

**LADY IN THE LAKE:
Münsterberg, Montgomery and the
Muddle of Mental Events**

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. . . the film, having only arrangements of space to work with, cannot render thought, for the moment thought is externalized it is no longer thought. The film, by arranging external signs for our visual perception, or by presenting us with dialogue, can lead us to infer thought. But it cannot show us thought directly. It can show us characters thinking, feeling, and speaking, but it cannot show us their thoughts and feelings. A film is not thought; it is perceived.

George Bluestone (1957)¹

Shortly before his death in 1916, Hugo Münsterberg, a renowned experimental psychologist teaching within the Department of Philosophy of Harvard University, published a book entitled *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study*, the first sustained enquiry into how we perceive movies and consequently, or so he contended, how they would have to be made differently were they to engage us artistically.²

¹ George Bluestone, *Novels into Film : the Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema* (Berkeley: the University of California Press, 1973 [1957]), pages 47 and 48. Bluestone cites Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "Le Cinéma et la Nouvelle Psychologie", *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 26 (November, 1947), pages 930-943, in support of his assertion. Merleau-Ponty's article may well have been the source of it.

² Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: a Psychological Study* (New York, New York: D. Appleton, 1916). For a provocative recounting of Münsterberg's life and works and the academic and social environment within which he wrote the book, see Jan-Christopher Horak's 'Hugo Münsterberg: a German Jew (?) in America' available within the Evan Wm. Cameron Collection.

Münsterberg, unlike many of his peers, had been uncommonly open throughout his life to recognising and commending the promise of things 'new', exemplified notably by his championing of Mary Calkins in 1894 as a candidate for a doctorate from Harvard University, and again in 1902 when Radcliffe College was permitted to offer doctorates in lieu of it, as Bruce Kuklick confirms.

"When the Women's Educational Association petitioned the corporation [of Harvard University] to consider granting degrees to females in 1872, the corporation instructed President] Eliot to reply 'the University does not propose to give its degrees to women'. Twenty years later Mary Calkins, the psychologist and philosopher, created a minor scandal by successfully auditing courses in the philosophical department and requesting a doctorate for her work in 1894. Calkins had completed all the degree requirements, and Münsterberg wrote to Eliot in her behalf as his 'best pupil'. The reply was negative: 'The Corporation are not prepared

An avid playgoer provoked by the distinctive nature and effect of the new art of movie making as exemplified by Griffith's *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*, Münsterberg concentrated upon how differently members of an audience within a cinema experience the events of a movie from how they would experience the events of a play performed on stage before them in a theatre.³ Despite the industry, care and enthusiasm of its author, however, the book perplexed readers and especially so as the art of filmmaking evolved during the studio era, for the conclusions that he drew with respect to how movies ought to be made to affect audiences 'artistically' were so misbegotten and yet so resonant with convictions that would soon after dominate 'modernist' thought about the making of works of 'art' in general that few readers could sense with assurance how, where and why he had gone astray.

The perplexity of readers of the text who have never made movies has persisted to this day, long after the actor Robert Montgomery confirmed unwittingly for filmmakers, when directing his first movie thirty years after the book's publication, how mistaken Münsterberg had been.

Montgomery, an actor trained in the theatre but with a career already established as a performer within films, was given the chance by MGM in 1946 to produce and direct a movie. The result, *LADY IN THE LAKE*, adapted from a novel of the same name by Raymond Chandler, written in the first-person singular, past tense, and published in 1943, so clearly yet disastrously misused the tools of filmmaking that it destroyed for filmmakers the pretence, central to Münsterberg's account, that viewers of movies, when *seeing* people, places and things by means of them, could nonetheless do so – somehow and in some way

to give any Harvard degree to any woman no matter how exceptional the circumstances may be'.

"After the turn of the century circumstances had altered to the extent that the new Radcliffe College was offering advanced degrees as the form of the advanced Harvard degree for women. Taught exclusively by Harvard faculty in regular graduate courses, women were able to get a Radcliffe doctorate from 1902. Calkins was not only philosophically gifted by also adamantly convinced of her rights. Münsterberg begged her as the leader of four women who were to receive a Radcliffe degree retroactively to accept the new degree to insure its academic reputation. She refused on the grounds that she deserved and would have a Harvard degree or none at all." . . .

. . . "Although she [Calkins] never went beyond Wellesley, she was elected president of the American Psychological Association (1905) and the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) (1918)." [Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy: Cambridge Massachusetts, 1860-1930* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1977), pages 590 and 591.]

³ Münsterberg's reference to *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* occurs on page 5.

– as if they were *thinking* of them (as if, that is, they were either remembering, imagining or dreaming of the events *rather* than seeing them, or as if, when seeing them, they were nonetheless encountering them through an act of private perception infused – somehow and in some way – with the distinctive *mental* awareness that only a human being, present unlike the viewer within the space and time of the objects and events being seen by means of the movie, could be bringing to his or her experience of them.

