

The Work of Art  
in The Age of Global Culture :  
Theory And Practice

Doctoral Thesis

John Grech

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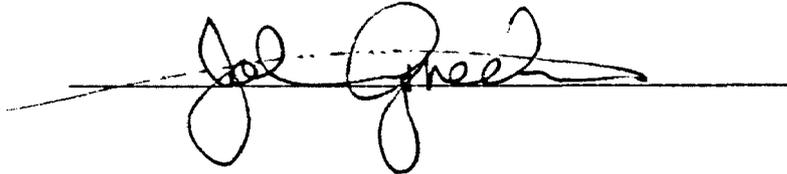
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## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this Thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the Thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the Thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the Thesis.

Signature of Candidate

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel Green", is written over a solid horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joel" and the last name "Green" clearly distinguishable.

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# The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture

## Abstract

### Thesis Statement :

This Thesis looks at two films by Wim Wenders with a view of examining how they represent the 'global city.' This thesis is not an examination of the films representation of 'the city' per se, but a consideration of the process of engagement between the films and the individual. The objective is to examine how viewers of the films engage with the cinematic process so as to enhance their awareness of and participation in the formation of the global city. By considering the role the films play in this process, I speculate on the continuing role of the work of art in the age of global culture.

### Scope :

The scope of this Thesis is provided by two films about Berlin by Wenders. The Thesis explicates how these films aid their viewer to participate in the global city. The Thesis extrapolates three different levels of abstraction in its analysis:

- 1) at an empirical level by analysing the films;
- 2) at an historical and social level by analysing the city and citizenship; and
- 3) at a cultural level by analysing the role art can play in society today.

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# Chapter 1

## An Introduction to *The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture*

### I

#### Analysing the Role of Art in Global Culture

Today, the idea ... that art could morally influence the world... has largely been dismissed, as it must be in a mass media society where art's principal social role is to investment capital, or, in the sublimest way, bullion. We still have political art, but we have no *effective* [emphasis Hughes] political art. ... As far as today's politics is concerned, most art aspires to the condition of muzak.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Hughes' concluding thought in the second episode of *The Shock of the New* reflects an attitude I encountered widely during my education as an artist. Its sentiment questions the value of what I aspired to achieve through the profession I had chosen. For 'muzak' was, to those acculturated during the 1970s and 80s, a term that derogatively referred to music made by machines and not the creative work of human beings. Later, when I began to teach art theory, I would sometimes screen Hughes' television series, but still a nagging doubt persisted about this episode's conclusion. I remained uncomfortable about what I was encouraging my students to think, almost right from the outset of their own careers, about the work that they could achieve as artists. Both for myself, and for my students, I wanted to retain a capacity to think that the work of art is more than just the provision of fetish commodities for the market place.<sup>2</sup> Part of the problem lay in the distinction Hughes and many of his contemporaries made about art as a conventional gallery-based<sup>3</sup> activity and other forms of cultural production in mass mediated societies. Like many,<sup>4</sup> Hughes adhered to an idea that the work of art was somehow different, and more important, than a work produced for more mundane and everyday communicational aspirations. This has led to a lack of critical appreciation for art produced and exhibited

in non gallery related contexts.

There was a time, however, when many societies understood that aspects of social life such as art cannot be expected to function in a context of commerce and the market.<sup>5</sup> Since the 1980s, however, Governments all over the world have increasingly embraced a free market ideology, linking the social value of art to its economic viability and profitability. In Australia, for example, the ties between art and the economy have reached a point where art is seen as a professional activity only when an artist shows a taxable income from their artistic production three years out of every five.<sup>6</sup> The immediate impact of this is a narrowing of the skills artists have in creating cultural expressions. Narrowing because artists have to concentrate on producing commercially viable work.

Consequentially, the individual in society who is not an artist but who relies on encounters with art in order to develop a better understanding over issues - ranging from matters relating to their inner lives to aspects of science or new technology and to social issues - is faced with a shortage of expressions to encounter. By demanding that artists make money through their work, other individuals in society find it increasingly difficult to encounter artifacts that adequately express their perspective of the world or speak in a way that they can relate with. With a narrower range of works of art, fewer artistic expressions are available to individuals to encounter are reduced. Although art still remains open to individual interpretation, the range and depth of nuances being encountered and expressed through art reduces the breadth, depth, and scope of understanding available for individuals. The art that remains available develops only a scaled down language through which the individual encounters new expressions that articulate the changing conditions under which they live. In broader terms, culture becomes increasingly founded on the expressions of fewer and fewer

elite individuals who gain tremendous privileges in participating in the production of meaning in society while a growing majority of individuals are forced into accepting a role as unwitting accomplices, unknowing participants, or impotent observers of the cultural processes that make up communal life.

Walter Benjamin's analysis of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" provides another way of thinking about the functionality of art that does not reduce it to its role in the market place. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" distinguishes individuals' interests and needs from those embedded in and by the cinematic apparatus<sup>7</sup> while showing that the individual remains central in the cultural exchanges conducted through the work of art. Benjamin provides this Thesis with its overall theoretical orientation and methodological thrust. For Benjamin, art is intimately linked to the renewal of society because, in an authentic encounter between a work of art and the individual, art helps that individual to perpetuate the social bonds and cultural relations with their fellow members of society. Benjamin's essay shows that art need not be linked to commercial transactions in order for art to produce its social and cultural value. Even when art is linked to commercial activity, as it now is in many capitalist societies, Benjamin also shows that art continues to perpetuate the economic bonds and hence propagate the economic relations of capitalist culture. Briefly then, Benjamin provides an analysis of art that shows how art performs a most fundamental role in the formation and perpetuation of human society. For him, art need not be reduced to the circumstances of a capitalist mode of production in which profit becomes paramount. Nor need art be tied to the perpetuation of the economic system as much art produced under capitalist conditions is. Cultural and artistic production certainly may be evaluated in

terms of its economic value, but such values need not be considered the only terms through which to gauge the significance of art.

