

Since frames imply a perspective on the world or on certain characters, their mobility or lack of it can point to the very foundation of the world you see in those frames. Is it an active world you are seeing or one that seems rigid and static? The complexities of that world are often revealed as the frames move and change, and the more exactly you can note these frames, the more incisive your analysis will be. Try, at some point, to base your analysis of a character or a situation exclusively on the framing action that describes them. What patterns can you see? Does this character always look at the world through close-ups that track through crowds and situations, without ever getting a larger perspective on them? Does that consistent way of framing the action suggest that he participates but never really sees the whole picture?

Remember that frames and their actions have no universal meaning. Just as colors do not have unchanging symbolic value, camera angles and movements do not have to mean the same thing in different movies. Low-angle shots do not always signify dominance, nor do high-angle shots always suggest oppression (as is sometimes thought). Although in one movie a low-angle shot may remind the viewer that a weak character is being looked at by a stronger, more dangerous person, in another movie that low-angle shot may be used to describe the wonder of a child looking at a person she loves. If you begin by noting visual details carefully, you can reflect on how particular framing actions work in specific films and on how they provoke certain questions about those films and their themes. An endless series of close-ups means one thing in a movie made for American television, where it may underline the importance of the individual character, and another thing in a European art film, where it may suggest the unknowable quality of the human face. In an Ozu film, the low height of the director's frame may be meant to suggest the more relaxed, meditative perspective of a Japanese looking at the world from the floor of a tatami room, but the Belgian filmmaker Chantal Akerman claims that the low height of her frames occurs because she is short! The lesson should be clear: Don't simply describe technical details and expect them to be self-explanatory. Rather, put them to work to convey an idea about the various ways frames and their points of view operate and what they mean in specific films, in specific cultures, and at specific times.

The Edited Image

In the simplest sense, editing is the linking of two different pieces of film (two different shots). Usually, the editing follows some logic of development (an image of a woman and then the object she is looking at, for ex-

ample) or is meant to make a statement of some sort (an image of an egotistical czar and then one of a peacock). Recall the cowboy at the bar: when a long shot shows him at the bar and then slowly tracks in closer to capture him close up, this is reframing within a single shot. But if after that first image the camera stops and moves to another position (maybe a low angle on the other side of the bar), that reframed long shot has now been edited into two shots. The break between the two images is a *cut*.

A shot can be held on the screen for any length of time, the result being a certain *editing pace* or *rhythm*. Because the pace of the editing is relative, we should try to note why and how a film or part of a film is edited according to a certain rhythm. We expect a chase scene to be rapidly edited (with lots of quick cuts and brief shots), but to make us comically aware of our expectations about editing, that chase scene could be edited with very slow rhythms and few cuts. As an exercise, observe exactly how long a single image remains on the screen in any movie, and then reflect on why the filmmaker cuts to another angle or image at that point. Does the director use mostly *long takes*, shots that remain on a scene or object for an unusually long time (as Terrence Malick did in *Thin Red Line* [1999] when he held the image on grassy fields or the branches of trees for mystically long periods)? Or does the film cut rapidly from one image to another, as in chase sequences in *The Terminator* (1984)? Does the pace of the editing change with the scene, for example, by using quick cuts on the streets and slow, long takes inside the home?

In the larger sense, *editing* refers to how shots are built into larger pieces of a movie and hence larger units of meaning. A series of shots can thus be carefully joined to create a single *scene*, which is usually an action confined to one place and time: for example, in Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993), the scene in which Ada (Holly Hunter) arrives on a remote beach in nineteenth-century New Zealand or, in *Potemkin*, the scene in which the officers inspect the rotten meat. The latter begins with a group of angry sailors gathered on deck around a piece of maggot-infested meat; the ship's surgeon inspects the meat, which is shown in close-up, and announces that the maggots are simply dead flies; the scene ends as another officer disperses the outraged sailors.

When these shots describe significantly more action and more time and more than one location, the interwoven and unified group of shots or scenes that results is often called a *sequence*. In *The Piano*, the beach scene becomes part of a larger arrival sequence when Ada is met and led through the jungle to her future home; in *Potemkin*, the scenes that dramatize the sailors' mounting discontent make those scenes part of a complicated sequence leading to their rebellion. As part of the previous exercise, see if