

Image and Story in the Films of Wim Wenders

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Abstract

This thesis examines the characteristic features and the aesthetic of the films of the German director Wim Wenders. The examination focuses on the relationship between image and story central to the composition of Wenders' films as well as his theoretical writings. The thesis concentrates its investigation mainly on the films *Alice in den Städten* (1974), *Tokyo Ga* (1983-5), *Paris, Texas* (1984), *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987) and *Lisbon Story* (1994).

Wenders' exploration of the relationship between image and story is centred on the concept of the photographic image as the most accurate and reliable record of the appearance of physical reality. Wenders hopes that the ability of the photographic image to reproduce reality in pictorial form can be harnessed by the cinema in order to promote a mode of visual perception that respects the existence of material phenomena.

Wenders' approach to story in film is dialectical: on the one hand he considers a filmic story as a threat to the integrity of the images because, used to further the construction of the story, images lose their genuine function of asserting the existence of the material phenomena appearing in them.

On the other hand, Wenders knows of and respects the deeply humane values of stories and story-telling and the desire for stories among cinema audiences. The most notable of his films are determined by the attempt to find a solution to this dilemma by respecting the coherence a story can bestow on the images, yet reducing its function to that of a framing device. In using stories as frames for the presentation of images Wenders hopes to allow his images to speak, to tell a story that is found within the images of his films, rather than being imposed on the images or existing as a dominant factor of the composition of the films.

As can be shown in the chapter of the thesis focusing on *Lisbon Story*, Wenders makes corresponding assertions relating to film sound at a later stage in his career, considering sound to be a tool equally capable of rendering an accurate "audio" record of physical reality. Similar to his approach to images, Wenders again avoids employing sounds primarily for the construction of a story. As opposed to mainstream cinema where images and sounds exist to tell a story, they both appear in Wenders' films in their own right.

In commentaries on individual films the thesis can show that Wenders employs a range of aesthetic strategies to avoid narrative development in his films, and to emphasise instead the photographic and audio records of physical existence offered in the images and sounds. Story seldom develops into anything more than a recognisable framework structure within which sounds and images are allowed to represent themselves.

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Introduction

Although a relative late-comer to the movement known as *Das neue deutsche Kino*, Wim Wenders is internationally its best known and most successful active member today. In his thirty-three-year career he has made ten short films, twenty-three feature length films, several music videos and television advertising films, many of which have been awarded prizes at international film-festivals. His work as a photographer has been exhibited on eight occasions in Europe, Asia and America, and he has published eight books.

This diversity of theme, format and genre makes it difficult to identify areas of unity within Wenders' work. However, Wenders has been unusually and passionately vocal on questions regarding the cinematic medium. His self-reflexive, intellectual discourse betrays a preoccupation with a personal morality, or moral code, that he attaches to film and cinema, whether speaking of his own work or that of other filmmakers or recognised film schools and traditions. This tendency is discernible not only in the themes and production methods of his films, but also in interviews and in his published volumes of writings and photographs. The theoretical question most consistently under discussion, and to which Wenders never appears to find an answer with which he is fully satisfied, has been an incompatibility or conflict he perceives to exist between the film image and the filmic story, two elements of film that, together with sound, represent the aesthetic and technical basis of modern narrative cinema.

The nature of this problematic is twofold: on one side, Wenders recognises that he has to meet his audience's demand for story in film in order to be commercially viable as an independent director (a precondition in commercial feature film production, as opposed to avant-garde or experimental film production). In a speech held in 1982 Wenders accounts for this audience demand for story as a universal human desire rather than as a personal attitude:

Den Leuten geht es in erster Linie darum, daß ein Zusammenhang hergestellt wird. Geschichten geben den Leuten das Gefühl, daß es einen Sinn gibt, daß sich eine letzte Ordnung und Reihenfolge hinter den unglaublichen

Verwirrungen aller Erscheinungen verbirgt, die sie umgeben. Diese Ordnung wünschen sich die Menschen mehr als alles andere, ja ich würde beinah sagen, daß die Vorstellung von Ordnung oder von Geschichte mit der Vorstellung von Gott zusammenhängt. Geschichten sind Gottesersatz. Oder umgekehrt.¹

Beyond commercial considerations, then, Wenders perceives stories to function as structures in which seemingly arbitrary or unrelated events or phenomena can acquire meaning because they are placed in new relation to other events or phenomena within the same structure, or because stories can place these into the brace of a logical temporal continuity, which reassures the audience that there is an order to the cacophony of visual and audio impressions it is exposed to in daily life. This conception of an order-bringing function inherent to stories has equal relevance for film production and for the filmic story.

On the other side, Wenders is suspicious of story. He considers story an unstable element within film and attributes to it the potential to create a misbalance with the images in his films. Wenders refers to his school film *Silver City* (1968-69) to illustrate the mechanism of this instability. *Silver City* consists of thirteen static shots, mostly filmed from the windows of various apartments that Wenders had lived in during his time at the *Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen* in Munich. The film is markedly absent of action of any kind until the sixth shot, in which the intention was to film a train passing through a landscape.² (stills 1-3) Just before the end of the sequence, however, a man enters the frame from the right, running across the rail-tracks, exiting left: a completely unplanned intervention of the coincidental which seems to have ruined Wenders' idea of the film. Wenders exclaims that the man running through the picture disrupted "... die Ruhe der 'Landschaft mit dem Zug'".³ Norbert Grob claims to detect in Wenders' sceptical account of his birth, albeit by accident, as a story-teller, that his early realisation that he would from that moment on be damned to tell stories in film even against his will was a fall from grace.⁴ In fact, Wenders' goal had been a pure observation of the scene, but the inadvertent intervention of the man crossing the track in front of the camera suggested the possible existence of a story on the edge of the frame, threatening to take over the meaning of the sequence because "*Die Leute würden schon*

*eine sehr weit hergeholte Beziehung zwischen den Bildern als Absicht ansehen, etwas zu erzählen."*⁵

The creation of a story against the will of the director, Wenders contends, is the first way in which story can dominate in a film. The second reason for Wenders' suspicious approach to story is related to the first: that the story, once it has forced its way into existence, can begin to build illusory connections between autonomous events or phenomena. The montage, or editing processes that enable several independent time-sequences to be projected consecutively mean that not only can individual images be placed into temporal connection with one another, but also that the sequences these build can have a relation to other, separate sequences of images, which alone is sufficient to generate or infer meaning not actually present in the images in an artificial manner. This is a process that Wenders considers to belong much more within the domain of writing, and to be unbecoming of images:

Den Schriftsteller scheint das Erzählen logisch zu Geschichten zu führen - in dem Sinne, daß jedes Wort zu einem Satz gehören will und die Sätze in einem Zusammenhang stehen wollen; er muß weder die Wörter gewaltsam in einen Satz hineinpressen noch die Sätze in eine Geschichte [...] Bilder haben für mich nicht automatisch die Tendenz, sich zu eine Geschichte zu fügen. Wenn sie allmählich funktionieren sollen wie Wörter und Sätze, müssen sie erst "gewaltsam" dazu gebracht, d.h. manipuliert werden [...] Die Manipulation, die nötig ist, um all die Bilder eines Films in eine Geschichte zu pressen, mag ich nicht [...] Im Verhältnis von Geschichte und Bild ähnelt für mich die Geschichte einem Vampir, der versucht, dem Bild das Blut auszusaugen.⁶

Wenders' view that stories bring "*einzig und allein Lügen hervor, und die größte Lüge liegt darin, daß sie einen Zusammenhang herstellen, wo keiner ist,*"⁷ has dissuaded him from satisfying the demands of an audience that presumably craves the artificial structure and order that a story seems to promise with a traditional filmic narrative. Similarly, the suggestion that stories tend to create connections where there are none, particularly where the filmic/photographic image does not suggest any such connections, has made Wenders suspicious of traditional filmic narrative.

The other side to Wenders' considerations regards the image. Wenders quotes the film theoretician Béla Balázs in response to the existential question put to him in a questionnaire, "why do you make films":

Er spricht von der Möglichkeit (und der Verantwortung) des Kinos, "die Dinge zu zeigen, wie sie sind." Und davon, daß das Kino "die Existenz der Dinge retten" kann. Genau das ist es.⁸

This is a purely phenomenological idea of cinema based on three points: the act of showing something; the act of retaining an image of that thing's physical appearance; and the responsibility to do this in a spirit of sincerity, to show things 'as they are.' In another text Wenders refers to the Lumière brothers' *L'arrivée d'un train en gare* (1895) as "...ein Wahrheitsmoment".⁹ While he sites the act of recording an image of physical reality as the original role of cinema here, he also implies, through his choice of wording, that this act has been a source of cinematic creativity, and that the physical act of seeing again, or of recognising a given reality in the recorded image, can be a poetic experience:

Vor ungefähr 70 Jahren hat jemand zum erstenmal eine Kamera aufgebaut und Bewegung in hintereinanderlaufenden Bildern festgehalten, so daß er später auf einer Leinwand etwas wiedererkannt hat, was er durch das Objektiv schon gesehen hatte: wie jemand den Kopf wendet, wie Wolken über den Himmel ziehen, wie Grashalme zittern, wie ein Gesicht Schmerz oder Freude zeigt.¹⁰

From Wenders' words, we can speculate that the act of recording the visible world for others to view at a later time in itself constitutes a creative act, and that this creative act has moral responsibilities attached to it. Not the act of recording but the truthfulness of a photographic representation is a moral duty in this sense precisely because such photographic representations (today one must include the electronic image making technologies under the term 'photographic') are able to provide the truest available image of the physical appearance of things for the world to see.

The moral aspect of Wenders' aesthetic also rests on the recognition that images today permeate every part of everyday life, and that they are a standard by which, like a

look into the mirror, identity is formed and fixed. Frieda Grafe explains the importance of this function of images in the following terms:

Und alle, die meinen könnten, es sei in ihm zuviel vom Filmen die Rede und von den Schwierigkeiten, die es macht, möchten doch in Betracht ziehen, daß, mehr über die Herkunft von Bildern zu wissen, heute von vitalem Interesse ist. Weil sie uns machen, mehr denn je.¹¹

For such a mirror to be useful in the process of determining identity, the reflection in the mirror must be true. The decisive powers that Wenders attributes to film images in the identification processes of human beings lie in their 'photographic' nature. From Wenders' reference in *Die Logik der Bilder* to Balázs, he considers it a responsibility for those who generate images - the filmmakers - to guarantee their authenticity, the affirmation and preservation of the integrity of images. Accordingly, the photographic image, the technical basis of cinema, becomes one of the main themes in Wenders' work.

The tendency, as Wenders describes it, for a story to falsify or pervert the truth latently contained within photographic images by creating connections that may not exist in the corresponding reality is a threat to the integrity of the image. This tension, and the declared aim of finding a balance that simultaneously grants the spectator a story without allowing the story to determine or influence the meaning of a film's images, and that provides a framework structure for the presentation of his images, is at the centre of the reflexive debate on image and narrative in Wenders' work and writings.

Critical analyses of Wenders' films typically praise their images with grandiose terms such as "...ein Fest fürs Auge,"¹² but express consternation at the lacking coherence of their narratives. Writing on *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*, Frank Schnelle perhaps best exhibits the tendency to expect a traditional narrative structure in cinema, considering the combination of strong emphasis on the image with the refusal to wrap up events into a less than challenging story an unqualified cinematic failure:

Das große Paradoxon des Films: Einerseits scheint Wenders sich mit Händen und Füßen dagegen zu sträuben, so etwas wie eine Geschichte zu erzählen. Andererseits montiert er eine Vielzahl von Schicksalen und Episoden zu einem Monstrum von einer Geschichte. [...] Wenders filmt gegen das Filmen an; er

ist das klassische Beispiel für den Mann, der den Ast absägt, auf dem er sitzt.
Nun ist er – vermutlich endgültig – abgestürzt.¹³

The ways in which Wenders has consistently sought methods of coping with, indeed promoting the idea of cinema as a medium capable of incorporating forms of narrative without himself falling back on established narrative traditions in his work, and how he attempts to guard the integrity of the image against manipulation through narrative influences, provide a valuable insight into the relevance of his work for cinema on the whole. And if Wenders can say at one and the same time that "*Ich lehne Geschichten vollkommen ab...*"¹⁴ but also that he does, in fact, try to tell stories,¹⁵ what kind of stories are these? The fact that Wenders has never succumbed before such uncompromising condemnation as Schnelle's is a remarkable feat in itself.

Though all of Wenders' films more than merit a mention, the films *Alice in den Städten* (1974), *Tokyo Ga* (1983-1985), *Paris, Texas* (1984) and *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987) together exemplify the evolution of Wenders' film aesthetic in terms of the developments in the relation narrative has to the films' images, and will be given particular emphasis in this analysis. A fifth film, *Lisbon Story* (1994) will also be dealt with more specifically because Wenders' use of sound as a primary information carrier in the film is relevant to an understanding of the film's narrative mechanism, and because the function of sound as information carrier of equally empirical nature as the filmic image is a further facet to the image/narrative relationship.



Stills 1-3: The sequence surrounding the train shot in Silver City

Part 1. On the production of images

Diese siebte Kunst, wie sie genannt wird, vermag wie keine andere, das Wesen der Dinge zu erfassen, das Klima und die Strömungen ihrer Zeit einzufangen und ihre Hoffnungen, Ängste und Wünsche in einer allgemein verständlichen Sprache zu artikulieren.¹⁶

1.i. The camera never lies: Image and reality

The circumstance that allows physical reality to appear in film or in a photograph just as it appears when viewed without the mediation of a camera or other optical device – meaning that the physiognomy of things can be reproduced exactly, but in two dimensions – has encouraged the acceptance in everyday life of photographic evidence as indisputably authentic. This is true even if most people are aware that photographs are easily manipulated to show a reality or an event that never in fact existed or took place. The ability of cinema to produce an accurate image of physical reality means that the claim of truth is always latently possible. People therefore customarily believe that what they see in a photograph, or almost any kind of photographic image, is genuine. The English language has gained a new phrase since the invention of photography to reflect this: ‘the camera never lies.’

The film camera itself is a neutral piece of apparatus that enables the production of images with varying degrees of digression from the original. Robert Bresson expresses the camera’s neutrality in relation to other recording devices in the following way, drawing attention also to the fact that any particular intent in the image making process lies with the user of the cinematic apparatus, rather than with the apparatus itself:

Was kein menschliches Auge, kein Stift, Pinsel, Federhalter festzuhalten fähig ist, fängt deine Kamera ein, ohne zu wissen, was es ist, und hält es fest mit der gewissenhaften Gleichgültigkeit einer Maschine.¹⁷

Where distortion or any other disfigurement of physical reality occurs in the image – in telephoto or wide-angle shots particularly – efforts are generally made to reduce this to a minimum unless the effect is intentional. For Morin, photographic images leave the impression of being real themselves through their analogy to the contours of the real object, even though the ability to convince of a photographic image is compromised by abstracting aspects such as their two-dimensionality or, sometimes, black and white images. At the same time he identifies the rendering of movement in the film image - a condition made possible by film's temporal dimension - as an aspect of film that can increase the impression of plausibility:

Der Film rollt ab, er dauert an. Gleichzeitig realisieren die in Bewegung versetzten Dinge den Raum. (...) Die Verbindung der Realität der Bewegung mit dem Augenschein der Formen bringt die Empfindung des konkreten Lebens und die Erfahrung der objektiven Wirklichkeit hervor. Die Formen liefern der Bewegung das objektive Gerüst, und die Bewegung gibt den Formen Körper.¹⁸

As a filmmaker concerned with the documentation of the time in which he lives,¹⁹ Wenders has made the photographic/filmic image the basis of his cinema, in which the relationship between image and reality is central to his film-aesthetic. From the title of Wenders' first film, *Schauplätze* (1967)²⁰ it would seem that the interest in observation of the environment has occupied the director since his beginnings. Several fragments of this film have been retained and incorporated into *Same Player Shoots Again* (1968), which exhibits an observing tendency that one might have expected from *Schauplätze*, and that remained common to later films. These early films showed the euphoria of someone using the medium for the first time, but not yet able to master its codes and instead being dragged along by its 'magical' reproductive abilities. This includes a respect for objects and phenomena, and for real spatial and temporal dimension, evidenced through the almost exclusive use of long, uninterrupted shots, a static camera and a refusal to use editing for synthetic or dramatic effects. Many scenes and sequences

are taken from a window of a building or of a moving car, leading Grob to describe these films as a "*Blick aus dem Fenster*".²¹

In emphasising the particular ability of film and photography to accurately record the appearance of physical reality, Wenders takes up not only the position of Balázs on the relationship between cinema and reality, but also allies himself with Kracauer's film theory. Central to Kracauer's theory is the fundamental role that photography plays in film. "[*Die Fotografie*] ist und bleibt unbestreitbar der entscheidende Faktor in der Produktion filmischen Inhalts. Das Wesen der Fotografie lebt in dem des Films fort."²² More precisely, it is the optical conditions that allow for the exact reproduction of physical reality that Kracauer considers decisive for the aesthetics of film production.

Wie die Fotografie, so tendiert auch der Film dazu, alle materiellen Phänomene festzuhalten, die virtuell in Reichweite der Kamera liegen. Um es anders auszudrücken: es ist als sei das Medium vom chimärischen Wunsch beseelt, das Kontinuum physischer Existenz zu erstellen.²³

Pier Paolo Pasolini however takes the relation film has with reality to its most extreme and radical end: in his book *Empirismo Eretico* Pasolini brings the cinema and the world together as one, labelling reality as '*kino in natura*'.²⁴ His conception of '*kino in natura*' describes reality as cinema but without a camera, and cinema as reality, but reproduced by an invisible camera in an unbroken continuity.

Dieses Kino in natura, das die Wirklichkeit ist, stellt tatsächlich eine Sprache dar, eine Sprache, die in gewisser Weise die mündliche Sprache der Menschen ähnelt. So ist das Kino - durch seine Reproduktion der Wirklichkeit - das geschriebene Moment der Wirklichkeit: [...] es stellt die Wirklichkeit durch die Wirklichkeit dar. [...] Diese Philosophie scheint mir nichts anderes zu sein als eine verblendete, kindliche und pragmatische Liebe zur Wirklichkeit. Wie unendlich und kontinuierlich die Wirklichkeit auch sei, immer kann eine ideelle Kamera sie reproduzieren, in ihre Unendlichkeit und Kontinuität. Das Kino ist also, in einem ersten und archetypischen Begriff, eine kontinuierliche und unendliche Einstellungssequenz.²⁵

Film images are thus not to be considered symbolic, because they represent reality with reality. The reproductive ability of the filmic medium implies that cinema has, above all, a documentary role to play in the field of artistic creativity.

Wenders makes the image the basis of his cinema, which we might with good reason call a documentary cinema, because the cinema-image is ideally suited to the documentation of the visual world, the illusion of actual presence. Entertainment, comedy, thrillers – all these other functions that film has assumed since its invention do not depend on the existence of film or photography, whereas the documentation of the appearance of things does. Of the other visual arts, painting is the nearest, but, although theoretically possible, it does not naturally fit into the role of copying the material world. In photography, it is difficult to avoid things appearing in the image just as they do in reality, even if the photograph is an abstraction.

For Wenders' cinema, the result of this choice of emphasis is that he tries to allow his films to remain open to material phenomena of both a specific and a non-specific nature: his films strive to emphasise the incorporation of the physical environments in which they play – including those films that follow their characters over sometimes vast distances around the world. For Wenders, realism is a code of representation, a *mis en scène* of objects and events that had not been visible before, or had not been thought worth preserving. This is what Wenders considers to have been the charm, and aesthetic drive behind early cinema.

1.ii. Rescuing physical reality.

Combined with photography's ability to reproduce physical reality accurately and in a pictorial form that is easily accessed and processed by any viewer, the fact that a photographic image withstands the flow of time means that moments in time, and the physical appearance of objects, whether animate or inanimate, whether fleeting or permanent, can be preserved. Balázs spoke of a cinema capable of rescuing the existence of things, while Kracauer's *Theorie des Films* is subtitled *Die Errettung der physischen Realität*. Wenders understands the term 'rescue' - *retten* or *Errettung* - to mean not just the preservation of the appearance of things, beings and of moments in time, but more specifically the preservation of their identity:

Keine andere Erzählform handelt eindringlicher und berechtigter von der Idee der Identität als der Film. Weil keine andere Sprache in der Lage ist, von der physischen Realität der Dinge selbst zu reden. 'Die Möglichkeit und der Sinn der Filmkunst liegt darin, daß jedwedes Wesen so aussieht, wie es ist.' So pathetisch dieser Satz von Béla Balázs ist, so richtig ist er auch. Ich kriege Lust, mir einen Film anzuschauen, wenn ich ihn lese.²⁶

As well as quoting Balázs when asked the question "*Warum filmen Sie?*" Wenders also found a phrase by Cézanne important enough to remember: "...*die Dinge verschwinden. Man muß sich beeilen, wenn man etwas sehen will.*"²⁷ For Wenders, the act of filming is a heroic act ("... *nicht immer, auch nicht oft, aber manchmal*)."²⁸ It enables the redemption of transient things as well as reproducing these accurately. Photography is perhaps the nearest mankind has ever come to achieving immortality for these two reasons. Of relevance in this respect is that photographic images can be retained almost indefinitely as proof of existence or of moments that otherwise become a part of the past immediately after they occur. Wenders explains this in simple terms:

Etwas geschieht, man sieht es geschehen, man filmt, während es geschieht, die Kamera sieht zu, bewahrt es auf, man kann es erneut betrachten, wieder betrachten. Die Sache ist nicht mehr da, aber die Betrachtung ist möglich, die Wahrheit der Existenz dieser Sache, sie ist nicht verloren [...] Die Kamera ist die Waffe gegen das Elend der Dinge, nämlich gegen ihr verschwinden. Warum filmen? Wissen Sie keine weniger dumme Frage?²⁹

For Wenders, cinema's ability to present an accurate picture of physical existence and to freeze transient appearance becomes a tool capable of fixing and retaining identity. Just as truth is latently possible in a photograph because it can provide an accurate reproduction of physical reality - proof of the existence of an object, or of a moment in time - a photograph is also a record that is valid even when the subject of the photograph no longer exists. The profusion in Wenders' films of images that document things, in particular buildings, that are about to disappear, suggests that there is a conscious effort on the part of the director to make use of cinema's ability to hold onto the appearance of things, preserving them until well after the objects themselves are forgotten. The house in which Jonathan, the main protagonist of *Der amerikanische Freund* (1977) lives is earmarked for demolition by the Hamburg Senate, (**still 4**) and a demolition is under way in a scene in Paris; the cinema in *Die Angst des Tormanns beim*

Elfmeter (1971-72) was reconstructed in a famous Jugendstil house due for destruction, (still 5) ("For the same reason, we used Wittgenstein's house in one of the scenes");³⁰ the Berlin Wall in *Der Himmel über Berlin* disappeared in 1989, prompting a discussion on whether it should not remain in part to preserve the memory of division. Wenders uses the ability of the photographic image to document not just the existence of things that are about to disappear, but to highlight the fleeting nature of physical existence. This characteristic of cinema prompted Cocteau to describe the activity of filming as watching "[...] *den Tod bei der Arbeit*."³¹

Buchka describes this notion, in connection with a memory from Wenders' days at film-school in Munich, as "*Zeitgeist*." He refers to an occasion, recounted by Wenders, when he was sitting in a Munich bar together with his colleague Rainer Werner Fassbinder; a woman (Hanna Schygulla) would regularly put a coin into a juke-box and dance alone in front of it. The two filmmakers agreed that that was a scene worth filming, which Fassbinder did in his film *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1978). Buchka contests that, regardless of the fact that Schygulla went on to become a star of the German screen, or that meaning might have grown to the image with her rise to fame, the images would have represented a worthwhile record of a particular phenomenon:

Denn darin kommt vor allem auch ein grundsätzlicher Respekt vor der bloßen Erscheinung eines Phänomens - sei's nun ein Mensch, sei's ein Ding - zum Ausdruck. Und diese Erscheinung hat schon einen Wert auch ohne die Rücksicht darauf, welche Bedeutung ihm in der Geschichte - der Historie wie der Erzählung - noch zuwächst. Mit dieser Haltung hat der Film begonnen. Lumière und seine Nachfolger nahmen einfach auf, was in ihrer nächsten Umgebung interessant war: Eisenbahnen, Pferdekutschen, Menschen und Dinge, die sich bewegten.³²

That makes out, for Wenders, the particular ability of the cinema and the photographic image to record physical reality as something special precisely because the process of selecting such moments directs attention at them. In Wenders' cinema, the idea is to see the world as if for the first time, to try to catch hold of something that seems beautiful or interesting in the moment of its occurrence. Things are recorded just on their own merit, without needing to represent something else, they are there for

themselves. Reality is itself a magical part of existence, but the cinema is capable of isolating things in a frame, making reality transparent, forcing the spectator to notice what they would otherwise have ignored. In relation to his concept of cinema as the written language of reality, Pasolini speaks of film as performing a no less than revolutionary role in making reality transparent and promoting an awareness of physical existence:

So revolutionär, wie die geschriebene Sprache mit der gesprochenen verfahren ist, wird das Kino mit der Wirklichkeit verfahren. Solange die Sprache der Wirklichkeit eine natürliche war, lag sie außerhalb unseres Bewußtseins; nun, da wir sie durchs Kino als "geschriebene" vor Augen haben, fordert sie notwendig ein Bewußtsein. Die geschriebene Sprache der Wirklichkeit bewirkt vor allem, das wir erkennen, was die Sprache der Wirklichkeit ist; und schließlich, daß wir unser Denken über die Wirklichkeit verändern...³³

1.iii. The film image as illusion of reality.

Inherent to the filmic medium, the cinematic apparatus and to the act of image-viewing, however, is that no matter how much a director strives to remain faithful to the real appearance of physical reality, the aesthetic qualities of the medium dictate that any filmic or photographic image of a natural scene is always a reproduction of actuality in pictorial form. The term 'illusion' is more poignant because of the especially close resemblance film images can have to reality. In a sense, then, though Wenders might try to present an unmediated image of physical reality, the ideal of unmediated vision that he seems to have been suggesting in *Silver City* through the simulation of the blinking action remains unattainable: the film image remains an imitation of reality from the very start. Nevertheless, the accurate pictorial reproduction of physical reality represents an adequate goal in the work of Wim Wenders, in which the limitations of the medium – the fact that depicted reality never is more than a reproduction – is thematically expressed as an inadequacy.³⁴

Any portrayal of physical existence in a filmic or photographic representation is the product of mediation on various levels, each of which, according to Bazin, increases the discrepancy between original and copy:

Dasselbe Ereignis, derselbe Gegenstand unterliegen verschiedenen Darstellungsformen. Jede von ihnen läßt einige Eigenschaften weg, bewahrt andere, an denen wir das Objekt auf der Leinwand wiedererkennen, jede von ihnen nimmt für didaktische oder ästhetische Zwecke mehr oder wenige starke Abstraktionen vor, die das Original nicht als Ganzes bestehen lassen. Am Schluß dieses unvermeidlichen und notwendigen chemischen Prozesses ist die ursprüngliche Realität ersetzt durch eine Illusion der Realität...³⁵

Though this characteristic of filmic and photographic images as, by definition, mere illusions of reality does not have any direct bearing on Wenders' desire for an unmediated representation of reality, the technical nature of the medium nevertheless makes such images the media most suited to enabling the realisation of this goal. The act of showing is therefore the first main instance of mediation between a direct view of reality and a portrayal of reality in images, and is a result of the spatial separation of film set from movie theatre. The point of view offered and the content of film images are exclusively the result of the director's choice. In this respect, the act of showing is, presumably, a compromise for Wenders because the medium is incapable of offering the audience its own point of view. A filmmaker can do no more than to show what he sees, the way he sees it, and whether or not this amounts to active deception of the audience (a moral question for Wenders) depends on how the material is presented.

The fact that film is a recording art also imposes a degree of temporal separation on events portrayed in film images, between the actual time of the occurrence of an event and the time the event is reviewed in a film. An event in reality is part of an infinite chain of concurrent and consecutive events, whether related or unrelated. The same event recorded on film is isolated from surrounding events by the necessity of turning on and off the film camera, which extracts an image of the event from the chain it organically belongs to and constructs a new context for it to appear in. Which events are recorded is again the choice of the director, as is the decision whether or not to place the recorded event into temporal relation with others. For Wenders, the necessity to make

such decisions seemed, during the filming of *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, to compromise the goal of unmediated representation:

Jedesmal, bei jeder Szene, ist es für mich das größte Problem, wie die nun aufhören wird und wie man zur nächsten kommt. Im Grunde möchte ich am liebsten die ganze Zeit dazwischen nicht auslassen. [...] Alle Handlungen, alles was in unserem Fall jetzt der Tormann macht, geht irgendwo weiter, und man zeigt halt immer nur ein ganz bestimmtes Teil davon. Das hat mir am meisten Schwierigkeiten gemacht, wie man da auswählt.³⁶

The temporal and spatial aberrations that separate a portrayal of reality in the form of photographic images from the reality from which it is taken mean that cinema can provide no more than an illusion of reality. While Wenders has attempted in his early films to simulate the conditions of actual and contemporaneous observation, the fact that an illusion of reality is the closest the filmic medium can come to touching the surface of reality by no means excludes the ability of the medium to offer an accurate representation of physical existence. This is a characteristic inherent to the medium, but has relevance nevertheless, because the act of showing involves the use of such simulation. The very same attributes – temporal delay in the immediacy of a photographic representation of reality, and spatial displacement of objects in images – are, in fact, necessary conditions for the act of showing. More importantly, these forms of mediation furnish the filmmaker with the opportunity to mould what is to be shown into a personally constructed recreation of reality, employing various strategies and techniques that give cinema its aesthetic form, that make it a creative art. They are the tools of intent in film, that would be denied to the filmmaker were the film image not an illusion of physical reality, and have relevance for filmic narration.

1.iv. The inflation and reproduction of images.

The act of showing involves the reproduction of reality in pictorial form which, in turn, requires the production of an illusion of reality. Ideally, Wenders would like to enable spectators of his films to enjoy unmediated visual perception, would like his films to promote the act of seeing amongst his audience. The aesthetic and physical

characteristics of cinema – his chosen art-form – dictate, however, that this sentiment can only be expressed through the mediation of photographic images, which are themselves reproductions of reality. Whilst considering the cinema an adequate tool for the promotion of visual perception, Wenders is also of the opinion that unrestricted and uncontrolled image-making can and has contributed to a deterioration in peoples' ability to understand their relation to and connection with what they see, and to a change in their seeing habits. Wenders' cinema is, at the time of *Alice in den Städten*, about the mediation between the human being and its environment, about the relationship between them and how this has changed since the invention - if one wished to take the theme back to its origins - of machines of mass-production: the printing-press, photography, the cinema itself. Wenders relates how the process of conserving images, of holding up the disappearance of things was begun by poets and painters:

Irgendwann kamen dann Fotografien dazu, und natürlich gab es schon den Druck, die Reproduktion der gemalten Bilder, das war auch schon wieder ein Schritt. Dann kamen die Filmbilder dazu, schließlich kam das elektronische Bild. Inzwischen ist jeder von uns einer solchen Überdosis von Bildern tagtäglich ausgesetzt, daß es fast schon Anachronismus ist... daß Bilder latent Wahrheit enthalten können. Bilder haben natürlich in dieser Inflation immer weniger Wahrheitsgehalt gleichzeitig.³⁷

The three primary reasons for the explosion in image production are the development of new and more efficient methods of reproducing images already mentioned; technical advances in the distribution of images; and the discovery of various ways in which images can be used to promote commercial interests. The most significant modern development that incorporates all three of these advancements is the invention of television and the technologies that subsequently stemmed from it, which Wenders sees as the main obstacle to establishing a culture of healthy visual perception.

1.v. Television and the commercialisation of images.

The camera never lies: the photographic image is provider of reliable, accurate and recognisable representations of reality which, for these reasons, is widely trusted as

authentic. For the same reasons, photographic images can be a powerful tool of influence, in particular the cinema, which is available and makes itself attractive to the masses. The optical conditions that create an image on a negative film-strip inside a camera - that fact that light enters the camera through a lens and is projected, without further mediation, onto the negative - means that the camera really does never 'lie.' (In the same vein, the temporal and spatial separation of an image on a photograph from the reality it depicts means that, in a sense, the camera always lies). The danger that this medium poses comes much more from the way the equipment is used, by whom and for what purpose, than from the photographic process itself. As much as any other medium, film and photography are open to a kind of manipulation that is not the falsification of material reality itself, but the use of that reality for ulterior intentions. This circumstance threatens to pervert what Wenders considers cinema's duty: to give an image of man in the 20th century, "... *ein brauchbares, wahres und gültiges Bild, in dem er sich nicht nur wiedererkennen, sondern von dem er vor allem über sich selbst lernen konnte.*"³⁸ Wenders' use of the term *Einstellung* in German, signifying both 'shot' and 'attitude', succinctly expresses this perceived connection between the mechanisms of cinematic production and the attitude a director has towards the physical reality that lies before the camera. This relationship determines - and can be evidenced in - how the given reality is transferred onto the screen, how it is presented to the spectator:

Das glaubt mir vielleicht nicht so ohne weiteres jeder: aber ich glaub, daß in jeder Einstellung in einem Film die Einstellung dessen und derer, die dahinterstehen und das zu verantworten haben, zu sehen ist. Ich glaub, daß jede Einstellung eines Films die Einstellung der Filmemacher widerspiegelt. Und daß man letzten Endes in jeder Einstellung sowohl das sieht, was vor der Kamera war, als auch immer das sieht, was hinter der Kamera ist. Für mich ist eine Kamera etwas, was in beide Richtungen funktioniert. Sie zeigt sowohl ihre Objekte als auch ihre Subjekte. Deswegen zeigt jede Einstellung letzten Endes auch die Einstellung derer, die dafür verantwortlich sind.³⁹

The director can choose, as Balázs describes, to show things 'as they are' (even though mediation through the filmmaker is an inevitable and unavoidable factor), allowing the viewer to take part in the interpretation - or other receptional activity - of what it sees. This idea rests on a perceived degree of respect towards what is in front of

the camera, and towards its accurate reproduction on the screen.⁴⁰ The intention to get as much reality onto the screen as possible means not just making images of a given reality, but also showing that reality in a way that allows its real nature to show through, that makes transparent the prevailing condition of the reality, showing things in a way that constructs a relation between the given reality and the life that exists within it.

Or the director can choose to use images to try to force the spectatorship to some pre-calculated interpretation or conclusion based within the predefined limits of the imagination of the filmmaker. For Wenders, this is a question of how much the filmmaker allows the spectators the freedom to decide for themselves.

Amongst the most common subjects under discussion in Wenders' films are other media - music, the written word - but most particularly television. There is one visible in almost all of his films from *Same Player Shoots Again* to *The Million Dollar Hotel* (1999). In many cases they are not working, their images are blank or else they have not even been unpacked, indicating that Wenders wants to use them thematically, but finds that what their screens show is not worth conveying to his own spectators. The four occasions when we are allowed a clear picture of what is in the program, they are other 'real' films, - *Young Mr. Lincoln*, which is shown in one of Winter's motel rooms in *Alice in den Städten*, but it is constantly interrupted by advertising, and *Die Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach* in the industrialist's villa in *Falsche Bewegung*. The first and fourth such occasions involve music, first in *Summer in the City*, then in *Bis ans Ende der Welt* (1991), where the rock group 'Talking Heads' are on the screen in an apparent reference to the classical Hollywood framing technique of the same name. **(still 6)** With these four exceptions, the television image always seems to be blind and superficial, transporting nothing. Only in the two examples where images from another film are shown, or when a music-clip is shown, are the images clearly visible. Peter Buchka attributes Wenders' almost contemptuous treatment of television to its lack of cinema's...

Geist der Utopie, der bei ihm die Würde des Films ausmacht. Es wird nicht verspottet, weil es der kommerzielle Feind des Kinos ist, sondern weil es dessen falsche Mittel bewußtlos vervielfacht. Dies macht Video zum "Krebs des Kinos" wie es in *Nicks Film: Lightning over Water* heißt....Zwar wuchert

Fernsehen und Video vor sich hin, aber es deckt mit der Vorspiegelung von aktuellem Leben die Widerspiegelung von akutem Leben zu.⁴¹

The commercialisation of images on one hand, and the inflation - or mass distribution - of commercial images through television on the other results, if one accepts Jean Luc Godard's account of television's origins in Wenders' film *Chambre 666* (1982), from the fact that television "zusammen mit der Werbung geboren [wurde], die das Fernsehen finanzierte. Es war also die Welt der Werbung, die sehr gut zu reden verstand."⁴² The situation described by Godard has not changed significantly: In order to survive, private television stations are today compelled to compete for viewer attention through the programming they offer, and to maximise revenue from advertising in order to be able to provide the most appealing programmes. One outcome of this state of affairs in a competitive climate is an increase across the board in the amount of advertising distributed through television networks, whilst television has, at least until the development of the world wide web, provided the most effective advertising forum available to commercial bodies and institutions.

The commercial use of images in advertising and, more particularly, advertising in television gives Wenders, a director committed to promoting an open mode of perception sensitive to the underlying essence of physical existence, good cause for distress because television is such an efficient and effective distributor of images. He considers advertising a form of "Gewaltanwendung" in that advertising always has the objective of promoting a specific idea, be it a product or a service. Advertising is incompatible with Wenders' concept of cinema, therefore, because his is a cinema based on minimising manipulation of the spectator to understand things in a certain way.⁴³

Wenn der Film fertig ist, ist er in dem Moment, wo er vorgeführt wird, eine Gewaltanwendung insofern, als die Gefahr besteht, daß er seinen Zuschauern keine Freiheit mehr gibt, etwas zu sehen, sondern nur noch ihnen sagt, was sie zu sehen haben. Das ist zweifellos im Film latent eine große Gefahr. Das Extrem dieser Gefahr ist die Reklame oder ein Propagandafilm. Wo alles darauf angelegt ist, daß der Zuschauer nur eine bestimmte Botschaft versteht. Das ist im Extremfall tatsächlich äußerste Manipulation, und Manipulation ist ja Gewaltanwendung... Und ich bemühe mich, daß meine Filme [...] erst im Kopf eines jeden Zuschauers entstehen, daß sie nicht immer mit dem Finger auf etwas zeigen und sagen: das siehst du jetzt und nichts anderes!

und das ist so und so zu verstehen! - sondern den Finger völlig wegziehen und die Dinge selbst ausbreiten, so daß man, wie im Leben auch, etwas sehen kann oder nicht.⁴⁴

Here, Wenders argues against the use of images for the transmission of information where the objective is to manipulate the spectator to understand the depicted reality in a certain way. The risk, he feels, is primarily that the image and the information transmitted through it might bear little or no natural relation to one another, causing a rift between signifier and signified.

The consequences Wenders draws from the phenomenon of image-based advertising, particularly in television, is that the mass distribution of such images may lead to a transformation of habitual visual perception, the fracturing of image and meaning, the dispersal of individuality, creativity, history, of the authentic which are dissolving in the pastiche of sounds and images generated by the modern communications media. Writing about his first visit to the USA, Wenders describes the extent to which he feels images of all kinds characterise every aspect of life to the extent that even vision becomes eroded:

Amerika, das Bilder-Land. Land aus Bildern. Land für Bilder. Selbst Schrift ist hier zu Bildhaftigkeit geworden. [...] Warum wirbt dieses Land mehr für sich als jedes andere? [...] Das Amerikanische Fernsehen hat diesen Werbefeldzug nur noch gewaltig potenziert über den ganzen Planeten.⁴⁵

In his film *Reverse Angle: NYC 1982*, he considers this practice to have lead to a "...bilderfeindliche Zeit (und auch eine Zeit feindlicher Bilder)".⁴⁶ Wenders feels that, far from providing images that might stem the rising tide of hostile images, new American films at the beginning of the 80s also spoke the language of television - of commerce - and are beginning to look like advertisements themselves:

Vom Kino ist keine Hilfe zu erwarten, im Gegenteil: die zeitgenössischen amerikanischen Filme sehen mehr und mehr aus wie ihre eigenen Reklametrailer. So vieles hat hier in Amerika die Tendenz, zur Werbung für sich selbst zu werden, was zu einer Invasion und Inflation von sinnentleerten Bildern führt. Und das Fernsehen, wie immer, vorneweg. Gift für die Augen.⁴⁷

A novel by Emanuel Bove (Mes Amis) and a picture book of Edward Hopper's paintings remind him, "... daß auch die Kamera so behutsam beschreiben kann, so daß die Dinge im rechten Licht erscheinen können: wie sie sind."⁴⁸ (stills 7 and 8)

1.vi. Cinema films in television.

Soon after the commercial introduction of television in the USA in the 1950's it found itself in competition with the cinema. In a bid to attract the American public out of the comfort of the living-room the cinema attempted to develop ways of retaining interest in itself. It emphasised the "physical superiority of its projected image in a series of technical 'improvements' (Cinemascope, Widescreen, VistaVision, 3-D, etc.)",⁴⁹ and put its larger capital base to use in spectacular blockbuster productions.

