The Grand Undefined Term
– A Study in Mise-en-Scène

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore and document the complex relationship between mise-en-scène and editing. The main goal was to determine whether or not editing could be used to influence the mise-en-scène of a film, and if so, in what ways. To achieve this, two surveys and a practical experiment in mise-en-scène was carried out. The first survey measured which definition of mise-en-scène was more common and what the general opinion of contemporary editors was on whether an editor can influence the mise-en-scène of a film. It also took in suggestions of different methods by which an editor could influence mise-en-scène.

Based on the methods that were suggested, a single scene of a short film (original material supplied by ACE) was cut in four different versions: an original cut and three alternatives, in which methods suggested in the survey were used to actively influence its mise-en-scène. A second survey was sent out determine the success of the experiment. The result was overwhelmingly in support for the notion that the mise-en-scène had been successfully influenced by ways of editing.

The conclusion was that editing can and does influence mise-en-scène. It was concluded that there is a number of methods for doing so – but that further, more specialized research is required to map their exact and individual effectiveness.

Keywords: Mise-en-Scène, Film, Editing
Abstrakt


Slutsatsen var att klippning påverkar en films mise-en-scène. Det fastslags att ett flertal metoder kan användas för att uppnå detta, men att vidare, mer djupgående forskning behövs för att kartlägga mer exakt hur pass effektiva de individuella metoderna är.

Nyckelord: Mise-en-Scène, Film, Klippning, Redigering
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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

“A director is about to make a film. He has before him a script, camera, lights, décor, actors. What he does with them is mise-en-scène, and it is precisely here that the artistic significance of the film, if any, lies.”


Though today it is most commonly associated with film, mise-en-scène is a term that is older than cinema itself – a concept that has lied at the heart of every staged production from the earliest attempts at theatre to the latest marvel of CGI shown on HD-screens in full 3D.

As films have evolved over the years, they have grown more and more technologically complex. New disciplines have been born, and with them has come a great debate – one that still goes on to this day. The question is "what exactly is mise-en-scène?" – which disciplines count? Why? Even editing, a trade as old as film itself, is still considered a part of this debate.

Being an editor myself, I am greatly fascinated by mise-en-scène – and its hotly debated relationship to editing. Is editing a part of what makes a movie's mise-en-scène? Can an editor consciously influence mise-en-scène – and if so, how? These and others are the questions I try to answer in this thesis.
Chapter 2

2.1 Background

"If the average film-goer saw his favourite star on the screen last night, it is safe to wager that today he does not remember much about the settings in the picture. The story and the stars, he will tell you, were so interesting, he did not really notice anything else. Exactly. It was so interesting that he was not conscious of the background. Most people have the same experience, no matter how observant they may ordinarily be."

– Cedric Gibbons (Corrigan & White 2004, p. 42)

In this chapter, I will aim to give the reader all the background information needed to understand my research question and all the terms that surround it. I will begin by dissecting the term *mise-en-scène*, starting with its strictly grammatical meaning in chapter 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. In chapter 2.1.3 and 2.1.4, I will move on to the *meaning* of *mise-en-scène*, starting with a brief history of its concept. Finally, in chapter 2.1.5, I will give a short explanation to the term 'editor', and the editor’s role in moviemaking.
2.1.1 Etymology

Mise-en-Scène (mizan’sen); transl: "putting into the scene"

Noun

1. a. the staging of a play, including the setting, arrangement of the actors, etc.
   b. the direction of film, emphasizing the image created by setting, props, lightning, actors' movements, etc.
2. general surroundings; environment (Collins Dictionary, 2013)

Pronounced "meez-ahn-sen", the word "mise-en-scène" originates from early 17th century French: it's first known use has been traced back as far as the year 1833 (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Literally translated, mise-en-scène means "staged" or "put on (the) stage" – however, the actual meaning of the term is a lot more complex, as the chapters that follow will explore.

There exists several variations on the spelling of the term mise-en-scène – with and without hyphens, with or without italicisation, etc. – and spelling can therefore vary between sources. For this thesis, I have chosen to write it as it appears in the Oxford English Dictionary: with hyphens and without italicisation (Simpson & Weiner, 1989). However, in the case of quotations I have chosen to at all times respect the spelling used by the original author - which is why the term may well appear with different spellings throughout the text.

2.1.2 Variations in Use

In the book Introduction to Film Studies, Suzanne Speidel elucidates that in cinema, mise-en-scène can be interpreted in two ways. Elements such as settings, actors, props, lightning, costumes, make-up and performance and other elements depicted by its images, are components existing independent of the camera (Corrigan & White 2004, p.42), and for some critics, those components themselves define a film's mise-en-scène.
For others, cinematography, editing and special effects – all elements existing in the finished film, are aspects of mise-en-scène and therefore defined as one broader term (Nelmes 2007, p. 8-9).

2.1.3 A Short History of Mise-en-Scène

"Indeed, understanding the evolution of mise-en-scène may be especially complicated because it involves the separate histories of painting and costuming; of the construction of social space, from houses to urban planning; and, more recently, of various lighting techniques."

– Corrigan & White 2004, p.46

While the term mise-en-scène was not coined until 1833 (Merriam-Webster, 2013) the concept itself can be traced back as far as to the Greek theatres of the years around 500 B.C. At this early incarnation of theatre, the stage was mostly used as a venue where the local religious beliefs could be acted out in front of the whole community, serving as entertainment as well as moral- and cautionary tales (Corrigan & White 2004, p.47).

This was to remain true for a long time to come. More than a thousand years later, in the European theatres of the middle ages, little progress had been made. The setups of the sets remained largely the same, as did the prevalence of religious themes. At this point in time however, the rich themes of the Greek and Roman mythologies had been entirely replaced by the more contemporary Christian stories – "the tale of Adam and Eve" and "the Birth of Christ" being two particularly popular themes (Corrigan & White 2004, p.47). While little actual progress was made in theatre during this period, it does represent one very relevant aspect: the birth of mise-en-scène as a "place apart from daily life" (Corrigan & White 2004, p.47) – a concept that holds true to this day, and which would come to be more and more apparent in the centuries that followed.

It was not until the 14th to 15th century, at the height of the period known as the Renaissance, that any significant developments was seen in theatre – but when the change came, it was sudden and drastic. Just as in the middle ages, the sets reflected the spirit of the time – and the spirit of the Renaissance was markedly more secular. For the theatre, this meant a rise in colour and flair, as well as a change in the archetypical themes, and the screenplays of the
period moved away from the biblical themes in favour of politics and interpersonal relationships (Corrigan & White 2004, p.47). Sets and costumes also grew substantially more elaborate during this period, and with them, so did the concept of mise-en-scène – as the complexity of sets grew, so did the importance of good practises regarding what to display on them, and when. Despite this, it wasn't until the dawn of the 19th century that mise-en-scène began to take the shape in which it is known today. (Gibbs 2002, p.66)

As technology became more advanced, so did the sets used in contemporary theatre. In the 19th century, the sets grew both in size and complexity – even to the point where elaborately constructed and decorated sets would steal the attention from the dramatic action on the stage (Corrigan & White 2004, p.47). At the same time – perhaps a response to this – theatre saw a decline in the traditional groups of actors, to the benefit of single lead actors (directly relatable to the movie “stars” of cinema today). These star actors quickly became a vital and expected part in the modern theatre, and as such often became the centre of the mise-en-scène of their plays (Corrigan & White 2004, p.47).

The two arguably most important events in the history of cinema and mise-en-scène both took place just around the turn of the 19th and 20th century: The invention of the film camera in the 1880's, and the invention of the mercury-vapor lamps in the early 1900's. The importance of the former can hardly be overstated – but the latter should certainly not be underestimated either. The dawn of reliable indoor-lightning allowed early cinematographers to cast aside their previous dependency on daylight, and resulted in an increased popularity of theatre-style indoor sets. At the same time, this new technology encouraged experimentation with light and shadow as part of the mise-en-scène – a practise that quickly gained in popularity, and resulted in the birth of a new aspect of the concept “mise-en-scène” (Corrigan & White 2004, p.47).

The century that followed can best be described as a slow refinement of the concept of mise-en-scène. The term itself became a buzzword around the 1950's, when it was adopted by French and British film critics, and it has stayed with the industry since – and even if its meaning has changed and adapted to the progress of film and technology, its spirit remains the same today as it was more than 2000 years ago: the conscious thought of what is put in front of the viewer, and when. (Gibbs 2002, p.55-56)
2.1.4 The Concept of Mise-en-Scène

"In film studies, mise-en-scene is an indispensable concept in understanding film style and in making critical distinctions between films of different genres, historical periods, and national provenances; it can also be a key concept in studies of authorship in film."

