Making a Difference

Rethinking Humanism
and the Humanities

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The World of a Movie

Upon its release by MGM films in 1947, the ads promoting *Lady in the Lake* ran as follows: "YOU accept an invitation to a blonde's apartment! YOU get socked in the jaw by a murder suspect!" James Pallot in *The Movie Guide* describes *Lady in the Lake* as the first film noir to employ "a subjective camera" and awards it three and a half stars for its originality. The *Time Out Film Guide* says the film is "shot entirely with subjective camera" and pans it – not for this reason, but because: "It really needed the magnificent panache of an Orson Welles … in the same subjective style." *Halliwell's Film Guide* criticizes the film for its "over-reliance on the subjective camera method" and concludes that it is "an experiment that failed because it was not really understood".

One way into the topic of this paper is to ask whether we can be satisfied with these descriptions: Is *Lady in the Lake* correctly described as employing (what we ordinarily want to mean by the words) "subjective camera"? Could an Orson Welles have shot a movie in the *same* "subjective" style and carried it off with magnificent panache? Does this movie involve an over-reliance on a sort of camera method that is routinely employed in other movies, only more sparsely? If it is "an experiment that failed", why does it fail? What is it here that "was not really understood"?

I will be using *Lady in the Lake* as a philosophical example of a particular sort – the sort that Wittgenstein tends to introduce by saying something along the following lines: "Now let us try to find a case for which that sort of description might fit." Perhaps the most famous such example in Wittgenstein's corpus, occurs in the opening of *Philosophical Investigations*.[1] After introducing us to a theory of meaning that he finds incipiently present in his opening quotation from Augustine's *Confessions* – namely, the theory that the meaning

of a word is the thing that it stands for (and thus that we learn the meanings of words merely by having the things that they stand for pointed out to us) – Wittgenstein goes on, in the second section of the book, to introduce us to his example of the builders: inviting us, in effect, to contemplate a case for which Augustine's description of language might appear to fit. That Augustine's description can so much as appear to fit such a case, helps to bring out how it involves, at best, a conception of a language rather more primitive than anything which we are usually accustomed to calling a language, and, at worst, how it involves an altogether primitive conception of what language (even a primitive language) *is*. As we try to press Wittgenstein's example – this is part of what makes it a *philosophical* example – it can dissolve on us, illustrating the ways in which even the sorts of uses of language for which Augustine's description can appear to fit only make sense against the background of a multiplicity of other things that we are able to do with words (things which we are asked to imagine the builders as ex *hypothesi* unable to do). Part of how Wittgenstein's example confers illumination is by introducing us to a seemingly intelligible scenario that appears to fit our theories of how language must work and then by showing us how our assumption that language must be possible on such a scenario begins to fall apart on us as we try to think it through, thereby helping to render visible aspects of language that are so immediate and familiar that they have become invisible to us.

I think *Lady in the Lake* allows us to see what happens if we take some of what film theorists and film critics have to say (sometimes about certain films, sometimes about the nature of film) *au pied de la letter* – in particular, some of what they have to say with regard to the question how it is that movies are able, through a judicious juxtaposition of visual images, to construct an intelligible and immediately apprehensible narrative world. In accordance with Wittgenstein's injunction "Try to find a case for which that sort of description might seem to fit", I offer the example of *Lady in the Lake*. That the claims of many film theorists can so much as appear to fit such a case, helps to bring out how such theories involve, at best, a conception of a kind of film rather more primitive than anything which we are

usually accustomed to calling a movie, and, at worst, how they involve an altogether primitive conception of what a movie (even a *bad* movie) *is*. If the example fulfills its purpose, it will help render visible aspects of what kind of a thing a movie is – aspects that constitute such a natural and familiar a part of our experience of movies that they have become invisible to us.

"Philosophy", Aristotle said, "begins in wonder." That is a nice way to put it. But what this means in practice can often be experienced as something rather annoying. Philosophy often consists in the asking of questions that are so elementary that it can seem that their answers must be obvious. One thing that can make the activity of philosophy annoying is that when one attempts to answer these seemingly infantile questions, one discovers that it turns out to be surprisingly difficult to do so. Philosophical questions often have the form of asking something that it seems we all already cannot help but know, but when we try to say what it is that we thus all already know, we find ourselves unable to say anything that satisfies us. We find ourselves beset by puzzlement. When Socrates would stop his fellow Athenians in the Forum – especially those of them that had a reputation for knowledge and wisdom – and ask them one of his opening questions (what is knowledge?, what is justice?, what is virtue?) they would often respond: "Socrates, when are you going to grow up and stop asking such childish questions?"

My talk today will, in this sense, be an exercise in philosophy: a call for us to become childlike in the face of certain apparently trivial questions – for us to wonder that certain familiar phenomena are so much as possible. I want to call forth wonder, first and foremost, at the fact that there are such things as movies. I hope to do this by causing you to become puzzled – to reflect upon questions to which you cannot help but already know (in some sense of "know") the answers, and yet when you try to say what it is that you thus already "know", you will find it difficult to do so. I, secondarily, aim to help you to take a few steps towards answers to these questions. But my primary aim is to introduce you to the questions themselves. The questions I want to place before you are the following: What is a movie?; and: What is it to watch a movie?

Now there are lots of things one can or might mean by the word 'movie'. I have no desire to legislate how the word should be used. But, for the purpose of homing in on the topic that interests me here, I will employ the word in a somewhat restricted sense. I shall use the word 'movie' to refer not to any kind of film, but rather only to a certain species of *narrative photographic film*. (I will say more about what species in a moment.) So by 'movie', in particular, I will mean (what we might begin by calling) a "fictional" – as opposed to a non-fictional – film (therefore not documentaries, newsreels, home movies, etc.). And by "fictional", I don't just mean "not true", say in the way, certain kinds of propaganda films can fail to be true; but I mean *narrative* film – that is, the sort of film that tells a story. And for it to be a movie, in my sense, it must have a basis in the photographic medium of film – it must be something that has been enacted for and shot by a movie camera (hence, for instance, not a cartoon). Some of what I will have to say about movies will apply to other forms of video narrative, but I want to confine myself here first to trying to understand what kind of a thing a movie is.

