Kristin Thompson, 'The formulation of the classical style, 1909–28,' 194.
[22] Ibid., 198–201.
[23] David Bordwell, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema,* 63.
[24] Ibid., 60.
[25] Ibid.

needs to be a rigorous estimation of what needs to be produced. Bazin comes back a few pages later when Bordwell writes specifically about 'continuity editing.' He defines it as a system that 'reinforces spatial orientation.' By no means is it a universal system of rules. Bordwell points out that in films by Eisenstein, Ozu, Nagisa Oshima, Godard and others, editing can work against the cohesion of space.

But what is perhaps most paradoxical is that when describing the basic premises of 'classical continuity editing', Bordwell reaches out to the already quoted excerpt from *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema*.[26] In that passage, Bazin defines *classical découpage* as a style based on the 'verisimilitude of the space' and used exclusively for dramatic or psychological purposes. Bordwell does not refer to the word *découpage* here, but uses a translation that supplants it with 'editing.'

As it should become clear by now, there are three related continuities in the neoformalist model: causal continuity of the classical narration, continuity system and continuity editing. Their close interdependence is intentional as neoformalist perspective assumes that narrative causality is the dominant. However, there is discernible at least a hesitation as to the place of continuity editing in this triad. On the one hand, Bordwell and Thomson see it as 'a dominant editing style throughout Western film history.'[27] It is described as a universal set of norms for cutting that forges spatial cohesion of the profilmic. When examining it in *Film Art: An Introduction*, Bordwell and Thompson write about 'a smooth flow from shot to shot' and stress consistency in positions of characters in the frame, eyelines and screen direction.[28] However, while it is relatively straightforward to point to the rules of continuity editing, as soon as the principles are discussed it becomes necessary to resort to other stylistic devices employed by the continuity system to support the overall aim of presenting 'a story coherently and clearly.' Hence, continuity editing, rather than being a subcategory of a continuity system, cannot be really accounted for without mentioning 'specific strategies of cinematography and mise-en-scène,' used to 'ensure *narrative continuity*.'[29] Continuity editing assumes the dominance of the compositional motivation in a film that employs that style of

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[26] Ibid., 56.
[27] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 231.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

cutting. In that sense, it is not really a standalone editing technique, but is rather one of the many aspects of the continuity system.

On the other hand, in some passages in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* and *Breaking the Glass Armor*, Bordwell and Thompson seem to lean toward the understanding of continuity editing as something more specific and related to the spatiotemporal breakdown within a scene, an equivalent of analytical editing or Bazin's classical *découpage*. Thompson for example writes:

> Stylistic functions remain almost continually subordinated to the narrative, promoting this sense of flow; hence the term 'continuity' system… Most properly, the continuity system refers to a set of editing rules for joining shots smoothly and creating the impression of continuous time and space *within scenes*.[30]

Here then, the continuity system is equalled with a set of editing norms and is subordinated by the overall narrative flow. But *most properly*, it is a practice of the spatiotemporal breakdown of 'the ordinary scene.' In that latter sense, it becomes a sort of universal *découpage* seemingly independent of narrative considerations.

Finally, *The Film Art* also contains a general discussion of the concept of editing without any descriptor. It is suggested that 'editing offers the filmmaker four basic areas of choice:' graphic, rhythmic, spatial and temporal relations.[31] This rather safe formula seems to cover the whole ground in an incontestable way, but is treated as a separate model, unrelated to the style of continuity editing.

It is not my intention to be overly pedantic in these distinctions. I do, however, think it is important to be precise about the scope of these terms as they inform how we conceptualise certain practices. There are two tensions that arise from understanding continuity editing as the 'standard cutting.' First is related to stylistic implications of continuity editing. 'Smooth flow' and 'invisibility' are the most common associations as evidenced in the quoted definitions from introductory textbooks, despite the fact that authors of *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* do recognise complexities hidden under those notions. Hence, because continuity editing style has strong classical connotations, the use of the term often necessitates qualifications when used to describe styles of editing, which clearly break away from that aesthetic. A sense of 'academism,' restraint and

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[30] Kristin Thompson, *Breaking the Glass Armor. Neoformalist Film Analysis*, 70.
[31] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 220.

unobtrusiveness are said to have been increasingly less prominent features of editing in the last three decades.[32] In the context of contemporary Hollywood, Bordwell proposes, therefore, to talk about 'intensified' continuity.[33] Valerie Orpen challenges the argument of continuity editing being 'invisible.' She says that 'as soon as editing becomes expressive, it also becomes visible.' [34] Most recently, Ronald Compesi and Jaime Gomez posit that there are two general techniques: *continuity editing* and *dynamic editing*.[35] Most films fall somewhere on the spectrum between these two stylistic poles. Theorists writing about post-classical cinema elaborate concepts like 'impact aesthetic'[36] or talk about 'MTV hyper-edited "shot fragment" editing' as the rule of commercial and semi-commercial films, in which 'excess is the dominant characteristic.'[37] One could add that many instances of intensified continuity could well be described as belonging to montage paradigm, which seems a more accurate way of describing editing styles that can also be referred to using Steven Shaviro's term 'post-cinematic affect.'[38] The emphasis and the creative goals of that kind of editing are far removed from the ideals of classicist continuity, whereas they do have a lot in common with the lineage of thinking that springs out of Eisenstein's groundwork in the theory of affect.

One could also add that there is a logical issue in defining the continuity system primarily on the basis of its implementation of 'continuity editing,' while at the same time proposing a definition of the latter that heavily relies on our understanding of the continuity system. It is clearly a tautology, which muddies the water, because we cannot be sure what continuity editing really is until a raft of continuity-related issues concerning film form and narrative construction are brought into the equation.

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[32] See Deron Overpeck, 'The New Hollywood, 1981–1999: Editing,' in *Editing and Special/Visual Effects*, ed. Charlie Keil and Kristen Whissel (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 129–141; Meraj Dhir, 'The Modern Entertainment Marketplace, 2000–Present,' in *Editing and Special/Visual Effects*, 156–171.
[33] David Bordwell, *The Way Hollywood Tells It*, 121.
[34] Valerie Orpen, *The Art of the Expressive* (London: Wallflower, 2003), 117.
[35] Ronal J. Compesi and Jaime S. Gomez, *Introduction to Video Production* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 260.
[36] Geoff King, *Spectacular Narratives: Hollywood in the Age of the Blockbuster* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 91–116.
[37] Wheeler Winston Dixon, 'Twenty-five Reasons Why It's All Over,' in *The End of Cinema as We Know it: American Film in the Nineties*, Jon Lewis, ed., (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 360.
[38] See Steven Shaviro, *Post-cinematic affect* (Winchester: Zero, 2010).

The core of the problem is perhaps the fact that the concept of continuity editing did not emerge in a vacuum but from the beginning was tied with the classical narrative. The invisibility and the smooth flow of that style are only, to some extent, a result of the technique of spatiotemporal fragmentation. The more essential component, as neoformalists themselves make clear, is the sequential distribution of narrative cues that adheres to the long-established and rather conservative norms of plot construction. Therefore, continuity editing as a notion that straddles both a particular model of the narrative and the spatiotemporal fragmentation cannot be easily separated from how we approach classicism in cinema. 'The ordinary scene' may well still be the most common vehicle for conveying narrative information in mainstream cinema. However, if contemporary cinema is sometimes construed as post-classical, should we then not talk about post-continuity editing?

Another issue related to the presented above is the overall assumption of the neoformalist project that stylistic norms are somehow immune to social discourse, that classical style is a closed system, sealed from the cultural and the political. However, Andrew Britton points out that

> [artistic] norms are cultural norms, and deployment of them cannot be identified in any simple way with a process of individuation or "self-expression" …To work with such norms is to work on and, in major cases, to modify and change the terms of a public discourse which structures sensibility and which governs the ways in which art is able to signify, and engage with the existing social world.[39]

The neoformalist perspective tends to ignore fluid changes in the forms of artistic expression, and this is also reflected in how they understand editing conventions, which are seen as tied to a 'group style.'

The more concrete issue is correlated with the recurring question of this thesis: 'what do we actually talk about when we talk about editing?' Even the narrowest formula of continuity editing presupposes some sort of other continuity that logically precedes the work of an editor. A matched cut can only be created if there is a potential for a matched cut in the rushes. Therefore, continuity in the classical sense is something that an editor can find or fix, but it

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[39] Andrew Britton, 'The Philosophy of the Pigeonhole,' in *Britton on Film: The Complete Criticism of Andrew Britton*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009), 431.

is beyond their means to impose it on any given material. As Mascelli says emphatically, '[the] editor cannot make a match-cut on mismatched action!'[40]

It is noteworthy that practical handbooks from the classical period placed emphasis on cinematography when examining the subject of continuity. The fore-mentioned *The Five C's of Cinematography* states authoritatively at the outset that

> [e]very motion picture should be based on a shooting plan. The plan may be a few mental notes, scribbled suggestions, an outline, a story board, or a detailed shooting script. The better the plan – or *continuity* – the stronger the chances of success. A continuity, or *shooting script*, is a preliminary motion picture on paper – a continuous plan for photographing and editing the production.[41]

A number of Mascelli's ideas about cinematography belong to the repertoire of the widely shared practical knowledge of the period. He describes continuity in almost identical terms as those of French critics' depictions of *découpage technique*. When he makes a distinction between filming 'controlled action' and 'uncontrolled action', he echoes the previously referenced advice of Hector Maclean from 1900.

What is rather remarkable is that his detailed suggestions about techniques of achieving continuity in cinematography are as relevant for multi-camera digital productions of today as they were for classical filmmaking of the 1950s. I would suggest it is worth pausing on them in order to highlight similarities and points of difference between continuity in cinematography and the concept of continuity editing. Mascelli scrupulously describes the mundane tenets of the continuity system as experienced by practitioners, and it is revealing to see how prescriptive and constraining classical *découpage* is.

Mascelli proposes two methods of achieving continuity of coverage: the master scene and the triple-take technique. In both cases the cinematographer can use a single-camera or a multi-camera set-up.[42]

He explains that '[a] master scene is a continuous take of an entire event occurring in a single setting.'[43] In this technique, portions of the action are afterwards repeated in 'medium-shots, two-shots, over-the-shoulder shots and

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[40] Joseph V. Mascelli, *The Five C's of Cinematography*, 83.
[41] Ibid., 67.
[42] Ibid., 75.
[43] Ibid.

individual close-ups.'[44] This breakdown is clearly aimed at maximising the number of available options in cutting. Mascelli writes that the editor can, at any time, 'open' up the scene and return to the master shot, or cut closer to emphasize a particular emotion or actor's reaction.[45] This type of coverage allows for an improvement of actor's performance or a change in the dramatic emphasis dictated by the script. The big advantage of this method is that each cut-in shot can be filmed with 'individual attention,' in particular with regard to its lighting. This is something that can be easily neglected on productions with multiple-camera set-ups.

In this context, Meraj Dhir makes an interesting point about multi-camera coverage of digital cinema. Examining *Chicago* (2002, dir. Bob Marshall, editor Martin Walsh), he notices that the use of many cameras can effectively constrain filmic expression. He writes that in that film '[since] all the musical numbers are staged as theatrical performances, the camerawork and compositions are bound to remain on one side of the *proscenium arch*.'[46] While the cameras have to be placed in an array at a certain distance from the action, the staging of actors remains fairly rigid. Less attention is given to closer shots because everything is played out in master scenes. He contrasts this approach with Bob Fosse's *Sweet Charity* (1969; Stuart Gilmore, editor) and *All That Jazz* (1979; Alan Heim, editor), which incorporate 'narrative ambiguity and character subjectivity in ways that make Chicago seem formally conservative in comparison.'[47]

The triple-take technique, according to Mascelli, is useful particularly when shooting without a script.[48] In this method, often called 'cutting in the camera,' the cinematographer divides the action into three consecutive shots. Mascelli explains that 'action at the end of the first shot is repeated at the beginning of the second shot, and action at the end of second shot is again overlapped at the beginning of the third shot.'[49] Needless to say, there must be a shift in camera angle and shot size with each consecutive shot.

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44 Ibid., 76.
45 Ibid., 77.
46 Meraj Dhir, 'The Modern Entertainment Marketplace, 2000–Present,' in *Editing and Special/Visual Effects*, 162.
47 Ibid., 163,
48 Ibid., 80.
49 Ibid.

Classical continuity has an elaborate system of norms concerning screen direction. Mascelli differentiates between various types of 'dynamic screen direction.' Among them is *constant* (used, for example, in travelling shots), *contrasting* (which suggests 'comings and goings') and *neutral* ('head-on' and 'tail-away' shots). Finally, rather than using a notion of the system of 180°, Mascelli talks about the *action axis*.

