CONTINUITY EDITING

JOHN HUSTON, 1941

THE MALTESE FALCON

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Driving Forces

Life Forces

Goals
Structure
Propulsion

EDITING

EDITING

- Film editing, in general, involves
  - **Selecting** which shots to include
  - **Trimming** those shots to a desired length
  - And **arranging** them into a specific order

CONTINUITY EDITING

- Continuity editing **structurally** communicates story details
  - Shot order generally based on a linear, chronological story arc
  - Propelled by goal-oriented protagonist overcoming obstacles to effect change

CONTINUITY EDITING

- Promotes interest and identification through diverse framing options

The Lonedale Operator
(D.W. Griffith, 1911)

The Cabbage Patch Fairy
(Alice Guy-Blaché, 1900)

CONTINUITY EDITING

- Continuity editing is crucial to film storytelling
  - Dialogue directly states story details
  - Cinematography suggests important story information
  - But editing takes all of the film parts and assembles them into a whole
    - While keeping that assembling “invisible”

CONTINUITY EDITING

- Draws on our experiences of the world to tell stories in a recognizable and seamless way
- Ensures all visuals contribute to the story and produce a **comprehensible** and **coherent** whole
- Eliminates distraction and confusion to keep viewers focused on characters and story

SHOT RELATIONSHIPS

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- Graphic
- Rhythmic
- Spatial
- Temporal

GRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS

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- Purely Pictorial Properties
  - Mise-en-scène
  - Cinematography

GRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS

- Purely pictorial properties include
  - Light and dark
  - Movement and stillness
  - Lighting, setting, costume
  - Framing and/or camera movement

GRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS

- Continuity editing strives to keep purely pictorial properties consistent
  - To keep viewers focused on gathering story information

Story
Style

GRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS

- But sometimes…
- Films draw our attention to **complement** or **contrast relationships**
  - Complements suggested by visually expressed similarities
  - Contrasts signaled by visually expressed differences

GRAPHIC RELATIONSHIPS

RHYTHMIC RELATIONSHIPS

RHYTHMIC RELATIONSHIPS

- Every shot is trimmed to a particular length
  - Shorter shot lengths produce a faster rhythm
  - Longer shot lengths generate a slower rhythm

RHYTHMIC RELATIONSHIPS

- Filmmakers use shot lengths to control the **tempo** of a scene
  - Shorter, faster shots for action scenes
  - Longer, slower shots for dramatic or romantic scenes

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Filmmakers use editing to orient viewers and characters in the film world
  - To visually indicate where characters are in relation to one another within the spaces they share
  - Minimizes disorientation

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Clear spatial relationships also enable more diverse framing, which
  - Keeps the film visually interesting
  - Gives us greater emotional access to characters
  - While also allowing us to see them in context

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Clear spatial relationships are brought to you by
  - Analytical editing techniques
  - Eyelines
  - The 180-Degree Rule