This might be a good moment to allow a bit of pent-up annoyance to be released. I imagine I hear someone saying: "What is there to *understand* here? I see what you mean by 'movies'. Now what's the problem? Haven't you just told me what a movie is? It is a narrative photographic film. And what is the problem about what it is to *watch* a movie? Given that we know what movies are, and given that we know what it is to watch something, then we know what it is to watch a movie, it's like watching anything else, say, a parade." No, it is not at all like watching a parade. Watching a movie go by is not just a matter of watching a series of images go by in the way we watch a column of soldiers in a parade march by. When a movie cuts from one shot to the next, in order to watch the movie – that is, in order to be able to see these consecutive shots as views of what is happening in the world of the movie – we need to understand the principle of unity that governs their connection. It will suffice for the moment to consider merely one of the various dimensions of unity at issue here – the temporal dimension: two consecutive shots can represent two actions taking place in immediate temporal succession, but they

can also represent parallel actions (two actions taking place at the same time but in different places), or the second shot can represent something that happened long before the action represented in the first shot (as in a flashback), or a long time forward in the future (as in a soothsayer's vision). And there are many other dimensions of unity at issue in apprehending the connection between any two consecutive shots in a movie – to name only a few: there is a spatial dimension (so we can ask: is what is represented in two consecutive shots happening in the same place or different places?), a causal dimension (we can ask: did the first event cause the second?, or vice versa?, or are they causally independent of one another?), a point-of-view dimension (we can ask: does the image on the screen represent how things look from the point of view of someone in the world of the movie?, if so whose point of view is it?), an objectivity dimension (does an image in the movie represent something that is happening in the world of a movie?, or merely something that is imagined or feared or hallucinated by someone in the movie?). A movie can leave the answers to certain such questions undecided, but only because there is something that can count as deciding them. (And some very artsy movies can leave the answers to a great many such questions undecided; but our ability to watch such movies is parasitic on our having first learned to consume more traditional forms of cinematic narrative.) Such questions might, on the face of it, appear to be *epistemological* questions – that is, questions about how we are able to *know* what is going on in the world of the movie. But our ability to know such things presupposes a prior understanding of what kind of a thing a movie is. It is a form of understanding that we now take for granted. It has become a ubiquitous, invisible dimension of our daily lives as consumers of movies.

The sort of question that I am most interested in here is a version of the sort of question that Heidegger calls an *ontological* question. Heidegger seeks to make perspicuous "the different senses of being" that are in play when we say things such as "There is a table in this room", "Dominic is a person", "Seven is a number", and so on. He wants us to come to see how the sense of the "is" in each of these propositions differs. He wants us to come to see that there is a differ-

ence in *the kind of being* that each of these entities (that is here said "to be") has. What I want to understand is the kind of being it is that the world of a movie has – the character of the nexus of unity that characterizes such a world – and therefore the kind of being that the beings caught up in such a nexus have.

These are large questions and we will only be able to make a beginning on them today. I will take up two aspects of these questions here. I think reflection on these twin aspects of the being of movies is a helpful way into the larger question of what movies are and what it is to watch a movie. The aspects of movies I will be concerned with today are (what Heidegger might have called) the *worldhood of the world of a movie* and *the mode of disclosure of such a world*. I will say: for something to be a movie it most offer us *glimpses of a world*. That is, in order for something to be a movie, first, it must visually *present a world* into which it can invite us and in which we can become absorbed; and, second, our mode of absorption must be one of *watching* it: we *see* what happens in that world. It is these twin modes of *visual presentation* and *visual absorption* that I wish, first to make puzzling and then to try to understand. Not every narrative photographic film succeeds – or necessarily even attempts – thus to present, and to absorb us in, its narrative world: not every film is a "movie" in the technical sense in which I will be employing the term 'movie' here. But most things we call "movies" are movies in this sense. *Lady in the Lake*, however, does not succeed in being a movie – in this slightly demanding sense of the term. There are features of its manner of construction – of its mode of attempting to present a world – that, for better or worse, systematically defeat our efforts to enter into that state of absorption that ordinarily characterizes our mode of engagement with a successful movie. So part of my interest in this rather peculiar and altogether remarkable product of Hollywood has to do with the specific manner in which it is able, precisely through the nature of its differences from an ordinary Hollywood movie, to highlight features of our ordinary experience of movies – features that have become invisible to us.

A less Heideggerian way of putting the topic of this talk is to say that I want to understand the fundamental earmarks of the

sort of *aesthetic medium* that a movie is. The tendency in most film theory is to take the properties of the aesthetic medium of the movie to be a direct function of the properties of the *physical* medium by means of which films are delivered to the viewer. So, for example, much early film theory tried to deduce the aesthetic properties of the medium through a reflection on the possibilities for aesthetic expression specific to a medium comprising bits of celluloid that have been photographically exposed and then chopped up and rearranged. In his remarkable essay on motion pictures, the art historian Erwin Panofsky handles this issue with more delicacy than most. He writes:

> The legitimate paths of evolution [for the film] were opened … by developing it within the limits of its own possibilities. Those primordial archetypes of film productions … could blossom forth into genuine history, tragedy and romance, crime and adventure, and comedy, as soon as it was realized that they could be transfigured – not by an artificial injection of literary values but by the exploitation of the unique and specific possibilities of the new medium.[2]

Part of what Panofsky appreciates here is that the invention of movies did not automatically come with the discovery of film. That film could be sculpted into the specific configurations of visual narration constitutive of movies was a possibility of film that it took much time and hard work to bring to light. Only once these possibilities were discovered and mastered did the medium of the movie come fully into existence. The medium of the movie therefore should not be confused with that of film and "the unique and specific possibilities" of that medium cannot be derived from mere reflection on the physical properties of film. Nevertheless, even as acute a thinker as Panofsky tends to fall into the trap of thinking that "the unique and specific possibilities of the new medium" are derivable through a priori reflection on the medium-specific properties of film. Panofsky defines these "possibilities of the medium" as *the dynamization of space* and *the spatialization of time* – that is, roughly, in a movie things move, and you can be moved instantaneously from anywhere to

anywhere, and you can witness successively events happening at the same time. He speaks of these properties as "self-evident to the point of triviality" and, because of that, "easily forgotten or neglected". I think Panofsky is dead-right that the most fundamental properties of the medium of the movie are "easily forgotten or neglected". But I don't think they can be identified in the manner in which he seeks to uncover them. One way of beginning to see this is so is to notice that the properties of the medium adduced here by Panofsky are fully exploited by *Lady in the Lake*. An account of the medium of the movie that restricts itself to adducing these particular "self-evident" properties of film will never be able to account for what misfires in the presentation of the world of *Lady in the Lake* – but that leaves us with the question: why it is that that film is unable to draw us into its narrative world? Something Stanley Cavell says is helpful here:

 [W]e still do not understand what makes [such] properties "the possibilities of the medium"….

   Why, for example, didn't the medium begin and remain in the condition of home movies, one shot just physically tacked on to another, cut and edited simply according to subject? (Newsreels essentially did just that, and they are nevertheless valuable, enough so to have justified the invention of moving pictures.) The answer seems obvious: narrative movies emerged because someone "saw the possibilities" of the medium – cutting and editing and taking shots at different distances from the subject. But again, these are mere actualities of film mechanics: every home movie and newsreel contains them. We could say: To make them "possibilities of the medium" is to realize what will give them *significance.*… It is not as if film-makers saw these possibilities and then looked for something to apply them to. It is truer to say that someone with the wish to make a movie saw that certain established forms would give point to certain properties of film.