– A Dictionary of Film Studies
Kuhn, Annette and Westwell, Guy, Oxford University Press 2012

Mise-en-scène is often used as a straightforward descriptive term – but it would in fact be far more accurate to describe it as a concept, which is complicated, yet central to the understanding of the artistic vision of a film. In its literal translation, it refers to putting something “on the stage” – however, it is commonly used when talking about the props, décor, costumes, lightning, camera movement, the actors, and so on. Simply put, it refers to every visual detail noticeable on the screen, excluding only the actors' lines and the sound. But the concept of 'mise-en-scène' goes farther than that, and has influenced the way that countless filmmakers create meaning in their works. All the components that make up the 'mise-en-scène' of a film-to-be are thought out and planned in intricate detail long before production begins – when a director has a meaning to his/her movie, even the details should be used to express that meaning. This is usually achieved through symbolism or psychological association, a technique dating back to the very beginning of cinema - and also the key to understanding the meaning of mise-en-scène (Kinoye, 2008).

It is admittedly very difficult to label mise-en-scène with a single, cohesive definition. Snehashis Basak calls it "a physical creation and an emotional concept" (Basak 2012, p. 2), while Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White define it as “a film's places and spaces, people and objects, lights and shadows … a dimension of our movie experience that we always value but usually take for granted” (Corrigan & White 2004, p. 44). In his essay at www.studymode.com, “burckey” states that mise-en-scène "… encapsulates the very essence of every scene in any film or television”, adding that “How all of these elements work together to portray certain actions, emotions, and places is the magical aspect that is difficult to define with mise-en-scene" (Burckey, 2013). These descriptions of mise-en-scène are naturally just a selection from the countless ones that are available, but they illustrate an important point. While the precise wording in the definitions of the term varies widely, the spirit of the
descriptions all point in a single direction: mise-en-scène is more than just the sum of the parts that make up a film – it is, in fact, its very spirit.

The very spirit of mise-en-scène is described quite vividly in the book *Mise-en-Scène – Film Style and Interpretation* (Gibbs 2002, p. 56-57) by Robin Wood, who writes:

"The director’s business is to get the actors (with their co-operation and advice) to move, speak, gesture, register expressions in a certain manner, with certain inflections, at a certain tempo: whether he uses the actors to fulfil precisely a preconceived vision (one thinks of Hitchcock) or releases their ability to express themselves and creates through them (one thinks of Renoir) is a matter for the individual genius. It is his business to place the actors significantly within the décor, so that the décor itself becomes an actor; with the advice and co-operation of the cameraman, to compose and frame shots; regulate the tempo and rhythm of movement within the frame and of the movement of the camera; to determine the lightning of the scene. In all this the director’s decision is final. All this is mise-en-scène.

And much more, for we have so far considered only one shot. The movement of the film from shot to shot, the relation of one shot to all the other shots already taken or not, which will make up the finished film, cutting, montage, all this is mise-en-scène. And still more. For mise-en-scène is not all these things considered as separate and detachable items: it is also what fuses all these into one organic unity, and consequently more, much more, than the sum of its parts. The tone and atmosphere of the film, visual metaphor, the establishment of relationships between characters, the relation of all parts to the whole: all this is mise-en-scène. It is this final consideration of the quality that fuses all the parts into a unity that led Astruc to define mise-en-scène as “a certain way of extending the élans of the soul in the movements of the body; a song, a rhythm, a dance”. It is this that makes the film, as an art, so much closer to music than to literature. One can sum up by defining mise-en-scène, with Doniol-Valcroze, quite simply as “the organisation of time and space”.

(Quoted from *Mise-en-Scène – Film Style and Interpretation* (Gibbs 2002, p. 56-57))
2.1.5 The Editor's Role in Filmmaking

"Mise-en-scène is what we see in a film; editing is what we do not. These are simplified definitions, but they emphasize two essential things: the basic building blocks of a film—the shot and the cut—and the complexities of each that allow a film to achieve its texture and resonance. Mise-en-scène concerns the shot, though we need to keep in the back of our minds that editing—putting two shots together—affects not only how a film's narrative is structured but how the shots are subsequently understood by viewers."

– Film Reference, 2013

What are film editors and what do they do? It is always difficult to judge oneself and one's own work, to see oneself from the outside. We are after all the continuously evolving result of a long process of one's own individual experiences. What also counts enormously are the people we have known, with whom we have exchanged ideas – in order to compare them or perhaps even discuss them.

It is well known editors have never been the superstars of Hollywood. They are often underestimated storytellers and lot of people can not value the truth enough that editors are the bookbinders of motion pictures. While audiences take notice of substantial elements such as acting, costumes, music or photography on a silver screen, they easily become captivated by the movement of the storyline and forget the physical passage of the film itself. The subconscious, artistic power of editors – invisibility – is manipulating and moving frames in a manner which may possibly be why editing has been given so little thought while watching a film. Editing is often invisible to the audience unless the picture is analyzed frame by frame or slowed down to a reasonable pace (Filmmakers, 2011a).

In a YouTube clip from the American Cinema Editors, Dustin Hoffman announces in his speech he attended a film ceremony where Alfred Hitchcock apparently once said: "What is Editing? You take the end of a strip of film and you paste it on to the end of another strip of film and you look at it and then – you cry." (ACEFilmEditors, 2011). Amongst an editor's massive theoretical knowledge of, for example, measuring frames mechanically, scripts or how a simple cut can impact a whole scene – the editor is something far more than that. When I first started studying film editing I discovered that cinema was a lot like music and that
editing was like being a conductor. I would not be able to invent themes, to be a composer, but I could produce orchestrations – I could adapt things therefore I could edit. Editing never came from the head; it came through the rhythm, the music and poetry, which brought me to the meaning of things. One had to listen, feel, receive and transmit. The complex art of an editor is achieved through instinct, emotion, psychology and rhythm (Filmmakers, 2011a).

Sound is just as important as the picture. It should be used wherever needed and be used for functional rather than decorative purposes. Musicality and rhythm are two vital elements in one universal principle when you are trying making a distinction between bad and good editing (Filmmakers, 2011b). "Timing is a big part of it; it has to do with musicality. The timing of a piece of music, the timing of a language, how it flows, how it goes from one moment to the next. The speech patterns of an actor have their own rhythm and musicality." (Filmmakers, 2011c).

In How Editors Make Movie Magic – The Invisible Cut by Bobbie O'Steen, she writes: "Whenever the editor chooses a shot, even if it only subtly changes a point of view or the timing of an actor's response, he will create an impact on the scene and even the entire movie. And every time he decides precisely where to start that shot and where to end it, he is contributing to an overall rhythm and pace that must pull the audience in and tell the story in the most satisfying way. In fact he is constantly taking the audience's pulse." (O'Steen, 2009)

The director’s vision is the editor's primary responsibility and they may not forget to remain servant to that vision (Filmmakers, 2011c). Once the footage has been introduced to the editor, he or she will be looking at the picture with complete objectivity – not subjectively, putting themselves in the role as the audience. Just as important it is to be technically accurate it is also important for the editor to be emotionally accurate. An actor's best performance is after all left in their hands. In the end, it is the producer, editor and director that spend the most time on a film (Filmmakers, 2011c). Paying attention to details and continuity, being organized, rigorously disciplined, persistent and self-reliant is all part of an editor's nature.

"Not only is the art and craft of editing elusive; in many cases, so are the editors themselves. For the most part they are insightful and visual, but not very verbal. Because they're primarily led by their instincts, when they're asked to explain why they made a particular cut, they may simply say, 'It just felt right.'" (O'Steen 2009, p.7)
2.2 Research Question

The following research question will be given priority to:

Q. How can an editor influence the Mise-en-Scène of a film?

2.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim and objective of this thesis is to explore the complex relationship between film editing and mise-en-scène. To what extent can the editor influence the mise-en-scène of a film? In what ways?

It has been a subject of some discussion whether or not editing (among other things, as discussed in chapter 2.1.2) can be considered into a film's mise-en-scène. It is my primary intention to explore each of these claims in depth, in order to establish (a) whether or not editing has a place in the modern-day definition of mise-en-scène, and (b) if it is, to what extent and in which ways it is open to the editor's influence. Should it prove that editing indeed does not constitute a part of a film's mise-en-scène, the primary objective will still remain: to investigate and map the exact relationship that does exist between the two.

As a secondary objective, this thesis will also aim to investigate the demographics related to the different popular interpretations of mise-en-scène. Does age, or time spent as working in the film industry have any significance toward ones opinions on the meaning of mise-en-scène? Does the opinion differ between editors and other disciplines, or is there a general consensus throughout the industry?
2.4 Thesis Limitations

For all intents and purposes of this thesis, only cinematic mise-en-scène will be considered in these questions – this in order to limit the size and scope of the study to better fit with the time available. For the same reasons, only editing will be the focus of this text – other related (and equally debated) topics such as sound and visual effects will be left for others to explore.

