



## Chapter 4: Editing: Coordinating the Shots

The general idea behind editing in narrative film is the coordination of one shot with another in order to create a coherent, artistically pleasing, meaningful whole. The system of editing employed in narrative film is called **continuity editing** – its purpose is to create and provide efficient, functional transitions. Sounds simple enough, right?<sup>1</sup>

Yeah, no. It's not really that simple.

These **three desired qualities** of narrative film editing – coherence, artistry, and meaning – are not easy to achieve, especially when you consider what the film editor begins with. The typical shooting phase of a typical two-hour narrative feature film lasts about eight weeks. During that time, the cinematography team may record anywhere from 20 or 30 hours of film on the relatively low end – up to the 240 hours of film that James Cameron and his cinematographer, Russell Carpenter, shot for *Titanic* – which eventually weighed in at 3 hours and 14 minutes by the time it reached theatres. Most filmmakers will shoot somewhere in between these extremes. No matter how you look at it, though, the editor knows from the outset that in all likelihood **less than ten percent** of the film shot will make its way into the final product.

As if the sheer weight of the available footage weren't enough, there is the reality that most scenes in feature films are shot **out of sequence** – in other words, they are typically shot in neither the chronological order of the story nor the temporal order of the film. Why? Because shooting out of sequence is more efficient in terms of both time and money. For example, all scenes shot in a particular location will probably be shot at the same time in order to avoid moving the entire cast and crew back and forth between locations more than absolutely necessary. What this means for the editor is that individual takes that need to be placed in proximity in the final product will be scattered throughout many, many hours of footage that need to be selected, organized and inventoried.<sup>2</sup>

Everything we've discussed so far reflects only the difficulty of what the editor is given to work with. How the editor then proceeds is the subject of this chapter. In transforming tens or scores or hundreds of hours of randomly organized footage into an effective two-hour movie that people will pay money to watch, the editor has five areas of control to consider. These areas of control are called **relations** in editing: temporal relations, spatial relations, graphic relations, rhythmic

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<sup>1</sup> You realize, of course, that this is a trick question. If it weren't, this would be a very short chapter indeed.

<sup>2</sup> And not always in that particular order, which only serves to complicate matters.

relations, and thematic relations. Each of these areas is directly relevant to one of the three desired qualities of narrative film as follows:

- **Coherence:** temporal relations, spatial relations
- **Artistry:** graphic relations, rhythmic relations
- **Meaning:** thematic relations

Before we begin talking about the specific techniques employed to achieve each of the above qualities, a few words about the examples that will be included throughout this chapter. Most of the techniques we will observe happen fairly quickly on screen and don't call much attention to themselves – in fact, I might argue that the less attention editing calls to itself, the better the editor. As a result, though, it's difficult to show you these techniques by presenting a lot of very short clips from a lot of different films. It's important in analyzing the effect of editing techniques to understand at least some of the context of the film overall.

So, rather than bombard you with clips from 30 or 40 different films in order to show you these techniques, I'm going to focus most of the examples in this chapter on a single film: *Lola rennt* (English translation *Run Lola Run*), directed by Tom Tykwer and edited by Mathilde Bonnefoy<sup>3</sup> in 1998. The film is in German with English subtitles, which is actually a good thing for analyzing editing techniques: if you don't understand all of the dialogue<sup>4</sup>, you'll be less likely to get wrapped up in the moment of the story/plot and will be better able to focus your attention on what's happening with the editing.

Aside from the language issue, I've selected this film for three reasons: first, the editing in this film is exceptionally good; second, the movie itself is really good; and third, you can watch the whole thing on YouTube by clicking on the picture of Lola to the right. ***I strongly suggest you keep the film open in another tab while reading so you can easily click back and forth to watch the clips mentioned throughout this chapter.***



The first thing I'm going to suggest that you do is [go to YouTube and watch Lola rennt](#). Yes, the whole film. It's 81 minutes long – shorter than any of the films we're watching in class – and it's good. You'll be glad you watched it, not only because the rest of this chapter will be much more meaningful for you if you do, but also because it's a good movie.

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<sup>3</sup> Yes, a female editor! And she was only 26 years old when she edited this film. So, that's cool.

