



KADİR HAS UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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**A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE FILM EDITING  
PRACTICE: LEGACY OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY**

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MASTER'S THESIS

ISTANBUL, JANUARY, 2018

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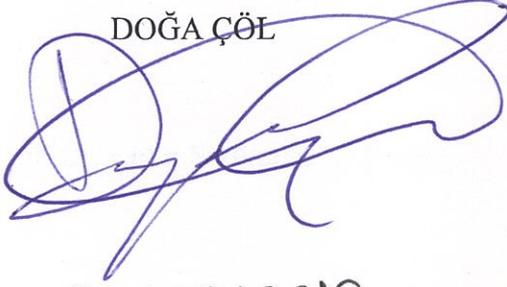
Submitted to the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Kadir Has University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's in the Discipline Area of Film and Television under the Program of Film and Television.

ISTANBUL, JANUARY, 2018

I, DOĐA ÖL;

Hereby declare that this Master's Thesis is my own original work and that due references have been appropriately provided on all supporting literature and resources.

DOĐA ÖL



01/02/2019

## ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This work entitled **A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE FILM EDITING PRACTICE: LEGACY OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY** prepared by **DOĞA ÇÖL** has been judged to be successful at the defense exam held on **4 JANUARY 2019** and accepted by our jury as **MASTER'S THESIS**.

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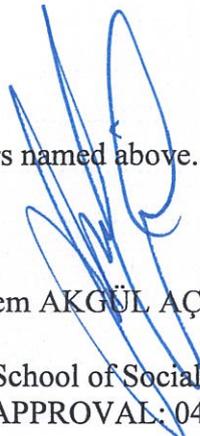


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## ABSTRACT

ÇÖL, DOĞA. *A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE FILM EDITING PRACTICE: LEGACY OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY*, MASTER'S THESIS, İstanbul, 2018.

A phenomenological look on film editing through Merleau-Ponty's ideas opens up a new way of seeing what editing is and how it affects the spectator. In the classical sense, editing is looked at technically where certain aspects of its use in the film's language are interpreted and analyzed to understand why and how something is done. In this thesis, the aim is to not dwell on understanding the why and the how. The aim is to view film editing from a different perspective that might lead to another type of thinking outside the limitations of empirical and intellectualist approaches. While the classical approach is able to satisfy most of what a spectator would need to understand, it falls short on what the spectator feels and experiences. In order to try to grasp how Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach could be adapted to film editing. First we have to start from the beginning to see how editing came to be and what ideas, approaches and techniques it brought with it. As all the approaches have their own uses; we have to consider them as such and lay out what could be with Merleau-Ponty's way and see how all the approaches compare in the end. Of course, this does not mean erasing all of film history and disregarding the classical way; it means that we can look at films from a perspective that the classical approach may not be able to see.

**Keywords:** film history, film theory, film editing, phenomenology, perception, experience, body, spectator.

## ÖZET

ÇÖL, DOĞA. *A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE FILM EDITING PRACTICE: LEGACY OF MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY*, YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ, İstanbul, 2018.

Merleau-Ponty'nin fikirlerini kullanarak film kurgusuna fenomenolojik olarak bakmak, kurgunun ne olduğunu ve izleyiciyi nasıl etkilediğine dair yeni bir görüş sağlıyor. Klasik bağlamda kurguya, teknik olarak filmin dili içerisindeki parçalarının kullanılmasının yorumu ve analizi ile bir şeyin neden ve nasıl yapıldığını anlamak üzere bakılır. Bu tezde, amaç bir şeyin nedenini ve nasılını anlamak değil. Amaç, film kurgusuna değişik bir perspektiften bakarak ampirik ve entellektüel yaklaşımlardan başka bir düşünceye yol açılmasıdır. Klasik yaklaşım bir izleyicinin ne anlaması gerektiğini tatmin ediyor olsa da, izleyicinin hissettiği ve deneyimlediği üzerine yeterli tatmini sağlayamaz. Merleau-Ponty'nin fenomenolojik yaklaşımının film kurgusuna uyarlanması kavramaya çalışmak için, öncelikle baştan başlamalı ve kurgunun nasıl bugüne geldiğini ve birlikte hangi düşünceleri, yaklaşımları ve teknikleri getirdiğinden başlamak gerekir. Her yaklaşımın kendine has uygulamaları olduğundan dolayı bu yaklaşımları bu şekilde ele alıp Merleau-Ponty'nin yönüyle birlikte öne sermeli ve sonunda diğer yaklaşımlarla nasıl karşılaştıklarını görmeliyiz. Tabii ki, bu film tarihini silmek veya klasik yaklaşımına itibar etmemek demek değildir, bu filmlere klasik yaklaşımın bakmadığı bir perspektiften bakabilmemiz demektir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** film tarihi, film teorisi, film kurgusu, fenomenoloji, algı, deneyim, beden, izleyici.

## INTRODUCTION

Film-viewing experience is something unique in the fine arts. The way that we watch, in an enclosed dark room with people sitting next to each other for a limited amount of time, can only be compared to the theatre. Whereas, watching a film is a different experience. Cinema virtually fulfils a fantasy for humans; the fantasy of manipulation of time and space. Film is made up of different parts that make a whole. And one of these parts has the ability to control spacetime to present a flowing visual story that spectators are immersed in: editing. The way films are made and watched is such a good example for *phenomenology*; it is almost a concrete experimentation of what *phenomenology* is. In this sense, film editing is not merely conceptual but also practical. It is important to look at film editing from both a conceptual and a practical viewpoint. There is an experience that reaches out from the editor to the spectator. As everything is shared and interrelated, the editor shares their pre-experience with the spectator. In this thesis, I will try and ponder upon how film editing might be explored through Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and how this thinking is compared to the classical theory of film editing.

Classical Film Theory, in the sense of formalism and neoformalism, tries to examine films and successfully identifies and analyzes every aspect of the art and technique up to a point. A point where the spectator first sees a film and feels before putting everything to thought. The gap between bodily experience and intellectual thought can be filled with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach. We are able to see film viewing with a new set of eyes before the cloud of pre-existing knowledge. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to gain a new perspective towards film, through returning back to the brute experience by focusing on the bodily perception. This does not mean, however, that we do not need one or the other since phenomenology covers where intellectualist and empiricist approaches cannot reach.

The reason why we will be focusing on editing is because editing is where the film all comes together, it is where the film is finished. Before editing, there are many possibilities and they are set once the final cut is made. The editor, in a way, is able to manipulate

spacetime to provide the film to the spectator with a certain angle and expression. The aim of this thesis is not to provide a whole phenomenology of film editing and film viewing, because a thesis would not be enough to do this. Rather we will aim to see Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology as an alternative to the classical neoformalist approach to film editing and the spectators' experience with editing practice that comes from the editor other than a conceptual film editing.

Therefore, to have a peek at phenomenology with regards to film editing, first, we need to examine the history of film editing and how the theories, techniques and approaches came to be to what they are today in Chapter 2. As new problems arose and as the technology grew, filmmaking changed, and this affected both the experience of film viewing and the way spectators saw films. This is still true today as technology never stopped progressing and filmmakers always had problems to solve to create new ways of making film and spectators realized new ways of seeing film. In the following Chapter 3, we will be discussing Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and his terms, comparing them with the neoformalist and classical film theory as well as how his approach to phenomenology can be adapted to the practice of editing and the spectators' experience with it. Merleau-Ponty's approach could be adapted to everything, as could be phenomenology because he talks about something primordial and something that seems so simple yet so important to us: having a body. The way we perceive things and the fact that we are in this world in very similar ways and the fact that we all have a body are important things to consider. The experiential and the emotional parts of being a spectator become something else when seen from this perspective, as the classical approach is focused on *understanding* things and objects in films, filmmaking and spectatorship rather than experiencing by experience. Here, a practical approach of film editing should also be considered next to the conceptual. If we do not consider the practice of film editing, we cannot say that this is a bodily experience as Merleau-Ponty suggests. Finally, a thesis is not enough to do a whole phenomenology of film editing that would consider both the editor and the spectator; it is important to realize other aspects that are not considered in this thesis. The next step to take would be to think about the aesthetic experience that we gain from watching a film in comparison to other art forms and how editing affects this differentiation.

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORY OF FILM EDITING

Since the beginning of the humankind, there have always been story-tellers. Humans are unique to all other animals for reciting their experiences or their imaginations in story form with exaggerated details and narrative conventions. These stories made their way into paintings in the caves, to music being sung from one person to another. And still continues today with artists expressing their emotions and stories through music, sculpture, painting, theatre, literature, poetry, and the 20<sup>th</sup>-century newcomer of the fine arts: cinema. Humans want to remember and be remembered and they want the next generation to be aware of their lives and ideas which leads them to leave artifacts and artworks that stay immortal. Immortality and the manipulation of time have always been an ultimate goal of humanity. The instinct of survival is in all animals, but the instinct to survive through art is unique to the humankind. Andre Bazin explains this in his essay *The Ontology of the Photographic Image* (Bazin, 1960) through the practice of mummification in Ancient Egypt. He suggests that mummification in Ancient Egypt was solely for the purpose of surviving through the ages, to beat time. He compares this to the urge to make art and especially the uniqueness of filmmaking in terms of temporality.

In its concept, cinema was never new; its properties, qualities, and functions were found in all other art forms. The film is different from all the other arts in that, not only does it capture and preserve a time past, but it also recreates the passage of time by manipulating it with an optical illusion through rapidly changing photographs through a celluloid strip. Nowadays they are projected digitally but the act and the fact of filmmaking remains. The way the time is manipulated is with editing. With editing, the film takes shape into a meaningful sequence and comes out as something other than various rapidly shot photographs.

Filmmaking as a recording/archiving started with experiments, just like the discovery of editing different shots to form visual narratives or to have different angles on the same situation. The experiments went further and further to become something that we are

accustomed to today and experience without a doubt and accept the way in which editing is done as if it is only natural to us. Ernest Lindgren explains this: “The development of film technique... has been primarily the development of editing.” Filmmakers always strived to find new ways to tell their stories. Porter, Griffith and Eisenstein, and many others experimented with editing techniques to try and tell a story through visual communication that invoked emotion which evolved editing techniques which transformed filmmaking from a recording of actuality to an artistic medium which became a sum of all the art forms that came before. These innovations in filmic storytelling pushed filmmakers to experiment with editing techniques to finally form a comprehensible “grammar” of the film which we are familiar with today (Reisz, 2009, p. 25).