2.5 Existing Research

The issue of existing research on this subject is a somewhat complicated one. The subject of mise-en-scène is by no means academically uncharted territory - however, the vast majority of these works are by far too wide in their scope to be of any tangible use.

The by far most common type of research available is the one pertaining to mise-en-scène as a concept – good examples being "The Effects of Mise-en-scène on Motion Graphics", a Bachelor’s Degree Student Thesis by Eric Davey (2012), "It Was Never All in the Script: Mise-en-Scène and the Interpretation of Visual Style in British Film Journals 1946-1978" a Ph.D. Thesis by John Gibbs (1999) and "The Mobile Mise-en-Scène: a Critical Analysis of the Theory and Practice of Long-take Camera Movement in the Narrative Film" a Master’s Thesis by Lutz Bacher (1978). All of these (and many more) deal with the concept and idea that is mise-en-scène - but the highly specialized nature of the research question (as defined in chapter 2.2) means that they will be of little use in its later stages.

The second, less common type of research that is available is the more specialized texts, such as "Mise-en-Scène and the City: a Stylistic Analysis of the Protagonist's Apartment in “Sex and the City”" (2013) a Bachelor’s Degree Student Thesis by Linda Lopar and "Mise-en-Scène as an Aid in Puzzle/Problem Solving in Adventure Games: a Study in How a Player can be Influenced Towards Predetermined Locations in a Game" (2010). A Bachelor’s Degree Student Thesis by Martin Jonsson. The former focuses on the use of mise-en-scène as a tool in a very specific set used in the popular television show "Sex and the City", and argues that the same has played a critical part in the success of the show. The Latter, on the other hand,
explores the potential benefits of utilizing mise-en-scène in the design of virtual worlds ("levels") for games, and the impact this might have on the players.

Both of these theses, as well as the multitude of similar ones found but not mentioned here, highlight their own very interesting aspects of the phenomenon that is mise-en-scène – but none I have found so far has been relatable to my own research. Even the most common themes I have found ("mise-en-scène in videogames", "mise-en-scène in a certain film or TV-show" and "mise-en-scène in screenwriting") are too far removed from my own research question to provide any relevant data for my analysis.

From this I have concluded that while plenty of academic research exists on the subject of mise-en-scène and its applications within numerous disciplines (such as the examples described above), all my research points to this thesis being one of the first to focus on the specific relationship between mise-en-scène and editing. It is my hope and intention that my findings will be able to function as a stepping stone for future research into this field.
Chapter 3

3.1 Methods

In this chapter, I explain more closely the methods utilized to conduct my study. I will endeavour to make clear my motives and intention behind each step of the process, as well as the processes in themselves and the intended results of each stage. The methods are covered in the chronological order in which they were implemented. The focus of this chapter lies purely on the methods themselves, leaving the actual results and conclusions for chapter 4 and 5 respectively.

3.1.1 Overview

In order to gain the data that would be needed to attempt to answer the research question, a plan in three steps was formulated. It was decided early on that the main method of data-collection would be through a survey, sent out to a selected audience. After the survey was completed and the data analyzed, a practical experiment would be undertaken where a single scene from a short film would be edited, and re-edited in several versions according to suggestions from the survey (pertaining to how an editor might be able to influence a film's mise-en-scène). Once the empirical tests were completed, the resulting videos were to be distributed to a similar audience as for the initial survey, along with a second survey to determine the effectiveness of the methods used in each sequence.

3.1.2 Survey 1

The process used to gather data for this thesis was largely designed to counter the lack of existing research in this field (as described more closely in chapter 2.4). My theory was that despite the lack of published books or papers on the subject, a vast – or at least respectable – amount of knowledge existed amongst those who work with editing for a living. A survey was selected as the best available method of collecting this knowledge in the form of quantitative
data, as it would provide a large amount of quantifiable opinions on the subject as well as a possible insight into how these opinions differed between demographics (as per the secondary objectives outlines in chapter 2.3).

### 3.1.2.1 Goals and Intentions

The main goal of this first survey was to gather data on the opinions from the film editing industry regarding mise-en-scène. The intention of the survey was to first and foremost focus on two specific questions of interest: Which of the two popular interpretations of the word mise-en-scène that held the highest support amongst industry professionals, and in which ways – if any – an editor might influence the mise-en-scène of a film.

Aside from this, the survey was also intended to provide data on secondary subjects such as the respondents' age, sex, education etc. This secondary data, while not vital to the main questions of the thesis, would provide additional insight into any potential connections between the respondents demographic and his or her views on the primary questions of the survey.

### 3.1.2.2 Questions Included

In order to best achieve the intended goals of the survey, the survey itself was divided into two parts. The first part handled primarily subjects related to determining to which demographic the respondent belonged. The questions asked in this part of the survey were simple multiple-choice questions and regarded subjects such as the respondent's sex, age, education, experience in editing and familiarity with the term mise-en-scène.

Besides providing demographic data, the first part of the survey was also used to filter out respondents that were either unqualified or unable to provide answers that could be considered relevant for the study. To this purpose, the form was set up to automatically filter out respondents based on two questions: experience as an editor and familiarity with the term mise-en-scène. Responses from respondents who failed in one or both of these criteria were sorted out of the survey and would be disregarded when compiling the results.
The second part of the survey was a more specific set of questions regarding mise-en-scène. The respondent was first asked to, in his or her own words, define the meaning of mise-en-scène. This question was intended to highlight the (expected) wide variety of definitions for the term, as had been referenced numerous times in literature on the subject (as explained more closely in chapter 2). The respondent was then asked to answer whether or not he or she believed that an editor could influence the mise-en-scène of a film, and if so, how. This question was fundamental to the survey, as it was intended to provide the very data upon which the next step of the research would be based.

As a final question of the survey, the respondent was presented with two of the more common definitions of mise-en-scène (see chapter 2.1.2), and asked to choose which one he or she considered to be more accurate. This question was included in order to further determine whether or not the common consensus included editing in the factors that determine the mise-en-scène of a film.

3.1.2.3 Target Audience

The survey was intentionally targeted at people who actively work with editing on a daily basis, without preference to age, gender, experience or preferred genre. This rather wide spectrum was picked in order to give a good overview of the dominant views within the industry, as well as to give an opportunity to analyze the differences, if any, between the views held by different demographics within the core audience.

In order to keep the views presented at the very least informed on the subject – and thus of at least some academic relevance – it was decided to further specify the target audience. The final definition of the preferred respondent became as follows: "an active editor of any age or experience, who is familiar with the term mise-en-scène and its meaning". This narrowing of the target audience was intended to ensure that all respondents would be properly able to answer the questions in the second part of the survey.

In order to enforce this, several cut-off questions were used to cull unsuitable respondents before they reached the second part of the survey – their responses from the first part were however kept, to be used in general statistics (such as the percentage of respondents familiar with the term "mise-en-scène").
3.1.2.4 Distribution

In order to best reach the intended target audience, it was decided that the survey would be distributed digitally using Google forms (an internet-based service for designing, distributing and evaluating digital surveys). The main channel of distribution was through the web-based community LinkedIn (a website used for professional networking).

A total of 650 personal invitations were sent through the LinkedIn website to hand-selected candidates. An open invitation was also posted through the internal message boards of 52 special interest groups related to editing.

3.1.3 Editing the Sequences

Once the results from the first survey was in and had been analyzed, it was time to put the theories that had presented themselves into practice. One of the primary questions asked in the survey was regarding in which way - if any - the respondent believed that an Editor can influence the mise-en-scène of a film. The answers to this question was looked into in great detail as a preparation for this step. The methods suggested by the respondents were sorted according to popularity, and the ten methods that held the greatest favour were selected for use in this second stage.

The purpose of this stage was to perform an empirical experiment in order to determine the effectiveness and indeed, the validity of various popular methods by which contemporary editors believe that mise-en-scène can be influenced. The experiment was set up as follows: Uncut video footage would be provided by the American Cinema Editors (ACE) - this footage would then be edited by myself in several different versions. The editing of each version would be made different from that of the others by the methods picked from the answers of the first survey. The edited videos resulting from this would then be used as a measure of the potential and success of each method - specifically, as the vital part in the final survey.

Taking into account the number of methods that would be studied and the limited amount of time available for editing, it was decided that a total of four versions would be made for this experiment. The first sequence would be dubbed the "Original Cut", and would not use any specific methods to influences its mise-en-scène. This was to be the version against which
each of the other versions would be compared. The remaining three videos would each be cut with a different set of methods from the list – each set consisting of a unique combinations of methods from the list of suggestions.