<sup>4</sup> I'm assuming here that you're not fluent in German. If you are, I apologize for my presumption.

So go. Watch. Have some popcorn. Feel free to tell your mom or your significant other or whoever's bugging you that yes, in fact, it's true: you have been given the homework assignment of watching an hour and a half of YouTube videos. Then come back here, OK? When you do, we'll learn about all of the cool editing techniques employed not only in *Lola rennt*, but also in all good narrative films.

< . . . 81 minutes later . . . >

OK. Welcome back. How did you like it? It was good, wasn't it?

All right. Now it's time to talk about the techniques that film editors employ in order to establish the qualities audiences expect in good narrative films – and we'll come to understand these techniques and qualities mostly, but not entirely,<sup>5</sup> by going back to look at specific moments in *Lola rennt*, which will make perfect sense because you've now seen the entire thing in its context.<sup>6</sup>

## Editing and Coherence

The most important job of the narrative film editor is to ensure that the story presented to the viewer is coherent – meaning that the events that occur in the lives of the characters make sense to the viewer. When I say “make sense,” I'm not talking about anything as grand as thematic meaning.<sup>7</sup> I'm talking about ensuring that viewers can experience the film's story without spending valuable time and mental energy wondering things like *Wait a minute, where are we? Who is that guy talking to? Has this already happened or is it happening now?* In short, the editor's number one job is to ensure that the timeline makes sense and that the space presented on screen and occupied by the figures in the narrative makes sense. To achieve these goals, the editor makes use of temporal relations and spatial relations in editing.

### Temporal Relations

Editing is the process by which the difference between **temporal duration** and **screen duration** is reconciled. It sounds simple, but consider this: most feature films present in roughly two hours sufficient intersection of story and plot to provide perceivers with everything they need in order to understand days, weeks, months or even years in characters' lives. *Lola rennt* is unusual, in that the temporal order of the film is actually shorter than its screen duration – that is, the roughly 80-minute film covers about 30 minutes' worth of continuous story for the characters.

### Temporal Relations: Chronology

Most narrative films are presented in roughly chronological order, with notable exceptions – films like *Memento* are, to a certain extent, essentially all about the manipulation of time order. In other

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<sup>5</sup> For some techniques, we'll look at clips from other films as well – largely because *Lola rennt*'s temporal duration doesn't require much in the way of such popular time-crunching strategies as montage and crosscutting. Don't worry if you don't know what I'm talking about. You will in just a little while.

<sup>6</sup> Now aren't you glad you watched it?

<sup>7</sup> At least, not yet. We'll get to thematic relations in editing a bit later in this chapter.

words, time being out of joint is a central element in the meaning of a film like *Memento*. But most films aren't *about* time being weird and incomprehensible, so most films present their stories in pretty much chronological order: *Casablanca*, *City Lights*, *Cool Hand Luke* – even *The Usual Suspects* and *Lola rennt* – spend the bulk of their time on screen moving the viewer forward in time.

But at the same time, most stories are more interesting if digressions occur – that is, if disruptions in the timeline occur for important reasons, for example to expose the viewer to crucial information about what has happened in the past or what will happen in the future. The two most common disruptions to chronological order are the **flashback** (a leap to an earlier moment) and the **flashforward** (a leap into the future). The former is much more typical than the latter because it's much more likely that the past is relevant to the story; this is because the past answers the viewer's curiosity while the future, if presented before its natural time, undercuts both suspense and surprise.

You can take a look at a **flashback sequence** that begins at the **5:10** mark and lasts a little over a minute in *Lola rennt*, linked in the image to the right. In the same clip, go to the **13:00** mark and watch about 10 seconds to see a **flashforward sequence**.



### Temporal Relations: The Passage of Time

We've already established that *Lola rennt* is weird in one temporal respect, right? That is, while most films have a screen duration significantly shorter than their temporal duration – showing in roughly two hours a story that takes place over days, weeks, months, or years – *Lola rennt* is that rarity that actually has a temporal duration significantly shorter than its screen duration. It is an 81-minute film that covers only about half an hour in the lives of the characters from beginning to end. This is accomplished through **temporal frequency**. But rather than temporal frequency being applied to an isolated, specific event, the entire film of *Lola rennt* is essentially an exercise in temporal frequency: we see the same chunk of time played out three times, with three distinctly separate results in terms of the film's meaning. But as for the film's form, the temporal frequency – the repetition of events – is employed in order to expand, rather than shorten, time.

