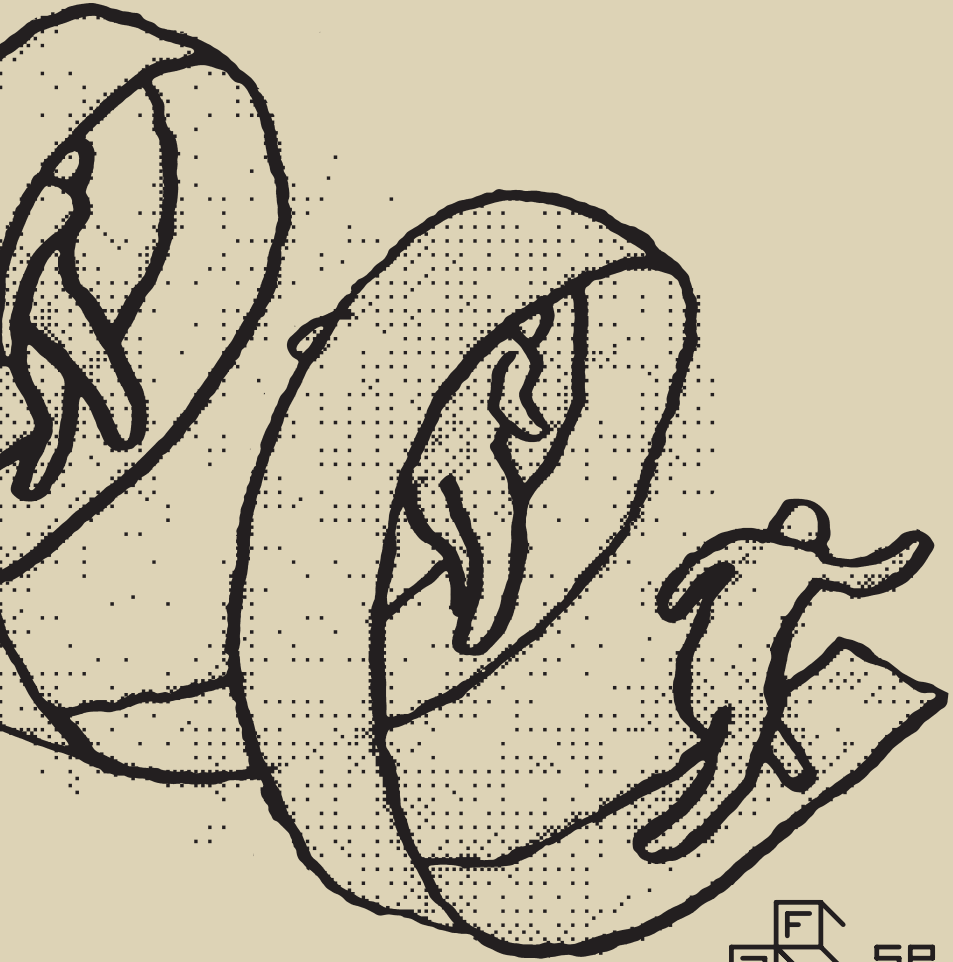


Gertrud
Koch

Identity in
Motion—On
Movement
in Film



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Identity in Motion – on Movement in Film

What kind of image is the filmic image? The standard answer is: a “moving image”. What is a moving image? The standard answer is: a) an image that has movement in it, and b) an image that is moving. The filmic image has both, it shows movement and it is moving. The specific case of the filmic image is that despite the kind of movement it entails it is expanded in time and we perceive and see it in the full sense of the word as an image of movement and not only as a moving image. The moving image of film has the capacity to show us images of movement not as an image of a moment in this movement like the painting of a rough sea, but as a flux. It does so by constantly shifting the view-point not only between cuts but in itself insofar the camera moves. From pictures that show movement the filmic image, the movie pictures differ insofar as they don't offer a stable frame with a fixed point-of-view. They can without leaving the frame turn to the back of the shown for example in one movement – the still image can do this by serialisation of different frames. But like a human gaze it cannot show itself, it has to shift in space and time to show the former point-of-view as another picture.

The flux of the filmic image in one shot is in itself temporally organised: we never know what will be seen next, even if we never change the frame of the screen. The constant mobilisation of the frame into an endless flow of successions of images poses a second question: How are spatial and temporal extension shaping the filmic image? The moving camera crosses space and opens horizons leading into new

spaces – an action that takes place in time. We see things unfolding in time while the camera moves in space, we not only see the fall of a man from a tower, we see the man falling, we see the act from the moment he loses his grip to the final splash on the ground and it may be only the lens system in the camera that moved zooming into the falling man's face evoking a moment of stasis in the ongoing falling. This poses the question: Is there a material limit that frames the filmic image as one? Films have thousands images in single frames – are they all filmic images or just images from the film? The filmic image as moving image, that's my suggestion here, is a perceptual synthesis, an epiphenomenon emerging out of the flux of single images and the past movements of the camera shooting them.