However, Kracauer was aware already in 1960 that television was unlikely to kill off the cinema, and suggests three possible reasons for television's success, one of which is that television feeds on the products of the cinema, needing the survival of the cinema to ensure its own survival.⁵⁰ TV today looks to cinema for innovations and new ideas, as well as for entertainment material, making the cinema an "area in which new styles of shooting and editing can be pioneered; and equally new forms of subject matter."⁵¹

This act of scavenging, though, has since become sacrifice in Wenders' opinion, for in order to reach the widest audiences and ensure financial success, cinema gave up its initial drive to compete with television and began instead to adapt to the formal conventions of the televisual image. This circumstance leads Wenders to complain in 1982:

Beim Fernsehen haben sich durch die Verengung von der Leinwand auf den Bildschirm auch die Regeln zusammengezogen. Das sieht man ganz deutlich bei Kinofilmen im Fernsehen. Da sind die Freiräume gar nicht mehr sichtbar, etwa bei Western die Totalen. Die Regeln mußten auch enger werden, weil die Bindung des Zuschauers an das Ding enger sein muß. Im Kino gabs ja immer eine schöne Distanz. Aber das ändert sich jetzt auch. In den neueren amerikanischen Filmen wird man ja auf ähnliche Weise an die Leinwand 'gefesselt' wie es das Fernsehen tut. Die offene Bindung wird immer enger.⁵²

Television has had to find new ways of binding the viewer to the screen because its image is comparatively small. Typically, close-ups are much more frequent than in a cinema film in order for the details to be clearly visible on the small screen. Less attention is devoted to background detail for this reason. The visual impact of cinema films thus becomes compromised when they are shown on television.⁵³

Television additionally appealed to its audience by matching cinema's offering of feature films and by sensationalising televisual events, keeping to a strict, reliable timetable that could encourage 'television appointments.' If these appointments were kept, then continued advertising revenue was guaranteed.

At the same time, Wenders claims, the public has accepted that, even in film, once an entirely separate medium from television, things must be in continuous movement. In interview with Leonetta Bentivoglio, Wenders suggests that the rhythm of films today has changed since the introduction of television into daily life in the 1950's:

I have the impression that [...] when television was one thing and cinema another, and video didn't exist yet, one could watch a film much more attentively and patiently. Today, films have a completely different rhythm: they no longer dedicate much time to observing things, and neither does the public.⁵⁴

This is an idea of television as a device that impedes freedom of view because it focuses attention only on foreground details, and leaves little time for attentive observation of images because of the relatively fast cutting rhythms employed to offer constantly new and changing images, sensations and impressions to the viewers, lest they become wearied and switch to another channel. This is the same kind of manipulation of the audience that Wenders observes in advertising films. Films made for television must conform to these tighter rules because the commercial cinema has a strong financial dependency on TV:

The financing of large-scale feature film production takes into account the eventual sale to TV [...] The financing of radical, independent work also depends on TV financing [...] Often, this dependence becomes excessive, as other possible sources of finance (state funding, private sources) tend to fade away, and the existence of a radical and independent sector becomes dependent on the internal decisions of a TV channel.⁵⁵

This dependence, paradoxically, compromises cinema's ability to provide constant innovation, as Ellis describes, because TV is required to be:

[...] predictable and timetabled; it is required to avoid offence and difficulty
[..] The centrality of broadcast TV to everyday life combined with the resultant demands for timidity and predictability means that TV defines a kind of centre ground from which cinema, in a variety of ways, diverges. This centre ground is composed of TV's habitual attitudes and its habitual forms.⁵⁶

With reference to Wenders' work and his position on the development of relations between modern cinema and TV, the combination of, on one hand, cinema's growing financial dependence on TV with, on the other hand, TV having adopted a centralist position, its dependence on advertising revenues and its worldwide dissemination of images has resulted in a dilution of the essence of individuality and identity of the objects depicted in its images: firstly because the mass reproduction of an individual object (or person) can compromise its uniqueness if it appears everywhere in images; secondly, because it can also appear outside its natural context; and thirdly, because any image, once produced and reproduced, can be used for the promotion of ideas, in advertising for example, to which the subject of the image has no natural connection. The attempts of filmmakers to adapt to the viewing conditions television offers could lead, in Wenders' opinion, to less challenging visual content in cinema films, thereby discouraging visual openness in perceptual habits generally:

Heutzutage schließlich ist es vor allem das Fernsehen, das die Bilder bewahrt. Aber in der Inflation elektronischer Bilder, die das Fernsehen uns bietet, scheint in einem solchen Maße wenig Erinnerungswürdiges zu sein, daß man sich fragen muß, ob man nicht lieber zur alten Tradition der Dichter und Maler zurückkehren sollte. Es ist besser, wenig Bilder, alle voller Leben als Unmassen von sinnlosen Bildern zu haben. Es ist der Blick, der darüber entscheidet, ob etwas gesehen worden ist.⁵⁷



Still 4: Jonathan's house in *Der amerikanische Freund*



Still 5: the cinema in *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*



Still 6: 'Talking Heads' video in *Bis Ans Ende Der Welt*



Still 7: Bove's novel in *Reverse Angle: NYC 1982*



Still 8: Edward Hopper plate in *Reverse Angle: NYC 1982*

Part 2. On the construction of narratives.

Wenders learnt from the *Silver City* affair that it is difficult to speak of attaining a goal in film without also taking the question of narrative into consideration during planning and shooting. His proclaimed ideal of a cinema capable of re-establishing or preserving the integrity of the photographic image inevitably leads to the questions: what role does the act – and the fact – of narration play in the selection of this goal; how do the laws and conventions of filmic narration influence the filmmaking process under these circumstances; how are they applied; and what, in Wenders' cinema, are the results?

2.i. Incompatibility of images and narrative.

The opinion categorically expressed by Wenders that images and stories are mutually incompatible⁵⁸ manifests itself in two different but interrelated ways in his films and in his utterances on the subject. His reaction to the inadvertent and unforeseen entrance of the man in *Silver City* focuses on the way a story can seem independently to assert its presence in a film against the will of the director. In this case, the suggestion of the existence of an unwanted story is a result of the temporal dimension inherent to the filmic medium, which allows the portrayal of action in film, and a result of the pre-conditioned nature of the average initiated film spectator who, familiar with conventional cinematic produce, is encouraged to expect some kind of causality from action in a film.

A second way in which Wenders expresses the incompatibility of images and stories in film is precisely the inverse of the situation in *Silver City*: that images must be manipulated if they are used to narrate a predefined story. This theory rests on Wenders' belief that the primary ability and role of images to show - due to their adherence to the appearance of physical reality - rather than tell - which involves the transmission of some kind of message - may be compromised if story is allowed to dominate in a film: "[Bilder] wollen nichts tragen und transportieren: weder Botschaft noch Bedeutung, weder Ziel noch Moral. Genau das wollen aber Geschichten."⁵⁹ If photographic images

are forced into the frame of a predefined story, then the truth that is inherent to them by virtue of their 'photographic' nature risks being distorted. Such distortion of the empirical evidence that photographs provide therefore amounts to the negation of truth in a visual representation of reality.

Though this sounds like a bitter personal rejection of story in film, Wenders' sentiments are shared by other theoreticians such as Siegfried Kracauer. In his book *Theorie des Films*, Kracauer asserts that a film producer who deals with history or fantasy runs the risk of disavowing the basic character and nature of the medium. "*Grob gesagt, es ist ihm dann nicht mehr um physische Realität zu tun, sondern um die Einbeziehung von Welten, die außerhalb des Bereichs unserer Wirklichkeit liegen.*"⁶⁰ In Kracauer's formulation, one should understand fantasy as fiction of any kind, and under history, films of a dramatic nature rather than historical documentary.

To these, Wenders would add the current fashion in the USA for re-makes of films as other types of filmic story that deny the documentary character of the photographic image, amounting to an abuse of images for the simple reason that they are appropriated to convey information with which their link is insubstantial. With a bold generalisation he directly criticises Americans for having a blind faith in their stories to the extent that Hollywood continually recycles its stories.

Das amerikanische Kino von heute regeneriert sich fast ausschließlich aus sich selbst und handelt von Erfahrungen, die selbst wieder nur in anderen Filmen gemacht worden sind, d.h. der Faden ist gerissen, wo das Kino etwas mit dem Leben zu tun hatte und wo Filme Erfahrungen 'aus dem Leben' verarbeitet haben.⁶¹

Wenders refers to such films, specifically the most recent American films in 1982, as 'exercises in suppression' because they pervert the empirical evidence contained within the film images because story is foregrounded,⁶² claiming that this negates the real and original purpose of the cinema:

Der Unterhaltungsfilm läßt die Welt natürlich gern vergessen, per Definition von Unterhaltung. Unterhaltung ist sozusagen Ablenkung von der Welt. Und ich finde, daß der Film nicht dafür erfunden worden ist, von der Welt abzulenken, sondern im Gegenteil auf die Welt hinzuweisen.⁶³

Difficulties arise when the story of a film is more important than its images. Fiction (entertainment) films and historical dramas fall into this category by definition: fantasy and fiction are constructs of the imagination, while both fiction and historical drama films, even if they claim to be based on real or historical events, deny a vision of the contemporary material world. These genre may bear a relation to the contemporary world, but in view of Wenders' ideas of the cinema as an essentially image-based medium, this relation is oblique if the stories are so important that the images focus attention on the story, rather than on the content of the images. In this sense, the dominance of the narrative - for what else is there to emphasise in fiction or drama - in a film involves forcing the images into a frame that pre-exists the images.

[...] in dem Moment, wo eine Geschichte nicht mehr zuläßt, daß man direkten Zugang zu den Dingen selbst, zu den Personen, zu der Stadt dahinter, zu den Gegenständen, sondern daß alles eine Funktion hat und alles eine Rolle hat und die Geschichte sozusagen die einzige übergreifende Wahrheit ist, dann habe ich zu nichts mehr ein Verhältnis. [...] wenn erst die Geschichte da ist und die Geschichte das Vertrauensverhältnis prädeterminiert, dann kann ich sozusagen nichts damit machen. Das ist mir im Scharlachroten Buchstaben passiert, genau wie mit Hammett auch.⁶⁴

If direct access to things and persons is denied to the filmmaker, if the underlying conditions of reality are mediated in film through the filter of a story, and if a film's narrative takes over the role from the image to act as the main information carrier as Wenders describes here, authority is detracted from the image. In Wenders' formulation of the priorities concerning cinematic expression, the relegation of the image to the role of supporting a less authoritative version of events – in fiction, this would be a version based in the fantasies of the imagination – risks perverting the value of the empirical evidence that a photograph offers. For Wenders, the function of the cinematic image as guarantor of an authentic visual representation of physical reality risks being compromised by the higher authority of the story, as might the motivation for making films at all. This is a notion that Wenders expressed in his film *Falsche Bewegung* (1975) through a speech made by the figure of Therese (Hanna Schygulla). As Therese, an actress, rehearses her lines for the next performance of a play, she stops to express regret that she must keep to her lines, ignoring the reality around her:

Gerade habe ich versucht, mir einen bestimmten Satz aus diesem Stück hier zu merken, da sehe ich diese Streichholzschnitzerei und denke, warum kommt eigentlich diese Streichholzschnitzerei in dem Stück nicht vor. Es ist so künstlich, sich immer mit den Sätzen von anderen ausdrücken zu müssen.

Therese's speech succinctly expresses Wenders' attitude to reality in film: there is a risk that reality may be ignored because the film must follow a story, the all-important end of which insists that all irrelevancies are held at arm's length. They are part of a different reality from that of the film. Schygulla's words recall Wenders' comments after the making of *Der Scharlachrote Buchstabe*: "*Ich möchte keinen Film mehr machen, in dem ein Auto oder eine Tankstelle, ein Fernsehapparat oder eine Telefonzelle nicht zumindest erscheinen dürfen.*"⁶⁵ This film was based on a novel by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and set in a 17th century American village. Anything that was likely to seem out of tune with the ambience of a coastal village in 17th century America had to be excluded from the artificial visual reality of the film. Yet Wenders still felt the urge to film a ship in the background, when their own ship was a cardboard cut-out hanging in the sea, or to film the actor Hans Christian Blech as he was filming the sea with an 8 mm camera during a break in the shooting.⁶⁶ The implication of Wenders' statement is that in making a film based on a reality other than the reality of the film, the given reality is disregarded, and the most important function of film - to record visual phenomena accurately, may be jeopardised.

Just as with the image then, Wenders insists that the story of a film is based on empirical evidence rather than on invented or imitated realities. This was what had attracted him to Patricia Highsmith's novel *Ripley's Game* as a basis for his film *Der amerikanische Freund* (1977), as he states in his commentary to the film. Wenders admired the way Highsmith was able to draw a story out of the characters, rather than force a story on them, and that her stories, rather than being psychologising, are empirical - they never explain.⁶⁷

In each of the above cases it is the lack of respect for the given reality that Wenders criticises, and in both cases he is talking about films that are based on other stories. The danger is that there is an increased risk of manipulation the further the image or story is

distanced from a given reality, and in film, as it presents any given time as a present time, including historical films, the danger is considerable. In each case, too, the manipulation is for the purpose of dramatic effect or spectacle usually connected with dominant cinema. Or the other way around: the greater the degree of manipulation of the image to fit it into the frame of a predefined story, the less likely it is that the image or story will have a close relation to reality, and 'life,' as Wenders expresses it, will ebb away from the images, or be sucked out of the images by the story like a "*Vampir*."⁶⁸

In this sense, it is interesting to compare reactions to the figures of the angels in *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*: despite them being fantasy figures, no critic has ever expressed incredulity at their characterisation, only at the background gangster story in the film. The angels are simply 'empirically' present in the images, without needing to be justified. Critics and spectators alike are familiar with angels, and do not therefore need to question them as filmic figures, whereas the gangster story is a construct, a fiction considered weak by many critics because it does not conform exactly to the strict rules governing tension in the gangster/film noir genre, and because it feels like an artificially included episode in the film. With this in mind, the presence of Peter Falk may have been a gag: both in this film and in *Der Himmel über Berlin*, characters who meet Falk refer to him as 'Colombo', Falk's famous film noir television personality, and express incredulity that it could really be him. They refuse to believe in Colombo's real existence, even though, or perhaps precisely because, they see him walking through the streets of Berlin: "*Das kann er doch nicht sein*". Colombo is too much a fiction to be real. Through this presentation of fiction in the frame of reality and of reality in the frame of fiction (the angels and Falk in both cases), Wenders is perhaps asking his spectators to reflect on which kind of story is the more probable: the existence of a real-life figure or the existence of a fantasy figure, to make the point that the expectations people have developed from fiction when it is presented as reality can lead to blindness when they are presented with a reality they connect primarily with a fiction.

2.ii. Narrative as structure.

Im Film ist es ja so, daß die Fiktion sozusagen das Gebot ist, das es mir ermöglicht, den Film zu machen. Ohne Fiktion könnte ich vielleicht einen Dokumentarfilm machen, aber das interessiert mich nicht, ich möchte Geschichten erzählen. Deswegen ist die Fiktion der Rahmen, in dem ich stehe, der mir das Recht gibt, eine Kamera aufzubauen.⁶⁹

One of the paradoxes that characterises Wenders' work and theory is that the filmic story, that can suck the life from an image by suggesting connections where there are none, is what Wenders hopes will provide a coherent context for the presentation of his images: "... ohne den Halt einer Geschichte wollen mir die Bilder auswechselbar und beliebig werden..."⁷⁰ he discloses in *Reverse Angle: NYC 1982*. This ambiguity has lead Norbert Grob to consider Wenders' attitude to narrative in film as "*Die Lust auf Geschichten. Und das Mißtrauen gegenüber Geschichten. Bei Wenders sind das zwei Seiten einer Medaille.*"⁷¹ Wenders' position on story is initially mistrust because the images that are given the job of telling must be manipulated to fit the predefined route of the story. The images are thus called upon to convey meaning that is not inherent to them. By the time of *Der Stand der Dinge*, however, Wenders realises that some sort of story is necessary for the structure and existence of his films (rather than the assertion that "*Lust*", as Grob describes it, is a significant factor in Wenders' approach to story), and that they had always been present in his films as "... ein Vorwand, [...] um Bilder zu finden."⁷²

Der Stand der Dinge represents Wenders' stand as a European director struggling to preserve the recognition of the artist in the face of dominance by stories from industrial

Hollywood produce. In fact, it seems that Wenders is conscious from the beginning of the film that he has lost his battle against the giants of the American film industry, for it is in an interview covering this film that he admits to the potential advantages of having a story in his films, also in *Der Stand der Dinge*, in order to hold the film together, to give the images and the story form and structure and to provide for some kind of narrative coherence. To the question: "Ist die Geschichte dann nur der rote Faden..." Wenders replies:

Nein, sie ist schon mehr, die Geschichte hat schon eine Struktur. Die vom Stand der Dinge hätte ja auch nur der rote Faden bleiben können [...] Dadurch, daß die Geschichte sozusagen schlüssig wurde (mit der Ermordung der beiden Haupthelden) ist alles andere auch in einem deutlicheren Licht definiert worden. Deshalb habe ich den Eindruck, daß ich Geschichten als Struktur wieder ganz ernst nehmen muß, also auch eine Sprache der Dramaturgie wiedererobern muß, um auch das "andere" ebenfalls affirmativ erzählen zu können.⁷³

The necessity of a story in a film is alluded to in *Der Stand der Dinge*: in an observing sequence, when the characters are filmed in the act of waiting for news from the financiers in the USA, they are in a state of limbo, not able to produce anything of the planned film at all. In order to once again become active, they need to be given a story both by the director Friedrich, and by their creator, Wenders. Without either of these they come to a complete standstill. (stills 9-14) Friedrich/Wenders does not want to admit a story into the space, but at the end of the film, Friedrich is killed by his creator because of the absence of a story in his film, *The Survivors*. Wenders realises here that his film, *Der Stand der Dinge*, was made possible only because it told a rudimentary story:

Ich bin von den Bildern gekommen, ich habe an das Bilder kino geglaubt. Das Erzähl kino habe ich für unmöglich gehalten. Ich bin erst allmählich drauf gekommen, daß mein Bilder kino letzten Endes nur existieren konnte wegen der rudimentären Geschichten, die drin erzählt wurden.⁷⁴

On the level of the required framework story in Wenders' films the stories are usually based on one of two possible sources: real experiences of the director; or prescribed literary texts, usually novels. In both cases, the source allows for the creation of a fictional, sometimes pre-formulated story to act as a frame for the films that is also

based in reality. The framework story *Alice in den Städten*, for example, draws its shape from Wenders' first two visits in the USA, first when he attended the American premier of his film *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* and secondly when he made *Alice in den Städten*. He did not have a script to follow once he started shooting in Germany - the second half of the film - so the story developed out of movement. In *Im Lauf der Zeit*, Wenders used the discoveries he made during the filming of *Falsche Bewegung* and the journey made by the entire film-crew along the German-German border. This film, too, was shot almost in its entirety without a script after the first few weeks of rushes were found to be faulty. Wenders had a road map and wrote the script on location before shooting. There was no script before the work began, so the spontaneous experiences of the film-crew became the story.⁷⁵ In *Der Stand der Dinge* the story is based on Wenders' experiences during the production of *Hammett* in America, and the situation he found when he visited a director in Portugal to deliver some black and white film-stock to the stranded film-crew who's finance was exhausted: their story became the background to *Der Stand der Dinge*, in which he films the crew - some of whom were borrowed from the real stranded crew - in their act of waiting. In *Nicks Film: Lightning over Water*, Wenders and Ray had intended to begin where *Der amerikanische Freund* had left off, to which the establishing sequence as Wenders gets out of a taxi and goes up the stairs to Ray's apartment, and Ray's commentary testify. (stills 15-16) Instead, they used the reality of Ray's illness and Wenders' desire to hold up the disappearance forever of one of the filmmakers who had most influenced his own filmmaking as the given reality, from which they then prepared a story - the story of this reality. "*Alles, was zu sehen sei, sagt Wenders, hätten Ray und er gemeinsam vorher festgelegt und niedergeschrieben. Eine Geschichte hätten sie nie gehabt; so sei ihre Realität ihre Geschichte geworden.*"⁷⁶

By the time of *Der Himmel über Berlin*, the situation becomes more complex, but even here, the narrative is structured from the vision and hearing of the angels, whose perception mirrors that of the film camera and the microphone. *Arisha, der Bär, und der steinerne Ring* (1994) documents a journey from Berlin to the north-east German island of Rügen, a journey on which characters that make up the fabric of German society are

encountered by the bear (Rüdiger Vogler) and the Santa Claus (Wim Wenders), encounters that are filmed on video by Wenders himself. Finally, *Lisbon Story* tells the story of a film-sound technician, Philip Winter (Rüdiger Vogler) discovering the Portuguese capital through his work - a parallel to Wenders' original intention to make a documentary film on the city.

These types of story, though all are strictly speaking fictional, are based on real experience, and are usually the product of movement or of involvement in events. These therefore resemble those types of story that Kracauer defines as 'found' in the following terms:

...alle Stories, die im Material der gegebenen physischen Realität gefunden werden. Wenn man lang genug auf einen Fluß oder einen See blickt, entdeckt man im Wasser gewisse Muster, die eine Brise oder eine Strömung erzeugt haben mag. 'Gefundene Stories' gleichen diesen Mustern. Da sie weniger erdacht als entdeckt werden, gehören sie zu den Filmen mit dokumentarischen Intentionen.⁷⁷

Their link - through their basis in physical reality and Wenders' experience of it - with the documentary tradition means that found stories mirror events and things taken from a real given environment. In film, this depends on their link with the photographic images that Wenders so faithfully trusts to authentically reproduce reality. For in film, the images are the first and foremost instrument that mediates between physical reality itself, and the story that those images tell. For Wenders, the found story is thus the ideal narrative form because the given environment is respected. His favoured filming method has, time and again, been to search out locations that raise images in his mind.

In the cases when literary texts function as outlines for the films (*Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, *Falsche Bewegung*, *Der amerikanische Freund* and *Der Himmel über Berlin*) the situation is similar: in the first, Wenders claims to have been primarily interested in how one thing followed into another, sentence to sentence, rather than in the development and progress of the story, meaning that he was most interested in the structure of the novel which, he says, reads like a film script.⁷⁸ In *Falsche Bewegung*, Wenders changed Handke's script somewhat, except for the dialogues, and

attempted to imitate the novel in its "'naturalistic' descriptive tendencies, its observation of minute details";⁷⁹ in *Der amerikanische Freund*, Wenders admired the way Highsmith was able to draw a story out of the characters, rather than force a story on them, and that her stories, rather than being psychologising, are empirical: "*Im Gegenteil, sie handeln von Psychologie nur empirisch und ohne Erklärungen*".⁸⁰ In both *Paris, Texas* and *Der Himmel über Berlin*, the scripts were only there to provide the dialogues and so the stories were invented or found. In the former, Harry Dean Stanton allowed his real biography to be used for the character of Travis in the film,⁸¹ which Wenders describes as a "...beinah leeren Rahmen einer 'Geschichtskonstruktion'... erst durch die Schauspieler und durch die gemeinsame Erfahrung (ausgefüllt). Die Geschichte also erfinden."⁸² All of these examples suggest that Wenders was primarily interested in the texts for the structure they provided, or because they were based on real experiences, with the possible exception of Highsmith's *Ripley's Game*, and the story of Travis in *Paris, Texas*, which he chose because he felt that the story was extracted from the characters, rather than imposing itself on them.

2.iii. Story as 'vampire'

Time and again, Wenders alludes to the concept of story as "vampire" by imposing stories on his characters that they do not necessarily want to be involved in. The most prominent example is *Der Stand der Dinge*, in which Friedrich, a film director (Patrick Bachau), struggles to complete his film because the funds are not forthcoming from his shady financiers across the Atlantic in Los Angeles. In the end, he tries to find Gordon, his producer (Allen Goorwitz), but discovers that the financiers are already on Gordon's tail and he is hiding out in a mobile home. Against Hollywood conventions, Friedrich had decided to make his film in black and white because "life is in colour, but black and white is more realistic," as his colleague Joe (Sam Fuller) explains in Portugal. But Friedrich and Gordon's discussion takes on the theme of narrative in a more philosophical fashion. Friedrich/Wenders admits to the belief that "Stories only exist in

stories." Gordon however asserts his opinion that "A film without a story is like a house without walls".

This attitude, which reflects the narrative tendencies of dominant - mainly American - cinema, contrasted with Friedrich's reply that "the [visual] space between the characters is enough to carry the film" does, as Wenders himself confesses, represent Wenders' dilemma concerning story in film. But it also refers more specifically to his experience in Los Angeles while making *Hammett*, produced by Francis Copolla. Wenders' film had to be rescripted three times, re-edited and re-filmed several times and presented before a sample audience to judge their views before it was considered fit for the market. Friedrich and Gordon in *Der Stand der Dinge* are eventually caught up and murdered by the financiers and, paradoxically, Friedrich is killed at the end of a story whose allusion to Film noire is all too obvious, and that he had been trying to avoid telling in Portugal. The story in this - Wenders' - film becomes a thriller which bleeds the life out of its protagonists. What is left at the end of the story are the images which, like photographic images, are concrete enough to carry the real story in the film about two different and seemingly mutually excluding ideas of cinema: cinema as art, and cinema as commerce.

Wenders again alludes to the seductive powers of the Hollywood story in *Der amerikanische Freund*. Jonathan Zimmermann (Bruno Ganz) is a picture framer in Hamburg who learns that he has a fatal illness. Ripley (Dennis Hopper) is a shady American art dealer who travels back and forth between the USA and Germany, and who has connections with an organised crime ring. Knowing of Jonathan's illness, a ring leader offers Jonathan a sum of money if he will assassinate an enemy in Paris. Jonathan is a family man and the least likely person who one would expect to involve himself in a murder, but after initial doubts, he accepts the offer, justifying his decision with the promise of leaving his family some money when he dies. While it is not the case, as Kolker and Beicken suggest, that Ripley actively offers Jonathan a "... movie-like life of intrigue, assassination and gangster martyrdom,"⁸³ there is no doubt that the middle-class, bourgeois Jonathan is attracted by Ripley's apparent rootlessness and suspicious

dealings, of which he is well aware from the beginning of the film. The character of Ripley is based on dominant cinematic codes "... that have colonised our subconscious," claims D'Angelo,⁸⁴ recalling Bruno Winter's famous phrase from *Im Lauf der Zeit*. Reinhold Rauh's opinion of this phrase as a possible cryptic interpretation of *Der amerikanische Freund*⁸⁵ seems justified because, from this point of view, Jonathan's consciousness seems so colonised by the myth of the glamorous Hollywood story that he is seduced, against his instinct, but in accordance with his will - his dreams, perhaps - to enter such a story himself in the lead role. He looks lost and out of place in the glossy, futuristic ambient of the Paris Metro. In terms of Wenders' description of the filmic story as vampire, D'Angelo makes perhaps the most astute point that would seem to confirm the notion of seduction:

European cultural dependence on American cinema is a link that becomes a metaphor for the wider relationship between spectator and film. If Tom [Ripley] is the Cinema, full of fascination and power, then Jonathan is his Spectator, the individual seduced by the magic of the medium, transported into a fantastic dimension far removed from reality.⁸⁶

Like a vampire, the story that entwines Jonathan slowly sucks the life remaining in him out of his body, and at the end of the film, he dies. His adventure provided only the temporary realisation of a dream long cultivated through the dominance of Hollywood's stories and images.

A third significant allusion to the concept of story in film as vampire is Wenders' fictional role as film director in *Nicks Film: Lightning over Water*. Wenders / the director uses (up) the life of Ray-character to realise his own film. In the course of time, Ray's life ebbs away in order that work on the film can continue. This allusion suggests that, in creating fiction out of reality, the cinema destroys the objects it uses, thereby exhausting its material. Ray dies in front of the camera because he knows that the film will transfer his vitality, gestures, from reality onto celluloid, to perpetuate them in time. On the other hand, the film shows Wenders to be like Ripley in *Der amerikanische Freund*, who uses the life of a friend egotistically while, in a way, prolonging his life.

2.iv. Road-movies and episodic narrative structure.

As opposed to mainstream cinema, Wenders (like some of his colleagues of the New German Cinema, for example Jean-Marie Straub, Werner Nekes, Werner Herzog) moves away from conventional patterns of plot construction in his films, and towards an episodic narrative structure in order to grant his films a degree of coherence that a story can offer, while at the same time respecting the role and integrity of the image as chief carrier of information. Just as Philip Winter's story in *Alice in den Städten*, that he tells Alice in the Wuppertal hotel to help her sleep, is a series of episodes related in an "und dann... und dann" fashion, so too are Wenders' films constructed as chains of relatively autonomous events: autonomous in that individual episodes usually only lead from one to the next because they are placed there during editing, rather than for reasons of cause and effect or for psychological motives. Kracauer observes the same tendency in the silent comedies of early cinema in which the stories often served as a frame for slapstick pranks:

Worauf es ankommt, ist, daß die Einheiten ohne Unterbrechung einander folgen, nicht aber, daß ihre Folge eine Handlung bildet. Sie entwickeln sich zwar häufig zu einer halbwegs plausiblen Geschichte, aber diese Geschichte ist nie so anspruchsvoll, daß ihre Bedeutung diejenige der Teile, aus denen sie besteht, beeinträchtigen würde.⁸⁷

Rather than serving exclusively to further the progress of a story, scenes, sequences or shots can serve to build an episodic narrative structure when they follow one another as a sequence of events. Although such an individual sequence can bear relation to other sequences in a film, the importance of each sequence in itself as an autonomous unit is preserved, as Kracauer emphasises. Only if this characteristic is fulfilled can such a unit be defined as episodic. The result for Wenders' cinema is that he takes care to remain, as much as possible, faithful to the temporal and spatial dimensions of such unitary scenes, most particularly in the early years. This involves avoiding the temptation to use editing for expressive or dramatic effect. Already in his first 16 mm film, *Schauplätze*, Wenders filmed a road junction without moving the camera or switching it off until the reel was empty. "Im nachherein kann ich mir vorstellen, daß mir das wie ein Sakrileg

vorgekommen sein muß."⁸⁸ Similarly, in the extremely contemplative *Silver City*, each of the film's sequences is uncut, and lasts as long as a full reel of film. In this way, single events tend to keep their individual character because, rather than contributing directly to the progress of a story, they are strung together like beads on a necklace: each episode retains its uniqueness. This gives the early films a very fragmented atmosphere, in which events are not composed with the specific intent of nearing the end of a prescribed route. The telling of a story is thus not the immediate objective of the films: instead, the story is an integral part of the act of filming, one that does not necessarily serve any specific goal. On his school film *Same Player Shoots Again* Wenders talks about the sequence with the man limping across the screen: "... you see only the man's legs and you know that he's been wounded because he loses some blood. But you don't know what's before and after."⁸⁹ (still 17) This film began by suggesting a standard narrative, but this is soon abandoned first when the music sound-track suddenly stops, then through the six-fold repetition of the sequence. Again, one sequence in *Summer in the City* is eight minutes long, as long as it took to drive the whole of the Kurfürstendamm in Berlin.⁹⁰ As radical as these long shots were, their main effect in relation to time is not only to stress film's ability to capture events unfolding in their real time, but also to stress that this is just a snippet of a larger whole that had an existence before the beginning of filming, and continues after it. Film's own technical limitations therefore stress the act of filming as an act of documenting the fleeting nature of the passage of time in these examples: an episode is, by definition, only a selected part of a greater, ongoing process or sequence of events that can nevertheless be considered to be an independent unit.⁹¹

In Wenders films, the open form functions as a component part of the episodic narration: Just as Alice falls asleep before Winter finishes his tale in *Alice in den Städten*, which has no recognisable ending, so Wenders' films often do not seem to come to, or even to seek, a conclusive state of affairs. The absence in Wenders' films of specific points at which one can say that the stories begin and end frequently gives rise to the impression that the cameras or characters simply arrive and leave during the progress of a narrative that originates beyond the temporal and physical boundaries of

the filmic narrative, potentially having been involved in a story elsewhere, or already seeking a next story. Philip Winter in *Alice in den Städten* simply sits on a beach at the end of the story of his journey across the USA. Robert in *Im Lauf der Zeit* charges his car into the river Elbe at the end of his story with his family in Genoa. Travis in *Paris, Texas* is introduced as someone who has committed acts of violence in the recent past. None of these stories are shown, but they instead give the story we see an angle. As a document of the passing of time, Wenders' cinema only captures tiny fragments of life and existence. Such stories have a close relation with physical existence because, due to their open ends and open beginnings, they acknowledge the temporal and physical limitations of the medium, stressing that the films do not pretend to catch more than just an extract of the larger, ongoing story or event. Perhaps a parallel can be made with Pasolini's concept of '*kino in natura*' which characterises cinema as an endless and continuous sequence of shots recorded by an invisible and virtual camera, the "written language of reality",⁹² of which films are a component part:

Die Differenz zwischen Kino und Film, allen Filmen, besteht eben darin, daß das Kino die *analytische* Linearität einer unendlichen und kontinuierlichen Einstellungssequenz besitzt, während die Filme eine potentiell unendliche und kontinuierliche, jedoch *synthetische* Linearität besitzen.⁹³

This tendency in Wenders' cinema to apply the open form is undoubtedly related to Wenders' early reluctance to use the cut - his preference for allowing things to continue until the film reel runs out, which avoids the necessity of imposing a too obviously constructed narrative structure on his films. In seven of his eighteen full-length feature films the camera flies into the beginning of the narrative with the aid of a helicopter or a jet-aircraft, though this is sometimes preceded by a short prologue, (as in *Der Himmel über Berlin*, which begins with images of a hand writing a poem, in *The End of Violence*, which features as its first images a film-set in Los Angeles, and in *The Million Dollar Hotel*, which begins with an introduction narrated by the main protagonist, Tom Tom). Those films are *Falsche Bewegung*, *Paris, Texas*, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*, *Beyond the Clouds* (Wenders was responsible for prologue and epilogue),⁹⁴ *The End of Violence* and *The Million Dollar Hotel*. Additionally, the first

shot of *Alice in den Städten* features an aircraft in flight, and *Bis ans Ende der Welt* a view from outer space of the sun rising on the earth, immediately followed by aerial landscape sequences. *Summer in the City*, *Im Lauf der Zeit*, *Nicks Film: Lightning over Water*, *Der amerikanische Freund*, and *Lisbon Story* all begin with a character's arrival on the scene by car, or with a car-journey, and *Der Scharlachrote Buchstabe* begins with the arrival of Chillingworth (Hans Christian Blech) on the New England coast by sea. Both this film and *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah* end with boat journeys out of the area of the diegesis, *Nicks Film: Lightning over Water*, *Alice in den Städten*, *Summer in the City*, *The End of Violence* and *The Million Dollar Hotel* end with air journeys out of the diegetical space, in *Im Lauf der Zeit* and *Paris, Texas* the characters drive away and *Bis ans Ende der Welt* ends as it started, with Claire looking down at the earth from space.

In all the above cases, the films begin and end with the arrival or departure of either the characters or the camera in the diegetical space, giving the spectator the impression of dropping in on a story already in progress, rather than there being any question of how or when these stories began - a tactic to weaken the authority of story in Wenders' films. Of the eighteen features, only *Der Stand der Dinge* can be said to have an identifiable beginning and ending - precisely the film in which Wenders' crisis over the role of story in film reaches its peak. *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* is the only other exception to the tendency for the films to begin 'in flight', yet even here, there is no sense of a conventional story having begun: the football-match sequences with which the film both begins and ends are, again, little more than prologue and epilogue to the protagonist's journey.

Seen as a series of episodes without end, due to the inter-linkage of one film with the next, it becomes, in Grob's opinion, questionable whether a story is told at all.

Eine Geschichte im realen Leben ereignet sich, einfach so. Nur die, die sie erleben, wissen davon. Als richtige Geschichte wird sie aber nur erfaßbar, wenn sie ihr Ende gefunden hat. Denn erst dann kann sie erzählt werden. Vom Ende her erschließt sich, was die Geschehnisse im Innersten zusammenhält. Weil nur der Tod der Geschichte dem einzelnen Geschehnis den Sinn zuweist, den es für die Geschichte einnimmt.⁹⁵

An episodic narrative structure where the episodes follow one another finds its natural ally in the road-movie genre. With its emphasis on constant movement along a narrative trajectory, the road-movie is most likely to conform to an episodic structure. Conversely, films can be episodically structured without necessarily being road-movies, such as *Der Himmel über Berlin* - an experiment in episodic structure.

One of the features of Wenders' films is the open, episodic narrative form: a strategy to minimise the dominance of story in a film as well as the similarity of their narratives to conventional filmic narration. Establishing shots, conventionally used in dominant cinema to introduce the space in which the story of the film will unfold, including films with an episodic structure, is one of the foundations of conventional filmic narration. Often there are several establishing shots in films, which punctuate the progress of the story to link action, dialogue, or emotions with certain locations, or to furnish the spectator with exegetic information pertaining to a sequence before it begins. With reference to the open form of Wenders' films, in particular the road-movies, the fact that the story unfolds by definition on the road renders such establishing shots less effective as a way of beginning a story since there are likely to be several stations along the road equal in importance to the first. The probable consequence is that each station, unless it is entered during travel, would require an establishing shot of its own. This is rarely the case in Wenders' road-movies because it is more usual for his characters to enter a location during their travels, accompanied by the camera, thus reducing the need for conventional establishing shots. Those feature films that cannot be classified as road-movies, however, (*Der amerikanische Freund*, *Der Stand der Dinge*, *Paris, Texas*, *Der Himmel über Berlin In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*, *Lisbon Story*, *The End of Violence*, *The Million Dollar Hotel*), are strongly associated with the locations in which they are set and, correspondingly, have establishing shots that emphasise location (New York, Sintra, Berlin, Lisbon and Los Angeles). The minimisation of narrative dominance achieved by the episodic structure is augmented by the combination with the road-movie genre, in that the traditional introduction to a narrative space that establishing shots provide - including those in Wenders' non-road-movies, whether they conform to an

episodic structure or not - is transformed into a sequence or shot that holds little more weight than any other sequence or shot in the films. This effect is similar to the way that the episodic structure, consisting of a string of consecutive occurrences, diminishes the narrative peaks of an individual event.

A road-movie, a story that unfolds on the road, firstly has a greatly expanded diegetical space and, secondly, this space includes - which is not always the case in episodic narrative films - the space covered during travel. Sometimes in Wenders, the movement itself between two locations is not documented. In a film such as *Bis ans Ende der Welt*, this very fact becomes a narrative element in that it is a projection of travel as it may seem at a future time, namely, that it will be so effortless and so fast that great distances can be covered in little time, and the fact of travel itself no longer gives rise to impressions as it did, for example, in *Im Lauf der Zeit*. When all transport modes are knocked out by a nuclear accident at the beginning of the second half of *Bis ans Ende der Welt*, and when the characters travel through lesser developed countries in the film such as Russia and China conversely, travel becomes painfully slow once more, and the characters experience space again as time and encounter stories, characters and experiences, just as Robert and Bruno had in *Im Lauf der Zeit*.

In all of Wenders' road-movies, however, the fact of constant motion means that the diegetical space is always changing. Especially when the characters feel at home on the road, they are at the same time distanced from the environment they pass through because they rarely become involved in any precise geographical location to the extent that a rapport develops with it, or that the time they spend there can metamorphose from being just an episode to forming a recognisable story. Instead, the characters pass through a landscape which they observe from within a vehicle - whether it is above the clouds in an aircraft or across an ocean - and which we, the spectators, observe together with them. The landscapes have the function, usually, of characterising the figures' inner states by association. The fact that they merely pass through these environments is often of significance for character identification: motion means, for Winter, Robert and Wilhelm Meister in the trilogy *Alice in den Städten*, *Falsche Bewegung* and *Im Lauf der*

Zeit, avoiding any kind of intimacy and integration with a town, a rural population or any particular environment apart from the constantly changing road and the inside of the vehicle. In none of the road-movies do the characters ever return to the same location twice. In a traditional narrative film however, there is usually a place or centre that is decisive for the protagonists or for the story, be it a ranch in the wild west, a space-station, a detective bureau or a family home. Wenders' road-movies progress along a narrative trajectory that, even when it does not necessarily follow a straight line, never doubles back on itself. Instead, figures are never at home (Philip Winter),⁹⁶ break away from home onto the open road (Wilhelm Meister), live in a mobile home on the road (Bruno Winter and Robert Lander), use someone else's home as a transit point (Philip Winter, Travis Henderson and Claire Tourneur) or live in hotels (Philip Winter, Claire Tourneur and others) Although many of these characters do, in fact, depart from or visit a location that might be considered a family base, their time there has no significance other than, usually, as a catalyst to move away.

The situation is quite different if one examines those films of Wenders that one cannot classify as road-movies: though Jonathan Zimmermann travels to Paris and Munich on contract for a criminal organisation, the story centres around his home town of Hamburg, his family apartment, his workshop and Ripley's home. The angels in *Der Himmel über Berlin* and *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah* move around Berlin, but always between the same few familiar locations of the public library, the *Siegessäule*, and a film-set in the former and, additionally in the latter, Damiel's '*Pizzeria Del Angelo*.'