By means of a movie, viewers may indeed see objects and events – including objects and events of which a 'character' is thinking (remembering, imagining, dreaming, etc.) – provided those objects and events are presented as they would could have been seen had the viewers .

Unfortunately, there are no such things as 'thoughts' or 'perceptions', much less private ones, only our acts of thinking and perceiving, hence nothing that a camera could record, much less for credible viewing thereafter.

Both Münsterberg and Montgomery – the first by precept, the second by example – were entrapped within what I shall call in the 'muddle of mental events'.

To comprehend the confusions they shared, let's attend firstly to Montgomery's misguided direction of LADY IN THE LAKE. Only a handful of movies, few but important and thus among the 'greatest of their kind', have so manifestly exemplified the mistakes of their makers that they have served for others ever after as 'object lessons' in how a movie ought never to be made. What did Robert Montgomery do when making the movie to warrant thereafter such disrepute among filmmakers?⁴

⁴ 'Object lesson' was a phrase that I learned from my mother, who used it to describe the short acts of teaching by which, a commonplace object in hand, she sought to inculcate her religious convictions within young listeners, I among them, when performing weekly before them within 'Sunday School'. Orson Welles's CITIZEN KANE, released in 1941, preceded Montgomery's movie as an 'object lesson' for filmmakers in how a movie ought never to be made, as Welles' himself confirmed in practice immediately thereafter when making THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS, though few nonfilmmakers have ever registered it as such. (See the lecture 'Misusing Sights as Sounds – Radio Drama and CITIZEN KANE' available elsewhere within the Evan Wm. Cameron Collection.).

LADY IN THE LAKE

The principal character of Raymond Chandler's novel is a detective named Philip Marlowe, and Robert Montgomery, when making the movie, elected to take on the rôle himself – so to speak.

Why so to speak? Because Robert Montgomery hardly appears in the film. His voice is heard on the soundtrack first-person, past-tense, commenting from beginning to end on events as they occurred, and occasionally one sees an arm or leg (supposedly his) protruding into view, screen-right or left, or catches a passing glimpse of him reflected in a mirror. Otherwise, one can only imagine how he might have looked as the story progressed, what stance he might have been taking or what expression his face might have borne, for the film was the first and last ever made by a major studio attempting to use the camera 'subjectively' throughout.

Except for brief interludes when Montgomery is seen addressing the camera directly(as the filmmaker of the movie as it opens) or by reflection in mirrors as he, enacting Philip Marlowe, speaks to other actors, THE LADY IN THE LAKE purports to be representing objects and events to viewers not only as if they are being seen from 'a character's point-of-view' (not only, that is, as they could have been perceived as publicly observable happenings by viewers had they rather than the 'character' been positioned within the scene where he instead happens to be), but as if the objects and events being witnessed are suffused with the private and unique mental *awareness* that only he could bring to the encounter.

The camera was supposed to *be* Philip Marlowe(!) as he was addressed directly by other characters, kissed, punched, bounced about as if in an auto accident, splashed with whiskey, dragged across a roadside and into a phone booth, etc.. Viewers were supposedly seeing the objects and events of the movie through Philip Marlowe's eyes as he was experiencing them.

The film is one of the funniest ever made, and some of the humour was intended: the lines are often Chandleresque and the acting is 'high camp'. Most of the glee, however, comes from the wonderful wrongheadedness of the endeavour. Who would have thought that a filmmaker, forty years after Porter's THE DREAM OF A RAREBIT FIEND (1906), could have conned a studio into backing conceptual confusion?

A few of my acquaintances, non-filmmakers one and all, believe to this day that Montgomery, a man of the theatre making his first film, was simply incompetent as a film director. Had he been a bit more careful with his framing here, used shorter takes there and cut more cautiously everywhere, he might have succeeded. Filmmakers, however,

knew better immediately. Montgomery had tried to do what cannot credibly be done – to present events to viewers as only a character could have experienced them, mental events among them.

I shall have much to say on other occasions of the confusions of *identity* inhering in Montgomery's misadventure.⁵ Here, however, I wish to attend simply to those accruing to his disregard of the *adverbial* appearance of mental events, the misconstrual central to the argument advanced thirty years before by Münsterberg who, despite having never written a play or a screenplay nor worked upon the making of artefacts as prescribed within them, believed nonetheless that he could pronounce credibly not only upon how they worked and why, but how they might work better.⁶ Let's turn to what he said.

Münsterberg's Argument

Hugo Münsterberg's *The Photoplay* was published in 1916 as Griffith was making *INTOLERANCE*, a year after he had astonished the world – and Münsterberg! – with the release of *THE BIRTH OF A NATION*.⁷

Münsterberg was no ordinary thinker. A German imbued with both the new science of experimental psychology and the teachings of Kant (as misunderstood by most readers in the late 19th-century), he had been invited to Harvard University by William James to work under the auspices of the 'philosophical' department in the first laboratory for psychological research in the new world. Fond of the theatre, he had become fascinated in turn by the cinema, especially the differences between the two arts. He decided to write a treatise delineating them.