   This perhaps sounds like quibbling, but what it means is that the aesthetic possibilities of a medium are not givens. You can no more tell what will give significance to the unique and specific aesthetic possibilities of projecting photographic images by thinking about them or seeing some, than you can tell what will give significance

to the possibilities of paint by thinking about paint or looking some over…. The first successful movies – i.e., the first moving pictures accepted as motion pictures – were not applications of a medium that was defined by given possibilities, but the creation of a medium by their giving significance to specific possibilities.[3]

It is a fact that has been insufficiently pondered that the art of film might have, but did not, remain stuck in the condition of the home movie, "with one shot just physically tacked on to another". According to the terminology I will employ here, the world of a home movie is not a movie-world. The world depicted in a home movie is *our* world – that is, the world that we who watch the home movie inhabit – it is a representation of that world as photographed by a camera. The being of the world of the home movie is in this respect ontologically akin to that of the newsreel and the documentary. The presentation of the world of (what I am calling) a movie presupposes a nexus of unity different in kind from that which unifies the sequences of images in any of the aforementioned genres of non-fiction film. This is not to deny that among the events that can occur in (what I am calling) a movie-world is the screening of (what is called) "a home movie". But there is all the difference in the world between an ordinary home movie (i.e., one that is both of and in our world) and a home movie in a movie (i.e., one that is both of and in the world of a movie). But what sort of "nexus of unity" is at issue in the latter case? How does it confer the appropriate sort of "significance" on a series of consecutive film images – so that a given sequence is able to present something that is immediately visually apprehensible to someone who knows how to "watch" a movie as the visual disclosure of a coherent and absorbing narrative movie-world?

 This takes us back to our question about the worldhood of the world of a movie. I have already allowed myself repeatedly to employ the locutions 'movie-world' and 'the world of a movie'. Thus, for example, in trying to say something a moment ago about how watching a movie is not just a matter of watching a series of images go by, I said: "When a movie cuts from one shot to the next, in order to watch the movie – that is, in order to be able to see these consecutive

shots as glimpses of what is *happening in the world of the movie* – we need to understand the principle of unity that governs their connection." In explication of one such principle of unity, namely, that of point of view, I noted that we can ask of a shot in a movie: does the image on the screen represent how things look from *the point of view of someone in the world of the movie*? The capacity to exercise such forms of discernment – the discernment of what is and what is not an event in the world of a movie and the discernment of what is and what is not a presentation of a point of view of someone in the world of the movie on such an event – are fundamental presuppositions of the possibility of movie-watching and hence of there being such things as movies to watch. In order for there to be such entities as movies there must be films that possess resources of visual narration sufficiently rich to draw these sorts of distinctions and a host of other related distinctions.

It is worth spelling this point out a little further by means of a few examples. I said: in order to watch a movie, we need to be able to distinguish between what is an event that is happening in the world of the movie and what is not. Not everything that appears on the movie screen – not everything that happens within (what we might call) the frame of a movie – is an event in the world of the movie. A trivial example of something that appears on the screen that is not in the world of a movie are the credits that appear at the beginning of a film superimposed on the opening images of the movie. (A related case is the subtitles in a foreign film). A slightly less trivial example is when the changing shapes and shades of visual light on the screen "represent" a fade, or dissolve, or a black screen that serves to punctuate a transition between scenes. There is a difference between the following two cases: the case of everything dissolving or going black *in the movie-world* (that is, in the portion of the world of the movie we glimpse in watching the movie) and the case of everything merely dissolving or merely going black *on the screen* (that is, the case in which the dissolve or the black merely forms a part of the grammatical techniques of narration employed by the movie, without itself representing a cataclysm or advent of sudden darkness in the world of the movie). If you were systematically unable to tell the difference

between these sorts of cases, then you would not be able to watch a movie – movies would not exist for you. And there is a difference between cases in which what you see in a movie is something that is happening in the world of the movie but not from the point of view of anyone in the world of the movie, and cases in which what you see is something that is happening (or has happened) in the world of the movie but as seen from the point of view of someone in the world of the movie. Sometimes when film theorists employ the language of "subjective" and "objective" point of view (or "subjective" and "objective" camera shots) it is *this* distinction (between comparatively perspectival and comparatively non-perspectival representations of the world of the movie) that they have in mind. Sometimes they have a different distinction in mind (and very often they fail to distinguish clearly between these two distinctions). For there is an equally fundamental difference between cases in which what you see is something that is happening in the world of the movie as seen from the point of view of someone in the world of the movie and cases in which what you see is not an objective event in the world of the movie, but *merely* what appears to someone as seen from that character's "purely subjective" point of view – for example, the contents of a dream.

And it is worth pausing to notice that these two pairs of distinctions are themselves very schematic and can be made more determinate in a wide range of ways. There are a great many kinds of perspectival yet objective point-of-view shots – that is, shots in which what you see is something that is happening (or has happened) in the world of the movie as seen from the point of view of someone in the world of the movie: there are shots that represent someone's perception of an occurrent event in the world of the movie, and there are shots that represent someone's memory of an actual but temporally distal event in the world of the movie (as in a flashback), and there are shots that possess a peculiar kind of counterfactual objectivity, representing something that "almost" happened and genuinely could have happened in the world of the movie as it would have appeared to someone in the world of the movie had the actions which would have brought that event about happened (such as a shot or sequence

of shots that represent what would have happened had someone done something in the world of the movie which he fortunately at the last minute decides not do). And there are also a great many kinds of merely subjective point of view shots – misperceptions, false memories, dreams, visual representations of the contents of a subject's fantasy, waking visual hallucinations, daydreams, involuntary occult visions, voluntary attempts at imaginative visualization, and so forth. And in order to watch a movie, you need to be able not only to distinguish all such merely subjective point-of-view shots from the various forms of objective point-of view shots (that is, from shots that visually present in a comparatively reliable fashion objective happenings in the world of the movie) but also to discriminate the multiplicity of cases of such modes of subjectivity that can be represented in a movie – you need to be able to discriminate misperceptions, from false memories, from dreams, from waking visual hallucinations, from occult visions, from daydreams, and so on. And, in watching a movie, we make all of these discriminations and many other equally subtle ones, effortlessly, all of the time. This is not to deny that there are movies in which the distinctions between these dimensions of objectivity and subjectivity remain systematically blurred or otherwise problematized throughout. But it is to affirm that our ability to understand movies that employ such comparatively non-transparent modes of visual narration presupposes the prior availability of highly transparent modes of narration and the prior cultivation of an ability to schematize these more traditional and familiar techniques of film narration.