This was considered the best acceptable compromise between thoroughness and effectiveness. The division of methods between separate edits would allow some insight into the individual effectiveness of small groups of related methods, rather than all methods together. At the same time, the relatively low number of unique versions meant that the experiment could be undertaken with reasonable confidence regarding the timeframe of the thesis.

3.1.3.1 The Original Cut

The purpose of the Original Cut was to provide a basis against which all the other versions could be compared. The original material was cut according to the screenplay that it had originally been filmed for, also provided by American Cinema Editors (ACE). As this was intended to be a neutral version, it was deliberately cut without any specific regard to mise-en-scène, and no particular method(s) of influencing the mise-en-scène of the film was used.

A single scene (with a total runtime of 1 minute and 21 seconds) was selected to be used in all cuts. The length was considered long enough that a viewer would get a good feeling for the mise-en-scène of the film, but not so long that a viewer might get easily bored or impatient when watching – or re-watching – several cuts in short progression. Though this concern was not directly related to the film itself or its mise-en-scène, it was still considered to hold no small importance as a factor for the follow-up survey that would be used to determine the outcome of the experiment.

3.1.3.2 First Alternative Version

While the second version would follow the same screenplay and use the same video footage as the Original Cut, the goal would be to attempt to influence and alter its mise-en-scène. In order to achieve this, several different methods (as suggested by professional editors through the first survey) would be used while cutting the material. The methods used for this particular clip were on the theme of "most popular" (i.e. the methods that had the highest
amount of total proponents amongst the respondents of the first survey) and consisted of the following:

- Colour correction / Colour Grading
- Music / Sound Design
- The order images are viewed
- Transitions / Vignettes
- Shot Selection

![Workflow from the editing software Adobe Premiere Pro (First altered version)](image)

Through colour grading, I added a warm filter with high saturation, some softness and a slight gradient – creating a glow around the characters. The values of contrast, shadows, mid-tones and highlights were changed as well, in order to establish a look that was meant to inspire a feeling of dreaming with the viewer. The background music was changed, which altered the atmosphere and mood drastically. To further move towards the desired visual mise-en-scène,
a vignette was added. The periphery was darkened, and a slight blur effect added, while a sharp focus was maintained in the centre. The focus point was occasionally offset, in order to bring the viewers attention to a specific point in the scene, such as an important item or character.

The music was deliberately chosen to enhance the dreamy atmosphere inspired by the colour grading - it is calm, vibrant and indicates a state of grace, almost like a dream. The volume of the piece was set to mimic the dramatic curve of the scene, to enhance its tension, and to sustain it. It is also worth noting that a reverb was added to the characters' voices, also with the intention of enhancing the 'dream' look.

Several shots were removed from the beginning of the sequence. This was done to alter the way that the viewer is introduced to the story - on the one hand showing less back story and build-up, but on the other allowing him to get into the story faster. To further illustrate the power of shot selection and the order that images are viewed, the shot used as the opening sequence in the Original Cut was moved to the very end – altering the meaning of all other shots drastically.

### 3.1.3.3 Second Alternative Version

The goal of the second alternate version was identical to that of the first. It was cut using largely the same methods as the first alternate version – but with each method used in a different way. This was intended to further highlight the ability – or inability – of these methods to alter the mise-en-scène. The methods used to edit this version was as follows:

- Shot Selection
- Colour Correction / Colour Grading
- Light Manipulation
- Music / Sound Design
- Transitions / Vignettes

Colour grading was used again in this version - this time adding a cold, dark blue tone. This was intended to give a different change in the feeling and mood of the scene, compared to the first alternative version. It also gave an uneasy, ominous undertone to the whole scene. The changes in colour grading also resulted in drastic changes to the lightning compared to the
Original Cut. While the original footage was shot in daylight, the addition of the colour filters would make it look as though the scene takes place at night. This was done in order to showcase the full power of colour grading and -correction: changing not only the mood of the scene, but also the environment.

![Workflow from the editing software Adobe Premiere Pro (Second altered version)](image)

The music was changed to match the mood that was set by the colour correction. It was also made not to start until after the second character – the antagonist – arrives on the set. Its rhythm gives a feeling that something bad is about to happen and builds in intensity over the course of the scene, somewhat altering its dramatic curve – thereby increasing the anticipation and dramatic tension felt by the viewer.

A subtle vignette was added to the footage with the primary intention of directing the viewers' focus to the characters. Darkening the edges around the shot worked well with the colour grading, and helped to soak up the light. As with the first alternative version, the vignette also served to help direct the viewers' attention within the shot.

The shot selection was altered in a less drastic way compared to the first alternate version. In this version, the opening shot was of the main character grabbing a suitcase from a nearby
table – a shot that had been used in a later part of the introduction in the Original Cut. This small change in the sequence of shots was meant to imply a distinctly different back story (which was again left out intentionally) – a final touch intended to harmonize the shot selection with the other changes that had been made to the scene.

### 3.1.3.4 Third Alternative Version

The fourth and final version – the third alternative cut – was also the one that differed the most from the Original Cut – especially in theme. While some methods used for this version had been used in the first and second alternate versions as well, some new methods were also tested, with the final list being as follows:

- Colour Correction / Colour Grading
- Length of Shot
- Shot Selection
- Music / Sound Design
- Cropping the Picture / Reframing Shots
- Transitions / Vignettes

![Fig. 3.3: Workflow from the editing software Adobe Premiere Pro (Third altered version)](image-url)
The colour grading is different from the two other examples. A warm gradient was added to the top half of the screen, changing the values of mid-tones and the contrast and creating the effect of a sunset in the background light. This was intended to change the viewer's idea of what time of day it was in the shot – in this case to either dusk or dawn. Changing the colour in this way also served to give the characters' skin tone a more vivid look.

The selection of shots also differed from the other versions, especially towards the end. This included an altered take on the reverse shot where the second character follows the protagonist into the nearby storage room. The editing pattern was adjusted to put more emphasis on the 'Charlie' character, lengthening the shots of him – the intended result being a change in the focus of the scene to make it 'his' point of view. The intention of this was primarily to test if the same story could have a different mise-en-scène, if told with different shots.

The primary intention behind the choice of music for this version was to invoke a feeling of dark comedy. The background music stands in contrast with the original tone of the acting, and serves to give the office environment a less threatening feel. Miscellaneous voices were also added in the background - creating an atmosphere of a busy office and strengthening the impression of the characters not being alone.

One of the new methods tested in this version was that of cropping. Certain shots at the end of the sequence were drastically changed by cropping the picture, effectively removing the gun carried by the antagonist from all shots. This takes out a vital prop – a traditional part of mise-en-scène – and makes the ending more ambiguous.

Finally, a cross-fade transition (a gradual fade from one shot to the next) was applied right before the protagonist opens the door at the end of the scene. This was done to convey a sense of passing time. The transition is also intended to meander the pace and create a contemplative mood. A double cut was used on the door opening / reveal of the body, in order to cover up the dramatic cut that was necessary to make the cropping work.
3.1.4 Survey 2

The last step in the data-gathering process was a second survey. After having collected ideas and opinions on how an editor might in theory influence the mise-en-scène of a film from the first survey and put these methods into practice with the editing of several short sequences, it was time to verify the results. It was decided that a second survey would be the best way of doing so - by showing the results of the second step to a well-selected target audience and asking their input on differences (if any) in mise-en-scène between the clips. This would provide valuable data on the basis of which success or failure of the experiment could be determined.

3.1.4.1 Goals and Intentions

Rather than data collection, the primary goal of the second survey was to objectively measure the effectiveness of the suggested methods from the first survey, when applied in practice on a short film. The intention of the survey was to follow up and conclude on the questions asked in the first one, thereby collecting final feedback and thoughts from a target audience same or similar to the first survey. The answers provided through this survey would primarily be used as a measure of how successful the attempts to alter mise-en-scène through editing (as described more closely in chapter 3.1.3).

3.1.4.2 Questions Included

As in the first survey, the second survey was also divided into two parts. The first part consisted of the same questions as the first part of the previous survey, intended to chart the demographics of the respondents. The choice to include these questions once more was made due to the fact that there was no way to guarantee that the same people who had answered the first survey would also be the ones who answered the second. The questions pertaining to the demographic of the respondents were therefore included with the intention of once more charting the various demographic aspects of the respondents, this time with the goal of being able to put the demographics of the respondents of the second survey in comparison with those of the respondents from the first one.
Just like in the first survey, the questions "Do you work as an editor today" and "Have you ever heard of the term mise-en-scène" were used to filter out respondents that did not fit the target audience. In addition to these, however, a new question was added: "Did you participate in the first survey". While not technically relevant to the primary or secondary purpose of the research, this question was still considered statistically interesting, at the very least in an anecdotal sense.