The difference in the terminology has some significance. Most common accounts of the rule of 180° in continuity editing focus on something that Mascelli calls 'static screen direction,' which applies to scenes when actors do not move, i.e. the shot/reverse shot exchanges of typical conversations.[50] However, the situation when the axis is static is relatively unproblematic, whereas shots with moving characters and/or moving camera are at risk of easily creating mismatches. Preserving direction of movement when filming action that follows a curved axis is particularly taxing. But often, also for pictorial or logistic reasons, it is necessary to switch the action axis. In order to head off a potential editing problem, it is then advisable to film a reaction shot that will 'distract the audience,' or 'a look on both sides of lens,' or cheat the action axis, which can be done 'if both the *camera viewpoint* and *subject movement* are transposed, so that they remain the same in relation to each other.'[51]

Mackendrick in his lectures is similarly fastidious about screen direction.[52] I would suggest that it is largely because there is a certain conflict of priorities here – production expediency is on a collision course with the need for dramatising the mise-en-scène. Therefore, issues with continuity are bound to be resolved only by compromises between blocking off for the effect, and permissible camera set-ups. Classical cinema is not just about the spatial coherence; the more important factor is the cogency of movement: of the characters and the narrative. Elaborate, dynamic staging, while time-consuming and more expensive, requires also a very careful adherence to the rules of screen direction and adequate coverage. That is why Mascelli insists that 'a picture shot from script should have all its travel mapped out before production begins.' He suggests that the action axis can be considered 'a [travel] line on a map, or an imaginary line made up by an individual walking down a hall; or a vehicle

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[50] Ibid., 87.
[51] Ibid., 99, 102, 112.
[52] Alexander Mackendrick, *On Film-making*, 235–250.

driving on a road.'[53] In other words, it is an imaginary line that remains constant throughout different set-ups.

As we have seen, this 'pictorial continuity,' as other handbook names it[54], was for classical cinema a significant factor in pre-production and was a rigorously observed rule during the stage of photography. Procedures described above, however, are not editing techniques. They are meant to give an editor the right kind of material for constructing a coherent space and time out of supplied fragments. What is more, and what restricts a set of editing choices, those segments are largely already pre-determined in narrative terms.

Practice-centred discourse about editing often reflects that limitation, and acknowledges, what we might call analytical *découpage* that happens in camera, emphasising other aspects of film construction that are particularly significant from the editing point of view. Walter Murch, in his influential *In a Blink of an Eye*, preambles his oft-referenced *rule of six* with a number of points which lead up to the question 'when you have to make a cut, what is it that makes it a good one?'[55] Murch is very clear about placing what he calls 'three-dimensional continuity' at the bottom of his list of priorities – the criteria that make a good cut. At the explicit level, he rejects the classicist obsession with 'pictorial continuity.' But at the same, he is not really dismissing any of the core values of classical narration. What he is implying then is that at the heart of the editor's work is something else than the re-constructing of the spatial continuum of the profilmic. A perfect cut for Murch is the one that meets, at the same time, six conditions, and each of them is given a different weight. The ideal cut then:

1) is true to the emotion of the moment [51%];
2) advances the story [23%];
3) occurs at a moment that is rhythmically interesting and 'right' [10%]
4) acknowledges what you might call 'eye-trace' – the concern with the location and movement of the audience's focus of interest within the frame [7%];
5) respects 'planarity' – the grammar of three dimensions transposed by photography to two [5%];
6) respects the three-dimensional continuity of the actual space [4%].[56]

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[53] Joseph V. Mascelli, *The Five C's of Cinematography,* 93.
[54] Arthur L. Gaskill, *Pictorial Continuity: How to Shoot a Movie Story* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1959).
[55] Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye*, 16.
[56] Ibid., 18.

These 'rules' also strongly suggest that the editor's job is an art of compromise – often one aspect of an edit needs to be sacrificed in order to hit the right note with the one that takes precedence. What is important, as Hervé de Luze puts it, is that the 'only rule in editing is that emotion trumps every rule in editing.'[57]

The three terms that feature most frequently in the practice-focused discourse are *story*, *emotion* and *rhythm*. They are tightly connected. As Murch explains 'the forces that bind them together are like bonds between the protons and neutrons in the nucleus of the atom.'[58] Editors who learnt the ropes in the classical period and those working in commercial cinema also tend to underline the need to 'protect' performances. Anne V. Coates, who cut *Lawrence of Arabia* (dir. David Lean, 1962), describes herself as an 'actor's editor.' She adds that she is 'also known as an emotional cutter.'[59] Tim Squyres proposes that 'the heart of the job is really about performance, and I think if you ask most editors what scene they're proudest of, it won't be an action scene. It'll be an emotional, dialogue-driven scene. Those are always the biggest challenge.'[60]

The image that emerges from most accounts is that the editor's job is to weave a fabric that intricately ties narrative elements with rhythms and affects. Richard Mark's observation is representative in that respect. He says: 'If editing is anything, it's telling a story and applying a rhythm to that story.'[61] Often, however, as we have seen in Murch's rule of six, it is emotion that comes forward.[62] Vittorio and Paolo Taviani suggest that '[the] emotion during the film dictates the rhythm more than the story.'[63] Josef Valusiak paints a vivid picture of those three terms saying that '[the] tempo of the storytelling does not depend on the frequency of the actions and attractions but on the control of timing where the emotion, philosophy and beauty are born.'[64]

An important metaphor for editors is music. Roberto Perpigani, described by his directors the Tavianis as the 'Stravinsky of the cutting room', explains: 'I cut following an emotion and it's the same way the musicians work.'[65] Murch

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[57] Justin Chang, *Editing* (Lewes: Ilex, 2012), 149.
[58] Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye*, 20.
[59] Justin Chang, 32.
[60] Ibid., 71.
[61] Ibid., 36.
[62] Roger Crittenden, *Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing* (Oxford: Focal Press, 2006), 26.
[63] Ibid., 89.
[64] Ibid., 239.
[65] Ibid., 103.

points to Beethoven as a source of inspiration. He says: When you listen to Beethoven's music now, and hear those sudden shifts in tonality, rhythm, and musical focus, it's as though you can hear the grammar of film – cuts, dissolves, fades, superimposures, long shots, close shots – being worked out in musical terms.'[66] Murch takes this analogy further, suggesting that cinema has Three Fathers: Edison, Beethoven and Flaubert.[67] The argument goes that the moving images bring together the 'closely observed' realism of the French nineteenth-century novel with Beethoven's idea of dynamics.[68] The German composer's revolutionary proposition was that 'by aggressively expanding, contracting, and transforming the rhythmic and orchestral structure of music, you could extract great emotional resonance and power.'[69] As is clear from that quote, Murch imagines the work of the editor as a process of composing, in which the material at hand is not comprised of notes but fragments of reality that are orchestrated in a way that brings out affect from them. This is in fact a very Eisensteinian observation, hinting at vertical montage, although Murch's interest in 'closely observed reality'[70] is absent from the Soviet writings.

Murch's additional influential insight, related to his metaphor of 'blinking', is that the most effective pattern of cuts 'needs to reflect or acknowledge pattern of thoughts of the characters in the film – which ultimately means the thought patterns of the audience.'[71] To use terminology suggested here, according to Murch, the editor takes the *découpage* structure of a film and moulds it into a pattern of emotions and thoughts that are induced in the audience.

If Murch is mostly concerned with emotion and story, the concept of rhythm is the basis of a model of editing proposed by Karen Pearlman. Her inquiry takes as a point of departure a common view among editors that their work is intuitive. Pearlman tries to establish where exactly those intuitions come from and what their subject is. She references Guy Claxton's study that defines an intuitive action as one employing expertise, implicit learning, judgment,

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[66] Michael Ondaatje, *The Conversations. Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 90.
[67] Ibid., 88.
[68] Ibid., 91.
[69] Ibid., 89.
[70] Ibid., 91.
[71] Ibid., 142.

sensitivity, creativity and rumination.[72] She then suggests that an editor's intuitive thinking is movement-based.[73] It is the movement of story, emotion, image and sound, and the job of an editor is to 'shape rhythm by shaping movement.'[74] She imagines that editors are attuned to the rhythms of the world, and responding to the rhythms of the uncut material. Her embodied responses to those rhythmic cues are then translated into cuts. In her model, Pearlman borrows from neuropsychology such aforementioned terms as *kinaesthetic empathy*, *corporeal imagination* and *embodied simulation*. She links the latter phenomenon with creating an emotional cycle of tension and release, based on Vittorio Gallese and Michele Guerra's study looking at Hitchcock's *Notorious* (1946). She herself proposes a term - 'trajectory phrasing' - to describe 'the manipulation of energy in the creation of rhythm.'[75] Pearlman sees rhythm in the sensory experience of the physical movement and in the flow of emotions and events.[76] In short, for her, 'rhythm in film editing is time, energy, and movement shaped by timing, pacing and trajectory phrasing for the purpose of creating cycles of tension and release.'[77]

Both Murch and Pearlman look for idiosyncratic features of editing and avoid referring to the narrative aspects of film construction. In particular, Pearlman attempts to explain all the workings of film form by the metaphor of energy circulating in a 'living body.'[78] Diverting from that image, when examining the divergence in styles of editing, she proposes to situate what she calls *thematic montage* and *continuity cutting* at the opposing edges of the spectrum.[79] By continuity cutting, she understands 'cutting up [into shots] something that could unfold in real time and space' and then putting back those fragments together to create the impression of spatiotemporal continuity.[80] This is then again a view very close to the idea of analytical *découpage*, and a slight modification of the concept of continuity editing. Thematic montage is, in this context, 'the association of things unrelated in time and space.'[81]

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[72] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing*, 11.
[73] Ibid., 14.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 60–61.
[76] Ibid., 88.
[77] Ibid., 86.
[78] Ibid., 151.
[79] Ibid., 164.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.

Murch's view is less binary in that respect. Despite frequent invocations of the emotional impact of a film, he comes back every now and then to the narrative aspect of editing decisions highlighting how story and affect are closely connected. For example, he says:

> …by cutting away from a certain character before he finishes speaking, I might encourage the audience to think only about the face value of what he said. On the other hand, if I linger on the character after he finishes speaking, I allow the audience to see, from the expression in his eyes, that he is probably not telling the truth, and they will think differently about him and what he said.[82]

He suggests, essentially, that a nuanced editing decision can have a significant impact on the meaning that the audience infers from the film text. Overall, both approaches try to answer a fundamental question: 'what is the reason for a cut?' Why does an editor decide to make an edit in the given moment and not another?

It is worth comparing how this issue is addressed in the most established model of editing that we find, in Reisz and Millar's book *The Technique of Film Editing*. Detailing principles of editing, Reisz refers to a precursor of cognitive theory of film, Ernest Lindgren, and suggests that 'cutting a film is not only the most convenient but also the psychologically correct method of *transferring attention* from one image to another.'[83] This reflection is echoed by Murch when he asserts that an editor needs to be aware at all times where the 'audience's eye is looking.' He says: 'If you think of the audience's focus of attention as a dot moving around the screen, the editor's job is to carry that dot around in an interesting way.'[84] For Reisz and Millar, that process of transferring attention is something to be sustained in cutting in order to 'construct a lucid continuity.'[85] However, that impression of 'smoothness' can only be achieved by creating two separate, and at the same time interdependent, continuities: mechanical and dramatic. The former is a result of adhering to the norms of spatiotemporal coherence of the profilmic. As Reisz writes, 'making a smooth cut means joining two shots in such a way that the transition does not create a noticeable jerk and the spectator's illusion of seeing a continuous piece of action is not interrupted.'[86] But this sort of illusionism is not an aim in itself. Reisz adds that

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[82] Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye*, 67.
[83] Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing*, 213.
[84] Michael Ondaatje, *The Conversations. Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*, 41,
[85] Karel Reisz, *The Technique of Film Editing*, 216.
[86] Ibid.

'all the "rules" of smooth cutting are subject to the much wider discipline of the *dramatic*, as opposed to the *mechanical* demands of the continuity, so that they are not to be taken as binding or universally valid.'[87]

Reisz goes as far as to suggest that assembling a rough cut is primarily focused on mechanical continuity, whereas the second stage of polishing the cut involves mainly dramatic considerations. Therefore, according to him, *cutting* can be associated with spatiotemporal smoothness, while *editing* is about constructing dramatic effects.[88] One rule of mechanical continuity Reisz is adamant about is that 'every cut…should make a point.'[89] He explains that the spectator needs to sense a dramatic motivation behind each cut, no matter whether it is a simple change of the size of a shot or a POV shot explaining a reason for the expression on a character's face.[90] In Reisz's writings, we see a similar set of aesthetic predilections as in Mackendrick's lectures. The dramatic motivation is king. It trumps other aspect of film construction and significantly contributes to the appearance of smoothness in editing.

Concluding, one could notice that next to some fundamental similarities, there are quite a few important differences between the common accounts of continuity editing and the models of editing emerging from the practice-focused literature. I would argue that continuity editing as described by Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger is tied to the concept of the classical narrative, which results in associations that are sometimes at odds with the variety of contemporary styles of editing.

The accounts of practitioners do not dispute the core tenets of classical editing – the dominant role of narrative and the importance of spatiotemporal continuity. They do, however, put much more emphasis on the emotions and rhythms generated by the editor's work. What is more, there is an attempt among practitioners to specify what makes the tasks of an editor different from those of a director, a scriptwriter or a cinematographer. This is one of the reasons why spatiotemporal (or mechanical) continuity is often not seen as an essential aspect of their work. Various facets of continuity, which can be seen as contributions towards the *découpage* of a film, pre-exist in the material that is subject to editing considerations. Therefore, instead of creating continuities, the editor's

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 220.
[90] Ibid., 228.

unique role is to realise their potential in the actual fabric of audio-visual relations and to ascribe a relative value to the components of the film's structure. That is why another recurring observation among practitioners is that mechanical continuity can be sacrificed if emotion or story are at stake. Crucially then, the editor's role includes resolving tensions between conflicting principles of film construction. Formulating hierarchies between the criteria of editing decisions, exemplified by Murch's rule of six, is a response to the fact that editors work with a large set of variables. Hence, a conviction that emotion trumps other editing principles, or that every cut needs a dramatic motivation, present themselves as heuristics that help practitioners lower the number of available options and suggest a direction for a multitude of editing decisions.