Film-viewing experience comes naturally. We do not read rules or guides to watch a film (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 133). Any child can watch a film and enjoy what is going on. We perceive not with our minds but with the whole of our body. Before exploring the phenomenology of film-viewing and editing, we have to go over a brief history of how films came to be the way they are.

## **1.1. EARLY FILM EDITING**

### **1.1.1. Georges Méliès**

One of the pioneers of early cinema before dramatic editing was Méliès. Georges Méliès was the “magician” of Cinema. He was a magician by occupation who owned his own theatre before he started making films and retained his personality throughout his filmmaking career. In 1895, Méliès discovered Lumière brothers’ Cinématographe, however, found out that they were not selling any. In 1896, he obtained a projector from English inventor R. W. Paul and by studying it was able to build his own camera. He then started shooting and projecting films in his theatre. Later in 1896, he built a glass surrounded studio where he could shoot all his films without worrying about light and to be in complete control over his mise-en-scene. Finished by early 1897, the studio

permitted Méliès to design and construct sets painted on canvas flats (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 14).

He used “trick editing” to give the illusion of “magic” in his films, for example cutting the head of a character, multiplying figures, teleporting characters etc. His use of editing was limited but revolutionary. In his first film *The Vanishing Lady* (1896), Méliès appears as a magician who transforms a woman into a skeleton. The trick was accomplished by stopping the camera and substituting the skeleton for the woman. Later, Méliès used stop-motion and other special effects to create more complex magic and fantasy scenes (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 14). For example, in his film *La Voyage dans la Lune* (1902), he used cuts to change from one scene to the next with characters keeping narrative continuity, and in this film, the only thing missing, compared to modern films, was the usage of different shots in one scene. Most of the films of the early 1900s used this style of editing; cuts were made to either trick the audience with the intention of illusion or cuts that were necessary to change settings. However, Méliès was more famous for his intricately designed sets, hand-painted films and the use of long reels rather than having films that were few seconds long which were entirely new to the audience of the late 1890s and early 1900s.

### **1.1.2. Edwin S. Porter**

Edwin Stanton Porter was a film projectionist and an expert at building photographic equipment. In late 1900, he went to work for Edison, whom he greatly admired. He was assigned to improve the firm’s cameras and projectors. In 1901, Porter began operating a camera in the Edison Company’s glass-enclosed rooftop studio in New York. At the time the cameraman was also considered the director of the film and Porter made many of the company’s most famous films (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 20).

Porter has often been credited with virtually all the innovations of the pre-1908 period, including making the first story film *Life of an American Fireman* (1903) and inventing editing as we know it. He used techniques that were previously experimented with; however, he watched and analyzed his predecessors (especially Georges Méliès’ *A Trip*

*to the Moon* and copied their manners in his storytelling (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 20).

Parallel editing introduced the notion of two, three or more actions happening simultaneously but shown consecutively on screen. Edwin S. Porter is one of the pioneers of parallel editing. He searched the archives of Edison's company to find shots of documentary and news footage combining with some that he shot to create a dramatic film. In *Life of an American Fireman* (1903), a mother and child are trapped in a burning building to be rescued at the last moment by the fire department (Jacobs, 1939). Porter's usage of "found footage" to create a new story was revolutionary, we can still see it exist today as a genre on its own – *found footage* films. Apart from this, Porter created a rising climax with his parallel cutting technique which made his film smoother and dramatically more engaging than a Méliès film. He continued using parallel editing and dramatic progression with his film *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). Porter's way of splitting up the action into small units gave him limitless freedom of movement (Reisz, 2009, p. 5). The most unusual shot of the film was the very last shot of the leader of the outlaws aiming his gun and shooting directly at the audience looking straight into the camera. This was an early example of a self-conscious film. His films influenced D.W. Griffith and almost every filmmaker who came after him.

### **1.1.3. D.W. Griffith**

Griffith is seen as the pioneer of dramatic editing in epic films along with extensive use of parallel editing/cross-cutting which Porter and other filmmakers were already famous for. He made long epic films which were achievements on their own for his time. Now from a historical viewpoint, even though the techniques he used were not revolutionary as other directors already used them before him, his way of combining all of the editing and narrative techniques to form epic films is considered to be one of the greatest triumphs in the history of film that pushed innovation forward. Griffith evolved continuity editing, by using close-ups and more shots within a scene unlike Porter's reliance on shooting a scene from a distance with fewer shots because of technical reasons (Reisz, 2009, p. 7). The use of close-ups within the scene for the sole purpose of dramatic progression and

expression gave the spectator a way to connect and relate with the characters in the film and this meant that the director no longer had to rely only on the actors' gestures for dramatic emphasis. His films proved to be engaging when compared to other films that used continuity editing at the time.

Porter's decision to cut in a scene was for physical reasons only. It was because he could no longer show the action in the same shot and had to make a cut, whereas Griffith's continuity rarely carried the action over from one shot to the next; the changing of the viewpoint was not for physical but for dramatic reasons (Reisz, 2009, p. 9). According to Karel Reisz, Griffith's approach to editing enables the director to create a sense of depth in his narrative, and director is in a far stronger position to guide the spectator's reactions because the director chooses what particular detail the spectator is to see at any particular moment (Reisz, 2009, p. 9). In this sense, editing becomes, in a way, not the cutting of shots but the *editing* of the experience of the spectator.

D.W. Griffith utilized editing as a storyteller to refine the narrative and dramatic aspects of the film. Sergei Eisenstein in his essay *Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today* (Eisenstein, 1977, pp. 195-255), talks about how many novelists, especially Charles Dickens, employed the techniques used by Griffith in their novels such as cross-cutting (parallel editing), flashbacks, dissolves, and even close-ups. According to Eisenstein, D.W. Griffith merely translated these techniques and conventions to the film language.

## **1.2. CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD EDITING**

In the early days of cinema, techniques and theories were mostly found out by solving problems. If there were something a director wanted to do in terms of his/her story but could not do, they would come up with a solution which would usually lead to a new way of shooting a scene or editing. For example, in 1906 a critic reviewing an Edison film says that some of the films are made photographically well but not in terms of the story because the maker of the film, who understands the plot, does not take into consideration the fact that the audience has no idea about it and does not understand the story if the locations and shots change abruptly without any motivation. This led to filmmakers

coming up with the idea that they should *guide* the spectator's attention, making every aspect of the story on the screen as clear as possible (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 32). This meant having clear motivations on how to make a cut in a certain scene. In the beginning, a large number of intertitles were used to guide the spectator, so that they would not be confused where the story was going, later the number of intertitles diminished as new techniques in editing justified the progression of the story without confusing the spectator. For example, the classical method follows that editing should be invisible and should not reveal itself to the spectator in order not to break the immersion. Thus, cuts were only made if there was a motivating factor such as a character suddenly moving her head to a different direction and a cut is made to the place where she is looking. These types of cuts would not reveal themselves to the spectator as they would feel it as such a *natural* thing to do if a person in front of you suddenly looks in another direction to see something *you* do as well. In the end, *Classical* Hollywood editing came to be known as *continuity* editing as that is its purpose; to push the story forward smoothly without having any hiccups.

### **1.3. MAJOR THEORIES AND TECHNIQUES IN FILM EDITING**

#### **1.3.1. Soviet Montage**

The Soviet Montage was about editing films that would reach the audience both emotionally and ideologically. Editing was used as a tool to transfer ideas of the filmmaker through the film to the spectator. Most of the filmmakers of the movement did not have specific rules that they saw as absolute, even after Sergei Eisenstein wrote about it in his essays on film form as if they were manifestos.

Russian formalist literary movement was a great inspiration for the techniques that were used by the Soviet filmmakers. Pudovkin said that, just like a Poet, the filmmaker can use editing to arrange words/shots in a way to search for the ultimate way of transferring information and emotion from the filmmaker to the spectator. Pudovkin believed that if a film narrative was to be kept continually effective, each shot must make a new and specific point (Reisz, 2009, p. 15). Eisenstein famously adding to Pudovkin said in his

essay on film form that every cut should have a functional role in the sequence. If the cut does not make sense, that cut should not be made and that editing is the “nerve” of cinema (Eisenstein, 1977).

After the communist revolution, the state needed to get people to stay together and support the Communist Party. Many initiatives were taken and Cinema was seen as a great artistic pursuit that would lead to togetherness among the people. Lenin said Cinema was of great importance for the USSR and the world. The state funded the VGIK (Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography) and many young directors were supported to make their films. The main filmmakers that played a key role in the development of Soviet Montage theory were Pudovkin, Kuleshov, Eisenstein, and Dziga Vertov. Their task was twofold: to use the film medium as a means of instructing the masses in the history and theory of their political movement and to train a young generation of filmmakers to fulfil this task (Reisz, 2009, p. 13).

Soviet Montage theory mainly consists of using shots consecutively that create a meaning where otherwise would not have the same effect on their own. A scene gains meaning from the shots that preceding the next and so on. Eisenstein lists a few techniques of editing that he categorizes as Metric montage, Rhythmic montage, Tonal montage, Overtonal montage, and Intellectual montage. Metric montage is using the absolute length of shots to edit a scene. For example, all the shots would have the same length or variable lengths that make mathematical sense just like musical times (4/4, 3/4, 5/8 etc.). Rhythmic montage means that the scene would be cut in a way that rhythmically, either emotionally or intellectually, progress sensibly. Tonal montage regards the tone of the scene to make decisions about the cuts, the change of the tone of the scene or the stability would motivate the filmmaker to decide on a cut. Overtonal montage considers all of the former techniques as well as the overall meaning and feeling of the film to decide on cuts perhaps to make a statement that is independent of the scene but dependent on the film as a whole. Intellectual montage, even though it could be understood that all the techniques Eisenstein talks about can be considered Intellectual montage, is the way in which the filmmaker decides on the order of the shots to make a meaning that is perhaps not present if they were shown on their own but make meaning when shown together. To Eisenstein – only

for silent films – the story merely provides a convenient structure upon which to build an exposition of ideas; to him, it is the conclusions and abstractions which can be drawn from the actual events which are of first interest (Reisz, 2009, p. 17). Eisenstein wanted to distance himself from classical narrative editing and go beyond simple storytelling: “While the conventional film directs emotions, [intellectual montage] suggests an opportunity to direct the whole thought process as well” (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 62); cited in (Reisz, 2009, p. 20).