The second part of the survey was very straightforward and consisted of a total of six questions, divided into three sets of two. Before each set of questions, the respondent was encouraged to watch two short films: the sequence in its original cut, and one of the alternative cuts produced in the second step. After watching these short films, the respondent was presented with two simple questions: "Would You say that the mise-en-scène of the second video is different from the mise-en-scène in the original cut" and "Why / Why not". These questions were then repeated for each of the three alternative cuts (described in greater detail in chapter 3.1.3). The questions were designed with two specific intentions in mind: first and foremost, the "yes / no" question of whether the mise-en-scène was changed was intended to provide a clear statistic on how well the methods used in that particular sequence had worked. The follow-up question would then provide more detailed views and answers - to be used not only to explain the more popular opinions, but also to provide an insight into the arguments by the minority.

3.1.4.3 Target Audience

The target audience for the second survey was the same as for the first: active editors of any age or experience, who are familiar with the term mise-en-scène and its meaning. The reasons for keeping the same target audience between the two surveys were fairly straight-forward - the extensive work done in preparation for the first survey had already led to a well-defined desired target audience, selected for its (presumed) collective knowledge and experience with editing as well as mise-en-scène in film. The same qualities that made this target audience the target audience of choice for the first survey also made their answers highly desired for this second part - and thus, the same target audience was used for this second survey.
3.1.4.4 Distribution

The survey was set up as a separate *Google form*. The videos from the second step were uploaded to *YouTube* (an online service for video-sharing), and links to each video was included in the Google form. The form itself was distributed in the very same way as the first survey: through personal invitations to the same 650 persons, as well as open invitations via the same 52 special interest groups.
Chapter 4

4.1 Results

In this chapter the results of the research and experiments (as described in chapter 3) are presented. The results are generally discussed in chronological order, with some exceptions where such would better serve the purposes of this chapter: to convey the results of my research in a logical and easily understandable manner. This chapter only covers the actual results of the research – conclusions and other discussions on the implications of the results has been saved for chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

As a note on the subject of the surveys; only select aspects of their results have been published in this paper. This is due to the fact that each survey generated a vast quantity of data, far from all of which hold any relevance to this research - therefore, I have chosen to only include those results which are of clear importance or interest with regard to the research question of this thesis.

4.1.1 Survey Demographics

The first point I would like to cover is a short breakdown of the demographics of the people who participated in both surveys. The target audience was already very specific (as is described in more detail in chapters 3.1.2.3 and 3.1.4.3), but as the first part of both surveys showed, there was still room for significant diversity.

This data has been included in the thesis primarily on the basis of the importance it holds regarding the secondary research goals. While the data might not be all that relevant on its own, it will prove more interesting when put in relation to data from the primary research – for example by showing how certain views with regard to the primary research question differs depending on various aspects of the respondent's demographic.
4.1.1.1 Survey 1

A total of 219 unique responses were recorded for the first survey. 183 (84%) were male, against 36 (16%) female respondents. While none who took the survey was younger than 18, all other age groups were nearly equally represented: 21% were in the 18-29 bracket, 21% in 30-39, 29% were 40-49 and 28% of the respondents were 50 or older.

Fig. 4.1: Age, gender and the respondents' highest level of education (Survey 1)

As is shown in the third chart above, a wide variety of levels of education were represented as well - all the way from "less then high school" to "doctoral degree". From all of these, Bachelor's degrees were the most common at 52% of all responses.

Fig. 4.2: How long the respondents have been editors and their current occupation (Survey 1)
As with the respondents' ages, a wide representation was also seen in regards to how long the respondents had been working in the industry. The majority, 75%, had been working between 5 and 35 years (evenly divided between the options "5-10", "10-20" and "20-35"). A smaller number, 16%, had been working as Editors for less than 5 years - and impressively, 9%, or 19 of the respondents, had been active as Editors for more than 35 years! Out of all of the respondents, 91% claimed to be working as Editors today. This group was evenly divided between those who were hired for wages, and those who were self-employed (56% vs. 44%).

It is noteworthy that while 78% of the respondents were familiar with the term mise-en-scène, only 63% – barely half – of them claimed to know what it meant.

**4.1.1.2 Survey 2**

The second survey, while distributed in the exact same manner as the first, saw a significant drop in responses: only 57 were recorded. The ratio of males vs. females remained largely the same (79% vs. 21%), as did the age division (none under 18, and a division of 30%, 25%, 16%, and 30% respectively for the other age brackets).
In education, the Bachelor's degree was still the most popular choice at 63%, with Master's degree coming in second at 18%. It is worth noting that Doctoral and Professional Degrees were unrepresented amongst the respondents of this second survey (compared to the first survey, where they represented a total of 3% of the responses recorded).

As you can see from the chart above, the experience in Editing was also represented in very similar numbers as with the first survey, with the three combined brackets for 5-35 years of experience still holding a majority at 70%. The most noteworthy changes here was an increase in the representation of "Less than 5 years" of experience (25% compared to 16% in the first survey) and a marked decrease in the category of "35 years or longer" (5%, down from 9%).

Fig. 4.4: Gender, age and the respondents’ highest level of education (Survey 2)

Fig. 4.5: How long the respondents have been editors and their current occupation (Survey 2)
As might have been expected from the changes in the representations regarding age and experience, the current work situation of the respondents in the second survey was perhaps the area that saw the most change between the two surveys. The category of "employed for wages" which had previously been the largest single group at 51% had here dropped to 33%, with "self employed" taking its place at 49%. The categories "out of work" and "student" also saw an increase in representation, from 7% to 11% and 2% to 5% respectively.

Despite the slight differences in the representation of various demographics between the two surveys, the familiarity with mise-en-scène remained very similar to the results seen in survey 1: 83% had heard of the term, and 67% were familiar with its meaning (compared to 78% and 63% in the first survey). As a trivia, 66% of the respondents for the second survey had also taken part in the first one, while 34% were new for this survey.

4.1.2 Definitions of Mise-en-Scène in the Industry

In chapter 2.1.2, two definitions of the term mise-en-scène were defined - the first including only what was actually present on the stage, while the second definition included a broader spectrum of aspects, including things such as audio, visual effects, and editing. When asked which of these two definitions they thought more correct, a distinct majority of the respondents (81%) stood by the second definition. Interestingly, when the proponents of each alternative were divided according to their demographics, the division for each side was equal
or very close to the overall representation - in short, no aspect of the respondents' demographics had any measurable sway over the respondent's view in the question.

### 4.1.3 On the Editor's Influence

![Pie charts showing survey results on editor's influence on film's mise-en-scène]

When asked whether or not they believed that an editor can influence the mise-en-scène of a film, 89% of the respondents answered yes. While that result is convincing in its own right, it is also interesting to note that this number is higher than the number of respondents who agreed with the definition of mise-en-scène where editing is included in the meaning of the term (81%). This means that even amongst those who do not believe that editing is formally part of a movie's mise-en-scène, 42% still believe that it is within the editor's powers to influence it.

It is worth noting that all respondents with a doctoral degree or higher (and 96% of those with a masters degree) believe that editors can influence the mise-en-scène of a film. The same trend can be seen in regards to industry experience; 91% of all with 5 years or more of industry experience answered "yes" while the category "less than 5 years" stood out as the single largest on the "no" side, accounting for 33% of the votes.
4.1.4 Suggested Methods

The final and perhaps most vital data that was collected from the first survey was the free-text suggestions from all respondents on in which ways they believed an editor could influence the mise-en-scène of a film. This data was of special importance to the research as a whole, as it would be used as a basis for the experiment (described in greater detail in chapter 3.1.3), upon which the second half of the research, and indeed its entire outcome rested.

For the purposes of making the information more transparent as well as more practically manageable in the experiment that followed, the data was organized into slightly broader categories. As each individual answer to the survey could contain any number of possible methods – including none at all – it would be difficult to present the results as plain statistics. Instead, each method or category of methods was listed with a score, relevant simply as a measure of its relative popularity when compared to other methods.
It is worth a mention that the two highest rated methods by far (with 76 and 41 votes respectively) are also the ones most commonly associated with an editor's day to day work. The largest group of methods (with ~20 votes each) is made up mostly of methods pertaining to special effects (VFX) and audio – areas of responsibility that are visual only sometimes counted as part of the editor's job (and therefore a subject of some debate).