What is, however, underappreciated in the accounts of editing discussed here is the role of cultural codes in determining editing options. It is the fact that Reisz's suggestion that every cut needs to make a point presupposes that both the editor and their audience share the knowledge of a behavioural script that the cut is making the point about. That is to say, an edit might very well tell the spectator to pay attention to someone's facial expression, but the meaning of that intervention will be lost on the viewer, if their reading of that gesture is different from what the editor intended. As argued by Barthes among others, the obtuse meaning and the iconic, while absolutely essential for our film experience, belong to the connotative order, and so they firmly reside in the realm of culture.[91] In particular, the quality of *dramatism*, so often invoked in the classical theories, is malleable and might be subject to both historical change and cultural specificity.

In relation to continuity, advice from practitioners often invokes the mythical invisibility of 'good' editing. While Pearlman has rightly some misgivings about that attribute[92], the attempt at hiding cuts should be seen in the context of a preferred aesthetic dominant. Whether it is storytelling, emotion, rhythm or movement – in continuity paradigm, they are all put forward in order to disguise the 'brushstrokes' of an editor.

What is more, that desired 'invisibility' of cutting might be as much a result of the inner dynamic between various components of a film, as an outcome of the close alignment between what the editor puts on screen and what the

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[91] Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning,' in *Image, Music, Text*, 56–65.
[92] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing,* 93.

audience expects to see given their preconceptions, gender and sexual biases, generic expectations and cultural knowledge. If there is a mismatch, the veil of invisibility promptly falls down to reveal a scaffolding made of assumptions. The point seems almost too obvious to make, but readings differ wildly as we are reminded by a number of scholars writing from the position of reception studies, feminism and queer theory.[93] Yet I think it is important to make a connection between their analyses and the subject of the editor's work. It is impossible to conceive the latter without bringing attention to the wide sphere of editing decisions that are teased out by *imagining* the spectator. Editors sometimes refer to themselves as nothing more than a 'surrogate audience,' detached creative contributors who, unlike directors or cinematographers, see the material through the eyes of its prospective viewer.[94] This expression of modesty inadvertently reveals a snag. It logically follows that a 'successful' edit is then dependent on how well the editor is versed in the cultural codes of their audience at the precise moment of the film's reception. It is quite clear from reception studies that these codes are not nearly as timeless and universal as some practitioners would hope for.[95]

This problem is acutely present in relation to our understanding of the legacy of classical cinema. As discussed earlier the norms of classical *découpage* together with its mirror stage classical editing were forged with a view to convey strong coherence between the storytelling, the spatiotemporal dissection of the profilmic and the emotional impact. A sense of harmonious alignment between those layers of fragmentation was contingent on, and at the same time affirmed, cultural norms that were the basis for a tacit contract between the filmmaker and their audience. The contract that yielded lifestyles that audience could aspire to, the moral boundaries whose contravention was tested, the yardsticks for beauty, bravery and wit.[96] Without doubt the cultural influence of classicism is still felt, but I would suggest it is possible to think about editing practice in a way that

[93] See for example Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Jackie Byars, *All that Hollywood Allows: Re-reading Gender in 1950s Melodrama* (London: Routledge, 1991); Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin, eds., *Queer Cinema. The Film Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[94] Dylan Tichenor, 'Interview,' in Justin Chang, *Editing* (Lewes: Ilex, 2012), 62.
[95] See Carrielynn D. Reinhard, Christopher J. Olson, eds., *Making Sense of Cinema: Empirical Studies into Film Spectators and Spectatorship* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
[96] See Michael Williams, *Film Stardom, Myth and Classicism. The Rise of Hollywood's Gods* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

untangles it from the coils of classical cinema. The problematic definitions of 'continuity editing' are proof there is a need for that.

Without referring to any culturally-specific norms then, the paradigm of continuity that springs from classicism but departs from it, could be described as a principle of fragmentation, applicable to both *découpage* and editing, that puts emphasis on the relative inconspicuousness of formal devices and cultural schemas they are tied with. It is a model that invokes flow and consistency. It aims at binding components of the film in a way that makes joints between them as unobtrusive as possible. Whether this goal is achieved, depends on many factors, including cultural context of the film's reception. However, the model I propose here is designed as a creative heuristic, so its focus is on editor's intentions and methods of working rather than the way that the film is read by its audience.

This general method could be contrasted with a principle that can be situated at the opposite end of the spectrum. The montage paradigm represents the overtness of formal interventions and the attempts to use them for affective impact or semiotic value. As I will explain in the following chapters these two paradigms are by no means mutually exclusive. I intend them as direction signs that allow us to conceptualise the scope of options that are available to all filmmakers, and in particular to editors.

III. From chaos to equilibrium

TWO PARADIGMS

In the previous two sections, I suggested that some forms of filmic fragmentation existed from the very beginnings of the history of the moving image. I looked at forms of editorial control executed by early exhibitors, film pioneers, writers, directors, and finally, by a person in the fully-fledged role of a film editor.

I proposed that models of editing practice fall under the two broad paradigms of montage and continuity. Lastly, I also argued for reinstituting the concept of *découpage*, with its many variants, as a way of separating from editing issues of film form normally addressed at earlier stages of production and conceptually distinct from the tasks of an editor.

That last argument has broader implications. A recurring idea appearing in interviews with editors is that they should avoid developing their individual styles and be attentive to the specific nature of each film project. This testifies to more than just a sense of pride in craftsmanship. It reveals recognition of the very particular set of skills that is involved in editing. Whereas many aspects of narrative and spatiotemporal fragmentation are decided upon through and during *découpage*, there are certain procedures that apply exclusively to editors. These specific techniques will be the subject of this section.

First, it is worth reiterating a few terminological distinctions. As already mentioned, the two suggested paradigms, of montage and continuity, are not reserved for editing considerations only. The aim of achieving an appearance of continuity in storytelling and spatiotemporal articulations requires that even the earliest stages of conceptual fragmentation are imbued with continuity-thinking. The montage paradigm, in a sense I propose here, is an extension of Eisenstein's theories around affective and conceptual aspects of film form (montage of affects and of images). It brings to the fore those cinematic techniques that are aimed at direct impact and use framing, sound, mis-en-scène, colour, pace of cutting, etc. in a way that is seen, and felt, by the viewer.

I would also suggest that it is appropriate to follow Bazin in referring to Hollywood classicism as the cinema of classical *découpage*. Its mirror stage in post-production is classical editing, whose principles Booth, Dickinson and Reisz (among others) articulate in the texts cited earlier. The legacy of classicism can

be found in the way that it informs how today mainstream editors approach their craft.

The concept of *découpage* has a wide application. Without doubt, there are many types of conceptual and director-led fragmentation. Therefore, one could say there are many kinds of *découpage* (say, Jean-Luc Godard's, Robert Bresson's or Stan Brakhage's). The concept draws a productive connection between earlier stages of production and editing-thinking, that is conceiving the film material as a complex collection of fragments.

In a similar context, Karen Pearlman develops the idea of an 'onscreen draft,' a method of 'no-budget digital rendering of a whole story or screenplay that gets created somewhere in between the first and final drafts of the script.'[1] She proposes this to be an exercise in editing-thinking applied to scriptwriting.[2] As I argued earlier, a conceptual working out of filmic fragmentation seems to have existed in some form since the beginning of narrative cinema. The term *découpage technique*, which has its equivalent in 'shooting script', could be used to refer to this process in the most general sense, unburdened by stylistic considerations.

While the continuity paradigm is easily discernible in a wide range of plot-based works, it is also clear that many practical approaches to editing like those of Murch and Pearlman reflect aspects of *montagism*, with its emphasis on the affective impact of a film, framing and semiosis. In the model I propose here montage-thinking and continuity-thinking are interchangeable principles that govern individual editing decisions. One could argue that in classical films analysed by Bordwell *et al.* those paradigms are applied in a sequential manner, when 'ordinary scenes' are interspersed with montage sequences. But it is quite obvious that in a great many films continuity-driven scenes contain formal aspects that are foregrounded in a *montagist* way. In Michael Haneke's *Amour* (2012; editors Nadine Muse and Monika Willi) framing and shot duration that are idiosyncratic, but only slightly, are subtle stylistic markers that unmissably reveal the hand of an auteurist director without disrupting the flow of what could be conventionally referred to as a plot. Some films flaunt an overall logic of montage, while preserving the continuity paradigm at the level of a scene – e.g. *Holy Motors* (2012, dir. Leos Carax, editor Nelly Quettier). In other films, the

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[1] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing*, 235.
[2] Ibid., 232.

style of cinematography is overtly disjointed suggesting a supercharged montage of affects, whereas all the other aspects of their form respect paradigm of continuity – e.g. *The Bourne Identity* (2002, dir. Doug Liman, editor Saar Klein).

In the following section, I will be drawing on my own experience as an editor in the vein of autoethnographic research, seeking to reflect on the heuristics of an editor's work.[3] My intention is to focus on a very narrow aspect of the post-production process. As the aforementioned approaches to editing evidenced, there is an abundance of constructive models of cutting both in the tradition of montage-thinking and within paradigm of continuity. There are also extensive studies on sound editing.[4] Here, I would like to propose a heuristic that deals with the *procedural* aspects of editing-thinking. The ideas suggested below will then be illustrated by an account of the last stages of editing a documentary film: *An Insignificant Man* (2016, dir. Khushboo Ranka and Vinay Shukla, editors Manan Bhatt, Abhinav Tyagi).

THE SPIRAL MODEL OF EDITING

A frequent observation in practice-centred discourse is that editing is comprised of a set of technical actions, which nevertheless have significant consequences for the shape of a film. Murch writes:

> When you're putting a scene together, the three key things you are deciding *over and over again*, are: What shot shall I use? Where shall I begin it? Where shall I end it? An average film may have a thousand edits in it, so: three thousand decisions. But if you answer those questions in the most interesting, complex, musical, dramatic way, then the film will be as alive as it can be.[5]

Pearlman suggests that editing 'can be summed up with three questions: Which shot? Where? For how long?'[6] Similarly, Morante distinguishes three straightforward stages: selection, ordering, duration.[7]

[3] Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner, 'Autoethnography: An Overview,' *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2011). http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095 (accessed 1 September).
[4] For example Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
[5] Michael Ondaatje, *The Conversations. Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*, 267.
[6] Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms*, 116.
[7] Luís Fernando Morales Morante, *Editing and Montage in International Film and Video*, 52–56.

When comparing those propositions, one could notice revealing omissions. Murch seems to have forgotten about the arrangement of shots – the question of where. But it is not difficult to infer from Murch's method of working that for him the shot has a unitary character. It has a certain independence and discrete quality. At the same time, the stage of determining duration mentioned by Pearlman and Morantes focuses on its strictly temporal aspect leaving aside the question of the so-called 'in point' and 'out point.' Where shall we begin that shot? And where shall we end it? These questions address not the duration of a shot but its dramatic and/or affective potential.

It seems that the most comprehensive proposition would be to say that an editing workflow typically goes through four distinct phases focused on: *selection*, *arrangement*, *cutting* and *blending*. Equally, these are four actions available to all editors throughout the process. However, before going any further, it is worth prefacing the discussion by saying that I want to expand the way we can refer to those four notions. The subject of them is more than just a series of frames. One can select/arrange/cut/blend a scene, a sequence, a colour, a mood, a story, an argument or a theme.

As recounted in the first part of the thesis, the selecting and arranging of subjects or individual shots was practiced already in the context of early exhibition and the beginnings of non-fiction filmmaking. These actions have an almost primal characteristic related to the expediency of constructing cinematic entertainment out of separate strips of celluloid. Cutting, another action tied to the medium from the very start, can be also thought of as a technical step of selection. To cut out a fragment means to deselect it and discard from the pool of available options. Trimming unwanted material from the beginning of a shot and from its end represents a decision about the right length of a shot and the usefulness of its content. That is to say, what stays in the editing bin, the trimmed shot, *potentially* can be a part of the cinematic syntagma. What is left out will *probably* not.

Criteria for editing decisions can be very complex. The most challenging aspect of making them is that the chain reaction of steps that involve discarding, including or trimming fragments is out of necessity provisional and unstable. *Découpage* structure is a planned, imagined and executed fragmentation. However, only when shots are lined up at the editing table, do the relations between them become apparent. Tensions, affinities or mismatches are visible

and can be subject to scrutiny and creative consideration. From the editor's perspective, a syntagmatic order does not appear as a given. Denotation is insolubly bound with a connotative thrust of a sequence, because both layers emerge in parallel. Therefore, every editing decision is in fact a bundle of solutions to a number of aspects of film construction. The challenge of the editor's role, I would suggest, lies in resolving conflicts inherent to the process when following directions, which are only more or less specified, and which are certainly not a set of norms.

For these reasons I propose to look at editing practice in a non-linear way. Conceptually, we can imagine the process to have a spiral nature. It is also paradoxical and relies on feedback loops. The desired progress from uncertainty to a growing certainty about the given editing decisions is only possible through a repetition of various levels of assessment that are concerned with linear structures, but which are not necessarily linear themselves. The phases of selection, arrangement, cutting and blending repeat themselves a number of times until each stage runs its course and the edit reaches a state of *equilibrium*. It is a moment which can be understood in many ways, and the distinctions I suggest here are based on intuition rather than hard evidence. At the minimum, it means that the goals of the edit have been achieved, but in particular cases this might entail reaching a desired alignment of narrative, emotional, aesthetic or other components of the film material. In other words, the editing structure gives an impression that the pieces of the puzzles fit and the picture is complete.