So, again: setting aside unusual films like *Lola rennt*, most films use editing to speed up, rather than slow down, time. In order to make time pass more quickly on screen than it actually does in the lives of the characters, editors make use of **elliptical editing** techniques such as **empty frames** – in which the action moves out of the frame in Shot A and then into the frame in Shot B, which saves us the time of watching the action somehow get from A to B – and **cutaway shots** – in which the editor cuts from one scene to another scene that takes less time, and then back to the original scene.



You can take a look at an **empty frames** edit that begins at the **23:08** mark and lasts about 5 seconds in *Lola rennt*, linked in the image to the right. Notice how Lola and the guard walk out of the frame in the beginning of the sequence; then we cut to Lola and the guard entering the frame in a different location, which saves us the time of seeing how they get there.



In the clip from *Lola rennt* (linked in the image to the left), go to the **31:40** mark and watch about two and a half minutes to see a **cutaway sequence**. Note that the scene that we cut away to – the memory/fantasy sequence – feels as if it's a longer event than the one we've cut away from, even though it's intended as a momentary, life-flashing-before-your-eyes sequence. Therefore, it oddly slows down time while also speeding up time.

The need to slow down time is rarer than the need to speed it up; nevertheless, it does occur in many, if not most, films – at least to a limited extent. To accomplish the slowing down of time, editors make use of **expansion editing** techniques such as **overlapping** – in which the end of Shot A is identical to beginning of Shot B, thus extending slightly the amount of time it takes to perceive the entire event – and **repetition** – in which we are exposed to multiple views of a single shot. Again, *Lola rennt* is essentially an exercise in large-scale, holistic expansion editing<sup>8</sup> - but it also makes use of small moments of expansion editing.

Two good examples of brief **overlapping editing** can be seen in *Lola rennt*. First, in the clip (linked in the image to the right), go to the **10:55** mark to see overlapped shots of the red telephone flying through the air in slow motion. This has the effect of drawing out the moment in which Lola decides to help Manni.



Second, in the clip (linked in the image to the left), go to the **27:55** mark to see overlapped shots of the camera moving in to a close-up shot of Lola's face at the robbery. What effect is achieved



through overlapping in this sequence? A nice, tiny example of **repetition editing** can be seen in the same clip linked to the left here at the **23:50** mark: notice how we see Lola look at the old woman's watch twice, once in a medium close-up of Lola and once in an eyeline match close-up zoom of the watch. This repetition slows down time and communicates Lola's concern about what time it is.