The fundamental problem this Thesis pursues is whether the work of art in contemporary culture still has a social role other than that assigned to it by the market. Returning to Hughes' frame of reference for an instant, this Thesis asks: can art aspire to producing an effect that has a moral influence on the individual? Can art be encountered in such a way so as bring attention to the political dimensions of the production of culture? In addressing these questions, I focus away from the work of the artist, for the significance of the artist in the production of art is already widely understood. This Thesis examines the outcomes of the relationship between art and the individual who encounters it for this is the work that art contributes to the making of global culture. This is the work that needs to be better understood.

In Chapter 2, I establish a theoretical method to show how art is more than just a background hum in modern society. Drawing on Benjamin's "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, I argue that forms of art such as film, far from acting like muzak in a supermarket, work prodigiously in producing very particular kinds of social bonds between individuals. Then by drawing on Benjamin's "Task of the Translator" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History", I argue that artifacts can work to perpetuate social bonds and relations in non traditional, but also, non capitalist contexts. In the "Translation" essay, Benjamin shows how an encounter with art can result in producing an authentic 'harmonic' 'reverberation'<sup>8</sup> of an original artistic expression in a foreign tongue. In a translation, an individual comes into contact with a new form of expression that enriches their socio-linguistic context. Benjamin's concept of translation shows how the individual who encounters art in a global context can authenticate their

experience of its artistic expression without having to re-occupy the social, linguistic, and cultural context of the original. Translation offers a meaningful intermediary space that is not provided by either the traditional setting of art and nor is that space made available by the art historian or market entrepreneur. Benjamin maintains that the translation frees the artifact from the relations it occupies in the context of its production and is allowed to produce its 'intended'<sup>9</sup> effect upon the language of its translation. In "Theses on the Philosophies of History", Benjamin identifies a stance a translator can adopt as they translate the intended effect of art meaningfully into another socio-linguistic context. Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" provides a model through which every individual retains the right to add their value and meaning to the work of art. This radically interrupts existing conventions in establishing the value of art because it means that any individual can decide that Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles* (1952), for example, is less valuable or meaningful than a popular television programme such as *Blue Heelers* (created by Hal McElroy, Tony Morphet, 1994) inspite of the fact that in terms of monetary value, Pollock's painting is worth many times more than the production of even the costliest television series.<sup>10</sup>

Although Benjamin offers only two alternatives to the work that art does in capitalist societies in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", namely, the work of art in traditional cultures, and the political work of art in communist society,<sup>11</sup> a third alternative emerges when one adopts the strategies he suggests in the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay in conjunction with strategies identified in the "Task of the Translator" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History". Across these three essays, Benjamin indicates that an alternative democratic relationship is possible to achieve through the work of art even in the modern context.

However, identifying the nature of this relationship requires Benjamin's reader to look for the 'potential translation between the lines'<sup>12</sup> of these three texts. Ignoring his understandable pessimism, Benjamin nevertheless offers hope for the redemption of art in modern contexts,<sup>13</sup> but the reader has to look in the 'interlinear'<sup>14</sup> "Mechanical Reproduction", "Translator" and "Philosophy of History" essays. Situated 'like a quiet, well fed, docile wild animal'<sup>15</sup> in the intersection between these essays, the artifact occupies the 'empty space'<sup>16</sup> between its manifestation as film in the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, the literary work and its 'translation' in the "Translation" essay, and finally the 'historical artifact' in the "Philosophy of History" essay. By interlocking the approaches to the artifact Benjamin suggests in these three profoundly important essays, he prefigures a way that art can work in perpetuating participatory relations between the individual, the artwork, and the production of meaning that interaction produces across a range of social, cultural, and linguistic contexts. The individual's participation in this interaction thus re-authenticates the expressiveness of the art object irrespective of when the object was made, whether it was produced using reproductive technology, and whether the individual and the original object share a common linguistic and cultural origin.

Chapter 3 examines how the individual can consciously intervene in their interaction with the artifact to heighten the quality of the work of art. This Chapter introduce Torben Graag Grodal's theory that art films produce higher levels of consciousness. Grodal thinks that this is linked to the intention of the author producing the work as well as the means of production. The overall thrust of Grodal's essay is to show how art films, which he identifies as European, produce a state of contemplative detachment in the protagonists' responses to the situations they are

presented in. Higher works of filmic art produce a state of epistemological uncertainty which encourages their protagonist to re-assess assumptions they have made about their situation before being drawn into action. Mainstream films, on the other hand, depict protagonists in situations that need solving. Such protagonists focus on the immediate realities of their embodied experiences and seek appropriate responses that focus on the necessities of the moment. For Grodal, the reflective abstractions that he associates with higher states of consciousness are the earmarks of a work of art, and are associated with production qualities emanating from the film rather than whatever readings the individual brings to them. So Grodal argues that while art-house films challenge their viewer to reflect consciously on the problem or situation that confronts the protagonist in the film, a mainstream production seeks to entertain the viewer by encouraging them to appreciate the film protagonists' appropriate responses to what confronts them without questioning the protagonists' underlying assumptions about how they respond. However, the comparison of Wenders' *Wings of Desire* and Brad Silberling's *City of Angels* in this Chapter suggests that Grodal's theory is not entirely convincing.