SELECTION AND ARRANGEMENT

The phases of selection and arrangement lend themselves to being considered through the prism of Roman Jakobson's paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes.[8] Digital bins containing batches of rushes can be organised in a way that highlights their paradigmatic relationships. For instance, an editor might create a bin titled 'cutaways for all occasions' and include there all shots that can be used in that function at any given moment of the edit. Therefore, when the editor

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[8] See Richard Bradford, *Roman Jakobson: Life, Language and Art* (London: Routledge, 1994), 6–8.

decides to select a shot from that category in order to use it in a sequence, they will be able to choose from a set of items that are different members of the same paradigm. Similarly, selecting a take of the same scene can be seen as a paradigmatic selection – a choice of the best performance for example. As for the horizontal axis, there is a strand in film theory that attempted to describe the organisation of spatiotemporal fragments in film in terms of their syntagmatic relationships.[9]

Both Christian Metz's categories and Jakobson's model are helpful, but they have limitations in the context of editing practice because paradigmatic sets rarely contain items of equal value. Editing bins are from the very outset imbued with syntagmatic structures. Cutaways, for example, are typically tied to locations, which means that a given shot can be used in a particular sequence and sometimes during a specific moment of that sequence. A given take of the scene might contain a good performance, but if it fails in terms of composition, it might be deemed unusable. In consequence, the scope of paradigmatic choices is instantly narrowed down. A bin titled 'establishing shots' is useful for finding the right shot when creating a sequence, but, strictly speaking, shots establishing a location are connected with other shots that suggest the same place.

More importantly, it often happens that once a shot is used in a sequence, it becomes part of a chain of signification and its basic meaning (denotation), seems of secondary importance. The same shot titled 'running horse' can be potentially used in a broadcast documentary, a fiction film or an art piece. Depending on the context of other shots in the sequence, an image of a running horse can be a realistic cutaway; it can add dramaturgy to a conversational scene, or metaphorically suggest 'flight to freedom.' There are at least three paradigmatic categories that we could apply to the same shot of a galloping animal. It is only when a shot is harnessed in the service of a particular syntagmatic structure that its paradigmatic potential becomes concretised.[10]

The core paradox of editing decisions is here at play. The precise meaning, but also the precise affective impact of a given image, are provisional until the film text is finally settled. At that moment the editing process is complete, but arguably that fluidity is transferred onto the interpretative process.

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[9] Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974).
[10] See also Jacob Bricca, *Documentary Editing. Principles & Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2018), xii.

I would suggest that the oft-quoted Kuleshov effect is not a particular instance of cinematic montage, but rather an unavoidable feature of all syntagmatic structures. Every time two shots are put next to each other some sort of productive interaction between them occurs, either in a seamless fashion following the continuity paradigm, or in a more overt way through montage-style blending.

My intention here is not to discuss well-established facts about the semiotics of an image, but to locate practical issues with logging rushes and assembling shots. In my experience, cataloguing shots is an essential stage of the post-production workflow, but, similarly to other phases of that process, its nature is provisional and subject to dynamic readjustments. This is because the syntagmatic order influences any sort of tentative paradigmatic categories that we would like to use to guide us through the editing. While the indicated issues are related to semiotics, an even greater difficulty is with approaching rhythms and emotions in any sort of systematic way. Notwithstanding the *découpage* content that is already in the rushes, rhythms and emotions for which the editor is responsible emerge through syntagmatic concatenations. Therefore, they are largely to be found in the 'timeline,' rather than in the 'browser window.'

What is more, selecting a shot also means selecting a particular action that is contained within it, and therefore also a given tone or emotion, which inevitably follow. Each shot then exists in a few syntagmatic orders at the same time: one is its explicit content (or denotation), the other ones are related to its emotional import, graphic form, colour tone, etc. All these stacked layers are, at various points in the editing process, reassessed and modified.

The already highlighted paradox is that the edited sequence has its own meaningful, sensory, and affective structure, which can only be discovered once the shots are put together, not before. A script, or a *découpage* structure, is nothing more than a blueprint with respect to the editor's specific tasks.

The question then is how to go forward without knowing exactly what the direction is. As Murch reminds us, the number of ways in which a selection of shots can be combined is staggeringly high, which might cause 'the queasy feeling in the pit of the stomach' at the beginning of a project.[11] Although the editor typically starts off with a large collection of shots that are organised into

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[11] Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye*, 80–81.

various categories, there seems to be only one 'correct' place for any good shot from the uncut material. At least, this is the impression that editors often strive for, in particular when working towards the ideal of invisible cutting. Its final version is the inevitable one. The film's structure should appear effortless, as if there was only one way of putting all the fragments together.

CUTTING

By using the word *cutting*, I refer first to the technical step of adjusting the beginning of a shot and its end. In the technical context, this stage is also called trimming. I prefer these two terms to *duration*, as they capture one of the most specific aspects of the editor's work, when they look closely at the outgoing and ingoing action, or two pieces of dialogue, or two sentences that will be spliced together. Both the impression of collision and smoothness can be achieved while working on the edges of two shots. Like selection and arrangement, cutting can also be applied to larger segments than individual shots. After all, edited sequences can be discarded or shuffled around or trimmed if they take up too much time, and put the overall structure off balance.

In a broader sense, cutting leads to the separating and isolating of fragments. A cut itself is a moment of transition between two moments in time and/or two points in space. In the montage paradigm it connotes disruption and a rapid shift in the viewer's attention. In the continuity paradigm a cut is meant to carry on the cognitive and affective engagement of the viewer from one shot to another, while sealing up the material stitch between them.

BLENDING

Blending occurs alongside two axes: vertical and horizontal, and has two aspects: visual and aural.[12] When Dickinson writes that *jointing* is a better term than *cutting*, his bafflement with the linguistic tenuousness of the latter reveals a curious blind spot in the semantic field of editing.[13] Neither cutting, nor editing, nor executing *découpage* give any indication of a process that logically follows from them: splicing, audiovisual *sawing*, blending. It is possible to think about cutting as nothing but a first stage proceeded by an operation that is aimed at

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[12] Walter Murch mentions in passing thinking horizontally and vertically ("What can I edit *within the frame*?" in relation to new opportunities of digital editing. See Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye*, 130.

[13] Thorold Dickinson, 'A Cutter in the Clouds,' 27.

joining two fragments together in a way that makes them *whole*. Blending, therefore, can be thought of as a principle for any one of the many procedures during post-production that make syntagmatic structures coherent and consistent. Typically for editing, operations like colour grading and sound mixing straddle technical and creative aspects of film construction. The task of a dubbing mixer is to combine audio layers, adjust their levels, apply filters and effects, and then deliver a mixed-down version of the soundtrack.[14] Colour grading is another process that is applied to each frame of the edited footage, and either adds hue values or narrows down the colour spectrum of the image.[15] Both of these post-production stages can have a significant impact on the way we experience a film in a semiotic and affective sense.

The notion of blending, however, extends also to the more conceptual areas of editing. Constructing a vertical blend between visual and aural layers is often within the purview of the editor (also of the sound designer or composer). In actual fact, the central planks of an editor's work like preserving the screen direction, matching cuts and constructing a coherent spatial continuity can be referred to as horizontal blends. While cutting is their method, the desired outcome of their use is constructing a bridge between two shots. This can be achieved by way of visual affinity, plot-driven causality, continuity of movement, POV structures or by switching to a different angle or a type of shot in a manner that provides additional information about the scene. These blends are typically closer to the continuity paradigm, which is not to say that they are absent from montage structures. In the latter forms of editing, blending is more overt and disruptive. Therefore, shots retain unitary character as vehicles of emotion and signification. Connections between them are emphasised rather than rendered seamless. Finally, compositing and other CGI techniques also merge digital assets in a manner that treats them as layers that are simultaneously displayed and arranged next to, or on top of each other. Therefore, they are radical and very concrete applications of the principle of blending[16]

As becomes clear, there is a certain push-and-pull dynamic between blending oriented towards continuity and cutting, which represents the

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[14] See also Don Atkinson, *The Sound Production Handbook* (London: Routledge, 2007), 107.

[15] See also Alexis Van Hurkman, *Color Correction Handbook: Professional Techniques for Video and Cinema* (Berkeley: Peachpit Press, 2014), xviii.

[16] Coincidentally, one of the most popular pieces of open-source 3D software is called Blender.

attentional change and the paradigm of montage.[17] A noticeable, unexpected cut brings about a degree of tension. An edit that aims at connecting two fragments signals a moment of release.[18] Editing styles in general can be placed on a broad spectrum between two extremes of the discussed paradigms. These models are mirrored at the micro level of a single editing decision. But it is only at this small scale that we can fully appreciate the complexity of the editor's interventions that concern rhythm, affect and semiosis. In a similar context Murch refers to an analogy with dynamics in music.[19] At times series of images speak to us *piano* and *pianissimo,* at other times *forte* and *fortissimo*. An editor, akin to a composer, can build a *crescendo* with an impactful montage, and then follow it with a continuity-driven scene constructed around horizontally blended *diminuendo*.
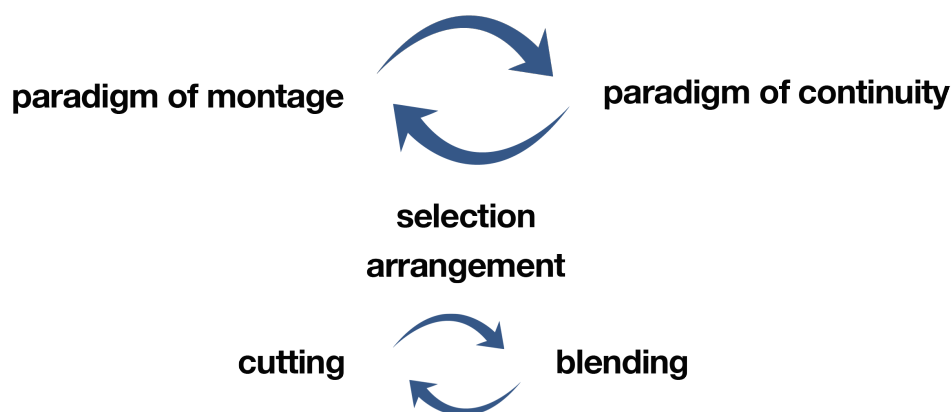
paradigm of montage   **paradigm of continuity**

selection
arrangement

cutting   **blending**

Fig. 1 Diagram of relationships between four actions of editing (by the author)

But it is equally important to notice that a hard cut is one of the most elementary tools of semiotic emphasis. A *montagist* cut draws attention to whatever immediately follows, whereas a series of rigorously blended shots reduces the dramatic tension of the sequence. This is true to the same degree for conceptually elaborate cuts, like the one joining the prehistory of human kind with its distant future in Kubrick's *Odyssey 2001*, and for the much subtler, but no less compelling, editing in Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012, editors

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[17] See fig. 1.
[18] See also Karen Pearlman, *Cutting Rhythms. Intuitive Film Editing*, 68.
[19] Michael Ondaatje, *The Conversations. Walter Murch and the Art of Editing Film*, 90–91.

Niels Pagh Andersen, Janus Billeskov Jansen, Mariko Montpetit, Charlotte Munch Bengtsen, Ariadna Fatjó-Vilas Mestre). Towards the end of Oppenheimer's film, when questions about the main characters' remorse come into sharp focus, the editing style becomes laggard and heavier as if Anwar Congo was a cornered prey, not a perpetrator who enjoys impunity. The authors of the film pass their judgment through elongated, silent shots and noticeably deliberate cutting. Here, as in many other fictional and non-fictional works, editing takes a central role in syntagmatic signification as much by isolating moments of revelation as by signalling gaps and the unsaid.

Finally, it is often the case that editing happens in a circular way, that is selection, arrangement, cutting and blending are repeated a number of times, and with each iteration of these steps the area of choice becomes narrower and narrower. If there is linearity in the process, it could be imagined more as a concentric spiral than a straight line. At the beginning, selection and arrangement are the more prominent actions and towards the end it is cutting and blending that come forward.

There is a daunting feeling of overwhelming chaos to start with. However, by arranging fragments into a shot assembly we can already work out a direction. The rough cut is a version of the edit which both editors and directors consider a significant threshold. It is because it is conventionally the first time that one can see a provisional equilibrium on the screen. While one should not disregard personal agendas and external factors having an impact on post-production, I would argue that at some level, alongside the collaborative efforts of everyone involved, there is a sense of a common goal, which is met when the edit reaches a state of inner cohesion, an equilibrium.
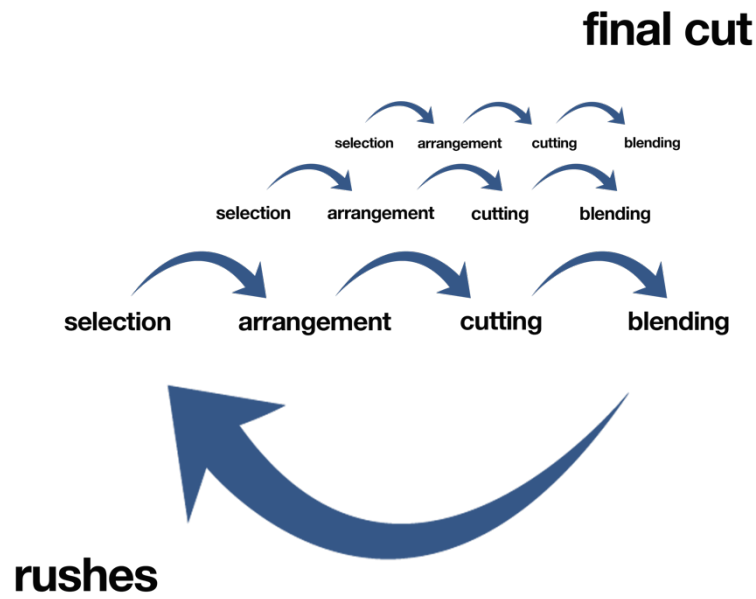
Fig. 2 Diagram of the spiral model of editing (by the author)

CULTURAL MAPPING

This spiral heuristic of the editing process is related to the metaphor of mapping. It has already been mentioned that Mackendrick imagined plots as maps of relationships between characters. This state of equilibrium that I am trying to depict here is very much predicated on the completeness of that mapping. The edit is polished when all the nodes of the narrative network have been explored.