⁵ See in particular the lectures comprising the 'Screenwriting, 1895-1905 Prelude – The Arrival of the Lumiere's Train' collection available elsewhere within the Evan Wm. Cameron Collection.

⁶ As we do so, keep in mind that Eisenstein, at almost the same time, was struggling to complete the latter parts of *IVAN THE TERRIBLE*, equally convinced of the importance of matching by means of film the effects of the novelistic stream-of-consciousness pioneered in Joyce's "inner monologues". Bewitched by language, he had earlier confused the use with the mention of things. How did he avoid disaster here? Good question! See the Postscript to this lecture (pages 19f. below).

⁷ *THE BIRTH OF A NATION* is one of the few movies that Münsterberg names within his book, having obviously been provoked to embark upon the writing of it – at least in part – by the excitement of having seen it. See footnote 2 above.

Münsterberg's argument encompassed every essential thesis that Rudolph Arnheim would advance five years later within his celebrated essay of 1921 on *Film*, the piece that was to entice a generation of thinkers into misconstruing filmmaking as a formalist endeavour. Both thinkers thought unsoundly and inconsistently, relying on false premises and faulty inferences. Nevertheless, it's worth reconstructing step-by-step what Münsterberg said and how he said it, for the roots of the confusions about how mental events appear to us, shared subsequently by Arnheim, are everywhere apparent.⁸

Münsterberg began by asking a number of questions commonly vetted at the time though answerable, if at all, only with uncommon caution.

Is film an art?

If so, is it a unique art (an art, that is, "in itself under entirely new mental life conditions", page 39)?⁹ And,

If either, How is that possible? How, that is, unlike other arts, is it constrained?

Münsterberg constructed his answer by trying to contrast how we encounter things in the theatre with how we encounter them by means of film. I shall try to reproduce his argument as strongly as possible, quoting directly wherever controversy of interpretation might arise.

1. We can encounter only two kinds of events: outer events constrained by "the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality"; and inner events constrained by "the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion" (page 173). Among the former are the trees, flowers and faces we see about us; among the latter are our thoughts, ideas, memories, dreams, and hallucinations.
2. When watching actors perform a play in the theatre, we encounter outer events. They engage our involuntary attention, memory, imagination and emotions but are subject to the forms of the outer world unimposed by our minds.

⁸ For a contrary judgment, namely that Münsterberg argued "better: clearly, succinctly and unpretentiously" and in a manner "yet to be surpassed", by a colleague of mine who seems inspired by the incoherence that I abhor, see Ian Jarvie's *The Philosophy of the Film: Epistemology, Ontology, Aesthetics* (New York, New York and London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), especially pages 69-95, 158f. and 208f. . The assessments are from pages 70 and 75.

⁹ Page references within the text of this essay are to the edition of Münsterberg's *The Photoplay* as cited in footnote 2 above.

3. When we encounter events by means of a movie, they also engage our involuntary attention, memory, imagination and emotions and thus often seem to us to be constrained by the forms of the outer world as well. Nevertheless, upon closer examination we discover that

- (A) Their motion and depth must be only apparent, for we know that they are caused by intermittently-projected patterns of light and hence cannot be genuine. ". . . the motion which he [the viewer] sees appears to be a true motion, and yet is created by his own mind. . . . It is only a suggestion of depth, a depth created by our own activity, but not actually seen, because essential conditions for the true perception of depth are lacking. (pages 70 and 71);
- (B) They lack colour, synchronized sound and other attributes of outer events;¹⁰ and
- (C) They are often non-objectively sequenced, causing us to switch our attention instantaneously from things in one space or time to those of another, or even compelling us to view such things superposed one upon the other, none of them causally connected. For example, "events which are far distant from one another so that we could not be physically present at all of them at the same time are fusing in our field of vision." (page 106).

4. Our encounters with things by means of film, therefore, unlike our encounters with things in the theatre, cannot be construed simply as encounters with outer events. They involve a "conflict of perception" (page 55) as when we see an object by means of a mirror: "we certainly see the depth, and yet we cannot accept it." (pages 55 and 56). Such an encounter "brings our mind into a peculiar complex state." (pages 56 and 57), for we are encountering "a mixture of fact and symbol" (page 71). We are compelled to conclude that:

Depth and movement alike come to us in the moving picture world, not as hard facts but as a mixture of fact and symbol. They are present and yet they are not in the things. We invest the impressions with them. The theatre has both depth and motion, without any subjective help; the screen has them and yet lacks them. We see things distant and moving, but we furnish to them more than we receive; we create the depth and the continuity through our mental mechanism. (page 71)

¹⁰ Münsterberg was writing in 1916, remember!

5. Unlike events encountered in the theatre, therefore, cinemactical events not only engage our attention, memory, imagination and emotions, but may mirror the structure and appearance of mental processes! Films can 'objectify inner states' (page 135), thus 'somewhat symbolizing' (page 99) or 'expressing' (pages 118 and 130) emotions. Events encountered by means of film, therefore, can be constrained by the forms of the inner world, just as inner events are, rather than by the forms of the outer world.