Soviet Montage was deeply inspired by D.W. Griffith’s epic dramatic films and his use of continuity editing. Soviet filmmakers and theorists built on Griffith to improve the ways in which parallel editing and dramatic close-up cuts could be used. Eisenstein and other young Soviet filmmakers idolized Griffith’s editing methods and wanted to refine it, on this regard Eisenstein wrote the following: “To the parallelism of alternating close-ups of America [i.e. Griffith] we offer the contrast of uniting these; *the montage trope*. In the theory of literature, a *trope* is defined thus: a figure of speech which consists in the use of a word or phrase in a sense other than that which is proper to it, for example, a sharp wit (translated from “sharp sword” in Russian) (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 240).

According to Eisenstein, Griffith’s cinema does not know this type of montage construction. His close-ups create atmosphere, outline traits of the characters, alternate in dialogues of the leading characters, and close-ups of the chaser and the chased speed up the tempo of the chase. Griffith’s way remains on a level of *representation* and *objectivity* whereas the Soviet Montage offers the *juxtaposition* of shots to shape *import and image*. While D.W. Griffith tried to *tell* a story, the young Soviet filmmakers planned, by means of new editing methods, not only to *tell* stories but to *interpret* and draw intellectual conclusions from them (Reisz, 2009, p. 13).

On the other hand, not all Soviet filmmakers agreed completely with each other. Eisenstein opposed Pudovkin’s theory of constructive editing claimed that a scene is most effectively presented by linking together a series of specially chosen details of the scene’s action. Eisenstein thought otherwise: “If montage is to be compared with something, then a phalanx of montage pieces of shots, should be compared to the series of explosions of

an internal combustion engine, driving forward its automobile or tractor: for, similarly, the dynamics of montage serve as impulses driving forward the total film.” (Eisenstein, 1977, p. 38) Eisenstein believed that each cut should give rise to a conflict between the two shots being spliced and thereby create a fresh impression in the spectator’s mind (Reisz, 2009, p. 22).

Soviet Montage theory influenced many great directors with its editing theory and technique. The neoformalist approach to film theory, for example, is greatly influenced by the Russian Formalists who developed the Soviet Montage theory.

### **1.3.2. French Impressionism**

French Impressionism sees cinema as a pure expression of the filmmaker’s impression of a subject. The movement founded itself upon the idea that Cinema is a pure art form and is not an extension of literature, theatre, painting, or photography. French impressionist filmmakers opposed the idea of Cinema being anything other than Fine Art.

The pioneering filmmakers of the French Impressionist movement were not as organized as the Soviets; they were filmmakers who shared a common idea towards making films. Almost all of the members of the movement made “commercial” films in order to finance their *impressionist* films which were not as popular at the box office. At the time, France was struggling with competing against foreign films because of the debts of World War I, especially American films from Hollywood. Some restrictions were made about importing of foreign films and this led to French directors being more prominent in the theatres. Directors like Abel Gance had made a lot of money from making epic commercial films and these were helpful in financing the true artistic side of their pursuits where they had no limitations by the studio or the state. This freedom led way to similar techniques in the movement. (French impressionist cinema: film culture, 1974)

French Impressionism was as artistic as it was ideological in that the films were made for pure beauty and satisfaction as well as following the strong idea that Cinema is a pure art

form without losing the narrative advancement (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, pp. 74-79).

French Impressionist cinema used fast editing, uncommon camera movements, and angles, experimental lighting, double exposures, superimpositions. In the technical sense, French Impressionism shares some of its views with the Surrealists, however, the Impressionist narrative was not as sensational or overboard, although they were interested in character subjectivity in the manner of mental images such as visions, dreams or memories with the use of point-of-view shots (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 78). French Impressionist film used more of a simple plot that worked well with the flashy editing style (in the carousel sequence in Epstein's *Cœur fidèle* (1923) for example), which provided a much different spectacle than what the audience of the era was used to. Until 1923, camera devices were used to achieve *photogénie* and expressing subjectivity which were the main distinguishing traits of Impressionism. In 1923, two films experimented with quick editing to explore characters' mental states, these were: Abel Gance's *La Roue* and Jean Epstein's *Cœur fidèle*. These two films made a great impact on Impressionism and added on the traits of the movement. André Bazin in his essay *The Evolution of the Language of Cinema* says: "Montage, as used by Kuleshov, Eisenstein, or Gance, did not show us the event; it alluded to it" (Bazin, 1967, p. 25).

### **1.3.3. German Expressionism**

German Expressionist movement was similar to other post-war movements in that artists found themselves in the middle of the movement rather than organising them. The stress of war and the fact that Germany was isolated after the war due to government regulations and financial problems coming with the war debt had an effect on the film industry as well. The German UFA was also formed and foreign films were banned. German expressionism told stories about madness, horror, mystery, and misery of the folk (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010).

In 1916 the government banned most foreign films and the ban continued until 1920 which gave German producers a few years of no competition before foreign films turned

up at the theatres. Unlike the victorious French government, German government-funded films heavily by forming the Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft (Ufa) which led to smaller companies merging and forming larger companies that produced films. By 1922 the anti-German thinking had calmed down throughout Europe and German cinema became internationally famous (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 87).

Due to the isolation, German cinema was very similar in terms of style and content during 1916 to 1921. Fantasy genre was popular, along with films about prostitution, venereal disease, drugs, madness and other social problems until censorship was put on such content. The expressionist movement jumped to the cinema with the release of a 1920 film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* by Robert Wiene which incorporated the stylistic tendencies of the movement in other arts such as dance, painting, and theatre. There was no ideological pursuit although most films were about the status of the post-war society which was interpreted differently in the Italian Neorealism movement where realism was the key. In German Expressionist cinema, it was the opposite.

The set design and the movement of the actors are rugged as opposed to the smoothness of acting in say an Italian neorealist or a French poetic realist film. While French Impressionism was about camerawork, German expressionism was about the use of mise-en-scene. However, the expressionist style was not only in the mise-en-scene or the acting, there could be stylistic distortions that function in the same ways as the graphic stylisation in *Caligari* does (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 92). Since mise-en-scene was more important in German expressionist cinema, the editing was simply focused on continuity rather than impressionistic or intellectual pursuits and slower pace than its contemporaries akin to poetic realism and neorealism. The slow pace helped the audience “scan” the surroundings of the scene better and helped with the immersion into the mad world of Expressionist films (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 94). The editing in *Dr. Mabuse the Gambler* (1922) for example was so precise that a young Eisenstein was amazed enough to find a copy to analyze it completely (Eisner, 2008, p. 245).

Even though the Expressionist movement was short-lived, its influence was great. Many of the Expressionist directors fled from Germany for Hollywood with the rise of Nazism

and this led to the emergence of Horror films of the late 1920s and 1930s and influenced the beginning of *film noir*. Later Hitchcock would say he was greatly inspired by the movement and we can see its influence in more modern filmmakers such as David Lynch and Tim Burton (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010).

#### **1.3.4. French New Wave**

The French New Wave was a movement that sought freedom of the youth by giving voice to the young directors that analysed and learned from the older generation of French filmmakers, i.e. Jean Renoir, which they considered to be “auteurs.” The editing style was functional yet experimental in some ways and had the interest to lead to new directions in filmmaking. They considered themselves to be the true authors of a film with the director being also the writer, the cinematographer, and the editor of their film (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010).

In the mid-1950s the youth movement was starting with young adults getting together to have more freedom of sex, drugs, and rock n roll. This movement led to many new young artists emerging: Nouvelle Vague. In time, with the help of older generation critics like André Bazin and Roger Leenhardt, these young *cinephiles* got opportunities to participate in a monthly film journal called *Cahiers du Cinéma* where they were able to share the ideas that they discussed among themselves with the rest of the country and, soon, the world. It did not take long for them to finally try their hand at making films themselves with the ideas they had come up with in their *Cinematheque* and *Cahiers du Cinéma* gatherings. A few of these notable young *cinophile* film directors are so famous that we study them heavily in academia: Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Demy, François Truffaut, Éric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette, and Agnès Varda. The group had many members and they were closely-knit often helping each other out in their films without asking for credits or even donating money to each others' films. Historically they were deeply influenced by the Hollywood films which were just starting to be shown at the Cinematheque after many years, and also some French directors which they considered early auteurs (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010).

The movement itself did have many things written on it almost every week and every day the inner workings of a film and their ideas were being discussed in their Cinematheque gatherings, this was both an ideological pursuit which they believed did not exist much in their contemporary cinema, and also an artistic pursuit. They considered a film to be the sole artistic pursuit of its auteur: the director (Truffaut, 1954).

The films consisted mostly of young-adults having dreams and finding themselves in existential crises, that led to crime, prostitution, despair, or liberation from the society. The editing was both continuity based and experimental at times, they used every technique they could find to somehow “liberate” cinema from the old *meteurs-en-scene* to a new way which the problems of the youth could be explored. For example, in films like *Breathless* (1960) and *400 Blows* (1959) editing focuses largely on continuity but the *jump cut* in the latter and the last scene that ends with a long take to a freeze frame zoom-in are quite experimental for narrative films in their times. There were films that were made up of simple plots, to plots that were so complicated they did not make conscious sense. From François Truffaut’s *400 Blows* to Alain Resnais’ *Last Year at Marienbad*.

The cinema of French New Wave was a personal one (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 407). Because of this, the directors used their own renditions of the editing techniques they have seen and studied and to an extent expanded them. Along with the growing practicality of the equipment, filmmakers could take the filming to the streets with their tripods and portable cameras. The French New Wave directors sought personal vision and were not unified on a set of rules (Bordwell & Thompson, 2010, p. 404).

French New Wave was mainly influenced by Italian neorealism, Classical Hollywood, French Impressionism and French poetic-realism as well as the Marxist cinema of the Soviets. They inspired many other national New Wave movements across the world including India, Japan, USA and so on.

### 1.3.5. Bordwell and Thompson's neoformalist theory

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson were influenced by the Russian Formalists and the Classical Formalist theories that analyse and critique films and how they are made. Neoformalism is a term first coined by Kristin Thompson in her book *Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible: A Neoformalist Analysis* (1981) and later expanded in *Breaking the Glass Armor* (1988). This approach was also used to describe the process of making and watching films in David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's books *Film Art* and *Film History*. They believe that other than the form nothing can be critiqued or analysed in a film without relying on speculation and that classical film criticism forgets that every film has specific places in history and that human mind has preconscious, conscious and subconscious activities that result in the final understanding of a film which we acquire with time before we see an artwork. Neoformalism also considers the unconscious as existent yet "unnecessary" (Thompson, 1988, pp. 27-28). There are no political or sociological reasons in this approach, they try to view and make meaning of a film through things they can judge formally rather than opinions or interpretation through speculation that treat the viewer as passive in theories like the Marxist and Psychoanalytic film theories.