4.1.5 Results of the Experiment

The final results of the experiment (described in greater detail in chapter 3.1.3) were collected through the second survey (as described more closely in chapter 3.1.4). The respondents of the survey had been asked to be the final judges of whether or not the experiment had been successful, and the mise-en-scène of each film altered from that of the original cut. In this final part of chapter 4, the results of the survey will be presented, as well as some of the opinions for and against.

4.1.5.1 The First Film

As is shown in the chart above, a total of 74% of all respondents were of the opinion that the mise-en-scène had been successfully altered in this version. Out of the five methods used to alter it, "Colour Correction / Colour Grading" and "The order images are viewed" were most frequently mentioned when the respondents were asked to elaborate on why they believed that
the mise-en-scène had changed. The changes made through "Shot selection" and "Music / Sound design" were also commonly quoted as the reason or part of the reason for the change, but the fifth method, "Transitions / Vignettes" was only mentioned in a single reply.

Among those who did not consider the mise-en-scène to have changed, the most popular reason cited was that they did not consider one or more of the methods – or even editing – as part of mise-en-scène. It was often argued that for all the effects and changes in the way the film was cut, the core of the material, including the stage performance of the actors, had not changed - and therefore, neither had the mise-en-scène.

Interestingly, a small group of respondents (5%) expressed a conflict in opinion where they claimed to not consider the changed parameters to be part of mise-en-scène - but still couldn't help but agree that the mise-en-scène had been changed. These respondents did not vote consistently for one side, but were found both among the "yes"- and "no" voters.

4.1.5.2 The Second Film

![Pie chart showing 74% of respondents agree the mise-en-scène in the second film was different from the original cut, while 26% disagree.](image)

As with the first film, a total of 74% of the respondents agreed that the mise-en-scène in the second film had been changed. The most prominently cited reason for agreeing was the change in lighting and colour correction, much like with the previous cut. Unlike the previous cut, however, the change in music was also frequently given as a reason for the change in
mise-en-scène. Shot selection was mentioned, albeit less often – but transitions and vignettes were not mentioned at all.

The arguments against were largely similar to those presented against the first film – generally relating to either editing in general or just the methods used not being considered as part of mise-en-scène by the respondent in question.

4.1.5.3 The Third Film

![Pie chart](image)

*Fig. 4.11: Respondents’ opinions on whether Mise-en-Scène is different from the Original Cut*

The third and final alternative cut of the scene was also judged to have successfully altered mise-en-scène according to 74% of the respondents. In this version, it was the music that attracted the most attention – positive as well as negative – and it was the one reason most frequently quoted both for and against. Many also noted the missing sound effects of a gunshot – but far fewer noted that the gun in itself had been cropped out of the picture.

Shot selection and length of shot were also cited with some frequency, but far fewer mentioned the colour correction - and once more, none of the respondents took note of the changes in transitions and vignettes.

As with the previous two films, the arguments against were mainly based on either the opinion that mise-en-scène cannot be influenced by editing, or that the particular methods
used (in this case most frequently the music) was not part of a film's mise-en-scène to begin with.

4.1.5.4 Overall

Overall, the experiment was considered highly successful. Each alternative cut that had been produced were backed by a solid 74% of all respondents believing that the mise-en-scène had successfully been influenced through the way they were edited.

It is worth noting that while the matching numbers (74%, 74% and 74%) of supporters for each video to some might indicate that it is the same 74% who supported all three videos; a closer examination of the answers given revealed that only 53% supported all three, a further 37% supported one or more (but not all three), and finally, only 10% did not find that the mise-en-scène had been changed any of the alternate versions.
Chapter 5

5.1 Discussion & Conclusions

In this final chapter, I raise some questions that has come to me throughout my research, and present the conclusions I've drawn. I raise them with the intent of arousing curiosity, debate, and hopefully – further inquiry into each matter. I will cover a total of four major topics, all relevant to the research questions asked at the beginning of this thesis. Each topic presented builds on those discussed before it, so it is recommended that all sub-chapters are read in the order that they are written. Last, in chapter 5.1.5, I present in a short and concise manner the final results and conclusions of my research – the sum of all I have learned, and of the potential for further research in this field.

5.1.1 The Definition of Mise-en-Scène

How exactly to define mise-en-scène is one of the most fundamental questions of the entire thesis, and it has been covered more than once throughout the previous chapters. The preliminary research showed a prevalence of two different definitions, smartly documented and defined by Suzanne Speidel in the book Introduction to Film Studies (2007, p. 8-9): a more traditional and restricted definition which included only that which could physically be put on a stage, and a newer definition which includes a wider variety of things – editing being one of them.

The results of the survey showed a clear support for the second definition – 81%. While this makes a strong case for the dominance, and thereby greater correctness, of the wider definition of the term, it also tells us that as many as 19%, nearly a fifth of those who work in the editing industry still hold the older definition as more accurate. This was clearly seen in the answers of both surveys, and the second survey in particular: while an outspoken majority
corroborated and confirmed the change in mise-en-scène, a solid minority remained steadfast against the notion. The individuals that made up this minority differed in many aspects, but they all had one thing in common – their view of mise-en-scène. To them, the question of whether the mise-en-scène had changed between the alternate versions of the scene used in the experiment was rather moot – none of the things that had changed were considered a part of the mise-en-scène to begin with. As one respondent put it: "Your examples show the beauty and the power of editing, but they're not about mise-en-scene, in my opinion" (Respondent #19, Second survey, Part 2 Question 2).

It is easy to conclude from the results of the surveys and research that the second definition is clearly the most common in the industry today. However, I have also come to the conclusion that the older definition certainly still persists, and in a number that despite being in minority, is significant enough to warrant being taken into account, especially given the long heritage and tradition attached to it. For the purposes of this thesis I chose to go entirely with the second, more modern – and importantly, more popular definition, but it is my personal opinion that both definitions should be taken into account when dealing with the term mise-en-scène.

5.1.2 The Editor's Influence on Mise-en-Scène

As had already been implied by the overwhelming support of a definition of mise-en-scène where editing was considered a legitimate part of it, a vast majority of the respondents were also in support of the notion that the editor of a film can influence its mise-en-scène. What is curious, however, is that the latter number turned out greater than the former (89% vs. 81%) - meaning that even among those who did not count editing as a formal part of mise-en-scène, nearly half still agreed that an editor could influence it.

From a thesis point of view, this result meant it could be concluded with some certainty that yes, an editor can influence the mise-en-scène of a film – thus allowing the focus to be shifted to questions such as how and by what methods.
5.1.3 Methods for Influencing Mise-en-Scène

The second survey provided a good list of potential methods for altering the mise-en-scène of a film through editing. As these methods were put to the test, the results that came back pointed clearly to one thing: at least some, maybe most (or even all) worked. Each alternative cut had at least 74% of the respondents voting for its mise-en-scène having changed, and a total of 90% believed that it had been changed in at least one of the videos.

The obvious conclusions, based on the direct results and the written feedback from the respondents is that the following methods were indeed highly successful for influencing mise-en-scène:

- Shot selection
- The order images are viewed
- Colour correction / Colour grading
- Music / Audio Design

Other methods that were also concluded to be successful, although less frequently credited for being so, are:

- Cropping
- Lighting
- Length of shot

Last, by being part in all three alternative cuts yet mentioned only once in total, the method of "transitions / vignettes" was not considered to be very successful – however, I am not convinced beyond all doubts that so is the case. The methods I chose carried many benefits, especially regarding efficiency (allowing me to test as many of the methods as possible), but came with drawbacks as well. One such drawback is the reliance purely on observation by respondents as a measure of the success of an individual measure. In practice, this results in a small risk that a less effective method may receive undue praise due to being easier to spot - and a larger risk that an effective method that is less easy to spot may get no praise at all. Whether or not this was the case with the category of "Transitions / Vignettes" I cannot conclude with certainty from the data I currently have available, but it is my hope that future research will bring more light on all of these methods and their effectiveness.
5.1.4 The Impact of Demographics

The secondary goal of this thesis was to chart and study the impact of demographics in relation to the respondents' views on mise-en-scène and editing. The assumption was that certain traits, such as the preference of a certain definition of mise-en-scène over the other or belief (or lack thereof) that an editor can influence it, would be found directly relatable to the respondents demographic in some way.

What was found, however, was rather the opposite. Overall, demographics proved to hold little to no importance whatsoever in determining where any individual respondent stood in these questions. Through several examinations of all demographics in relation to the answers given in nearly every question over both surveys, the only inclination that appeared was that respondents with higher education tended to agree more with the wider definition of mise-en-scène – and also that the mise-en-scène in each of the films had been changed – while those with lesser degrees tended to favour the more traditional definition.

The conclusion I've drawn from this is that demographics plays a rather small part in determining the opinions of professional editors when it comes to mise-en-scène – and that the opinions expressed tend to be a lot more individual than what one might expect. This in itself is highly interesting, and again, warrants further research on the subject.