The road-movie genre, then, contributes to the weakening of narrative dominance in Wenders' films already achieved through the episodic construction of the narrative, in that the potential for familiarity with any of the locations in which the episodes are set to develop is, both for the character and for the spectator, diminished due to their status as transitory stations along an unrelenting narrative trajectory. This is particularly true when, as in Wenders' earlier films, many of the episodes cover the act of travelling itself. The traditional narrative film depends on points of reference, often determined in establishing shots such as the examples already mentioned, to establish a sense of the

spatial factors at play in the filmic story, or perhaps to disclose some relevant details about a place or character, if these are of narrative importance. But the fact that Wenders' road-movies are - by definition - set on the road, means that they lack geographic points of reference that have relevance for narrative closure. Every physical or geographical point of reference has narrative relevance only in that they are passed through like dots on a road map - which, according to Wenders, often plays the greatest role in determining the scripts of his films - or in that they have something to do with the development of the central figures. But almost never do these locations contribute to the progression of the narrative to a conclusive ending. They are, and remain, little more than points on a map preserved in the films' images, rather than in their narratives, which almost forces an episodic structure on the films.

2.v. Understatement of dramatic highlights.

Wenders hopes that the story that inevitably develops out of the act of showing images consecutively will not become more important than the images themselves. But he also actively tries to avoid the 'vampire narrative' that uses up the images through maintaining a tight control over the development of dramatic tensions and influences. In *Die Logik der Bilder* Wenders asserts his belief that, contrary to words and sentences, which seem to automatically seek the context of a story, images are able to stand on their own without necessarily leading to something else.⁹⁷ This shows just how much Wenders is influenced by the aesthetics specifically of photography, rather than of the film-image. Indeed in his early years as a film student, the observing tendency his films exhibited and promoted from the very first *Schauplätze* to *Summer in the City* - often seemed to exclude the possibility of interference by a story, and the images (and, equally, the sound) were charged with carrying both the meaning of the films and, in the few cases that had one, with developing their narratives. *Same Player Shoots Again*, for instance, is peculiarly void of action of any kind, yet the allusion to the gangster genre through the soundtrack, the card-game, the great-coat and the machine-gun raise in the

spectator the expectations of action and narrative. (stills 18 and 19) In fact, a story is only suggested through the observation of 'after action', temps morts that only hint that some event may have taken place just before the arrival of the observing photographer. The greater part of the film is made up of a single sequence that is repeated five times. Initially, one assumes from the mis-en-scene that a gangster has been injured in a gun battle because he limps across the picture from right to left, carrying a weapon, but after the fifth repetition of the sequence one doubts whether the suggestion of a story initially perceived has anything at all to do with the purpose of the film. The five-fold repetition of the same scene - each of which differs only in the colouring of the celluloid - would suggest instead, that the aim was simply to contemplate the images, or perhaps look for a difference between each repetition. But at no time is there a suggestion that the director is interested in influencing one's interpretation: rather, he suggests the existence of a story but in the same breath asserts that he will not be the one to tell it. That is left very much for the spectator to arrive at. Just like with a photograph, the director's objective is simply to observe and compose a scene for the sake of the images that the scene suggests - images that he would have been familiar with from his assumed experience and knowledge of the gangster genre - and to offer this view to the spectator, transferring to him the option to see a story - or not.

Concordant with this is the tendency to understate dramatic highlights in order to diffuse the development of a strong narrative and to maintain a focus on ordinary events. This was already a feature of Wenders' school films, for example *Alabama: 2000 Light-years*, which has a perceivable beginning, middle and end, but actual events that conform ordinarily to the crime genre are not shown, just suggested. The gangster who has to kill another gangster is merely given a gun and told, "*Du weißt was du zu tun hast*" The spectator is then witness only to his drive to the destination where he must carry out his duty, and his drive again from it, during which he seems to black out at the wheel and, apparently, dies as a result of a gun-shot wound at the end of the film. This enables the telling of a story without adhering to the conventions of the genre, without, that is, resorting to making things plain. In this way, observation and suggestion, relying

on spectator familiarity with the rules and customs of the gangster genre, allow the suggestion of the existence of a story without actually telling a story. Wenders himself described *Alabama: 2000 Light-years* in interview as "It's a story, and not a story."⁹⁸

The Italian film critic Filippo D'Angelo refers to *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* to show how, through understating the protagonist's murder of the cinema cashier girl, the absence of dramatic tension usually connected with - and imposed by - the standards is made plain:

Bloch puts the belt of a dressing gown around the girl's neck: this is just an insignificant act - like a game - just one of the character's actions. An uncontrollable impulse then makes him complete the action and he strangles her. It is such an unexpected and casual act [...] that makes the absence of dramatic tension, demanded by the constitutive standards of the [suspense] genre, clearer.⁹⁹

The camera remains fixed in a wide-angle view, refusing to isolate any other detail from the overall scene. The murder is normalised as a part of the continuum of the diegesis, having no privileged position in the dramatic development of the film. **(stills 20-22)**

Again bending the rules of the genre, but in the opposite direction, Wenders uses music to build up tension in *Lisbon Story* when there is no real reason for it. Philip Winter is on the search for his friend Friedrich Monroe in Lisbon, but the music soundtrack suggests that something sinister has come of him. From the point of view of the plot, this serves to, somewhat ironically, overstate the dramatic tension. When the friend is found, his reaction - to greet Winter heartily, and continue talking about his film project - diffuses all dramatic tension that had built up, also in Winter, without reason. In this case, the highlight is Winter's search for Friedrich - which complements the film's purpose to document the city of Lisbon - rather than the finding of the friend.

Wenders considers films that only tell the affirmative type of story, the highlights, as "... eine Art von 'Schaufliegen.' Und dann ist Geschichtenerzählen nur noch Schaumschlägerei."¹⁰⁰ In order not to detract importance from the other scenes in a film, or from the primary objective of observing physical reality, Wenders de-emphasises

dramatic high-points and, occasionally, emphasises points empty of real drama, or points that are meant for pure observation through long sequences in which the narrative development is forgotten for a moment. For Wenders, the telling of a story should not just focus on the highlights, but should, if a story must be told at all, include everything there is to tell or to see, as Hans, his character in *Summer in the City* suggests: "*Ein Jahr Gefängnis, ein Jahr Erzählen.*"

By making the image the basis of his cinema, and giving every sequence, not just the dramatic highlights, equal status, Wenders constructs a narrative system that denies narrative development to the point of it becoming dominant. Individual sequences are thus encouraged to stand alone, having a value in themselves. The same can often be said about single shots. In many cases, action is suggested but not shown, making his aesthetic one of observation of 'no action' events as well. This mode of filmmaking enables Wenders, who's interest is to make films about the time in which he lives, to extend the physical space of the story from the predefined limits of a prepared script or a novel which, if the telling of those stories are the focus of the film, may tend to diminish the freedom to overstep the boundaries of the prescribed work.

2.vi. Temporal dilation in the filmic story

But this is not to say that Wenders' films are completely void of action and drama. On several occasions Wenders has subjected his characters to dramatic situations, as if to test the strength of his argument against driving a story to its end, a story that moves from one highlight to the next: in *Der amerikanische Freund*, *Der Stand der Dinge* and *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*. Each time, the character becomes involved in some sort of story, is allowed to experience life as a series of highlights and falls victim to the 'vampire narrative.' In each case, these stories stand out as individual episodes in the films in which they occur, but differ from the bulk of the films' episodes in that there are points at which they clearly begin and end; they are closed episodes that cover a specific and pre-determined period of time. Wenders' main achievement in these experiments

with story is to illustrate the effect of temporal manipulation on how time is experienced when the story follows a prescribed narrative route to its inevitable end, in comparison with the open form to which the rest of the respective films and their episodes adhere, when one episode is usually no more a highlight than the next.

Jonathan Zimmermann in *Der amerikanische Freund* was the first of Wenders' characters, apart from some protagonists of the school films, to be seduced by the vampire narrative. Before Ripley appears, Jonathan's is a quiet, domestic family life without obvious drama or excitement. The fantasy role of gangster, under-cover assassin offered by his 'American friend' is a briefly attractive proposition for Zimmermann. He succumbs to the temptation to enter the world of Film Noire as a gangster but, once he takes his decision, the story he becomes involved in must also find its end. Time runs out for Zimmermann, and his story inevitably dies with him after three dramatic murders and a dramatic escape from other gangsters.

In *Der Stand der Dinge* the situation is somewhat different: here, Friedrich and his film-crew are stranded on the Portuguese coast, lacking the money and the material to continue the shoot. They are lost in temporal standstill. There is neither a story to be filmed, nor a story in the film. The 'American friend' in this case is the shady financier of Friedrich's film entitled *The Survivors*, who insists on the film having a strong story. From the moment Friedrich lands in America, time begins to run faster in the film and another gangster drama begins. The detective movie elements - the search for Gordon, the car-chase sequences and the shooting - push the film on to the end, and to its death. This story, once it moves to America, also becomes a series of highlights. Wenders' expresses his motive for having Friedrich shot at the end of the film in the following terms:

Diesen Film, der als These hatte: "Geschichtenerzählen ist ausgeschlossen im Kino", gibt es nur, weil er dennoch eine Kleine Geschichte erzählt. Letzten Endes hat diese kümmerliche Geschichte die These widerlegt. Deswegen habe ich den Regisseur am Schluß erschossen. Und dann habe ich gedacht, wenn dieses kümmerliche Minigeschichtchen, dieses Fetzen von Geschichte, den Film zusammengehalten hat, dann machen wir es doch mal

umgekehrt, dann schauen wir, ob man sich nicht doch auf eine Geschichte verlassen kann.¹⁰¹

Most particularly Cassiel's story in *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah* makes a strong link between the death of the character, the story, and the forward motion of time in a filmic story. Just as in *Der Himmel über Berlin*, the angel Cassiel and his colleagues occupy a timeless tone in which no action is possible. Cassiel's passage from angelic to human existence involves a shift in temporal conditions and allows action to take place which, in both Daniel's and Cassiel's cases result in the birth of a story. Once Cassiel becomes a human, which is induced by accident, temporal flow begins to take effect as Cassiel's story develops, again, into a gangster drama. Cassiel enters into a close relation with a new 'American friend' in this story (time is personified in the film in the character of emiT flestI (Willem Dafoe), whose name is an anagram of 'Time Itself'). When Flesti is around the ticking of a clock is constantly audible in the background. He repeatedly looks at his pocket watch, but it has no face: he seems fascinated by the movement of the clockwork mechanism inside. **(still 23)** He introduces himself to Cassiel in the following fashion:

In the beginning there was no time. After a moment, time began with a splat [...] There's a word on your forehead Cassiel, written with tears. It's a word for loss, describing someone who wanted to see paradise from the outside and never found his way back, a word waiting to appear, one day, just for the tiniest moment.

Later in the film we discover that this word is "so long".

From the moment he becomes human, Cassiel is pressed on by Flesti. Cassiel's guardian angel Raphaela (Nastassja Kinski) herself reiterates in her monologue that "*Ein jegliches hat seine Zeit*" yet when time threatens the newly born Cassiel, who complains that 'everything goes by so fast,' she begs Flesti in vain not to intervene in Cassiel's progress through time. "Old hunters never die" she says to Flesti who retorts "They just fade away. But not me. Never." It is Flesti who encourages Cassiel to gamble in the underground station, for which he lands in jail. He introduces him to *Schnapps*, and Cassiel becomes a drunkard. Finally, Flesti leads Cassiel to the place where he is to die, but in the moment of Cassiel's death, Flesti appears to show compassion in that he

symbolically stops time - in fact, he stops the motion of a giant pulley-wheel in the works of the barge lift that is raising the canal-boat holding the hostages taken captive by Russian arms dealers - to enable the young girl, Raissa, to escape from their clutches and the circus troupe to overpower the criminals. With Cassiel's death, action stops and for him, time, the necessary condition for action (and stories) to occur, is frozen. But this is also a necessary condition to enable Cassiel to return from the restrictive human time dimension into the dilated time of the angels. Time stops with the death of Cassiel, his short human existence, his story, comes to an end.

But for Cassiel, who constantly worries "Why can't I be good," the only thing that mattered was this story, in which he twice saved the life of a young girl. That was the highlight of his life, the only thing that, in the end, makes it worth living for Cassiel.

But perhaps the most crucial sequence in all Wenders' work that confronts the vampire narrative, that sucks the life out of characters in the relentless drive towards the end of the story with Wenders' tactic to weaken narrative dominance through de-emphasis of dramatic highlights in an episodic narrative structure, is represented by the scene when Cassiel meets Winter. In this elaborate scene, Wenders alludes to his film *Im Lauf der Zeit* through Winter's dying words. It is reasonable to assume that this is the same Winter as Bruno Winter in the former film, because of the evident inter-linkage between Wenders' films: in this case, the name and character of Winter. In *Im Lauf der Zeit* with its open ended, episodic narrative structure Winter expresses his satisfaction at having, for the first time, the feeling that he has a story: "*Heute spüre ich zum ersten Mal, daß ich eine Zeit hinter mich habe, und daß diese Zeit meine Geschichte ist. Das ist ein sehr beruhigendes Gefühl*". It is in *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah* though, where Winter's travels seem to come to an end when he is shot through the heart by Flesti. His last words are a direct reference to his speech as Bruno Winter, and reflect his twenty-year career as Wenders' favourite character and alter-ego:

Ich suche, wie immer, hab's nicht gefunden, wie immer, wollte euch warnen.
Bin aber zu spät gekommen. [...] Ich spüre zum ersten Mal, daß ich schwer
bin, daß mein Blut ein Gewicht hat. Ich bin endlich schwer... bin schwer. .
ein gutes Gefühl. Jetzt ist der Winter vorbei.

In Wenders' work, this really is the moment at which Vogler's role as the character Winter comes to an end, though he is raised from the dead once more one year later in *Lisbon Story*. It is the end of the story 'Winter.' Bruno Winter experienced the flow of time in an open-ended, episodic narrative structure, and a plot without highlights. In *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*, however, he too has finally taken up a way of life befitting a star of a gangster movie: he is involved in a spying intrigue and takes photographs, and listens for the same criminal group that hires Cassiel. This activity kills him. In fact, time itself catches up with Winter too, and shoots him through the heart (the sound of a clock ticking can be heard in the background as Winter speaks). That he feels the proximity to death and his story as a weight mirrors Damiel's will in *Der Himmel über Berlin* to feel the weight of existence. Damiel's last action before he becomes human is to fondle the stone paperweight he had taken from Marion's caravan earlier, and tosses in his hands as if trying to feel its weight. **(still 24)** Here, Damiel moves from one temporal dimension into another. In other words, in becoming a mortal human he, in a sense, dies at the same time. And as he dies he feels, finally, his existence as weight. Cassiel too tests his weight as soon as he stands in the (eastern) centre of Berlin, a human for the first time. And as he dies he hangs suspended from a circus trapeze device - a kind of elastic rope - between the earth and the space the angels occupy. Before he releases himself to fall to his death, Flesti's last word of advice is "...make yourself heavy. You have to use your dead weight." The dead weight is the fact that, once the angel Cassiel becomes human he, like Damiel, knows that he has brought about his own death. Compared with his angelic existence, his time on earth will, anyway, seem just like a blink of the eye. His angelic last words as a human, in fact, are "fucking gravity!" and his last act, to save the little girl, is at one and the same time the greatest confirmation of his life and a headlong rush into death. He only really lived if he takes this step, and dies. For Winter, the greatest satisfaction was to have a story that he could feel as a weight, and he feels this weight, this satisfaction, at the moment of his death. His and Cassiel's stories have their meaning and relevance defined by the death of their respective stories.

If life only becomes a story after death, which Wenders seems to assert through his hero, Friedrich Munro, whose famous phrase, "life goes by without the need to turn into stories" rings with irony when he is murdered at the end *Der Stand der Dinge*, then in leaving most of his narratives open, Wenders avoids it ever coming to the death of the narrative, and hence to the creation of a real story. And if death is the "sanction of everything the storyteller can tell" and if, as Benjamin claims, the storyteller "borrows his authority from death,"¹⁰² then Wenders denies that he is in the business of telling stories in images. A story is only a real story when it has an ending, Grob asserts, and he goes on to quote Sartre's *La Nausée*:

So lange man lebt, passiert nichts. Die Szenerie wechselt, Leute kommen und gehen, das ist alles. Nie gibt es ein Beginn. Tag schließt sich an Tag, ohne Sinn und Verstand, eine unaufhörliche and langweilige Addition. [...] Erzählt man aber das Leben, dann ist alles anders [...] Die Ereignisse geschehen in einer bestimmten Reihenfolge, and wir erzählen sie gerade umgekehrt. Wir geben uns den Anschein, mit dem Beginn anzufangen. 'Es war ein schöner Abend im Herbst 1922. Ich war Bürovorsteher bei dem Notar in Marommes.' In Wahrheit hat man am Ende angefangen Es ist das Ende, unsichtbar and doch gegenwärtig, das diesen wenigen Worten Auftrieb and Wert eines Anfangs beigibt [...] Die Erzählung geht verkehrt herum weiter: die einzelnen Phasen türmen sich nicht mehr so hübsch eine auf die andere, sie sind schon vom Ende der Geschichte verschlungen, and jede Phase ihrerseits tut dergleichen mit ihrer Vorgängerin.¹⁰³

Or, as Pasolini describes, cinema can reorder the events of a lifetime into a synthetic sequence of highlights that can then constitute a film. Again, Pasolini's emphasis is on how the death of a particular event can bring about its existence:

Ich muß hier wiederholen, daß ein Leben mit allen seinen Handlungen vollständig and wahrhaft erst nach dem Tode dechiffrierbar ist: dann zieht seine zeitliche Dimension sich zusammen, and das Bedeutungslose fällt von ihm ab. [...] Das Kontinuum des Lebens verliert im Moment des Todes - nach dem Eingriff der Montage - die ganze Endlosigkeit der Zeit [...] Nach dem Tod gibt es diese Kontinuität des Lebens nicht mehr, aber dann *gibt es seinen Sinn*. [...] Anders als im Leben oder im Kino, besteht im Film die Bedeutung einer Handlung zwar in der Bedeutung der analogen wirklichen Handlung, doch ist ihr Sinn schon vollendet and dechiffrierbar, als wäre der Tod schon eingetreten. Das besagt, daß im Film die Zeit zu Ende ist, sei es auch durch eine Fiktion. Es hilft also nichts, man muß eine Geschichte erzählen. Die Zeit ist nicht die des Lebens, solange es lebt, sondern die des Lebens nach dem

Tod: als solche ist sie wirklich und keine Illusion, sie kann ohne weiteres die Zeit der Geschichte eines Films sein.¹⁰⁴

On one hand, Wenders recognises that the practice of leaving a story relatively open-ended - at both ends - weakens its similarity with traditional forms of story, allowing to extend its space. On the other hand, he realises the value of a conclusive end to stories for the meaning of the stories. Only *Der Stand der Dinge*, which marks the end of the first leg of Wenders' journey, has an abrupt and dramatic ending. Though Kolker and Beicken consider Travis' tale in *Paris, Texas* to have a beginning, middle and end,¹⁰⁵ he drives off into the desert having left his son with Jane. For him, the story is not over yet, for this was just the first major step in his reintegration into society. In his experiments with drama, tension, closure in *Der amerikanische Freund*, *Der Stand der Dinge* and *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah* Wenders proved to himself, if nothing else, the validity of his theses that... "*Geschichten sind unmöglich, doch ohne Geschichten können wir unmöglich leben*".¹⁰⁶ and that you cannot, in fact, rely in a story as he had speculated in *Der Stand der Dinge*.

Not just *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*, but all of Wenders' films condemn the traditional filmic narrative diegetically in that, whenever Wenders has allowed any of his characters to experience a story with a tight structure, a conclusive end, a psychologically motivated beginning and dramatic high-points, the character always dies at the end of the story he had begun to experience. The stories always lead to the inevitability of death under the unrelenting pressure of time's onward march. This condemnation simultaneously champions Wenders' alternative, so consistently applied and developed in each of his films except *Der Scharlachrote Buchstabe* and *Hammett*, which Wenders considers to be momentary lapses of judgement. This concept rests on an episodic narrative structure which promotes the uniqueness of all events that occur in the films, not just the highlights, enabling them to stand on their own, without necessarily leading to narrative conclusion. It is a tactic to lessen the potential for the uncontrollable filmic story to become over-important, to become more important than the films' images, the

real document of the appearance of things. Story in Wenders' films is, and remains, little more than a necessary framework on which to hang the images.

But the impression of timelessness that characterises the episodes of a film such as *Im Lauf der Zeit* is raised because, in the absence of any specific goal or conclusion, the film has no obvious time-markers incorporated into the narrative. The treatment of time rather reflects the experience of a journey along the German-German border in a lorry: the characters eat, sleep, drive, rest, fight, even defecate on screen. Then the film is finished. In dominant cinema, time is ordinarily strictly controlled to assure narrative continuity, as a quotation of Lewis Herman describes in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*:

Care must be taken that every hole is plugged; that every loose string is tied together; that every entrance and exit is fully motivated, and that they are not made for some obviously contrived reason; that every coincidence is sufficiently motivated to make it credible; that there is no conflict between what has gone on before, what is going on currently, and what will happen in the future; that there is complete consistency between present dialogue and past action - that no baffling question marks are left over at the end of the picture to detract from the audience's appreciation of it.¹⁰⁷

One can generally state, then, that in films that have, from the beginning, the intention to bring a story to its end, every shot acts like a building block that at once adds information and moves the plot of the film onwards. Once the end of the story is reached, the end is all that counts because every other unit that came before was placed in the film in order to reach this ending. Other functions of editing such as suture, special effects or suspense also have the ultimate goal of realising narrative impact on the spectator. In these cases, one can say that time has been manipulated because, through editing, each fragment of the film contributes to a synthetic scheme of the unfolding of events. From this point of view, one could also claim that every film is necessarily fiction because, through the editing process, it is a synthetic reconstruction of a reality that never in fact existed. Each unit, in the case of a film that has as its ultimate goal the telling of a story, therefore, is placed in an artificial connection with other units. In themselves, though, they have no meaning other than in relation to other

units. A degree of autonomy between units, however, can be a first step towards reducing the artificiality of a filmic narrative construction.

Clearly, Herman's guidelines leave no room for error. But neither do they leave any room for a film to speak of something other than the immediate concern of narrating a story. Though Wenders keeps an equally tight control over time and sequence in his films, he imposes a different set of regulations to do this. Rather than "taking care that every hole is plugged", Wenders prefers, if the opportunity arises, to show the hole in its entirety, to present time as much as possible in its natural dimension. This is most obviously the case in Wenders' early films, with their long, uncut sequences, images of space that recall Wenders' description of himself when he painted as "*Maler des Raums auf der Suche nach der Zeit*".¹⁰⁸ Much less radical in his later films, Wenders made less and less use of such extremely long sequences, and he became more sure of cutting by the time of *Alice in den Städten*, when he began to realise that it is still possible to respect natural time and space even without simply switching on the camera and letting it run until the reel is finished. This is much more a question of the relation one shot has with the shots that precede and succeed it, than that a cut brings about the beginning and the end of a certain period of filmic time. Here again, the different cutting patterns in *Im Lauf der Zeit* and *Bis ans Ende der Welt* show that, although cutting patterns may differ from film to film, Wenders tries, in these films, to treat time thematically, using editing to express the experience of the passage of time. The former film represents the most extreme case in Wenders' oeuvre of a free narrative development, since it was made for the most part without a script having been prepared, whilst the latter gives the Italian critic Filippo D'Angelo the impression that Wenders wanted to test his new found trust in the power of stories, due to the tighter editing patterns and stronger story.¹⁰⁹ The border/hemisphere crossings in *Bis ans Ende der Welt* are represented simply by inconspicuous cuts. Changes in location are not immediately obvious, even if they move the film from one side of the planet to the other. (stills 25-27) The gangster elements incorporated within this film additionally have the effect of speeding up the narrative development in the first half of the film.

During the preparations for the filming of *Im Lauf der Zeit*, conversely, Wenders drove the length of the German/German border several times. Consequently, the film documents his own journey in that the space between one place and the next is covered by road, and can be felt in the film. Both films are about the movements of the protagonists through a landscape, and their journey - the act of being on the move - becomes a main narrative thrust of the films. (still 28) *Im Lauf der Zeit* is about Robert and Bruno's journey, and also about Wenders' journey through the same landscape. It is as if they are merely playing out his diary entries from the location searches he did himself. Time is respected in *Bis ans Ende der Welt* mainly because, through the invisible cuts between continents, Wenders expresses the impression that transport and communications, compared to the days of *Im Lauf der Zeit*, have become everyday, easy and quicker. The cuts thus respect the flow of time as he may have experienced it. Just so, the absence of such cuts in *Im Lauf der Zeit*, rather, the focus on the act of moving itself, perhaps reflect Wenders' impression then, that travel was something for which time had to be taken. In each case, narrative structure is episodic, and the points of contact between episodes - represented by a cut - strengthen the impression that we have witnessed a complete cycle of time - and of movement through space - and that the next cycle is about to begin. Each episode keeps its independent character in this way and, instead of serving to construct a synthetic time continuum in the form of a story, each episode is like a detail that is rounded off before the next begins. This is partly why so many of Wenders' films are road-movies: because the genre is suited to the fairly loose stringing together of units that are permitted a certain degree of autonomy, that do not, therefore, serve exclusively to construct a story, rather they aim to document the "*Lauf der Zeit*". Wenders minimalises plot to such an extent that it is often no more than a framework narrative that tells "the story of the man who..." This story has an episodic structure so that each episode is featured, rather than placing the emphasis on the conclusion of the story: usually, the conclusion, in the traditional sense, is even omitted. What remains is the bare outline of a story necessary for the presentation of images in

the body of a film. This is how Wenders tries to bring his images to word, to allow them to speak, and is the basis of his aesthetic and of his concept of filmic storytelling.

2. vii. Wenders' aesthetic of creative perception

A single photograph is unable to narrate a story because a story that is narrated can only develop over a period of time. But a photograph is a document of physical appearance, which is the only concrete information pertaining to the image that it can offer. This information is of an empirical nature. But that does not mean that the meaning of an image (a photograph or a filmic episode) is equal to the empirical content of the image: the evidence of physical appearance offered by a photograph can be characterised by many other factors. One of these factors is that the image is always a record of appearance in the past, at a specific moment which the flow of time immediately and irrevocably overtakes. Whether or not the subject of the photograph changes in appearance is immaterial, but this aspect allows one, even forces one to consider a photograph to have caught also a specific moment, a piece of time, as well as having documented the appearance of a specific physical space. A photograph is therefore something that belongs to history in the very (present) moment of its creation. The photograph 'speaks' of history, and its viewer must accept its meaning as such. The historical meaning inherent to a photographic reproduction of reality is attached to it by virtue of the technical characteristics of the medium.

But photographic and filmic images also express a view of reality from the personal point of view of the photographer or director, who selects the time and space to be recorded and uses the reproductive qualities of the medium and montage - the art of juggling time and space - to express this point of view. Even the images of *Silver City*, a film that suggests the complete withdrawal of the director and the absence of the filmic apparatus from the filmmaking process, document the appearance of physical reality only because the director selected the locations for filming. Though Wenders avoided the use of cuts in this film, each of the thirteen time-sequences is finite, beginning and

ending in accordance with the director's choices. In empowering his images to speak with the authority of their empirical content, Wenders, as much as any other filmmaker, is himself speaking through his images. The empirical evidence that the images present is a record that exists because of the perception and vision of the filmmaker. The specificity of space and time represented in a photographic image means that, although it offers empirical evidence of physical appearance, reality has nevertheless been interpreted by the photographer/filmmaker. This is, along with historical meaning, a second level of meaning that is attached to any photographic representation of reality.

In view of Wenders' concerns about the important role of images in establishing and retaining the identity of things, the manipulation of images for commercial and narrative purposes (the vampire narrative) and the inflation of images through television can be considered a destructive interpretation of reality, because of the potential for a schism to develop between reality and depicted reality. One might consequently consider a mode of representation that preserves or even (re)establishes the natural link between image and reality/subject, which is Wenders' objective, as a creative interpretation of reality. The photographer's interpretation can be judged from the images he makes because, according to Wenders, the chosen *Einstellung* (shot) also says something about the photographer's *Einstellung* (attitude) towards reality. If this is so, then a photographer's/filmmaker's mode of perception is decisive for determining the nature of his interpretation of the physical world. A mode of perception that is attentive to the unique identity of phenomena would therefore be conditional for a creative interpretation, in film images, of physical reality.

The act of seeing - observation and perception - is thematised in Wenders' films precisely because vision is one of the senses that contribute to the formation and understanding of identity. The discourse is held on two different levels: diegetically, through the drawing of contrasts between the perceptual habits of different characters in the films; and practically, in that the conclusions Wenders reaches through making these contrasts plain are reflected in the way the films are made. The glance Wenders' camera casts over the world therefore also betrays his attitude vis-à-vis reality. His images,

which must transmit most of the information in Wenders' films due to his consistent refusal to develop psychological storylines, nevertheless interpret the physical world. If the spectator receives the information transmitted in images, then he learns not only about the appearance of physical reality, but also about Wenders' attitude towards reality. This non-empirical information is, in the absence of story, how Wenders' films narrate.

In film, the image is the key by which we can gauge the perception of the director: the camera is his eye, and the image we see is his account of what he has seen. Wenders has likened the kind of vision he desires for his films to the vision of children, who he considers to enjoy the purest perception.

[...] Kinder sind in meinen Filmen eigentlich ständig gegenwärtig als der eigene Wunschtraum der Filme, sozusagen die Augen, die meine Filme gerne hätten. Nämlich einen Blick auf die Welt ohne jede Meinung, ein ganz ontologischer Blick. Und das ist eigentlich nur der Kinderblick.[...] Wie der kleine Junge am Ende von *Im Lauf der Zeit*, der am Bahnhof sitzt and seine Schularbeiten macht. Das ist eigentlich mein Traum von einem Filmregisseur.¹¹⁰

The child figures in Wenders' films usually play an important part in guiding adult figures who are too blinded by the abundance of images to notice things. Kolker and Beicken consider the child figure to act as a point of certainty, whose innocence is largely due to their ignorance of German history, but there are many children in Wenders' films who have no link whatsoever with Germany yet perform a similar role. Perhaps the child figures represent an innocence of perception in the more general sense. Wenders' position is rather more in line with that of Norbert Grob, who considers this breakdown in adult subjectivity as much more of a general affliction connected to image-commercialisation and inflation as Wenders describes it:

Im Mahlstrom der technisch produzierten Zeichensysteme und Kodierungsmuster sind es heute die 'einfachen' Bilder, an die sich die Hoffnung des komplizierten Intellekts heftet: als könnte aus 'einfachen' Bildern das 'einfache' Leben entspringen and aus reiner Betrachtung ein reines Gemüt zurückzugewinnen sein.¹¹¹

Alice, who helps Winter to restore his vision after his American experience, is only the first, but the most important example of this aspect of children's vision in Wenders' films.

The boy at the end of *Im Lauf der Zeit* describes what he sees and writes his observations in a school book. "So einfach ist das?" Robert asks the boy. "Ja, so einfach ist das" is the reply. What Robert glimpses here is the possibility of seeing without requiring an understanding beyond the fact of the existence of the things seen: simply remaining open to visual stimulation, to ordinary phenomena. For Wenders, such perception raises the potential, in film, for truth in a representation of physical reality:

Beim Sehen ist toll, daß es anders als das Denken nicht eine Meinung von den Dingen beinhalten muß [...] im Sehen kann man eine Einstellung finden zu einer anderen Person, zu einem Gegenstand, zur Welt die meinungsfrei ist Das schönere Wort für Sehen ist Wahrnehmen, weil da das Wort wahr drin ist. Das heißt, im Sehen ist für mich Wahrheit latent möglich. [...] Für mich ist das Sehen ein In-die-Welt-Eintauchen.¹¹²

Wenders' films attempt to reproduce this mode of perception by emphasising the act of observation and drawing the spectator into active participation, making him take part in a search. The activity of searching out images that tell a story from the given environment is common to all of Wenders' films, but particularly in the road-movies, the constant movement of the characters and with them the director and the camera adds a new dimension to the activity of observation. The fact of moving on and arriving in a place that had previously been unknown to a character, even to the director, as in the case of Tokyo in the film *Tokyo Ga*, means that finding is at the same time a constantly necessary and renewed activity. It would be possible to make a road movie without casting an eye on the surroundings, without giving up a strictly structured and prescribed story, but this would defeat the object of movement: the movement would be extraneous to the film and its story. But in Wenders' road-movies, the act of seeing, when combined with constant motion through city and landscapes, even necessitates the act of discovering. Constant motion means constantly renewing images that have to be examined, searched, before they can be properly perceived. The shots for which Wenders is probably best known in his road movies are through the window of a moving

vehicle. It is important that the conditions of movement are made clear because, as the vehicle is made obvious, the shots are presented as the vision of one of the characters: a subjective point of view on the landscapes. Consequently, the characters and the audience are drawn into the act of moving and of film viewing respectively, as a searching activity. What Grob terms a 'panoramistic' shot,¹¹³ is thus characterised by the potentially endlessly changing image. Compared to a pan, which is limited to observing the 360 degrees of space around the camera, the panoramistic shot characteristic of Wenders' road-movies promotes the searching/observing activity because there are no real limits at which the shots most stop, which imitates biological vision. The only thing that changes in the image is the image itself, hence, this must be watched closely. The audience follows the camera, which follows the characters who often just look at the landscape passing by through the window. Landscapes and details raise questions in the minds of the spectator, thus drawing attention back to the details to find more evidence. For the spectator, this search for evidence in the details is an act of personal discovery, giving the impression that the details must exist apart from the films' stories, that they are also witnessing a documentation of spaces. Wenders makes the reasons behind this kind of filmmaking practice plain: answering to the charge that his characters and his films seem to have aimless narrative trajectories, Wenders explains:

Es stimmt, sie gehen nirgendwo hin; ich möchte sagen, daß es für sie nicht wichtig ist, irgendwo anzukommen. Es ist wichtig, die richtige "Einstellung" zu haben, auf dem Weg zu sein. [...] Auch ich selbst mache das sehr gerne, nicht "ankommen," sondern "gehen". Der Zustand der Bewegung, das ist wichtig für mich. Wenn ich zu lange an einem Ort bleibe, fühle ich mich irgendwie unbehaglich; ich will nicht sagen, daß ich mich langweile, aber ich habe das Gefühl, nicht mehr so offen zu sein wie unterwegs. Die beste Art für mich, einen Film zu machen liegt in der Fortbewegung - meine Phantasie arbeitet dann besser. Sobald ich zu lange an einem Ort bleibe, kann ich mir keine neuen Bilder mehr vorstellen, ich fühle mich nicht frei.¹¹⁴

But reproducing the simplicity of a child's vision encourages and demands visual agility and complexity of the spectator, who is drawn into the act of searching by the absence of psychological explanation. To be just shown things means on one hand that the audience is to some extent left to come to its own conclusions about what it sees, and on the other, that the director who shows is able to direct attention at particular things in

various different ways, depending on how the film equipment is employed. These are the narrative strategies the director has at hand and can use in order to transmit his interpretation of the physical world by abstracting the empirical information the film images offer.

That this kind of narration in images has to do with abstracting reality is reflected by those critics who have made attempts at defining or describing the nature of the information it transmits in equally abstract terms. Kracauer, for example, makes the assertion that images that document the physical appearance of a given environment can nevertheless be said to tell a story, which he defines as "*gefundene Stories*". In Kracauer's formulation,¹¹⁵ prolonged observation is the key to arriving at abstract information based in documentary images. Quoting Alfred North Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World*, Kracauer suggests that this kind of observation, though desirable, must be learned:

Wenn man alles über die Sonne und alles über die Atmosphäre und alles über die Erdumdrehung weiß, ist es immer noch möglich, daß man den Glanz des Sonnenuntergangs nicht sieht. Es gibt keinen Ersatz für die unmittelbare Wahrnehmung des konkreten Sicherfüllens (achievement) eines Dinges in seiner Wirklichkeit. Wir wollen konkrete Fakten, von einem Licht beschienen, das heraushebt, was ihre Kostbarkeit ausmacht [...] was ich meine, ist Kunst mit ästhetischer Erziehung. Es ist aber Kunst in einem so allgemeinen Sinne, daß ich ihr eigentlich gar nicht diesen Namen geben möchte. Kunst ist ein besonderes Beispiel. Was wir brauchen, sind Gewohnheiten, die sich aus ästhetischer Wahrnehmung entwickeln.¹¹⁶

Like Kracauer, Norbert Grob emphasises the desire for a perception capable of penetrating through the visible surface of physical reality to discern the preciousness (*Kostbarkeit*) of objects. Though he considers film, particularly Wenders' cinema, the art-form that is most suited to this objective, he too defines the product of such filmic perception in abstract terms, always coming to the conclusion that it has the character of something secretive:

In seiner frühen Schrift spricht Balázs von "der lebendigen Physiognomie, die alle Dinge haben," und davon, daß es "keine Kunst (gibt), die so berufen wäre, dieses Gesicht der Dinge darzustellen, wie der Film. Weil er nicht nur eine einmalige, starre Physiognomie, sondern ihr geheimvoll-geheimes

Mienenspiel zeigen kann." Wenders widmet sich diesem Mienenspiel; er gibt seinen Filmen die Zeit, sich auf das Gesicht der Dinge zu konzentrieren.¹¹⁷

The hidden secrets born by objects and images have occupied Wenders since *Im Lauf der Zeit* up until his most recent films. In *Beyond the Clouds*, a film that Wenders co-directed with the Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni in 1995, he appears confident in the belief that even the filmic medium will never manage to reach so far beneath the surface appearance of things, that no one will ever see the true reality behind the surface image. Through the figure of the Director (John Malkovich) Wenders quotes a well-known dictum of Antonioni from the year 1964:

We know that behind each image there is another image that is closer to reality, and behind that another even purer than the one before, and behind that image yet another image, and so on, until you reach the last, absolute image that no one will ever be able to see.

But, as Wenders confesses in *Die Logik der Bilder*, he finds it more important to have the right *Einstellung* than to arrive at some destination.¹¹⁸ Perhaps he also finds it worth remaining open to the visual world, promoting a creative kind of perception, even though the absolute and true image of reality may prove to be beyond the reach of the cinema, or remain an indefinable abstract quality (leaving the spectator to decide what constitutes absolute truth in an image). Wenders desires an articulate cinematic image that, on one hand, imitates natural perception, remaining open to all phenomena, and on the other, is able to allow things to present and represent themselves. In this way, his cinema is based on the image as the primary information-bearing device: narrative development, restricted to the role of a framework in which to present the images, is abated through the open-ended episodic form and a low degree of psychological explanation and motivation. Wenders attempts to make reality itself transparent, to bring the secret within things to the surface of the image, and hopes that, through careful observation, the spectator may catch a glimpse of the uniqueness of existence. This is a purely phenomenological approach to filmmaking.



Stills 9-14: The film crew is filmed in the act of waiting in Der Stand Der Dinge



Stills 15-16: Dennis Hopper in Der amerikanische Freund and Wenders in Nicks Film arrive by taxi to visit Nicholas Ray in his New York apartment



Still 17: Same Player Shoots Again



Still 18: Suggestion of action in Same Player Shoots Again



Still 19: Suggestion of action in Same Player Shoots Again



Still 20: Initial playfulness



Still 21: The murder



Still 22: Bloch falls asleep after the murder

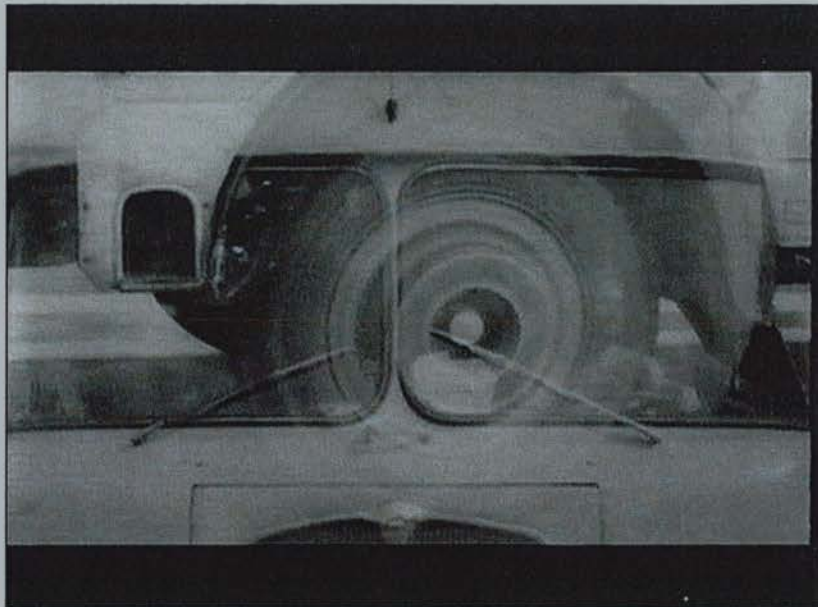


Still 23: Emit Flesti examines the workings of time



Still 24

Stills 25-27: The direct cuts that take Bis Ans Ende Der Welt from San Francisco to the Australian desert



Still 28: Movement becomes a theme of Im Lauf Der Zeit

3. Commentaries:

Introduction

The following examination of Wim Wenders' work in the context of his position on the film image and its relation to narrative seeks to take into account the notable diversity of his extraordinarily prolific filmic output. The films selected therefore respect the fact that, while the feature films are, generally speaking, most suited to demonstrate the image/story problematic, the documentaries also merit particular consideration because they are extremely valuable as personal essays on images and image making.