They lay out the principles of film form as function, similarity, and repetition, difference and variation, development, unity and disunity. These principles give an idea of how the film functions if it has similarities and repetition, variations, how the film develops through the course of its running, if the film has unity or disunity. They do not consider these as a formula and say that the artistic form is a matter of convention. These conventions say a lot about how a film is and why a film is (Bordwell, et al., 2017, p. 62). It is also important for Bordwell and Thompson that the spectators become accustomed by learning these principles by watching other films, seeing other artworks, and going about their daily lives. Kristin Thompson calls this *background*. There are three types of backgrounds: spectators engage with the film by using skills learned in encounters with other artworks and in everyday experience, spectators see and hear a great many artworks and come to understand their conventions from a very young age and they do not get born understanding how to follow plots or how to grasp filmic space, we recognise how films

are used for practical purposes (advertising, reportage, rhetorical persuasion, and so on) and see the artistic use of cinema as something apart from such usage (Thompson, 1988, p. 21).

This approach consists of a few principles that make up Film Form and how they matter in terms of the film in question. For example, the principle of function looks at a film's formalistic qualities in terms of how they function in the bigger picture or if there is unity or disunity in the film and how that changes the film.

Bordwell and Thompson are academicians of Film History and Theory so there are a lot of theories and movements they could have been influenced by, but mainly they are interested in Classical Hollywood and greatly inspired by the Russian Formalists in forming their approach towards films. Their ideas oppose the psychoanalytic approach to film theory and supporters of these approaches oppose their ideas being only technical and not reflecting the true cinematic experience.

### **1.3.6. Karel Reisz**

Czech-born British filmmaker Karel Reisz in his book on *The Technique of Film Editing* gives an excerpt from Ernest Lindgren suggesting a theoretical justification for editing by saying:

The fundamental psychological justification of editing as a method of representing the physical world around us lies in the fact that it reproduces this mental process [an edited action scene] in which one visual image follows another as our attention is drawn to this point and to that in our surroundings. In so far, the film is photographic and reproduces movement, it can give us a life-like semblance of what we see.; in so far as it employs editing, it can exactly reproduce the manner in which we normally see it. (Lindgren, 1948, p. 48)

He shows that cutting a film is not only the most convenient but also the psychologically correct method of transferring attention from one image to another (Reisz, 2009, p. 179).

Karel Reisz in his book *Technique of Film Editing* gives an example of an imaginary scene where he is staring at his bookshelf and his eyes catch a red covered book. He suggests that in his mind when he is scanning his bookshelf his mind acts as if it is editing

a scene as his eyes catch a glimpse of the red book and in a way cuts to a close-up of the book disregarding rest of the bookcase. He says:

In transferring this scene to the screen, it is not sufficient to show the general impression and let the spectator pick out any detail he chooses: the specific detail must be artificially brought to his attention. At the dramatically appropriate moment, the editor must cut from the general view of the whole shelf to a close shot of the chosen red volume. In doing this, he is not reproducing the physical conditions which obtain when I experience the scene: he is interpreting the mental process by which I see it. A spectator watching the film will immediately identify this method of presentation as a psychologically accurate one and will accept the cut to the close shot without becoming conscious of the device. (Reisz, 2009, p. 180)

There are many approaches and theories on film and few in editing. Usually, a few *grand* theories try to incorporate editing as well (Marxist, Psychoanalytic, Formalism). Some approaches like neoformalism, for example, try to think about the spectator's experience as well. In trying to explain the spectator's experience with films, neoformalism relies on the information and knowledge that we, as spectators, have gathered throughout our life. Neoformalists claim that we acquire the skills to watch a film from a young age, being exposed to other artworks and things in our daily lives. With this we acquire assumptions, and it is important to consider these assumptions when analysing a film through *aesthetic* approach.

There may be another angle to view this from. Phenomenology, for example, incorporates bracketing (suspension) in order to view objects and things around us in a way that our thoughts are not prejudiced and muddled by ideas and knowledge that we have acquired before we perceive an object. This way of approaching things is, though somewhat related to other theories, might let us see films with a different eye: an eye that is not spectacled and in its purest form. There have already been things written on this subject mainly by Maurice Merleau-Ponty's student Amédée Ayfre – whom André Bazin was inspired by and worked on his theories of film – along with more modern variations on the approach by Vivian Sobchack in her book *The Address of the Eye* (1992). The objective that will be taken in the next chapter will be to utilise Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological thinking in order to see the experience of a spectator with editing in relation to the rest of the filmic experience. But it is also important to look at some of the prominent figures that have thought about phenomenology and film in general.

## CHAPTER 2

### MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY'S PHENOMENOLOGY AND FILM EDITING

The film-viewing experience is distinct from other art forms. And as mentioned before, the one true uniqueness of film is the editing. Editing and the editor help the film to create a comprehensible visual narrative for the spectator to interact with. Borrowing from other art forms, such as the performing arts, films are traditionally viewed in spacious dark rooms where the only thing that one focuses on are lights of moving pictures on a stretched white curtain with little to no distraction other than the work being presented. The spectator interacts with the pictures in a collectively isolated state. This act is twofold. The film actively reaches out to the spectator as much as the spectator actively reaches out to the film. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), gives an example of two hands touching each other. The touching and the touched are reversible. The reversibility of touching is applicable for films too, like looking at another person or interacting with an object. Film-viewing offers a phenomenological experience that alludes to a practical example of phenomenological reduction (ἐποχή) and especially Merleau-Ponty's observations on the body of oneself as *being-in-the-world*. Film-viewing is done in a large and enclosed dark room where the only thing the spectators can clearly see is the bright light that is projected on to a white curtain. When a film is viewed in the theatre, the spectator is isolated from any other distraction as much as possible which creates an effect of concrete phenomenological reduction. Of course, now a film can be viewed in many different ways however, this holds true somewhat even in-home setting.

Considering film in the way of Maurice Merleau-Ponty provides a fresh look where prejudice and preconception do not cloud our perception. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology and ideas on perception, body, the flesh, and chiasm shed light to a new understanding of the way editing is done and experienced. Film, mainly through the means of editing, is a phenomenological experience where the spectators are actively drawn in a story-experience without prejudice, guided by their bodies.

## 2.1. STUDIES ON PHENOMENOLOGY AND FILM

Phenomenology is the approach where one tries to see how a thing is within spacetime through the use of language. It is not only difficult to define phenomenology because it is “a method and an experience always open and always renewing itself,” (Farina, 2014) it is there in our every day life, it is even more difficult to define a *phenomenology of film* “because it forces us to overlook a wide field” (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 1). Sobchack gives an example to what phenomenology is quoting Merleau-Ponty: “It is at the same time true that the world is *what we see* and that, nevertheless, we must learn to see it – first in the sense that we must watch this vision with knowledge, take possession of it, say what *we* and what *seeing* are, act therefore as if we knew nothing about it, as if here we still had everything to learn” (Sobchack, 1991, pp. 25-26).

Contemporary film theory has not focused much on phenomenology as a major approach, however there are prominent scholars who have studied how phenomenology might be used as an alternative approach to films. Phenomenology as a philosophical approach has different viewpoints such as *transcendental* and *existential*. Film phenomenology also differs and there is not a single all-inclusive viewpoint. In Sobchack’s work we see that *The Address of the Eye* focuses on the noematic, “what is experienced as experienced,” and in *Carnal Thoughts* on the noetic, “mode of its being experienced” (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 11). Film phenomenology has had a rebirth in the 1990s with Allan Casebier, Vivian Sobchack and Dudley Andrew, after its initial beginnings with the *filmology* movement in the 1940s with Merleau-Ponty, Roman Ingarden and Albert Michotte van den Berck (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 13). In the “height of classical phenomenology,” philosophers like Husserl, Heidegger and Scheler did not have aesthetic considerations as such never had a saying on film. The first to consider film and phenomenology were Roman Ingarden and Jean-Paul Sartre who did not completely implement phenomenology in their mentioning film. The first to truly think about film through phenomenological approach was Maurice Merleau-Ponty in his lecture *The Film and the New Psychology* (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, pp. 15-16).

Let us then look at some of the views on phenomenology and film. As phenomenology has different approaches, there is not a single formula that encapsulates all film phenomenology.

In Dudley Andrew's essay *The Neglected Tradition of Phenomenology in Film Theory* (1978), the authors that are mentioned have a common interest in the study of the experience of the spectator which is very important to film phenomenology. Psychology, then, is closely related to phenomenological inquiry where both try to look into the human aspect of things. According to Husserl, however, phenomenology differs from psychology in two ways: the first is that psychology regards consciousness solely as a "worldly object situated in the causal nexus of reality," while phenomenology "regards the objective world merely as an intentional correlate of subjective lived experiences." Secondly, psychology is a science that relies on empirical data, while phenomenology is an eidetic science interested in the "a priori structure of subjective experience." (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 16).

According to Ferencz-Flatz and Hanich, there is an intimate relationship between film and phenomenology on the basis that not only phenomenology strives to make manifest the union of mind and body but film as well. Even though human experience may be ambiguous in various ways, and defies a fully descriptive attitude, there is at the same time an openness to it; an openness of perception of time, space, intersubjectivity in which has a convergence to film experience. Ferencz-Flatz and Hanich, not only set forth why a film can be a subject of phenomenology but also investigate the research practices in film phenomenology. They have come up with five distinct ways: Excavation, Explanation, Exemplification, Extrapolation and Expansion. Excavation is to see the philosophical reflections of famous film theories, filmmakers or even films through phenomenological practice. Explanation, as the second phenomenological practice aims to shed light to the commentaries and interpretations of film through the philosophies of prominent phenomenologists. Exemplification, which is the most common practice among film theorists, aiming to 'clarify' a sequence of a film which may have gone unnoticed unless taken into consideration, or film in general by reflecting upon a phenomenological study. Extrapolation, is the fourth way of phenomenological practice that tries to speculate what the famous philosophers or thinkers who take a phenomenological stance would have said if they had written on film. Lastly, the fifth way of phenomenological practice, expansion is the practice is onto portraying how

particular phenomenological approaches of particular philosophers can be a source in deliberating onto film experience (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, pp. 6-10).