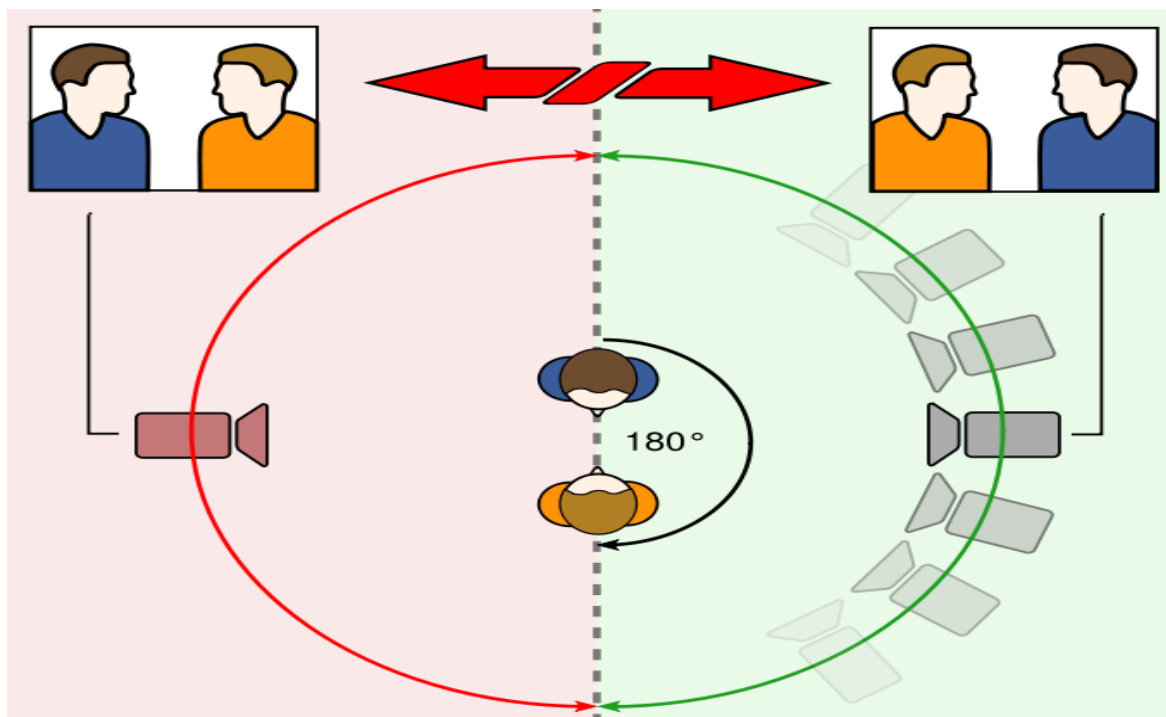
<sup>8</sup> Particularly in its use of repetition, right?

## Spatial Relations

Coherence of time, as we've seen above, is an absolutely crucial outcome of effective film editing. But perhaps an equally important principle of editing is its often overlooked function in providing perceivers a reliable sense of the physical space that constitutes the world of the film. Think about it: every time we see a shot on screen, whether it's a car driving down the road or a building blowing up or a guy talking to someone, we expect (perhaps without even realizing it) to understand where these things are happening in relation to other things. Where is that car going? Where did it start from? Which building is that? Have we seen it before? What is it near? To whom is that guy talking? Where is the other person in relation to him? All of these questions are answered, clearly and unobtrusively, through the use of **spatial relations** – the principle of relating points in space in order to achieve narrative continuity.

### Spatial Relations: General Concepts

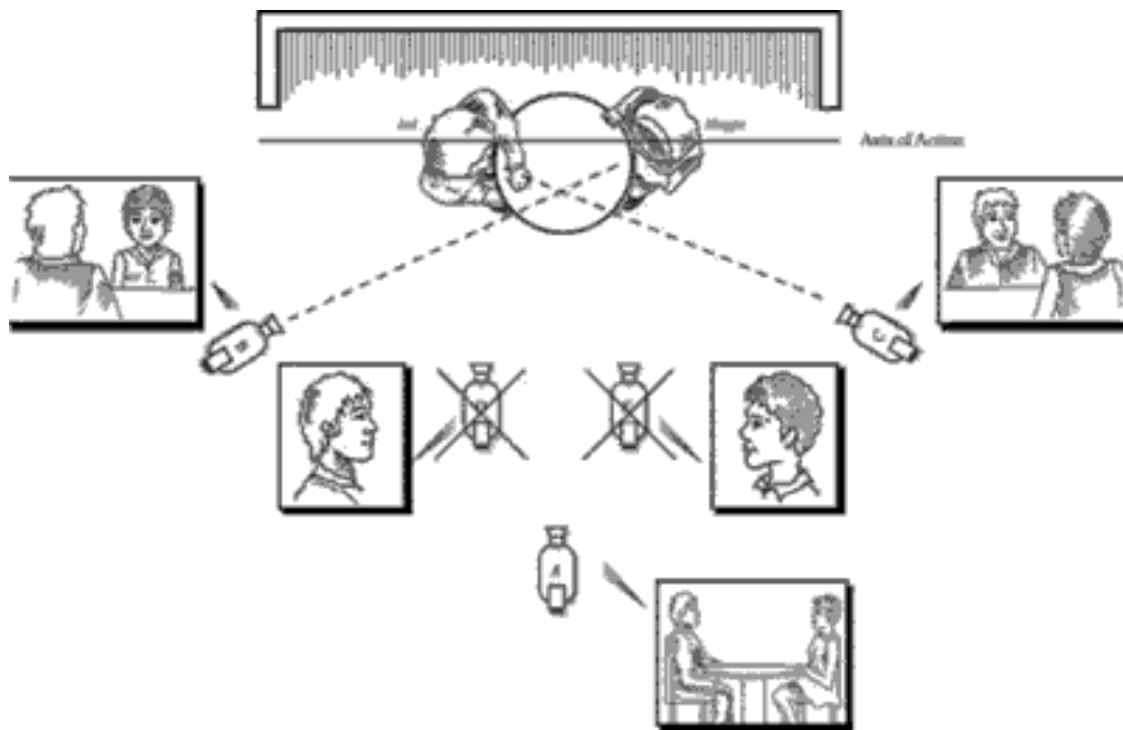
One of the most important principles in spatial relations is actually the responsibility of the cinematographer: the **Axis of Action** (a.k.a. the 180-degree line). This principle dictates that the camera must shoot any given scene from one side of a straight line that runs from one end of the composition to the other – typically there is a figure (character) on either end of the line. The 180-degree line can't be violated without disorienting the perceiver unless the viewer actually sees the act of crossing the line happen. In other words, if Character A (in blue below) is on the right side of the frame at the beginning of the scene, he still needs to be on the right later in the scene *unless* the camera actually circles the figures so that the viewer understands how we came to be on the other side of the action. It is largely because of the Axis of Action rule that most scenes in narrative films are shot with a single camera that can move wherever it wants as long as it stays on its own side of the 180-degree line.