5.1.5 Conclusions

To summarize the conclusions from this thesis, it has been established that while mise-en-scène traditionally (and through the majority of the existence of the term) has only included work done on the actual set of a film, it's definition has changed in modern years to include all the work done in post-production as well. The old definition persists with some, but a vast majority of professional editors today have adopted the newer definition.

As a result of this change in definition, it is now commonly accepted that the editor of a film can and does influence the movie's mise-en-scène. Through my research, several potential methods for an editor to influence the mise-en-scène of a film were suggested and later tested. Most of these methods were concluded to be successful to some degree – which in itself is a
success in regards to the goals of the thesis. The time constraints imposed on the research meant that efficiency sometimes had to take precedence over thoroughness – therefore there is still room for more research on the subject.

A lot of data was collected regarding to the secondary research questions – however, surprisingly it turned out that the entire assumption of how big an influence the demographics of the respondents would have on their opinions were faulty to begin with. While an even wider study would be necessary to draw any definite conclusions, for now I can only conclude that the opinions measured in this research are proportionally common in all the measured demographics.

Of all the conclusions this study has brought me to, the one I consider the most important is the affirmation of the power – and responsibility – the editor holds over the mise-en-scène of a film. It has been fascinating and humbling to study the effects of all the widely different methods at the editor's disposal, and I would like to once more express my hope that the discoveries I've made will be a stepping stone for the more advanced research of someone else in the future.
Vocabulary

A

*American Cinema Editors (ACE)*: An honorary society of motion picture editors founded in 1950.

*Antagonist*: The adversary of the hero (the protagonist) of a drama or other literary work.

B

*Blur*: Defocus aberration, blurring of an image due to incorrect focus.

*Background Music*: Music on the soundtrack of a film that derives from no discernible source within the diegesis, typically used to heighten the emotional effect of a given scene.

C

*Character*: A straightforward term meaning a person from the fictional world of the film represented by a performer on the screen.

*Cinematic*: Term describing something taken to have qualities associated with characteristic of, or specific to cinema. Used when a film is considered to exhibit particular qualities of cinema, such as striking editing, though the way the term is used can tend to be rather precious.

*Cinematography*: The work of the cinematographer, includes both technical procedures such as the operation of the camera, lights, film stock and lenses as well as aesthetic concerns such as composition, colour and camera movement.

*Colour Correction*: Colour correction is a process used in stage lightning, photography, television, cinematography and other disciplines by using colour gels, or filters with the
intention of which is to alter the overall colour of the light. Typically, the light colour is measured on a scale known as colour temperature, as well as along a green-magenta axis orthogonal to the colour temperature axis.

**Colour Grading:** Is the process of altering and enhancing the colour of a motion picture, video image, or still image, either electronically, photo-chemically or digitally.

**Contrast:** Is the difference in luminance and/or colour that makes an object (or its representation in an image or display) distinguishable. In visual perception of the real world, contrast is determined by the difference in the colour and brightness of the object and other objects within the same field of view.

**Composer:** Is a person who creates music, either by musical notation or oral tradition, for interpretation and performance, or through direct manipulation of sonic material as electroacoustic music.

**Conductor:** Conducting is the art of directing a musical performance by way of visible gestures. The primary duties of the conductor are to unify performers, set the tempo, execute clear preparations and beats, listen critically and shape the sound of the ensemble.

**Costume:** Is seen as an integral part of the creation and study of a film’s mise-en-scène. It may also refer to the artistic arrangement of accessories in a picture, statue, poem or play or to a particular style of clothing worn to portray the wearer as a character.

**Cropping:** Any process by which the original size and shape of a film image is cut down to fit the aspect ratio of, for example, the television screen, whether by masking on the film itself or by means of the projector aperture.

**Cross-fade:** A function on many audio mixers and turntables that allows the user to transition smoothly from one song to the next by turning the volume down on the first song as it ends and up on the new song as it begins.

**Cut:** The most common method of connecting images – the physical act of splicing the end of one shot to the beginning of the next.
D

Décor: The total effect of the art direction and all its contributing skills in a particular scene, or even a whole film – the look created by the combined contributions of props, furniture, costumes and the overall colour scheme adopted for a particular scene. Décor can have a straightforward narrative function such as the establishments of place and character or be part of an expressionist or symbolic design.

Director: The person with ultimate responsibility for everything that takes place on a film set, from technical aspects such as choosing the right lens or lightning set-up to the movement of the actors. In practice, the director works in conjunction with a range of other creative artists, in particular the cinematographer, editor or director of photography as well as the film’s producers. The precise nature of the relationship between the director and the rest of the creative team working on a film has varied enormously in terms of the historical development of the industry and the individual styles of particular directors.

E

Editing: The process by which shot film footage is assembled to create sets of meanings not wholly contained in the separate shots themselves. The majority of edits appear on the screen as a series of cuts with one scene ending and another one beginning with no visible break, though transitional devices such as dissolves, fades and wipes, all of which are visible on the screen in different ways, are also common.

Editor: The person ultimately responsible for assembling the footage shot during the various stages of a film’s production, from simply putting together a scene, or set of scenes, from the dailies or rushes, to the final version of the whole film. The power and status of editors can vary greatly from film to film, but their role automatically involves close liaison with the film’s director and, probably, producer. It is now more widely recognized that an editor’s most important skills are less technical than those associated with patterns and rhythms, though it is still rare for an individual editor to achieve a high public profile.
Footage: The amount of film shot over a particular period. The term relates to the traditional way of measuring this in feet. A foot of 35mm film contains 16 frames and film is shot at 24 frames per second. Film cameras are all equipped with counters to measure the number of feet and frames that have been shot.

Frame: The basic unit of film; a single, rectangular, still image, with a certain aspect ratio, separated from frames on either side by frame lines, recorded on a strip of celluloid, which, when projected at a certain speed (16-18 frames per second for silent films, 24 frames per second for sound film) gives the illusion, via persistence of vision, of pictures moving at an acceptably normal rate. The term frame presumably comes from the picture frame for painting, and ‘to frame’ means to position the camera to compose a desired image. More metaphorically, frame can be applied to a narrative or story, as in ‘framing narrative’.

Gradient: An image gradient is a directional change in the intensity or colour in an image. They may be used to extract information from images. In graphics software for digital image editing, the term gradient or colour gradient is used for a gradual blend of colour which can be considered as an even gradation from low to high values, as used from white to black in the images to the right. Another name for this is colour progression.

Image: (1) Broadly, the general visual ‘look’ of a film. (2) In a mechanical sense, the pictorial reproduction of a photographed shot on the film strip. (3) In an aesthetic sense, an individual frame from a film, considering all its constituent elements such as the mise-en-scène, camera angle and lightning. (4) In a cultural sense, the ability of an actor or a scene to represent a
cluster of values or encapsulate a historical moment. (5) More generally, the meaning or attitude one projects through the codes of fashion and behaviour.

**Invisible Editing**: Another way of describing continuity editing although the notion of the invisibility of the continuity system places a special emphasis on editing’s contribution to the overall transparency of the classical narrative style. André Bazin puts it well: ‘The use of editing can be “invisible”; and this was most frequently the case in the classical pre-war American film. The only purpose of breaking down the shots is to analyse an event according to the physical and dramatic logic of a scene. This analysis is rendered imperceptible by its very logicality. The spectator’s mind naturally accepts the camera angles that the director offers him because they are justified by the disposition of the action and the shifting of dramatic interest’ (Bazin in Graham, 1968, p. 26)

**J**

**K**

**L**

**Lightning**: The way in which light, whether in a studio or on location, interior or exterior, is organized and controlled for the making a shot or scene. Though a shot may be made with available light, especially in documentary filmmaking, most shots in commercially made films use some additional lightning from artificial sources. Lightning allows for or enhances a whole range of possibilities for the composition of the film image.

**M**

**Mid-tones**: Shadows, mid-tones and highlights are what is known as tonal information of the image itself, or the ratio of dark to light in the image. This information can be found in the histogram of the image. This histogram is a graphical representation of the light in the image.
and looks like a series of hills and valleys, the left side representing dark tones, the middle representing mid-tones and the right representing highlights.

**Mise-en-scène:** French term, taken from its usage in theatre, for ‘staging’ – literally, ‘placed on stage’ to designate the work done, largely by the director, in realizing in images the words of the script. Bordwell and Thompson (1997) restrict, somewhat confusingly, the elements of mise-en-scène to the profilmic event – what is arranged on set before shooting – décor, costume, disposition of characters and aspects of performance, colour, lightning – and make a separate category of the cinematographic qualities of camera angle distance, and camera movement. Since these two areas of decision-making are inevitably always in a dynamic relationship, most accounts of mise-en-scène incorporate these cinematographic elements.