. . . the photoplay tells us the human story by overcoming the forms of the outer world, namely, space, time, and causality, and by adjusting the events to the forms of the inner world, namely, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion. (page 173)

. . . [the photoplay] can act as our imagination acts. It has the mobility of our ideas which are not controlled by the physical necessity of outer events but by the psychological laws for the association of ideas. In our mind past and future become intertwined with the present. The photoplay obeys the laws of the mind rather than those of the outer world. (page 97; also page 175)

The objective world [in the photoplay] is molded by the interests of the mind. (page 106). . . in every case the objective world of outer events had been shaped and molded until it became adjusted to the subjective movements of the mind. The mind develops memory ideas and imaginative ideas; in the moving pictures they become reality. (page 135)

6. Encountered events are artistical, however, only to the degree that they differ from the events of the outer world! The point of art is not to imitate "real things and men", but to create events of perfect harmony and unity that contrast with the relative chaos of the events we encounter about us.

. . . [a work] becomes art just so far as it overcomes reality, stops imitating and leaves the imitated reality behind it. It is artistic just in so far as it does not imitate reality but changes the world . . . To imitate the world is a mechanical process; to transform the world so that it becomes a thing of beauty is the purpose of art. The highest art may be furthest removed from reality. (page 144).

The fundamental condition of art, therefore, is that we shall be distinctly conscious of the unreality of the artistic production, and that means that it must be absolutely separated from the real things and men, that it must be isolated and kept in its own sphere. (page 161) . . . The different arts are different ways of abstracting from reality. (page 231)

But we must take one step more. We need not only complete separation from reality by the changed forms of experience, but we must demand also that this unreal thing or event shall be complete in itself . . . every demand which is made by the purpose of true art removes us from reality and is contrary to the superficial claim that art ought to rest on skillful imitation. The true victory of art lies in the overcoming of the real appearance . . . (pages 164 and 165)

The work of art shows us the things and events perfectly complete in themselves, freed from all connections which lead beyond their limits, that is, in perfect isolation. (page 150)

7. Since the events that we encounter by means of film need not be constrained by the forms of the outer world, but, like inner events, may rather be constrained by the forms of the inner world, it follows that they ought to be so constrained if they are to be maximally artistical! Filmmakers ought to make films that will enable us to encounter events as unlike "the real human persons and the real landscapes" as can be (page 209), for films, like music but unlike theatre, can divorce themselves from reality and become artistical only by "overcoming the outer world" (page 169). Filmmakers ought therefore to avoid the use of synchronous dialogue (page 203), sound effects (page 89), stereo projection (page 179) and colour (page 209) when and if they become available, and ought unceasingly to use non-objective sequencing, for "to picture emotions must be the central aim of the photoplay" (page 112) rather than to present events realistically. Only in this way can film become a unique art.

We become aware that the unique task of the photoplay art can be fulfilled only by a far-reaching disregard of reality. The real human persons and the real landscapes must be left behind and, as we saw, must be transformed into pictorial suggestions only. We must be strongly conscious of their pictorial unreality in order that that wonderful play of our inner experiences may be realized on the screen. This consciousness of unreality must seriously suffer from the addition of color. (page 209)

Münsterberg's Muddle

I have been charitable to Münsterberg when reconstructing his argument, reducing ambiguities, inconsistencies and non sequiturs as much as possible for heuristic reasons. Careful readers will nevertheless have recoiled already at the latent incoherence of the suggestions implicit in steps 3 and 4, and everywhere reaffirmed in his text, that although we "certainly see the depth" by means of films (page 56) and see things move as well, the depth is "not actually seen" (pages 70 and 71) nor motion either. Münsterberg is here confusing what we see with what, or so he believes, we *must* be seeing, inferring illicitly from a diversity of causes to a diversity of effects.¹¹

Careful readers will have noted, as well, the illicit conflation of 'objectifying', 'symbolizing' and 'expressing' inner states consequent in step 5 leading to Münsterberg's culminating failure to notice that however far beyond "the real human persons and the real landscapes" a work must go to become artistical (however strongly, that is, an artistical event "overcomes reality . . . and leaves the imitated reality behind it", it does not follow that an artistical work must at any point "stop imitating" the reality it transcends. However far beyond imitation a work must go to become artistical, it needn't ever refuse to encompass imitation and thus render observers "distinctly conscious of the unreality of the artistic production".

When all was said and done, Münsterberg sensed, to his credit, that he had somehow argued incoherently, failing to capture in his conclusions what he knew of films and the world. Somehow, in particular, he had to slip 'imitation' back in under the rug, for were films to be encumbered as thoroughly as possible by "a far-reaching disregard of reality", then filmmakers ought in the future not only to avoid synchronous dialogue, sound effects, stereo projection and colour but to foreswear using any of the objects of the world, especially actors. And yet, as Münsterberg noted, albeit incoherently, not only do we see by means of film "the real actor in the picture . . . [for] in the photoplay we see the actors themselves" (page 179), but we *must* do so to be engaged as artistically as we ought by films, for otherwise the "emotional interests upon which the whole [photo]play depends would be destroyed" (page 210)!