Each film in the selection features emphasis on different aspects of Wenders' exploration. Of the feature films, *Alice in den Städten*, best exhibits the tendency in Wenders' films for the foregrounding of observational activity: the act of seeing. This is also the only road-movie to be dealt with in this examination. *Paris, Texas* and *Der Himmel über Berlin* focus more on the search for a form, a narrative structure to allow the images to retain their semantic force as a way of preserving the identity of their subjects, which lost through image manipulation. In the diary film *Tokyo Ga*, Wenders goes in search of the Tokyo of Yasujiro Ozu's films, but finds modern-day Tokyo does not divulge to him anything of Ozu's city, which seems only to have been preserved in images. The last film selected is *Lisbon Story*, in which, through the sound technician Philip Winter, Wenders suggests that sound in film can play a similar role to the image, to allow things to be seen differently.

3.i. Alice in den Städten

Being his first independent production (both the previous films produced after Wenders' graduation from film school were made for television stations), *Alice in den Städten* is the film in which Wenders was first able to freely put his personal film aesthetic or language to the test. It is a road-movie that features an extremely economic use of plot and a linear, open, episodic narrative structure. Beginning in the USA, the film thematically contrasts two different modes of vision: that of a child, Alice, and that of a travelling journalist, Philip Winter who, like his creator, seems to be testing a media induced impression of the USA: "the land of images."

Alice in den Städten begins towards the end of a pre-history to the film, the untold story of the main protagonist Philip Winter's journey through America which, to a certain extent, determines the unfolding of the story we are about to witness. The establishing sequence is less an introduction to the film than a beginning of something, and explains what the film is about. The first shot of the film, a pan on an aircraft in flight, past an American street sign for B-67th Street, ending on a shot of an empty beach establishes the geographical location at which the film's story begins, but which is situated midway through Winter's journey through America. In the third shot we see Winter make a Polaroid photograph of the beach. He is alone, leaning against a pier. Winter compares his Polaroid against the actual object, a wooden construction on the beach, then begins to sing a song that would have been familiar to the audience in the mid-seventies: "Under the boardwalk / Down by the sea / On a blanket with my baby / That's where I wanna be." (stills 29-34) Just as he seems to compare his Polaroid images with reality, Winter also seems to be testing an impression of America gained from the popular culture of the day against reality. Everything seems in place, but Winter is alone, there is no sign of any "baby" beside him and Winter seems to have resigned himself to this state of affairs. This song, and the Polaroid photographs Winter makes, outline the nature of the film's exploration: the possible consequences of visual over-stimulation; and the relationship between images and reality.

The American setting for the first half of *Alice in den Städten* is highly relevant: American films and Hollywood have been the strongest influence on Wenders' filmmaking, which is evidenced in his adaptation of essentially American genres such as the road-movie here, Film Noire in *Der Stand der Dinge*, *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, *Der amerikanische Freund*, the western genre in *Im Lauf der Zeit* and *Paris, Texas*. But this is the film in which Wenders begins to relativise his idealistic picture of America as "*Das Land des befreiten Sehens*."¹¹⁹ Beginning to question the validity of the 'American Dream,' exported to all parts of the world through the successful export of American musical and cinematic culture worldwide, Wenders here uses his film to announce the death of the mythical American cinema of the 1940's and 1950's that had so inspired him, finding one reason for its extinction in the kind of vision and visuality nurtured by the television phenomenon and the commercial interests it represents. The television set that Winter later destroys in his hotel room is showing a film by John Ford, *Young Mr. Lincoln* when the film is interrupted by television advertising. (still 35) That is the point at which Winter gets up from his bed and knocks the television set from its table, suggesting that television, rather than the film itself provokes the unusually aggressive outburst in the normally composed Winter. The last sequence of *Alice in den Städten* completes the picture when we see the headline announcing Ford's death in a newspaper Winter is reading. (still 36) The associations made in the introductory sequence, the final sequence and in the motel sequence when Winter smashes the television set are complex, but fully consistent with Wenders' belief that it is above all the introduction of television and the resulting inflation of commercialised images that brought about the demise of the mythical American cinema that was such an inspiration to him and many other filmmakers of his generation.

The lost dream of American cinema is, for Wenders, present in American music: "*Man müßte Filme machen können über Amerika, die nur aus Totalen bestehen*" are the first words said by Wenders in his short film *3 amerikanische LPs*. "*In der Musik gibt's das ja schon, also in der amerikanischen Musik.*" This is followed by a shot from a high balcony in the Munich suburbs showing the empty landscape miles into the distance,

which is held for almost 90 seconds. **(stills 37-38)** Wenders elaborates on the notion of films consisting entirely of panoramic shots in his 1970 article on Ford, *Emotion Pictures: Slowly rockin' on*. Whilst expressing his disapproval at most contemporary films "... [dessen Bilder] einem die Sicht versperren..." he describes what he misses about Ford's cinema:

[...] ich vermisse die Freundlichkeit, die Sorgfalt, die Ausführlichkeit, die Sicherheit, die Ernsthaftigkeit, die Ruhe, die Menschlichkeit der Filme von John Ford, ich vermisse die Gesichter, die nie zu etwas gezwungen werden, die Landschaften, die nie einfach nur Hintergründe sind... Die Musik aus Amerika ersetzt immer mehr die Sinnlichkeit, die den Filmen verloren geht: aus der Verdichtung von Blues und Rock- und Countrymusik ist etwas entstanden, was nicht mehr nur hörbar zu erfahren ist, sondern auch sichtbar, in Bildern, als Raum und Zeit. Diese Musik ist vor allem die Musik des amerikanischen Westens, von dessen Eroberung die Filme von John Ford gehandelt haben... in San Francisco und Los Angeles ist auch das amerikanische Kino entstanden. Aber Motion Pictures ist inzwischen eine Definition von Musik.¹²⁰

Wenders' character, Philip Winter, would like to believe in the promised dream but finds that it is empty in a land where images have pervaded every aspect of life, to the extent that he, in a sense, becomes blinded by them. With the announcement of Ford's death at the end of the film, the camera rises from the train that is taking Alice and Winter to Munich until it is high enough for a panoramistic shot of the whole of the surrounding landscape up to the horizon that fills the frame. **(still 39)** Wenders sought to give the impression of seeing all Germany in this shot, wanted to fly as high as possible.¹²¹ After the forests of signposts, urban and suburban streets and the psychological numbness of the American city and landscapes, Germany - Europe - appears like a clean sheet of paper, an emptiness soothing to the eye, an as yet undiscovered land that offers the willing eye the opportunity and the invitation to explore, discover and perhaps even find a new story. This last sequence exhibits the type of panoramic shot that Wenders praises in Ford's films, that he considers to be present only in contemporary American music. It is but a dream of America, a land where the visible has become so predominant that it leads to blindness.

The first sequences of *Alice in den Städten* feature a mixture of narrative techniques, both conventional and unconventional. The physical space is established in an establishing shot, yet it introduces the beginning of the long road that the film will take as it progresses towards the end of a journey, rather than a space in which the narrative will unfold. We are introduced to the main protagonist, Philip Winter, and immediately gain some knowledge about his psychological state through the emptiness around him, and his melancholy behaviour. The human figure initially appears no more important than the empty backgrounds, creating a near complete homologation between the individual figure and the world of objects that he photographs. Through the lines of the song Winter sings to himself, the soundtrack simultaneously provides information similar to the information we gain from the film's images, about the absence of a longed-for warmth of togetherness. In this example of image/sound reversal, the words Winter sings yield the same information as the images of the film: a man, under a boardwalk, by the sea. Both image and sound also inform us of the figure's loneliness, the absence in reality of the dream to be "on a blanket with my baby / that's where I wanna be."

Audience identification is encouraged through familiarity with the song Winter sings, but also through conventional suture. The film begins with a subjective shot of an aircraft flying above, then an objective/independent shot of Winter sitting on the beach, who is in turn looking at the photographs he has made, then more subjective point-of-view shots as he compares the photographs with the reality before him. These cutting patterns immediately involve the spectator in a game of looking, comparing and looking again, aligning audience point of view with Winter's at the same time as introducing the film's theme of observation. All but one of the images that come before the point at which Winter leaves the beach is either a shot on the figure or a subjective shot representing what the figure sees. Whilst there is no apparent story structure in this establishing sequence, the audience gains an understanding mainly through what they are shown, or through what they hear.

As Wenders continues to mix conventional with non-conventional narrative techniques over the part of *Alice in den Städten* covering Winter's drive to New York City, the emphasis on sound and image-based narration remains constant, which lends the film a documentary atmosphere. The movement of Winter's car is presented in a mixture of different shots: tracking, then an objective shot of Winter in the car, followed by a subjective shot as the car approaches the beach a second time. Later, pans are also used to follow the movement of the car. The passage of time and distance is represented, quite conventionally, by a cut-in / fade-out sequence, in which the changing weather also gives a sense of an expanded passage of time through space over the progress of this road-movie.

This progress is punctuated every time Winter stops to take a photograph of objects or locations he finds along the roadside: a different part of the beach where there are more people, a tower with the words "Surf City". Already in this first part of the road that will lead Winter back to Germany, these roadside attractions provide evidence of the phenomenological approach to film which Wenders pursues. The combination of images of the open road - which, in this case, seems clustered by signs, lampposts and telegraph poles when compared with the sense of freedom the road represents in one of Wenders' favourite films, *Easy Rider* - and the inquisitive camera that focuses attention on the immediate environment along the stretch of the road at the beginning of this film is familiar from Wenders' earlier work, most particularly *Summer in the City*. It, too, is largely a collection of filmic observations from a moving car. Here, the sense of the pictures Winter makes does not seem to contribute in any way to the development of a plot until New York is reached, where Winter explains to the agent of the publication for which he is meant to be writing an article why he has only accumulated a mountain of photographs, but has no written material to deliver. Here, Wenders and Winter are, essentially, doing the same work: documenting the appearance of a certain location at a certain time.

The road and the motor vehicle are Wenders' ideal mode of transport for the task of documenting physical reality in moving images: this might also have been the least

costly option for Wenders' first independent production. Wenders' camera follows Winter's gaze through the windows of the car. It brings us close to the "Surf City" tower in an extreme close-up, which recalls the drive through Antonioni's Los Angeles in *Zabriskie Point* (1969), and which has the effect of isolating the image from the already very slender form of a narrative even whilst the car is in motion, the story getting under way. (stills 40-43) At the beach, the camera is mounted on the bonnet of the car. We only hear that Winter takes a picture – we are familiar with the sound of the then new Polaroid camera from the film's opening sequence – while the camera shows independently the scene that he photographs. And when Winter pulls into a roadside cafeteria to look through his collection of images, we see the director put on a record on the juke-box in the background as if to state that the journey so far was also his journey, that they are his images, his documentation of the American South West in the mid seventies. What more evidence could be necessary to make the statement that the intention of this part of the film has been a filmic documentation of the appearance of physical reality, other than the presence in one of those images of the master photographer himself: almost like a snap-shot of a tourist passing through, proof that this is not just some invented story, but one based on personal experience.

Drawing from Wenders' poem *Der amerikanische Traum*, his account of his first experiences of the USA, it seems clear that Wenders has largely transferred his sentiments onto his character: Wenders writes about how he perceives America as a land where one is so surrounded by advertising images that vision becomes eroded:

Amerika, das Bilder-Land. Land aus Bildern. Land für Bilder. Selbst Schrift ist hier zu Bildhaftigkeit geworden. [...] Warum wirbt dieses Land mehr für sich als jedes andere? [...] Das Amerikanische Fernsehen hat diesen Werbefeldzug nur noch gewaltig potenziert über den ganzen Planeten.¹²²

Winter expresses a similar sentiment when, after arriving in New York, he excuses his inability to write, reasoning that "the story is about things you can see..." Instead of preparing a written document describing his experiences travelling through America, Winter has produced something like a photoreportage. He has abandoned the arbitrary mediation of the word - writing - in favour of the immediacy and the comparative

concreteness of the photographic image, more suited to reclaiming the predominantly visible aspects of contemporary American society.

Compared with the distortions of the verbal language, photographs reproduce reality without altering its form. The picture shows the many-sidedness of what the word catches in one term, and vice-versa. Winter seems to be attempting to slow down the torrent of constantly changing images that permeate life in the USA, to catch a moment in the very process of turning into something else before it disappears forever. Yet, despite the fact that Winter photographs the things that interest him - an attempt to isolate the objects of interest in images that concretise the appearance of reality in one visual representation - he still cannot bring himself to express the meaning of his experiences in words. From the photographs he makes, and his reaction when they have developed, it is clear that Winter is indeed hoping to express something in abstract terms, some meaning attached to the objects and landscapes he photographs, which the concrete representations in the photographs do not seem to permit.

The first image of the empty beach is a contemplative, carefully composed representation - an abstraction of Winter's inner state. The emptiness seems to disturb Winter and he drives to another part of the same beach where there are some people playing ball games to make a second photograph, one that fits in with the overall impression of an otherwise visually overloaded environment, but that denies his subjective experience of the moment that the first photograph represents. The contrast between these two images shows how Winter has become so distanced from the environment that he is no longer sure whether his own perception of the world around him reflects reality, or whether the camera's eye, and the concrete images it produces, is the true representation. This is a conflict between Winter's personal artistic intention (romantic contemplation and reflection), which also suggests the existence of an inner longing for peaceful images, and the negation of personal intent for other interests (Winter is also meant to be working). And the fact that Winter cannot decide which of these approaches is the more relevant - the image that fits in with his impressions, or the image that seems more relevant from the point of view of completing his assignment - is

a symptom of the illness of images that Winter describes later, and which Wenders describes in similar terms in his poem *Der amerikanische Traum*.

Winter is blinded and bewildered by the dominance of the visual aspect in his experience of America. This dominance is augmented by the abundance of images used for commercial purposes. Not only does Wenders consider the danger to exist of new, foreign meanings becoming attached to images through their use in advertising, meanings that are unrelated to the object represented, but that these saturate the general visual aspect to the extent that fixed impressions are replaced by constantly changing ones and objects no longer keep their unchangeable, final, recognisable visual identity. The speed of change allows no time for contemplation and reflection.

Winter seems to be trying to hold up the constantly changing visual aspect of things with the Polaroid photographs he makes. The Italian critic Filippo D'Angelo likens Polaroid technology (Winter's Land Camera was an innovation of the mid 1970s), which differs from conventional photography in that there is no negative from which to make copies of the image, to an older art form, painting, asserting that the absence of a negative in Polaroid photography from which to make copies serves to "...recoups the 'aura' of painting, lost in the age of technical reproducibility."¹²³

The 'aura' in painting that D'Angelo speaks of lies partly in the uniqueness of the original, partly in the act of freezing time, the catching of a moment before it has time to change, before things move on, not just because faithful copies of paintings could not easily be made before the development and industrialisation of copying and printing techniques. According to D'Angelo, Polaroid photographs, as opposed to conventional photography, offer a potential for the very same aura attached to painting: each is a unique representation of things, a single expression that cannot be repeated.

But D'Angelo is also referring to the creativity involved in painting, as well as the physical qualities that distinguish it and Polaroid photography. The act of slowing down the course of events, of freezing the momentary appearance of physical reality in the fixed frame of an image is the nature of any visual medium whether it is based on still or

moving images. This feature allows time for the contemplation and reflection necessary for the expression of the artist's interpretation of the given reality (the expression in the reproduction of innermost emotions; of the relevance of the painting or its subject for the artist), which goes into the production of a painting, and which gives a painting its value (a value that becomes diminished if the same work is reproduced in large numbers, or is diffused as a reproduction). Norbert Grob draws on a phrase of the German painter Caspar David Friedrich, to whom Wenders alludes in *Falsche Bewegung* and *Bis ans Ende der Welt*, (still 44) to illustrate the importance of an artist's subjectivity in a representation of reality: "*Der Maler soll nicht bloß malen was er vor sich sieht, sondern auch was er in sich sieht. Sieht er aber nichts in sich, so unterlasse er auch zu malen, was er vor sich sieht.*"¹²⁴

Winter's snapshots represent such an attempt at holding up time before it is passed, to allow a moment's contemplation and still observation. His Polaroid camera offers him the same expressive potential as D'Angelo observes in painting, but he is nevertheless unable to find a relation, to develop a personal angle to all that he sees. Winter complains that "*Es ist doch nie das drauf, was man gesehen hat*" when, having stopped at a service station to make a photograph of the station, a boy, who had been standing in front of the station, is not on the picture when it develops. As an illustration of how things can change before you have time to look again, this is a relatively crude example: the boy literally does not appear in the image. But Wenders makes the point that Winter is always looking for the expression in his photographs of something he sees, or perceives, and is disappointed when the image does not reflect or express the atmosphere that he had hoped to catch - an abstraction of reality, an emotion. The assumption is that, for Winter, it is too late, or that, as he himself explains, the bombardment by images during his travels in America, particularly through television, which he admits to having watched every night (Winter claims to be so affected that things begin to look the same wherever he goes) has blinded him to the extent that he cannot develop a personal relation to the environment. He no longer sees anything within himself, and so accumulates a collection of images of "*was er vor sich sieht.*" His

power of expression has become diminished because of the domination of the visual aspect that constantly feeds him new information: an overwhelming flood that threatens to drag Winter along.

There are two scenes in *Alice in den Städten* that feature direct attacks on television, and which show that this device lies at least partly at the root of Winter's problems with perception. The first night since the beginning of the film Winter spends in a roadside motel where he turns on the television. He begins to watch Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) before lying down on the bed and falling asleep. That Ford is one of the directors whom Wenders most admired at the time seems to dispute the suggestion that Winter serves as a kind of alter ego for Wenders, as he promptly turns away from the television to sleep. In the following montage sequence, one of the few instances in Wenders' films where editing is used for expressive purposes, the television set appears against a backdrop of the window frame in which flashing advertising lights are framed. The television flickers into life and we see the first images of Ford's film before the image fades away in an eruption of static interference, which expresses the unsuitability of the televisual medium for cinematic films. The next time we see the television set the film is interrupted by a series of adverts. We hear the words "a mind is a terrible thing to waste: give to the United Negro College Fund" and the beginning of the next advertisement, apparently for tourism in Florida, at which point Winter gets up from the bed to smash the television set. The backdrop of neon advertising lights reinforces the theme of television as "*Gift für die Augen*"¹²⁵ because of its association with the television set through the framing - both emit a flickering light - and through the suggestion of mind-poisoning in the text of the advertisement. This sequence is interrupted only by images of the sleeping Winter and a few seconds of his dream: images of an open road, emptiness. In America, at least, the reality - the view on the background through the window - sadly corresponds to the evidence for the commercialisation of film images in television, and the peace Winter is searching for to be able to 'see', to be able, that is, to translate his visual experience of America into words, only seems possible in his dreams.

The significance of this sequence is the filmic expression and statement of Wenders' theories that television contributed to the degradation of the former mythical American cinematic tradition, represented by the reference to Ford through the film *Young Mr. Lincoln*, through its appropriation of this tradition for its own commercial gain, before it had itself come of age as a visual language. The small, crackly image testifies to television's unsuitability for the broadcasting of cinematic films, whilst the interruption of the film for advertising illustrates the mechanisms by which film images are appropriated for commercial gain, which threatens the fracturing of image and meaning, a "*bilderfeindliche Zeit (und auch eine Zeit feindlicher Bilder)*".¹²⁶

Winter puts precisely this idea into words in the second instance of a direct attack on television in this film, when he is in a New York hotel room, taking notes while watching television:

Das Unmenschliche an diesem Fernsehen ist gar nicht, daß es alles zerstückelt und mit Werbung unterbricht, obwohl das schlimm genug ist. Viel schlimmer ist, daß alles, was da gesendet wird auf die Dauer selbst zur Reklame wird, zu einer Werbung für die bestehenden Zustände. Alle Bilder, die da gesendet werden pegeln sich irgendwie ein auf eine gemeinsame und widerliche Art von angeberischer Verachtung. Kein Bild läßt einen in Ruhe. Alle wollen etwas.

Here again, as Winter watches television and writes his notes, the image is split: one half shows the television in close-up, the other, the sleeping Alice in the background. Not only is television associated in both of these cases with "*Unmenschlichkeit*," (the television is framed against a backdrop of advertising signs in the former sequence) and with dreams (there are altogether three instances in which sleeping and dreaming are associated with television), but Alice, in the second instance, is a picture of peace and tranquillity and appears for the first time in the film as a possible guiding light for Winter to recover his vision. It will be Alice, after all, who leads Winter back to the relative visual peace of the German Rheinland and Ruhrgebiet where he begins a search not for casual impressions, but for the stations marking Alice's real story.

But even Alice is threatened by the 'monstrosity' television. The dream she describes in the Amsterdam hotel room later, in which she is bound to a chair in front of a

television set and forced to watch a horror film, seals the association of television with a nightmarish concept, and makes plain the threat that Wenders perceives television to present for the purity, calmness and transparency of vision promised by cinema in its early days.

The New York sequence of *Alice in den Städten* serves primarily to introduce the figure of Alice and to further elaborate on Winter's problems with vision, and Alice's possible role in helping him to see and comprehend things more clearly. Winter first meets Alice at New York's Pan Am office where he and Alice's mother, Lisa van Damm, both hope to obtain tickets for a flight to Germany. Winter and Lisa van Damm agree to find a hotel room together when they are told that they can only travel the next day. In the morning, the mother has disappeared, and instead of meeting later as planned, Winter finds another note asking him to accompany Alice to Amsterdam where she would reach them the next day.

Unused to the company of a child, Winter takes Alice to the observation level in the Empire State Building in New York. Winter is impatient while Alice observes the city below through a pay-telescope. The camera assumes her point of view. For a moment, Winter and the story are completely forgotten, and the sequence becomes one of pure contemplation for its own sake. By chance a bird flies into the frame, the camera follows it until it becomes lost in the jungle of Manhattan's sky-scrapers below. We, the spectators, see the first images of release and escape from the inner toils of the hero, Winter, since the beginning of the film - and it is significant that these images are presented as the vision of a child, Alice. From the composition of this sequence it is clear that the bird flies into the frame quite by chance: the camera had previously been tracking along a different line but, once the bird enters the frame, the camera follows its path. This signals a desire in Wenders for the camera to enjoy the same openness of vision and attention that Alice - the first of a number of children who, in Wenders' films are blessed with clear vision - shows for the incidental. Objects on the edge of the diegesis - here, the bird - are often allowed to drift into the frame, even though they may have little or no relevance for the development of the plot, as is the case here.

This evaluation of the cinema as an instrument capable of catching unique moments such as the flight of a bird through Manhattan seems like it has more to do with some magical property than with plain physical reality. But such coincidences are the fabric of everyday reality: the question is whether one notices them. Wenders explains that, for him, this is where the charm of the cinema is based:

Ich meine, daß die Lust daran, zu erzählen und mit der Kamera auf die Straße zu gehen oder in eine Wohnung oder in die Eisenbahn, besteht darin, daß was passieren kann, was man vorher nicht gewußt hat, daß etwas auftauchen kann, mit dem man nicht gerechnet hat.¹²⁷

Secondly, the sequence shows the activity of making reality transparent through simple observation. Alice may just see the bird but, more importantly, the reproduction or interpretation of Alice's vision in the framing shows something about how this type of habitual vision might also offer the spectator a glimpse of some underlying reality, to make reality transparent. In watching the bird, we are shown how free it seems in comparison with the prison-like jungle of the city below, with its straight lines and sharp edges, its rows of windows that block vision. **(still 45)**

From the point of view of narration - of finding Alice's mother or a home where she can be delivered - this scene has nothing at all to say. Neither does it have any relation, in the sense of building up meaning, with the shots that come before and after it. It is an entirely self-sufficient shot that has its own meaning defined simply by the occurrence of a bird flying between the skyscrapers of Manhattan. Time and space are respected in their real dimensions here because the image merely shows what it contains and is uncut: it has no narrative relation to any other shot in the film, and therefore does not attempt to construct a narrative coherence of any sort. The only time that is relevant here is the time it takes for the bird to fly through the image, until it is out of sight. The space that this shot represents is in reality the space through which the bird flies in this time. The shot does not claim to be anything other than the documentation of this event, at this time and in this space. The objective of the shot is that the spectator sees what the camera records. It is a self-sufficient unit in that we do not stop to wonder whether the fact of the bird's presence will be decisive in the outcome of the story. The only

importance of this sequence is that it occurred, has come to an end, but has been chosen for preservation by a filmmaker who 'liked' it, and whose concern is to capture something of the time in which he lives: "*meine Kraftquelle war immer, daß ich etwas Gültiges festhalten wollte von der Zeit, in der ich lebe.*"¹²⁸

In the section of *Alice in den Städten* covering Philip Winter's and Alice's journey together from New York to Amsterdam, Wenders further diminishes the presence of any kind of recognisable narration in the conventional sense to the point that there is as good as no plot development from the moment the two protagonists leave New York City for the airport, until they return to Amsterdam airport two days later to meet Alice's mother, who is expected to arrive. The narrative information one can speak of in this section - though this does not mean storytelling, rather, perhaps, characterisation - is what Winter and Alice do and say whilst they are in the process of waiting. Before the flight, Alice explores the airport, sits down to watch television and begins eating a sandwich. Winter presumably remains in his seat until he searches for and finds Alice, though, in the absence of parallel editing, this is not shown. During the flight, both characters sleep and eat, Winter makes a photograph and tries to write in the toilet. Winter asks the stewardess for an aspirin. He and Alice play a word game. In Amsterdam, they go to the nearest hotel and fall asleep. The next day, they embark on a city tour, Winter has his hair cut and they return to the hotel to sleep. Twenty minutes - almost a fifth of the film - go by in this "dead" period from when they leave New York until they discover that Alice's mother has not arrived in Amsterdam, which is the point at which the search for the grandmother begins, and the plot again assumes some relevance as far as the story is concerned. If one includes the seventeen minutes of "dead" narrative time that go by from the film's beginning until Winter's arrival in New York's Pan Am office, then from the point of view of plot development, two thirds of the film so far (until the 55th minute) describes the process of waiting or of moving, whilst the remaining eighteen minutes introduce us to Alice and her mother (this is the only time she is present in the film). With this barest outline of a story, it is clear that the relevance of the first half of *Alice in den Städten* lies almost entirely in the characterisation of the protagonists and in the

images the continuously moving camera records. It is, furthermore, impossible to speak of any narrative peaks or dramatisation, since everything that has so far come into the viewer of the camera has been simply revealed without any narrative importance attached to it. Their existence has been confirmed, but these objects disappear again for the remainder of the film unless they are in some way attached to one of the characters.

The line the film is following is thus a linear trajectory that never crosses its own path and never doubles back on itself. Both photographers, Winter and (the very present) Wenders, are travelling along this line, making visual records of the existence of the phenomena visible in a radius from the axis of the line to the horizon whilst they move onwards along the line, marked, presumably, on Wenders' road map - the basis for advancement in *Alice in den Städten*, just as in many of the other films. The end of the story is determined by the length of this line, rather than by dramatic fulfilment or conclusion and here, as usual, the line continues beyond the end of the film. If the story has no obvious beginning or ending, one can speak of an imaginary infinite narrative line that continues beyond the film's 110 minute length. 'Story' is a result of movement over this time, the product of a development that depends on spatial and temporal logic, not on narrative intent. The story we witness is thus - as Wenders admits by leaving his narratives open at both ends - only a relatively insignificant part, a fragment of a larger story, which is the advancement of time and the existence of space. The camera is unable to record all existence and cannot be left to run infinitely, but the time recorded in *Alice in den Städten* is marked apart for the simple fact that it has been preserved in the form of a film.

Over the expanse of time it takes for the film and its main protagonists to move from New York to Amsterdam airport, the information the film offers us serves to further develop the characters and to continue the discourse that began in the first frames of the film, rather than to develop a story. With Philip Winter already characterised as a European far from home, and so bewildered by the mass of visual information America has to offer that he is blinded, and with Alice having been presented as a possible cure

for Winter's blindness, Wenders begins to create a palpable tension between Alice and the main cause of Winter's blindness, television.

Just as Filippo D'Angelo forges a link between the spectator in *Der amerikanische Freund* (represented by Jonathan Zimmerman, who is seduced into involvement in a story that seems to come straight from a Hollywood film), fascinated by, and culturally dependent on American cinematic culture (represented by the figure of Ripley), he makes a similar parallel between Alice, representative of early cinema by virtue of the purity of her vision, and Philip Winter, for whom Alice would seem to promise a cure.

Alice is the cinema by virtue of her way of seeing: Philip finds his identity in her because, unlike photography, cinema can reproduce movement. It is able to show man in his spatial and temporal dimension, which photographs cannot. Man's infancy is like a return to the spontaneous creative energy, the ingenuity of an uncontaminated vision. The infancy of cinema is like a recouping of the descriptive purity of the 'evidence' of the representation.¹²⁹

Wenders once again links television with dreams in the expression of this parallel. When, during the flight from New York to Amsterdam, Winter and Alice play a word game - Alice has to guess the letters that make up a word thought up by Winter - Alice exclaims that the word chosen by Winter, dream (*Traum*), should be disallowed: "*Nur Sachen, die es gibt*", she says. This apparent reference to Winter's dream of calmness, emptiness during the television showing of Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln, interrupted by the television advertising slot, and Alice's suggestion that a corresponding reality does not exist is a confirmation of Winter's distanced and idealistic picture of reality of life in America - also expressed in the words of the song he sings at the very beginning of the film.

Alice, conversely, does not believe what she cannot see or touch: here, she does not believe in a dream; in New York, she is not fooled when Winter pretends to blow out the lights illuminating the Empire State Building - on the stroke of midnight. She exhibits a much closer contact to the world than Winter, it is palpable to her. Winter cannot have his dream, despite his conviction that there is an underlying harmony behind the distracting visual facades in America.

Alice's quasi psychoanalytical analysis of the motives behind Winter's choice of the word 'dream' confirms that, as Winter suspects, his real task lies in first understanding that which is real: the unreal, fragmented image of the world presented by television and advertising. Representing, as D'Angelo suggests, the spirit of early cinema, Alice's closer relation to the world of phenomena, her more direct access to the world, her uncomplicated understanding of things and her simplicity of vision are the tools that Winter lacks. Her role as guide and as visual therapist for Winter is never more clearly expressed than when Alice asks Winter to tell her something about himself while the two await a bus near Amsterdam airport. Winter cannot think of anything to tell, so Alice takes a Polaroid snap shot of him, handing it to Winter with the words "*Damit du wenigstens weißt, wie du aussiehst*". As Winter examines his likeness, Alice's face is reflected in the photo and becomes superimposed over his: while Winter so far seems to have little to offer Alice, except as a driver, this shot is a sign that Winter's and Alice's destinies are nevertheless closely intertwined, mostly because Winter is beginning to depend on and learn from Alice.

The block of "dead" narrative time ends in Amsterdam with the realisation that it will be useless to wait for Alice's mother to arrive. Instead, Winter and Alice set off to a search for Alice's grandmother who, according to Alice, lives in Wuppertal. Winter rents a small car and the pair head off on their odyssey. Though the decision to start a search - coming after such a period of narrative stasis in which we observe the characters eating, sleeping, even Winter having his hair cut - might at first be interpreted as a sign that a more conventional narrative is about to begin, including elements such as purpose, tension, possible narrative closure, this second half of the film simply renews the trajectory of the protagonists' movement from the first half of the film. We, the spectators, fall back into the role of searching and observing a new landscape through the window of a moving motor car. The grandmother is nothing more than a pretext for movement: Reinhold Rauh's detection of a new criminal element in the second half of *Alice in den Städten* "*...was Spannung aufkommen läßt und alle zu sehenden Einzelheiten bedeutsam werden läßt*"¹³⁰ is mistaken not least because, unlike in *Der*

amerikanische Freund or *The End of Violence* which, from the beginning exhibit some conventional criminal elements that introduce us to their narratives, there is never a hint of a potential threat to any of the figures in *Alice in den Städten*. This is altogether quite a different 'story'.

Winter's inability to see his life and his experiences as a cohesive whole that can be told as a story is clear from his reply to Alice when she asks about it in Amsterdam. Similarly, when Alice asks him to tell a story in the Wuppertal hotel, his response - he shouts at her "*Ich weiß keine Geschichte*" - reinforces the point. However, Winter rethinks, takes a breath and then is able to summon up a story which alludes to Wenders' own method of storytelling. He begins, after some hesitation, with the classical beginning "*Es war einmal...*" and then relates a series of events that follow one another in steady succession. A little boy who goes for a walk with his mother gets lost in the woods. He meets a horseman, a truck driver and other characters and continues walking until he reaches the sea. Winter breaks the story off once Alice falls asleep. The beginning of this related story is a pretext for succession of events that follow to occur, just as the framework story about a man who meets a girl whose mother disappears is a pretext for the making of *Alice in den Städten*. The stations of the boy's adventure - each time he meets a new character in the forest - correspond to the episodic structure that characterises Winter's and Alice's adventures in the film until this point. The stories related by both Wenders and Winter are products of the succession of their episodes, and both stories have open beginnings - the little boy is already walking at the beginning of the story - and open ends.

But perhaps the most significant aspect of this sequence is that Winter had twice felt at a loss when Alice had made a demand on him that required *erzählen*. He could find nothing to tell her about himself in the form of a verbal account, nor did he feel he had a story to tell her at bedtime. Winter only feels able to tell a story, after some reflection, that is wholly invented: an approach to cinematic narrative that is formally consistent and thematically present throughout Wenders' work. Hanns in *Summer in the City* reflects that, in order to avoid reducing life to its highlights, he would need one year's

time to describe the year he spent in prison: where should one begin the story, what should one leave out and what ought to be included? Robert in *Im Lauf der Zeit* replies to Bruno's question "Ich will wissen wer du bist" with the words "Ich bin meine Geschichte." Friedrich Munro in *Der Stand der Dinge* dies for his conviction that "... stories only exist in stories (whereas life goes by without the need to turn into stories)." And Travis in *Paris, Texas* only feels able to tell his own story in the third person - as a 'real' story - with his back turned to the one listening. These stories, when they are told, provide the teller and listener with a structured order to things - a form of cohesion which, Wenders admits, is comforting to the listener¹³¹ - but that is artificial and imposed. In Wenders' own words, an artificially structured account of things in the form of a story brings "einzig und allein Lügen hervor, und die größte Lüge liegt darin, daß sie einen Zusammenhang herstellen, wo keiner ist."¹³² Which is why he claims to use stories such as the story outline of *Alice in den Städten* only as "... ein Vorwand, [...] um Bilder zu finden."¹³³

Finding images is, of course, what *Alice in den Städten* is about. Alice seems to have no memories of her past: she knows neither her grandmother's name nor her mother's maiden name, does not know where her grandmother lives. The few clues she does have are based on vision - she remembers that there were trees around the house - and on sound - the sound of soot crackling between the pages of her grandmothers' books. Most of all, her memories seem to be based on the photographs she carries with her of her grandmother's house and family members. These photos are placed on the dash of the rented motor car and begin to lead Alice and Winter in the right direction as concrete points of reference: the house as a kind of memory, a visual representation of the potential end of this search and of this narrative trajectory, the photograph of the mother possibly for inspiration, certainly as a memory stimulant for the spectator.

During their search for the house in Oberhausen, the camera sometimes follows Winter and Alice, and at other times adopts the perspectives of the two searchers. When the camera reproduces the point of view of the protagonists, Wenders uses tracking shots from inside a moving car, similar to shots in many of Wenders' student films such as

Same Player Shoots Again and *Summer in the City*, in which characters are tracked as they walk along a road. Here, the camera observes the buildings in Oberhausen which, as Winter is informed by a local resident, would soon make way for a new hospital. (stills 46-47)

The sequence in Oberhausen encourages the spectator to share with Wenders the activity of pure contemplation - a camera simply directed out of a car window onto the rows of houses in a suburb of Oberhausen. The sequence becomes an autonomous episode because, as with the earlier scene in the Empire State Building in New York, the story and characters are, for the moment, forgotten and the visuals take over as a form of descriptive narration. The spectator can sink, with Wenders, into the shared activity of still observation, meditation and contemplation - taking part in Wenders' search for pure images, and Winter's and Alice's search for home, even though the search is forgotten for the moment. This sequence is thus the opposite of what Grob describes as an 'ornamentalising' sequence because it neither attempts nor succeeds in detracting attention from the film images themselves or from the observing activity already in progress.

The search for the house in *Alice in den Städten* marks another important turning point in Winter's visual rehabilitation. Whereas before, he had always sought to catch an image of reality in his Polaroids, comparing his snapshots against the object he had photographed once they had developed, he immediately recognises the house from Alice's photograph, despite the fact that the vicinity and its inhabitants have changed since the photograph was made. He is astounded to find that the house exists. Even if the house and the area no longer look exactly as they do in the photograph, the important thing that Winter learns from this experience is that, unlike the snapshots of America, Alice has a connection to the object in the photograph: the image is the only link between a memory of a real past, a real story, and the reality of the existence of the house. Winter scratches his head "*Das gibt's nicht*". He is astounded, not because of the likeness of the photograph to the house, but because the house, which had before been the still point of his movement with Alice, and had existed only as a tale and a

photograph, concretely exists. The photograph and the fact of the existence of the house unifies the act of narration with actual reality, providing cohesion for an, until then, seemingly arbitrary representation of reality in a simple snapshot. (stills 48-49)

While Kolker and Beicken are correct in their assessment of images as being "untrustworthy" substitutes for reality most of the time (this is true, for example, of Winter's Polaroids), they mistakenly assert that the "picture of grandmother's house proved to be a disappointment insofar as its reproduction of the actual house could not satisfy the characters' desire to find the person formerly housed in this 'real' building."¹³⁴ In fact, Winter seems rather relieved to have found the house corresponding to the image: whether or not the grandmother still lives there is irrelevant, the house may no longer be the grandmother's house, but it is concretely there. Winter is relieved, above all, because he has learnt something about the nature of the relationship between images, stories and real experience, and because the story does not have to end here. The road continues on a short excursion across the Rhine in a ferry, and a train journey towards Germany's south. As the camera rises from a close-up of Alice and Winter's faces looking out of the window of the train, there is no suggestion of closure, only the suggestion of a possible continuation of the story - perhaps with Alice's mother in Munich. The helicopter provides a glimpse of the landscape as far as the horizon only to descend again in the next film, *Falsche Bewegung*, to the town of Glückstadt where we observe a young man named Wilhelm Meister, who also tries in vein to write, through the window of his room. Wilhelm Meister is also played by Rüdiger Vogler.

Alice in den Städten enters into a profound discourse on the production and consumption of images, and contrasts a number of conflicting approaches to filmmaking - to artistic production in general. Wenders uses his character Winter and the thin outline of the film's story to be able to hold this discourse. While Winter's exasperation at the tendency in American television towards the commercialisation of images ("*Kein Bild läßt einem in Ruhe. Alle wollen etwas*") is an evident and blunt attack on televisual aesthetics in general, including the role Wenders perceives it to have played in a similar aesthetic developing in conventional cinematic production, it is also a filmic

reaffirmation, through Winter, of Wenders' own position regarding the influence of television on vision as an experience, as he describes in his article *Der amerikanische Traum*.

Set against this inherently televisual notion of images is Winter's desire to be able to see clearly, to allow time for contemplation and reflection on his environment. This opposing force is represented in *Alice in den Städten* by the presence of Ford in the discourse on imagemaking, is expressed in Winter's dream and in the comparatively uncomplicated, calm film images of Europe and Germany, and is embodied in Alice, who's clearness of vision allows her an uncomplicated and unopinionated understanding of her environment, and a respect for simple existence. While commenting that the photograph Winter makes from the window of the jet taking him and Alice to Amsterdam is "*so schön leer*", Alice directs Winter's attention at himself when she gives him the photograph to contemplate who he is as the subject of an image, a unique phenomenon. **(still 50)**

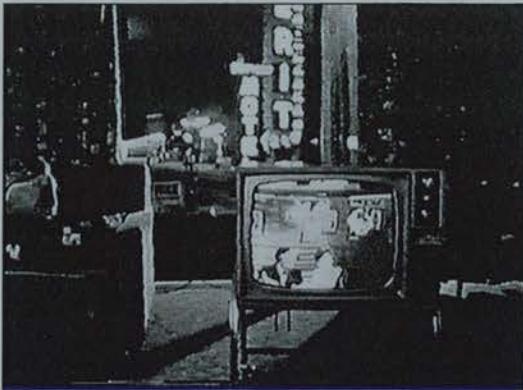
While Alice's perceptive qualities represent the opportunity for Winter to learn a new mode of vision, Wenders contrasts these qualities against the incoherence afflicting Winter's understanding of the visual world and against modes of image production and consumption influenced by television aesthetics. This contrast defines and illustrates the nature of his alternative to the modern visual experience, and the role he perceives cinema could play in the realisation of this alternative. *Alice in den Städten* proclaims the death of the legendary and mythical American cinema of the 1940s and 1950s, killed off by the introduction of television and the new imagemaking aesthetic it brought with it. Rather than suggesting a revival of the old cinema, Wenders suggests a review of early cinematic practice (an image-based cinema descending from the pioneers, Lumière and Skladanovsky) coupled with the minimalistic and uncomplicated, yet strong narrative tradition represented by the qualities Wenders values in John Ford's films.