This is a good point to acknowledge the fundamental difference between Grodal's approach, Benjamin's critical theory, and the position adopted by this Thesis. Grodal is situated within the cognitive school of Film Studies and analyses films from an art historical and aesthetic perspective. He distinguishes high and low art along the lines of the formal qualities of the art object, the object's context and conditions of production, the critical appraisal a work of art gains from cultural and artistic gatekeepers such as art critics, galleries and museums, academics and art historians, and even what might be termed "art market". Left unamended, Grodal is on a collision course with Benjamin's critical analyses because Benjamin seeks to uncover

the underlying ideological assumptions embedded in aesthetic and art historical approaches Grodal produces. In concluding Chapter 3, I reconcile these differences by arguing that Grodal's theory is productive but only as long as it is made subject to a broader Benjaminian approach. This means that Grodal's theory remains useable when it is applied on a case by case, individual by individual, film by film basis. However, neither does this Thesis reject the possibility that the work of art, be it mainstream or elite artistic production, may also produce a radical re-working of the individual's social bonds and cultural relations. To the extent this Thesis differs from the approach taken by Benjamin and other Critical Theorists.

This is why Chapter 3 focuses again on the work of the individual when and as they encounter the art object. It argues that the work art does is not contained or determined exclusively within the object's formal parameters or the intentions of the producer, as Grodal's assessment of the qualities he associates with art and mainstream films suggests,<sup>17</sup> but rather in the relationship the individual establishes with each film. In this Chapter, I show that even a mainstream film such as *City of Angels* can raise the awareness of an individual, but this depends entirely on the values that individual brings to and associates with the film. In defence of Grodal's hierarchy, however, it remains true to say that a film that aims to engender higher levels of conscious reflection may indeed succeed more often in producing such a response in its viewer than a film that seeks to only entertain the viewer. Yet as Ien Ang found in her studies of Dutch audiences of the television soap opera *Dallas*,<sup>18</sup> viewers retain a surprising capacity to subvert even the most passively constructed viewing position.

This returns me to the stance suggested by Benjamin's 'angel of history' who, shocked by the ever mounting pile of historical debris before them, is jolted into remembering that each artifact that they see, whether it

is regarded as high art, works of popular culture, or historical documents, represents the work a living individual rather than the stories that get woven around such objects and that purport to give those objects meaning. Benjamin's 'angel of history'<sup>19</sup> reminds his reader that an encounter with an artifact ought not be conditioned by the stories that are presented when such artifacts are put on display. Rather the meaning of the object should continue to be determined by the authentic response arising from each individual's engagement with it. However, by deferring to the individual, it does then not make it possible to arrive at a view that Pollock's *Blue Poles* is a lesser work of art when a majority of individuals conclude that it is not as important as a television police drama like *Blue Heelers*.<sup>20</sup> There can be no majority rules in the way that art works in a global context. Every encounter with the artifact is important and the significance of an encounter that is grouped into a collective opinion cannot be used to qualify and exclude another individual encounters with the same (or another) artifact. So the result of the unlikely collusion between Grodal and Benjamin produces a method that is critically decisive, politically oriented, and optimistic about the prospects the work of art has in enabling the individual to participate meaningfully in the creation of bonds and relations in global society.

## II

### Parameters and Definitions

The textual basis of this Thesis is derived from two films about Berlin, Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire* (1987) and *Faraway So Close!* (1993). Chapters 4 and 5, investigates how these films enable the individual watching them to consciously reflect on lived experiences in the contemporary city. The focus is on the work the films produce in aiding the viewer to renew the bonds and relations with the world around them. It examines how these films depict

experiences of everyday city life and how such depictions facilitate the viewer's experience and understanding of themselves as self-determining subjects and citizens in the modern city. The city in global culture is unlike the city in reality, however, because the global city is both an immediate and physical experience as well as a mediated and symbolic experience generated through communication technologies. The production of the *global cinematic city* suggests a multi-staged process that integrates: a) an individual's perception and experience of the actual city within which they live; and b) an integration of simulated information from other places in the world that can be derived from any medium of communication including film, radio, television, the world wide web, a travel journal, a painting, or any other textual material that confers cultural information to the individual who encounters it. My argument is that the work of art such as film models bonds and relations between that individual and the world. Understanding how such bonds are constructed, and how they can be manipulated and altered, is crucial if the individual is to actively participate in the culture that surrounds both the work of art and the real world within which that individual lives.

#### 1) Theorising the Global City

As Lewis Mumford's study of *The City in History*<sup>21</sup> suggests, cities have long provided one of the most complex contexts within which humans realise their lives and ambitions. Cities have been places where people working together have produced some of the most significant developments in human history. The importance of events that have shaped the history of the city suggests that cities might be regarded as the 'native' habitat for human beings, a habitat that continues to grow in significance and now appears to condition the daily realities of all humanity irrespective of where they live. Just as the role of cities in the lives of human beings has continued to evolve

throughout history, so our understanding of the city must also continue to grow with it. Jonathan Raban's *Soft City* (1974) signalled an important evolution in thinking about the city in the 20th Century, a book described as 'a classic part in the literature of the [postmodern] city'.<sup>22</sup> In this book, Raban describes the experience of living in cities like London and New York as if one were mildly intoxicated by the profusion of different places, different cultures, different languages, and different styles. Even before Raban published his book, however, evidence of contemporary experiences of the city can be found in films such as Jean Luc Godard's *À bout de souffle* (1960), *Alphaville, une étrange aventure de Lemmy Caution* (1965), and *Week End* (1967). In these films, Godard began to critically explore various aspects of contemporary life in the city, from falling in love with foreigners in *À bout de souffle*, to futuristic projections depicting the futility of insurrectionary attempts to destabilise the commanding role of technology over everyday life in *Alphaville*, to the satirical depiction of the shift to consumer culture in suburban France in *Weekend*. While new representations of the city were being realised in earlier films, it is not until the appearance of films like Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Wings of Desire* that the global city started to gain fuller expression.<sup>23</sup> In recent years there has been a minor explosion of writing about the global city, although mostly this is focused on the relationship between the city and the global economy.<sup>24</sup>