I said earlier that for something to be a movie it must offer us *glimpses of a world* and that this involved both a very particular mode of *visual presentation* of a world on the part of the movie and a very particular mode of *visual absorption* in that world on the part of a viewer. My preceding remarks were meant to hint at the extraordinarily rich array of techniques of visual narration typically deployed in order to achieve the visual *presentation* of the world of a movie. Now I would like to offer some remarks that aim to hint at some of the respects in which our ordinary mode of visual absorption in such presentations constitutes an equally elusive and complex phenome-

non. In order to be able to watch movies we must be initiated into an utterly *sui generis* mode of aesthetic experience – one that makes our mode of access to the world of a movie possible. With the invention of movies comes the disclosure of the possibility of this mode of experience. There is an ontological interdependence between the mode of experience here at issue and the sort of entity – movie-worlds – that are thus disclosed. The relevant modes of *visual presentation* on the part of the movie and *visual absorption* on the part of a viewer are, as Heidegger might have put it, equiprimordial. It is neither the case that first there are movies and then we watch them (that is, first there are the entities that recognizably have the sort of being that only movies have and then we learn how to visually engage with them, nor is it the case that watching movies is just something we already knew (prior to the invention of movies) how to do – as if we had just been waiting for the day when movies would be invented and this appetite could then finally be catered to.

The hero of this talk will be the French philosopher Denis Diderot. I will claim that in his theory of painting suggestions are to be found for how to understand some of the most puzzling aspects of the modes of visual presentation and visual absorption at issue here. It is *prima facie* surprising that the most promising place to look for help on this topic should be in the writings of someone who lived over one hundred years before the invention of film, let alone the movies. But Diderot's topic bears an important affinity with our own. He wanted to put forward a theory of *dramatic painting* – that is, a theory that set forth the conditions of the possibility of a painting furnishing an immediately apprehensible yet utterly convincing narrative that is conveyed by exclusively visual means. Reflection on the very possibility of such a category of painting can induce philosophical puzzlement. How can a painting convey an utterly convincing representation of a dramatically complex event? A dramatic event is of its nature something that unfolds in time, while the pictorial image on the surface of a painting might appear to be something that can only fully adequately represent an event frozen in time – an event that has the temporal duration of a single moment in time. How can a painting ever offer us anything more than

a snapshot of an event? I will say a bit about the details of Diderot's theory of painting at the conclusion of this talk. For the moment, it will suffice to mention just the following feature of Diderot's theory: a successful narrative painting, he held, must call forth a certain sort of response on the part of beholder – it must transfix his attention and cause him to become absorbed in the action depicted on the canvas before him. Michael Fried summarizes this aspect of Diderot's theory as follows:

> For Diderot … the painter's task was above all to reach the beholder's soul by way of his eyes…. [A] painting … had first to attract and then to arrest and finally to enthrall the beholder, that is, a painting had to call to someone, bring him to a halt in front of itself, and hold him there as if spellbound and unable to move.[4]

All that I want to call attention to here for the moment is the following: Fried's description of Diderot's aspiration for the best that painting can hope to achieve is a perfectly accurate, literal description of the condition of the average viewer of a movie.

 This envisioned *extraordinary* possibility for the highest that narrative painting can hope to achieve is the *ordinary* situation of a viewer of a film. For Diderot, the capacity to elicit such a state of absorbed beholding on the part of a spectator is a criterion of the aesthetic excellence of a painting. Whereas, in the present age, the very forms of words that Diderot called upon to formulate his criterion of aesthetic excellence can serve now to express a structural feature of the kind of entity a movie is – even a fairly bad movie.

 As biologists and psychologists will tell you, often the best way to understand the normal is to study the pathological. If you want to understand what it is for a normal healthy organism to flourish, then it helps to look carefully at what happens when the organism breaks down and the possibility of healthy functioning becomes impeded. So, too, in seeking to understand what it is for a movie to present a world, it helps to study cases in which attempts at such presentation break down and the correlative modes of aesthetic experience are consequently inhibited. This brings us to *Lady in the Lake*.

You might be tempted to say of *Lady in the Lake* – along with Stephen Halliwell or the *Time Out Guide* – that it is a bad movie. But this implies that it fails *as* a movie – i.e., that it fully succeeds in *being* a movie, but that *qua* movie it happens to be a bad one. This idea is clearly present in the suggestion that Orson Welles could and did employ the same camera technique with more panache. I think it is more accurate to say that in a certain fundamental respect *Lady in the Lake* simply *fails to be* a movie. More specifically, the film is constructed in such a way that we are unable to enter into the experience of visual absorption that is a condition of the possibility of our entering into the world of a movie – or to put the same point more elliptically: it fails in its attempt to visually present a world. Simply to conclude that it is a bad movie is to miss the interest this film can assume in the context of an investigation into the kind of entities movies are. There are lots of bad movies, but there are hardly any that fail in *this* way. And it is no simple matter to say just *how* or *why* this film fails.

I note in passing, it is no part of my brief to argue that *Lady in the Lake* constitutes an aesthetically significant work of art, be it one that amounts to something less, or more, or simply other than a movie – or to argue the contrary. The peculiar sort of interest that I wish to claim on behalf of this film for the aesthetics of movies is not *qua* film that possesses a peculiar sort of aesthetic merit, but *qua* philosophical example – one that embodies in an illuminating fashion a certain sort of failure to visually present the narrative world of a movie. This is not to deny that there are aesthetically compelling films – made, for example, by directors such as Bunuel and Godard – that employ visual conventions permitting the presentation of a compelling narrative film world in an intentionally tentative or intermittently non-transparent manner with the aim of eventually subverting or calling attention to or otherwise neutralizing these very conventions, thus disrupting our visual absorption in the world of the movie in a manner that is able to assume an aesthetic significance within the context of the film as a whole. But *Lady in the Lake* is not such a film: it does not interrupt or intermittently subvert the presentation of a movie-world; its mode of visual narration systematically obstructs

the possibility of absorption in such a world for almost the entirety of the duration of the film.

If I asked you to try to say what is unique about *Lady in the Lake*, your first attempt might well take the form of saying what most of the authors of film encyclopedias and movie guides say about the film. As we have seen, in such books you find sentences such as the following: "*Lady in the Lake* is an attempt to make a film that resolutely employs nothing other than first-person point of view." Or: "The movie consists entirely of subjective camera angles." But neither of these descriptions or anything at all like them will do. The problem is not simply that the notions of a "first-person point of view" or a "subjective camera angle" can be unpacked in a variety of ways. The more fundamental problem is that the "point-of-view shots" or "subjective camera angles" in this film are unlike (and are far more unsettling than) those generally found in any ordinary movie – that is, in the sort of film that offers the possibility of that mode of aesthetic experience constitutive of movies. Eventually, in attempting to illuminate the chasm of difference between the "point of view shots" or "subjective camera angles" in this film and those that can be found in an ordinary movie, I hope to illuminate a fundamental aspect of what is involved in the presentation of and absorption in the world of a movie. But, first, before we consider further what it means to speak of "first-person point of view shots" or "subjective camera angles", let us take up the question what it is that such "shots" or "angles" are supposed to contrast with. We have seen how unclear the expression "subjective point of view "or "subjective camera angle" can be. But let us now ask: What is an "objective" point of view or camera angle?