On the visual level, *Alice in den Städten* thus finds the key to visual complexity to lie in visual simplicity, because a mode of filmmaking that respects the appearance of

physical reality promotes observation and contemplation of the visible world as a worthwhile activity. On the level of film narrative, Wenders suggests an open, episodic, narrative form with a minimum of dramatic content to break the dominance that story has traditionally enjoyed over the image in film, thereby demanding attentive observation from the spectator at the same time as making use of a narrative framework to attract the audience's attention and to provide a frame for the presentation of his images.



Stills 29-34: Left to right, the establishing sequence of *Alice in den Städten*



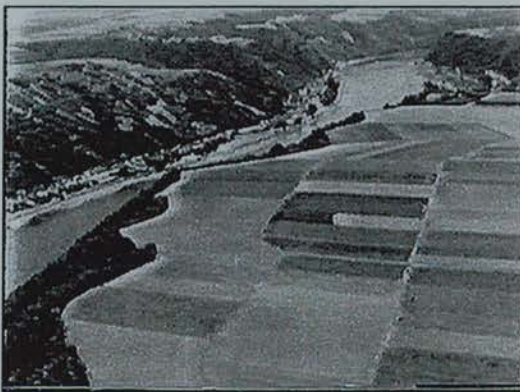
Still 35: John Ford's film is framed against a backdrop of neon advertising lights



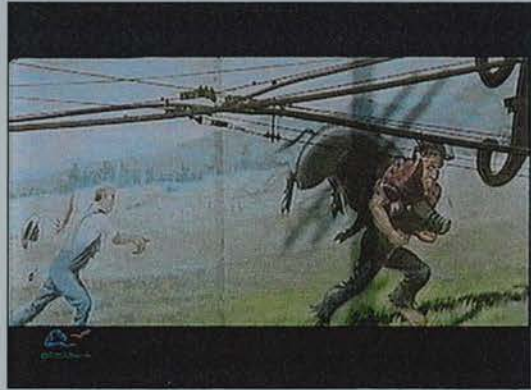
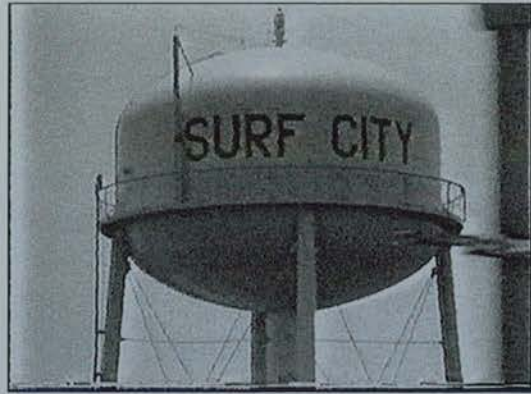
Still 36: Winter reads the announcement of Ford's death at the end of *Alice in den Städten*



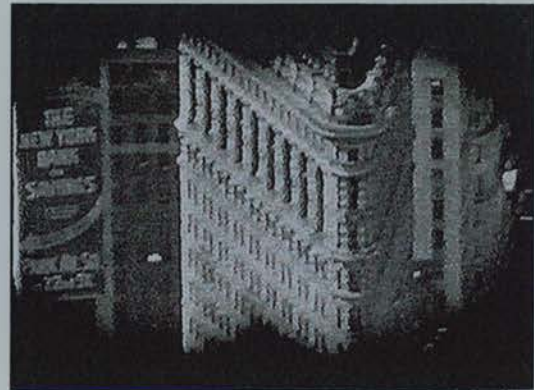
Stills 37-38: 3 amerikanische LPs



Still 39: Panoramic shot that closes *Alice in den Städten*



Stills 40-43: *Wenders (Alice in den Städten)* and *Antonioni (Zabriskie Point)* zoom in to isolate meaningless details from the environment

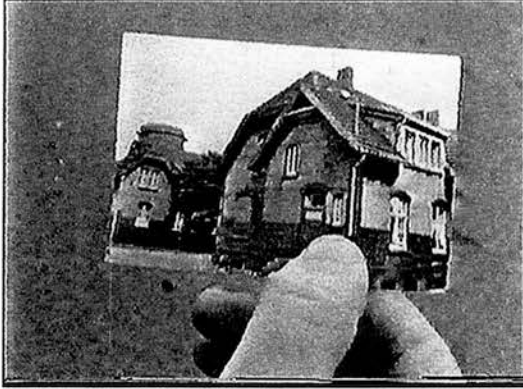


Still 44: *Wilhelm Meister at the end of Falsche Bewegung*

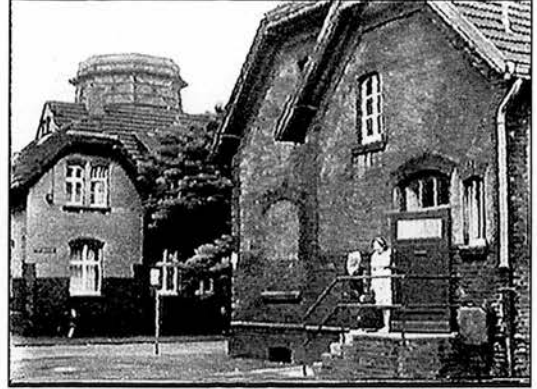
Still 45: *Alice's point of view in the sequence with the seagull in Alice in den Städten*



Stills 46-47: *Contemplative shot from the window of a moving car in Oberhausen, Alice in den Städten*



Stills 48-49: Winter compares a photograph against reality



Still 50: Winter contemplates the photograph Alice made of him: her face is mirrored in the image

3.ii. Paris, Texas

Critics such as Norbert Grob and Kolker & Beicken have categorised Wenders' work into three or more periods - an initial, formative period until *Im Lauf der Zeit*, a period featuring more conventional narrative until *Paris, Texas*, and an as yet only vaguely described third period "... mit neuen Helden, neuen Geschichten, neuen Experimenten".¹³⁵ With regard to the undeviating discourse into the relationship between image and narrative in his films, Wenders' work is, from beginning to end, an ongoing exploration, an experiment in progress: one film is always a reaction to what came before, a new step, a new experiment, even though the form of presentation in the individual films may vary or seem to build thematic blocks.

Wenders' arrival at *Paris, Texas* thus represents neither more nor less the end of a phase or process,¹³⁶ or the sum of all of Wenders' films to date,¹³⁷ than any other of his films, but one more step forward in the investigation into cinematic form. The major formal and thematic influence on *Paris, Texas* was thus that which came immediately before: Wenders' experience of filmmaking in Hollywood with *Hammett*, and his reaction to this experience in *Der Stand der Dinge*. In the latter film, Wenders had pushed himself into an extreme and decisive position, which he describes in the following terms:

In order to be able to visualise the free space in the middle [between the images], you need walls. After *The State of Things* I thought 'Now or never"! Either I learn from this film to reject its thesis about the impossibility of stories, or I have no real future as a filmmaker. That's why I tried to follow the script strictly in *Paris, Texas*.¹³⁸

Paris, Texas addresses the conflict between image and narrative that had always been latent in Wenders' filmic discourse, but that came to a decisive peak in *Der Stand der Dinge*, both in its structure and its theme: what kind of storytelling is possible in film without threatening the integrity of the image, and its primary function of rendering the world visible?

In *Der Stand der Dinge* Wenders found his theory that the space between the images in a film were enough to hold the film together to be flawed. Clearly in response to this

dilemma, *Paris, Texas*, with a script written by the American actor/author Sam Shepard, exhibits one of the strongest narrative structures in any Wenders film, and recalls his experiments with stronger narrative structure in *Der amerikanische Freund* and *Hammett*. Common to these three films is a clearly defined space in which the narrative unfolds. In the case of *Paris, Texas* this geographical space is triangular and incorporates western and southern territories of the USA, from Houston and the Mexican border in the extreme south as far as Los Angeles in California in the mid-west. In contrast to Wenders' earlier films, in particular the road movies, the narrative develops within this enclosed space rather than following a line, as is the case in *Alice in den Städten*, *Im Lauf der Zeit* and *Falsche Bewegung*. *Paris, Texas* relies as much on dramatic tension as *Der amerikanische Freund* and *Hammett*, and culminates in a dramatic peak at the end of the film. Though the film is open at both ends, the dramatic culmination - the apparently successful end of a search - lends the film a feeling of closure. The narrative moves within a self-contained geographical area and, at the end of the film, returns to where it began, giving it a united, circular form. It exhibits none of the *temps morts* of *Der Stand der Dinge* or the earlier road movies, is generally quicker-paced and provides a good sense of the passage of time.

One important consequence of the boundaries of the narrative in *Paris, Texas* being fixed within borders is that the narrative space is divided into three separate units of space, much as the seemingly endless temporal trajectories of the road movies are divisible into units or episodes of time. *Paris, Texas* is a spatial film rather than a segment of time. This is partially responsible for the impression reflected in most critical writings on *Paris, Texas* that the film exhibits a more conventional narrative structure: emphasis is laid on each of the spaces - the desert of the beginning, Los Angeles in the middle and Houston at the end - where dramatic events relevant to the development of the narrative occur. In the road movies, such stations were less bases than they are in *Paris, Texas*, more places to be passed through and left.

It is the division of the narrative space and the particular associations attached to each of the three spaces that make this structure particularly suitable for the theme of

Paris, Texas, as the movement of the protagonists and the film between these spaces reflect Wenders' thematic concern: the search for a kind of narrative, a frame that does allow the presentation of the film's images without compromising their integrity. The film begins in the desert of the American south west. In the desert, vision is limited only by the sky itself: there are no landmarks, there is no language or other life form. The desert is, for these reasons, a place where a story, which requires language and points of reference, is impossible: not only is there no vehicle for the expression of the story, but its path would be aimless. The unobstructed vision, and the lack of any recognisable landmarks in the desert sequence in the first half of *Paris, Texas* make the desert the realm of the image.

The second narrative space, centred on Los Angeles and the Henderson family home, is marked out by a completely different set of characteristics. It begins when Travis stumbles into a settlement called *Terra Lingua*. As the name of the town suggests, this is also the point at which language enters the film, and at which the spectators receive the first verbally communicated narrative information: that Travis is dumb, and has a relative in Los Angeles. Travis is led away from the vacuum of the desert into the new environment by his brother, Walt, who is most strongly associated with this environment. The desert clinic and the inside of Walt's car are the places where language resides. Walt moves in straight lines, is unwilling to depart from his course and would like to reach his destination as quickly as possible. From the point of Travis' arrival at Walt's house in a Los Angeles suburb, almost all the narrative information until the end of the film is transmitted verbally. The more language begins to define the progress of the narrative, the stronger the presence of the narrative also becomes. At the same time, vision on the level of the film image becomes increasingly restricted the closer Walt and Travis come to Walt's home.

A third narrative space consists of an amalgamation of Travis' and Walt's spaces in form, beginning the moment Travis and his son, Hunter, leave Los Angeles for Houston. The road to Houston begins beneath a freeway bridge where several roads meet, symbolising the blending of chaotic with resolute movement through this space, and the

fact that a decision is made here that will decide the shape of the future for the protagonists. **(still 51)** To get to Houston, Travis re-enters the desert with Hunter but stays on the road. Though the destination is certain - a drive-in bank - neither figure knows for sure whether they will also find the object of their search, Jane, Travis' wife and Hunter's mother. The combining of the desert and the inside of Travis' car on the way to Houston leads to a camera use that reflects the contrasting spatial dimensions at play: several wide shots on the landscape, and close-ups inside the car, while medium shots are mostly used within hotel rooms and populated areas along the route. Houston is presented as "the opposite image to the desert in the beginning",¹³⁹ and is where the strongest narrative elements take place. Travis and Hunter stake out a bank in the hope of catching Jane as she comes to deposit money. This is immediately followed by a car chase sequence and the tension of not knowing whether the pair are following the right car. Finally, we see Jane in the claustrophobic cubicle where she works. Vision is most limited here, and the camera continuously seeks new angles on the figures. Language flows freely both in Houston and at this most dramatic moment from the point of view of the narrative in the film, which ends in a flood of words as Travis relates the story of his life together with Jane.

The development of the theme of *Paris, Texas* is thus reflected in the film's structure: on the search for a formula, a narrative structure that admits a story, dialogue and communication into the film - which at the same time offers, even promotes the integrity of the filmic image. The film moves from a dead space, where narration is impossible, but where vision on the level of the image is unlimited, to inhabited or developed spaces, where the liberty of the image becomes increasingly restricted spatially, and where the fact of communication - the presence of language - promotes the act of narration in the film.

On the level of the theme, however, *Paris, Texas* relies mainly on the characterisation of the protagonists, their association with the narrative spaces in the film, and on allusion for the discourse on images and story presented within this narrative structure. Travis Henderson is most strongly associated with the desert of the

beginning, which characterises him with the same qualities that mark the desert. The figure of Travis is, through analogy and through his particular background, bound very much to the natural elements characterising the desert: as we are told at the end of the film, Travis walked away from his burning family home into the desert, where we and the film join him. His first action is to drink the water remaining in the plastic container that he carries, and then to seek new water from a dry tap in a settlement. One of the few possessions he carries with him is a photograph of a plot of land in the desert: the place where, he believes, he was conceived. His intention - to settle with his family on this plot - can be understood as an effort to preserve the continuity of his family heritage not just because of his assumption of having himself been conceived at this spot, but also because of his assumed Mexican-American family history. At the beginning, his sole companion is a falcon that watches him (a symbol of isolation and of the proximity of death, rather like a vulture). Because there are no landmarks in the desert, there is no specific direction to Travis' movement: the camera most often observes him as he walks through the image, moving through its depth. Travis wanders aimlessly and will not be able to leave the desert, the representation of his inner state, until he can leave his trauma behind him as well, which consists of dumbness, aimlessness and vacuum. The numerous lines that bisect the image in the desert are a sign that both Travis and the film are searching for such a direction to follow. Travis walks only in straight lines until his brother, Walt, finally manages to convince him to get into the car. (stills 52-54) He ignores the roads and paths in the desert, crossing them without wavering from his course, and follows a railway track. In the first frames of the film he seems to be following the Mexican / US border (a doctor later asks Travis whether he knows which side of the border he is on). And, once in Walt's car, still dumb, Travis traces the lines on a map with his finger until he finds Paris. This is the first word he says in the film (at 23" : 34').

Even more than the figure of Winter in *Alice in den Städten*, who was defined by extra-diegetical information, Travis appears with an extremely violent and traumatic experience behind him that has put him in a state resembling autism or some other

emotional or intellectual rupture, the details of which are kept from the spectator until the very end of the film. But we nevertheless immediately sense the presence of some disturbance in Travis through his behaviour and appearance, his environment, and through the fact that this figure is in this environment. It is exclusively the acting and the images that convey us this information, as Travis is completely alone in the desert, and he does not speak, he just walks through the empty landscape and through the image that accompanies him, away from the camera. Ry Cooder's blues guitar adds a sense of complete isolation to the overall picture we have of Travis at this point.

As soon as Travis moves from the desert into Walt's space - beginning in the desert clinic and including the inside of Walt's car, and the family home in Los Angeles - his character begins to react to the new environment, reflecting the changed conditions that characterise this space. This is where Travis slowly re-acquires language and the power of communication, which will be the most significant ability in the decisive Houston sequences from the point of view of the conclusion Wenders reaches regarding filmic narration. The closer Travis comes to Walt's house, the stronger his linguistic capabilities become. Walt and his wife, Anne, are associated with verbal communication from their first appearance - they speak on the telephone, and he and Anne are both observed clinging to the telephone in the film. **(stills 55-56)**

Similarly, the new direction that the story takes from the point at which Walt enters the story also benefits Travis, in that he gains the ability to direct his movement and intention towards reaching a certain goal: that of finding his estranged wife. His figure has clear psychological motivations for his actions, which are made plain to the viewer, and he seems to have a clear goal. This is mirrored in the film's story which, it seems, also begins to take shape here, in preparation for a conventionally determined goal of narrative culmination at the end of the film: the conclusion of the search begun here. The film's search for story, then, is expressed through its main character and his reaction to the environments he finds himself in.

But Los Angeles is also the place where the part of the filmic discourse regarding images, which begins in the expanses of the desert at the beginning of the film, starts to take shape. The particular construction of the filmic space of *Paris, Texas*, and its division into three entities with different spatial dimensions, leads to a different camera use, and varying fields of vision within these spaces. Of these, the unrestricted vision in the opening desert sequences is presented as an ideal for vision, and is contrasted with the spaces where vision is limited due to spatial restriction and lack of light. These spaces - in particular the desert café and the booth where Travis finds Jane, convey an impression of imprisonment, restriction and confinement, and lead to a different kind of camera use and cutting techniques to deal with the changed spatial dimensions. Most significant of these is the greater use of wide-angle lens in the restricted areas, which has the effect of significantly reducing depth of field in the image, when compared to telephoto or standard lenses.

It is inside these imprisoned areas that we find the subject Wenders chooses as his tool for his exploration on filmic images: images of women - for Wenders, the archetypal degraded image. Though Wenders has never shown an obvious awareness of feminist film theory, the images of women in *Paris, Texas*, with the exception of Walt's wife, Anne, reflect the feminist argument, put forward by Laura Mulvey, that women have traditionally been represented as little more than a surface in images, lacking a depth of their own, as a focus of male objectification in Hollywood and in western society at large.¹⁴⁰ They equally conform to Wenders' assessment, which he gave in an interview with Taja Gut in the volume *The Act of Seeing*, of commercial images as a form of "*Gewaltanwendung*" because of the way the images are used and because of the message this use attaches to them.¹⁴¹ Wenders refers to this tradition when asked, in 1982, whether he could imagine making a film with a female lead:

Es schien mir leichter zu sein, mit Erzählungen von Beziehungen zwischen Männern anzufangen, vor allem in den siebziger Jahren. Aber für mich war das immer nur eine Vorbereitung, und ich hoffe, nach einigen Filmen einen Schritt vorwärts zu machen und anzufangen, Geschichten von Männern und Frauen zu erzählen. Aber ich will sie nicht auf die herkömmliche Weise erzählen: die Tradition ist da ganz falsch, so fürchterlich und schrecklich

falsch, besonders im Hinblick auf die Frauen. Im Kino sind Frauen nur selten gut dargestellt worden.¹⁴²

Both in the desert café and in Los Angeles, Travis is framed against semi-pornographic images of women. **(stills 57-58)** In the first example, Travis, exhausted from his aimless, but strangely purposeful trek through the desert, reaches the desert café. Instead of drinking, he fills his mouth with ice from an ice-machine and promptly collapses. Behind him, hanging on the wall of this men's bar, is a reproduction of a reclining nude. Though the picture is far from being a pornographic work, the location, behind the drinks cooler in the male atmosphere of the bar, makes it stand out as if it were a page taken from some crude stripper or cheer-leader calendar. The second, more directly revealing example is the figure of a reclining woman in a gymnastics costume, advertising mineral water, positioned on a giant billboard above a highway in Los Angeles. Both these images feature a degree of displacement or abuse of their subjects: the first - a potential work of art - is degraded to the role of sexual icon, stimulant or gratification for male consumption because of its situation in the bar; the second image is an example of the commercial exploitation of women in advertising. Like the former image, this one too shows the woman as object and in fragments, lacking the depth of a third dimension (augmented by the use of a wide-angle lens that reduces depth of field), and is equally sexually iconic. For Wenders, these images, their two-dimensionality, are symbols of a prevailing misogyny in society, and expose the way in which the female image, degraded for commercial or some other gain, is readily available, the suggestion being that the image of Woman is first appropriated, then remoulded, imprisoned in the image to reach a certain goal, or to present another image with which the subject has no actual relation.

Here, again, the discourse regarding filmic images relies chiefly on the associations attached to them in the film: they appear where vision is most limited (in the second example, Travis turns away from the image to remark on how vision is clearer in the opposite direction). The second image is, moreover, associated with Walt, who works for the company that makes the billboards. While the first appears in the desert - set for

many of Ford's films, so admired by Wenders - the second is in Los Angeles, the centre of American filmmaking industry that, according to Wenders' commentary in *Reverse Angle: NYC March 1982*, is responsible for the production of an increasing number of degraded and degrading images.¹⁴³

Mostly, though, it is through their association with Travis that these images contribute to the development of the theme in *Paris, Texas*. If, as Kolker & Beicken suggest, the images of women in *Paris, Texas* reveal aspects of Travis' violence against Jane,¹⁴⁴ they also serve to show the process by which Travis learns something about this violence. Whereas he collapses directly before the first example in the darkness of the desert bar, he uses the second to support himself on the scaffold holding the giant billboard image. Standing directly before the image he is pleased, as he holds onto it, that he can see things more clearly from there.

Both the above instances of images depicting women prepare the spectator for the thematic climax - which coincides with the film's dramatic ending. Travis and his son, Hunter, decide to travel together to Houston to retrace their wife and mother, Jane. The only information they have is that she deposits cash at a bank on a certain day each month. Jane is first seen in a home movie at the Henderson family home - images of better times when she and Travis were still a couple. In a way, this is the opposite image to the desert of the beginning, along with Houston (chronologically, Travis' time in the desert begins immediately after the time the home movie was made): The whole Henderson family appears together on a wide, sandy beach. Water is plentiful, and Travis is surrounded by his family: symbolically, an ideal image as far as *Paris, Texas* is concerned. In Houston, conversely, Jane is always shot in enclosed spaces: her car, in the peep-show and the foyer at the peep-show, where there are no apertures to the outside world. At the very end, she appears with Hunter in a Houston hotel room, still imprisoned (the shape of the windows of the hotel room suggest incarceration), **(still 59)** but there is a view of the outside world. The composition of these shots link Jane firmly with the two previous images of women in the desert cafe and in Los Angeles.

A much stronger such link, though, becomes apparent in the booth where she works. Not only is she separated from the outside world, she is also physically separated from Travis and the camera by a sheet of mirrored glass dividing the peepshow into two separate areas. Seen from Travis' and the camera's point of view, Jane appears as a prostitute set within the confining borders of a frame, giving the image an appearance similar to both earlier images of women. **(still 60)** Jane is thus clearly identified as a victim of the same degradation that allow the use of images of women as objets for commercial gain.

Travis pays two visits to Jane in the peepshow. He leaves the first time, obviously distraught at the sight of what has become of her after the break-up of their marriage, but returns the next day. Travis confronts her and himself with the story of their violence in what could be described as a sort of confessional hearing. His speech offers evidence of the strong psychological motivation behind his actions, as well as providing the background information that informs the spectator of the reasons why Travis was wandering in the desert in the first place at the beginning of the film. He refers to Jane and himself in the third person and has only a crude intercom device through which to speak to Jane through the glass divide. **(still 61)** He relates the banal story of his domestic life with Jane, describing their initial happiness, followed by Travis' gradual descent into jealousy and alcoholism that resulted from his conviction that Jane's refusal to show jealousy when Travis was away for longer periods was evidence that she was seeing other men. The news that Jane was pregnant, Travis says, temporarily gave him new impetus to work for the family again, but when Jane accused Travis of using the child to tie her down, Travis turned back to the bottle and became violent and increasingly suspicious, eventually tying Jane to the stove during the day and attaching a cowbell to her ankle at night, to ensure that she could not escape. The story ends with Jane setting fire to the house, which brings an abrupt end to their relationship. When he has completed the story of their life together, which enabled Jane to recognise for the first time that she was speaking to her husband, Travis arranges her reunion with their son in a Houston hotel room.

Travis created an image of his young and beautiful wife Jane out of jealousy. Although she was always loyal to her husband, as far as we know, Travis' obsession with her and his jealousy meant that he became suspicious of her. Travis' dream of an ordinary family situation relates to a very American dream of settlement in the inhospitable wilderness of the desert, the American (and cinematic) expansionist tradition of the desert out-post, the fruitful conquering of the desolation of the wild west with the common aims of family, home, work and land: an honest American dream. But, according to Travis' tale, this dream soon became corrupted. Travis tells Walt and Hunter, in separate scenes, how his father had often joked that his wife, Travis' mother, was from "Paris", waiting before destroying the exotic impression of such a statement by adding "Texas".

Er hat was anderes in ihr sehen wollen. Das war wie eine Krankheit. Er sah sie an, aber er hat sie nicht gesehen. Er sah eine andere, und er erzählte überall, sie wäre aus Paris. Er fing an, es selbst zu glauben. Und sie hat sich für ihn geschämt.

The relevance of this background information to the film's story is that the same tendency to see someone other in a person or thing than actually exists, which Travis describes here as an illness, is that it seems to have survived into the next generation in Travis. In his imagination, Travis nurtured an ideal image of Jane as the perfect wife who looked after the household, bore him a child and loved her husband. Whenever Travis began to doubt this image, whenever the reality of the relationship no longer seemed to correspond to this image, he reacted violently to restore it. In other words, he exchanged Jane herself for an image that he had created of her in his mind, which he loved more than the real Jane. These circumstances lead Stefan Kolditz to describe *Paris, Texas* as a

... Bilder-Film. Er ist nicht nur in Bildern inszeniert, die ihn weltberühmt machen werden - er handelt von Bildern: von Bildern, die Männer sich von Frauen machen [...] Travis ist ein Mann, der mit seinen Bildern über seine wesentlich jüngere Frau nicht zurechtkommt. Er hält sie für das, was sie später - zumindest symbolisch - tatsächlich wird: eine Hure.¹⁴⁵

Kolditz identifies as one of the themes of *Paris, Texas* the potential dangers involved when photographic images, or their subjects, are perverted in a way that separates the

subject and its identity. Jane's condition in *Paris, Texas* is presented as a direct result of Travis' projection of an image of her in his mind that conformed more to his imaginary ideal than to the nature of the woman he was actually with, which Wenders uses thematically to make a statement about the abuse of images in general. Still, although Kolditz's conclusion that *Paris, Texas* is a film about images is correct, he does not go far enough beyond the banality of the love story about Travis and Jane to address the nature of the cinematic exploration in progress:

Wenn es nun wirklich so ist, daß *Paris, Texas* die Geschichte von Travis ist, der seine Schuld abarbeiten will, indem er wieder zusammenführt, was er zerstört hat, dann erzählt der Film, wie Bilder nur wieder zu neuen Bildern führen. Travis hatte ein Bild im Kopf, daß ihn die Realität ignorieren und dann zerstören ließ. Jetzt, vier Jahre später, hat er ein neues - diametrales - Bild im Kopf (...) Er bringt Hunter zu Jane, nicht weil sie die leibliche Mutter ist, sondern weil er das Bild seiner Schuld, die er am Schluß endlich anerkennt, loswerden will.¹⁴⁶

Paris, Texas is a film about images, about degraded images, and about the degraded images men can have of women. Images that are appropriated for advertising or taken out of their original contexts for any reason at all, face the danger of losing their meaning or having it altered, of dissolving in a pastiche of degraded images without an undoubted identity of their own and lose the spirit of identity that is latent within them. Precisely this has happened to Jane in the background story to *Paris, Texas*, (though it should be noted that the case of women is just the extreme of a general situation: Wenders is making a statement about any abuse of any images).

Wenders' character, Travis Henderson, representing as he does the average middle-class American male, is sent forth from a desert - an iconic, now dead and empty landscape that has come to symbolise the myth of Hollywood's entertainment industry and, for Wenders, the death of the myth of Hollywood - into (apparent) civilisation by the director. In Los Angeles, the font of the American image-making tradition, Travis' brother, Walt, is a producer of advertising billboards that feature commercialised images of women. Wenders confronts his character with one of these, and Travis begins to understand something of the nature of his violence against Jane. Travis is then sent to

Houston where, in a brothel representing the absolute in perversion of images, a kind of dark, underground purgatory where degraded images collect, he discovers Jane's fate (Wenders chose Kinski for the part of Jane because he felt she was a capable actress who had come to represent a sort of nymphet figure through her roles in semi-pornographic and erotic movies over the years).

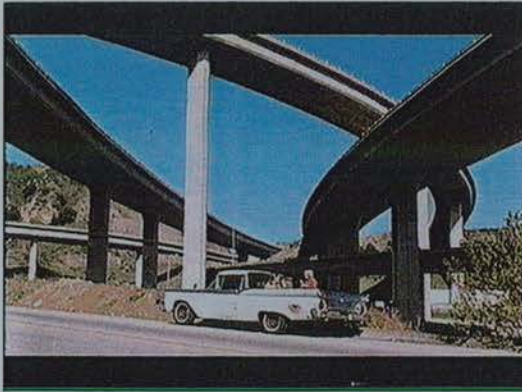
In his summary, Kolditz ignores the symbolic nature of Travis' act, and the metalinguistic context of the film, thus concluding that Travis is merely trying to appease his guilt in returning Hunter to Jane. But the confession Travis directs at Jane in the penultimate sequence of *Paris, Texas* could equally represent a confession of the director, of Wenders, on behalf of the whole history of image-making, for having contributed to the degradation of photographic images in this way. Travis merely confesses, that is, he relates the story of his life together with Jane in simple terms. He returns Hunter to his mother and departs the scene. Kolditz concentrates on this dramatic conclusion as the end of the film, not considering that the film begins and ends with Travis who, having recognised his errors, drives away into the Texan night, still unable to fit into the civilised world, to leave his emotional desert.

The return of Hunter to Jane is only an apparent closure because *Paris, Texas* is really about a characteristic inherent in modern society that fosters and supports men like Travis, who are possessed by their need to acquire and maintain control not just over women, but who have been trained in the art of ownership and consumption - a tendency reflected in the portrayal of women in cinema, advertising and other visual media. The film is left open because this problem is not resolved by Travis'/Wenders' confession. This is just a beginning: a sign that the battle to restore and preserve the integrity of images is not lost, that Wenders has not resigned himself to defeat after the dilemmas surrounding his experience working in Hollywood on *Hammett* and resulting in *Der Stand der Dinge*, and that the continuing degradation and inflation of images is, maybe, resistible.

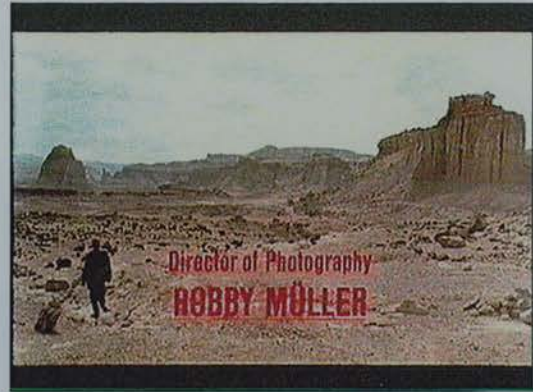
From the point of view of story in film, Wenders claims to have made a new discovery with *Paris, Texas*:

Ich habe gelernt, daß Geschichten tatsächlich existieren, ohne uns. Sie sind eine Art Fluß, und der Film ist ein Boot. Ich war vorher immer nur in den Nebengewässern herumgerudert, im Brackwasser. Dann bin ich mit dem Boot auf die Mitte des Flusses gefahren. Das war *Paris, Texas*. Wenn man sich einmal diesem Fluß, dem Erzählstrom, wirklich hingeeben hat, ist man ans Meer angekommen. Diese Erfahrung habe ich seither immer wieder gesucht.¹⁴⁷

On one hand, Wenders is undoubtedly referring to the experience of relying on a strong narrative structure and script in *Paris, Texas*. But he also seems to have made a discovery regarding the questions he raised after *Der Stand der Dinge* regarding the relationship between story and image: not just Travis' confession, but the whole film relies, in the end, on Travis regaining the power of language that enables him to tell a story, in simple terms, as a simple narration. This short story, which is not the story of the film, represents a form of narration that foregrounds a linear structure, and offers the coherence and order necessary for the telling of events in the form of a story. It is this order and coherence that Travis (and the film) lacked at the beginning of the film. In the context of the film's cinematographic exploration, Wenders suggests through Travis' monologue that this kind of narration can co-exist with photographic images without threatening the integrity of the film image.



Still 51:



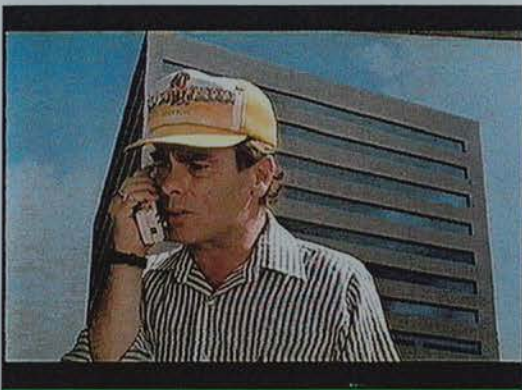
Still 52



Still 53



Still 54



Stills 55-56: Walt and Anne Henderson are connected with domesticity and associated with language



Stills 57-58: Travis is twice framed against a backdrop of vaguely pornographic images of women in Paris, Texas



Still 59: Hunter in his hotel room



Still 60



Still 61

3.iii Tokyo Ga

That American culture, particularly American cinematic culture was a formative influence on Wenders' work, as it was on the work of many of his European colleagues and contemporaries, is evident in Wenders' adaptation of American genres and styles in his films. But in 1972, when the foundations of his film aesthetic were already established, Wenders discovered the films of the Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu (1903-1963). Less an influence than a confirmation of his own evolution as a filmmaker, Wenders seems to have recognised in Ozu a director from an older generation, a foreign culture, with a universal film language that was closely related to his own.

Ozu is the Japanese director whose work most expresses traditional Japanese values, concentrating mainly on the daily lives and interpersonal relationships of the members of lower and middle class families.¹⁴⁸ Particularly his later films are characterised by a striking economy of means such as an almost exclusive use of static camera, straight cuts and studio shooting, and drama sustained mostly by dialogue. Ozu is respected for his innovative use of on- and off-screen space and his decentred narratives, features that, in some ways, also characterise Wenders' work.

Ozu's consistent violation of the classical 180° rule, for example, means that objects and backgrounds within the frame change frequently, lending these a more prominent presence in the image and forcing the viewer to pay more attention to setting in order to avoid confusion.¹⁴⁹ (stills 62-63) In combination with this use of space, Ozu tends to extend the spatial limits of the film frame in order to imply the existence of off-screen space by concentrating the centre of the image on objects that have no direct narrative importance. Though such objects as a vase or an empty room might themselves be meaningless in terms of narrative development, they draw attention to the surrounding space which, through off-screen sound for example, are emphasised as meaningful, containing meaningful objects or people.¹⁵⁰ In Wenders this technique is used to combat the illusionistic effect of centred framing, which effectively denies the existence of space beyond the limits of the image frame. The seagull sequence in *Alice in den Städten* is

one example of how Wenders uses objects unimportant to narrative development in order to draw attention away from the progression of the story and to the wider, visual environment.

Deemphasis of narrative peaks is another way in which Ozu's narrative style resembles Wenders': Discussing Ozu's film *Tokyo Monogatari* (Tokyo Story, 1953) Bordwell and Thompson refer to Ozu's incorporation of 'ellipses' at vital moments the story, which reduces the impact of important narrative events. For instance, we hear about, but are not shown, the death of the grandmother, one of the main characters of *Tokyo Monogatari*: "The result is a shift in balance. Key narrative events are deemphasised by means of ellipses, whereas narrative events that we do see in the plot are simple and understated".¹⁵¹ Although their techniques may differ, the deemphasis of narrative impact and the emphasis on diegetical and non-diegetical visual phenomena are features common to both Wenders and Ozu, suggesting that they share an aesthetic basis regarding their respective evaluations of the relationship between image and narrative in film.

Wenders has usually referred only to Ozu's narrative style when describing what he found to mark Ozu's films apart from others. He claims to have learnt from Ozu "... daß es nicht sinnvoll ist, in einem Film eine Geschichte um jeden Preis zu erzählen. Ich habe von Ozu gelernt, daß man einen Film auch ohne 'Geschichte' erzählen kann".¹⁵² In the introduction to his diary film *Tokyo Ga* (1983-1985) he also focuses on story to express the impact Ozu's cinema has had on him:

Wenn es in unserem Jahrhundert noch Heiligtümer gäbe ... wenn es so etwas gäbe wie das Heiligtum des Kinos, müßte das für mich das Werk des Japanischen Regisseurs Yasujiro Ozu sein. [...] Ozus Filme erzählen, mit äußerster Sparsamkeit der Mittel und auf das Allernotwendigste reduziert, immer wieder dieselben einfachen Geschichten, von immer wieder denselben Menschen, in derselben Stadt, Tokyo.¹⁵³

While Wenders praises Ozu's films for their narrative qualities it is, above all, images of Ozu's Tokyo that he hopes to find in *Tokyo Ga*: "Ich war neugierig, ob ich

vielleicht noch etwas aufspüren könnte von dieser Zeit [...] Bilder vielleicht oder sogar Menschen."¹⁵⁴

The first impressions present a city and a population in constant movement: sounds from video arcades, pachinko halls and televisions, augmented by the ever-present, discordant music sound-track, the constant rush of traffic, of trains and of the people in the Metro system create a flood of images, an inescapable cacophony of audio impressions that blend into a monstrous chaos. One contemplative shot early in the film exemplifies the impression of chaotic movement: the camera is held steady for exactly one minute and represents a completely independent, non-aligned point of view over a city-scape in which five passenger trains move across the screen from the left and the right. These cut a horizontal axis across the image which is bisected by cars travelling underneath the railway track on a vertical axis. Towards the top of the image another road can be seen leading diagonally across the screen. The whole picture is an impressionistic picture of life in the city of Tokyo and stands out of the bulk of the film because of the length of the shot and because of the patterns of movement along the solid lines of the roads and the railway tracks. **(still 64)**

In a second sequence of this kind, the shot is held for two minutes and thirty seconds and again features trains, but this time the shot is composed from the inside of a train, and frames another that is travelling on a parallel axis. Because of the darkness the train itself is not clearly visible, only the lights inside, and the reflections of the lights in the train carrying the camera are visible, creating patterns with moving and stationary lights. When the train can no longer be seen, Wenders raises the camera to observe the patterns of lights created by the movement of the train in which he is sitting past an illuminated tower-block. **(still 65)**

Only three peaceful sequences in these first twenty minutes of the film break up the chaos: the familiar shot out of the window of the jet taking Wenders to Tokyo (contrasted by Wenders with the movie being shown aboard the jet), a group of people

picnicking in a cemetery (the place of the dead) and a rebellious boy in the Tokyo Metro who refuses to take another step (contrasted with the people rushing past him).

In Wenders' off-screen commentary he analyses the rift he perceives between the images of Ozu's Tokyo and his own first impressions of this audio-visually over-loaded environment, reflecting that the identity forming function of images may have become lost in the inflation of visual impressions. In the film, this connection between images and identity is blatantly stated. Describing the value of Ozu's cinema for the cinema on the whole, Wenders says:

[...] Für mich war das Kino nie vorher und niemehr seitdem so nahe an seiner Bestimmung: Ein Bild des Menschen des 20ten Jahrhunderts zu geben, ein brauchbares, wahres und gültiges Bild, in dem er sich nicht nur wiedererkennen, sondern von dem er vor allem über sich selbst lernen konnte.¹⁵⁵

In contrast, however, having witnessed the chaos of Tokyo, Wenders expresses his fears that "[...] *Bilder, die die Welt einen und eins mit der Welt sein können, [vielleicht] heute schon für immer verloren [sind].*"¹⁵⁶

The insertion of this reflection on images and identity in his commentary between two sequences featuring television sets ("*... noch mehr Krach für die Augen und die Ohren*") situates television as a primary factor in the loss, or even corruption of the identity of an entire nation, evidenced in the chaos that characterises life in Tokyo (in this respect, it is significant that Ozu was active as a director throughout the period in which television was commercially introduced). In the first of these sequences, the television set is in a taxi moving along a road, which links it with the chaos of the city. The second is in a hotel room: after a John Wayne film the Japanese flag appears on the screen and the national anthem is played, (**stills 66-67**) prompting Wenders to reflect:

Where I am now is the centre of the world. Every shitty television set, no matter where, is the centre of the world. The centre has become a ludicrous idea, and the world as well. An image of the world: a ludicrous idea the more TV sets there are on the globe. And here I am, in the country that builds them all for the whole world, so that the whole world can watch the American images.