For the purpose of this Thesis, the postmodern city is a city that has inherited a cultural history of modernisation and in which a process of industrialisation has taken place prior to 1945. After World War II, postmodern cities experienced some or all of the conditions associated with what are sometimes called post-industrial societies.<sup>25</sup> A post-industrial city indicates a city in which the economic and social systems founded in and

evolving from 19th Century capitalism have either dissolved or never developed. A post-industrial city therefore, need not have been a modern city, that is to say, to have ever undergone a process of industrialisation such as a city like Manchester has, but needs to be able to access the flow of capital and information through the global media. This means that cities like Jakarta, Bangkok, and even Tokyo are considered post-industrial cities even though they do not share the history of modern Western cities such as London, Paris, or Amsterdam. The postmodern city indicates a city that has experienced some or all of the history associated with the modern city (becoming industrialised before 1945) but in which global economic forces have since (1945) acted to limit or even disable the Nation State's capacity to regulate the conditions of those living within their cities.<sup>26</sup> The global city indicates a postmodern and/or post-industrial city that has become enmeshed within networks of global capital and information moving freely through the city. In broader terms, mediums for the international flows of information include but are not limited to international newspapers and books, film, radio and television, satellite television and radio, as well as publication and broadcasting on the world wide web. This concept of the global city can thus incorporate experiences found in any city in the world as long as individuals living in such cities are exposed either to the international flow of money or are subject to an international flow of information through communication media.

#### i) The Global Cinematic City

the 'feeling you get when you step out of an Italian or a Dutch gallery into a city that seems the very reflection of the paintings you have just seen, as if the city had come out of the painting and not the other way round [... This is like coming out of a cinema into an] American city [which] seems to have stepped right out of the movies. [...] To grasp its secrets, you should not, then, begin with the city and move towards the screen; you should begin with the screen and move towards the city.<sup>27</sup>

The cinematic city indicates a sense of the city that the individual gains through interactions with the cinematic apparatus. The cinematic city is not limited by the individual's physical proximity or material locality with the object. Space and time in the technologically-mediated city are derived from a range of inputs, some distant and mediated by technology, and some close to hand and mediated only by the individual's body.<sup>28</sup> As Benjamin points out, the social bonds and relations of modern capitalist societies are embedded within mass forms of communication like the cinematic apparatus.<sup>29</sup> However, the global cinematic city describes particularities and experiences associated with modern, postmodern, and post-industrial cities in which the citizen's sense of self and the city's representation are increasingly produced with and derived from communication media. While other technologies such as the internet are playing an increasingly important role in the compression of time and space and the creation of global culture,<sup>30</sup> I focus on the cinema because the cinema is still one of the most widely available forms of media in the global city. This means that the cinema is accessible to individuals even if they do not have access to new media technologies and the internet.

Irrespective of the form of media, however, technology has had a dramatic impact on the individual experience of time and space in the global city. Foucault has described a new kind of spatial experience that is found in modern societies as a 'heterotopia'. In "Of Other Spaces,"<sup>31</sup> Foucault writes that a 'heterotopia' is a "simultaneity" or "juxtaposition" of different places, a "near and a far" and a "side by side" of realities that would ordinarily not be possible without modern technology. This describes the sense of space in the global cinematic city, spaces that are situated within and by technological apparatuses such as the cinema that are located and dispersed throughout the global city. Although ultimately constrained by individuals'

organic experience within the human body, time too has become heterochronic in the global city. The cinematic apparatus represents time in alternate ways also, varying both the duration and perception of a moment. There are numerous techniques in the cinema that do this. For example, a moment of real time can be made to take up hours in the cinema using techniques such as slow motion or spliced in edits to present alternative perceptions of that moment.<sup>32</sup> More commonly though, films often compact the passage of much longer periods of time, sometimes even decades or centuries, into the screen time of just one movie. While the individual's inner sense of time and space always remains pivotal, the cinematic apparatus enhances the sense of presence of other times and spaces in the consciousness of the viewer.

In Chapter 4 I define how and identify why Wenders' two films depict Berlin as part of the global city. Although Berlin had been an important centre in the flow of information internationally during the Cold War, a point that is re-inforced by the city's depiction in *Wings of Desire*,<sup>33</sup> its significance in the global economy was only marginal during that period. With the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, however, and with the subsequent re-unification of both German states, Berlin became an important hub for the movement of economic goods and capital between the former Eastern bloc nations and the West. Set in the early stage of these developments, *Faraway So Close* depicts how the international flow of capital, goods and services, and people started to impact on the life of Berlin's inhabitants.<sup>34</sup>

## 2) Why Berlin?

Berlin is useful in undertaking a study of the evolution of the global city because, in over 700 years of history, it has grown from the two originally walled in villages called *Cölln* and *Berlin* to a complex modern city. In

addition, during the 20th Century, Berlin has played an instrumental role in defining the cinematic city. In the 1920s, Berlin's Babelsberg, along with Hollywood, were the two principal centres for cinema production in the world. Furthermore, with films like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, a futuristic depiction of the metropolis turned into a dystopian nightmare in which the individual's life has become governed by the machines of production, and Walter Ruttmann's more optimistic view of the musical interaction between biology and technology in the modern city in *Berlin, Symphony of a Big City*, Berlin played a leading role in developing early filmic discourses and portrayals of the city. As I show in Chapter 4, Berlin continues to inform that evolving discourse, not only through the production of Wenders' two films, but by the more recent production of Thomas Schadt's *Berlin - Sinfonie einer Großstadt* (2002). The comparison between Ruttmann's with Schadt's films sheds light on the development and changing realities of cities between the early 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century. What Schadt's version of the modern city shows is the increasing influence motor vehicles are playing in shaping the construction of social spaces in the city, as evidenced through the provision of highways, parking bays, petrol stations, traffic lights, the widening of streets and building of monolithic city blocks that help to make the city so inhospitable to the pedestrian.