But if, enroute to artistical engagement, actors must be seen in films as the real objects they are, then the door has been flung open to the uses of dialogue, sound effects, stereo projection, colour and much else besides, for by these means we may better see and hear actors as the real things they are.

¹¹ For more on this confusion, so in particular the lecture 'Kant at the La Ciotat Station – the Arrival of the Lumière's Train' available elsewhere within the Evan Wm. Cameron Collection.

Surely three questions must be asked and answered:

What at root had confused Münsterberg? What had unwittingly compelled him, an uncommonly observant and well-trained thinker, into blatant incoherence when thinking about filmmaking, even when he knew better? And why?

The answers, I suggest, require us to recognise that Münsterberg was misled by a conviction weaving in and out of his argument, and linking step 1 to step 5, for which at times he seems to be arguing and yet that functions for him as a premise rather than a conclusion, namely, in his own words, that the "wonderful play of our inner experiences" can be "realized on the screen".¹² Were this conjecture untenable, the entire argument would collapse.

I wish therefore to address here the core claim upon which his argument rests, namely that one may encounter things by means of film as if one were thinking of them (construing 'thinking' broadly enough to encompass all the ways by which we may attend internally and self-consciously to things). For it is simply and obviously false that we can exemplify photographically how we think of things. I find it astonishing, indeed, that anyone, on second thought, could ever have believed it. Without it, however, Münsterberg's argument passes understanding.

Thinking of Things

When we remember, imagine, ponder, dream, hallucinate or otherwise think of something, does anything appear to us? And, if so, may our encounters with them be exemplified photographically? Münsterberg believed that the answer to both questions was 'yes', and thought, it seems, that Kant would have thought so as well. I, on the contrary, believe the first but not the second, and suspect that Kant would have agreed with me had he been clear on the logic of identity. To see why, let's consider the questions in reverse order.

¹² As readers will already have noted, Münsterberg waffles on the meaning of the phrase "objectifying inner states" (page 135), sometimes construing it as a "symbolizing" or "expressing" activity (pages 99, 118 and 130), sometimes as a "picturing" or "realizing" one (pages 112 and 209). If we are to take both construals seriously, we must presume, it seems, that he is at least contending that things encountered by means of film may *resemble* things as experienced through inner events *in some respect or other* (that is, they are at least *iconic* symbols for them), for otherwise his argument is unintelligible.

Think, for a moment, of your father. Suppose I were now to ask you,

What colour shirt was he wearing as you thought of him?

Where was he standing?

What time of day was it?

Typically, none of the questions need have had definitive answers (although, if I had asked you to do so, you could well have imagined your father wearing a coloured shirt sitting in Elizabeth Taylor's lap at high noon in Times Square, and may indeed have done something akin to that upon hearing my questions). The questions remained unanswerable before I asked them, however, not because you imagined your father as naked or as standing in a fog so heavy you couldn't determine where or when he was, nor because you thought imprecisely of him, having failed somehow to focus a 'mental lens', thus rendering him defocused, discoloured and distorted.

By thinking of your father as you did, without specific dress, colouring or spatial and temporal place, you thought of him precisely, naturally and without aberration, for that is how one *thinks* of things!

To think of your father is to attend to him *mentally* in ways having no credible correlate with any of the ways in which he might have been *perceived*, however distortedly. To believe otherwise is to confuse how one thinks of things with how one perceives them.

My father and I, for example, perceived one another too rarely, for our encounters were too few and far between; and yet I – as a thing – may at anytime think of him – as a thing – by using my brain, something that is a part of me. My father appeared to me whenever I saw him as Kant said that he would.

When I now think of my father, however, nothing appears to me *but my thinking brain as it thinks of him!* And my brain, as I think of my father, although appearing to me, cannot appear to me as did my father when I perceived him!

One can, of course, attend to any imaginable aspect of a thing when thinking of it, and many people have been especially trained to think extraordinarily of things. Had you become accustomed as a painter or photographer to uncommon habits of imagining, for example, or were you pathologically disturbed, you might well have thought of your father, even before I asked my questions, in subtly different ways: you might have thought uncommonly of local features of surface or even of chronological identifiers.

Nonetheless, however well-trained we may be to think uncommonly of things or however contortedly we may occasionally find ourselves thinking of them, we can never think of them as we would perceive them, for to perceive something is to have it appear to us as a densely defined thing within a spatially, temporally and causally unified world of other things. Things never appear to us when we think of them, however, much less as inhabiting an "inner world" (Münsterberg's phrase). Our thinking brains, by appearing to us as they do, enable us to attend mentally to things, but to attend mentally to something is to encounter nothing perceptually.

