

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Fast-paced editing has become an increasingly popular technique used in films over the past few decades. Bowen (2024) states that this trend may be impacted by the “MTV effect” or the series of MTV music videos produced in the 80s involving fast cuts (p. 232). Cutting, Brunick, DeLong, Iricinski, & Candan (2011) found that the average shot length (ASL) of films reached below 4 seconds by 2000-2010, while it used to be over 10 seconds in 1930-1940 (p. 571). This data was consistent among 160 English-language films from 1935 to 2010, across five genres including action, adventure, animation, comedy, and drama. A lower ASL suggests that the film is driven at a faster pace with shorter cuts, which is done to maintain the viewer’s attention. Furthermore, modern action and adventure films have increased their use of motion, movement, and optical change (Cutting et al., 2011, p. 573). Specifically, motion is utilized in shorter shots, which Carruthers and Taggart (as cited in Cutting et al., 2011, p. 573) concluded increases viewer response by triggering physiological responses.

The conscious use of fast-paced editing is part of a general editing technique known as rhythmic editing. The rhythm of a film is shaped by editing choices in timing, pacing, and trajectory phrasing to create cycles of tension and release (Pearlman, 2025, p. 13). Ultimately, the rhythmic experience determines the impact of a film, as it is an intended action of engaging and disengaging (p. 141). These editing choices are manifested through three movements of tension and release occurring at three different levels: images and sound (micro level), emotions (mezzo level), and events (macro level). Through intentional coordination of editing choices, the cycles of tension and release function to synchronize with the viewer to leave a meaningful impact (p.149).

In the context of action-thriller films, rhythmic editing is utilized to create a state of persistent suspense that occurs between tension and release. *The Siege at Thorn High* (2025) becomes a notable example that uses consistent fast pacing in the movement of its events. Preliminary research done by the author identifies the film’s ASL to be 4.97 seconds, which aligns with Cutting’s data of modern film

spacing. Having observed the macro-rhythm, this study intends to explore even further into the micro-rhythm of shot-to-shot editing choices, and mezzo-rhythm of individual scenes.

Previous research on rhythmic editing has found it to be connected to viewer engagement and is intended. However, most are only focused on one aspect of rhythmic editing, often discarding trajectory phrasing. Existing research done on the film *The Siege at Thorn High* (2025) has only thoroughly explored the thematic aspects of the film, and lacks exploration of film form and style. Moreover, these analyses tend to be limited to one of three levels: micro (shot-to-shot), mezzo (scene), or macro (overall film). To address the research gap, this new research introduces the discussion of film style through *The Siege at Thorn High* (2025). Specifically, using Pearlman's theories, it shows how rhythmic editing forms tension and release, occurring simultaneously throughout three levels to create synchronization.

In this study, the author will apply the qualitative method by doing content analysis. The primary data is taken through film observation, which will be structured onto a data table that shows the visual, sound, duration, and context. Secondary data will be gained through literature study of Pearlman's rhythmic editing theory and tension and release theory. Through this systematic analysis, the author will evaluate how structural editing choices coordinate across multiple levels to form cycles of tension and release that leave a meaningful impact through synchronization.

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCOPE

How does rhythmic editing form cycles of tension and release through the film *The Siege at Thorn High* (2025)? The author will identify this through three important scenes, each taken from each act of the film. Each scene will be analyzed through Pearlman's rhythmic editing aspects which include timing, pacing and trajectory phrasing. At the same time, movements of tension and release occurring in cycles will be measured through movement of events, emotions, and images and sound. In limiting this research, the three main scenes that are chosen will be:

1. Edwin's first day of teaching at Bukit Duri School (00:12:20 – 00:16:16)
2. Edwin's group gets chased by Jefri's gang (00:53:40 – 00:56:34)
3. Edwin and Jefri's final battle (01:47:29 – 01:51:22)

1.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to analyze rhythmic editing in forming tension and release through the film *The Siege at Thorn High* (2025). In particular, rhythmic editing shown in the film will be discussed through its timing, pacing, and trajectory phrasing. As a result, the tension and release movements caused by it will be identified through a micro, mezzo, and macro level. This research hopes to fill the gap of previous studies lacking in-depth analysis of Pearlman's rhythmic editing aspects in forming tension and release across three levels. Additionally, existing studies on *The Siege at Thorn High* (2025) have not yet discussed film style elements, which is just as significant as themes in leaving a lasting impact. The author hopes that the research will be beneficial to those who are interested in Pearlman's studies of rhythm in editing.