There are a few useful concepts in cognitive psychology and anthropology that feed into that approach. For example, connectionist models posit that the physical structure of the brain informs cognition. In other words, we do not think in a linear way but understand concepts through patterns of associations. Memory in connectionism is defined as a particular pattern of activity, with some memories superimposed on each other by sharing single units.[20] The idea of distributed representation – fundamental for connectionism – presupposes that 'knowledge is coded as a pattern of activation across many processing units, with each unit contributing to a multiple, different

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[20] Ib J. S. Bowers, 'On the Biological Plausibility of Grandmother Cells: Implications for Neural Network Theories in Psychology and Neuroscience,' *Psychological Review*, vol. 116, no. 1 (2009): 220.

representations. As a consequence, there is no one unit devoted to coding a given word, object, or person.'[21] This idea of networked, associative thinking is also reflected in cognitive approaches to cultural knowledge. As Holland and Quinn write, 'cultural knowledge appears to be organized in sequences of prototypical events – schemas that we call cultural models and that are themselves hierarchically related to other cultural knowledge.'[22] 'Cultural skills' are sometimes understood as abilities that allow us to comprehend and use facts, rules and heuristics.[23] They might have a quality of implicitness, which connects them with Michael Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge and Wittgenstein's 'form of life.'[24]

Editing often does operate in a network-like manner through the activation of particular cultural models and by playing out tensions and congruencies between them. Murch compares the point of attention of the spectator to a dot moving across the screen. This perceptual dot, I would suggest, has an equivalent at the cognitive–affective level, in how we understand, for example, relationships between characters and the cultural models they represent. Vertical and horizontal blends create a structure linking neighbouring nodes of that cognitive-affective network. The editor has agile tools at their disposal (the aforementioned four basic procedures) allowing them to add emphasis and move the point of attention of the spectator along the lines of that intricate cognitive-affective map that constitutes a film.

Editing decisions can then be placed alongside two opposing vectors. One is pointing inwards to the centre of the spiral and represents the *textual* objective of the editor's work, with its focus on balancing various components of the film and the drive towards equilibrium. The other one is directed towards cultural schemas that surround it and are explicitly or implicitly referred to by the film's signifiers. Despite a tension between these two vectors, the outer rings of the spiral and its centre are intimately connected. It is because the hierarchy of

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn, 'Introduction,' in *Cultural Models in Language and Thought,* ed. Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)*,* vii.

[23] H.M. Collins, Expert Systems and the Science of Knowledge, in The Social Construction of Technological Systems. New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes and Trevor J. Pinch (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 336–337.

[24] See J.F.M Hunter, '*Forms of Life* in Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations,' American Philosophical Quarterly, vol. 5, no. 4 (1968): 233–243; Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

cultural knowledge is reflected in the way that the thematic core of a film is blended with the components of its structure. The case study at the end of this section will elaborate on the latter observation and will serve as an illustration of how one can employ concepts discussed so far.[25]

DOCUMENTARY EDITING

Before moving further, it is necessary to pause on the issue of the specificity of certain types of editing. So far, I have been deliberately avoiding any distinctions between editing fictional and non-fictional material. This is largely because the organising principle of this thesis was to describe editing practice in the most all-encompassing terms possible, as a set of activities particular for cutting and splicing shots and disregarding the questions of storytelling, generic differences, or indeed the 'truth claim' of the cinematic image. Although this strategy was not always possible when analysing historical contexts of editing, an intention behind the spiral model proposed here was to delineate a set of practices applicable universally.

However, another reason for this tactical circumvention lies with a notion of documentary itself. Dai Vaughan expresses the issue in a characteristically eloquent way:

> If it has proven notoriously difficult to define documentary by reference to its constantly shifting stylistic practices, it is because the term 'documentary' properly describes not a style or a method or a genre of filmmaking but a mode of response to film material: a mode of response founded upon the acknowledgment that every photograph is a portrait signed by its sitter…[The] documentary response is one in which the image is perceived as signifying what it appears to record.[26]

Jakob Bricca concurs stating that most documentaries are edited in a way similar to narrative films.[27] While Vaughan locates the essential difference on the side of reception, Bill Nichols sees it in the linkage between footage and the historical world.[28]

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[25] See also fig. 3 on page 226.
[26] Dai Vaughan, 'The Aesthetics of Ambiguity,' in *For documentary. Twelve Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 58.
[27] Jacob Bricca, *Documentary Editing. Principles & Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 50.
[28] See Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

This view, however, requires a few qualifications. Bricca's excellent handbook is based on a self-acknowledged premise that a documentary film presents a fully developed story.[29] It has dramatic arcs, subplots, emotional twists and a well-crafted climax. From this perspective, the only real difference between a narrative and a documentary production concerns the question of when the story is shaped. In fiction, it normally happens at the stage of pre-production and shooting (or *découpage*). In documentaries, 'the story is created in the editing room.'[30] This in itself would suggest that documentary editing covers a much wider scope of creative decisions than cutting fiction. Indeed, the bulk of Bricca's recommendations for taming the chaos of rushes and his strategies of efficient 'binning' confirm how challenging editing can be, in particular when one has at their disposal *verité* footage and sets out to turn it into a conventional plot. The case study presented in the next chapter will give substance to that claim. However, privileging the story in a documentary production is not the only way of approaching the subject, and it can be seen as a reflection of the more contemporary dogma representative for industry circles.

One can compare this with the view of Bill Nichols, who in his seminal book 1991 book makes a fundamental distinction between a story and an argument as the two gravitational centres towards which respective film structures are pulled.[31] According to him, documentary film in general depends on what Nichols calls 'evidentiary editing,' where shots are not organised around unified time and space as in fiction, but rather around the impression of a convincing argument.[32] This idea finds its way into Bricca's list of editing techniques that include verité editing (the continuity-driven scene), montage (understood as the conventional montage sequence), and precisely *evidentiary editing* (here a method of building scenes around an interview with a series of cutaways illustrating the spoken word).[33]

Even more poignantly, Dai Vaughan, one of the most highly regarded British documentary editors, in his book devoted to documentary seems almost entirely uninterested in the issues of storytelling understood as crafting linear structures of events-based coherence. In his analyses of Georges Franju's *Hôtel*

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[29] Jacob Bricca, *Documentary Editing. Principles & Practice,* xi.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 111.
[32] Ibid., 35.
[33] Jacob Bricca, *Documentary Editing. Principles & Practice*, 51.

des Invalides (1952, editor Roland Coste) and Adrian Cowell's *The Tribe That Hides from Man* (1970, editor Keith Miller) Vaughan tries to reconcile two claims that, according to him, every documentary implicitly makes: to present images that refer to their sources, and to articulate statements about those very sources.[34] The vagaries of filmic articulation, of the fact that in film, as Vaughan claims, 'meaning precedes syntax' complicate the 'privileged relationship' of images to the world.[35] Vaughan seems drawn to methods, through which documentary syntax salvages the referential aspect of the image. In his vision of documentary, storytelling is nothing more than an instance of the more fundamental issue of filmic semiosis.

He suggests the existence of a 'cognitive rift' arising from the multiplicity of codes involved in reading the documentary image.[36] This can be seen as an invariable facet of cultural mapping, which in documentary has a more immediate, direct quality than in fiction. But this process is also prone here to be more unstable and fluid. Cultural schemas a documentary editor points to are not dressed up in fictional costumes tailor-made to meet our expectations. They do not fit into predesigned and carefully arranged moulds if not for other reasons than because non-fictional *découpage* is typically more open-ended, speculative and often rushed. While narrative conventions play an important part in a great many documentaries, the starting point for editing is an overflow of signification. Often the role of an editor is precisely to curb that excess and funnel the abundance of semiosis into the tracks of a desired structure, be it a character-centred plot, an argument, or an artistic gesture. Although the nature of documentary as a record validates editor's statements about reality, as soon as they appear on screen the film brackets them with articulations that are shifty, incomplete and subjective. As Frederick Wiseman, the purist of observational cinema, puts it,

> '[any] documentary, mine or anyone's else's, made in no matter what style, is arbitrary, biased, prejudiced, compressed and subjective. Like any of its sisterly or brotherly fictional forms it is born *in choice* – choice of subject matter, place, people, camera angles, duration of shooting, sequences to be shot or omitted, transitional material and cutaways.'[37]

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[34] Dai Vaughan, 'The Aesthetics of Ambiguity,' in *For documentary. Twelve Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 58–61.
[35] Ibid., 51.
[36] Ibid., 52.
[37] Frederick Wiseman, 'Editing as a Four-Way Conversation,' in *Imagining Reality. The Faber Book of Documentary*, ed. Kevin Macdonald and Mark Cousins (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 279, [emphasis added].

The model of editing proposed here is thought of as a response to the limiting perspectives of understanding film as a vehicle for storytelling. Non-fiction cinema comes in many shades: from Lumière's actualities, through Esther Shub's compilation films and Benjamin Christensen's category-defying *Haxan* (1922, editor Edla Hansen), to city symphonies, to propagandist poetry of *Night Mail* (1936, dir. Harry Watt and Basil Wright, editors Basil Wright, Alberto Cavalcanti and Richard Q. McNaughton) to the whimsical vérite style of *Letter From Siberia* (1958, dir. Chris Marker, editor Anne Sarraute), to Frederick Wiseman's observational dissecting of institutions, to the dramatic reconstructions of *The Thin Blue Line* (1988, dir. Errol Morris, editor Paul Barnes).[38] Not only is the film form born *in choice*, it thrives in it. It is the wide range of decisions concerning *selection* and *arrangement* that makes editing come into its own. This applies in equal measure to fictional works as to documentaries.

Nevertheless, analysing documentary editing can be seen as particularly productive because, first, the scope of editing decisions is larger than in fiction. Secondly, they often occupy a liminal ground. Vaughan describes in detail the opening scene from *The Tribe That Hides from Man*, in which Claudio Villas Boas swings in a hammock with the air of an adventurer straight from the pages of Jules Verne novels.[39] The commentary read out in English is self-assured and judgmental. The camera swings up and down mimicking the perspective of the observer. But Boas is able to catch only brief glimpses of the Kree-Akrore tribe lurking in the dark forest. This in itself is an apt metaphor of the limitations of the documentary lens. The distance between the observer and the subject of their investigation, between two cultural perspectives, between the hammock and the jungle is unsurmountable. But the existence of this very encounter is a manifestation, as Vaughan seems to suggest, of a desire to uncover a reality that is 'outside the grasp of our comprehending languages.'[40] On another level, this image represents a tension between the tightly knit centre of the editing spiral,

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[38] See Maxim Gorky, 'Kingdom of Shadows,' in *Imagining Reality*, 6-10; Jay Leyda, 'Esther Shub and the Art of Compilation,' in *Imagining Reality*, 56-61; Tom Milne, 'Haxan/Witchcraft through the Ages,' in *Imagining Reality*, 70-73, Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Failings of *Berlin*,' in *Imagining Reality,* 75; Dai Vaughan, 'Night Mail,' in *Imagining Reality*, 118-121; Terrence Rafferty, 'Chris Marker and Sans Soleil,' in *Imagining Reality*, 244-245.
[39] Dai Vaughan, 'The Aesthetics of Ambiguity,' 43.
[40] Ibid., 51.

the logos, and its outer rings, the culture. The inward pointing vector from a diagram below suggests the editor's focus on the structures of textual coherence. The outward pointing vector is the sphere of cultural mapping. While some works have structures that are very much closed-off, there are also films that make us acutely aware of the sphere that lies beyond the editing spiral, beyond the frame.
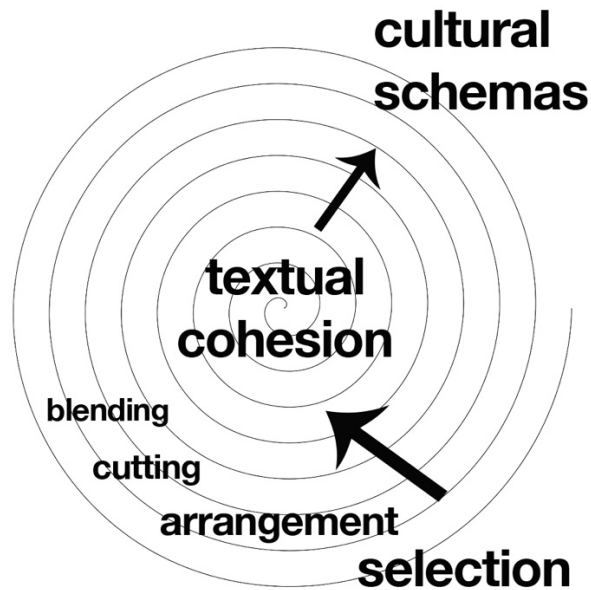

Fig. 3 Diagram of the relationship between cultural schemas and editing (by the author)

DIGITAL EDITING

Up until this point I have also avoided making clear distinctions between cutting celluloid and digital files, and this is for the same reason that I have not separated editing fiction from non-fiction. Veteran editors asked about whether the digital revolution has changed any of the principles of their craft, tend to vehemently deny that it has.[41] The fundamentals of editing praxis, which is the focus of this thesis, seem to have remained the same. However, to paraphrase Tancredi Falconeri, the character of *The Leopard*, for the editing tenets to survive the advance of digital technology, everything else about cutting had to change.