The term has entered English language film criticism largely because of the young 1950s French film critics, particularly those associated with Cahiers du Cinéma, where its use was often not neutral or descriptive. For others, cinematography, editing and special effects – all elements existing in the finished film, are aspects of mise-en-scène and therefore defined as one broader term.

**Motion Graphics:** Graphics that use video footage and/or animation technology to create the illusion of motion or rotation, and are usually combined with audio for use in multimedia projects. Motion graphics are usually displayed via electronic media technology, but may be displayed via manual powered technology as well. The term is useful for distinguishing still graphics from graphics with a transforming appearance over time without over-specifying the form.

**Narrative:** In terms of narrative, classical Hollywood cinema has a number of elements that make up a clear recurring pattern. Most stories are based upon the disruption of order by an event or series of events, setting in motion a chain of cause and effect until harmony is restored by the resolution of difficulties. Narratives are character-led, with events seen as the result of individual motivations, goals and drives and any wider explanations in politics and history are subsumed within this.
Orchestrations: The act of arranging a piece of music for an orchestra and assigning parts to the different musical instruments.

Photography: The process or art of producing images of objects on sensitized surfaces by the chemical action of light or of other forms of radiant energy.

Point of View: The eyes through which we view the unfolding of the plot. The dominant eye in mainstream film is taken to be an imaginary neutral camera with only the interspersing of the highly subjective viewpoint of individual characters.

Props: An abbreviation of property, referring to any object on a film set that can be used and carried by the actors, as opposed to larger items such as furniture which are considered to be part of the set itself, though a piece of furniture integral to a character and used as part of the action can also be seen as a prop. Most directors and production designers use the symbolic power of props in the creation of the mise-en-scène.

Protagonist: The main character (the central or primary personal figure) of a literary, theatrical, cinematic, or musical narrative, who ends up in conflict because of the antagonist. The adversary of the antagonist of a drama or other literary work.

Reframing Shots: In film, reframing is a change in camera angle without a cut and can include changing the focus of the scene. The term has been more often used in film criticism than in actual cinema. In production or post-production, reframing can be used to change a sequence without having to reshoot. For example, zooming in on an actor to edit out nudity
for a movie to be broadcast over the air. Types of reframing can include: pan, tilt, zoom, crane or boom shot, dolly or trucking shot, handheld shot, tracking shot, and steadycam shot.

Reverb: Reverberation is the persistence of sound in a particular space after the original sound is produced. Reverb is created when a sound is produced in an enclosed space causing a large number of echoes to build up and then slowly decay as the sound is absorbed by the walls and air. This is most noticeable when the sound source stops but the reflections continue, decreasing in amplitude, until they can no longer be heard.

Rhythm: The general meaning of regular recurrence of pattern in time can apply to a wide variety of cyclical natural phenomena having a periodicity or frequency of anything from microseconds to millions of years. In the performance arts rhythm is the timing of events on a human scale; of musical sounds and silences, of the steps of a dance, or the meter of spoken language and poetry. Rhythm may also refer to visual presentation and in recent years, it has become, along with meter an important area of research among music scholars.

Saturation: Is the colourfulness of a colour relative to its own brightness. Though this general concept is intuitive, terms such as chrome, saturation, purity and intensity are often used without great precision, and even when well-defined depend greatly on the specific colour model in use. Saturation is one of three coordinates in the HSL and HSV colour spaces. Virtually all computer software implementing these spaces use a very rough approximation to calculate the value they call ‘saturation’, such as the formula described for HSV. The saturation of a colour is determined by a combination of light intensity and how much it is distributed across the spectrum of different wavelengths. The purest (most saturated) colour is achieved by using just one wavelength at a high intensity, such as in laser light. If the intensity drops, then as a result the saturation drops. To desaturate a colour of given intensity in a subtractive system (such as watercolour), one can add white, black, grey or the hue’s complement.

Scene: A term much used, but hard to define precisely, a scene is a unit of narration in a narrative film, roughly defined as a dramatic unit, or series of actions or events, which takes
place in continuous time and space, so that a scene would end with a change of time or place or both. Typically, a scene consists of several shots, but it could be a single shot. Though a sequence is also a rather vague term, a sequence would generally be made up of several scenes.

**Screenplay:** The finished script for a film, containing dialogue and explicit descriptions of significant action. The degree to which screenplays include camera instructions varies markedly: a script with full information about camera work may need a little work to be turned into a shooting script. If the writer is also the director the screenplay is likely to be very explicit about the way each scene will be shot.

**Screenwriter:** The individual or team member responsible for producing the finished screenplay for a film.

**Script:** See ‘Screenplay’.

**Sequence:** A shot or series of shots, or even scenes, in a narrative film, not necessarily depicting action in one space and continuous time, but constituting a clearly defined segment of the film’s overall structure. A transitional series of rapidly edited shots in classic narrative cinema is a montage sequence, while a lengthy dialogue scene shot in long takes also constitutes a sequence.

**Set:** A place where a film is to be shot that is created or constructed as opposed to a location, which is essentially ‘found’. In practice the distinction can be blurred: locations often need to be adapted and are almost always lit in ways that make it a partly constructed setting.

**Short Film:** Usually defined as a film with a running time of less than 30 minutes, often referred to as a ‘short’ or ‘short subject’.

**Shot:** (1) A continuously exposed strip of film made from a single uninterrupted run of the camera, without a cut, regardless of camera movement, movement of the profilmic subjects or change of focus. (2) The smallest unit out of which scenes and sequences are made. (3) A printed and edited take. (4) Action on the screen that appears to be photographed as one continuous run of the camera. Shots are categorized in several ways: a) by their temporal
duration, from subliminal inserts to long takes; b) by the distance (or perceived distance, as in the zoom shot) of the camera in relation to the subject photographed, from big close-up up to extreme long shot; c) by the camera angle from which the subject is viewed, ranging from below ground to aerial shot; d) the movement of the camera, as in dolly shot, pan shot, tracking shot or crane shot; e) the number of characters in the frame, as in one-shot or two-shot; special techniques used, as in matte shot and deep focus shot. Shots are connected by cuts or by transitional devices such as the dissolve, superimposition, fade and wipe.

**Silver Screen**: Also known as a silver lenticular screen, is a type of projection screen that was popular in the early years of the motion picture industry and passed into popular usage as a metonym for the cinema industry. The term silver screen comes from the actual silver (or similarly reflective aluminium) content embedded in the material that made up the screen’s highly reflective surface.

**Sound Design**: Is the process of specifying, acquiring, manipulating or generating audio elements. It is employed in a variety of disciplines including filmmaking, television production, theatre, sound recording and reproduction, live performance, sound art, postproduction and video game software development. Sound design most commonly involves the manipulation of previously composed or recorded audio, such as music and sound effects. In some instances it may also involve the composition or manipulation of audio to create a desired effect or mood.

**Special effects**: (often abbreviated to SFX). Artificially contrived effects designed to create the illusion of real (or imagined) events, whether through special photographic effects or created, and recorded normally by a camera. In principle, many common effects such as fades, dissolves and wipes should be considered special effects, but the term is usually reserved for three main classes of effects: mechanical effects such as simulated explosions, fires, floods, storms; illusion created by so-called ‘trick-photography’ either in-camera, during shooting, or via the optical printer, such as glass shots, matte shots or rear projection in which live action is combined with painted backgrounds or miniatures; and, increasingly, the major use of the term, effects achieved on the photographic image by digital means, from electronically programmed motion control to computer graphics and animation which can move characters from one background to another, and so on.
**Transition:** (1) Any technique used to provide a bridge from one scene to another, including the whip pan, fade, dissolve, superimposition and wipe. In silent film, the iris in and out was also a common transitional technique. (2) The straight cut also provides a transition between shots, but normally some additional cue, whether in the image or on the soundtrack, is necessary for the viewer to understand the change in time and/or space. (3) The use of a cutaway, particularly in documentary film, to avoid a jump cut when material has been edited out of a shot.

**Vignette:** In still photography, a portrait showing only the head, or the head, shoulders and upper part of the torso, and shading off at the edges into indistinct background. In cinema, the term applies to a close-up with a similar composition. A vignette is also a self-contained, expository scene that briefly isolates and caricatures the essence of a given character.

**Visual Effects:** (Commonly shortened to Visual F/X or VFX) are the various processes by which imagery is created and/or manipulated outside the context of a live action shoot. Visual effects involve the integration of live-action footage and generated imagery to create environments, which look realistic, but would be dangerous, costly, or simply impossible to capture on film.
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