ANALYTICAL EDITING

- Starts with a **whole** space then breaks it down into smaller **parts**

EYELINES

- **Eyelines** remind us where another character is when they're offscreen

THE 180-DEGREE RULE

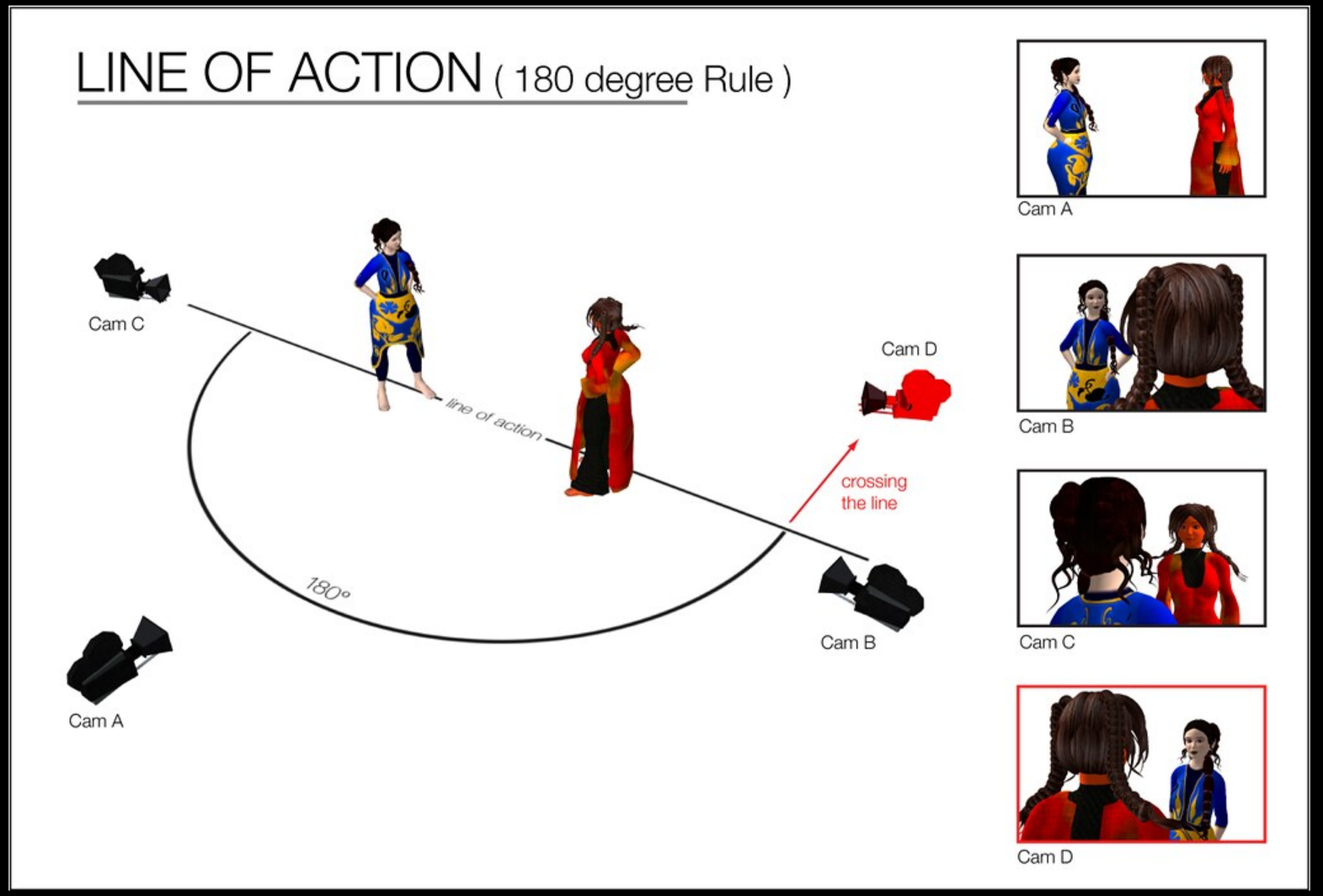
- **The 180-Degree Rule** builds a scene's space around an **axis of action**
  - The axis of action is established by two characters interacting

THE 180-DEGREE RULE

- The axis of action defines a 180-degree half-circle
- Placing the camera anywhere along that half-circle ensures consistent
    - spatial relations
    - eyelines
    - screen direction

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

180-DEGREE RULE



Courtesy of Annabeth Robinson (Flickr)

SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

180-DEGREE RULE

Camera stays in front (of the back) of the desk

ANALYTICAL EDITING

- Shot - reverse shot

TEMPORAL RELATIONSHIPS

TEMPORAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Editing shapes the film's timeline
  - Generally, editing is **chronological**, moving the plot **forward** in time
  - **Flashbacks** can take us into the past

TEMPORAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Editing can also condense or expand time
  - **Elliptical editing** condenses actions to keep the plot moving (e.g., getting from point A to point B)
  - **Overlapping editing** expands moments by repeating aspects of them to highlight their importance

TEMPORAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Methods used to join shots also give us a sense of the time relationship between the juxtaposed shots or scenes
  - Cut
  - Fade-in and Fade-out
  - Dissolve
  - Wipe