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[41] Maria Garcia, 'Surviving a non-linear way of work,' *Cinéaste*, vol. 37, no. 4 (2012): 47.

The tectonic shift in the material medium of the moving image had a plethora of implications which can be seen from the perspective of a theory of sociotechnical change. As Wiebe E. Bijker posits, transition from an older technology to a more advanced one can be analysed as a social process, in which 'relevant social groups' are actively involved in shaping the discourse around the invention and its real-world applications.[42] In this case, we can see how it has taken surprisingly long, more than 20 years, for nonlinear editing to completely replace laborious cutting on Moviolas and Steenbecks. During this time, editors, the most relevant social group, had to grapple not only with technical innovations, but also with changes to their work environment: the erosion of the apprenticeship system, the further development of independent Hollywood cinema and the vast expansion of audiovisual production due to the emergence of online sharing platforms.[43]

In parallel to that, the scholarly reaction to the digital turn has also gone through a stage of initial 'interpretative flexibility,' and then settled into the phase of 'closure,' when the meanings associated with the new artifacts have become more defined and less ambiguous.[44]

Following John Mateer, it is possible to discern in the early debates a split between 'evolutionists,' who see new technology as a natural progression not unlike earlier introduction of the wide aspect ratio or colour, and revolutionists, claiming that the digital has fundamentally altered what we know as cinema.[45] Exemplifying the latter, Lev Manovich argued in 2002 that '[the] logic of replacement, characteristic of cinema, gives [now] way to the logic of addition and coexistence.'[46] Therefore, digital forms of the moving image are oriented towards what he calls 'spatial montage,' congruent with simultaneity of desktop experience.[47] This, as he suggests, can be contrasted with the traditional film and video, where exploring spatial-montage was '*against* the *technology*.'[48]

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[42] Wiebe E. Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs. Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 269–271.

[43] Maria Garcia, 'Surviving a non-linear way of work,' 45–47; Stephen Prince, 'The Emergence of Filmic Artifacts: Cinema and Cinematography in the Digital Era,' *Film Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 3 (2004): 25.

[44] See Wiebe E. Bijker, *Of Bicycles, Bakelites, and Bulbs. Toward a Theory of Sociotechnical Change*, 270–271.

[45] John Mateer, 'Digital Cinematography: Evolution of Craft or Revolution in Production,' *Journal of Film and Video*, vol. 66, no. 2 (2014): 3.

[46] Lev Manovich, 'Spatial Computerisation and Film Language,' in *New Screen Media. Cinema/Art/Narrative*, ed. Martin Rieser and Andrea Zapp (London: BFI, 2002), 71.

[47] Ibid., 72.

[48] Ibid., 70 [emphasis added].

The argument above seems very much a return to the search for the medium-specificity of the moving image, but updated to reflect the digital. But a possible criticism of that stance is that it confuses technology with both form and medium. A useful corrective in this respect is proposed by Peter Kiwitt, who insists on separating those terms and calling technology 'the materials and devices used for creating, storing, transmitting, or displaying expression.'[49] Both film stock and digital cameras are 'foundational technologies of cinema' and most mainstream films produced today, while being filmed, edited and projected entirely using digital technology, retain the core characteristics of the cinematic form developed in the celluloid era.

That said, there is no denying that both exhibition media (cinema, TV or video-on-demand streaming) and *production* technologies have an impact on the creative choices available to filmmakers, who are forced to assimilate new technologies with existing production methods. This influence can be as much enabling as constraining.

The most popular pieces of editing software organise desktop space into three areas: the rushes window, the viewer and the timeline. One could argue that this design has an in-built element of montage-thinking, since the window containing shots (or rather all kinds of media) is a library of fragments. An editor needs to impose an order onto the collection of media by creating folders (sometimes referred to as 'bins' or 'events') or by adding keywords. These virtual containers are there to help arrange the collected media into paradigmatic sets. However, as discussed earlier, the process of assigning useful categories is often riddled with difficulties, which stem from the open-ended nature of connections in the syntagmatic structures. While the rushes window is an area of *selection*, *arrangement* and *blending* happen on the timeline. *Cutting* can be usually executed either on the timeline, or within the viewer window by choosing a trimmed selection of a shot. Overall the design of editing software encourages thinking about editing in terms of four consecutive steps: *selecting* and *arranging* first, then *cutting* and *blending*.[50] In contrast to that, an editor working on a Moviola, precisely due to its technological constraints, was very much focused on *blending*, on imaging potential syntagmatic articulations before

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[49] Peter Kiwitt, 'What is Cinema in a Digital Age? Divergent Definitions from a Production Perspective,' 7.
[50] In Adobe Premiere Pro and Blackmagic Davinci Resolve the linearity is underscored by the order of tabs suggesting distinct phases of editing.

any cut was actually made. Digital editing allows for an instant access to all media. Therefore, the emphasis is on a shot as an individual unit, rather than on a large, syntagmatic segment that unfolds in time. Digital editing also offers an immediate possibility of image manipulation.

Malcolm Turvey writing about Ken Jacobs recent videos, including *Return to the Scene of the Crime* (2008), a digital re-examination of *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son*, situates Jacobs among great *revelationists* of cinema.[51] Digital magnification and time-stretching is seen by him as a natural continuation of Vertov's kino-eye aesthetic, extending human vision and promising to show 'a world perceived without a mask.'[52] Turvey invokes tropes which were discussed earlier in the context of burgeoning *montagism*: the 'euphoric epistemology' of Jean Epstein and Béla Balázs, and Gunning's re-evaluation of the notion of index.[53] This exemplifies a discourse about the digital that draws on a historical lineage framing contemporary practices within the established epistemological perspectives on cinema. It also points to a new digital *montagism*, in which computer manipulation is seen as an enhancement of the traditional visual strategies, an upgrade to the Benjaminian optical unconscious.[54]

Looking at the digital from a production perspective, one could notice a paradoxical complaint featuring prominently in the interviews with veteran editors: nonlinear workflow does not leave time for thinking.[55] Digital editing is much more immediate. It is based on a trial-and-error approach. Editors are routinely asked to cut a number of versions, which might even be revised on the basis of the feedback from a focus group screening.[56] Having extensive coverage combined with time pressure discourages attention to emotional and narrative detail. Walter Murch in his afterword to *In the Blink of an Eye*, written in 2001, speculates whether cutting fast and in a 'choppy' style has anything to do with the fact that it is much quicker to edit on a nonlinear system than on a Moviola.[57] While statements like this amount to technological determinism, with nonlinear systems we can certainly see a shift from editing understood as a complementary

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[51] Malcolm Turvey, 'Ken Jacobs: Digital Revelationist,' *October*, vol. 137 (2011): 107–124.
[52] Ibid., 109.
[53] Ibid., 109, 116.
[54] See Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 178.
[55] Maria Garcia, 'Surviving a non-linear way of work,' 44.
[56] Ibid., 45.
[57] Walter Murch, *In the Blink of an Eye*, 119–120.

stage of a carefully planned *découpage* to *découpage* seen as a preliminary phase of editing, with a strong emphasis on maximising the area of choice in a post-production setting.

From the sociotechnical perspective, it is clear that the technological change introduced a high level of anxiety among established professionals, who saw the more traditional production methods uprooted. Digital technology facilitates the diffusion of responsibility for editing decisions, which is seen as encroaching on the position of the editor as a person with the privileged access to the editing process.

The very same changes, however, resulted in a remarkable expansion in the role of post-production. Stephen Prince claims slightly provocatively that 'the advent of digital grading in contemporary film suggests that we now need to think of cinematography, and even directing, as *image-capture* processes.'[58] Paul Schrader and Robert Brink suggested in 2014 that 'in another 10 years it may be possible to direct a film in postproduction.'[59] In recent years, the perfection of computer-generated photorealism has only enhanced the blurring of the line separating production and post-production. In animated films this has been the case for a long time.[60] But this now also extends to films, which we perceive as live-action. As Alan Warburton suggests in his video essay, *Goodbye Uncanny Valley*, in 2017 the frontier of photorealism was crossed.[61] The advances in software development made it possible to conjure up almost any realistic looking texture and movement using solely computer algorithms. What Warburton as an artist advocates for is an exploration of medium-specificity, that is, exposing the mechanics of the perfect digital illusion.[62]

All in all then, the digital revolution in filmmaking has now reached a stage of significant convergence in tools and processes, and a certain level of standardisation. This might suggest that, according to the model of sociotechnical change, the digital turn is at the moment of 'closure.' As already indicated, from a creative point of view digital cinematography extends to such

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[58] Stephen Prince, 'The Emergence of Filmic Artifacts: Cinema and Cinematography in the Digital Era,' *Film Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 3 (2004): 30.
[59] Paul Schrader and Robert Brink, 'Editing: Part III,' *Film Comment*, vol. 50, no. 6 (2014): 53.
[60] Maria Garcia, 'Surviving a non-linear way of work,' 47.
[61] Alan Warburton, 'Goodbye Uncanny Valley,' https://vimeo.com/237568588 (accessed 3 October 2018).
[62] See Alan Warburton, 'Spherical Harmonics,' https://vimeo.com/82085374 (accessed 3 October 2018).

stages in post-production as grading, compositing and CGI. The ease of capturing, storing and logging large quantities of shots means that decisions that traditionally belonged to *découpage* can be now postponed until it is possible to assess them in the context of the whole material. Editing-thinking in the digital era is a thread that runs through the entire process of making a film.

FINDING EQUILIBRIUM: THE CASE STUDY OF *AN INSIGNIFICANT MAN*

The following case study is meant to illustrate how the distinctions elaborated so far can help us understand the praxis of editing.

An Insignificant Man is an Indian documentary film in the genre of political thriller directed by Khushboo Ranka and Vinay Shukla. It was produced by Anand Gandhi and was released in 2016, premiering at the Toronto International Film Festival. Editing *An Insignificant Man* exemplifies a process, in which documentary footage shot in observational style is used to craft a narrative with a well-defined and character-centred plot with neither voice-over commentary, nor evidentiary editing. As already mentioned, the scope of editorial decisions in such productions is very broad and cutting is time-consuming, which serves as a good illustration of the iterant nature of selecting, arranging, cutting and blending.

The film depicts the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party (Common Man's Party) on a wave of anti-corruption protests in India and the rise to power of its leader, Arvind Kejriwal. The events of the plot cover a period of one year, culminating in the local elections to the Delhi Assembly in 2013.

The production of *An Insignificant Man* was initially sponsored through a crowdfunding campaign. However, the filmmakers soon gained the support of a number of institutions promoting documentary, including the Sundance Institute, IDFA festival and Britdoc (currently the Doc Society). It is in the context of that institutional backing that I was involved in the editing process of *An Insignificant Man*. Towards the end of the post-production, the Britdoc Foundation stepped in to fund a period of editing consultancy with Ollie Huddleston, an established editor known for his collaborations with Kim Longinotto (*Salma*, 2013, *Dreamcatcher,* 2015) and the award-winning film *We Are Together (Thina Simunye)* (2006, dir. Paul Taylor). This additional editing period was arranged

largely because the filmmakers wanted to direct the film more towards a Western audience. My role was to facilitate a two-week editing collaboration between Huddleston and both directors in London. During that time, I took notes, made audio recordings, and conducted interviews in order to document the process.

In the video interview, Ranka and Shukla explain that the period of shooting lasted a year, and they then spent over two and a half years editing the footage.[63] They gathered about 400 hours of material. Ranka admits that the biggest challenge of the production was the premise to film in an observational mode, but with an eye to editing the film according to the conventions of a fiction film. Shukla stresses that they wanted to avoid using documentary-style interviews for various reasons, including the common perception that politicians are insincere in front of the camera. Ranka admits that as inexperienced filmmakers they often failed to film with adequate coverage – they did not change shot sizes, and neglected the need for reaction shots. What is more, throughout the period of filming, they were not sure what the narrative of the film would be. In fact, in a separate conversation, Ranka admitted that they did not even know if there was a film to be made from the shots they were taking.

To illustrate the use of notions discussed earlier, we could notice that the production of *An Insignificant Man* had a minimal *découpage* structure. Ranka and Shukla were not guided by a script, but they also approached the subject in a very open-ended way, in the tradition of what Bill Nichols calls the 'observational mode' giving examples of Albert and David Maysles' *Salesman* (1969, editors David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin) and Robert Drew's *Primary* (1960, editors Robert Drew, Robert Farren and Allen Hotchner).[64] Such a production set-up requires the film to be 'made in editing,' as the commonplace goes. But what exactly does it mean?