When it comes to Vivian Sobchack, as one of the most well-known film theorists who reflects on phenomenology, holds a very strong stance that a film *can* be looked at with a phenomenological attitude. Film can be the subject of phenomenology since they both share an *experiential* element and openness in order to be understood from an *experimental* methodology. According to Sobchack, intentionality is the key concept (an intentionality that of Merleau-Ponty's than commonly understood as of Husserl's) in searching the relation between film and phenomenology, since she sees that intentionality will always call for what is active than what is passive, which film experience is dependent upon, the experience of the spectator as well the filmmaker (Sobchack, 2011, pp. 436-437). As Sobchack claims,

The intentional directedness of subjective consciousness toward its intended object demands a description of the film experience that includes the "spectator" as well as the "text" – that is, it presumes an active (rather than passive) viewer and calls for focus not only on elements of the film viewed but also on possible modes of engaging and viewing it. (Sobchack, 2011, p. 436)

Not only intentionality, but also what phenomenology suggests on meaning and expression is helpful in film theory. As inquired before, expression is one of the crucial elements in the existential and experiential being-in-the-world, as the 'meaning' of everything arises in the pure relation of I and the Other who are indifferent from each other. Similarly, reflecting onto Merleau-Ponty, Sobchack claims that it is through *editing* cinema expresses the meaning of its own. Thus, it is important to briefly look over Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology before linking to the theory and practice of film editing (Sobchack, 1991, p. 26).

Another film scholar, Jennifer Chamarette, begins her book *Phenomenology and the Future of Film* by asking this question: "Having a body, being through time: what more is there to subjectivity than this?" as focusing her interest on subjectivity through a phenomenological approach. She distinguishes herself from the philosophy as phenomenology but inquires with the phenomenological approach philosophy provides. Her phenomenological approach consists of the contextual, historical, aesthetic, relational

and embodied movement of a film experience. As phenomenology deals with the world, and the natural and the spontaneous *everyday attitude* of the lived experience, she finds this kind of “thinking of the world” is parallel to “thinking of the film.” Film, as an object of experience, as being viewed by a viewer (spectator) holds the similar intimacy between what Merleau-Ponty suggests in his famous chiasmic structure (the intertwining of one and the other) between the seer and seen, leads Chamarette to consider subjectivity, or to put it in a better way: the possibility of cinematic subjectivity (Chamarette, 2012).

Finally, John B. Brough, begins his essay “Showing and Seeing” with a passage from the *Prime of Life* by Simone de Beauvoir, which, from the beginning makes an account that anything can be philosophized if only looked through phenomenology. The passage is as follows:

Simone de Beauvoir describes an evening spent with Jean-Paul Sartre and Raymond Aron over apricot cocktails at a café on the Rue Montparnasse. Aron, who had been studying Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology in Berlin, pointed to his glass and said to Sartre: “You see, my dear fellow, if you are a phenomenologist, you can talk about this cocktail and make philosophy out of it!” Sartre, de Beauvoir reports, “turned pale with emotion at this. Here was just the thing he had been longing to achieve for years – to describe objects just as he saw and touched them, and extract philosophy from the process.” (Brough, 2011)

He believes, the essence of phenomenology rests on what is present and what is seen rather than what can be described. Even though a film, he claims, is a reflection of filmmaker’s imagination, what he makes out of his/her imagination is always within the scope of viewing by seeing, therefore feasible for a phenomenological inquiry (Brough, 2011).

Let us now briefly investigate how Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes his phenomenology and how it would relate to the practice of film editing.

## **2.2. MERLEAU-PONTY’S PHENOMENOLOGY**

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical thinking is complex and expansive. Phenomenology could be implemented in every way of daily human life. Merleau-Ponty’s view is an alternative to the empiricist and intellectualist *interpretations* of the world and rejects the hierarchy and duality of body and mind; uniting them in the body (sometimes translated as *lived* body).

Merleau-Ponty's main concern was the rejection of perception and experience in empiricist and intellectualist thoughts which led the natural sciences to a conception of a "blind mind." He considered the importance of those thoughts but thought they were inadequate in explaining the understanding of one's experience of being-in-the-world and one's perception of the world. For him, the mind-body distinction was false. He viewed the body and mind as united in the *body* (lived-body). Furthermore, he suggested that the purely scientific perception of the world was weighted down and clouded. We had to go back to a more primal perception without prejudice to view the world as if from the eyes of a baby.

In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty rejects Descartes on his explanation of thought, experience and meaning. He acknowledges consciousness as being in the body and not in the mind (Anlar, 2016). He believes that it is wrong to think that the subject is encapsulated in the "dark room" of the mind ignoring the body. For him the subject is body. We see, think and most importantly perceive with our body. When we perceive we see objects upon a horizon (object-horizon structure) where the borders of the object we are seeing end where the horizon begins. Objects are perceived when they are distinguished from the background with the body's focus on it. This is similar to the way a camera's lens focuses on an object to make the background of the object blurred, this blur is the horizon. It is because one has a body that one can perceive objects from different perspectives and objects reveal themselves to the one who perceives. There is no hierarchy of importance in this system; the body is within the system as much as the others (Anlar, 2016). The subject-object dualism, thus, has no place in this system. Objects reflect on each other as much as they are reflected on the body, this is the same with previously mentioned reversibility of touch. This is also true for the body and its relation to the world. One's own body is the way one sees and experiences the world and it is with the world that one sees and experiences one's own body (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 84). He explains this double sensation as a rejection of classical psychology. In classical psychology the reversibility is not simultaneous and the roles are not constantly changing. Classical psychology also considers the body as another object *only*. For Merleau-Ponty,

body is both an object and a subject. It is within the object-horizon structure as both the viewer and the viewed (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 95).

In terms of Husserlian Phenomenology (Sokolowski, 2000, pp. 22-23) Merleau-Ponty considers parts of body as *moments* of whole and not *parts* of whole. *Moments* are, when separated, not functional and meaningful on their own without the whole – a musical note outside of a specific musical composition for example. *Parts*, have a meaning outside of the whole – the wood that is cut from a tree for example. Merleau-Ponty, inspired by *Gestalt* theory, views the body as a whole with *moments* that are inseparable from each other and when severed are felt that they are gone. He gives the *phantom limb* as an example to explain this (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, pp. 75-91).

...when I fix my eyes on an object in the half-light; and say: 'it's a brush,' there is not in my mind the concept of a brush, under which I subsume the object, and which whatsoever is linked by frequent association with the word 'brush,' but the word bears the meaning, and, by imposing it on the object, I am conscious of reaching that object. (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 183)

For Merleau-Ponty speech does not come before or after thought. Speech is thought. The sign and the signified are the same. He rejects the intellectualist idea of meaning making in the consciousness and its hierarchical priority of thinking before speech. In this way, thought cannot be independent of words and the spoken word is also a gesture containing the meaning in itself. The body, through speech, is linked to the world and unites everybody (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 201). The theory of body is, thus, the theory of perception. Merleau-Ponty tries to *understand* the way we perceive through our body as we are in this world with our body, the world appears to us through our body, and we towards the world. The body has unity, as with things, and with this unity the senses are at work towards the same intention. The body is the one which operates, guides and tries to grasp not the intellect. "My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'" (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, pp. 243-244).

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty, tries to explore perception and existence, without Cartesian dualism, intellectualism, and empiricism, through existential

phenomenology. There is a naivety, a primal instinctual gaze, towards the world in Merleau-Ponty's thinking, where perception of the world with the body goes back to before when our *minds* are clouded, when we perceived the world *as it is* with our body *as it is*.

In *Sense and Non-sense* (Merleau-Ponty, 1992), a collection of essays on various topics including art and film, Merleau-Ponty talks about painting, Cézanne in *Cézanne's Doubt* (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, pp. 9-25) and Film in *The Film and the New Psychology* (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, pp. 48-62) essays. In those essays he recounts his views on perception and adapts them to his phenomenological view of art. He believes that whatever it is said about perception is also true about painting, film and many other art forms both from the artist's and the spectator's perspectives. He thinks about these subjects not only as a philosopher but also as a spectator of fine art.

For Merleau-Ponty, a painting by Cézanne was only an essay, an approach to painting, not just work as we, the spectator, view it (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 9). Paul Cézanne was deeply inspired by the Impressionists and their way of conceiving painting "not as the incarnation of imagined scenes, the projection of dreams outward, but as the exact study of appearances: less a work of the studio than a working from nature." With this thought he abandoned the baroque technique where the capture of movement was the primary aim. His inspiration by Impressionism was quickly abandoned this time for their attempt to capture "the very way in which objects strike our eyes and attack our senses." Impressionist objects are "depicted as they appear to instantaneous perception, without fixed contours, bound together by light and air" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 11). Cézanne's style became more and more of a questioning of tradition and since he felt that he could not explain himself adequately he painted instead (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 13). "He wished, as he said, to confront the sciences with the nature 'from which they came'" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 14). And this is quite similar to what Merleau-Ponty tried to do with his rejection of the classical psychology and tradition of scientific ways of *describing* perception for his natural view on perception. He, just like Cézanne, tried to conceive by going back to nature, by viewing the world from a more primal perspective. "We live in the midst of man-made objects, among tools, in houses, streets, cities, and most of the

time we see them only through the human actions which put them to use. We become used to thinking that all of this exists necessarily and unshakably. Cézanne's painting suspends these habits of thought and reveals the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself. This is why Cézanne's people are strange, as if viewed by a creature of another species." With this thought Merleau-Ponty asserts that Cézanne "revived the classical definition of art: man added to nature" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 16).

In the essay, of the 1948 IDHEC (Institut des hautes études cinématographiques) lecture, *The Film and the New Psychology* (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 48) Maurice Merleau-Ponty explains how the classical psychology considers the visual field in comparison to how the new psychology does and adapts these statements to Film.

The classical psychology considers our visual field to be a sum or mosaic of sensations, each of which is strictly dependent on the local retinal stimulus which corresponds to it. The new psychology reveals, first, that such parallelism between sensations and the nervous phenomenon conditioning them is unacceptable, even for our simplest and most immediate sensations. Our retina is far from homogeneous: certain parts, for example, are blind to blue or red, yet I do not see any discolored areas when looking at a blue or red surface. This is because starting at the level of simply seeing colours, my perception is not limited to registering what the retinal stimuli prescribe but reorganises these stimuli so as to re-establish the field's homogeneity. (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 48)

Merleau-Ponty says that we perceive with a total way with our being and that which we perceive speaks to all our senses at once. Gestalt theory tells to "... stop distinguishing between signs and their significance, between what is sensed and what is judged" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 50). Our body's position in the world perceives the stationary as our environment and what is perceived as movement is not a construct of our intelligence but because of our body's assumed position (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 52).

