

# Threshold

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## Three scenes from Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress*, 1958

1/Wipe



A wipe moves from right to left with the movement of Tahei, a Japanese peasant returning from the battlefield. As Tahei moves off right into the distance so too does the wipe, almost sweeping him out of the frame. With the wipe comes a new scene. This time we see Tahei moving toward the camera, walking left uphill following the wipe, as if he is pushing the previous scene away. The actor's movements determine the use of the wipe-cut and, in so doing, produce the flow of the scene.

## 2/Pan



As the characters Matashichi and Tahei fight over who should get the discovered gold, they move from left to right with the camera following their movement. They finally end up on the right hand side of the frame, which enables you to see general Rokurota who is watching over them. The camera movement of the scene finishes with reversing the shot. Now Matashichi and Tahei move slowly left along the rock face, hoping they haven't been seen. The camera movement is a simple pan from left to right, yet, determined by the movements of the actors, it unlocks the scene and expresses everything.

### 3/Repetition



As the Japanese peasants, Matashichi and Tahei try and clamber up a rocky slope, they find themselves constantly falling back down in a comical fashion. As they struggle to climb, the camera cuts back and forth between the two of them. The constant repetition of cutting between the struggling faces creates an exaggeration of the scale of the slope. We see the struggle and pain of the climb only to be shown the comical small feat that has been accomplished. It is the repetition of the cut that creates the tension and movement of the scene.

#### **A personal note**

In making *Threshold* I looked closely at the cinematography and editing of Akira Kurosawa's *The Hidden Fortress*. With the camera movement and the cut fused with what is being depicted, there comes the feeling that the scene could not be filmed in any other way. Within *Threshold* the same ethos is taken: the movement of the land determines the editing required.