First of all, the question of the narrative drive of the film emerges as the most pressing one. As Shukla explains, there were many 'narratives on the ground.' In a separate conversation, he told me that for a long time they followed a number of characters whose stories were discarded at some stage of editing. It is worth adding that assessing his own decisions with the privilege of hindsight and having had the experience of editing a film, Shukla understands the 'story'

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[63] 'An Insignificant Man – interview with directors,' https://vimeo.com/235263351 (accessed 25 September 2017).

[64] Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 31.

as a plot centred on the psychology and the actions of a limited number of characters, who have clearly defined goals – the classical narrative. There were certainly other ways of approaching their footage. This could have been a less plot-based film. There was also the possibility of having a multi-threaded narrative, which Ranka was well aware of, as this was something they contemplated at earlier stages. Ranka and Shukla's eventual decision to make a film with the genre characteristics of a political thriller had profound consequences for the shape of the editing process, which was only gradually becoming evident as the editing proceeded.

The overall number of characters and 'stories' is a good example of that. The India Against Corruption movement, which came to prominence in 2011 and 2012, was a complex phenomenon. It involved the mobilisation of popular unrest against widespread corruption in India, which led to a failed attempt at passing an anti-corruption bill, The Lokpal Act. Undeterred, one of the leaders of the movement, Arvind Kejriwal formed a political party, which is currently a major political force in the Delhi Assembly. From a historical point of view, in those events a number of people played important roles. In particular, one of the most prominent figures of the anti-corruption movement was Anna Hazare, a veteran social activist, who, due to differences in opinion, did not take part in the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party. A cut that Ranka and Shukla brought to London contained in the exposition a few brief shots of television news which contain allusions to Hazare's involvement. These were residues of earlier versions of the film. As the editing had been progressing, Ranka and Shukla had been eliminating plots that were not directly related to Kejriwal's rise to power. Since Anna Hazare was not part of that story, his involvement was simply not included in the film. The directors were consciously trying to build a narrative arc suggesting the trope of the 'success of an underdog.' At the stage of the rough cut, the narrative was already fairly streamlined, but there were certain stories which they could not let go of, partly because they reflected complicated realities 'on the ground.'

The eventual solution from the final cut is a brief shot of Kejriwal leaning towards Hazare as if seeking advice. The shot means nothing to a Western viewer, but for the audience in India it is a nod towards the indisputable role of Hazare in spearheading the anti-corruption movement.

All in all, one of the core interventions of Huddleston was to strengthen the dynamics of the relationship between Kejriwal and another important figure in the party, his chief strategist Yogendra Yadav. All the other characters blend into the background, while the emphasis is put on the interactions between those two. This can be seen by comparing the rough cut, which is a version from the beginning of the London edit and the final cut that emerged a few weeks later.[65] The change is evident as early as in the exposition of the film, which spells out the unfolding themes and conflicts in a style reminiscent of fiction cinema.

On the one hand, this could be seen as a straightforward application of the template offered by classical narration. Yodav is an important ally, but also an antagonist, whose departure from the party is a key event of the denouement. On the other hand, the realisation that the narrative drive of the film lies with the relationship between those two characters was an outcome of the spiral editing-thinking I illustrated above. This narrative emerged from the rushes through a process of selection and arrangement, through winnowing stories with lesser potential and discovering the core aspects of the material.

The most general level of selection, arrangement, cutting and blending applies then to narrative threads and themes. In many documentary productions this is something to be discovered through editing. It is often the case that the temporal structure reflects that process of discovery, as the viewer is led forward to learn new things about the themes and characters while the story unfolds. As suggested by the cognitive model of cultural knowledge, there is a certain hierarchy in the organisation of cultural schemas. In this particular narrative, in order to understand the tension between pragmatism and idealism represented by the two protagonists, first we need to be told about the mechanics of running a political party and the ideals that it is meant to uphold. The viewer should have the impression that this organisation of knowledge making up the diegesis is logical and that the film releases pertinent information at a time when it is needed for our comprehension of the plot. That is why the core of the narrative is occupied by the relationship between Yodav and Kejriwal. It serves as the main plot thread, thanks to its affective resonances and broad cultural relevance.

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[65] 'Proposition For A Revolution – International Cut,' https://goo.gl/Rmzrxc, password: PR0P4REV@!6 (accessed 25 September 2017); 'An Insignificant Man,' https://goo.gl/nEsEDv, password: Screener_A1M2O!7 (accessed 25 September 2017).

Taken together then, it is clear that the image of a spiral is a more adequate illustration of that narrative than a linear distribution of plot events.
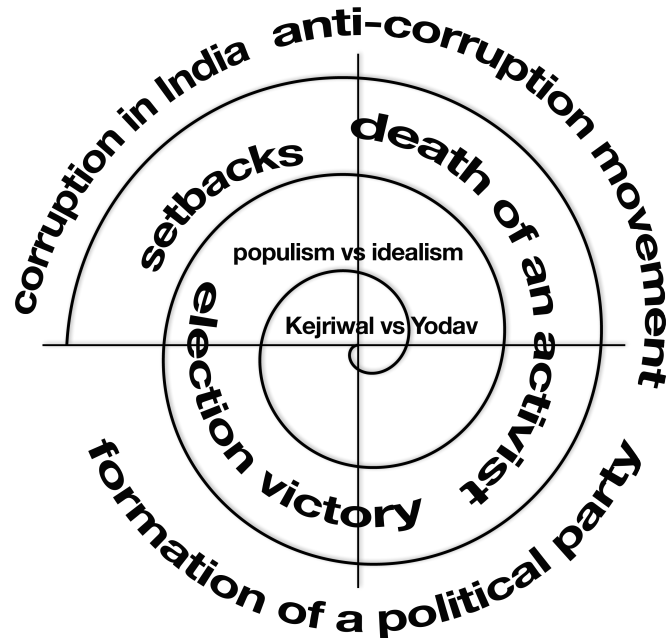

Fig. 4 Spiral editing structure of An Insignificant Man (by the author)

As should be clear from the illustration above, in a film like *An Insignificant Man*, themes and plot events are on the same narrative plane. Some pieces of information, like the political backdrop of corruption in India, are presented in the form of a montage sequence. Others, such as 'ideological tensions' are dramatised in scenes with dialogue and action that respect the paradigm of continuity. Both forms rigorously intertwine in the sense that a dramatic scene is often followed by a montage, which gives way to another dramatic scene, and so on. This allows us to see how paradigms of montage and continuity work in conjunction and strengthen each other. A montage, like the one presenting the election day, is a convenient tool for a dynamic narrative summary, but its impact is greater if it leads to a slower, continuity-based scene.

At the stage of cutting, attention was paid to the relative duration of sequences in relation to each other. In general, Huddleston's advice was that we could linger on scenes that felt more intimate and gave us some insight into the character of Kejriwal, whereas scenes heavy on political dialogue and with little

affective import should be trimmed once the main points are communicated. That is why, for example, an emphasis was added to the sequence of a hunger strike, and why every single frame showing Kejriwal and Yodav in proximity to each other was used.

At one point during the interview Ranka says that one of the most surprising discoveries for her was how extending or shortening a shot by a mere few frames could lead to a significant shift in its meaning. A shot that she mentions shows Kejriwal briefly looking up at the sky. A second later something else catches his attention and he becomes distracted. It could be that Kejriwal is really just worried about the weather worsening before the upcoming rally. However, in the context of the preceding sequence his expression betrays a moment of doubt or apprehension. Editing allows us to draw attention to that moment. A cut precisely when he is looking up and not a second later will freeze it and let that image stay in our minds.

The inadequate coverage mentioned by Ranka was a result of very common difficulties with maintaining 'pictorial continuity' on a documentary shoot. In particular, since the film references norms of mainstream narrative construction, both directors and Huddleston felt that there was a need for it to have the typical spatiotemporal breakdown of an 'ordinary' scene. Limited coverage did not allow the editors to build sequence in the shot/reverse shot pattern. A relatively large amount of time was then spent scavenging the rushes for reaction shots and cutaways. In other words, the solution was to introduce an editing-based fragmentation in the style of analytical *découpage*. The editor sometimes had to construct an artificial three-dimensional location out of discrete fragments according to the montage principles of 'creative geography.' Both Huddleston and I were also eager to include a sense of location by adding textures of street life in Delhi, which for the directors was of lesser interest. Eventually a lot of those spatial articulations were added to the edit. Their inclusion is an example of another iteration of the four actions at the stage of refining a rough cut. Those last cycles were also largely about balance: between moods, types of shots, perspectives. We were splicing in wide-angle shots of Delhi streets not only for the sake of individual scenes that needed establishing shots, but also because, taken together, they portrayed the city as a setting and as another character.

Finally, the spiral model also allows us to look analytically at the practice of a paper edit. The two most problematic parts of the film were the opening montage and the sequence of climax and denouement. To help us solve issues with the arrangement of shots, we created paper edits for both sequences. This method of visualising an editing structure through a set of flash cards is nothing more than mapping relationships between shots.
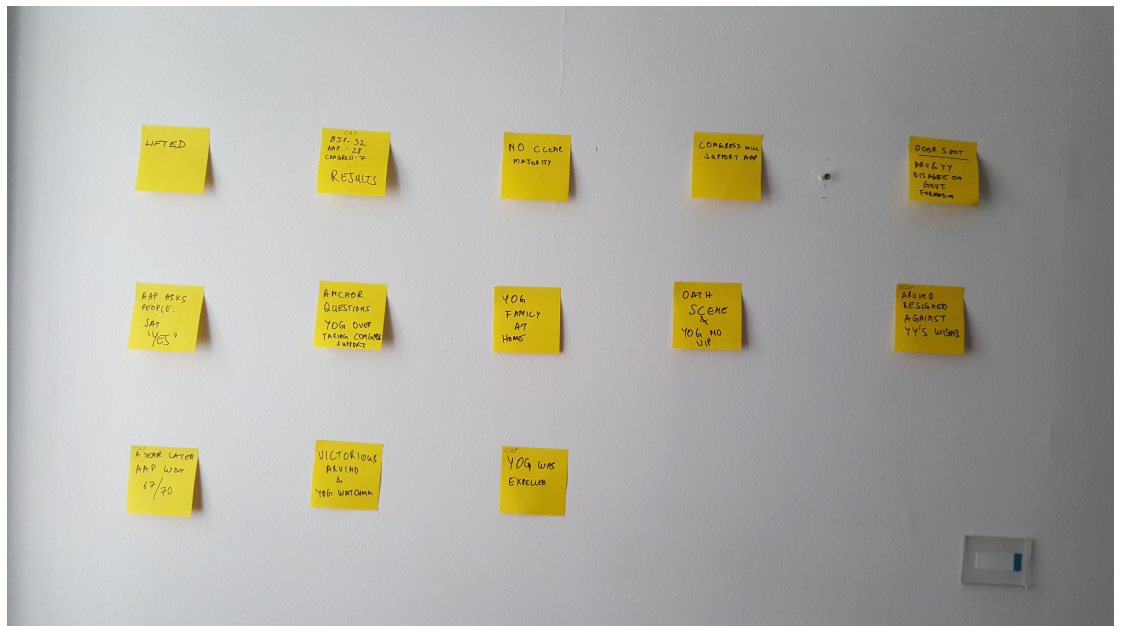

Fig. 5 Paper edit of the last sequence of An Insignificant Man (photograph by the author)

The problem with the exposition was the need to give a comprehensive and broad overview of the anti-corruption movement and its vicissitudes; introduce the main characters; show the importance of the decision to form a party and then attach some emotional significance to the moment when the party is launched. This large amount of information had to be presented preferably in a visual way, with as little text as possible on the screen. Everyone involved in the editing felt that the exposition in the rough cut was simply too long (at about 10 minutes). Huddleston's intervention here was about simplifying the information and presenting only the facts that were needed for narrative reasons and that might be relevant for the Western audience.

The issue with the end of the film was related to the fact that it was the moment to close off the main narrative thread in a way that retained the

emotional tension between the two protagonists. At the same time, a certain amount of information needed to be communicated for that narrative ending to work.

In both cases, the paper edit was helpful. Mapping shots in that way shows a sequence as a structure of relationships, reducing fragments to their essential elements that have open connections, like pieces of a puzzle. This method of visualising narrative construction draws attention to emerging themes and patterns of repetition.

As the above case study illustrates, examining an editing structure of a film requires simultaneously considering its narrative, characters, themes, and types of shot among other things. All these elements are subject to editing decisions. In documentary productions that rely heavily on editing for shaping their narratives, splicing shots together is the main creative contribution that turns raw material into a film. Sam Billinge asserts that 'almost all documentary films come together in the edit' and compares the process to how Michelangelo describes sculpting. It is 'finding the finished sculpture already contained within the stone.'[66]

The model suggested here breaks down a complex process into four actions, which oscillate between the paradigm of continuity and the paradigm of montage, aimed at reaching the stage of equilibrium. This draws attention to aspects of editing that cross the boundaries between types of filmmaking and different genres, but which are unique for this particular process.

CONCLUSION

Returning, finally, to the question posed at the beginning of this thesis, it is noteworthy how difficult it is to separate a discourse on editing from a general analysis of film form. This problem was pointed out earlier when discussing the established accounts of the development of film editing. Cutting appears tightly connected to the fundamental aspects of film construction, and it has been theorised in parallel to the history of film narrative and style, and under its influence.

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[66] Sam Billinge, *The Practical Guide to Documentary Editing: Techniques for TV and Film* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 9.