Feelings are not learned and they are not determined by our intelligence. Merleau-Ponty gives the example of babies being able to understand gestures and facial expressions before they can reproduce them on their own. Thus, the meaning adheres to the behaviour. He furthermore suggests that we must "reject the prejudice which makes 'inner realities' out of love, hate, or anger, leaving them accessible to one single witness: the person who feels them" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 52). These feelings are not hidden in another's consciousness; they are types of behaviour or styles of conduct which are visible from the outside. According to Merleau-Ponty psychology did not begin to develop until the day

it gave up the distinction between mind and body. He also adds that we would not learn anything if we only measured the rate of respiration or heartbeat in an angry person, and we would not learn anything further if we try to express the qualitative and inexpressible nuances of lived anger. These inexpressible nuances of emotion and style can be recognised collectively even when comparing few different people. Merleau-Ponty gives an example of some unbiased subjects able to put together correct matching of face and handwriting, face and the recordings of voice, for example when given many options. Even though these matches are not 100% percent, the correct matchings greatly outnumber the incorrect ones. We are able to recognise common structures of others around us and the only reason for this is the way of being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 53). The new psychology also builds upon Sartre's being-thrown-into-the-world and suggests that we are "attached to it by a natural bond." This means that new psychology rejects the classical psychology's way of abandoning the lived world for the scientific intelligence that constructs it (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 54).

According to Merleau-Ponty, when we consider film as a perceptual object, we can apply all of what is said about perception in general to the perception of a film. In this way this new psychology is the best way to illuminate the nature and significance of films. We can therefore, say that "a film is not a sum total of images but a *temporal gestalt*." Merleau-Ponty supports this by giving the Kuleshov experiment which clearly shows the melodic unity of films (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 54). "The meaning of a film is incorporated into its rhythm just as the meaning of a gesture may immediately be read in that gesture: the film does not mean anything but itself" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, pp. 57-58). "A movie is not thought; it is perceived" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 58). "The movies are peculiarly suited to make manifest the union of the mind and the body, the mind and the world, and the expression of one in the other." "Therefore, if philosophy is in harmony with cinema, if thought and technical effort are heading in the same direction, it is because the philosopher and the moviemaker share a certain way of being, a certain view of the world which belongs to a generation. It offers us yet another chance to confirm that modes of thought correspond to technical methods and that, to use Goethe's phrase, "What is inside is also outside" (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 59).

Merleau-Ponty thinks of film as an object of perception which comes from Gestalt psychology's approach on perception. He applies this on film and calls it *temporal gestalt*. He not only sees film as the object of perception but a means of expression. If film is a means of expression, then the same dynamics of being-in-the-world and the system of communication between subject and the world can occur. Hence, this idea not only affects those who are interested in film aesthetics but those who try to attain the meaning of film experience. This meaning does not result in an intellectual interpretation, but grasped within the act of perception itself. (Ferencz-Flatz & Hanich, 2016, p. 16).

Film also has a language that we do not need to learn. What is shown on screen is not apart from that which is conveyed. When something is shown the meaning is already within. If every sign carries a meaning, then from a gestalt perspective the whole meaning of the film comes out from each of these signs interacting with each other. Films also have a similar system where every aspect (the lights, the cinematography, each of the shots, the actors, the mise-en-scene etc.) is interacting and indivisible. Each shot is interacting with the one that comes after as well as with the whole, and together making the whole. We do not make the film speak. The film speaks to us, and to itself reflexively and grows as it does. Our world and the film world come eye to eye which creates an invisible web in the room. Both sides know each others' language, thus there are no gaps between the seer and the seen. Even the work that seems the strangest to us, even the work that seems disconnected are never strangers to us. Because, we are in the same world in the same way, even if we have different ways we are connected. That is why the relationship with the film and the spectator is special.

Later on, in the part *The Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence*, in his incomplete posthumous work *Signs* (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), Merleau-Ponty moves toward an *indirect ontology* from phenomenology. Here he describes the "flesh of the world." The perceived and the body are connected and the link between them cannot be severed. All sensations are one, and an experience is a combination of five all senses in one. The world surrounds the body, and the body is surrounded by the world. Neither the world nor the body can be apart from each other or within themselves. This is why experiences are unique yet similar and shareable. With this thought, Merleau-Ponty moves farther away from the tradition

of philosophy and psychology than he did in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945). In *The Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, pp. 39-84) Maurice Merleau-Ponty introduces the terms *flesh* and the *chiasm*. His expression of those terms is thought as his most memorable contribution to the study of philosophy. In discussing his understanding of perception in his earlier works, Merleau-Ponty, suggested that he was looking from the body to the world and this time he tries to look at the body from the world. This is where the *flesh* comes in. Just like his example of a hand drenched in honey, he says that our body is surrounded by the world in every way. This honey of the world that surrounds our bodies is the *flesh* which we are all part of as if of a larger body. Therefore, our experiences, perceptions and thoughts are in harmony often.

Merleau-Ponty also talks about style in this essay. He disagrees with Malraux's way of deifying painters and suggests that the painter is not able to see his/her work just like the writer not being able to read his/her work. He adds to this by saying the painter does not know anything about the "antithesis of man and the world, of signification and the absurd, of style and representation." The painter is far too busy expressing his/her communication with the world to become proud of a style which is born almost as if he/she were unaware of it (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, pp. 53-54). Painter paints, writer writes. "Style does not have an external mode; painting does not exist before painting" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 54). According to Merleau-Ponty, "when a writer considers painting and painters, he is a little in the position of readers in relation to the writer." In this sense, the writer and painter are just other persons, the expression of art is not supernatural, only human. We should see paintings as the painters see them "in the sober joy of work." Merleau-Ponty believes that the Museum gives us a thieves' conscience. We occasionally sense that those works were not after all intended to end up between these morose walls, for the pleasure of Sunday strollers or Monday "intellectuals" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 62).

According to Merleau-Ponty a child speaks and after learns to "apply the principle of speech in diverse ways" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 40). This confirms Saussure's remarks that signs do not signify anything on their own (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 39). In addition to this "expressive speech does not simply choose a sign for an already defined signification, as one goes to look for a hammer in order to drive a nail or for a claw to

pull it out” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 46). “The desire to kill is thus not in the works at all. It is between them, in the hollow of space, time, and signification they mark out, as movement at the Cinema is between the immobile images which follow one another” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 76). “The true contrary of formalism is a good theory of style, or speech, which puts both above “technique” or “device” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 77). “We must therefore say the same thing about language in relation to meaning that Simone de Beauvoir says about the body in relation to mind: it is neither primary nor secondary” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 83).

In traditional formalist and neoformalist film theory editing is seen as if it is one part of film that is independent from the rest. When we think of editing phenomenologically, we see that it is a *moment* of the whole and on its own it is nothing and without it a film is arguably an uninterrupted and untouched recording of moving images – as editing refers to every bit of addition, subtraction, and/or modification made after the moving images are recorded. Here we will be speaking of editing mainly as the arrangement, cutting, and modification of segments of moving images (shots).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty talks about the importance and the necessity of *montage* in films in his lecture in IDHEC transcribed in the collection of essays *Sense and Nonsense* (Merleau-Ponty, 1992). He fittingly describes film as a “temporal gestalt” and not as a “sum total of images.” He gives the Kuleshov experiment as an example. If we take all the shots in a film and add them together, disregarding their order, manner and duration, we would not be able to have the same perception when we consider the film along with time; which relates to the earlier statement: editing/*montage* is a *moment* of the film as a whole and not a part that *adds to* the film. Merleau-Ponty says, “I perceive in a total way with my whole being; I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my senses at once” (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 51). Gestalt theory also teaches us that there is no reason to distinguish between the sign and the signified because of this totality of perception in the body. When we apply this to cinema, we see that our experience of a film corresponds to what is said about perception here. We perceive a film as a whole speaking to all our senses at once. We are immersed in the theatre or in our rooms watching a film. When we let ourselves go with the “suspension of disbelief”

we are not in a simulated world but in the world. We perceive the temporal gestalt of moving images as if we are watching the world outside. On the other hand, in some films the editing might be as visible as possible where the goal is for the spectator to become aware of the experience, to disillusion or distract them. This is simply another type of immersion speaking to our senses. The style of editing does not determine if there will be sensation or not. Sensation happens simultaneously and naturally. The film pushes us to phenomenological reduction; successful or not. As Karel Reisz states editing is natural to us (Reisz, 2009). This process, he explains, is like what we experience when we watch a film. In the world when want to look at something else from our current view we blink and open our eyelids once we have changed our view. This is what happens when there is a continuity cut in a film. The process is also explored in the book *In the Blink of an Eye* (Murch, 2001) by Walter Murch.

This process of natural perception is universal. Because of the *flesh of the world* we are able to share the whole of film viewing experience and this is why editing is like a language we can understand but never have to learn. When we first watch a film, we do not have to ask ourselves why the images have changed or are changing. It is only natural that we perceive temporality. *How* is not a question we have to ask. We have a body, we are in the *flesh* of the world together. We sit in a dark room, we sense with the whole of our body the experience of a film and the language of editing it uses. We can share this experience with each other no matter how unique. We do not have to learn cinematic terms to be able to discuss what we have perceived on the screen in the dark. Our senses are focused into one like in any other place in the world. Our body adjusts itself to get the “optimal grip” of the situation (Dreyfus, 2005).

Hubert Dreyfus explains Merleau-Ponty by saying “you don’t need rules, you don’t need guidelines” (Dreyfus, 2005). This is something that is implied but not said directly by Merleau-Ponty. We have to think about applying this to film theory. Especially in the “interpretation” of editing we have too many unknowable guidelines that we treat as facts. We may never be able to say what art is, but we can say what it is not. Art is not made up of rules and guidelines. Neither is the perception of the world. When we consider films

as art, we often find ourselves shackled by the empiricist language and try to *analyze* and *interpret* films. This is fine as long as we know their limitations. One can interpret a film as much as they wish and it is often very fun to do and talk about and makes films more accessible for people who get their own meaning. This is not an issue. We should not, however, treat the empiricist doctrine as the one true way of viewing and speaking about films. As Merleau-Ponty says this would be blinding our minds. In art understanding serves the imagination and film does not mean anything but itself (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 57).

### **2.3. MERLEAU-PONTY'S PHENOMENOLOGY AND FILM EDITING**

If pre-production and production are designing and manufacturing bricks, post-production is putting them together to build a house. None of these processes could be separated and they all depend on each other in some way. Editing the film is sometimes also called the third rewrite of the film. The first writing is the screenplay, the second is the production, and the last is the editing. Through the filmmaking process, a film may be written and edited a few times. No matter how it is done, we cannot ignore the importance of editing that binds the film together.