Television, the primary disseminator of American images and American lifestyle, Wenders implies in this film, is responsible for the inflation of meaningless images and the resulting confusion of identity he senses to afflict the Japanese in Tokyo. A vehicle for the export of a dominant, commercially oriented culture, television claims to bring all the world into the living room. But if the choice of what kind of images of the world are promoted is the result of a commercial calculation, then identity is formed and fixed on the basis of this commercial calculation, leading to a dysfunction: a confusion of identity.

Wenders sees this confusion of identity expressed in many trends in Japanese city life that seem to imitate other cultures, mainly European and American. He visits a golfing range on the roof of a Tokyo building, where hundreds of men and women who, he says, will probably never get to see a real golf course, practice their swing: "*Es verwundert mich trotzdem, wie sehr [Golf] hier als reine Form betrieben wurde, als Schönheit und Perfektion der Bewegung. Der Sinn des Spiels, den Ball letzten Endes in ein Loch zu befördern, schien völlig verkommen.*"¹⁵⁷ (still 68) After meeting Werner Herzog atop the Tokyo broadcasting tower (which eerily resembles Paris' *Tour Eiffel*), Wenders breaks off a visit to the newly opened Disneyland Park on the outskirts of the city saying "[...] *the thought of seeing an exact copy of the park in California made me reconsider, and I did a U-turn.*" Later still, in a Tokyo Park, youths outfitted in appropriate 1950's costumes gather to dance American rock and roll dances. Finally, as if to show that the inclination towards cultural imitation had also begun to effect authentically Japanese cultural life, Wenders shoots a lengthy sequence, inter-cut with images from the inner-city golfing range, of a factory that manufactures wax imitations of Japanese dishes for display in restaurant windows. (still 69)

From the point of view of his search for images of Ozu's Tokyo, Wenders realises that he will only succeed in finding his own images here: the difference between Ozu's and Wenders' perspectives on the city is illustrated in the sequence when Wenders imitates Ozu's composition in a Tokyo street that regularly featured in Ozu's films: "*Ein anderes Bild bot sich dar, eines, das nicht mehr mir gehörte.*"¹⁵⁸ This experiment - the

imitation of a visual code alien to the filmmaker Wenders - confirms Wenders' fears that Tokyo had embraced a new identity since Ozu's death, one that requires a new visual code to catch its essence. (stills 70-71) In this sense, Wenders' search in Tokyo for images of the past is futile since there are, presumably, only new images that exude a new national identity. Or, more probably, the experiment illustrates the futility of Wenders' attempt to find Ozu's Tokyo in concrete images of present-day Tokyo.

Indeed, the only images in *Tokyo Ga* that concretely link Ozu's films with Wenders', that make a link between the past and the present, seem to be the frequent appearance of trains. In Ozu, the arrival and departure of trains habitually symbolises Japan's progress from a (war-torn), mainly agricultural society towards a modern industrial nation (that now produces televisions for the whole world). (still 72) Film-historically, Klaus Kreimeier notes, trains have tended to symbolise modern alienation in the period of industrialisation.¹⁵⁹ In this sense Ozu's films, which document Japanese life over a period of over 35 years, could be considered to present an image of Tokyo on the way to becoming the alienated and alienating city that Wenders experiences in the fragmentary chaos of modern Tokyo.

Wenders suspects early on in the film that he may be looking for something other than images of a past city or way of life in *Tokyo Ga*:

Je mehr mir die Realität von Tokyo als beliebige, lieblose, bedrohliche, ja sogar unmenschliche Bilderfülle erschien, um so größer und mächtiger wurde in meiner Erinnerung das Bild der liebevollen und geordneten Welt der mythischen Stadt Tokyo aus den Filmen des Yasujiro Ozu. Vielleicht war es das, was es nicht mehr gab: Ein Blick, der noch Ordnung schaffen könnte in einer immer heilloseren Welt, der die Welt noch durchsichtig machen könnte.¹⁶⁰

From Wenders' comments, it is maybe less a question of finding images that remind him of Ozu's Tokyo than of finding an attitude towards the given reality: Wenders' initial impressions of an overwhelming chaos are reflected in the disordered sequences of *Tokyo Ga* because, in this diary film, he is above all seeking to make his own confusion plain to the spectator, to show the chaos of the city. His attitude (*Einstellung*)¹⁶¹ towards the reality of Tokyo is therefore intended to reveal these impressions, with the result that

his own film is a relatively unstructured sequence of chaotic impressions, of fast-moving images and jumbled sounds. This is the form he employs in order to express these impressions, and his fear that "... a view capable of providing order" has disappeared, also refers to his own view of the city, his own inability to hold up the flow of continually changing impressions.

The main difference between *Tokyo Ga* and the films of Ozu in this respect is that, in his films, Ozu's intent is to become closely involved in, above all, a set of characters that remain more or less constant throughout his filmmaking career, whereas Wenders does not attempt, for the purpose of this film, to become involved with individual figures. In other words, Ozu's objective had been to tell stories about the people of Tokyo, and Wenders' objective is to show life in the city from the point of view of a first-time visitor, an outsider. In this sense, Wenders is acting out Philip Winter's role as the alienated European in the USA in *Alice in den Städten*, transposed to a different geographical location, particularly in view of his and Winter's comments on television in the respective films. Where Winter looks to Alice for a way of ordering his visual impressions in the former film, here Wenders looks to Ozu for ways of making sense of the city chaos.

The difference in Wenders' and Ozu's approaches, which determine the nature of their respective 'views' on Tokyo, are made clear in the two instances in *Tokyo Ga* when Wenders does in fact attempt to achieve a degree of intimacy with figures from Ozu's film world: In the interview with Ozu's lead male actor, Chishu Ryu, Ryu describes Ozu as the "master" whose disciplined working methods left his imprint on everything around him:

"In the studio, for instance, he not only concerned himself with the sets and decorations in general, but with every detail and every little thing. He positioned every cushion and put every little object in its place. Nothing was left to chance. He even straightened out the actors' costumes just before a take. And there's nothing wrong with that", Ryu concluded, "when someone is so sure of what he wants".¹⁶²

Ozu's cameraman, Yuharu Atsuta, also gives a picture of Ozu as a director so obsessed with order, control and meticulous planning that he timed every shot exactly to the second with a specially designed stopwatch. Atsuta sets up a camera to show the low shooting position usually adopted in interior shots, which gave the impression that the camera was amongst the figures, one of the guests, allowing a spirit of intimacy to develop between audience and protagonists (and between director and the actors). (still 73)

These remarks are revealing in the context of Wenders' search in the film *Tokyo Ga* and of his cinematic exploration into the incompatibility of images and story in film. If one accepts Wenders' claim in interview with Jan Dawson that Ozu was the only filmmaker he had learnt from "[...] weil seine Art, Geschichten zu erzählen, so ausschließlich darstellend war",¹⁶³ and his evaluation in *Tokyo Ga* that Ozu possessed "... a view capable of providing order",¹⁶⁴ then it would be a reasonable deduction that it was above all an aspect of Ozu's narrative style that Wenders was hoping to find in Tokyo: The simplicity of Ozu's aesthetic of 'representational' narration, which emphasises the visuality of events and phenomena in his films through careful and thorough attention to composition and strict control over time, to which Ryu and Atsuta's comments testify, and through the incorporation of off-screen space into the diegesis, confirms Wenders' own mistrust of stories and respect for the appearance of physical reality in film. At the same time, Wenders realises in *Tokyo Ga* that a concept of "Ordnung", the necessity of a story to act as a frame for the presentation of images in film, is the key to promoting a sense of stability and identity, and to his being able to make sense of the chaos of Tokyo. This observation also confirms Wenders' position regarding the structuring function of stories expressed in the film *Reverse Angle: NYC March 1982*: "... ohne den Halt einer Geschichte, wollen mir die Bilder auswechselbar und beliebig werden..."¹⁶⁵

The importance of Ozu and of *Tokyo Ga* in Wenders' oeuvre is not restricted only to confirmation of a film aesthetic, but is of significance for the forward development of Wenders' aesthetic. The complexity of the multi-layered sound track of *Tokyo Ga*, in

which ambient noise, commentary and score are audible simultaneously to express the chaos and disconnectedness of life in Tokyo is employed and functions similarly at the beginning of Wenders' next film, *Der Himmel über Berlin* (dedicated, in part, to Ozu). And, like in *Tokyo Ga*, Wenders resumes the search for an appropriate form to enable cinema, represented by the angel Daniel, to integrate the chaos of audio and visual impressions into the structure of a story that, like in the films of Yasujiro Ozu, nevertheless allows the image (and sound) to act as the chief information carrier and guardian of identity.



Stills 62-63: A direct cut violating the 180° rule in Tokyo Story



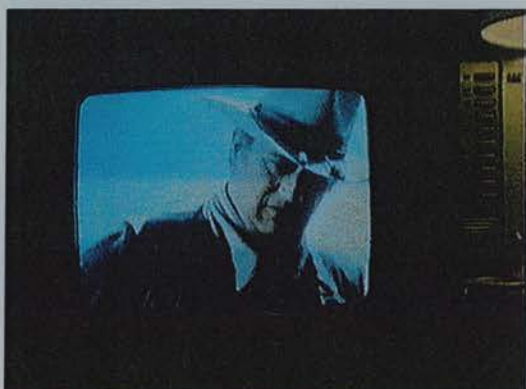
Have you got the air-cushion?



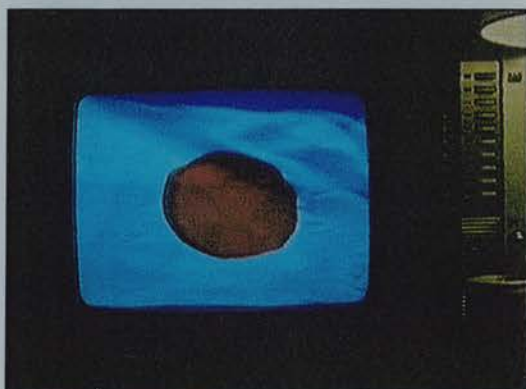
Still 64: The chaos of modern Tokyo



Still 65



Still 66



Still 67



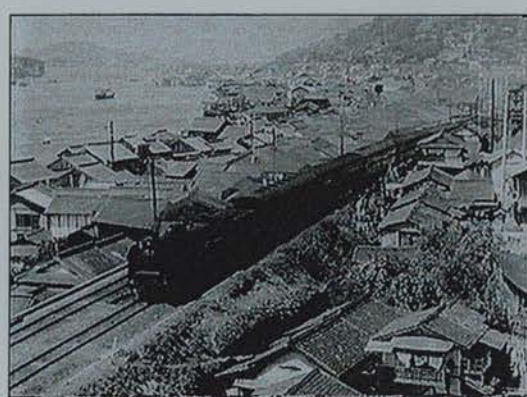
Still 68: a man practicing his golf swing with a newspaper in a Tokyo street



Still 69



Stills 70-71: Wenders imitates Ozu's mise en scène in Tokyo Ga



Still 72: one of the frequently appearing trains in Ozu's Tokyo Story



Still 73: Atsuto demonstrates Ozu's typical camera position

3.iv Der Himmel über Berlin

Against the background of Wenders' work, *Der Himmel über Berlin* shares many of the characteristics of the two films previously discussed, *Alice in den Städten* and *Paris, Texas*. It has been described as a road movie of sorts, yet the film never departs from the location of the city of Berlin. It is filmed in black and white as well as colour. It thematises both image and the search for a story and, representing a homecoming for a director who had spent the previous ten years working in America, exhibits a similarly restless tension between European and American cultural identity as any of the previous films.

At the same time, Wenders explores new technical and formal possibilities in *Der Himmel über Berlin*, for instance the use of a complex multi-track sound track to combine sound on several different levels simultaneously: "*Ich habe noch nie etwas gemacht, wo schon der Ton allein ein ganzer Film ist... Wo so viel gleichzeitig zu hören ist, weil so viel gleichzeitig erzählt wird*"¹⁶⁶ he admits. On the level of the image, this is the first film in which both black and white and colour are used, each stock type having a function as narrative devices. In some sequences, the image changes from black and white to colour within a shot, which, due to the restrictions this technique implies in the use of filters to attain a change from black and white to colour within a single shot, has the effect of a visibly inferior image quality in the shots where this technique is applied (quite a sacrifice for a director who places so much emphasis on the image in his films). **(stills 74-76)** The simulation of the incorporeal angels' point of view in *Der Himmel über Berlin* also meant a degree of technical innovation: the camera had to learn to fly and move through solid objects.

In a first project description of *Der Himmel über Berlin*, written in 1986 and first published in the volume *Die Logik der Bilder*, Wenders offers an insight into his hopes for the new film to catch something of Berlin's history and atmosphere, the sheer visibility of the city's history, as well as his own impressions of the city after his ten-year absence:

Ein Film, in dem eine Ahnung von der Geschichte dieser Stadt seit dem Kriegsende enthalten sein möge. Ein Film, in dem vielleicht etwas auftauchen und zur Erscheinung kommen möge, was ich in so vielen Filmen, die hier spielen, vermisste, und was doch so handgreiflich vor Augen zu liegen scheint, wenn man in diese Stadt kommt.¹⁶⁷

Later in the same text, the phenomenon of the city's historic division into east and west becomes an ever more dominant theme of the project description.

Berlin ist so gespalten wie unsere Welt.../
Der Film soll heißen:/
DER HIMMEL ÜBER BERLIN,/
weil der Himmel das Einzige sein mag,/
was den beiden Städten in dieser Stadt/
gemeinsam ist, außer ihrer Vergangenheit/
natürlich. "Nur der Himmel weiß", sozusagen,/
ob es noch eine gemeinsame Zukunft gibt.¹⁶⁸

Both this description of an original idea and many aspects of the film itself would seem to encourage an interpretation of the film as an idealistic call for an end to the division of the city - hence of the country and of the cold war world. It contains the first images of destruction and death during the Second World War in Wenders' films, and the Berlin wall, which two of the main protagonists, the angels Damiel and Cassiel (and Wenders' camera) pass through or over with ease, is an ever-present reminder of the city's division. Added to this are the characterisation of Damiel and the third main protagonist, Marion, as two opposites seeking to unite: Damiel, the angel, could be read as pure (incorporeal) spirit, and Marion, a circus trapeze artist, as pure material seeking a spiritual dimension. Both these figures seem incomplete, each one desiring experience of the attributes that characterise the other.

In their article, *Handke and Wenders' Wings of Desire: Transcending Postmodernism*,¹⁶⁹ David Caldwell and Paul Rea expand the idea of a united city/nation as a possible theme of *Der Himmel über Berlin* (which, admittedly, seems more acceptable as an interpretation since the historical reality of German reunification in 1990) to comment on the film in the context of divisions and opposites in general. The

article contends that Wenders moves beyond the stability of paired binaries of modernism (east/west, man/woman, black and white/colour, angelic/human, past/present, modern/postmodern, etc.)¹⁷⁰ which, they say, Wenders exploits in *Der Himmel über Berlin*, to seek a new order and stability in reciprocals. Caldwell and Rea place particular emphasis on image and word as opposite modes of experiencing, transcribing and narrating knowledge and history. Berlin, its particular history and its way of going about with it, is the field in which this experiment takes place. The main protagonists Damiel, Cassiel, Marion and the two 'angelic' human figures Homer and Peter Falk represent different ways of experiencing the world and they all expose a degree of perceptual dissatisfaction.

The word "angel" derives from the ancient Greek *angelos*, meaning *nuncio*, messenger (Cassiel/Raphaëla also refer to themselves in their monologue as "the messengers" in the sequel film, *In weiter Ferne, so nah*).¹⁷¹ The angel is the bearer of meaning: the signifier. The term consequently also suggests the existence of a space in, across or through which the message is conveyed; the space between the speaker and those to whom he speaks. The only function of Wenders' angels is to formulate, transport and deliver a message that consists of the events they witness based on vision and hearing. The choice of angels for the central figures in *Der Himmel über Berlin* was, according to Wenders, inspired by several different events: Rilke's *Duineser Elegies*, Paul Klee's works, Walter Benjamin's essay *Engel der Geschichte*,¹⁷² a pop song by The Cure and the *Friedensengel* atop the *Siegessäule* in Berlin.¹⁷³ a mixture of different sources of inspiration from German art and literary history and British pop music. There is no mention in any of Wenders' texts of a religious background to the use of angels in the film, or that these angels, Damiel and Cassiel, represent the spirits of individuals who have died. Though their appearance and artificial, at times poetic language suggests the presence of a religious background to their characterisation, these are no spiritual beings in the biblical sense. This is in stark contrast to their characterisation in the sequel, *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*, which ends with a monologue by Cassiel/Raphaëla in

which the spectator is offered closeness to a being referred to as "Him".¹⁷⁴ In *Der Himmel über Berlin*, all the central characters are angels in a way.

From the opening frames until the middle of the film the camera usually adopts the perspective of the angels. After the initial shot of a text which is being written, the film cuts to a shot on Daniel's eye in close-up, then dissolves into images of the city from an elevated point of view, thus identifying the camera with Daniel's point of view. (still 77) Remaining mainly with Daniel's point of view in the first hour of the film, we follow his floating journey around Berlin, descending first to street level from the spire of Berlin's *Gedächtniskirche*, then ascending into the sky and an aeroplane, then past a telecommunications tower into residential buildings where Daniel and the camera, which follows his point of view, move freely from one apartment to the next, through walls and across open spaces. Due to the seemingly random character of what we and Daniel see, we are at first unable to make much sense out of the pattern of events, except that we know we are being shown these events by Daniel, an angel. Beyond this realisation, the spectator has little to do other than watch the images and listen to the sound-track. We are also able to catch seemingly random patterns of thought and speech from the characters that Daniel follows or observes, including even the multi-lingual broadcasts from the Berliner Funkturm as we fly past. Were it not for the presence of the spiritual angels, this first part of the film would seem like its director had simply turned on a camera with a microphone and walked randomly through the city, its buildings, underground, and its streets - a sequence that seems to hark back to Wenders' earliest days at film-school in Munich, when the simple act of recording something for its own sake, the magical reproductive abilities of the camera, were the fascination for Wenders.

The first time Daniel meets his colleague Cassiel in a car showroom, each presents his notebook and reads the observations in the form of a list, occasionally pausing to comment on the events they report. Cassiel's notes include events ranging from sunrise and sunset times, an air disaster in the 1960s, a man walking along the street who turned to look into the emptiness behind him, and a prisoner who said "Jetzt" while committing suicide. In this way, the messenger acts as a kind of memory that captures past events

that seem noteworthy to the angels, preserving phenomena in a form that can be accessed in the future.

This sequence constitutes the first opportunity in the film for the spectator to make sense of the stream of constantly changing, seemingly random sounds and images, though the recognition that these are merely events witnessed by the angels is a relatively unspectacular revelation that does not yet contribute to the development of a recognisable narrative.

The second time Daniel and Cassiel meet to deliberate on past events they chronicle the local evolution including the rise and fall of mankind in a kind of allegory. At this point it becomes clear that the angels have existed and been active in this location since the beginning of time. More importantly for the characterisation of the angels though, they are also able to experience particular moments in time as if they were the present, to relive the past, jumping from one era to the next, an ability that is first apparent to the spectator when Cassiel observes the inserted documentary footage of destruction in the Second World War as if it were the present while riding through the city in a vintage car.

As the messenger, the angel does not just witness these events: he also records them in his memory, or writes them down in the form of notes in a notebook. The identification of the angel's eye with the camera's point of view, and their activity of observing, recording and re-telling make the angels in *Der Himmel über Berlin* personifications of a cinematic ideal: a cinema based in the indiscriminating observation of all kinds of phenomena, in the world of physical appearance, the capturing of the secret of existence in photographic images and the preservation of these images for the future. Norbert Grob has compared the work of Wenders' angels to the similar way Handke picks up on the smallest of details in his novel, *Die Stunde der Wahren Empfindung*.

Wie keuschnig die Dinge im Sand zu seinen Füßen erblickte...: ein Kastanienblatt; ein Stück von einem Taschenspiegel; eine Kinderzopfspanne. sie hatten schon die ganze Zeit so dagelegen, doch auf einmal rückten diese Gegenstände zusammen zu Wunderdingen. - 'Wer sagt denn, daß die Welt schon entdeckt ist? - Sie war nur entdeckt, was die Geheimnistuerien betraf,

mit denen die einen ihre Gewißheiten gegen andre verteidigten, ... jedes einzelne hohe Geheimnis war ... gemacht zur Abschreckung. doch die Wunderdinge jetzt vor ihm auf der Erde schreckten nicht ab. Sie stimmten ihn so zuversichtlich, daß er nicht mehr ruhig bleiben konnte. Er scharfte mit den Fersen und lachte ... Ich habe an ihnen kein persönliches Geheimnis für mich entdeckt, sondern die Idee eines Geheimnisses, die für alle da ist! ... Weil er sich von den drei Dingen nichts mehr zu wünschen brauchte, scharfte er Sand über sie ... ich habe endlich eine Idee gehabt. - er fühlte sich von neuem allmächtig, aber nicht mächtiger als irgend jemand anderer.¹⁷⁵

In the translation of the angel's point of view through the camera, Wenders insisted upon an "*Einstellung zu einer Einstellung, eine liebevolle Einstellung*",¹⁷⁶ which points towards an attempt at maintaining the respect for ordinary, as well as spectacular phenomena in the image, an attempt at accessing the "*Geheimnis, das für alle da ist*" described in Handke's text. Particularly the timelessness of the angels' existence cements the parallel with the cinematic image due to cinema's status as a recording art. This interpretation of the angels' function in the film is supported by Wenders' description in *The Act of Seeing* of cinema as an *Akt der Archivierung*.¹⁷⁷

Ganz bestimmt. Manchmal merkt man es erst hinterher. Mitunter habe ich das auch bewußt gemacht [...] Die Tatsache, dass etwas verschwinden sollte, war immer wieder ein Grund für eine Szene gewesen. *Der Himmel über Berlin* ist dafür ein krasses Beispiel. Da ist fast keiner der *Schauplätze*, an denen wir gedreht haben, heute noch da. Das fängt an bei der Brücke auf der der Motorradfahrer stirbt. Die ist weg.¹⁷⁸ Auf dem Platz, wo der Zirkus stand, ist jetzt eine Grünanlage. Über den Potsdamer Platz brauchen wir erst gar nicht zu reden. Die Mauer sowieso. Der ganze Film ist plötzlich ein einziges Archiv geworden, von Dingen die weg sind. Gerade Filme, die sich nicht Dokumentarfilme nennen, Spielfilme, tun das eigentlich in ganz erstaunlichem Maße.¹⁷⁹

Film has the same capability as the angels to hold a record of past events and of objects that change or disappear over time, and make their appearance available for viewing in the future. The fact that film images are restricted to recording an illusion of reality is also mirrored in the angels. Like the camera in a film, the angels are invisible observers, and like a photographic image, they do not come into actual contact with the world, but, with their black and white vision, can only capture images of the physical appearance of things, seeing things and people like shadows on a cinema screen, or they physically handle ghostly outlines of objects, not the objects themselves (when Daniel

attempts, in separate sequences, to pick up a stone and a pen, the actual objects remain in position, Daniel can only examine their image). (still 78) The film's dedication (*Allen ehemaligen Engeln gewidmet, vor allem aber Yasujiro [Ozu], François [Truffaut] und Andrei [Tarkovsky]*) crystallises the identification of the angels with a cinematic tradition of the Autorenfilm within which Wenders locates himself.

The angels exist in a domain parallel to that of the humans. They are able to observe humans, and are even capable of communicating with them on a spiritual level. It seems that they are visible to some of the child characters in the film. On three occasions, Daniel manages to access the consciences also of adult humans: he places his hand on the abdomen of a woman who is about to give birth, lessening her pain; he consoles a man in the underground train, who sees a bleak future, helping him to feel more positive about his domestic situation; and he begins to recite a songlike poem which a man takes over before his death after a motorcycle accident. But by and large, the angels do not seem able to influence events in the human world, which Cassiel painfully learns when he is unable to prevent a suicide attempt. The narrative core of *Der Himmel über Berlin* is situated between these two worlds, and the film's thematic thrust is built from the tension that exists between the ethereal world of the angels, and the generally bleak life lead by the humans in their world.

And that is the problem for Wenders' cinema: humans - the intended recipients of the angels' message - are blind to the everyday phenomena recorded by the angels, yet they seek constantly refreshed sensations elsewhere. In an interview with Wenders, Gerd Gemünden remarks on the moral aspects of Wenders' films, making the suggestion that morality had to do with a

... certain respect for objects and locations in which the characters move. It seems you want to do justice to the things you show on the screen, and the films take their time in order to achieve this. In your last two films the moral aspect has been transposed from the level of form to the level of content. Many critics saw this as a lack of subtlety. One spoke of Wim Wenders as a moralist who is primarily concerned with delivering a message...¹⁸⁰

Wenders agrees with Gemünden, adding that "the images can no longer carry the message".¹⁸¹ But rather than ascribe a deficiency to film images themselves, Wenders gives vent to his frustration, suggesting that their inability to carry a message is related to the modern dominant cinema aesthetic of entertainment:

The hesitancy to say something rests on the inability to form an opinion. Everybody wants to stay out of things. But with the present situation, one cannot stay out of things. Today, films are evaluated exclusively by their entertainment value, and it bothered many people that *Faraway, So Close* had a message, especially if they saw it as a Christian message.¹⁸²

Both image and sound track in *Der Himmel über Berlin* illustrate the particular form of blindness Wenders describes above. The inner monologues of the Berliners in the first hour of the film, which we hear as Daniel's hearing, go to the heart of the matter: men and women are plagued by their everyday problems, children are, like the angels, in their own dreamy world, a violent domestic dispute is seen to alienate a child from its family, and we are witness to the last thoughts of a man who kills himself. These captured thoughts are blended with other sounds from radios, the ever-present television sets and the multi-lingual broadcasts from the Funkturm - a modern-day tower of Babel. Two children argue about the television show "*Wetten Daß*", while others spend their time playing video games.

Only for the angels do the everyday and ordinary phenomena seem to hold some fascination, or to promise sensation. The Berliners themselves are full of doubt. And it is the angels - the cinema - that is cited here as a force capable of removing doubts, that holds the promise of answers, if only the audience were less blind: Wenders' cinema - the messenger - has lost its audience and recipient to the pace of modern-day life, and has become near to irrelevant. The audience has lost a mode of vision, which the angel can provide. Cassiel bemoans his spiritual existence: "*Allein bleiben! Geschehen lassen! Ernst bleiben! ... Nichts weiter tun als anschauen, sammeln, bezeugen, beglaubigen, wahren! Geist bleiben! Im Abstand bleiben! Im Wort bleiben!*"¹⁸³ The activities of the angels seem senseless when described in this way: though they continue to collect their records of occurrences from day to day, they can make no use of their note-taking, other

than for self-reflection. Cassiel's sentiments bare a striking resemblance to Wenders' own verdict on his work until 1982. Speaking after the making of *Paris, Texas* in 1984, Wenders alludes to Cassiel's words when he claims to have made "...quite a number of films that were more concerned with reflecting themselves than reflecting anything that exists apart from movies. And I think that's a really serious dead end for something that I love very much, which is movies."¹⁸⁴

It is this lack of effectiveness and loss of relevance that seems to weigh heavily on Damiel's conscience. This perceived impotence is expressed diegetically in one of the sequences shot in Berlin's *Staatsbibliothek* when we can listen in to the mental reading of one of the readers, the 'Zweiter Lesender', as he reads from a book about Walter Benjamin's purchase in 1921 of Paul Klee's water-colour, *Angelus Novus*. Benjamin interprets the water-colour in his text *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* as an allegory of a glance back at history, "*Rückblick auf die Geschichte*".¹⁸⁵ Of the painting, Benjamin says:

Ein Engel ist darauf dargestellt, der aussieht, als wäre er im Begriff, sich von etwas zu entfernen, worauf er starrt. Seine Augen sind aufgerissen, sein Mund steht offen und seine Flügel sind ausgespannt. Der Engel der Geschichte muß so aussehen. Er hat das Antlitz der Vergangenheit zugewendet. Wo eine Kette von Begebenheiten vor uns erscheint, da sieht er eine einzige Katastrophe, die unablässige Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. Er möchte wohl verweilen, die Toten wecken und das Zerschlagene zusammenfügen. Aber ein Sturm weht vom Paradies her, der sich in seinen Flügeln verfangen hat und so stark ist, daß der Engel sie nicht mehr schließen kann.¹⁸⁶

The desire to find ways of gaining new relevance will eventually lead to Damiel surrendering his spiritual existence in return for experience of the human world. His motives and sources of temptation are many. During the first meeting with Cassiel, he expresses the desire to give his existence some relevance:

Es ist herrlich, nur geistig zu leben und Tag für Tag für die Ewigkeit von den Leuten rein, was geistig ist, zu bezeugen - aber manchmal wird mir meine ewige geistige Existenz zuviel. Ich möchte dann nicht mehr so ewig drüberschweben, ich möchte ein Gewicht an mir spüren, das die Grenzenlosigkeit an mir aufhebt und mich erdfest macht. Ich möchte bei jedem Schritt oder Windstoß "Jetzt", und "Jetzt" und "Jetzt" sagen können

und nicht wie immer "seit je" und "in Ewigkeit". (...) Die ganze Zeit, wenn wir schon einmal mittaten, war es doch nur zum Schein. (...) Nicht, daß ich ja gleich ein Kind zeugen oder einen Baum pflanzen möchte, aber es wäre doch schon etwas, (...) sich nicht immer nur am Geist begeistern, sondern endlich an einer Malzeit, einer Nackenlinie, ... einem Ohr. (...) Oder endlich zu spüren, wie es ist, unter dem Tisch die Schuhe auszuziehen und die Zehen auszustrecken, barfuß, so.¹⁸⁷

Damiel's subjective postulation is that closer contact to the physical world - more than just observing objects and events - is a solution to the crisis of irrelevance and ineffectuality. His world is, if not purely spiritual, the world of non-material perception (light, shadow and thought) and he makes the decision to join the human world partly in order to gain experience of physical matter. This desire is illustrated in a sequence in Marion's caravan. Damiel follows Marion from the circus tent to her trailer, listening all the time to her thoughts. In the caravan Damiel turns his back on Marion to pick up and fondle a stone that is lying on a table. He can, however, only pick up its likeness, the stone itself remains on the table. He turns it over, tosses it in his hands as if trying to feel its weight and texture whilst Marion, sitting on her bed, begins to undress behind him. He turns around and, still holding the image of the stone in his hand, traces the line of Marion's neck and shoulder with his finger, which alludes to Damiel's earlier reference to "*Nackelinie*" and "*Ohr*".¹⁸⁸ (still 79) In the final moments of his angels' existence, similarly, he grasps the stone that he took from Marion's caravan in his hand. He looks forward to being able to sense the weight and texture of the stone, and not just carry its image.

The figure of Peter Falk, who plays himself, is a second source of temptation for Damiel. An ex-angel, Falk can sense Damiel's presence and addresses him by a snack booth. He extols the merits of everyday sensations enjoyed by humans such as coffee-drinking, cigarette-smoking and hand-rubbing on a cold day. These are then among the first actions Damiel performs after becoming human.

But Falk inspires Damiel in another way, in a more direct parallel to cinema: Falk is a hobby artist and draws portraits of the actors he works with on the set of his war movie production in Berlin - the reason for his presence in the city. When he first senses and

addresses Damiel, he describes how, in drawing, a dark line and a light line together make "a good line". (stills 80-82) Light and dark - or light and shadow - being the component of the cinematic and photographic image, have a strong thematic presence in other films: Robert and Bruno's silhouetted mime performance at the school in *Im Lauf der Zeit*, and the painter in *Der Stand der Dinge*, who locates the essence of physical appearance in the contrasts and contradictions between the light and the dark: "in nature everything's either - *hell und dunkel* - *dadurch kriegt alles Form*". What the artist says of painting is perhaps more a feature of filmic and photographic images, due to the technical procedures involved in their production, particularly if manipulation is excluded from this process. an ex-angel, Falk is able - literally - to make a mark with his drawing, which is another aspect in which Falk, the human, differs from Damiel, the angel. Just as Damiel has no access to the physical world, his activities are in vain since he has no audience. If Damiel is invisible to most humans, then he - possessor and purveyor of a pure, unmanipulated vision - is unable to make a mark amongst them. Seen this way, this sequence is an further illustration of Damiel's and Wenders' perceived impotence as 'guardians of the sacred image'. In a library sequence involving a pencil - an instrument of inscription - the notes to the script of *Der Himmel über Berlin* suggest that Damiel feels this impotence as a physical or emotional pain: "*Damiels Hand kommt ins Bild und greift nach einem weißen Stift auf dem Schreibtisch. Der 'Stift selbst' bleibt liegen, Damiel entwendet nur 'das Abbild'*".¹⁸⁹ (still 83) Shortly afterwards: "*Damiel legt den Bleistift in seinen Schoß. Ein Schmerz erfaßt ihn (vielleicht der, diesen Stift nicht 'wirklich' halten zu können?) und er hält sich an der Brüstung hinter ihm fest.*"¹⁹⁰ (still 84) Both figures - Marion and Falk - are cast as figures who's activities entice Damiel into his decision to surrender his armour and become a human. Maybe the most significant aspect of their characterisation in this sense is that both figures - the artist and real-life actor Peter Falk, and the trapeze artist Marion - work with their bodies, and both are able to make a mark amongst their audiences.

A simple but very calculated form of suture is at work throughout *Der Himmel über Berlin*, that has implications for the development of the narrative as well as for the

exploitation of the film image itself as an instrument for viewer manipulation. Like conventional forms of suture, it is based on the aligning and emotional interweaving of audience identification with one of the main protagonists - in this case Damiel.

Though it can be argued that, as Damiel is unfamiliar with human emotions, it is impossible for the spectator to identify with him on an emotional level merely through the presentation of events from Damiel's subjective point of view, the regular alternation between subjective and objective/independent camera - especially during the first minutes of the film - encourages the development of an independent spectator position towards the situation of the angel as understood in terms of human emotions: the independent point of view distances the spectator from the angel at regular intervals, except when it constitutes a part of a conventional shot/reverse-shot mechanism, which has the function of reinforcing the spectator's identification with Damiel's point of view. This means that the emotions that develop independently within the spectator are separate to those experienced by the angel, though the calculated manipulation of audience point of view ensures that they do, at times, coincide. This is, for instance, a condition necessary for the development in the spectator of sexual desire in connection with the figure of Marion - which Damiel logically cannot experience - in parallel to the angel's actual emotions: desire for experience of the physical world, which Marion represents for him, and which the spectator logically cannot experience. The trigger for the parallel development of different emotions in both angel and spectator is Marion.

Damiel is dissatisfied with his inability to engage in the world of physical existence. Similarly, the fragmentary nature of the audio and visual information available to the spectator ensures the development of a comparable feeling of dissatisfaction at being unable to detect significance in the scraps of information offered in the form of the angel's perception. While the angel begins to show signs of frustration due to his impotence regarding his exclusion from events, the spectator's frustration is based in a similar impotence stemming from the lack of a logical sequence of events, or of recognisable signs of a story - for instance through psychological motivation - during the first half of the film that could allow him to master and make sense of the developments

on the screen. Where a desire for increased subjective relevance wells up in the angel, the spectator develops a subjective desire for relevance in the sequence of events on the screen. Because the hero confesses his impotence, and because he is a fantasy figure, identification with him is out of the question: it is rather the case that the spectator, distanced from the main character by the absence of a coherent sequence to the events, develops an independent point of view, to identify, that is, with himself, and with a personal point of view regarding the visual and audio information on the cinema screen. The spectator is more or less left to his own devices, and hopes the events on the screen will soon gain coherence. The activity of looking for some kind of relevance is thus shared by both Damiel and the spectator, though each has different motives for their search.

During this part of the film, there are three events that offer the spectator a semblance of coherence, and so function to hold his attention: the revelation of Damiel's dissatisfaction and his desire to change his situation in his two meetings with Cassiel; the introduction of the familiar film and television star Peter Falk; and the introduction of the figure of Marion, whose inner monologue we follow for a longer period than that of any other figure and who thus gains significance for the spectator because we can make sense of her thinking. Marion's characterisation through her inner monologue and the notes to the script express the nature of her link with Damiel. As a circus angel, whose role is defined in the image she presents to an audience, Marion is linked to the world of objects, of physical matter, from which Damiel is excluded. Her occupation lends her the fictional role of angel/show girl that seems to give her strength and courage. With the announcement that the circus where she works is to close down for the year due to lack of money, the fictional persona of angel and beauty queen that her trapeze act had allowed her to adopt will be lost. The importance of her assumed identity is clear from her declaration during the circus party that she is "*...vergnügt. Ich habe eine Geschichte! Und ich werde weiter eine haben.*"¹⁹¹

Despite this satisfaction, her identity is dependent on forces beyond her control: once the end is spelled out for the circus, she is left alone with her melancholy thoughts,

her inner monologue, in which she expresses her desires. It is only her fictional persona that is relevant in her circus role, which, along with her inner thoughts, exposes an incompleteness to her identity:

Hier bin ich fremd, und trotzdem ist alles so vertraut. Auf jeden Fall kann man sich hier nicht verlaufen, man kommt immer wieder an der Mauer an. Vor einem Fotoautomaten warten, und dann kommt ein Foto mit einem anderen Gesicht heraus (...) Die Angst macht mich krank, weil immer nur ein Teil von mir Angst hat, und der andere nicht daran glaubt. Wie soll ich leben?¹⁹²

A confusion of identity, considered together with her dependence on a fictional identity allows for an interpretation of Marion as a development on the figure of Jane in the previous film, *Paris, Texas*. Like Jane, Marion is a performer who works with her body, and is an object of focus for spectators. In *Paris, Texas*, Wenders attempts to redeem the traditional degraded image of women in cinema, setting the conditions for returning a form of identity lost through the commercialisation of images - particularly of women - through his clear statement that this degradation has occurred, and largely at the hands of male filmmakers. In *Der Himmel über Berlin*, Wenders seems to have been inspired by a figure from German cinematic history - Marlene Dietrich, who appeared as Lola Lola in Josef von Sternberg's *Der Blaue Engel* (1930) - again to make the same statement, and to suggest more concretely that cinema is capable of effecting this kind of redemption. Apart from the very implicative link with Wenders' angels in the title of von Sternberg's film, and the similarity of the names Marlene and Marion, Dietrich's role as cabaret artist who is "*von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt ... und sonst gar nichts*" suggests the identification of Marion as Dietrich's modern-day equivalent for whom "*Manchmal das einzige Wichtige: schön zu sein, und sonst gar nichts*"¹⁹³ is more than mere speculation. Like Lola Lola, Marion (Marlene) works with her body in a show and becomes the object of male desire. Both figures appear in similarly revealing costumes, and Marion's melancholy is another sign of the relation with her recluse ancestor:

Ewigkeit habe ich darauf gewartet, daß jemand ein liebes Wort zu mir sagt. Dann bin ich ins Ausland gefahren. Jemand, der sagen würde: "Heute lieb' ich dich so sehr." Ach, was wär' das schön! Ich brauch' nur den Kopf zu heben, und die Welt geht auf vor meinen Augen, steigt mir ins Herz.¹⁹⁴

Contrary to Roger Cook's view that Marion assumes a significant role for the spectator much later,¹⁹⁵ it is clear from her interior monologue, which aligns her desire with Damiel's, and the fact that this is the first time Damiel follows one of the many individuals he watches and listens to, that she will be of more consequence to the narrative. Marion's text "*Als ich ein Kind war, wollte ich auf einer Insel leben*"¹⁹⁶ reminds the spectator of the film's opening lines, the beginning of the poem that frames almost the entire film, and which are not only spoken by Damiel but also hand written by Peter Handke: "*Als das Kind Kind war, ging es mit hängenden Armen, wollte, der Bach sei ein Fluß, der Fluß sei ein Strom und diese Pfütze das Meer...*",¹⁹⁷ and is the first time the spectator can forge a link in the disconnectedness of the film's opening fifteen minutes. For the first time, the spectator's desire for coherence aligns itself fully with Damiel's desire for relevance, for it is also the first time that the object of his desire seems within reach and that his desire equates with earthly concerns that the spectator can recognise.

Another feature of the first sequences with Marion is the sudden use of colour film stock. Where black and white is usually used to signify the presence of an angel, or when the point of view is that of an angel, the colour image signifies the opposite. The choice of colour for Marion's first appearance in *Der Himmel über Berlin* solicits a reaction in the spectator in connection with Marion: she appears in the revealing costume she uses for her circus performances, and is without question a beautiful sight after the greyness of everyday Berlin, particularly so in the colourful images. For this reason, her very appearance situates Marion as an iconic object of visual attraction for the spectator, which can be of a sexual nature in a male spectator. At the very least, the use of colour film stock provokes the spectator to question the motives for the sudden change, and to begin attentively looking for explanations and connections. **(still 85)** This and the fact that Marion appears as a pseudo-angel with wings additionally points towards a connection between her and Damiel, possibly the beginning of a story. In this way, Marion's function as a figure who arouses more curiosity and expectation in the spectator than did the established routine of following Damiel's flight around the city of

Berlin takes effect at precisely the same moment as does her function as the main figure to tempt Daniel into surrendering his existence.