If I asked you, what is the difference between an "subjective point of view shot" (or a "subjective camera angle") and an "objective point of view shot" or an "objective camera angle", then you might in response find yourself saying something like this: "A subjective point-of-view shot (or subjective camera angle) is a representation of just how things would look if actually viewed from a particular person's point of view and an objective point of view shot (or objective camera angle) is a representation of how things would look if viewed from no point of view, or at least from no one's point of view in

particular." If taken at all literally, neither half of this response happily withstands scrutiny. The first half of this response – "a subjective point-of-view shot (or subjective camera angle) is a representation of just how things would look if actually viewed from a particular person's point of view" – is actually a pretty good first stab at a description of the rather unique mode of visual presentation of the world that we find in *Lady in the Lake*. It captures a feature of the way that very unusual film attempts to presents "point of view" – a feature of that film that radically distinguishes it from any ordinary movie. The following are examples of shots we get in that film that we don't get in an ordinary movie: the way in which we see part of the telephone or the end of a cigarette obtrude onto the screen, or the way the cigarette smoke rises up from just below the eye of the camera into our field of vision, or the way in which we are afforded a view of the protagonist of the narrative only when he steps in front of a mirror. If we want to be picky, we will have to conclude that, if taken quite literally, this formulation of what a "subjective point of view" is won't even fully do as a description of what we see even in *Lady in the Lake*. For instance, our protagonist never seems to blink. More subtly, when we are afforded a view of him in the mirror, the angle of his gaze into the mirror tends to be slightly off what it should be if his gaze is to coincide with ours. (If the gaze of the camera did coincide with the point of view of the character, then we would be treated to a view of a camera in the mirror). Nevertheless, "a representation of just how things would look if actually viewed from a particular person's point of view" does seem to be a pretty good account of (what we might call) the regulative ideal to which the mode of visual presentation in *Lady in the Lake* aspires. But it is also just this feature of the film that distinguishes it from almost any other movie you have ever seen; and, as I shall argue later on, it is just this feature of the film that inhibits our absorption in its world. So this description will hardly do as an account of what it is that we generally want to mean when we say of a shot in an ordinary movie that it is first-personal or subjective. For the shots that we get in ordinary movies that we seek to designate by means of such terminology are nothing like the shots in *Lady in the Lake*.

Let's turn now to the other half of our answer above: "an objective point of view shot (or objective camera angle) is a representation of how things would look if viewed from no point of view, or at from least no one's point of view in particular." On the face of it, this is self-contradictory. Doesn't the very idea of a point of view presuppose the idea of an observer *whose* point of view it is? Isn't the notion of *a point of view that is no one's point of view in particular* a "notion" of which no sense can be made? Yet if we want to try to put into words the kind of "point of view" that goes missing entirely in *Lady in the Lake* and that occurs frequently in every ordinary movie, it is hard to avoid calling upon some seemingly paradoxical form of words such as these.

The problem of trying to say what an "objective camera shot" involves is one with which film theorists have struggled. The version of the problem that figures in the history of film theory tends to be given an epistemological slant. It takes the form of a question about how the viewer is able to *know* what is happening at any given point in the world of a movie. Film theorists have, in this context, allowed themselves to become puzzled about how it is that we are able to apprehend, when watching a slice of photographic film narration, what is going on in the narrative – and how it is that we are so often able to know what we are supposed to in a remarkably immediate and apparently effortless manner. In theoretical discussions of classical narrative film, these problems tend to be raised in connection with *editing*. It was realized very early on in the theory of film that perspicuous exposition of narrative action has to rely upon the possibility of cutting from shot to shot. At the same time, the transitions between shots, in various forms and styles, seemed to such theorists, to constitute a series of discontinuous breaks from one viewpoint on the action to another. As such, these transitions, apart from some understanding of the principles that unite them, would appear at first blush to be at least potentially disorienting interruptions in the viewer's attempt to follow the progress of the dramatic events in a movie.

This puzzle about movie viewing (how it is that the viewer is able to follow the narrative of a movie) and the related puzzle about movie editing (how it is possible to juxtapose slices of film in say

a way that they are able to form a coherent narrative) are merely symptoms of an underlying, comparatively repressed puzzlement concerning what a movie is and what is involved in the presentation of the world of a movie. But let us for a moment follow some of the more sophisticated attempts to address the puzzle in its classical form. This will allow us to see some of the ways in which intelligent theorists, when faced with this puzzle, find themselves wanting to say something very much like what we found ourselves wanting to say before when we attempted to offer a characterization of an objective camera shot: namely, that in order to construct such a shot one must find a way to represent how things would look if viewed from a point of view that is no one's point of view in particular.

Back in the days when movies were still a recent phenomenon, so that it was not yet unfashionable to be filled with wonder at the very possibility of such entities, the early film theorists marveled at the following fact: When we watch a movie we are subject to interruptions in viewing utterly unlike anything that happens to us in normal perceptual experience. They repeatedly asked questions such as the following: How does a film spectator tolerate and comprehend these abrupt and unnatural intercessions? Which sorts of shifts are merely disorienting and unintelligible and which sorts confer modes of orientation and intelligibility upon the narrative of a film? Let us consider one early attempt at an answer to this question due to V.I. Pudovkin. It goes as follows: the cuts within a scene should correspond to the natural shifts of attention of a hypothetical, interested spectator who observes, on the spot, the action we see depicted on the screen.[5] Let's call this Pudovkin's proposal. It has gained a remarkable number of adherents. It has seemed to many to offer an attractive explanation of the style of so-called "invisible" editing characteristic of the typical classical Hollywood film. The central underlying thesis is that an audience does not consciously notice the fragmentation that is enforced by judiciously invisible editing, because given the way in which their sense of the integrity of space and time is maintained, each new shot supplies the visual information demanded and schematically anticipated by "the normal mental mechanism by which we alter our attention from object to object in real life."