This is not to say that all scenes in all films are shot with a single camera. Although, again, most narrative scenes are shot using the [single-camera technique](#) in order to honor the Axis of Action (and also to avoid the problem of Camera 1 capturing Camera 2 in its shot), there are circumstances in which the [multiple-camera technique](#) is used, most often for shots that are very difficult to set up or extremely expensive to recreate – for example, car crashes, explosions, and other challenging set-ups.

## Spatial Continuity

As we discussed above, most standard scenes in narrative film are shot in a way that obeys the 180-degree line. Beyond this, most scenes are shot multiple times from different positions on the same side of the Axis of Action. The diagram below illustrates the typical [camera placements](#) for a standard narrative scene: one take will shoot Character A from a position diagonally behind Character B; another take will shoot Character B from a position diagonally behind Character A; and another take will shoot both characters from a position that is “neutral,” meaning that it occupies a central, head-on, perpendicular position in relation to both characters. Note that the cameras are *not* set up to shoot each individual character from a head-on perpendicular angle, as this would eliminate the viewer’s sense of perspective – where the characters are in relation to each other.



Once the cinematographer has done his or her job by honoring the Axis of Action and the principles of camera placement,<sup>9</sup> it’s the editor’s job to make use of the principles of [continuity](#)

<sup>9</sup> Unless it’s a Quentin Tarantino film or a Martin Scorsese film in which case all bets are off . . . No, seriously, even those guys don’t violate the 180-degree line – they simply move the camera while shooting. A lot.

**editing** to ensure spatial coherence for the viewer. The standard pattern for editing a scene in a narrative film includes the following types of shots, typically in a predictable order: the **establishing shot** (a.k.a. the master shot) provides the viewer with a fairly wide shot of the scene so that we get a sense of where figures and objects are in relation to each other; the **shot/reverse-shot sequence** alternates shots of figures from their positions on the Axis of Action (typically these figures are characters engaged in dialogue); the **eyeline match** (a.k.a. the point-of-view shot) follows a shot of Figure A looking at something with a shot of the figure/object that Figure A is seeing; and the **re-establishing shot** returns us to an establishing shot, to confirm that we are still exactly where we thought we were. The Jutta/Papa scenes from *Lola rennt* tend to follow this pattern with a slight variation, in that the scenes begin without an establishing shot – instead they dive right into the shot/ reverse-shot pattern, as seen in the clip that begins at **14:14** (linked at right). An establishing shot finally appears at **14:49**.