Whether or not Dietrich in *Der Blaue Engel* was a model for the characterisation of Marion, her "*Sehnsucht nach eine Welle von Liebe*"¹⁹⁸ is answered by Daniel's *liebvollen Blick*¹⁹⁹ that respects and values the identity of people and objects, has universal knowledge and is capable of seeing things 'as they are'. Like the semi-pornographic images featuring women in *Paris, Texas*, the disparity between Marion's outer appearance - which she displays as the show girl in *Der Himmel über Berlin* - and her inner identity - of which Daniel has knowledge - is the source of her inner conflict. Daniel's (cinema's) exclusive access, through the purity of his perceptual abilities and his knowledge, to Marion's inner self suggests to the spectator that a union between him and Marion will be one of reciprocals, and that such a union is the desired next step in the film. Such a union can only come about if Daniel takes the decision to surrender his angelic status to become a human. The figure of Homer (Curt Bois) provides the key to understanding the nature of such a union, and expresses the hopes Wenders has for cinema as a medium capable of redeeming its relevance.

Kolker and Beicken's assertion that Wenders appears to be on an "endless, quasi mystical search for the appeasing and accepting father - his real father ... and a search, finally, for the accepting and guiding fathers of world cinema"²⁰⁰ is supported by Wenders' treatment of the older generation after *Paris, Texas*. But rather than acceptance and appeasement, the search began with a rejection of the fatherly generation: Winter in *Alice in den Städten* might have turned to his family when he ran out of money on the search for Alice's grandmother; his parents are deceased in *Im Lauf der Zeit*, the family home is a ruin and Robert Lander refuses his father the opportunity to speak when he sees him, saying "*Ihm habe ich mein ganzes Leben zugehört*"; Travis, through recognising that he had become what his own father had been in *Paris, Texas*, re-acquires language and the ability to act to make good his errors and, with this move, becomes the first of Wenders' characters to directly tackle his relationship with his father through recognition.

After *Paris, Texas*, Wenders' casting of older male figures in his films evolved into the recognition that their knowledge and experience can be instructive, a thing of value and guidance. Wenders describes Homer in *Der Himmel über Berlin* as "...weder Engel noch Mensch, sondern beides zugleich, denn er ist so alt wie das Kino."²⁰¹ Likewise, in *Bis ans Ende der Welt*, Wenders was interested in Doctor Henry Farber's invention as an instrument that shows "...das, was er aus den Köpfen seiner mit ihm lebenden Vorfahren 'herausziehen' kann. Das wird dann eine deutsche Geschichte von den dreißiger Jahren bis zum Jahr 2000."²⁰² The late Heinz Rühmann plays the part of Konrad in *In Weiter Ferne, so Nah*, Samuel Fuller, already present in *Der Stand der Dinge*, appears again in *The End of Violence*. The ageing musicians that make up the Salsa band "*Buena Vista Social Club*" in the film of the same name are the latest in this row of ageing male characters to whom Wenders has turned in later years. Bois, Rühmann and Fuller are chattering, reminiscing old men whose tales, whether filmic or oral, have contributed to the documentation of the twentieth century.

The figure of Homer in *Der Himmel über Berlin* may be described as the "divinely inspired voice of narration who incorporates the spirit of human experience from the old epics to the most recent tales of historic events ... the representative and bearer of collective memory, the spirit of history ... the spirit of Berlin..."²⁰³ or the "...blind poet, a man of words..."²⁰⁴ but he is also, quite simply, an old man who rambles on about the past. Like the Homer of the classics, Wenders' Homer represents a document that consists of nothing more than the verbal communication of this experience and his views on them, a document that is held in the present. As such, the figure of the old man is, for the first time in Wenders' oeuvre, a figure of authority and invaluable experience. Wenders' own teachers were not those of the Munich *Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen*, rather the old masters of the German cinema, Fritz Lang and F.W. Murnau, or the Hollywood directors Nicholas Ray and John Ford, amongst others, and not least the Japanese director Yasujiro Ozu. Importantly, in 1967, these were all figures who were either already deceased or no longer significantly active. Figures, that is, who had

an entire life behind them, an experience which authorises them as witnesses of their time, to qualify them as narrators.

In *Der Himmel über Berlin*, we first see Homer on the landing of the Berlin *Staatsbibliothek*, which also seems to serve as some kind of home or gathering point for the angels. As his name and his monologues would suggest, Homer represents the collective memory of Berlin and the world beyond, the "...ewiger Dichter"²⁰⁵ who keeps alive the myths of his time passing them down to his listeners through the generations. In interview with Wolfgang Schütte in 1982, Wenders expresses his view that, ever since Homer (the author), stories have served to satisfy a need for coherence in the face of the growing interchangability of visual impressions:

... im Kino will Geschichten-Erzählen auch ein Wiedererkennen provozieren und durch die Form eine Ordnung in die Kakophonie von Eindrücken bringen. Das Bedürfnis für Geschichten, seit Homer, den ich jetzt lese, ist doch auch: zu hören, daß man Zusammenhänge herstellen kann. Es gibt ein Bedürfnis nach Zusammenhängen, weil die Menschen ja eigentlich wenig Zusammenhängendes erleben. Dabei nehmen die 'Eindrücke' ja immer stärker, geradezu inflationär, zu. Deshalb denke ich, daß das Bedürfnis nach Geschichten eher größer wird, weil es da jemand gibt, der erzählt, der das ordnet und die Idee reinbringt: Man hat noch Eingriff auf sein eigenes Leben. Das tun ja Geschichten: Sie bestätigen, daß man kompetent ist, daß man sein Leben bestimmt.²⁰⁶

Wenders' first idea had been to cast Bois as an old archangel, but he and Handke were inspired by a reproduction of Rembrandt's Homer that hung on Handke's wall. The picture had been cut into two halves separating Homer from his listeners "... so daß er jetzt alleine redet."²⁰⁷ Thus, in the film, Homer warns:

Wenn ich jetzt aufgebe, dann wird die Menschheit ihren Erzähler verlieren. Und hat die Menschheit einmal ihren Erzähler verloren, so hat sie auch ihre Kindschaft verloren. ...Nennt mir die Männer und Frauen und Kinder, die mich suchen werden, mich, ihren Erzähler, Vorsänger und Tonangeber, weil sie mich brauchen, wie sonst nichts auf der Welt.²⁰⁸

The narrator, in the shape of Homer, has lost his relevance in essentially the same way as Daniel: he too has lost his audience and acknowledges the fact of his listeners' absence and the deficient relationship between them and the texts that have replaced his function: "*Meine Zuhörer sind mit der Zeit zu Lesern geworden, und sie sitzen nicht*

mehr im Kreis, sondern für sich, und einer weiß nichts vom anderen"²⁰⁹. Homer, too, is looking for a new way to continue the "*Epos des Friedens (...) Was ist denn am Frieden, daß er nicht auf die Dauer begeistert und daß von ihm kaum erzählen läßt?*"²¹⁰ Because of the disaffection of Homer's listeners (due, presumably, to the invention of the book and of printing technology) and the nature of his resulting frustration, he can be understood as a parallel to the filmmaker.

Damiel's (cinema's) qualities - his caring glance and his role as eternal observer cite him as the candidate capable of continuing Homer's *Epos des Friedens*. But to reach an audience, to assume Homer's role, he must first become a human. One of the most significant side-effects of Damiel's leap into humanity is the change in the way he experiences time. Indeed, the first consequence of Damiel's fall is the loss of his angelic invulnerability represented by his armour breastplate, and his passage into a finite temporal dimension. As an angel, able to transcend the time barrier, Damiel experiences time less as a linear flow than as kind of plain on which all of history is gathered as a single event: the angels "...can move back along an infinite time continuum, viewing past moments as if they were the present."²¹¹ As a human, Damiel loses his function as contemplative observer and recorder of history, which he bemoans during his first meeting with Cassiel. The term *Ewig(keit)* features three times in his speech, always in a negative context, as do the terms *geistig*, *Grenzenlosigkeit* and *seit je*. Conversely, he expresses the desire to say "*Jetzt*", *und "Jetzt" und "Jetzt"* as a positive concept suggesting that, like Marion, Damiel would like to have boundaries, whether temporal or spatial, to realise his aim of reaching something palpable. This is, indeed, the condition Damiel enters when he becomes human. The new linear temporal dimension he enters thus furnishes Damiel with a structure that orders events sequentially, binding them within a coherent form that has finite boundaries. That these characteristics are also attributes both of story and of Homer's narrative, together with the new capacity to reach an audience, clearly suggests the sentiment that cinema, represented here by Damiel, will only be suited to continuing Homer's *Epos des Friedens* if it is a cinema capable of

narration: a narrative cinema. In interview in 1988, Wenders concisely expresses this desire for stories and the structure they can provide in film:

No, it's not really nostalgia, [storytelling] is almost this new discovery for me. It is one of the most reassuring things. It seems its very basis is that it reassures you that there is a sense to things. Like the fact that children want to hear stories when they go to sleep. I mean not so much that they want to know this or that, but that they want it as it gives them a security. The story creates a form and the form reassures them so that you can almost tell them any story - which you can actually do. So there is something very powerful in stories, something that gives you security and a sense of identity and meaning. And it seems to me that this sort of storytelling is disappearing a little bit. Because more and more we seem to be getting them from television and movies, and less and less through books. We're confronted with all these films and images and all that, so it seems that storytelling in that old sense, it's not becoming a lost art, but it's getting less important. And the stories we're being fed with mostly in television and film seem just to pretend being stories. Very often they try to act as if they were stories and are really just pure form, and behind there is just a lot of baloney and noise, especially in most of the films made for young people today that only seem to work if there's a lot of action and violence. That has almost replaced an old story structure, so in that sense you're right there is a nostalgia for stories, for real stories and for an epic feeling of a story.²¹²

In *Der Himmel über Berlin* Wenders reinvestigates his valuation of cinema's ability to present an image of physical reality 'photographically', "*weil keine andere Sprache in der Lage ist, von der physischen Realität selbst zu reden.*"²¹³ The dominant trend in commercial cinema that Wenders perceives to consist only of pure form and little content except for highlights, action, violence and sensations can, he states in this film, be countered if the spectator once again learns that mere existence is a real and worthwhile sensation. Damiel's caring glance and simple observation of the environment represents such attentiveness and, as such, is cited as a key to accessing the secret of existence described in Handke's text.²¹⁴ At the same time, Wenders seeks a form for the presentation of his images, which he hopes will satisfy audience demand for coherence in their cinematic experience.

More than in *Paris, Texas*, *Der Himmel über Berlin* remains a fragmentary collections of impressions, without ever seeking to develop a story out of these. The film's episodic structure is linked only by the figure of Damiel, and the forward

movement of the minimalistic plot is based on the development and realisation of his desires, which holds the film together. Each stage of this development, each episode is introduced anew with the reiteration of Damiel's poem beginning with "*Als das Kind Kind war...*". If the development of the plot has any other line to follow, it is an imaginary one that runs between Damiel's companion, Cassiel, a figure who remains in the background and from whom Damiel wants to distance himself, and Marion, who appears up front in the circus ring, and towards whom Damiel wants to move. The 'love story' is used purely as a frame, a recognisable plot element that is there only to satisfy the demands of the spectator for story. With the fulfilment of his desire to become human, Damiel imports his childlike vision - the camera-eye - into life with him, and his visual impressions gain new sequential logical order, as opposed to the previous arbitrariness of his impressions. The conclusion for Wenders is thus less a discovery of story as a positive force than many critics would like to see in this film:²¹⁵ it is merely a more resolute re-affirmation of his consistently held position regarding the role of stories, bluntly expressed by the director Friedrich in *Der Stand der Dinge*: "stories only exist in stories (whereas life goes by without the need to turn into stories)."



Stills 74-76: The reduction in tone and contrast between stills 76 and 77 is obvious in a shot that changes from black and white to colour (stills 75 and 76)



Still 77: Daniel's eye is established as the point of view of the camera



Still 78



Still 79



Still 80



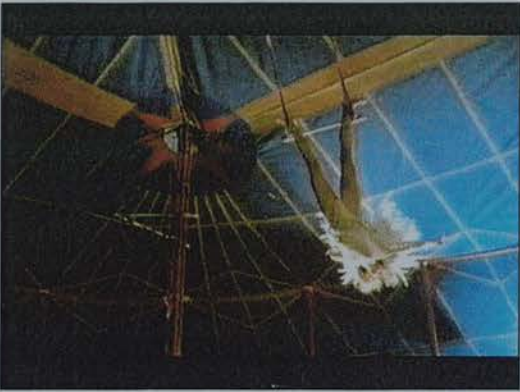
Still 81



Still 82



Stills 83-84: Daniel can only touch the 'image' of things, which is an element of his limitations as representative of cinema



Still 85: The first colour image in Der Himmel über Berlin arouses curiosity in the spectator in association with the figure of Marion

3.v. Lisbon Story.

As we can see from the analysis of the previous films, Wenders exploits the film image as the primary information-bearing device because, being a photographic reproduction of reality, it takes its raw material from a given physical environment in order to emphasise the presence of that environment or of individual objects within it: "[...] *eine Berührung von Haut zu Haut; von sensibler Pellicula und Wirklichkeitskörper.*"²¹⁶ Story, on the other hand, seldom has more importance in Wenders' films than for the provision of a frame in which the images appear. A traditional filmic story, as it does not originate from the act of recording the existence of visual reality, presents a constructed rendition of space, related in a time-frame that is also artificial. Though a filmmaker might attempt, through suture, to convince the spectator of the authenticity of a story, Wenders refuses to accept the information offered by a story as a comparatively authoritative account of events, and correspondingly places the responsibility to transmit information of this kind on the image.

That a story must be plucked from a physical environment if it is not to manipulate the images that convey it, meaning that images must not be forced into telling a story, is a fundamental condition that, for Wenders, makes the difference between an authentic and a degraded image.²¹⁷ In an interview with Peter Jansen in 1989, Wenders expresses his belief that only when each image has something to say in itself does one have the right to place it in conjunction with others to form a whole.²¹⁸ Although Wenders was speaking about images, the same is true of his position on film sound.

Lisbon Story explores the potential in film for sound to act in similar ways as the film image. In the introduction to the script Wenders refers to the pressures which he perceives to threaten the integrity and expressive force of images, and their resulting degradation, to specify his motives for making the film: "We live in a time when the visible aspect is so predominant that sometimes words, sounds and music are able to

strengthen images, to sustain them. The aim of this film is to show that sounds can help things to be seen differently."²¹⁹

One technique Wenders employs to promote the expressive force of sound, and which can be evidenced not only in *Lisbon Story*, but in all of his films, is a relative autonomy of the sound track from the image. In this, Wenders' position is a development on the film-ideological debate among the Soviet directors Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov in 1928, in which they advocate a contrapuntal use of sound in film, maintaining that sound should operate as a separate montage element instead of simply underlining the image.

Sound, treated as a new montage element (as a factor divorced from the visual image), will inevitably introduce new means of enormous power to the expression and solution of the most complicated tasks that now oppress us with the impossibility of overcoming them by means of an imperfect film method, working only with visual images.²²⁰

Walter Ruttmann was following a similar line to the Soviets contemporaneously. Writing in the *Reichsfilmblatt* in September 1928, Ruttmann described a possible future role for sound in film of simply supporting the image as a fundamental error:

Der Tonfilm hat nicht etwa die Aufgabe, dem stummen Film die Zunge zu lösen. (...) Kontrapunkt, optisch-akustischer Kontrapunkt muß die Grundlage aller tonfilmischen Gestaltung sein. Der Kampf zwischen Bild und Ton, ihr Spielen miteinander, ihre zeitweise Verschmelzung, die sich wieder löst, um von neuem gegeneinander zu agieren, - das sind die Möglichkeiten.²²¹

Such separation of sound from image, and the resulting autonomy that the film sound enjoys, can potentiate an inversion of the traditional subordination of sound to image in film, a concept sustained by Béla Balázs and, more recently, by John Belton. A noise, writes Balázs, sounds different if it is perceived together with its physiognomy, its image.²²² The image typically dominates over sound in terms of its ability to convince the listener/spectator of the authenticity of the object perceived due, according to Balázs, to sound's status as an attribute of the image.²²³ If the source of a sound is not visible,

the listener seeks an image that corresponds to the sound with which to associate it. When the source of the sound becomes visible, the listener transcends initial doubts caused by the lack of a corresponding image, testing the sound and image together against reality. A sound alone, Belton agrees, lacks "...'objectivity' (thus authenticity) not only because it is invisible but because it is an attribute and is thus incomplete in itself. Sound achieves authenticity only as a consequence of its submission to tests imposed upon it by other senses - primarily by sight".²²⁴

Regarded as an element separate from the image, Wenders rarely uses sound simply to accompany the image unless it is ambient sound or, significantly, music.²²⁵ Rarely are sounds synchronised with the images simply to increase the impression and illusion of presence. Instead, Wenders insists that sound is more articulate than just acting as an alibi for the image. The image may say one thing, but the sound can say another, or, can say something else about the subject of the image. In allowing the sound tracks of his films a significant degree of autonomy from the images, Wenders hopes that sounds will be heard and respected in their own right, so contributing to the amount and quality of the information his films can offer to the spectators.

One episode of *Im Lauf der Zeit* illustrates this complete separation of sound and image within a single sequence for the communication of information. Robert discovers a grieving man in a grain silo and invites him to enter the lorry he and Bruno are travelling in. Sitting down, he tells Robert the story of how the accident occurred, that he suspects suicide and implicates himself as the cause of his wife's death. Inter-cut into this sequence are shots of Bruno in the cab of the lorry, who overhears the man's story. When the man has finished, Winter quietly leaves the lorry to inspect the crash scene. He opens the door of the car and closely examines the driver's seat where, presumably, the man's wife had died earlier the same day. Here, the soundtrack conveys information about the accident and the man's reactions, his psychological state, through his oral communication of the incident to Robert. Already with an image of the scene in our minds, the camera shows us the images of the crash scene through Bruno's eyes, and his psychological reactions to what he sees and what he has heard through the wall of his

truck. The images are shown separately from, and later than, the soundtrack informs the spectator of events. The fact that the images, which ought to correspond to the man's story, are seen through the filter of Bruno's vision and understanding means that the sequence of images gains a new dimension through the use of sound. We see two different reactions to the same event, a subjective and an objective reaction. (stills 86-88)

This non-synchronic use of sound has the effect of abstracting the simple fact of the occurrence of the accident, making the scene one of many facets, not just the image with an accompanying sound-track. The sound tells one man's story of the accident, while the image shows Bruno's experience of the same event. Blurring the point of view here significantly adds to and enriches the narrative information conveyed than would be the case if sound and image were synchronised, acting in unison.

A second such example is the film *Der Himmel über Berlin*. Of the first sixty minutes of the film about 90 per cent of verbal communication consists of the inner monologues of the many figures that appear before the camera. Thereafter the inner monologues make up about 50% of verbal communication. This offers the spectator information about the inner states of the respective figures, while the image shows us these figures and their physical environment: the city of Berlin. Here, the inner monologues of the Berliners tell us one thing separate from, but related to, the information conveyed by the images, just as the man's story in *Im Lauf der Zeit* offers his mental and verbal reaction to an event later shown in images. But in each case the sound informs us of a psychological condition, while the image provides visual information about the figures concerned and their physical environment. The audience is shown, and is offered reactions to what it is shown through the sound, which simultaneously encourages the formation in the spectator of an independent point of view regarding the events shown. The sound track helps life in Berlin to be seen and understood differently from the picture offered by the images of the city alone. The texts spoken by the many figures as inner monologues could well exist independently, and must be closely listened to. Rather than contributing to the completeness of the film's

images, Handke's texts add information on a level parallel to the information offered by the image,²²⁶ and must be listened to as closely as the image in order to receive all the narrative information the film offers.

This use of sound has significance for the modern cinematic experience, for it is an attempt at maximising the amount of information the spectator receives. If sound is synchronised - a car drives past and you hear the noise of its engine, the tyres, etc. the picture is so completely empirical that the sound is as much as possible invisible: it is beyond doubt that it is generated by the subject of the image. The sound, in this case, underlines the image, which contributes only to the concreteness of the image. It is an attribute of the subject of the image. The sound tracks mentioned above in connection with *Im Lauf der Zeit* and *Der Himmel über Berlin* do not have directly corresponding images. Sound and image form a kind of audio-visual collage. The two levels only meet in that they complement one another. When the sound heard together with an image is not generated by the subject of the image, then the sound can instead be used to add additional information.

This affects the process of storytelling in the following ways: because no coherent story is offered by the film the audience is discouraged from identifying with any character who controls the development of events. Character identification is not a question in either of the two scenes above. A traditional story, of the type we would expect in dominant cinema, would conversely present the given accounts of events as the only accounts possible, in order that the audience does not lose the thread of the story, and that the story can near its conclusion. Here, however, the audience is made conscious of the fact that the account of events shown is *an* account instead of *the* account. This is brought about through the use of distancing devices that discourage character identification, through the breaking-down of the illusion of reality. This in turn is achieved through the division of sound and image, and the elevation of these to the primary information-bearing devices in the film.

The inversion of the order of dominance of image over sound increases the relevance of film sound as an independently working expressive device, and overturns Belton's claim that sounds "lack objectivity". The idea of conferring a greater responsibility on sound as an information carrier seems to have interested Wenders from the very beginning, during his days as a film critic. Almost without exception, he constantly and repeatedly links his emotions with the music in a film rather than with the film itself, or he finds music which expresses the emotions he feels about an unconnected film. His critique of Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper's film *Easy Rider* (1969) is a good example of this early trend: "*In Easy Rider sind die Filmbilder schon überflüssig, weil sie seine Musik nur noch illustrieren, nicht mehr umgekehrt, nur noch Relikte einer Anschaulichkeit sind, die sich in der Musik viel stärker ausgebreitet hat als in den Bildern...*"²²⁷

Wenders attempts the same inversion of the sound/image balance in one of his early films, *Drei amerikanische LPs*. Here, he contrasts the flat images of the Munich suburbs with contemporary American rock music in the sound track, while he and Peter Handke talk about the music that is playing. Their conversation focuses on the effect of the music on the images, and how American rock music is suited to Wenders' utopian idea of cinema because it is also "... *eine sichtbare Musik, die hörbar ist und sichtbar zugleich. Und deshalb kann man sie wirklich als eine Filmmusik bezeichnen*". Music accentuates the visible here, allowing the visual world to appear differently. The music is as 'visible' as the images, but the images convey a sense of emptiness, sombreness, and the music is full of utopian emotive force. The images seem either randomly put together or chosen for the music. The music and the commentary are the only things that bind together the fragmentary atmosphere in the images. We do not know whether the music is there for the images or the other way around. Just as in the other early films, the images in *Drei amerikanische LPs* are purely contemplative, therefore do not attempt to carry meaning, but to show. The combination with American rock music then fills the empty images with a contrasting mood that makes the conditions of life in the Munich suburbs transparent. Here, as in *Im Lauf der Zeit*, the soundtrack contributes to the

complete picture that Wenders' film presents us because it adds a mood, or information of a different kind to that offered in the images of the film. The main contribution of the music in *3 amerikanische LPs* that Wenders identifies in the commentary is 'emotion': the music is '*Anschaulicher*', providing exactly that which Wenders feels is missing in the images and, perhaps, in his experience of the Munich suburbs.

In *Lisbon Story* Wenders effectively challenges Balázs' position regarding the subordination of sound to image, by implicitly emphasising the latter's distinction between the chaotic noises of everyday life, and the sound that is isolated from the "chaos of shapeless noise by accepting it as expression, significance and meaning..."²²⁸ The very same Philip Winter from *Alice in den Städten* returns as a sound technician in *Lisbon Story*. Called to Lisbon by a friend who needs help with the soundtrack of the film, it is Winter's job in Lisbon to explore the city looking not for the various sights, but into its acoustic landscape in search of the sounds that the city generates.

One of Winter's first discoveries is *Madredeus*, the Portuguese folk band that features in the film as they are recording the song *Ainda*. As Teresa, the vocalist, sings, Winter watches her shadow, cast on the wall in a pool of white light. **(still 89)** In the first place, here, such a degree of separation is achieved between sound and image that the usual subordination of sound is inverted. The image of Teresa's shadow (a negative image because it is a shadow) seems almost like an attribute of the music, which contrasts with sound's more usual status as an attribute of the image. The individual band members are indistinguishable in the dark blue light of the recording studio, but the sound rings crisply and clearly. **(still 90)**

Secondly, the fact that Wenders uses his band both diegetically and non-diegetically in *Lisbon Story* (*Madredeus* are seen performing live, recording the music for both Friedrich's and Wenders' films) contributes to the autonomy of the music soundtrack. They are presented as a group of musicians who have a unity and an existence outside the context of the film, which one would normally expect from a documentary rather than from a feature film. Their music illustrates the city not the images of the film. Two

out of the four songs they perform in the film are about Lisbon: *Tejo*, the name of the city's river,²²⁹ and *Alfama*, the ancient district where Friedrich, Winter's friend, lives. In this way, the film's music adds expression, significance and meaning to the film, rather than to the images. The songs are neither cut nor dissolved when they finish, but are respected as pieces. At the end of the recording session, Teresa even hands Winter the digital audio cassette containing the soundtrack for both Wenders' and Friedrich's films. The soundtrack of the film is concretely seen to be a physically separate entity to the film. The music, because it appears in its own right rather than functioning to underline the film's images, can be considered to bring an "extra" quality to the film. This goes both for Friedrich's and for Wenders' film, *Lisbon Story*, for which the band provides the same music.

Beyond the use of music in *Lisbon Story* the sounds Winter records and improvises in Lisbon are also thematically dealt with in a way that makes their physical separation from the image apparent. The question of sound's relation with images and stories is dealt with mainly in Winter's encounters with the children who live in Lisbon's ancient quarters. The first to appear is Ze who, at fourteen years, is the oldest of the tribe of children. Expecting to find sounds amongst Winter's equipment, Ze opens one of the cases but complains that there are no sounds. These are just the instruments for making them, but to the child's simplistic understanding it is a question of not yet being able to visualise the sounds. To satisfy his doubt Winter confirms this point with a word play, using a terminology normally reserved for the visual world to make reference to the traditional audio-visual order of dominance: "I'll show you."²³⁰ A similar example of how the language of vision is used to refer to sound is when Friedrich points out Ricardo to Winter saying, "Can't you see, he's mute."²³¹

Winter's display of his sound effects is a sequence that reminds us that sound, too, can be a source of charm and wonder in the cinema. He prepares his equipment out of sight of the children and improvises the sounds of a galloping horse, a burning fire, an egg being fried and a lion roaring. He encourages the children to build a story from what they hear, which they do through imaginative visualisation. They are not told what to

hear, and make up their own story by visualising in their minds the sounds they are given. The children are free to interpret the sounds Winter improvises as they like, and are not forced towards a predetermined conclusion by them. The story and images rise out of the sounds themselves and from within the children's collective imagination. The sounds act only as a trigger provoking imaginative activity. In a similar sequence later, Winter is alone with one of the children, Beta. Both have a set of headphones and listen to the city which neither can see. Again, the child identifies what she hears. **(stills 91-92)**

Wenders considers an equal potential to exist for sound to present an accurate acoustic, or 'audio-graphic', image of the physical world as the film image. Allowing sound to realise its full expressive force without necessarily corresponding to a visual referent requires, in film, a significant degree of spatial or temporal separation and autonomy from the image, sometimes even a complete autonomy. That this can go so far as to effect an inversion of sound's status as an attribute of the image is confirmed in the film for Winter by one of the verses he reads by the Portuguese writer/philosopher Fernando Pessoa who, like Winter, works with his eyes closed. "In some place on the inside of my eyelids, I see nothing but Lisbon with its houses of many colours ... In broad daylight even the sounds shine." "I have wanted, like sounds, to live by things and not be theirs ... I listen without looking and so see".²³²

In turning his microphone on the city of Lisbon, Winter and Wenders perform the very same role of isolating individual sounds from the "chaos of shapeless noise" that Balázs describes in his writings, sounds that can potentially give rise to an image or initiate a story. Winter's directional microphone 'looks' carefully, isolating the individual sounds that set this city apart from just any city, and that one would not immediately associate with a corresponding image, but as sounds alone: First, the sound of church bells which, in a catholic country always carry a message of birth, of death, of marriage or simply a call to mass. They are part of the jumble of noises that every city generates, but only in their absence would they seem suddenly and uncomfortably conspicuous. Next, an arguing couple is isolated from the acoustic environment, then the

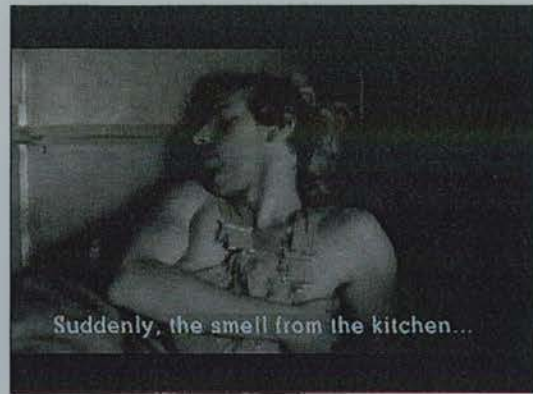
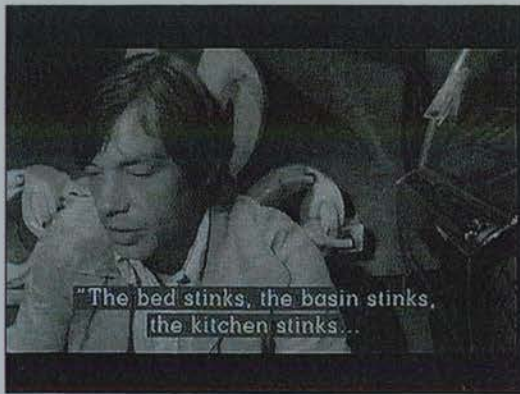
sound of a child singing and the running footsteps and lively, chattering voices of other children on the way to school. Finally, we hear the sound of pigeons taking flight: what would a city be without them? Through this activity Wenders is essentially involving the spectator in the same game as the children earlier: listening to, identifying and respecting sounds that exist in a real physical environment to which we have gained access via the film *Lisbon Story*. This is a function of film sound that corresponds to that of the image in Wenders' aesthetic.

Due to the several direct references to silent cinema in *Lisbon Story*, it is more than mere speculation to assume a connection between Wenders' application of sound in this film and the conventions of sound in the days before it became a technical reality in film. Although early cinema is referred to as silent, films would almost always be accompanied by live music because it had not yet developed the technology to record sound as part of the production process. Speech was communicated through intertitles. Since the advent of sound, however, it has never again been subject to such a degree of separation from the image. This is true not only in the physical sense, but also in the sense that the music for a film was often unscripted, improvised by the musicians at the performance. For his film *Man with a Movie Camera*, for example, to which Wenders dedicates *Lisbon Story*, Dziga Vertov gave only instructions for the type of music he desired for each sequence. This four page document was then distributed to three composers engaged by the *Sovkino Council of Music* for the preparation of orchestral cue-sheets for the first projection in April 1929. Only much later was an official musical script prepared for the film.²³³

In *Lisbon Story*, the direct allusions to the silent era include the use of an aperture to dissolve shots and sequences; the Portuguese director Manoel de Oliveira imitates Chaplin who, even after the invention of sound, preferred to work without it. **(stills 93-94)** The final slapstick style sequence and the use of the old movie camera further strengthen the link with the silent cinema, but in a very particular way: in the earlier sequence with the children, Winter clasps his headphones onto the old camera as if to furnish it with a hearing capability. **(still 95)** Secondly, in the final sequence, Winter and

Friedrich roam the streets of Lisbon with the old camera, but unlike Vertov's film, which shares the obsession with trams, Friedrich's film is to have a soundtrack. (stills 96-98) As much as *Lisbon Story* is a celebration of *Man with a Movie Camera*, which Vertov describes as the "... first film without subtitles, an international film" that, "with the language of the cinema alone, describes the behaviour of man",²³⁴ Wenders clearly suggests that cinema needs and has benefited from sound without necessarily following the "line of least resistance" that the Soviets had warned of in their manifesto of 1928, and in which the dominant Hollywood cinema decided to find a safe haven for its images where it still lies today, "providing a certain 'illusion' of talking people, of audible objects, etc."²³⁵

The allusions to silent cinema in *Lisbon Story* show that sound can function on a much higher level as a tool of expression. But it would be too much to assume that Wenders favours a return to the aesthetics of silent cinema because, as we see in this film, sound can also be a source of creative expression in modern cinema. As such, the deployment of sound in the silent era serves as a source of inspiration regarding the use of sound in film. Paradoxically, Wenders implies, sound enjoyed its maximum expressive potential at a time when there was no sound in film, when sound, in the form of a musical accompaniment, was a separate entity from the image. Free of its future role of merely supporting image and story in film, sound functioned independently as a generator of meaning, a carrier of information, a source of expression able to 'depict' physical existence in the same way as the image. This is how sound functions in *Lisbon Story*. The film's story is entirely pretextuous, completely lacking a plot of any relevance: the film is about the city of Lisbon, which we are shown in images and in sounds that do not compete with one another for dominance, but coexist within the frame of the story.



Stills 86-88: An audio and a visual impression of a single event are offered through the separation of sound from image in Im Lauf Der Zeit



Still 89



Still 90



Stills 91-92: A girl listens to the sounds picked up by Winter's microphone



Stills 93-94: Manoel de Oliveira imitates Charlie Chaplin



Still 95



Still 96



Still 97



Still 98

Conclusion

As becomes clear from his own disclosures on the subject of the cinema as an institution, Wenders heavily charges cinema and filmmakers with important responsibilities regarding human existential questions such as re-establishing and preserving a sense of stability in the process of identity formation, or the potential for truth in a representation. Such statements are by far the weightiest presence in almost all of his meditations on the subject, and can sometimes leave an impression of puerile idealism. Though these may, in themselves, be more features of a personal moral stance than of any substantial theoretical position on film, they have nevertheless been instrumental in the development of a personal film language, of which a true caring for the medium is a constitutive part.

Wenders' reference, when explaining his motivations for making films, to Balàzs' phenomenological formulation of cinema's responsibility to show things 'as they are'²³⁶ suggests that he perceives an intimate bond to exist between the aesthetic fundamentals of his cinema and the fundamental aesthetic and technical nature of the cinematic medium. In his films, this connection manifests itself in the use of the film image which, like photographic images, permits a maximum possible optical similarity to the appearance of material phenomena in the representation, and of sound, always an attribute of a material phenomenon, but which can exist independently of a corresponding visual referent - as the chief information transmitting devices. Significantly, there is no more to film than image and sound, if one is talking about film's fundamental properties (the same can be said of all audio-visual media).

A further relevant technical and aesthetic characteristic inherent to film (as a descendent of photography) is that it is a recording art or medium (unlike film and photography, not all audio-visual media can be considered to perform recording functions²³⁷). As records of the appearance of material phenomena, film images and sound, once recorded, can persist and be reviewed repeatedly over an extended period of time, making themselves available for viewing even when the recorded subject no longer

exists in the same form. Wenders makes the relevance of this characteristic for his motivations in making films clear, and again describes film's ability to assert the existence of material phenomena using moral terms.²³⁸

These inherent characteristics, however, have not alone been responsible for raising film (and the electronic media) to the most important, most popular, most influential, and most commercialised art form. Film, in the purely technical sense of the word, has had only little to do with cinema's historical success as a leisure activity among the broader public: it is merely the technical basis of the medium. A scientific film, perhaps, can be said to benefit alone from the technical characteristics of film as an adequately developed recording technology. It is nevertheless these characteristics, the primary aesthetic and technical characteristics of film, which Wenders evokes in his references to Balázs and Cézanne above, on which the fundamentals of his own cinema, and the higher purposes he ascribes to it, rest.

But Wenders' oeuvre is much more than a collection of recordings, an archive of images and sounds. Meaning can become attached to any film through its context. Though, for instance, Andy Warhol's film *Sleep* (1964) shows nothing more than a sleeping man for six hours, the film is considered an artistic rather than a scientific study (which it could equally be considered if the film appeared in a scientific context). Had a scientist made *Sleep* for scientific purposes, one would never consider evaluating its power of expression. A.L. Rees would never consider the film to be a "parody of the trance film", or remark that we do not see the man's dreams.²³⁹ Similarly, Wenders would maybe never have described the Lumière brothers' film *L'arrivée d'un train en gare*, as "*ein Wahrheitsmoment*",²⁴⁰ even though it was, in the very highest degree, a product and object of scientific research. The train, the subject of the film, is not the object of research here (as in a scientific film), but the film itself. The difference lies in the context and in the intervention of the directors that caused the film to be made.

Wenders' film *Silver City* goes one step further than Warhol's *Sleep* in this sense because it has a audio track that is unrelated to the visuals. Beyond the universal

necessity of selecting, framing and timing a shot in film, music and visual effects have been added to the images of the film's material phenomena, the Munich suburbs. Equally, the ambient sound has either not been recorded, or it has been removed from the film. To the information both audio and visual tracks provide, and to the connotations these can give rise to, this combination adds a new abstract aspect, which is a product of the filmmaker's active intervention in the representation, and is an element of his aesthetic expression. Even though the audio and visual tracks are more than just physically separated in *Silver City*, the only concrete information the film offers the spectator is of a phenomenological nature (the blinking effect is a visual effect, not a piece of information): how the music sounds, what the Munich suburbs look like, and what is going on there at the time of filming.

Silver City is far from being a documentary film even though it consists of nothing more than a collection of audio and visual recordings. It is an experiment in filmic vision that makes allusions to biological vision as an ideal potential filmic vision. In the same way as in the case of the Lumières', the film is itself the object of examination here, rather than the subjects of the film's images. Defining exactly what, beyond the concrete information offered by the images and the sound, constitutes the 'more' in a film such as *Silver City* is the job of the critics, but we might make a few hypotheses: poetry, emotion, memory, atmosphere, visual stimulation, mood. All of these derive exclusively from the fundamental technical and aesthetic characteristics inherent to the filmic medium, for, as with the Lumières' film, there was no other input to this film. Only features inherent to the filmic medium are employed: sound and image in their unaltered original form, albeit selected, recorded, processed and removed from the depicted reality (a prerequisite of all recording arts and media). This means that the material phenomena appearing in the film is, in accordance with Balázs' dictum, respected, left, as far as is technically possible in film, unaltered (including the music).

Wenders' moral perspective regarding the function and responsibilities of cinema and filmmakers seems to have been the driving force behind the development of his film language: a mode of expression that attempts to ensure that all material phenomena

appear in his films assertively, in the existential sense. Sound and image are not only the sole component parts of film: due to the development of audio-visual recording technologies towards the ultimate goal of maximum accuracy in the representation, they potentiate a (moral *and* existential) respect for the appearance of material phenomena in film. Film and photography are Wenders' ideal tools.

But because Wenders' is, in its nature, a moral stance, he finds anything that causes a misbalance in this harmony between material phenomena and their representation in film a potential threat. *Paris, Texas*, for instance, thematises how commercial uses of images can degrade the subject of the images to serving an ulterior goal that has no natural relation to the depicted reality (in this case, images of women used for profit). Here, the gap between reality and representation (or the presence of intent in the making and use of the images other than the simple self-representation of the women in images) provokes, Wenders suggests, distortions in questions of identity. *Alice in den Städten* makes the same suggestion in connection with commercial images in general and, in particular, in connection with a televisual aesthetic. Similar claims are made by Wenders in countless written texts and interviews.

Wenders' most consistently vehement attacks in this respect concern story in film, by which he effectively mounts a challenge on almost the whole history of narrative cinema. Paradoxically, filmic stories, as well as commercial images, whether filmic, photographic or electronic, also only exist in the form of sounds and images. But, although Wenders would disagree²⁴¹, the commercial cinema does seem to have asserted its place in history as a natural storytelling medium. All visual media, including those pre-existing film, have always sought to appeal to the public through fantasy and fiction. The film script, the backbone of any conventional narrative film, descends, in form, from dramaturgy, theatrical production and the novel. In this respect, modern narrative cinema has simply adapted and developed pre-existing forms of narration.

Still, in film, stories are told in sound and image, meaning that the potential to respect the appearance of physical reality remains.

Wenders begins to mistrust stories in film when they become more important than a film's images. This can be the case when, for instance, the story of a film pre-exists the film, also when the story is in the form of a film script. The pre-existence of the story means that the images have, above all, to fit into the story. Images may then no longer be chosen or appear on their own merit, but in support of an act of narration. This can compromise the value of the portrayed reality because the material phenomena present in the images of the film does not assert itself, but is instead the material adapted for and consumed by the story. Wenders' regular negative use of the term 'vampire' to describe stories alludes to this act of consumption.

Also, the fact that a film must be assembled, manufactured during the editing process means that individual visual phenomena can be placed into a synthetic temporal and spatial relation with others, thereby diminishing their autonomy within the whole representation. Though it is precisely the case in *Silver City* that material phenomena are selected from various geographical locations at varying times, thus gaining a temporal relation (because of their succession) and a spatial relation (because of their succession, and their displacement from their actual locations) to one another in the film that do not correspond to nature, there is no sense of dramatic unity that suggests a connection between the individual episodes, other than their spatial and temporal proximity to one another within the framework of the film. The episodes remain autonomous, as does the music of the film, representing only themselves.