This proposal, however, is in many ways a better description of what happens in *Lady in the Lake* than in any ordinary film. First of all, it tends to suggest that our point of view onto the world of a movie is always the point of view of *someone* in the world of the movie. (In its classical formulation, it also tended to suggest that there was only one such point of view.) But I would like now to consider instead a further objection to it – one that receives its most famous formulation in Karel Reisz's classic text on the fundamental principles of film editing. Reisz rejects Pudovkin's proposal on the grounds that many of the instantaneous spatial transitions produced by elementary and standard patterns of editing patently do not correspond to anything that a single fixed or limitedly mobile observer could achieve. In response to this difficulty, Reisz goes on to suggest his own alternative proposal:

> Instead, the director's aim is to give an ideal picture of the scene, in each case placing his camera in such a position that it records most effectively the particular piece of action or detail which is dramatically significant. He becomes, as it were, a ubiquitous observer, giving the audience at each moment of the action the best possible viewpoint. He selects the images which he considers most telling, irrespective of the fact that no single individual could view a scene in this way in real life.[6]

There are a number of phrases in this formulation that appear to pull in different directions. Nonetheless, taken as a whole, it is an immensely suggestive and helpful first stab at a description of part of what goes into the presentation of the world of a movie and thus of part what goes missing in *Lady in the Lake*. First, we have here the idea that the director should aim "to give an ideal picture of the scene". This suggests that the picture thus presented over the course of the whole of a movie is not simply to be identified with any actual picture or set of pictures enjoyed by the envisioned possible inhabitants of the world of the movie, taken individually or collectively. Second, Reisz says that the director is to "place his camera in such a position that it records most effectively the particular piece of action

or detail which is dramatically significant". This allows for the point of view of the camera on occasion to coincide with that of someone in the world of the film without requiring our point of the view on that world to remain thereby confined to such comparatively embedded points of view. More suggestively still, Reisz adds – speaking to the puzzling question of what is involved in those moments in which we are offered an "objective" mode of presentation of the world of a movie – there is "a ubiquitous observer, giving the audience at each moment of the action the best possible viewpoint". This is certainly a comparatively promising proposal, in that it fits many facts about where the camera is placed in the filming of the action of a movie that Pudovkin's proposal is obliged to neglect. But it is not altogether satisfying. The idea of a ubiquitous observer – like our earlier idea of a point of view that is no one's point of view in particular – teeters on the brink of absurdity. This involves not only the comparatively modest claim that the point of view in question here is not to be identified throughout with how things might appear to someone in the movie; but, as Reisz says, "no single individual *could* view a scene in this way in real life". Indeed, some of what Reisz says, quite astutely in my view, seems to require that what must at issue here is the idea of an observer whose standpoint is quite unlike that of any observer of which we can form a coherent conception. But the concept of an observer of which we can form no coherent conception threatens to fail to be a concept of an observer at all – ideal, ubiquitous, or otherwise.

One might try to save Reisz's suggestion by domesticating it into the idea of an imaginary but nonetheless imaginable observer. A "ubiquitous" and "ideal" observer is perhaps an observer that is free of all of the grosser limitations of embodied perception. George Wilson helpfully asks with regard to this way of cashing out Reisz's suggestion:

> Is it part of the idea that members of the audience are supposed to see the series of shots as representing the visual field of Reisz's observer, so that they identify their perception and attention with that of this fictional observer? In other words, do all such films have, in this

sense, a visual narrator who mediates the action in a manner that is standardly effaced? Certainly, something like this is a cliché of a lot of writing on film: the camera is or has an eye, and the screen image is understood as its phenomenological product.[7]

I share Wilson's skepticism that the fashionable idea that the camera is or has an eye (and the related idea that the screen image is to be understood as its phenomenological product) can do justice to the mode of presentation characteristic of a typical (so-called) "objective" camera shot. Such an account tends in the direction of suggesting that the main difference between the mode of presentation of a world in an ordinary movie and that in *Lady in the Lake* is one merely of degree, rather than of kind: it is just that the point of view of the objective narrator in a movie is such that the observer is able to jump around a lot more than any possible observer ever could and able to jump to places so high up or so far away that no real observer could ever reach them. Such an account, Wilson argues, is unable to do justice to (what he, suggestively, calls) "the transparency of the film image". And it is this that we must understand, if we are to understand the manner in which a movie affords us glimpses of a world. Wilson is also right, I think, to insist that Reisz's original suggestion is considerably more paradoxical than the domesticated reading of it allows:

> Reisz seems to envisage the audience as viewing – that is, sharing the same view – of a scene that is paradoxically felt to be both right in front of them and yet existing in its own impenetrable system of space.[8]

This suggests that in an "objective" shot what we are offered is not a view of the scene from some possible but practically unattainable point of view, but rather something far more paradoxical – something we might call "the view from nowhere". This is a form of words that philosophers sometimes reach for in attempting to explicate the concept of objectivity. I have little sympathy with the philosophical views that result from attempts to give sense to this form of words.

But what the frequency of such attempts does testify to is a deep-seated attraction on our part to a certain *fantasy* of what objectivity ought to entail. Even though it may be the case that the ensuing conception can not fully be made sense of, it does not follow that such a conception – however inchoate – plays no role in constituting our aesthetic experience of the narrative worlds to which we have access when reading a novel, sitting in a theatre, or watching a movie. So it is not necessarily an objection to an account of our mode of access to the world of a movie that involves a paradox. But such an account must be able to pay its way: it must be able to illuminate how the paradox it posits is rendered an aesthetically fruitful one – how can it be made to issue in forms of aesthetic experience. It is no accident that some of the most suggestive and helpful accounts we have of the mode of presentation of the world of a movie are ones that do not shrink from courting paradox. Here is Jean Mitry taking a stab at our topic:

> Thanks to the mobility of the camera, to the multiplicity of shots, I am everywhere at once…. I know that I am in the movie theater, but I feel that I am in the world offered to my gaze, a world that I experience "physically" while identifying myself with one or another of the characters in the drama – with all of them, alternatively. This finally means that at the movies I am both in this action and outside it, in this space and outside this space. Having this gift of ubiquity, I am everywhere and nowhere.[9]

What is this idea of a point of view that seems to presuppose a spectator who is at once everywhere and nowhere? And what would it mean to get clear about such a notion – one that appears to be in its essence paradoxical? This much should be clear by now: we cannot make sense of a movie unless we are able to tell that a particular shot of a something represents a point of view on it that is not to be identified with that of anyone in the world of the movie, and that we can tell, in contrast to such a shot that a subsequent shot is to be so identified, and that we can tell, in contrast to both of these cases, that yet a further shot represents something altogether

more "subjective", and so on, in widely differing and ever ramifying ways. And this much should also be clear by now: the cases of screen imagery of the latter so-called "subjective" sort – cases that seek to represent episodes of dreaming, hallucination, unreliable visual memory, and so on – can only intelligibly occur as segments that are apprehensible as subjective if they occur in the context of a space of significant contrasts with other, further segments that are apprehensible as comparatively "objective" modes of presentation of the world of the movie. "It is this 'objectivity' in the visual depiction of narrative fiction that we want to understand more clearly. What do we take to be objective about the way in which the screen and its images present the narrative facts?" Wilson attempts to answer this question as follows:

> The answer, I believe, is given by a famous analogy. In the objective mode that is primary for classical narration the screen is experienced as a rectangular window or opening that faces onto the movie's secondary world. It is to be, in a new sense, a "picture window" set before locales within that world. The screen is meant to be taken as an almost perfect transparency between the audience and the fictional objects and events they see. …. A fictional world of the cinema is essentially a visible world and that which is presented in the imagery is meant to be the immediate, intersubjective visual appearance of the fictional objects and events as their appearance is manifested to a position within the world's apparently real space.[10]

The most obvious problem with this suggestion is one that also beset Pudovkin's proposal: we seem to be dealing with a picture window that possesses remarkable properties: "The screen window is remarkably – to use Reisz's word – ubiquitous. The views that are delivered to the audience change frequently, abruptly, and discontinuously, and the changes are felt to be guided by a mind other than their own."[11] These properties of the cinematic picture window would seem to place an unbearable strain on the initially apparently straightforward analogy that was intended to illuminate the phenomenon in question. But instead of worrying this point, I would like to focus

on a more subtle and fundamental inadequacy of Wilson's proposal – one that is by no means unique to it – indeed, one that it shares with both Pudovkin's and Reisz's proposals. An mischevious way of putting what will be my eventual fundamental objection to Wilson's proposal would be to say that it is insufficiently respectful of the paradox that lurks at the heart of the notion of an objective camera shot. In attempting to make progress on the suggestions of thinkers such as Reisz and Mitry, Wilson takes a step in the wrong direction, by attempting to get things that are murky in their formulations clear in the wrong way.

First, however, I need to call attention to one of the features of *Lady in the Lake* that most radically differentiates it from any ordinary movie – one that is essentially connected with why its ostensibly "subjective" or "first-personal" shots are so utterly unlike the immediately compelling counterparts of such shots that predominate in any ordinary movie. The characters (or should we say: the actors?) in *Lady in the Lake look directly into* the eyes of the viewer (or should we say: the eye of the camera?). They visually address themselves directly to the beholder of the film; their gaze is experienced by a viewer as acknowledging his presence – the presence of a spectator who is situated on the far side of the screen. We are accustomed to encountering such direct gazes from TV news anchormen and from little children in home movies (who are perhaps being concurrently instructed by a filming family member "Look at the camera!", Look at the camera!) Why should it matter so tremendously to the possibility of the sort of aesthetic experience that allows for disclosure of the world of a movie that it be the case that the viewer never be directly visually implicated in this manner? This is a matter that we are not yet quite ready to tackle.

I would like to note at this juncture that there is nothing in any of the proposals we have considered thus far that in any way rules out or even discourages such direct visual implication. Pudovkin's proposal would seem almost to require the possibility of such a mode of address. Reisz's and Wilson's proposals are more adequate in that they at least seem to move away from the postulation of such a requirement. But they do nothing to preclude the occurrence of such a mode of

address. If what is required is simply Reisz's ideal and ubiquitous observer and nothing more, then why shouldn't the actors caught up in the drama this ideal observer contemplates happen occasionally to look squarely in his direction? If it suffices to account for the possibility of "objectivity in the visual depiction of narrative fiction" to say, as Wilson does, that the screen is "to be taken as an almost perfect transparency between the audience and the fictional objects and events they see", then why shouldn't it occasionally happen that those who live on the far side of that transparency look straight into our eyes, as the characters in *Lady in the Lake* never cease to do. And why should their unceasingly doing so in *Lady in the Lake* be so profoundly disruptive of our aesthetic experience of the world they inhabit? Why does such a mode of address inhibit our becoming visually absorbed in their narrative world?

It is here that Diderot is helpful. Diderot starts not with the question of the beholder's absorption in a painting, but with a different question: what is required for the successful visual representation of an absorbed beholder? He begins not with the topic of absorption in a representation, but with the topic of the representation of absorption. For Diderot, the persuasive representation of absorption entails evoking the perfect obliviousness of a figure or group of figures to everything but the objects of their absorption. Those objects do not include the beholder standing before the painting. Hence the figure or figures must seem oblivious to the beholder's presence if the illusion of absorption is to be sustained. Moreover, Diderot thought a similar principle held in the theatre: a compelling representation of dramatic events on the stage must transpire in such a way that the actors never acknowledge the presence of an audience before them. Here are some attempts on Diderot's part to express the demand in question:

[E]ven though a dramatic work is made to be represented, it is necessary that author and actor forget the beholder.[12]

Whether you compose or act, think no more of the beholder than if he did not exist. Imagine, at the edge of the stage, a high wall separates you from the orchestra. Act as if the curtain never rose.[13]

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> In a dramatic performance, the spectator has no more importance than if he did not exist. Is there anything there which is addressed to him? Then the author has deserted his theme and the actor has stepped outside his role. They both come down off the stage. I see them both in the pit and as long as the tirade lasts, the action is halted as far as I am concerned, and the stage remains empty.[14]

This last remark nicely captures an aspect of the experience of a viewer of *Lady in the Lake.* In the drama of the film, the spectator of the film does not retain his usual position (of having "no more importance than if he did not exist"); rather everything is addressed directly to him. With just the result that Diderot foresees: the mode of direct address shatters the possibility of the beholder becoming visually absorbed in the world of the narrative. The director seems to have deserted his theme and the actors seem to have stepped outside their roles. They all come down out of the world of the movie – or better: the possibility of the visually effective presentation of such a world seems to disintegrate altogether. The narrative world of the movie is emptied out; it collapses into our world.

One common criticism of *Lady in the Lake* is to say that it involves a great deal of bad acting. This fails, I suspect, to put a finger on what it is that really unsettles one when subjected to the performances of the actors in this film. I do not think the acting is worse than that in many a mediocre Hollywood film that is far less disruptive of our capacities for cinematic enjoyment. Moreover, the stars in this film are all actors who discharge their duties admirably in the other movies in which they appear. The kernel of truth contained in this common criticism of the film has to be reformulated to take account of the ways in which this film systematically inhibits our capacity for cinematic absorption. By directly addressing themselves to us, the actors subvert our capacity to apprehend them as characters inhabiting the narrative world of a movie. This subversion of our capacity for the visual apprehension of movie narrative has something in common with the aesthetic experience of bad acting: in both cases our attention is obtrusively drawn to the actor in a manner that eclipses our capacity to see through the actions of the actor to those

of the character. But this happens for very different reasons in a film in which the acting is simply bad and in one in which – such as *Lady in the Lake* – there is a systematic rout of the conditions of the possibility of a compelling visual presentation of the world of a movie. Michael Fried says:

> Diderot's works … called … for the illusion that the audience did not exist, that it was not really there or at the very least had not been taken into account. In the absence of that illusion no amount of realism could provide the dramatic experience that Diderot sought.[15]

This claim (whatever its merits within theory of painting) expresses something approximating a basic law governing the presentation of the world of a movie. No amount of realism lavished on the sets or invested in the quality of the cinematography or achieved in the performance of the actors in a film can restore the illusion of worldhood that is shattered through a systematic failure to respect a supreme underlying fiction that is a constitutive condition of the possibility of the presentation of a movie-world: namely, that the camera – and its viewpoint onto the world of the movie – does not exist. In Diderot's theory of painting, the injunction in question (i.e., the beholder does not exist) functions as a regulative principle of aesthetic excellence; in the realm of movies, it functions as a constitutive principle of the medium.