Insofar one could come to say that the moving image is a dialectical one: it sublates the fugitive and vanishing single images that are never truly seen into the filmic image that is their perceptual synthesis and as such already between seeing and thinking. Moving images provoke visual thought.

Insofar as the moving images of film play constantly with the framing and deframing of what they show one could argue that



film in itself shifts spatial borders into a constant flux of changing horizons. By doing so film establishes an interplay with the seen and the unseen, the on screen and the off screen space. This operation can also be described as an doing and undoing of the framed image and its concreteness, its identity, as if it would say to us, 'what I show is the flux of time and the changes that take place into it'. Taking this potentiality of film – sure not every film has to proceed this way – seriously it offers the possibility of incessant negation of fixed identities. Identities that look for a framed and single image of themselves confront in film the uncanny experience of becoming different. Film therefor creates identities that are not fixed but in constant move. And that's the chance film offers.

Detour, dir.: Edgar Ulmer, USA 1945

The final shot of Ulmer's mesmerizing film turns in a single shot the angle on its character, cutting from a frontal shot, in which he seems to address his inner monologue to the public, to his final steps until and into his arrest. In the inner



monologue spoken over the shot the character assumes the change that made him from an innocent suspect of murderer of a stranger to an unintentional murderer of a fatal woman – fulfilling a fate that beats accidentally and blind and comes from



behind. The camera movement of the shot frames the character from the first person to an object observed from behind, changing his identity from an 'I' to a subjugated object of fate and law.



The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence, dir.: John Ford,
USA 1962

The film shifts the identity of The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence from one character to the other by only moving the camera and changing the frame: In the first shot we see two men shooting at each other and one man shot. In the second shot we see a third man shooting behind the two and from now on know that the man who was known as the man who shot Liberty Valence, was not the man who shot Liberty Valence. The film shows this, just through the operation of the camera and the new framing.



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of numerous books and international journals on aesthetics, film theory, art theory and perception. She was Lecturer and Guest professor in Germany and abroad.

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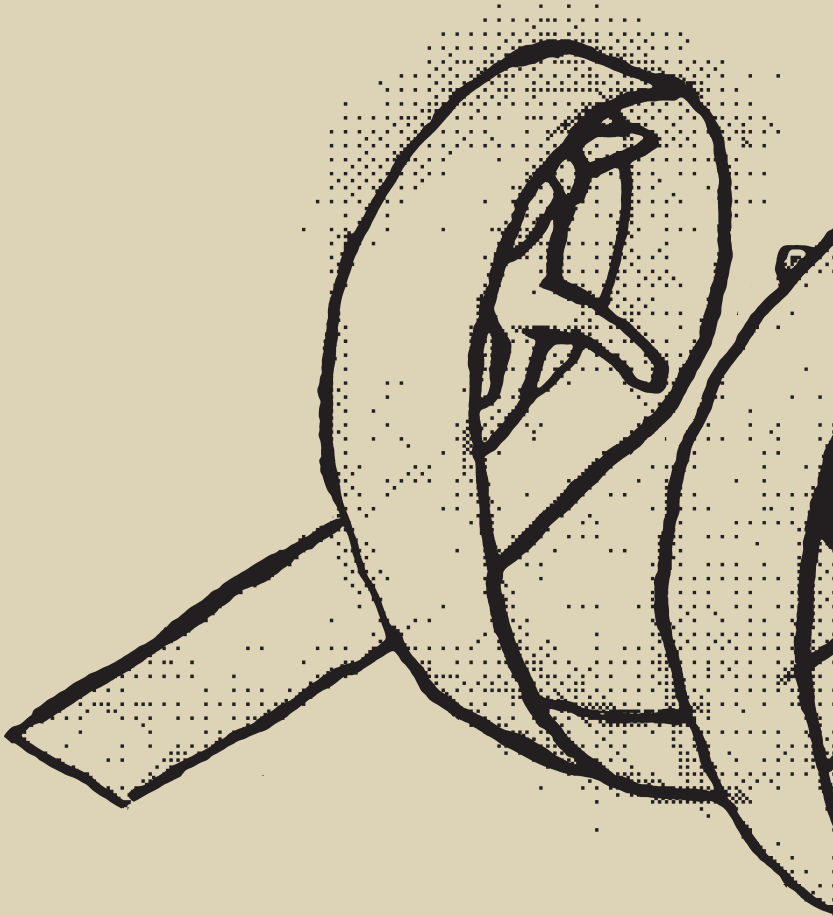
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