Merleau-Ponty, was influenced by Gestalt psychology which distinguishes between the importance of the whole and sum of its parts, and declares that neither is more important than the other (Koffka, 1999, p. 176). In this way we can see how the sum of the parts of a film is distinguished from the whole of a film. This means every part of the film is as important as the other. We could have focused on every other part of the film and see how the whole and that part along with other parts are interrelated and interwoven. Here we have similarities with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.

First of all, before investigating further upon the whole, what he means by the whole should be made clear. Merleau-Ponty refers to the "whole" as a system of communication. This system in his early works refers to the body, things and others who inhabit the same world where the *flesh* is interwoven between and around them. In his later works the system of communication is surrounded by the world which is also surrounded by and interwoven into the flesh (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). The early approach may be seen as an

ontological and the later may be seen as a metaphysical one. We, the spectators, are interwoven into the world via the *flesh*, as are the editors. So, there is an experience that is shared; an interrelatedness. We are of the same flesh and we are surrounded by the same world as mentioned before. This way of thinking opens a new angle to the peculiarity of our experiences with the world. There is also a system of communication in film. Every part of the film, the camera, the actors, the director, the mise-en-scene, the editor etc. are in this system. They are all in the same world and are interconnected. Editing is no more important than any other part. But we focus on editing because that is when the editor connects the parts by reconstructing time and space creating harmony and presents spectators a perspective. Every shot is intricately put one after the other which also creates a language of film. Deriving upon Gestalt understanding, the film comes to the editor only as parts, and it is he/she who puts them together to create the whole concretely. The editor not only can choose different shots to fit a certain scene, he/she also can manipulate the time of the scene, the events, the sequence, the whole film. On top of this, by choosing various shots and angles in a certain order, the editor, can also manipulate the sense of space in the film. This can affect the way we view the film as this is where the random words of a newly construct language come together to form a sentence, we, as the audience, make sense of. The power of editing is becoming more viable nowadays with the 3D films that use surround sound, and especially VR (virtual reality) films that put the spectator right in the middle of the film to achieve an immersive experience of film viewing.

Our perception ends in objects, and the object, once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it that we have had or that we could have. For example, I see the neighbouring house from a particular angle. It would be seen differently from the right bank of the Seine, from the inside of the house, and differently still from an airplane. Not one of these appearances is the house itself. The house, as Leibniz said, is the geometrical plan that includes these perspectives and all possible perspectives; that is, the non-perspectival term from which all perspectives can be derived; the house itself is the house seen from nowhere. But what do these words mean? To see is always to see from somewhere, is it not? If we say the house is seen from nowhere, are we not just saying that it is invisible? And yet, when I say "I see the house with my eyes," surely, I am not saying anything controversial, for I do not mean that my retina and my crystalline lens, or that my eyes as material organs are operational and make me see the house. With only myself to examine, I know nothing of these things. With this assertion I wish to express a certain manner of reaching the object, namely, the "gaze," which is as indubitable as my own thought, and which I know just as directly. We must attempt to understand how vision can come about from somewhere without thereby being locked within its perspective. (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 69)

It is never enough to mention the importance of perspective in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. It can be considered to be the backbone of most of his ideas since it is one of the most crucial elements to defy empiricist and intellectualist approaches. Intellectualist approach always tends to take an 'object' to be seen from everywhere, whereas the empiricist approach takes an object to be merely the total of all its qualities. In both of the approaches, it can be seen that perspective has no place. The subject, who is in contact with an object is thought to be lacking a body. If perception was like what the intellectualist attitude suggested, it would not be inappropriate to say that the subject would require God-like vision. It is not possible to perceive an object from all sides. For example, when one looks at an apple, it is true that he/she perceives its certain qualities, its redness, its smell, yet its redness always comes with its shape. The redness cannot ever be abstracted from the apple itself. If the apple were on a table, it would not be possible to see beneath the apple, or the particular place it was sitting on. If it were hanging on a tree, it would not be possible to see the landscape behind the apple completely. If it were possible, it would mean that either there is no apple at all or the apple is transparent. So, what is the reason behind this? Why is it that we always see something from somewhere? It is because we have a body. The body is there to accompany a subject all the time. Body, for Merleau-Ponty, is always situated. It always has a certain position which brings up the notion of perspective.

The empirical attitude, including cognitive sciences and classical psychology, as mentioned above, is apt to give merely a scientific explanation of how the subject perceives an object. There is no fallacy here. The problem is the forgetfulness of the body and its experience. According to Merleau-Ponty, the body is never a total of organs. Therefore, giving a scientific description of what happens when one perceives is not adequate in comparison to subject's lively experience. Since this experience, even though in completion on its own, comes with its limitations. Because one inhabits and perceives the world through the medium of his/her body. Thereupon, Merleau-Ponty raises a very sound question against these two approaches: "to see is always to see from somewhere, is it not?" When the film is shot and the production phase is done there are still many possibilities for how the film might end up looking. For a film that is going to be an hour and a half, there might be hours and hours of footage. And if we had seen all the footage

simultaneously, as a spectator, would we have seen the film? At that point, we would not have a film to see just like the apple being transparent. In this case, editing provides a perspective in regards to the film. We see the film through the perspective of the editors specific editing choices to see the film from *somewhere*. When the film is edited, it is constructed and finally, we can perceive the film from a particular angle.

Husserl calls the intentionalities that anchor me to my surroundings “protentions” and “retentions.” These do not emanate from a central I, but somehow from my perceptual field itself, which drags along behind itself its horizon of retentions and eats into the future through its protentions. I do not pass through a series of nows whose images I would preserve and that, placed end to end, would form a line. For every moment that arrives, the previous moment suffers a modification: I still hold it in hand, it is still there, and yet it already sinks back, it descends beneath the line of presents. In order to keep hold of it, I must reach across a thin layer of time. It is still clearly the same one, and I have the power of meeting up with it such as it just was, I am not cut off from it; but then again it would not be past if nothing had changed it begins to appear perspectively against or to project itself upon my present, whereas just a moment ago it in fact was my present. When a third moment takes place, the second one suffers a new modification; having been a retention, it now becomes thicker... Time is not a line, but rather a network of intentionalities. (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, pp. 439-440)

Our experience, therefore our perception is dependent upon time and space. Space-time is threefold – retention, protention, and the immediate present. Everything is in duration. The relation between retention and protention is what makes something lively. What the film editor does is very similar to this idea. The editor is the one who reconstructs time and space, yet through the same relation between retention, protention and the immediate now. We could always remember the Kuleshov experiment. Even though the goal was to put forward how the meaning changes in different sequences of shots, it is the threefold structure of time and space that made this experiment possible in the first place. It is because the editor can play with time and space in this manner. The two consecutive shots are always as connected as the way the immediate now and the past (retention) are connected. The Kuleshov experiment proves something more prior to us; that time has a flow, and what we see now is connected to what we saw right before. Space-time that we experience with our body is threefold as is the space-time in the film.

Even though it is time and space that makes perception possible in the first place, it also provides the harmony within the perception. In his lecture/essay *The Film and the New Psychology* (Merleau-Ponty, 1992), Merleau-Ponty examines the importance of harmony through a critique towards classical psychology. According to classical psychology,

which is known to take an empirical attitude, what is perceived is perceived as the sum of total senses; tactile, visual, audial. It tends to take the perception as a mosaic, where new psychology opposes this view introducing that perception occurs through a configuration. Merleau-Ponty claims:

Groups rather than juxtaposed elements are principle and primary in our perception. We group stars into the same constellation as the ancients, yet it is *a priori* possible to draw the heavenly map many other ways. Given the series:

ab cd ef gh ij

we will always pair the dots according to the formula a-b, c-d, e-f, etc. although the grouping b-c, d-e, f-g, etc. is equally probable in principle. (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 48)

This demonstrates a perfect example of spatial harmony where music can be an example for temporal harmony. The melody of Vinteuil from, Marcel Proust's famous book *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927) (Proust, 2017), where Monsieur Swann obsesses with, would be an appropriate example. The melody is never merely the sum of notes. What makes Vinteuil's melody so beautiful for M. Swann is the interrelations between the notes. For instance, if the melody is in the key of G, we could transpose it to the key of B-flat and would not lose the melody. We can transpose the melody in every note we please as long as it keeps the interrelation where every note is joined together with each other. Merleau-Ponty explains this as: "... just one single change in these interrelationships will be enough to modify the entire make-up of the melody." (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 49) Therefore, it is through these temporal and spatial gestalts, one sees harmony and configurations in his/her perception. This is why Merleau-Ponty begins talking about film with this remark: "let us say right off that a film is not a sum total of images but a temporal gestalt." (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 54) In film, the shots and other cinematographic devices work in harmony to form the film itself. This is why editing is also about patterns that create the harmonies. The film has patterns and they come to make meaning with the shots coming together one by one to create a whole. In this regard, editing is like a melody in a song. Film is in such a way that scenes and sequences of its editing create smaller and larger melodies to form a whole song. That particular order of notes, or shots in this case, create a certain melody that creates a certain song that plays when viewed consecutively with its own rhythm, a rhythm of images. Merleau-Ponty puts this forward as:

A rhythm exists for sounds just as for images. There is a montage of noises and sounds, as Leenhardt's example of the old sound movie *Broadway Melody* shows. "Two actors are on stage. We are in the balcony listening to them speak their parts. Then immediately there is a close-up, whispering, and we are aware of something they are saying to each other under their breath..." The expressive force of this montage lies in its ability to make us sense the coexistence, the simultaneity of lives in the same world, the actors as they are for us and for themselves, just as, previously, we saw Pudovkin's visual montage linking the man and his gaze to the sights which surround him. (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 55)

Because every shot is put forward in temporality and some configuration in order for expression, a film cannot be considered as a *play photographed in motion*. This is because of editing. Editing makes the film different. If there were no editing, changing of angles and time, it would be a play photographed in motion as if the spectator had filmed a play themselves.