This variation on the continuity pattern – presenting shot/reverse-shots and eyeline matches in the absence of an establishing shot – creates something known as the **Kuleshov Effect**. Although the original Kuleshov effect was posited in a psychological experiment created by Russian filmmaker Lev Kuleshov involving film editing, the term is used today to explain the phenomenon by which the viewer infers a spatial relationship between objects or figures even though there has been no establishing shot to confirm the relationship. In other words, we see Jutta on the right side of the screen and then we see Papa on the left, and we *assume* they're sharing the same space. But we don't know this is true until the establishing shot finally comes at **14:49**.

For a more **traditional use of continuity editing**, check out how each element of the pattern is presented like clockwork in the clip from Rob Reiner's *When Harry Met Sally*, linked below.





## Editing and Artistry

OK. So the editor is primarily concerned with coherence of both time and space. But he (or she) is also an artist, right? Beyond making sure that the story is understandable in terms of its *when* and *where*, the editor also wants to make sure that the edits – the transitions between shots in the film – are aesthetically pleasing to the viewer. **Aesthetics**, as you may know, are all about what appeals to the five senses in a way that will be perceived as beautiful. Since films generally don't appeal to our senses of taste or smell,<sup>10</sup> editors achieve their artistry by making use of techniques designed to enhance the visual, auditory, and tactile impact of edits.

### Editing and Artistry: Graphic Relations

Although the primary focus of the film editor is to ensure continuity of the narrative, film editors remain acutely aware that film is a visual art. Therefore, they work to achieve visual interest by creating transitions between shots that are graphically similar and graphically dissimilar, depending on the desired effect. This aspect of editing is called **graphic continuity**, and its two central principles are the graphic match and the graphically discontinuous edit.

A **graphic match** is achieved by joining two shots that have a similarity in terms of light/dark, line or shape, volume or depth, movement or stasis. In other words, the edit moves us from one shot – or even one scene – to another, but visually, the two shots “rhyme” with each other, in that they share an important characteristic that links them together visually even if they are dissimilar in terms of subject matter, content, or thematic meaning. *Lola rennt* has many good examples of graphic matches. In the clip (linked below, right) there's one at **3:00** (the shift from live to animation); at **5:05** (about 10 seconds) and at **8:35** (about 50 seconds) we see a series of matches as we switch back and forth between Lola and Manni on the telephone; and at **11:05** (for about 30 seconds) we see a very quick succession of graphic matches as Lola thinks of where she might go for money.



A **graphically discontinuous edit** creates a clash of visual content by joining two shots that are dissimilar in terms of one or more of the above visual principles. And again, *Lola rennt* has several fine examples in this clip alone (just use the same link above, right): at **5:10**, the shift from one film stock to another (color to black & white) and at **5:20** the shift back to the original stock; at **9:48**, the shift from a close-up of Lola to an extreme long shot of Manni (note also the significant difference in color value, from bright Lola to gray Manni; and at **14:15**, the shift from the vivid-color long shot of Lola to the washed-out close-up of Jutta.

<sup>10</sup> Although films like *Big Night* and *Babette's Feast* and *Like Water for Chocolate* would beg to differ.

## Editing and Artistry: Rhythmic Relations

Film is not only a visual art, but also an auditory and even tactile art. Therefore, editors also remain aware of the effects achieved by manipulating the rhythms experienced by perceivers through thoughtful juxtapositions of longer and shorter shots<sup>11</sup> –well as through transitional devices that affect the perceiver’s sense of beat or tempo. These **transitional devices** help the viewer to understand how to perceive the shift from one shot to another, as described and exemplified below.

### Rhythmic Transitional Devices

By far the most common transitional device in film is the **straight cut**, which is exactly what it sounds like: a direct, unadorned shift from one shot to another. Most straight-cut edits aren’t even noticed by the viewer because they are so prevalent in any given film. I could pick almost any point in almost any film to show you as an example of a straight cut, but for now let’s just look at the series of straight cuts between Lola and Manni in *Lola rennt*, beginning at **4:48** and continuing for about 25 seconds in the link to the right.