However, in the opening part I also argued that it was possible to discern an evolution of the role of an editor as a distinct profession with its own identity and methods of working. The examined writings of the Soviet School, but also that of Dickinson and Booth, suggest a maturity of thinking about editing in the late 1930s. This historical development allows us to see more clearly what differentiates editing interventions from other creative inputs. An important contribution to this discourse is provided by those voices in classical film theory that considered editing as a uniquely cinematic way of perception and cognition. The theories of Eisenstein and Pudovkin threw into sharp relief the approach to film as a 'cathedral' of fragments. Bazin's fascination with the medium lay with its ability to dissect reality into 'splinters' of presence. Finally, there is also a strong tradition of conceptualising filmic form as an 'invisible' vehicle for storytelling. This strand is evident, for example, in Reisz and Millar's handbook that supports the idea of 'lucid continuity.' But what is often missing from more contemporary accounts of 'continuity editing' is an acknowledgment that its prototype – classical editing – put a strong emphasis on dramatism as a more fundamental goal of cutting than spatiotemporal coherence. In this context, I suggested that in the practice-focused teaching that refers to classicism, the core influences are ideals of classical *découpage* formulated in scriptwriting handbooks and elaborated by Pudovkin. It is precisely the notion of *découpage* that allows us to make an important distinction between the fragmentation at earlier stages of production and the unique set of practices that happen in the edit.

In response to a number of observations that point to the specificity of editing practice, I suggested three vantage points for looking at editing, which take stock of the established theories and organise them around three core notions. These are the paradigm of montage, the paradigm of continuity, and *découpage*. These concepts can help us describe the process of editing a film like *An Insignificant Man* in a way that is, hopefully, close to the experience of an editor. Despite some aspects characteristic only for observational documentaries, the editing of this film touched on issues representative for cutting in all genres. Although there was no script for that film, *An Insignificant Man* ended up having many traits of a classical narrative. Despite a lack of adequate coverage, some aspects of analytical *découpage* were constructed through the patient selection and arrangement of adequate shots. The film has both dialogue-driven scenes,

not unlike those in 'ordinary' drama, and fast paced montage sequences depicting a process – examples of the classical use of montage reminiscent of Vorkapiches.

What is more, it is possible to discern in the imagery certain attitudes of the filmmakers towards the events they were witnessing, which can be described as their own *découpage*. Here I am not referring to classical scene dissection, but to *découpage* in the sense of Balázs' *Einstellung* or Bazin's intuitions about *presence*. Ranka and Shukla's camera-eye recorded the unfolding political process in a way that followed their instincts and curiosity. The fragmentation of the material was a response to the complex narrative 'on the ground' and an attempt to understand it.

It could be argued that the two suggested paradigms retain one of the core disadvantages of all the other approaches to editing – their scope is still wider than just the area of editing. The continuity paradigm, as already indicated, feeds into every aspect of film form. Similarly, the paradigm of montage is an approach to the entirety of film production. However, the analysis in the second part of the thesis highlighted that thinking carefully about editing in relation to the questions of film form allows us to reflect on the semiotics of an image, affect, embodiment, indexicality, and the narrative implications of syntagmatic structures. Both paradigms shed light on those issues in a way that is inflected by practical considerations. They show directions of inquiry that aim to bring together theory and practice.

Furthermore, going back to the first question of this thesis: 'what happens to shots that we no longer refer to them as "mere" shots but as the elements of a film narrative?' The question seems absurdly broad, but indeed many traditions of film theory can be thought of as organised around that problem. I suggest here, first, that we can grasp for an answer to that question by examining issues specific to editing. Second, as I have indicated throughout the thesis, we can take heed of the heuristic thinking developed among practitioners, or theorists like Eisenstein and Pudovkin, whose writing was intertwined with their filmmaking. This model of approaching a subject means that we aim to reduce its complexity and focus on pragmatic ways of dealing with the problem.

The spiral model of editing is a heuristic that breaks down the wider issue of film construction into fundamental steps. The model examines a very narrow set of procedures, which are separate from more general questions of film form.

It looks closely at the specific tools that every editor has at their disposal, because they are intrinsic to any medium that is based on fragmentation. Therefore, the model should apply in equal measure to both mainstream narratives and experimental art practices. Whereas the notion of *découpage*, with its narratively imbued spatiotemporal dissection, can make an account of the wider issues of film construction, this restrictive understanding of editing allows us to concentrate on its particular creative aspects.

Although the spiral model of editing deals with universal procedures, there will certainly be exceptions. The underpinning assumption that editors strive for a sense of cohesion is based on observations appearing in various sources.[67] Classical editing looked for congruity between the fragmentation of the spatiotemporal continuum and the fragmentation of the plot. Contemporary styles of editing seem to be more focused on a sense of consistency between affect and story, with less emphasis on spatiotemporal logic. The principle of cohesion, though, applies to both of them. Aiming for that ideal was something that brought Ranka and Shukla to London, and it was the reason why they spent almost three years editing their film. It took them that long to find in their 400 hours of material all the sensory and narrative elements that make the structure of the film so 'obvious' when one is watching it now.

Spiral editing-thinking brings to the fore the idea of equilibrium. Following the most common observations by editors, equilibrium would be a state when connections between story, emotion, and rhythm seem sealed. But this is not the only possible way of understanding this idea. Equilibrium is more about a sense of completeness in the way elements of the edit interact with each other. This open-ended imagining of editing allows us to appreciate the importance of the basic tools of an editor. Simply by selecting, arranging, cutting, and blending shots the editor can create the most powerful cinematic effects. But, equally, the mastery of these rudimentary procedures is an elaborate craft, and, truly, an art in itself. Only by considering the practicalities of editing practice can we arrive at some sort of understanding of what filmmakers strive for as creative individuals. The idea of equilibrium points to the direction of their thinking.

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[67] For example Roger Crittenden, *Fine Cuts: The Art of European Film Editing*, 12; Michael Wohl, *Editing Techniques with Final Cut Pro* (Berkeley: Peachpit, 2002), 24; Sam Billinge, *The Practical Guide to Documentary Editing*, 118.

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Amour, 2012, dir. Michael Haneke, editors Nadine Muse and Monika Willi. France/Germany/Austria.

A Visit to Peek Frean and Co.'s Biscuit Works, 1906, Cricks and Martin, UK.

Alice in Wonderland, 1903, Cecil Hepworth, UK.

American Graffiti, 1973, dir. George Lucas, editors Verna Fields and Marcia Lucas, USA.

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Arrivée des Congressistes à Neuville-sur-Saône, 1895, Lumière, France.

Attack on the China Mission, 1900, dir. James Williamson, UK.

Bataillle de boules, 1896, Lumière, France.

Berlin: Symphony of a Great City, 1927, director and editor Walter Ruttmann. Germany.

Blood and Sand, 1922, dir. Fred Niblo, editor Dorothy Arzner, USA.

Blue, 1993, dir. Derek Jarman, sound designer Marvin Black, colorist Tom Russell. UK.

Boarding School Girls, 1905, dir. Edwin S. Porter, USA.

Bonnie and Clyde, 1969, dir. Arthur Penn, editor Dede Allen, USA.

Broken Blossoms, 1919, dir. D.W. Griffith, editor James Smith, USA.

Dear Old Stars and Stripes Good-Bye, 1903, Lubin, USA.

Desperate Poaching Affray, 1903, dir. William Haggar, UK.

Drifters, 1929, director and editor John Grierson. UK.

Dr. Mabuse the Gambler, 1922, dir. Fritz Lang, Germany.

Every Day Is Sunshine When the Heart Beats True, 1903, Lubin, USA.

Execution of Czolgosz, with panorama of Auburn Prison, 1901, dir. Edwin S. Porter, USA.

Explosion of a Motor Car, 1900, Cecil Hepworth, UK.

Fashions for Women, 1927, director Dorothy Arzner, editor Marion Morgan, USA.

Fire!, 1901, dir. James *Williamson*, UK.

Fool's Paradise, 1921, dir. Cecil Demille, editor Anne Bauchens, USA.

What Price Hollywood?, 1932, dir. George Cukor, editors Del Andrews and Jack Kitchin. USA.

Grandma Threading her Needle, 1900, G.A. Smith, UK.

Greed, 1924, dir. Erich von Stroheim, editors Erich von Stroheim, Frank Hull, Rex Ingram, Grant Whytock, June Mathis and Joseph W. Farnham, USA.

Haxan, 1922, Benjamin Christensen, editor Edla Hansen, Sweden.

Holy Motors, 2012, dir. Leos Carax, editor Nelly Quettier, France/Germany.

Hôtel des Invalides, 1952, dir. Georges Franju, editor Roland Coste, France.

How It Feels to Be Run Over, 1900, Cecil Hepworth, UK

Intolerance, 1916, dir. D.W. Griffith, editors D.W. Griffith, James Smith and Rose Smith, USA.

It's a Wonderful Life, 1946, dir. Frank Capra, editor William Hornbeck, USA.

Ivan the Terrible, 1944 (1958), dir. Sergei Eisenstein, USSR.

Le jardinier et le petit espiegle, *1895*, Lumière, France.

Letter from Siberia, 1958, dir. Chris Marker, editor Anne Sarraute, France.

Man with a Movie Camera, 1929, dir. Dziga Vertov, editors Dziga Vertov and Yelizaveta Svilova, USSR.

Mary Jane's Mishap, 1903, G.A. Smith, UK.

Meet John Doe, 1941, dir. Frank Capra, editor Daniel Mandell, USA.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, 1939, dir. Frank Capra, editors Al Clark and Gene Havlick, USA.

Night Mail, 1936, dir. Harry Watt and Basil Wright, editors Basil Wright, Alberto Cavalcanti and Richard Q. McNaughton, UK.

Nosferatu, 1922, dir. F.W. Murnau, Germany.

Only A Soldier Boy, 1903, Lubin, USA.

Party Girl, 1958, dir. Nicholas Ray, editor John McSweeney Jr., USA.

Pathé's *Par le trou de serrure*, 1901, Pathé, France.

Pompiers à Lyon, c. 1896, Lumière, France.

Repas de bébé, *1895*, Lumière, France.

Rescued by Rover, 1905, Cecil Hepworth, UK.

Rube and Mandy at Coney Island, 1903, dir. Edwin S. Porter, USA.

Salesman, 1969, dir. Albert and David Maysles, editors David Maysles and Charlotte Zwerin, USA.

Shirin, 2008, dir. Abbas Kiarostami, editors Abbas Kiarostami and Hamideh Razavi, Iran.

Solaris, 1972, director Andrei Tarkovsky, editor Lyudmila Feyginova, USSR.

Stalker, 1979, dir. Andrei Tarkovsky, editor Lyudmila Feyginova, USSR.

Sweet Smell of Success, 1957, dir. Alexander Mackendrick, editor Alan Crosland Jr., USA.

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Ten, 2002, director Abbas Kiarostami, editors Vahid Ghazi, Abbas Kiarostami and Bahman Kiarostami, Iran.

That Obscure Object of Desire, 1977, dir. Luis Buñuel, editor Hélène Plemiannikov, French/Spanish.

The Act of Killing, 2012, dir. Joshua Oppenheimer, editors Niels Pagh Andersen, Janus Billeskov Jansen, Mariko Montpetit, Charlotte Munch Bengtsen, Ariadna Fatjó-Vilas Mestre, UK, Denmark, Norway.

The Bourne Identity, 2002, dir. Doug Liman, editor Saar Klein, USA.

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, 1920, dir. Robert Wiene, Germany.

The 'Teddy' Bears, 1907, dir. Edwin S. Porter, USA.

The Thin Blue Line, 1988, dir. Errol Morris, editor Paul Barnes, USA.

The Big Sleep, 1946, dir. Howard Hawks, editor Christian Nyby, USA.

The Birds, 1963, dir. Alfred Hitchcock, editor George Tomasini, USA.

The Birth of a Nation, 1915, dir. D.W. Griffith, USA.

The Gleaners and I, 2000, dir. Agnès Varda, editors Jean-Baptiste Morin, Laurent Pineau and Agnès Varda, France.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly, 1966, dir. Sergio Leone, editors Eugenio Alabiso and Nino Baragli, Italy/West Germany/Spain/USA.

The Great Train Robbery, dir. Edwin S. Porter, USA.

The End of St. Petersburg, 1927, dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin, USSR.

The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks, 1924, dir. Lev Kuleshov, editor Aleksandr Levitsky, USSR.

The Gay Shoe Clerk, 1903, dir. Edwin S. Porter, USA.

The Little Doctor, 1901, G.A. Smith, UK.

The Magnificent Ambersons, 1942, dir. Orson Welles, editor Robert Wise, USA.

The Man in the White Suit, 1951, dir. Alexander Mackendrick, editor Bernard Gribble, UK.

The Path of the Heroes, 1936, dir. Corrado d'Errico, Italy.

The Rain People, 1969, dir. Francis Ford Coppola, editor Blackie Malkin, USA.

The Third Man, 1949, dir. Carol Reed, editor Oswald Hafenrichter, UK.

The Tribe That Hides from Man, 1970, dir. Adrian Cowell, editor Keith Miller, UK.

Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son, 1905, dir. G.W. Bitzer, USA.

Touch of Evil, 1958, dir. Orson Welles, editors Virgil Vogel and Aaron Stell, USA.

THX 1138, 1971, directed and edited by George Lucas, USA.

Whisky Galore!, 1949, dir. Alexander Mackendrick, editor Joseph Sterling, UK.