Notice, however, how utterly paradoxical Diderot's injunctions to the actor are: If the actor were to do just as Diderot says, if he were simply to act as if the audience did not exist, then there is no reason why he should not wander offstage, or lower his voice below the audible threshold, or stand in a way (or in a place on the stage) that renders his dramatically most significant gestures invisible to the audience. Any attempt on the part of an actor to take Diderot's advice at all literally would spell instant dramatic catastrophe. And the same holds for much of his advice to the painter. If the painter were simply to represent the visual action of the narrative of a dramatic painting in a manner that in no way takes account of its effect on a beholder in front of the canvas, then the result would fail to achieve

the very forms of radical intelligibility that Diderot demands of successful dramatic painting. A painter obviously must take account of how the painting will appear to a beholder. A dramatic painting, according to Diderot, must possess a sort of pictorial unity that can be apprehended at a glance, in a single *coup d'oeil*. This demand of Diderot's on the pictorial representation of drama – that the image be as a whole instantaneously and radically intelligible – comes to achieve a measure of fulfillment beyond Diderot's own wildest dreams in (what Wilson calls) "the transparency of the film image" in classical narrative film. But, in both dramatic painting and in the movies, such a mode of transparency can be attained only through a mode of representation that rests on a thorough appreciation of how things on the canvas or on the screen will be schematized by a beholder of such images.

 I said before: Any attempt on the part of an actor to take Diderot's advice at all literally would spell dramatic catastrophe. This might suggest that there is some more figurative or metaphorical way to unpack Diderot's remarks on this topic. But this is not right. One cannot attain a full understanding of the logic of the demand in question unless one first comes to terms with the reasons why any attempt at a concise formulation of it will inevitably embody an element of paradox. Fried attempts to explicate the paradox in question as follows:

> [T]he recognition that paintings are made to be beheld and therefore presuppose the existence of a beholder led to the demand for the actualization of his presence: a painting, it was insisted, had to attract the beholder, to stop him in front of itself, and to hold him there in a perfect trance of involvement. … [I]t was only by negating the beholder's presence that this could be achieved: only by establishing the fiction of his absence or nonexistence could his actual placement before and enthrallment by the painting be secured. [16]

The painter should present things in a manner that is controlled by the ambition to depict a world that everywhere registers *the absence of the gaze of a beholder*; and the measure of the success of such a mode

of representation is constituted by the degree of painting's power *to exercise a certain effect upon the beholder*: namely, the tripartite effect of attracting, arresting and enthralling him.

One way to bring out the utterly paradoxical character of this demand is to explore aspects of its counterpart as it functions as a condition on the presentation of the world of a movie. A manifestation of the paradoxical demand in question can be seen to arise in an especially acute form if we consider what is involved in the problematic of movie acting. An aspiring movie actor is repeatedly enjoined (in terms roughly opposite of those screamed out by the parent filming his children in a home move): "Don't look at the camera!" He must never to look directly into the lens of the camera. A related skill that is often difficult for inexperienced movie actors to acquire is the following: one must be able to allow one's gaze to gradually pan across a room without visually registering, even momentarily, the gaze of the camera. This requires the suppression of a deep natural human instinct. The tendency is, without even realizing it, to have one's gaze, as it passes by the camera, ever so momentarily, slightly visually register the gaze of the beholder. But if we say to an aspiring actor: "Forget about the camera! Act as if the camera did not exist!", he must know how to understand our injunction. What the actor must learn to do is something far more paradoxical and difficult than forgetting about the camera: he must learn always to be aware of precisely where the camera is and just how he comports himself with respect to it – where the test of whether he has fully achieved this mode of awareness consists in its being the case that nothing he ever does, not even a glance or a facial expression, offer any indication of his controlling awareness of the presence of the camera whose absence his every glance and gesture serves to declare.

The enactment of such a mode of comportment vis-à-vis the camera on the part of a movie actor is a local aspect of that more global fundamental paradox that lies at the heart the presentation of the world of a movie: namely, that the default mode of disclosure of such a world consists in a view of it as it appears from the view from nowhere. The fantasy of the possibility of such a mode of disclosure is the constitutive myth of the medium of the movie; and the

practical embodiment of such a myth in the classical conventions of visual movie narration constitutes the condition of the possibility of a particular sort of *sui generi*s mode of aesthetic experience – one of the attraction, fixation and enthrallment of the beholder – that is what the watching of a movie is. It is a mode of experience that we have come to take so much for granted that is difficult for us to achieve a reflective understanding of the peculiarity and complexity of its constitution. And this is why a viewing of *Lady in the Lake* can serve as a means to philosophical clarity: by engendering in us a very particular sort of state of aesthetic frustration – one that is the product of this film's systematic failure to respect the conditions of the possibility of the constitution of this otherwise so readily available mode of aesthetic experience. The film helps to render visible aspects of the constitution of this mode of experience that otherwise remain invisible to us, thereby helping us to appreciate the extraordinariness of a mode of experience that has come to seem so ordinary to us.

Notes

1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, second edition, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998 [1953]).

2 Erwin Panofsky, "Style and Medium in the Moving Pictures," in Daniel Talbot, ed., *Film* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1959) p. 28,

3 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 31f. (The passage continues: "Only the art itself can discover its possibilities, and the discovery of a new possibility is the discovery of a new medium. A medium is something through which or by means of which something specific gets done or said in particular ways. It provides, one might say, particular ways to get through to someone, to make sense…. To discover ways of making sense is always a matter of the relation of an artist to his art, each discovering the other.")

4 Michael Fried, XXX

5 V.I. Pudovkin, XXX

6 Karel Reisz, XXX

7 George Wilson, XXX

8 Wilson, XXX

9 Jean Mitry, XXX

10 Wilson, XXX

11 Pudovkin, XXX
12 Diderot, XXX
13 Diderot, XXX
14 Diderot, XXX
15 Michael Fried, XXX
16 Michael Fried, XXX