As he expresses through the figure of Homer in *Der Himmel über Berlin*, Wenders speculates that people need stories more than anything else²⁴². The core of Wenders' cinematic exploration has been the attempt to find ways of accommodating the demands of his spectatorship for story in film without compromising his own moral positions regarding the film image. The result is that Wenders uses story only as a frame that can be drawn from any source. If a published literary work or script is used as a basis, then only to structure the films (*Falsche Bewegung*, *Der amerikanische Freund*, *Paris, Texas*, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, *Bis ans Ende der Welt*, *The End of Violence*, *The Million Dollar Hotel*). In the absence of such sources the given or found reality can be adapted

(*Alice in den Städten, Im Lauf der Zeit, Nicks Film: Lightning over Water, Der Stand der Dinge, Lisbon Story*). None of these films tell a story so assertive that the material phenomena appears in the films only to serve the telling of their stories. Usually, these framework stories are episodically structured to regularly interrupt and break up narrative development, and to avoid as much as possible the necessity of imposing artificial connections between unrelated time sequences and locations. Images (and sound) are thus left to transmit most of the information in the films, thereby allowing the audio and visual tracks to 'speak' the language of material phenomena to their full potential.

The significance of Wenders' cinematic exploration for cinema on the whole is important. It represents a look back at the technical and aesthetic basis of film as an art form to identify in this what it can do best, and to assert this as a creative act: enabling the self-referential appearance of material phenomena in image and sound, and their presentation within the framework of a story.

Filmography as director

Abbreviations:

d = director
p = producer
c = camera
sc = script
ed = editor
m = music
r = running time
sd = sound
lp = leading players

Schauplätze. (1967)

d/p/c/sc/ed: Wim Wenders. *m*: The Rolling Stones. *r*: 10 min., 16mm, b/w.
No prints exist; the only two surviving shots appear at the beginning of *Same Player Shoots Again*.

Same Player Shoots Again. (1967)

d/p/c/sc/ed: Wim Wenders. *r*: 12 min., 16mm, b/w (differently tinted).

Silver City. (1968)

d/p/c/sc/ed: Wim Wenders. *r*: 25 min., 16mm, col.

Alabama: 2000 Light Years. (1968)

d/sc/ed: Wim Wenders. *p*: Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, Munich. *c*: Robby Müller. *m*: The Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, John Coltrane. *r*: 21 min., 35mm, b/w. *lp*: Paul Lys, Werner Schroeter, Peter Kaiser, Muriel Schrat, Christian Friedel.

Polizeifilm. (1969)

d/c/ed: Wim Wenders. *p*: Bayerischer Rundfunk, Munich. *sc*: Albrecht Göschel, Wim Wenders. *r*: 11 min., 16mm, b/w. *lp*: Jimmy Vogler, Kasimir Esser.

3 amerikanische LP's. (1969)

d/ed/sd: Wim Wenders. *p*: Hessischer Rundfunk, Frankfurt. *sc*: Peter Handke. *m*: Van Morrison, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Harvey Mandel. *r*: 13 min. 16mm, col. *lp*: Wim Wenders, Peter Handke.

Summer in the City: Dedicated to the Kinks. (1970)

d/sc: Wim Wenders. *p*: Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen, Munich. *c*: Robby Müller. *ed*: Peter Przygodda. *m*: The Kinks, Lovin' Spoonful, Chuck Berry, Gene Vincent, The Troggs. *r*: 145 mm. (first version), 116 mm. (second version), 16mm, b/w. *lp*: Hanns Zischler (Hans), Edda Köchl (friend in Munich), Libgart Schwarz (girlfriend in Berlin), Maria Bardischewski (friend in Berlin), Wim Wenders (friend at pool hall).

Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter. (1971)

d: Wim Wenders. *p*: Filmverlag der Autoren, Munich; Telefilm AG, Wien; Westdeutscher Rundfunk Cologne. *sc*: Wim Wenders, after the novel by Peter Handke. *c*: Robby Müller. *ed*: Peter Przygodda. *sd*: Rainer Lorenz, Martin Müller. *m*: Jürgen Knieper. *r*: 100 min., 35mm, col. *lp*: Arthur Brauss (Josef Bloch), Erika Pluhar (Gloria), Kai Fischer (Hertha Gabler), Libgart Schwarz (Anna), Maria Bardischewski (Maria), Rüdiger Vogler (village idiot), Wim Wenders (walks through Vienna bus station).

Der scharlachrote Buchstabe. (1972)

d: Wim Wenders. *p*: Filmverlag der Autoren, Munich; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne; Elias Querejeta, Madrid. *sc*: Wim Wenders, Bernardo Fernandez, after the script by Tankred Dorst and Ursula Ehler, *Der Herr klagt über sein Volk in der Wildnis Amerika*, based on the novel *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. *c*: Robby Müller. *ed*: Peter Przygodda. *sd*: Christian Schubert. *m*: Jürgen Knieper. *r*: 90 min., 35mm, col. *lp*: Senta Berger (Hester Prynne), Hans Christian Blech (Chillingworth), Lou Castel (Dimmesdale), Yella Rottländer (Pearl), William Layton (Bellingham).

Alice in den Städten. (1974)

d: Wim Wenders. *p*: Filmverlag der Autoren, Munich; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne. *sc*: Wim Wenders, Veith von Fürstenburg. *c*: Robby Müller. *ed*: Peter Przygodda. *sd*: Martin Müller, Paul Schöler. *m*: Can, Chuck Berry, Canned Heat, Deep Purple, Count Five, The Stories. *r*: 110 min., 16mm, b/w. *lp*: Rüdiger Vogler, (Philip Winter), Yella Rottländer (Alice), Lisa Kreuzer (Lisa van Damm), Edda Köchl (Angela, girlfriend in New York), Wim Wenders (man standing at jukebox).

Aus der Familie der Panzerechsen/Die Insel. (1974)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Bavaria, Munich, as part of the television series *Ein Haus für alle*. *sc:* Philippe Pilloid. *c:* Michael Ballhaus. *ed:* Lilian Seng. *sd:* Armin Münch, Walter Hutterer. *m:* arpad bondy. *r:* 50 min., 16mm, col. *lp:* Katja Wulff (Ute), Lisa Kreuzer (social worker), Thomas Braut (director of the school), Marquard Bohm (visitor at the zoo), Nicholas Brieder (father), Hans-Joachim Krietsch (psychologist), Helga Tomper (mother).

Falsche Bewegung. (1975)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Solaris Film, Munich; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne. *sc:* Peter Handke, freely adapted from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. *c:* Robby Müller. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *sd:* Martin Müller, Peter Kaiser, Paul Schöler. *m:* Jürgen Knieper. *r:* 104 min., 35mm, col. *lp:* Rüdiger Vogler (Wilhelm), Hanna Schygulla (Therese), Hans Christian Blech (Laertes), Nastassja Kinski (Mignon), Peter Kern (Landau), Ivan Desny (industrialist), Marianne Hoppe (mother), Lisa Kreuzer (Janine), Wim Wenders (man in dining car).

Im Lauf der Zeit. (1976)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Wim Wenders Produktion, Munich; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne. *sc:* Wim Wenders. *c:* Robby Müller. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *sd:* Martin Müller, Bruno Bollhalder. *m:* Improved Sound Limited, Axel Linstädt. *r:* 176 min., 35mm, b/w. *lp:* Rüdiger Vogler (Bruno), Hanns Zischler (Robert), Lisa Kreuzer (Pauline), Rudolf Schündler (father), Marquard Bohm (husband of the woman who committed suicide), Dieter Traier (Robert's friend from school), Wim Wenders (spectator at Pauline's theater).

Der amerikanische Freund. (1977)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Berlin; Les Films du Losange Paris; Wim Wenders Produktion, Munich; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne. *sc:* Wim Wenders, after Patricia Highsmith's novel *Ripley's Game*. *c:* Robby Müller. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *sd:* Martin Müller, Peter Kaiser. *m:* Jürgen Knieper. *r:* 123 min., 35mm, col. *lp:* Bruno Ganz (Jonathan Zimmermann), Dennis Hopper (Tom Ripley), Lisa Kreuzer (Marianne Zimmermann), Gerard Blain (Raoul Minôt), Nicholas Ray (Derwatt), Samuel Fuller (the American mafioso), Wim Wenders (figure wrapped in plaster bandages in ambulance).

Nick's Film. (1980)

d: Nicholas Ray, Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Berlin; Wim Wenders Produktion, Berlin; Viking-Film, Stockholm. *sc:* Wim Wenders. *c:* Edward Lachmann, Martin Schifer (film), Tom Farrell (video). *ed:* Peter Przygodda (first version), Wim Wenders (second version). *sd:* Martin Müller, Maryte Kavahauskas, Gary Steele. *m:* Ronee Blakely. *r:* 116 min. (first version), 90 min. (second version), 35mm, col. *lp:* Nicholas Ray, Wim Wenders, Susan Ray, Timothy Ray, Tom Farrell, Ronee Blakely, Gerry Bauman, Pierre Cottrell, Stephan Czapsky, Becky Johnston, Tom Kaufmann, Craig Nelson, Pat Kirck, Edward Lachmann, Maryte Kavahauskas, Martin Müller, Martin Schifer, Chris Sievernich.

Hammett. (1982)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Zoetrope Studios, San Francisco; Orion Pictures, New York. *sc:* Ross Thomas, Dennis O'Flaherty, Thomas Pope, Joe Gores, after the novel by Joe Gores. *c:* Philip Lathrop, Joseph Biroc. *ed:* Barry Malkin, Marc Laub, Rober Q. Lovett, Randy Roberts, Andrew London. *sd:* James Webb Jr., Richard Goodman. *m:* John Barry. *r:* 94 min., 35mm, col. *lp:* Frederic Forrest (Hammett), Peter Boyle (Jimmy Ryan), Marilu Henner (Kit Conger, Sue Alabama), Roy Kinnear (Eddie Hagedorn), Elisha Cook Jr. (cab driver), Lydia Lei (Chrystal Ling), R. G. Ann-strong (O'Mara), Richard Bradford (Tom Bradford).

Der Stand der Dinge. (1982)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Berlin; Wim Wenders Produktion, Berlin; Gray City Inc., New York; Pro-ject Filmproduktion, Munich; Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, Mainz; Pan Films, Paris; Musidora, Madrid; Film International, Rotterdam; Artificial Eye, London. *sc:* Wim Wenders, Robert Kramer. *c:* Henri Alekan, Martin Schifer, Fred Murphy. *ed:* Barbara von Weitershausen, Peter Przygodda. *sd:* Maryte Kavahauskas, Martin Müller. *m:* Jürgen Knieper. *r:* 120 min., 35mm, b/w. *lp:* Patrick Bauchau (Friedrich Munro), Isabelle Weingarten (Anna), Rebecca Pauly (Joan), Jeffrey Kime (Mark), Geoffrey Carey (Robert), Camilla Mora (Julia), Alexandra Auder (Jane), Paul Getty III (Dennis), Viva Auder (Kate).

Reverse Angle: New York City, March 1982. (1982)

d/sc: Wim Wenders. *p:* Gray City, New York; Antenne 2, Paris. *c:* Liza Rinsler. *ed:* Jon Neuberger. *sd:* Maryte Kavahauskas. *m:* Public Image, Echo and the Bunnymen, Martha and the Muffins, The Del Byzanteens, Allen Goorwitz. *r:* 17 min., 16mm, col. *lp:* Wim Wenders, Isabelle Weingarten, Tony Richardson, Louis Malle, Francis Ford Coppola.

Chambre 666: Cannes May '82. (1982)

d/sc: Wim Wenders. *p:* Gray City, New York; Antenne 2, Paris. *c:* Agnes Godard. *ed:* Chantal de Vismes. *sd:* Jean-Paul Mugel. *m:* Jürgen Knieper, Bernhard Herrmann. *r:* 45 min., 16mm, col. *lp:* Jean-Luc Godard, Paul Morrissey, Mike de Leon, Monte Hellman, Romain Goupil, Susan Seidelman, Noel Simsolo, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, Robert Kramer, Ana Carolina, Mahroun Baghbadi, Steven Spielberg, Michelangelo Antonioni, Wim Wenders, Yilmaz Goney (voice only).

Docu Drama (1984)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Wenders, Blakley. *r:* 100 min. *lp:* Wim Wenders, Ronee Blakely, Scarlet Rivera, Old Dog Band, Eulogy Band.

Paris, Texas. (1984)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Berlin; Argos Films, Paris; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne; Channel 4, London; Pro-ject Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren, Munich. *sc:* Sam Shepard. *c:* Robby Müller. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *sd:* Jean Paul Mugel. *m:* Ry Cooder. *r:* 145 min., 35mm, col. *lp:* Harry Dean Stanton (Travis), Nastassja Kinski (Jane), Dean Stockwell (Walt), Aurore Clement (Anne), Hunter Carson (Hunter), Bernhard Wicki (Dr. Ulmer), John Lurie (Slater), Sam Berry (man at gas station).

Tokyo-Ga. (1985)

d/sc: Wim Wenders. *p:* Wim Wenders Produktion, Berlin; Gray City, New York; Chris Sievernich Produktion, Berlin; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne. *c:* Edward Lachman. *ed:* Wim Wenders, Solveig Dommartin, John Neuburger. *sd:* Hartmut Eichgrün. *m:* Dick Tracy, Lorie Petitgrand, Mechne Mamecier, Chico Rojo Ortega. *r:* 92 min., 16mm, col. *lp:* Chishu Ryu, Yuhara Atsuta, Werner Herzog.

Der Himmel über Berlin. (1987)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Berlin; Argos Films, Paris; Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Cologne. *sc:* Wim Wenders, Peter Handke, Richard Reitinger. *c:* Henri Alekan. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *s:* Jean-Paul Mugel, Axel Arit. *m:* Jürgen Knieper, Laurent Petitgrand, Laurie Anderson, Crime and the City Solution, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Sprung aus den Wolken, Tuxedomoon, Minimal Compact. *r:* 126 min., 35mm, b/w and col. *lp:* Bruno Ganz (Damiel), Solveig Dommartin (Marion), Otto Sander (Cassiel), Curt Bois (Homer), Peter Falk (Peter Falk), Hans Martin Stier, Elmar Wilms, Sigurd Rachman, Beatriz Mankowski, Lajos Kovacs.

Aufzeichnungen zu Kleidern und Städten. (1989)

d/sc: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies. *c:* Robby Müller, Muriel Edelstein, Uli Kudicke, Wim Wenders, Musatocki Nakajima, Masasai Chikamori. *ed:* Dominique Auvray, Lenie Saviette, Anne Schnee. *r:* 90 min., 35mm and video, col.

Bis ans Ende der Welt. (1991)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Berlin; Argos Film; Village Roadshow *sc:* Peter Carvey, Wim Wenders, after an idea by Wim Wenders and Solveig Dommartin. *c:* Robby Müller. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *m:* Graeme Revell, David Darling, Talking Heads, R.E.M., Lou Reed, Nick Cave, Crime and the City Solution, T-Bone Burnett, Can, Nench Cherry, Depeche Mode, Robbie Robertson & Blue Nile, The Kinks, Elvis Costello, Daniel Lanois, Peter Gabriel, U2, Patti & Fred Smith Jane Siberry, k. d. lang. *r:* 179 min. (Europe), 157 min. (U.S.), 35mm, col. *lp:* Solveig Dommartin (Claire), William Hurt (Sam Farber), Jeanne Moreau (Edith Farber) Max von Sydow (Henry Farber), Chick Ortega (Chico), Sam Neill (Eugene Fitzpatrick), Rüdiger Vogler (Phillip Winter), Eddy Mitchell (Raymond), Ernie Dingo (Burt), Elena Smirnowa (Krasikowa), Ryu Chishu (Mr. Mori), Allen Garfield (Bernie), Lois Chiles (Elsa), David Gulpilil (David), Charlie McMahon (Buzzer), Justine Saunders (Maisie), Jimmy Little (Peter), Kylie Belling (Lydia), Rhoda Roberts (Ronda), Paul Livingston (Karl), Bart Willoughby (Ned).

Arisha, der Bär und der steinerne Ring. (1992)

d/sc: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies. *c:* Jürgen Jürges. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *m:* Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, The House of Love, Crime and the City Solution, Ed Kuepper. *r:* 45 min. *lp:* Rüdiger Vogler (Bear), Anna Vronskaya (woman), Arina Voznesenskaya (child), Wim Wenders (Santa Claus), Gong Rung Truong, Nam Ha Nguyen, Thi Hoa Nguyen (Vietnamese family).

In welter Ferne, so nah!. (1993)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies; Tobis Filmkunst. *sc:* Wim Wenders, Ulrich Ziegler, Richard Reitinger. *ed:* Peter Przygodda *m:* U2, Crime and the City Solution, Jane Siberry, Laurie Anderson, Herbert Grönemeyer, Guy Chadwick and the House of Love, Lou Reed. *r:* 146 min. *lp:* Otto Sander (Cassiel), Bruno Ganz (Damiel), Nastassja Kinski (Raphaella), Martin Olbertz (dying man), Lou Reed, Michail Gorbatchov, Heinz Rührmann (Konrad), Horst Buchholz (Tony Baker), Rüdiger Vogler (Phillip Winter), Yella Rottländer (Winter's angel), Hanns Zischler (Dr. Becker), Solveig Dommartin (Marion), Willem Dafoe (Emit Flesti).

Lisbon Story (1994)

d/sc: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies. *c:* (colour) Lisa Rinzier. *ed:* Peter Przygodda, Anne Schnee. *m:* Madredeus. *sd:* Jürgen Knieper. *r:* 105 min. *lp:* Rüdiger Vogler (Philip Winter), Patrick Bauchau (Friedrich Monroe), Ricardo Colares (Ricardo), Joe Ferreira (Ze'), Teresa Salgueiro (Teresa), Manoel De Oliveira.

Par-Delà les Nuages. (1995)

d: Michelangelo Antonioni, Wim Wenders. *p:* Philippe Carcasonne, Stephane Tchakadjieff. *sc:* Tonino Guerra, Michelangelo Antonioni, Wim Wenders. *c:* Alfio Contini, Robby Müller. *ed:* Peter Przygodda, Lucian Segura. *m:* Lucio Dalla, Laurent Petitgrand, Van Morrison, U2. *r:* 113 min. *lp:* Fanny Ardant (Patrizia), Chiara Caselli (Olga), Irene Jacob (young woman), John Malkovich (director), Sophie Marceau (young woman), Vincent Perrez (Niccolo), Jean Reno (Carlo), Kim Rossi Stuart (Silvano), Ines Sastre (Carmen), Peter Weller (Roberto), Marcello Mastroianni (painter), Jeanne Moreau (friend).

Die Gebrüder Skladanowski (1996)

d/sc: Wim Wenders (with the students of the HFF Munich: Carlos Alvarez, Sebastian Andrac, Sorin Dragoi, Peter Fuchs, Carsten Funche, Florian Gallenberger, Makun Hansen, Henrik Heckmann, Veit Helmer, German Kral, Björn Kurt, Bodo Lang, Matthias Lehinanri, Eva Munz, Stefan Puchner, Barbara Rohm, Britta Sauer, Marcus Schmidt, Alma Teodorescu.). *p:* Wim Wenders Produktion, Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, Munich, Veit Heliner Filmproduktion. *c:* Jürgen Jürges. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *m:* Laurent Petigrand. *r:* 79 min. *lp:* Udo Kier (Max Skladanowski), Nadine Buttner (Gertrud Skladanowski), Christoph Merg (Eugen Skladanowski), Otto Kuhnle (Emil Skladanowski), Lucie Hürtgen-Skladanowski (as herself).

Am Ende der Gewalt (1997)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Ciby Pictures, Road Movies, Kintop Pictures. *sc:* Nicholas Klein, Wim Wenders. *c:* Pasca Rabaud. *ed:* Peter Przygodda. *m:* Ry Cooder. *sd:* Jim Stuebe. *r:* 122 min. *lp:* Bill Pullman (Mike Max), Andie MacDowell (Paige Stockard), Traci Lind (Cat), Gabriel Byrne (Ray Berm), Rosalind Chao (Claire), Pruitt Taylor Vince (Frank Cray), John Diehl (Lowell Lewis), Richard Cummings (Tyler), Chris Douridas (mechanic), Nicole Parker (Kenya).

Buena Vista Social Club (1999)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Kinotop Pictures, Arte. *c:* Jörg Widmer. *ed:* Brian Johnson. *m:* Ry Cooder and Buena Vista Social Club (Ibrahim Ferrer, Rubén Gonzáles, Eliades Ochoa, Omara Portuondo, Compay Segundo). *r:* 100 min. *lp:* Wim Wenders, Ry Cooder, Joachim Cooder, Ibrahim Ferrer, Rubén Gonzáles, Eliades Ochoa, Omara Portuondo, Compay Segundo.

The Million Dollar Hotel (1999)

d: Wim Wenders. *p:* Road Movies, Kinotop Pictures. *sc:* Nicholas Klein, Bono. *c:* Phedon Papamichael. *ed:* Tatjana S. Riegel. *M:* Bono, Brian Eno, U2. *sd:* Lee Orloff. *r:* 122 min. 35mm. Col. *lp:* Jeremy Davies (Tom Tom), Milla Jovovich (Eloise), Mel Gibson (Skinner), Peter Stormare (Dixie), Jimmy Smits (Geronimo), Gloria Stuart (Jessica), Donal Logue (Best), Bud Cort (Shortie).

Notes

- ¹ Wim Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder, Essays und Gespräche* Frankfurt am Main, Verlag der Autoren, 1993, p. 71.
- ² Ibid, p. 68.
- ³ Ibid, p. 69.
- ⁴ Norbert Grob, *Wenders*, Berlin, Edition Filme 1991 p. 162.
- ⁵ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 69.
- ⁶ Ibid, pp. 70-71
- ⁷ Ibid, p. 77.
- ⁸ Ibid, p. 9.
- ⁹ Wim Wenders, *Emotion Pictures: Essays und Filmkritiken*, Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren 1988, p. 33.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 51.
- ¹¹ Frieda Grafe in Jansen, Peter, Wolfram Schütte (Ed): *Wim Wenders* (Munich, Vienna,: Reihe Film no. 44, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1992) p. 8
- ¹² Frank Schnelle "In weiter Ferne, So nah" in *epd Film*, 09,1993, p. 69
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 77
- ¹⁵ Wenders in Edgar Reitz, *Bilder in Bewegung: Essays; Gespräche zum Kino*, Hamburg: Rowolt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995, p. 192. ("Eigentlich bin ich ein Dokumentarfilmer, der zwar versucht, Geschichten zu erzählen, aber in diesen Geschichten etwas aufbewahren will von dem, was er gefunden hat.")
- ¹⁶ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing, Essays, Reden und Gespräche* Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1992p. 116.
- ¹⁷ Robert Bresson, *Noten zum Kinomatographischen*, München, Hanser Verlag, 1980, p. 21.
- ¹⁸ Edgar Morin, *Der Mensch und das Kino: eine anthropologische Untersuchung*, Stuttgart, Klett Verlag, 1958 p. 68.
- ¹⁹ Wenders in Reinhold Rauh, *Wim Wenders und seine Filme* Munich, Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 1990. p. 125: ("Meine Kraftquelle war immer, daß ich etwas Gültiges festhalten wollte von der Zeit, in der ich lebe.")
- ²⁰ Wenders informs us that, unfortunately, most of this film has been lost.
- ²¹ Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 38.
- ²² Siegfried Kracauer, *Theorie des Films: Die Errettung der äußeren Wirklichkeit* Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993, p. 53.
- ²³ Ibid, p. 99.
- ²⁴ Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Ketzerfahrten 'Empirismo eretico'*. Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1982, p. 219.
- ²⁵ Ibid, pp. 119-120.
- ²⁶ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 30.
- ²⁷ Ibid, p. 9.
- ²⁸ Ibid, p. 10.
- ²⁹ Ibid, p. 10.
- ³⁰ Wenders in Filippo D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders* Milan: Editrice Il Castoro, 1994, p. 90.
- ³¹ Reinhold Rauh, *Wim Wenders und seine Filme*, p. 39.
- ³² Peter Buchka, *Augen kann man nicht kaufen: Wim Wenders und seine Filme*, Munich, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1983, p. 108.
- ³³ Pasolini, *Ketzerfahrten 'Empirismo eretico'*, p. 226.
- ³⁴ See chapters on *Alice in den Städten* and *Der Himmel über Berlin*.
- ³⁵ André Bazin, *Was ist Kino? Bausteine zur Theorie des Films*, (Köln: DuMont Schauberg Verlag, 1975, p. 68.
- ³⁶ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, pp. 13-14.
- ³⁷ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 61.

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- ³⁸ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 78.
- ³⁹ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 87.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 86-87.
- ⁴¹ Buchka, *Augen kann man nicht kaufen*, p. 112.
- ⁴² Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 37.
- ⁴³ It is interesting to note that Wenders has regularly produced and directed advertising films for television, beginning with a film for the domestic appliances manufacturer 'Ariston' in 1995, and for the 'Deutsche Bundesbahn' in 1999. He has also appeared in a television advertisement for the credit company 'American Express'. Wenders explains in interview in the colour supplement *Sette* to the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* No. 28, 1995 that he accepted the advertising engagement with 'Ariston' out of "curiosity".
- ⁴⁴ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 42.
- ⁴⁵ Wenders, *Emotion Pictures*, pp. 144-145.
- ⁴⁶ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 33.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid*.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 33.
- ⁴⁹ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema; Television; Video* London, New York: Routledge 1992, p. 240.
- ⁵⁰ Kracauer, *Theorie des Films*, p. 227.
- ⁵¹ Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 236.
- ⁵² Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 64.
- ⁵³ Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, pp. 226-227.
- ⁵⁴ Wim Wenders, *Una Volta*, Rome: Edizioni Socrates, 1993, p. 387. ("*Ho l'impressione che (...) quando la televisione era una cosa e il cinema era un'altra, e i video non esistevano ancora i film si potevano guardare con molta più attenzione e pazienza. Oggi i film hanno un ritmo completamente diverso: non dedicano più molto tempo a osservare le cose, proprio come fa il pubblico.*")
- ⁵⁵ Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, p. 239.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 227.
- ⁵⁷ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 109.
- ⁵⁸ See note 7.
- ⁵⁹ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 71.
- ⁶⁰ Kracauer, *Theorie des Films*, p. 115.
- ⁶¹ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 132.
- ⁶² Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 13.
- ⁶³ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 136.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 65.
- ⁶⁵ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 17.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 16.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 29.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 71.
- ⁶⁹ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 135-136.
- ⁷⁰ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 33.
- ⁷¹ Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 14.
- ⁷² Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 32.
- ⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 60-61
- ⁷⁴ Wenders in Reitz, *Bilder in Bewegung*, p. 191.
- ⁷⁵ Rauh, *Wim Wenders und seine Filme*, p. 52.
- ⁷⁶ Grob *Wim Wenders*, p. 219. Grob does not specify his source.
- ⁷⁷ Kracauer, *Theorie des Films*, p. 323-324.
- ⁷⁸ Jansen, Schütte, *Wim Wenders*, p. 44.
- ⁷⁹ D'Angelo. *Wim Wenders*, P. 35. ("*... la "naturale" tendenza descrittiva, la capacità di osservare e restituire minuziosamente le caratteristiche ambientali...*")

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- ⁸⁰ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 29.
- ⁸¹ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 63.
- ⁸² *Ibid*, p. 13.
- ⁸³ Kolker, Robert Phillip; Peter Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*, Cambridge University Press, 1993 p. 47. (Though Ripley seems to conform to this idea, he attempts to prevent Jonathan's involvement in the crimes. It is rather the character Raoul Minot (Gerard Blain) who directly approaches Jonathan regarding the murders).
- ⁸⁴ D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders*, p. 93. "*Il personaggio Tom si mostra dichiaratamente ricalcato sui modelli di un immaginario cinematografico che, vuole dirci Wenders, ha colonizzato l'inconscio dello spettatore europeo*".
- ⁸⁵ Rauh, *Wim Wenders und seine Filme*, p. 66.
- ⁸⁶ D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders*, p. 94. ("*La dipendenza culturale europea dal cinema americano è un legame che si fa metafora del più ampio rapporto tra spettatore e film. se Tom è il Cinema, carico di fascino e di potere, Jonathan ne è lo Spettatore, l'individuo sedotto dalla magia del medium e trasportato in una dimensione fantastica, lontana dalla realtà*").
- ⁸⁷ Kracauer, *Theorie des Films*, p. 333.
- ⁸⁸ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 9.
- ⁸⁹ Wenders in *Sight and Sound*, 44, 1, 1975.
- ⁹⁰ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 12. (This sequence lasts only 4': 46" seconds in the 'Atlas Film Werkausgabe' version, from 1:03:34 - 1:08:20)
- ⁹¹ The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines an episode as: "A scene or digression complete in itself but forming part of a continuous narrative."
- ⁹² See note 25.
- ⁹³ Pasolini, *Ketzerfahrten 'Empirismo eretico'*, p. 221.
- ⁹⁴ Jointly directed by Wenders and Michelangelo Antonioni.
- ⁹⁵ Grob *Wim Wenders*, p. 78.
- ⁹⁶ In *Alice in den Städten*.
- ⁹⁷ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, pp. 70-71.
- ⁹⁸ Kolker and Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders*, p. 5.
- ⁹⁹ D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders*, p.39. ("*Bloch lega la cintura della vestaglia attorno al collo della donna, è un gesto come gli altri, insignificante, quasi un gioco. Poi un impulso incontrollabile gli fa completare l'azione: la strangola. Il gesto è tanto improvviso quanto inaspettato (..)giugendo ad evidenziare l'assenza di tensione drammatica imposta dai canoni costitutivi del genere*").
- ¹⁰⁰ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 61.
- ¹⁰¹ Wenders in Reitz, *Bilder in Bewegung*, p. 192.
- ¹⁰² Cook, Roger F.; Gemünden, Gerd (Eds.), *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: Image, Narrative and the Postmodern Condition*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997, p. 138-139.
- ¹⁰³ Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 79.
- ¹⁰⁴ Pasolini, *Ketzerfahrten 'Empirismo eretico'*, pp. 235-236.
- ¹⁰⁵ Kolker, Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders*, p. 116.
- ¹⁰⁶ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 77.
- ¹⁰⁷ Bordwell, David; Staiger, Janet; Thompson, Kristin: *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Modes of Production to 1960*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 18.
- ¹⁰⁸ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 68.
- ¹⁰⁹ D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders*, p. 129. ("*L'impressione, comunque, e che l'autore abbia voluto mettere alla prova la sua rinnovata fiducia nel potere del racconto...*")
- ¹¹⁰ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 56.
- ¹¹¹ Klaus Kreimeier in Jansen, Schütte, *Wim Wenders*, p. 22.
- ¹¹² Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 272. Grob does not give his source.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid*, p. 122.
- ¹¹⁴ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 49.

- ¹¹⁵ See note 77.
- ¹¹⁶ Kracauer, *Theorie des Films*, p. 385.
- ¹¹⁷ Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 117.
- ¹¹⁸ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 49.
- ¹¹⁹ Jansen, Schütte, *Wim Wenders*, p. 148.
- ¹²⁰ Wenders, *Emotion Pictures*, pp. 66-67.
- ¹²¹ Wenders in D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders*, p. 9. ("Abbiamo volato costeggiando il treno. Volevo farla in maniera un po' diversa; volevo volare ancora più in alto e poi far salire l'elicottero in verticale, perché si avesse l'impressione di vedere la Germania tutta intera.")
- ¹²² Wenders, *Emotion Pictures*, p. 144.
- ¹²³ D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders*, p. 62. ("La photo Polaroid, la cui non-riproducibilità la accomuna ai prodotti dell'arte pittorica, riscattava, con l'unicità dell'esemplare, la standardizzazione del paesaggio, recupera l'"aura" perduta nell'epoca della riproducibilità tecnica.")
- ¹²⁴ Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 28.
- ¹²⁵ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 33
- ¹²⁶ Ibid.
- ¹²⁷ Wenders in Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 11.
- ¹²⁸ Rauh, *Wim Wenders und seine Filme*, p. 125.
- ¹²⁹ D'Angelo, *Wim Wenders*, p. 67. ("Se Felix ritrova la consapevolezza della propria identità mediante lo sguardo oggettivo di una bambina [...] è perché Alice è il Cinema, strumento che al contrario della fotografia è capace di riprodurre il movimento, di restituire l'esistenza dell'uomo nella sua continuità spaziale e temporale. Infanzia dell'Uomo come ritorno alla spontanea energia creativa, all'ingenuità di uno sguardo incontaminato: infanzia del Cinema come recupero della purezza descrittiva, dell'"evidenza" della rappresentazione.")
- ¹³⁰ Rauh, *Wim Wenders und seine Filme*, p. 37
- ¹³¹ Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 77
- ¹³² Ibid, p. 77
- ¹³³ Ibid, p. 32.
- ¹³⁴ Kolker, Beicken, *The films of Wim Wenders*, p. 66.
- ¹³⁵ Grob, *Wim Wenders*, pp. 11-12
- ¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 12.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 254.
- ¹³⁸ Cook, Gemünden, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders*, p. 66.
- ¹³⁹ Wim Wenders in *Film Quarterly*, Winter 1984-85, No. 38,2
- ¹⁴⁰ Laura Mulvey in Mast, Gerald; Cohen, Marshall; Braudy, Leo (Eds.): *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*: New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp 750-757.
- ¹⁴¹ Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 42 (see also note 44)
- ¹⁴² Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 52.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 33.
- ¹⁴⁴ Kolker, Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders*, p. 129.
- ¹⁴⁵ Stefan Kolditz in Jansen, Schütte, *Wim Wenders*, p. 248.
- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid
- ¹⁴⁷ Reitz, *Bilder in Bewegung*, p. 192.
- ¹⁴⁸ Cook, David A.: *A History of Narrative Film*, Second Edition, London, New York: Emery University 1990. p. 794.
- ¹⁴⁹ Bordwell, David; Thompson, Kristin: *Film Art: An Introduction*, University of Wisconsin: McGraw-Hill, 1993, p. 399
- ¹⁵⁰ Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, p. 796.
- ¹⁵¹ Bordwell, Thompson, *Film Art*, p. 397. See also note 103 (on the use of dramatic understatement in *Lisbon Story* and *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*).
- ¹⁵² Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 46.

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- 153 Ibid.
- 154 Ibid.
- 155 Ibid.
- 156 Ibid, p. 80.
- 157 Ibid, p. 82.
- 158 Ibid, p. 82.
- 159 Jansen, Schütte, *Wim Wenders*, pp. 22.
- 160 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 80.
- 161 See note 39.
- 162 Wenders' commentary to Ryu's interview, in *Tokyo Ga* (22' 00" - 29' 33")
- 163 Jan Dawson, *Wim Wenders*, (New York: Zoetrope, 1979, p. 10.
- 164 See note 160.
- 165 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 33.
- 166 Wenders in Grob, *Wim Wenders*, p. 264. (Grob does not give his source).
- 167 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 94.
- 168 Ibid, pp. 94-95.
- 169 *German Quarterly* 64/ winter 1991 No. 1, p 46-60.
- 170 Ibid, p. 46.
- 171 "Wir sind nicht die Botschaft. Wir sind die Boten". (In *weiter Ferne, so nah*, 132' 27")
- 172 Wenders is presumably referring to Benjamin's essay, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte" in Benjamin: *Gesammelte Schriften*: Band 1, Teil 2, pp. 697-698.
- 173 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 93.
- 174 "...dann sind wir euch nah, und ihr Ihm". (In *weiter Ferne, so nah*, 133' 34")
- 175 Norbert Grob, *Auf der Suche nach den verlorenen Augenblick*, Berlin, Edition Film, 1989. p. 153.
- 176 Grob *Wim Wenders*, p. 262.
- 177 Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 166.
- 178 This is not true: the "Langenscheidtsbrücke" was only renovated, not demolished.
- 179 Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, p. 167.
- 180 Cook, Gemünden, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders*, p. 80.
- 181 Ibid.
- 182 Wenders in Cook, Gemünden, *the Cinema of Wim Wenders*, p. 81.
- 183 Wim Wenders, Peter Handke, *Der Himmel über Berlin. Ein Filmbuch*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1987, p. 21.
- 184 Kolker & Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders*, 114.
- 185 Wenders, Handke, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, p. 23.
- 186 Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991. p. 697-698.
- 187 Wenders, Handke, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, pp. 19-21
- 188 See note 187.
- 189 Wenders, Handke, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, p. 28.
- 190 Ibid, p. 29.
- 191 Ibid, p. 110.
- 192 Ibid, pp. 46-47
- 193 Ibid, p. 98.
- 194 Ibid, p. 43.
- 195 Roger Cook, *The Germanic Review* no. 66, 1991, pp. 34-47. "Angels, Fiction and History in Berlin: Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*". p. 38.
- 196 Wenders, Handke, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, p. 44.
- 197 Ibid, p. 4.
- 198 Ibid, p. 49.
- 199 See note 194.
- 200 Kolker, Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders*, p. 4.

- 201 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 137.
- 202 Ibid, p. 67.
- 203 Kolker, Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders*, p. 150-151
- 204 Caldwell, David; Rea, Paul, W.: *German Quarterly* no. 64, Winter 1991, pp. 46-60. "Handke's and Wenders' Wings of Desire: Transcending Postmodernism." p.51.
- 205 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 136.
- 206 Ibid. p. 59.
- 207 Ibid, p. 137.
- 208 Wenders, Handke, *Der Himmel über Berlin*, p. 57 and p. 169.
- 209 Ibid, p. 30.
- 210 Ibid, p. 56-7.
- 211 Roger F. Cook, *The Germanic Review*, p. 45.
- 212 Wenders in *Sight & Sound* no. 42, 1988-89
- 213 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 30.
- 214 See note 175.
- 215 Edward M. V. Plater points out in *Postscript* (volume 12 1992) that emphasis here is placed on the storytelling capabilities of the visual image rather than the word.
- 216 Jansen, Schütte, *Wim Wenders*, p. 59.
- 217 Wenders in *Reverse Angle NYC* (1982)
- 218 *The Act of Seeing*, p. 60.
- 219 Wim Wenders, *Lisbon Story* film script (Mario Sesti (Ed.), Milan, Ubulibri, 1995: In the introduction to the script of *Lisbon Story*, p. 14. ("Viviamo in un'epoca in cui l'aspetto visivo è così preponderante che a volte le parole, i suoni, la musica riescono a mettere l'immagine Alice suo posta, a proteggerla. Lo scopo di questo film è stato quello di dimostrare che i suoni ci aiutano a vedere le cose in modo diverso.")
- 220 See Mast, Cohen, Braudy, *Film Theory and Criticism*, pp. 317-319
- 221 Walter Ruttmann in Goergen, Jeanpaul: *Walter Ruttmann: Eine Dokumentation*, Berlin: Freunde der deutschen Kinemathek, 1989, p. 83.
- 222 Weis, E.; Belton, J.(Eds.): *Film Sound: Theory and Practice* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 116-117
- 223 Ibid.
- 224 John Belton in Mast, Gerald; Marshall Cohen; Leo Braudy: *Film Theory and Criticism*, p. 325.
- 225 Here and in other films (*Summer in the City*, *Alice in den Städten*, *Der Himmel über Berlin*), the band members appear performing their own music, hence the synchronisation.
- 226 See Wenders, Handke, *Der Himmel über Berlin: Ein Filmbuch*, pp. 8-17.
- 227 Wenders, *Emotion Pictures*, p. 67.
- 228 Weis, Belton: *Film Sound*, p. 116.
- 229 Near the end of the film, Teresa describes the music, which is audible in the background, and the river, which is faintly visible in the haze, as "more or less the same thing".
- 230 *Lisbon Story* script, p. 44. ("Ti faccio vedere.").
- 231 Ibid, p. 102 ("Lo vedi... è muto.").
- 232 *Lisbon Story* text, pages. 64 and 23.
- 233 Dziga Vertov in Montani, Pietro: *Vertov*, Milan: Editrice Il Castoro no. 16, April 1975, pp. 5-6
- 234 Ibid. ("Perché non fare [...] il primo film senza didascalie, un film internazionale, che non abbia bisogno di essere tradotto nelle altre lingue? Perché non tentare di descrivere con questo linguaggio il comportamento dell'uomo vivo, le azioni compiute, in varie circostanze, da un uomo con una cinepresa?")
- 235 Weis, Belton, *Film Sound*, p. 84
- 236 Wenders, *Die Logik der Bilder*, p. 9.
- 237 Live television, for instance, does not necessarily perform a recording function.
- 238 See notes 28 and 29: Wenders refers to the act of filming as a 'heroic' act, and describes the film camera as a weapon against the 'misery' of the disappearance of things.

²³⁹ Rees, A.L.: *A History of Experimental Film and Video: from the Canonical Avant-garde to Contemporary British Practice*; London, BFI Publishing, 1999, p. 69.

²⁴⁰ Wenders, *Emotion Pictures*, p. 3.

²⁴¹ See note 6.

²⁴² See note 1.

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