During the 1930s, Berlin superseded its role as a hub for filmic discourses about the city and became a real life film set for the unfolding drama of European history. This role continued after World War II when divided Berlin became a potential flash point when the stand off between East and West threatened to turn the Cold War into a hot nuclear confrontation. Then with the sudden collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1990, Berlin took up another role on the global stage. Now the city signalled the possibility of a mediation of the

conflicts that had divided East and West. Berlin played an important role in the integration of the former East Germany, and it has continued in that role in the incorporation of eight former Eastern Bloc countries into the European Union in 2004.

Today, in addition to again becoming the German capital, Berlin is the third largest Turkish city in the world.<sup>35</sup> Multicultural Berlin will undoubtedly play an important role in deciding Turkey's potential entry into the European Union, and henceforth, the Turkish people's attempts at parity with the world's wealthier nations. This also carries the promise to bridge the gap between the Christian and Muslim worlds and so reinforce the bonds of global peace while recognising and respecting different cultural traditions. With such transformations taking place across transnational boundaries, a question remains about how individuals will continue to participate as citizens in the global city.

### 3) Who is a Global Citizen

As Toby Miller explains, the concept of global citizenship unlocks many conventional notions about what constitutes citizenship. Miller's notion of citizenship purposely counters innate properties of the individual such as the soil upon which they were born and their blood ties with a particular group of people, carrying with them binding and fixed relations that can never be freely chosen or decided upon by the individual. Instead of citizenship rights and responsibilities being granted along blood-ties and pledges and allegiances to the Nation State, Miller argues that citizenship should be based on the expression of 'different forms of engagement between state and person'.<sup>36</sup> The individual enters into relations with others in a community in which everyone agrees to "give and receive things"<sup>37</sup> such as social welfare in exchange of individual's participation in a

country's processes of governance and engagement in the election process. Chapter 5 outlines some recent debates concerning citizenship before considering how Wenders depicts how a number of his characters participate in the life of the city in his films.

4) Why study *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* to understand global culture?

There are a number of compelling reasons for choosing these films for this study. From the angels Damiel and Cassiel strolls around Berlin, observing as they do the life of the city's inhabitants, to the films' depiction of hypermobility in modern societies, the films reflect many significant aspects of life in modern cities. These include the sense of alienation associated with modern cities, the need for love and meaningful communication with others, and the loneliness some feel when such needs are not met. The angels' inability to relate with their human charges finally brings the angel Damiel, tiring of his inability to understand the human condition, to abandon his long standing vigil over life and, as he puts it, "jump into the stream of time". His wish to participate in the lives of the people reflects a basic human desire to engage with the world in which they live. In realising his desire, he stresses that a practical, fully immersed, and immediate engagement with life is more satisfying than the angel's stand-off mode of contemplative reflection and meditation of the human condition.

Not content with just portraying this condition, *Wings of Desire* seeks to establish a different sense of life in the city, a life in which, in the midst of total disintegration Marion, the leading female role in *Wings of Desire*, experiences, there emerges the promise of re-integration and coherence. This somewhat schizophrenic film then incorporates a further warning from Homer, an aging storyteller who almost haunts the main protagonists,

Marion and Damiel in this film, that there is still the need to reflect on practice through the representation of life through narratives. In fact, both *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* suggest that there is a strong continuing need the individual living in the modern city has to develop narratives that account for and evaluate their lives. *Faraway So Close!* develops these themes further by depicting the angel Cassiel's attempts to grasp the potential and responsibilities of being "good" in the emergent realities of the once divided city at the conclusion of the Cold War. The task that confronts Cassiel depicts how many individuals continue to struggle against powerful external forces such as the international economy to inhabit their city in ways that are morally sustainable while remaining engaged with their own personal aspirations. Cassiel's period of existence as a human being in this film develops the theme of how the individual can participate in the life of the city in ways that not only profit the individual but also benefit the whole of society. Both films provoke their viewers to think about many aspects of the realities that confront the individual living in the city no matter where they happen to live. As I show in Chapters 4 and 5, these films depict how many individuals living in contemporary cities experience themselves as fragmented, schizophrenic subjects, faking actors forever changing roles and costumes that never seem authentic. For some writers, films like *Wings of Desire* typify what has been described as "the postmodern condition".<sup>38</sup> Both films are compelling viewing for a researcher interested in understanding the role of the work of art in depicting the life of individuals in contemporary cities.

There are other factors that make these films important in thinking about and representing different subjectivities in a global culture. Identifying the specifics of these global subjects can be begun by thinking about the position Wenders himself occupies as an artist working in an

international context. As the products of an individual who sits uncomfortably within a commercially oriented film industry, Wenders' films unsettle, or at least disturb what is otherwise a more homogenous notion of global culture developed in Anglo-phonetic discourses issuing from London and New York and issuing along so-called "free market imperatives". However, that is not to say that Wenders himself is such an unconventional artist. Yet there is something enigmatic about Wenders' film-making practice in that his films often inspired by Hollywood and focus on the basest values of commercial value while at the same time aspiring towards artistic innovation. It is this contradiction as much as anything that nuances his work and enables his films' viewers to think in two directions. The first points towards the work of art that facilitates the individual's struggle to find authentic expressions through which to participate in the social and cultural processes taking place around them. These include the *off-centre* focus on places like Berlin, a city on the margins of the global economy during the Cold War. Secondly, however, his films continue to construct his subjects in relatively conventional terms that re-inforce overarching cultural biases and predispositions evident in facets of global culture such as the global economy and the international media. Wenders' films' broaden the scope of the global city so that individual perspectives not always represented in commercial productions can participate in the production of global culture.