Mental events can never be *perceived* but only *experienced* when imagining or thinking!

To believe otherwise is to denigrate the uniqueness of thinking, to try to shove how we attend mentally to things into the cubby hole of how we attend perceptually to them. Inevitably, it entices the unwary to assimilate mental clarity with perceptual distortion, and thus to seek ways of making things appear distortedly by means of film while claiming incredibly that this is how we think of them.

However difficult it may sometimes be to think precisely of things, we are never, when thinking, engaged conceptually in a task analogous to trying to get a better perspective on a defocused, discoloured or otherwise perceptually distorted inhabitant of some other world of things. From which it follows directly that

No photograph or film of your father, however contrived or manipulated, could ever present him to anyone as your brain appears to you when you think of him, or as anyone else's brain would appear to them as they think of him.

By means of photographs or a film, one may readily perceive things, and perceive them distortedly; but since to think of things, however oddly, is to encounter nothing distortedly (whether remembering, imagining, pondering, dreaming, hallucinating or otherwise thinking of it), it follows, contra Münsterberg, that no film or photograph can exemplify how we think of things. That is,

To remember, imagine, ponder, dream, hallucinate or otherwise think of something is to *conceive* of it in a uniquely mental manner having no credible correlate when *perceiving* things.

Since no film or photograph can exemplify inner events, Münsterberg's argument is untenable. We have yet, however, to inoculate ourselves fully against its root confusion, for we have yet to consider the linguistical bias that led him to it. Inner events are how our

brain events appear to us and hence are not only unexemplifiable photographically, but, carefully considered, present to us no things as they are at all! To think otherwise is to confuse how we think of things either with the things of which we think or with the events occurring within our brains that appear to us as we think of other things, and thus, as argued before in Chapter 1, to confuse adverbial with illicitly adjectival thinking.

The Reifying Roots of the Confusion

What led Münsterberg astray? We all acquire as children the habit of speaking of 'memories', 'images', 'ideas', 'dreams' or 'hallucinations' whenever we ought, were we to speak carefully, to speak only of human beings 'remembering', 'imagining', 'thinking', 'dreaming' or 'hallucinating'.

Münsterberg was accustomed, I suggest, as we all are, to misdescribing how brain events appear to us as if one were encountering the things of which one is thinking. He, as we, had been trained to reify how inner events appear to us by illicitly using nouns and adjectives where he ought only to have used verbs and adverbs.

We needn't disagree with Münsterberg's contention, derived from Kant, that there are inner as well as outer events. Our brains, after all, are influenced by stimuli generated not only by things about us but by themselves. As parts of my brain process data derived from stimuli received from external things, enabling me to become aware of them as things distinct from me, parts process data derived from my brain's internal workings as well, enabling me simultaneously to be aware of myself as a complexly functioning being.¹³

Echoing Kant, the early Wittgenstein may have been right in believing that we never appear to ourselves as things but only as limiting cohesively how other things appear to us, implying that at least some of the parts of our brains most subtly devoted to internal sensing may never themselves be sensed, much less sense themselves. As Kant and Münsterberg well knew, however, at least some of the events of our brains are experienced by us as they happen, appearing internally to us as we think and feel. The events of our brains that appear internally to us, however, are never encountered by us as things.

¹³ Many thinkers, unaccustomed to thinking adverbially, have erected roadblocks of their own invention to identifying brain events with the events that appear to us when we think, but that's no excuse for failing to do so. Were I to observe your brain as you think of your father, your thinking brain would appear to me differently from the way it appears to you: it would appear *externally* to me, *internally* to you, and hence as different adverbially as could be. But that is no reason whatsoever for failing to *identify* the event appearing differently to both of us, for it is the *same* event.

As noted above, whenever I think of my father, an event occurs in part of my brain of which I am aware. As I think of my father, the event appears to me as it is sensed internally by parts of my brain, not as an outer event would appear to me but rather as an inner event appears having no credible photographable analogue whatsoever. For there is nothing being encountered as I think of my father other than the happening in my brain, and it appears to me to be no thing, and hence to be appearing nowhere in particular.

Whenever I think of my father (that is, remember, imagine or ponder him, or dream or hallucinate about him), I am aware of thinking of my father: there is an outer event of the past (my father) of whom I am thinking, and an inner event of the present (my thinking of him) of which I am aware. But there is no such thing as a 'memory', 'image', 'thought', 'idea', 'dream' or 'hallucination' of him! There are no such things to be had by me when thinking of my father; there is only my father and my thinking of him.

Münsterberg believed not only that we encounter inner events (that is, happenings in our brains), but that those inner events appear to us as inner *things* (memories, images, ideas, dreams and hallucinations). Being things, he thought, they ought to be exemplifiable photographically.

What misled him? What has led so many writers, attuned to how we commonly speak of the common things about us, especially novelists and dramatists when trying to write screenplays, to add mental things illicitly to the presumed furniture of the world? What compels them to speak as if such extraordinary things were?