The rest of the specific transitional devices explored below are significantly less common than the straight cut. These cuts – also known as **punctuation edits** – tend to provide more direction for the viewer in terms of how to perceive the transitions. This direction is achieved through speed and visual effects that function in much the same way that punctuation functions in writing.<sup>12</sup>

The **fade-out** is a specific edit in which the shot ends, not by shifting immediately to another shot as in a straight cut, but by slowly fading from the image of the shot into a solid color (often, but not



always, black). The **fade-in** is pretty much the same deal, except that it begins with a solid color (again – often, but not always, black) and then fades into the image of the shot. Both of these edits can be seen in the clip of *Lola rennt* linked at left – the fade-out (from shot to red) appears at **31:42** and the fade-in (from red to the next shot) appears at **31:46**. Fades are used to communicate a meaningful transition – often a major shift in time or a shift from one mental state to another (memories, fantasies, dreams, etc.)

<sup>11</sup> Think of the long take in *Touch of Evil* or the short takes in *The Bourne Supremacy* presented near the end of Chapter 3.

<sup>12</sup> Which pretty much explains why they’re called punctuation edits, right?

The **dissolve** is sort of like a fade-out and fade-in happening in quick succession, only without the solid color in between. The technique is fairly simple: fade out Shot A while fading in Shot B. At some point during the dual fade, both images are seen at the same time, as in a superimposition. The dissolve creates a very smooth transition between shots that also expands time, as in the series of dissolves between the crowds and the individual figures beginning at the **2:15** mark and continuing for about half a minute (these dissolves achieve a thematic mingling of the group and the individual) and the single dissolve at the **14:10** mark, which serves to blend time during Lola's run, in one of the film's few uses of elliptical editing. Both of these segments are seen in the clip of *Lola rennt* linked above right.



The **jump cut** is usually a series of edits rather than a single edit. It involves editing together shots that are very similar to one another in subject matter and composition – typically a series of shots



of the same figure in roughly the same setting but with minor variations to show the passage of time or the achievement of movement. They are almost always used elliptically (i.e. in order to speed up time) and also to communicate in a very short time the repetition of a series of similar events. Good examples of jump cuts can be seen in the clip of *Lola rennt* (linked to the left) beginning at **11:00** and lasting about 10 seconds (when Lola is trying to determine whom she should ask for help) and again in the same clip at

**12:37** when jump cuts are used for about 5 seconds to communicate Lola's progress in beginning her run for the first time.

The **smash cut**, like the jump cut, is also typically a series of edits rather than a single edit. It involves editing together a series of shots that are dissimilar from each other in subject matter or composition (or both). Thus they can be either graphic matches or graphically discontinuous – but they are almost certainly *not* matches thematically.

Smash cuts are used to highlight juxtapositions between dissimilar figures or objects – in other words, they point out how disjointed a series of images can be. In order to enhance the sense of disjointedness, smash cuts are often accompanied by sound that accentuates each edit. Good examples of smash cuts can be seen in the clip of *Lola rennt* (linked below right) at the **7:58** mark (about 10 seconds' worth of Manni's imagining how the bum is spending his money) and again at the **11:18** mark (about 30 seconds of Lola thinking of all the people she could possibly ask for money).





The **freeze-frame** is a cool technique that essentially stops the action by lingering on what appears to be a still photo while the viewer is pulled out of the moment in the diegesis to experience something nondiegetic – music, for example, or more often a voice-over narration. Alas, *Lola rennt* doesn't have any freeze-frame edits, but the master of the freeze-frame, Martin Scorsese, has them sprinkled liberally throughout most of his films.

The freeze-frame is actually achieved by repeating the same frame over and over again, for as long as the director and editor want to create the effect of the still photo. In the clip from *Goodfellas* linked above left, for example, the frame of Ray Liotta standing behind the trunk of the car is repeated around 170 times (7 seconds at 24 frames per second). To see the moment I'm referring to, go to the link and watch the opening sequence of the film (the actual freeze-frame begins at **1:28**).