##### 5) What is the work of art in the age of global culture

While the primary focus of this Thesis is on how Wenders' two films work to realise the participation of the "Angels in Berlin" in a global context, this investigation also thinks about the work that art can do in a globalised and globalising culture. Chapter 6 returns to the basic question driving this Thesis: what is the work of art in the age of global culture? The focus of this question remains the work produced in interactions between individuals and

works of art in global contexts. In doing so, I turn to recent events in Holland and examine how the work of art is facilitating the participation of different individuals in society there. The impact of Theo van Gogh's last film, *Submission Part 1* (2004) again shows that art continues to enable individuals to participate in the renewal of their bonds with others in contemporary society. Complementing this Thesis' primary focus of study by correlating it with the study of other works of art and events in cities around the world again stresses the importance of the work of art in a global context. However, as the tragic consequences of van Gogh's film indicate, the capacity of the individual to consciously participate in that process hinges entirely on the conscious awareness the individual develops in and through their relationship with the artifact. I conclude the Thesis by recapping why Wenders' films are important in considering the state of contemporary global culture, what further questions this research leads to, and final comments on the directions Wenders has taken since making these films.

### III

#### Notes on Theory and Methodology

##### 1) Is this Thesis a Practical Theory for Encountering Art

This Thesis regards "theory" as an introspective mode of reflective cognition. Reflective cognition represents objects and events that appear suspended from the individual's direct 'subjective experience'.<sup>39</sup> Because representations refer to something that is removed in some way from the physical present of the individual's actual location in time and space, only representations that maintain a connection with the individual in their present sense of reality that achieve significant meaning. "Practice", on the other hand, is a processional mode of participation a living being capable of producing a subjective experience generates when and as that being

encounters things and events in real time and space. A subjective experience is a cognitive construction of an interaction between an object and a being that can consciously represent that interaction. A subjective experience is therefore not to be found in a chemical reaction, but can be found in interactions involving living self-regulating beings.<sup>40</sup> This means that the epistemological nature of subjective experience is 'interdisciplinary'.

As I argue in Chapter 3, introspective reflection (theory) and processional action (practice) are different modes of interaction in the subjective moment. The mode of interaction actualise subjective apprehensions of encounters with things, including art, as the individual processionally interacts with them and other living beings in the real world. Sometimes, these apprehensions lead the individual to form new bonds and relations, and sometimes they will lead them to renew existing bonds and relations in reality. For the purpose of this discussion it has seemed necessary to sometimes separate theory from practice, yet it is important to remember that theory and practice continue to take place simultaneously and contiguously in living beings. Furthermore, although an individual may conceive of critical choices while operating in a mode of theoretical reflection, it is only when these choices are actualised in the individual's practical interactions with others that introspective reflections make a critical contribution to the actual quality of that individual's world. So this Thesis concludes that the level of critical self consciousness and self determined participation (i.e. subjective responses) is heightened when the two modes of activity, theoretical reflection and practical action, are engaged conjointly.

But there are other compelling reasons for adopting an interdisciplinary approach in analysing the impact of art such as film on the individual. In recent years, there has been much discussion about how

modern media effect the individual in terms of generating immersive experiences as they encounter information that is artificially stimulated through media to simulate real life experiences.<sup>41</sup> Although much of this discussion has focused on new media's capacity to generate experiences through 3D animation, artificial life, virtual reality, and simulation,<sup>42</sup> the same tendencies can also be identified in other media forms such as film and television.<sup>43</sup> From the use of flight simulators in the training of pilots to experiences generated by IMAX cinemas, the capacity of modern modes of communication such as film to combine visual, aural, and other sensual stimulation means that analysing the encounter between an individual and such media needs to be approached from a number of perspectives.

In the context of learning more about how the individual participates in the daily life of the global city, interdisciplinary approaches produce diverse understanding of what actually takes place when individuals go to the cinema. This approach is reflected in the conjunction of Benjamin's critical ideological analysis of the work of art and Grodal's aesthetic analysis of the art object and its production. While acknowledging that interdisciplinary approaches sometimes produce findings that run contrary to orthodox methods generated by a purer application of theoretical academic disciplines, and that my analyses is neither cognitivist nor critical theory, I suggest that interdisciplinary strategies are appropriate to understand the individual's multifaceted engagement with films.

Not all individuals are aware that art is a form of mediation that effects their relationship with life and the rest of the world however. Such individuals may also be unaware of how they reproduce the bonds and relations implicitly embedded in mediated perceptions about the world back into their lives in giving meaning to the artifact. Individuals who are unaware of how art works can overlook or disregard their own contribution

to the production of the artifact's meaning. This is when a viewer may attribute a certain 'natural-ness' to filmic constructions of the city even though cinematic constructions are, like all artifacts, always contrived. As suggested by the etymology of "art", the work of art is not something that comes into existence naturally. Words like art, artificial, artifact, article, refer to something that a human being has made or has added some value or attribute to, and that is not present in the naturally occurring world.