We are so accustomed, I suspect, to referring to the things about us with which we interact (people, for example, and flowers, cabbages and kings) that we are enticed unwittingly into believing that we must be encountering things whenever we act.

We learn to say of someone that 'She is playing chess', and then to talk as if there is something she is playing called 'the game of chess', failing to recognize that 'chess' is an adverb telling how she is playing, not a noun. (Were she 'playing badly', would we look for something called 'badly' that she is playing?) We learn to say of someone that 'He is speaking English', and then to talk as if there were something he is speaking called 'the English language', failing to recognize that 'English' is an adverb telling how he is speaking, not a noun. (Were he 'speaking loudly', would we look for something called 'loudly' that he is speaking?)

We learn to speak as we do by interacting with things about us, failing to recognize that by articulating how we experience them as we have been taught to do, we imbed within ourselves habits of speaking that mislead us systematically in other contexts. We learn to

speaking grammatically of our ordinary encounters with things, and are then tempted grammatically into conjuring things not present in the world in those rarer moments when we think reflectively of ourselves remembering, imagining, pondering, dreaming or hallucinating.

For example, we learn early on to say of people that they walk, run, jump and exercise, or remember, ponder, dream and think. Soon we are saying that they are walking, running, jumping and exercising, or are remembering, pondering, dreaming and thinking. So far, so fair: we have learned to speak gerundively and perhaps to understand correctly that we are thereby speaking adverbially of how people are.

Almost inevitably, however, we then begin to speak infinitively: To walk, run or jump is to exercise, or To remember, ponder or dream is to think. Finally we find ourselves on the brink of the slippery slope of illicitly reifying by using nouns where verbs would be less dangerous: Walking or running is better exercise than jumping, or Remembering, pondering or dreaming are ways of thinking.

When confined to referring abstractly to outer events, our offence may appear harmless. After all, if one may refer to various encounterable happenings as 'dogs', one may, if careful, refer to others as 'walkings', 'runnings' or 'jumpings'. The habit of doing so, however, reinforces a temptation that few can then resist to reify illicitly inner events. Few, having accustomed themselves to speaking of people remembering, imagining, pondering, dreaming or hallucinating, can then resist the temptation to speak of the memories, images, thoughts, ideas, dreams and hallucinations that people have.

To speak of such things, however, is to speak of things where none exist, to hint at independences and interactions where none are possible and hence to mislead rather than to describe accurately how people are.

Montgomery's Double-bind

We can now comprehend more exactly the nature and consequences of the failure of Robert Montgomery's *THE LADY IN THE LAKE*.

Contra Münsterberg, things can never appear to us by means of film as we think of them, for, when thinking of them, *nothing* is appearing to us, much less photographably; nor can we encounter by means of movies dreams, hallucinations, ideas, images, memories or thoughts, for there are no such *things* to encounter.

To believe otherwise is to confuse thinking with perceiving, and to misconstrue what can and cannot appear photographically.

Münsterberg, I suggest, was misled by the linguistical habit of *reifying*. A novelist, using nouns, may refer indiscriminately to things as perceived or as thought by a character, and we, as readers, may then credibly and correctly construe them as such, for nothing appears to us by means of a novel save words on a page. We instinctively read the proper ambience into the description, construing it objectively or subjectively as appropriate, for within a medium through which things cannot appear, no problem of credible appearance can arise.

By means of movies, however, things *appear* to us!

Consequently,

A filmmaker, having showing to us things as they would naturally appear to us, cannot then follow by showing us others appearing unnaturally, without breeching the credibility of everything that we perceive!

By means of film, for example, one may show a drunken man pausing atop a bridge and then cut credibly to an event of twenty years before which he is with difficulty remembering, but if one tries to manipulate how the latter event appears to us by means of film, either directorially or through photographic distortion, to mistakenly make it appear as one believes it must be appearing to him as he is remembering it, one will fail more or less cleverly. For no event of twenty years ago is appearing to him in any way at all as he is remembering it! His brain is enabling him to remember what happened twenty years ago, though the only event appearing to him is the brain event itself, and we by means of film can perceive the event to which he is attending mentally but not perceptually. Neither of us, however, can attend to it as the other is: we can no more attend to it mentally by means of film than he can perceive it without.

Were one a filmmaker accustomed to speaking of inner things, rather than speaking adverbially of how we think of them, one would be sorely tempted to try to show them: to try to exemplify memories, images, thoughts, ideas, dreams or hallucinations, despite there being no such things to encounter, much less to photograph. No wonder disaster results, inevitably however cleverly masked, whenever one tries to show by means of film how someone is thinking of things.

Münsterberg was muddled about mental events. Montgomery, however, was doubly confused, for he not only tried, though rarely, to show how Philip Marlowe was thinking of things, but also to show how he was perceiving them with the unique infusion of mental awareness of it and himself that only he could have brought to the encounter! It would have been enough to reify the inner events of a character and then to try to exemplify them photographically. But Montgomery went even further: he not only tried to reify Philip Marlowe's experiencing of an outer event, but compounded the error by trying then to enable viewers to experience the event by perceiving it as if they could do infused with the unique mental awareness of it and themselves that only Philip Marlowe could have brought to the experiencing of it.