And finally, the **wipe edit** is a showy visual technique that involves one shot literally pushing another shot out of the way in the frame: Shot A is physically replaced by Shot B while we watch it happen. A wipe can move from left to right, right to left, top to bottom, bottom to top, or something weirder like in a circle or a spiral. The effect is rather like turning a page in a book – it heightens the sense of an important shift in the physical, temporal, or emotional content from one shot to another. Sometimes a wipe edit is incomplete, in that Shot B begins to push Shot A off the screen but stops halfway, leaving us with a split-screen view of both shots at the same time. This dramatically raises our position in the hierarchy of knowledge because we can watch two lines of action simultaneously – in other words, we know everything that the figure(s) in Shot A know, and we also know everything that the figure(s) in Shot B know. *Lola rennt* uses several wipe edits, including this nice one (linked below right) that begins at the **26:08** mark. Notice how it adds an omniscient Shot C rising up from the bottom of the frame at the **26:37** mark.



## Editing and Meaning

So, we have now established that editing is all about coherence and it's also all about aesthetics (or artistry). In other words, it's both functional and artful; it serves the purposes of both clarity and beauty. But it probably won't surprise you too much to discover that editing is also about Truth. Yes, that's right: editing is not only functional and artful, it's also thematic. A good editor will use editing in order to help communicate to the viewer not only *what happens* but also *what it means*.



## Editing and Meaning: Thematic Relations

Editors have at their disposal two very powerful techniques for manipulating the perceiver's place in the hierarchy of knowledge, and therefore affecting our thematic understanding of the film: the montage sequence and the crosscut editing sequence.

The **montage sequence** is a series of shots edited together in order to create a visual motif – a collection of shots that are related to each other in subject matter and that also contain a progression. On the simplest, most utilitarian level, montage sequences communicate the passage of time fairly briefly – so, yes, they're related to temporal relations – but on a deeper level they're really about communicating significant meaning about what happens in the diegesis over a longer period of time than the film can cover in narrative scenes. The easiest place to see a montage sequence in action is in pretty much any sports film: you know the obligatory sequence when the underdog losers finally decide they want to win so they start training? And then we watch about 2 or 3 minutes of the team going from really pathetic to awesome over a series of days, weeks, or months? Yeah, those are montage sequences.



*Lola rennt* doesn't use a lot of montage because it doesn't need to (again, it doesn't need to shorten time but rather lengthen it). However, there are a few spots that are montage-like. In the clip linked at left, a montage beginning at the **24:00** mark manages to communicate about 10 minutes' worth of Lola running in 30 seconds of screen time. See how that works?

But again, *Lola rennt* isn't really a montage-y movie because its screen duration (81 minutes) is more than enough to cover its temporal duration (~30 minutes). There's almost zero reason to try to communicate a

progression over the temporal duration in a short piece of screen duration. For examples of significantly more traditional montage sequences, try the following clips. The first, from Ivan Reitman's *Ghostbusters*, is a classic montage showing how the hapless, dorky scientists become rock stars by saving Gotham from its pesky ectoplasmic invaders:





Often, as in the above clip from *Ghostbusters*, the montage sequence is used for comic effect or to evoke a certain level of excitement. Montage sequences in sports movies (and arguably in *Ghostbusters*) are fairly often used in order to manipulate the audience into rooting for the heroes, cheering them on to victory. Sometimes,

though, the montage sequence is used for a smaller, quieter, less showy effect, as in this sequence from Pete Docter and Bob Peterson's *Up*. Watch it at the link above. I dare you not to cry a little.

A final way in which editing is used to communicate significant thematic meaning is through the technique of **crosscut editing**. The technique itself is really simple: the editor cuts back and forth between two lines of action that are occurring at the same time. But the effect is profound: not only does it place the viewer at the top of the hierarchy of knowledge (much in the way that the split-screen wipe, described above, does) – but it also juxtaposes two sets of content in such a way that the viewer is encouraged to think about them in relation to each other. Sometimes this is as simple as a crosscut between The Bad Guys running away and The Good Guys pursuing them, which causes us to wonder whether the BGs will get away or the GGs will catch them. But often

it's much more thematically potent than simple suspense, as in the clip (linked below right) from Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*. This sequence is widely regarded as one of the modern cinema's most powerful examples of crosscutting. What thematic truth is being suggested by the juxtaposition of images and actions in this clip?



. . . and that's all I have to say about editing. See you in Chapter 5 – Sound.