CUT

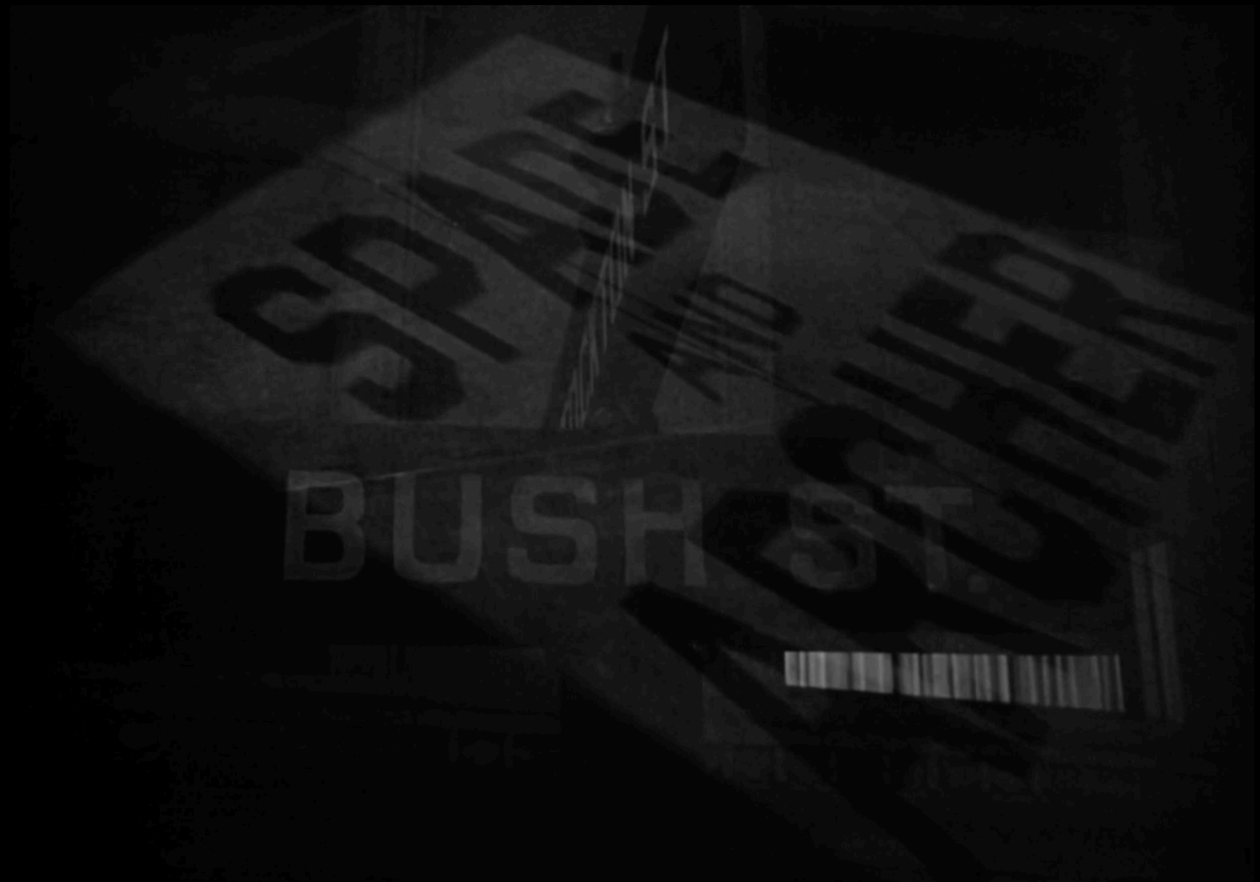
- A **cut** usually indicates an instantaneous movement forward in time
  - Cuts join shots that unfold moment-by-moment
  - And usually join the shots that make up a **scene**
    - Scenes generally occur in one place at one time

FADE-IN / FADE-OUT

- A Fade-In slowly reveals a shot from black
- Fade-Out slowly conceals a shot to black
- Fades mark transitions, usually from one scene to another
- And indicate time has passed

DISSOLVE

- Dissolves superimpose the end of one shot over the beginning of another
- Dissolves also indicate transitions from one scene to another
- And signal time has passed



WIPE

- A Wipe joins two shots via a line moving across the frame
  - For a second, both shots are onscreen, but don’t blend
- Wipes also indicate the end of one scene and beginning of another
- And that time has passed

CROSSCUTTING

CROSSCUTTING

- Crosscutting involves alternating shots of events in one location with shots of events in another location
- Crosscutting ties together different lines of action **occurring in different places at the same time**
- And is most often used to create a sense of urgency or suspense