Furthermore, making art always implies the future presence of a human being in relation to that object, even if that individual is the same person who made it in the first place. Art requires the participation of that human being in order for the artifact to become meaningful. Irrespective of whether an individual is conscious of their contribution to the construction of meaning or not, the implicit participation of the individual remains essential in enlivening the semiotic codes that underpin the relations between the object and reality. Nevertheless, in order for art's representations to make sense, that individual must already have experienced both the form and language that art takes and the reality to which it refers in order for that individual to apprehend the artifact's subject. Thus the individual participates in the production of meaning at every step surrounding the artifact's realisation in terms of both the relationships it expresses in the reality of the individual as well as to relationships it has with the things that it represents. So art can be regarded as a material form of abstract representation of relations between itself, the life of the individual, and the world within which both exist. In giving these relations an embodied form extrinsic to the individual's enacting of them, art can facilitate that individual's conscious awareness of their experiences, including the way in which that individual relates meaningfully with the objects around them.

Even artifacts such as films require this fundamental contribution in order for them to be seen and understood. Like many modern forms of art, however, the cinematic apparatus makes a film's representation of the world appear as if it is independent of the viewer. This may make the individual mistakenly conclude that it is the film which "reveals" what is happening in that individual's world. As I argue in Chapters 2 and 3 however, this is the work of art's audience. Whether the individual is aware of their contribution or not, a film helps the individual to re-apprehend the world within which they live, and even to re-shape their understanding of that world. An individual who is aware of the work that art does 'reads' the work of art at a higher level of sophistication. This sophistication enhances the individual's ability to unravel the package of social bonds and relations transmitted in and through art such as a film and so to unravel the nature of their participation in the perpetuation of such bonds and relations.<sup>44</sup>

In Chapter 6, I return to the dilemma created when critical reflection and practice are separated from each other and later related back together through the work of art. What becomes clear in recent events in Holland is that while the reflective mode helps to analyse relations taking place in the world, the work of artistic expressions is to assist a practical active mode of engagement in those living relations. As I argue in Chapter 3, a work of art heightens the conscious awareness of the individual by assisting them to reflect consciously on those bonds and relations in their world. The example in Chapter 6 suggests that an exceptional work of art helps the individual to not only reflect on the existing bonds and relations, but also to reflect on the potential consequences of an intervention should the individual decide to alter these relations. Recent events in Holland show that a work of art need not necessarily result in a peaceful re-working of the bonds and relations in society. This is why maintaining and expanding as wide a range of artistic

expression in global society as possible is essential in equipping individuals to both articulate and deal constructively with events, issues, and problems that they may encounter in realising their life of the global city.

I propose that each of the films studied in this Thesis can enhance an individual's awareness of their relationships with others in the age of global culture. Hence one may conclude that all these films are works of art because they all have a capacity to enable individuals to reflect consciously on the aspects that are meaningful in their lives. Although every example studied has its limitations, even van Gogh's film has demonstrably enabled the individual to grasp and participate in the emerging potentialities of the actual cities in which they live. The time has come to ask now whether this is the constructive protagonist, the global citizen, this Thesis imagines? An exceptional work of art is one that enables the individual to conceptually abstract critiques about not only the existing bonds and relations within which they operate, but also reflect on potential consequences of a range of interventions that they may produce to either perpetuate or alter those bonds and relations. A truly exceptional work of art, however, is one that helps the individual to become a global citizen by consciously and intelligently participating in evolving global culture around them. Assuming that under normal circumstances, a healthy human being would neither choose to end their own lives prematurely, nor take it upon themselves to end the life of another unnecessarily, here emerges a criteria that suggests how different works of art can be qualitatively assessed: higher works of art work towards perpetuating and enhancing human life in relation with others.<sup>45</sup> Viewing films about other cities around the world avails much cultural information from other individuals experiences in other social, cultural, and linguistic contexts. Such films expand the repertoire of the individual's actual living performance in the city. Even if

individuals do not know or recognise their fellow citizens while they are sitting in the cinemas sprinkled throughout the world, they are simultaneously in/formed and in/forming the culture of the global city as well as the immediate cities within which they live.

## 2) The Work of Art beyond Relativism

Contrary to assertions that a Thesis such as this assigns discussions about art, culture, and society to relativism, looking at interactions between art and individuals opens up avenues of discussion for all sorts of objects as works of higher artistic value. While this certainly relativises each artifact, it does not devalue the work that artists do because although any artifact may now be considered as a work of artistic worth, artists who constantly and consistently practice the making of artifacts develop skills and capabilities in handling their materials that irregular workers can not. It remains crucial that artistic expressions continues to be encountered as the individual chooses and that meaning corresponds with that of the individual irrespective of the value the work achieves in the market place. Only then can art successfully express and articulate the nature of global life. When individuals encounter such expressions through channels like the cinema, they again relate that work both directly and meaningfully to their own living situations. So art enables the individual to reflect on their lived realities both thoughtfully and critically.

It might be argued that what I identify as the work of art is reflected in assumptions in traditional aesthetic and art theory that underpin Grodal's approach. There is a long tradition in Western art stemming from Kant through to Schelling and Hegel that suggests that the real social work of art is to educate and enlighten 'the human race'.<sup>46</sup> This is when 'art is supposed to become effective in place of religion as the unifying power, because it is

understood to be a “form of communication” that enters into the intersubjective relationships between people’.<sup>47</sup> In Chapter 3 I argue that the authority for art to do its ‘socialising work’, so to speak, can not be derived from an institutional or production setting, however, or even from a scholarly authority or aesthetic tradition that presumes the power to govern and regulate relations between the individual and the art object. The work of art envisaged by this Thesis is founded in each individual’s actual interaction with the artifact. This unique interaction between the individual and the object is the only authority that can legitimate the relations that they have. I argue that only when the work produced by encounters between art and its audience incorporates the conscious participation of the individual can the work of art really be considered to be exceptional. This is when the relationship between art and the individual fosters a genuinely democratic bond.

