From the Editor: Editing, Digital Image Design, World-Building

When Sam Peckinpah turned over his raw footage for *Ride the High Country* (1962) to the MGM studio editor, she declared that the material he had filmed for the final gunfight was incompetent and that it could not be edited together in a coherent way. Viewed today, the scene does not seem especially transgressive in its treatment of continuity, but in that earlier period when studio editing rules were more conservative, Peckinpah's disregard for standardized camera set-ups and conventional coverage perplexed and infuriated MGM's editor.

As this example suggests, approaches to editing in popular cinema have changed over the years. The abundant violations of screen direction and spatial positioning found throughout *The Dark Knight* (2008) would not have been tolerated in a studio picture in the 1940s. At the same time, Godard's jump cutting in *Breathless* (1960) looks transparent and nearly invisible today, so much like contemporary cutting patterns that its iconoclastic approach signals a no-longer-new New Wave. Yet, despite such changes, the principles of continuity editing that serve to create a stable, spatially coherent world on screen have proven to be very durable. Filmmakers developed these principles on an intuitive and pragmatic basis because they made for good storytelling, guiding and directing viewer attention in ways that were easy to follow and minimized confusion, which always looms as the enemy in a medium that is based on image fragmentation and on partial views of an action. Were the rules not so durable and if they did not make valid claims on our perceptual processing, the mushy action choreography in *The Dark Knight* would not seem so peculiar. Despite the foundational nature of continuity editing in cinema, however, little is known about how these rules cue cognitive processes within viewers in response to image transitions.

These considerations are a major focus of this issue of *Projections,* along with explorations of digital image design and the special cognitive pleasures to be found in sets of narratives that form an extended world or cosmos.

The issue opens with a Scholars Roundtable on continuity editing. Tim Smith presents a new theory, grounded in empirical research, specifying the numerous ways that continuity editing solicits and directs the viewer's atten-

tional processes. The Attentional Theory of Continuity Editing postulates that this method of editing works by sustaining the viewer's attention with a series of cues that can be tracked across cuts, both forward and backward in time. Smith identifies these mechanisms and cues and relates them to similar perceptual activities that operate in real-world, nonfilmic situations. He thus presents an ecological theory of filmic comprehension.

Seven scholars from the fields of communication (Paul Messaris, Greg Smith), film studies (Malcolm Turvey), psychology (Sheena Rogers, Daniel Levin, Alicia Hymel), and philosophy (Cynthia Freeland) present responses to Smith's work. These scholars explore the theory's implications and ambiguities, suggest ways that it might be extended and point to areas of filmic experience that it does not address. Smith then provides a closing response in reply to the seven scholars. These exchanges shed new light on an important component of cinema style and structure, one that has been at the forefront of cinematic practice and scholarship but has remained somewhat mysterious, with secrets unrevealed.

The other articles in this issue focus on image design and on cosmogenesis or world-building as found within popular narratives in film and other media. Recent lamentations about the death of film have pointed to the apparent speed with which digital capture and digital exhibition are thought to be driving film into oblivion. Gerald Sim offers a counterview, arguing that film retains significant cultural, aesthetic, and economic values, ones prized by the industry, and that proclamations about the death of film, therefore, are likely to be precipitous. Sim explores the controversies within the cinematographic community regarding digital capture and offers a prognostication affirming film's future as a viable medium for industry work.

Digital imaging has led to a revival of stereoscopy, aka 3D, in popular cinema because it solves many of the flaws that were inherent to film in a two-camera, two-projector system. At the same time, it presents new aesthetic issues as images shift from a planar basis to one incorporating the depth cues of convergence and binocular disparity. Barbara Flueckiger explores the nature of stereoscopic aesthetics and distinguishes these from the designs that prevail in planar cinema.

Popular cinema today often involves franchises, films whose narratives extend beyond single installments to create worlds to which viewers may return multiple times in different installments and media. Mark Wolf describes the unique and distinctive pleasures such films offer their viewers. Wolf describes the mechanisms by which world-gestalten operates, the cognitive filling-in of a perceptibly complete and finished world from incomplete data supplied by the installments of a film series or franchise. Wolf convincingly demonstrates how world-gestalten constitutes its own form of pleasure for viewers and how this is distinct, and at times in tension with, the pleasures furnished by

narrative. His article provides us with an enlightening way of thinking about what viewers derive from, and contribute to, popular series such as Star Wars or The Lord of the Rings.

Finally, James Cutting, Kaitlin Brunick, and Jordon DeLong provide a clarification and correction to some of their analysis on shot lengths that appeared the Summer 2011 issue of *Projections*.

These articles on image design and on the design of narrative worlds give us new ways of thinking about cinema, about its past and its future. As I assume the editorship of *Projections,* I salute our outgoing editor, Ira Konigsberg whose fine sensibilities helped to make the journal a prize-winning showcase for scholarship. I hope that Ira will find that this issue maintains the high standards that he established. With regard to the essays in this new issue, I am very pleased to have the opportunity of showcasing such fine work in the journal.

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