When it comes to what films express through its temporal gestalt, it is helpful to begin with stating right off that "*each film tells a story*." Thus, every film has a language. In his essay *Indirect Language and Voices of Silence* (Merleau-Ponty, 1964), Merleau-Ponty closely investigates language on the basis of sign and signified. According to him, language has internal articulations where every word has a relation between each other, just as the harmony of a melody. Through each word crisscrossing each other (Merleau-Ponty, 1969, p. 134), the meaning arises as an integral whole. Therefore, it is only by hearing and being open to this integral whole which has its own movements and gestures, one is able to 'understand' what language is. The reason why his lecture/essay on film is named *The Film and The New Psychology* (Merleau-Ponty, 1992) is because new psychology has shed light on what classical psychology has never considered; the availability to emotions (which classical psychology names as psychic facts) not only from the inside by the person experiencing it, such as love or hate, but also availability to others through voice, face, and gestures. It is through gestures a language is formed. Sign and signified have always been considered to be two discrete sets, yet sign and signified cannot be abstracted from each other. For this Merleau-Ponty says:

...just as man's body and soul are but two aspects of his way of being in the world, so the word and the thought it indicates should not be considered two externally related terms: the word bears its meaning in the same way that the body incarnates a manner of behaviour. (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 53)

Therefore, the meaning of a film can never be extracted from the film itself. Its meaning is integrated through its own rhythm. Merleau-Ponty claims: "...a movie has meaning in

the same way that thing does: neither of them speaks to an isolated understanding; rather, but appeal to our power tacitly to decipher the world or men and to coexist with them” (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 58). It is clear that the editor has a huge role in setting up the rhythm through which the meaning arises. Not only the director but also the editor, who chooses the configurations of shots (just as grouping ab and cd but not bc and ad), forms the relations between signs, thus, signs’ internal articulations. When it comes to the spectators, a spectator always knows the language of the film without needing to *learn* its language. Every film may have a different way of speech but we only need our body to experience the film and make sense of it through the film’s particular gestures and behaviour. The patterns could be *interpreted* differently but they are always in the perceptual field of the subject, the spectator. The meaning of the film is never gathered through a synthesis of the intellect but gathered through the medium of body which is surrounded by others and world with the same flesh. As Merleau-Ponty concludes, “a movie is not thought; it is perceived.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, p. 58)

“When I say that I have before me a red patch, the sense of the word “patch” is provided by previous experiences through which I learned how to employ the word.” (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. 15) However, creating meaning in the mind is another thing. What phenomenology is concerned with is from the time we first see and experience the film until the time we create an interpretation in our mind. In his philosophy, Merleau-Ponty never takes his subject to be the meaning-giver. In contrast, the meaning arises from the relationship between subject and the thing (in our case its film). The meaning and interpretation should be distinguished from each other. It is always the person who interprets. A person is different from the body since the body is more primordial and a prerequisite for a person. For Merleau-Ponty, a person is a cultural and political subject who tries to understand and interpret in accordance with his/her cultural and political affiliations. However, before anything else we all perceive with our body. Body gives the first expressions and reactions. For example, in a horror film, we jump out of our seat exactly at the moment of the *jump-scare* and not after we intellectualize and analyze the situation. This is why our problem here is not to *understand*. To quote Robert Bresson on this when he is asked if people *understand* him and his films: “I’d rather people feel a film before understanding it. I’d rather feelings arise before intellect.” (Bresson)

In his unfinished manuscript, *The Visible and The Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty states that what makes something visible is the invisible as much as what makes something audible is the inaudible (Merleau-Ponty, 1969). This is also true in editing. It is not possible to use different shots at the same time on top of each other. Everything we see is possible with things we do not see. That is because of the limitations of space-time. We are bound by it. Merleau-Ponty gives an example to this in language:

Saussure notes that the English “the man I love” expresses just as completely as the French “l’homme *que* j’aime.” We say that the English does not express the relative pronoun. The truth is that instead of being expressed by a word, the relative pronoun passes into the language by means of a blank between the words. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 43)

It may seem like only conceptual film editing is investigated so far. Yet the aim is never a conceptual investigation alone. But film editing practice can very well be approached by and through phenomenology as well.

Film editing practice can be looked at with a phenomenological approach because there is an experience in it; a temporal experience in there. Even though editing is not truly “visible” in a film, there is something the practice of editing transfers to the spectator. Inasmuch as time is connected within a whole, inasmuch as everything in the world is related, we cannot disregard the relationship between the spectator and the practice of editing in films. The editor, with the practice, calls the spectator to an existential phenomenon, to look where the editor looks, to share the experience together. And so, there is a sharing. If we see watching a film as an experience, there is no wall between the production of the film and the spectating, there is a continuous temporality from the pre-production, to the post-production which we are focusing on here, of a film to eventually the spectating. There is a pre-experience in the practice of filmmaking, or editing here, that reaches out to the spectator.

## CONCLUSION

Traditional film theories (formalist theories) can be seen as trying to fit films into intellectual formulas. It should be considered that scientific facts are rather distinct from one's own perceptual experience. In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty gives the example of the phantom limb where scientists are able to explain the characteristics of the phantom limb and set forward the reasons of its occurrence yet unable to fully explain how the patient experiences phantom limb. The distinction between the two can be applied to film theory.

Rather than approaching film theory through inductive methods would be more fruitful and more rigid if our views are based on Merleau-Ponty's views on perception, language and the body. Of course, it should not be mistaken that Merleau-Ponty's ideas should fit film theory like a mold. This is because phenomenology can never give a prescription how things are or should be. In contrast, it encourages one to take a new perspective on ideas, things, and oneself.

As Merleau-Ponty suggests, films have a unique way of manifesting the union of body and mind. A film is not thought; it is perceived (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, pp. 57-58). Our body guides us watching a film as it guides us in the world. This is in contrast with the formalist and neoformalist approaches where mind guides the mind and the body is inferior to mind as a vessel only. It is true that these two approaches vary greatly though begin from a similar place: the form. Neoformalism is an approach where every film is taken on its own and analysed accordingly. In her book, *Breaking the Glass Armor* (Thompson, 1988), Kristin Thompson explains her neoformalist approach by giving practical examples. In the book, she explains that neoformalism views films, and other art, as a communication medium where there is a message being sent by the sender (filmmaker in our case), through the medium (film), to the receiver (spectator) (Thompson, 1988, p. 7). Disagreeing with "cookie-cutter" techniques she views each film in its own place. She believes for an academic to analyse a film there has to be something that is puzzling in the initial viewing that needs explanation.

There are a few things that we can agree on through what we have suggested with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception toward the neoformalist approach of film analysis. In the neoformalist approach, the spectator is as active as the film and there is not a clear-cut formula method that works for every and all films. The majority of disagreement is with the empirical nature of the approach where the analysis of film is for answering the question why more than anything else. As Merleau-Ponty says, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, we can understand how and why something is happening to our body but we cannot truly *understand* another person's perception experience through empirical approaches. Also, the goal is never *to understand* in phenomenology, otherwise it would have been an intellectualist drive. The artist does not think about what he/she is doing while doing it, does not analyse the work while working (Merleau-Ponty, 1992, pp. 53-54). Rather the artist puts his intentions out there: in style and in his speech. With every brush stroke, every camera angle, the artists' intentions are there; they are unique yet always available for the spectator to get in contact with. It is in this contact that we let ourselves go in immersion where everything the film shows us is natural and apprehended in its own simultaneous and never-ending way through the medium of our body. At that point there is nothing foreign to the body. In its brute perception, the signal and the signified are the same. What is seen and what it means are one and the same. It is never an intellectual task but an ecstasis of the body. We do not think before watching the film, we think while we are watching the film. Even if we try to analyse and make sense of the film later on, we have to return back to the memory of that particular experience which will not be as vivid and lively in comparison.

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology sheds light to new ways of seeing and understanding perception. His sayings on art are as important as the core of his philosophy. As he does too, we have to put film-viewing in a different place within the arts with its unique experience.

Film as a complete whole in-itself are made of parts and these parts, neither more crucial nor more primary than each other, are what makes a world within a world. Being a part of film/film-making, film editing is the phase where each of the building blocks are assembled together in order to form the whole by reconstructing time and space, setting

up interrelations between shots, rhythm and determining the audiovisual perspective. Therefore, every process of filmmaking, including viewing, becomes an indivisible whole.

In conclusion, while classical film theories like neoformalism, explain how the film works and how we understand things and concepts in those films, along with how the technique of the craft is practiced, very well, they fall short on explaining what happens before we come up with ideas and try to make meanings and interpretations. That first moment that we see the film and our body reacts is where phenomenology helps us with. After all, cinema, like all other art forms is a peculiar thing and science and technology cannot always be enough. Unlike the classical way, Merleau-Ponty does not try to *understand*. We are in this world with our bodies and we cannot deny the importance of this. Merleau-Ponty's ideas help us seeing the world, and editing in our case, differently and as a whole. His ideas and phenomenology itself could be adapted to any other part of the filmmaking and film-viewing process, but editing, its practice and its effects on the spectator is a very good example to see how Merleau-Ponty's ideas on perception, perspective, expression, language and spacetime work concretely.

Aesthetic experience has always been argued; whether it be the experience of a film, a painting, a sculpture or any piece of art. However, the aesthetic experience of a film is unique in its own way, since it has distinct constituents in comparison with other artworks in various fields of art even though it has elements from each. What makes a film? A film is time; a series of images that are rapidly shown through a light source on a screen in continuity. Therefore, the most critical elements of a film are movement and temporality. If film is a continuous flux of images through time, then, time is the founder of film experience and it is film editing which makes the time construction possible in the first place. This plays well with the age-old human fantasy of manipulation of time. Film editing is manipulating spacetime to present a specific angle of a film. Though film is a system where every part is equally crucial, the editing of a film is where it all comes together. It is as if the separate notes and melodies come together to form the whole song. Film editing not only manipulates space-time but at the same time constructs the film language since film is a means of expression. So, film takes each unique aspect from

various art forms and combines them through editing. This is why our experience with film is quite different than with any other art form.

The next phase of research would be to investigate how the aesthetic experience of a film is uniquely distinct from the experience of any other art form with a phenomenological perspective concentrating on temporality and ontology of movement. Phenomenology provides the suspension of any pre-determined judgment through 'bracketing', thus enabling to approach film theory as well as film history with clear eyes. This will be an alternative approach to the already established empiricist and intellectualist approaches towards film (e.g. Neoformalism, Formalism). Classical approaches tend to disregard the aesthetic experience gained from a film.

It is crucial looking at how the practice and theory of editing grew and influenced film viewing throughout the history of filmmaking. It is not the intention of this dissertation to disregard the classical approach but try to build on it to gain a new perspective. The classical approaches are very powerful in terms of what they try to do (how and why something works the way it does), however, fall short when it comes to the feeling, experience and perception of a film. Therefore, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, especially his philosophy of art in his *Phenomenology of Perception*, *Signs* and *Eye and Mind* will guide me through this investigation since his philosophy covers where empiricist and intellectualist approaches do not. Merleau-Ponty talks about the importance of art frequently and even talks about film in a lecture given at IDHEC (Institute for Advanced Cinematographic Studies) in 1945 titled *The Film and the New Psychology*. However, adapting his philosophy to the theory and practice of editing has not been studied in depth. In a time where our experience with everything in the world is affected by technology, I believe it is important to return to the brute aesthetic experience.

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