No wonder competent filmmakers after Montgomery have avoided using LADY IN THE LAKE as a working model for the making of movies. No wonder cautious film scholars after Münsterberg have avoided the pervasive confusions of his text as well.

**Postscript:
a Note upon Eisenstein's 'Escape' from the
Confusions of Münsterberg and Montgomery**

As filmmakers in the 1930s were reaffirming in practice Pudovkin's precept of experiential coherence, Eisenstein was doing so conceptually by insisting, contra his earlier convictions, that events must be perceivable *naturally* by means of film to be deeply and globally engaging.¹⁴ By the early 1940s, however, he had begun work upon the first of a trio of films, the three parts of IVAN THE TERRIBLE, that have seemed to many commentators to be amongst the most theatrical ever made. Few have failed to describe them as 'operatic', implying a theatrical and therewith unnatural mode of presentation at variance with his remarks. What ought we to make of this seeming disparity between Eisenstein's conceptions and practice late in life? What can we learn from it in particular about the differences between the arts of filmmaking and drama? In a nutshell,

Eisenstein, misled by the ideational bias of Marxism, had erred early on in seeking an "intellectual cinema".

Concurrently, however, a contrary impetus of Marxism toward *naturalism* had immunized him against the confusions to which Münsterberg and Montgomery, enthralled by the arts of words, succumbed.

Unlike Pudovkin, who had been trained to work with things as an experimenting craftsman within scientific laboratories, Eisenstein had been trained to work as a mathematician with symbols. When he began his artistical training under Meyerhold in the theatre, the linguistical bias was reinforced, for the theatre is an art of words – spoken words unlike the novel, but words nonetheless.

Eisenstein began by arguing, therefore, that the theatre ought to model itself after filmmaking. Sensing differences between the two arts, however, he attempted in 1924 to clarify for himself how they differed. The result led him into the confusions of the "intellectual cinema", for words, whether written or spoken, may refer ubiquitously to events of any kind, perceivable or otherwise, may be self-referential or may seem to refer to things even when they do not. Unless one is extremely careful, confusions of *use* and *mention*, both with respect to the things to which one purportedly refers and with respect to the words purportedly referring to them, are unavoidable.

¹⁴ See the two lectures on Eisenstein available elsewhere within the Evan Wm. Cameron Collection.

Eisenstein, enwrapped in words, erred early, confusing things seen by means of film with signs for other things. However tempted he may have been, however, he, unlike some other filmmakers (Montgomery later among them), avoided the error of trying to show mental events by means of film.

Though Eisenstein was concerned throughout his career with mental events, he insisted always that the goal of filmmaking was to evoke them *within* spectators. Prior to 1930 he had urged filmmakers to collide conflicting shots to enable viewers to generate ideas, and after 1930 urged them to show things from which viewers would derive unified complexes of emotional affects, or images. To Eisenstein early and late, however, the shots of a film were unexceptionally to present to viewers things that could be seen naturally and without distortion, thereby *evoking* in them mental events that could only be imagined and felt. The latter evocations encompassed, for Eisenstein, the ends to which the perceptions were the means, and although he was to reconstrue radically the prime patterns of both after 1930, he never confused the two nor inverted their causal order.

Throughout his career, therefore, Eisenstein insisted that filmmakers could make powerful movies only by recognising that the things to be seen by means of film are "equally as real in appearance as the objects themselves."¹⁵ To present things as if otherwise is to misrepresent them perceptually via distortion rather than enabling viewers to encounter them as if mentally, for whenever we are imagining or thinking of things, we are never *perceiving* them distortedly. We are never perceiving them at all.

As Eisenstein insisted in 1934 when articulating a conviction from which he was never to retreat,

The shot, considered as material for the purpose of composition, is more resistant than granite. This resistance is specific to it. The shot's tendency toward complete factual immutability is rooted in its nature. ... We have agreed that the first sign of a cinema tendency is one showing events with the least distortion, aiming at the factual reality of the fragments.¹⁶

¹⁵ "Achievement" [1939], *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, pages 1-272 [first volume] of *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory and The Film Sense by Sergei Eisenstein*, edited and translated by Jay Leyda (Cleveland, Ohio and New York, New York: Meridian Books – The World Publishing Company, 1957 [Fifth Printing, 1963], page 189.

¹⁶ "Through Theater to Cinema" [1934], *Ibid.*, pages 5 and 6.

Filmmakers must acknowledge, therefore, that

Mental events are unphotographable!

Many filmmakers after Eisenstein, however, Montgomery among them, were to be less careful, and their failure to comprehend how differently we think of things from how we perceive them was to clutter the making of movies far into the 1940s and beyond, fueling careless thinking by commentators upon the art to this very day.