This is why the discrimination against non-commercial artists has a dramatic impact on the democratic processes of the community.<sup>48</sup> The narrowing in artistic practice under the guise of allowing the market to do its work reduces the value of the work to an exchange commodity. A reduction of the scope of art leads to a reduced variety of creative expressions available to an individual in their culture. By homogenising the expressions about contemporary life an individual can choose from, the individual’s ability to consciously reflect on the range of living situations they come into contact with decreases. The loss of sophistication in human communication leads to an inability to identify and understand different subjective experiences as well as to an impoverishment in the language individuals have to mediate between their varying and potentially conflicting positions. As the conclusion of this Thesis shows, the diminution of the individual’s ability to express themselves authentically results in

death. It is vital in the age of global culture that the work of art is freed from the constructions of a mythical popular majority as well as from the domain of the elites in society. Left in the hands of an elite, art reproduces the cultural bonds and relations that represent the interests of that elite and not the society as a whole. When art is made to masquerade as a popular public spectacle, it becomes a totalising tool that reduces the individual to a broad spectrum majority constructed by mass channels of communication.<sup>49</sup> Today, film and cinema are powerful forms of artistic expression, and yet they are one of the most elite forms of production. Films are elite because the cost of producing films which then gain access to a global audience is prohibitive. Because of this, films are potentially a dangerous and yet productive means of realising or inhibiting the development of a democratic global culture. This makes their study critical and necessary.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Robert Hughes, *The Shock of the New; Art and the Century of Change*, 1993, p 111.
- <sup>2</sup> Artists in earlier eras also understood that it was possible to produce art for a range of reasons including the production of art with no appreciable market value. As Hughes indicates  
The difference between us and the artists of the 1920s is that they thought such a work of art could be made. Perhaps it was a certain naïveté that made them think so. But it is certainly our loss that we cannot.  
Ibid p 111.
- <sup>3</sup> Works of art exhibited in private and commercial galleries have always needed to ensure some prospects of a commercial transaction associated with their display, even though it is notoriously difficult to establish a commercial value for art that covers all the costs of production.
- <sup>4</sup> One of the earliest and most influential articulation of the distinction and relative value of art and popularly produced works was made by Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's essay "The Culture Industry". See Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1997, pp 120 - 167. See also the "Introduction" pp xi - xvii to that volume.
- <sup>5</sup> It was once possible to produce art with the intention that it was only for display. Such displays typically took place in publicly funded contexts like the BBC and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, government run art galleries such as regional and municipal galleries, and community oriented exhibition spaces. These contexts allowed the individual to encounter art outside a market context.
- <sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for a further detailed account of the contemporary state of artistic production and expression in Australia.
- <sup>7</sup> For my purpose, the "cinematic apparatus" is a totality of techniques and technologies

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(including the industrial, social, and cultural institutions such as the film studio and theatres, film museums and film festivals, film academies) as well as film directors, actors, and their audiences, that must be in place in order for a film to be seen by people and for that film to assume a meaningful relationship with their world. The "cinematic apparatus" describes an entire mode of communication that incorporates not only the buildings and other physical and production technologies and infrastructure required to produce and display films, but also the institutions that surround and embed those technologies in codes of understanding and meaning as well as codes of practice and actualisation. The cinematic apparatus embeds relations that preserve the principal financial investors of film production in the relations between the artifact and the individual who finally encounters it. According to Benjamin, the cinematic apparatus in conventional cinema works precisely to perpetuate these relations so that the bonds produced by such relations continue to reflect the dominant positions of capital and industry whose power is meaningfully reproduced in the interactions between art and the individual.

8 Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", *Illuminations*, 1992, pp 77, 79.

9 As Benjamin puts it,

the language of a translation can - in fact, must - let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself, as its own kind of *intentio*.

Ibid p 79. In fact, Benjamin is at pains through out this essay to argue that the translation is not a reproduction of the original in a new language, yet neither must the language of the translation be allowed to reduce the artifact's original expressive intention to the structures of the translator's language. What Benjamin concludes is that a work of art that is translatable moves the language of its translation to express something that has not been expressed before in that language. In this way, translation moves the language of the translator closer to an ideal language Benjamin calls "pure language" (ibid pp 77 - 79), but this is a language that is never realised except in doctrine. What Benjamin appears to finally suggest is that when art is translated, it moves the language of its translation one step closer to the ideal of language, even though that ideal actually doesn't exist. Instead what really exists is the constant flows of languages as they struggle to come to grips with expressing the experiences of those who use them. Thus what Benjamin finally arrives at in the "Translation" essay is a position that ironises the absolute certainty of meaning that is found in doctrinaire statements such as the Scriptures while suggesting that the work of art in translation always falls short of that absolute position, yet always also challenges the language of the translation to adapt itself to a new form of expression never before articulated in that language.

10 As Lindsay Barrett documents, the purchase of *Blue Poles* caused much debate in the 1970s because of the price the Australian National Gallery paid. Debate about the relative value and worth of Pollock's painting continues in Australia, as Alison Wright's report for The 7-30 Report called "National Gallery celebrates 20 years" (broadcast on 07/10/2002) indicates. The debate has always been swallowed, however, by the paintings's monetary value. This was the reason its purchase by the Australian National Gallery was so controversial in the 1970s, and the painting's monetary value continues to be the main interest of Wright's report. Little attention has been devoted to the significance of the painting as a cultural object, or its relevance to the Australian community. Perhaps this points to weaknesses in the Australian National Gallery's reasons for buying the painting. For if the painting was purchased so as to locate the Gallery on the international art scene map, over and above the relevance it may have had to Australian culture, then it is understandable why such debate should continue to curcumvent itself around the international reputation of the painting as well as its monetary value. For a full transcript of Wright's programme, see the ABC website. See also Lindsay Barrett, *The Prime*

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*Minister's Christmas Card: Blue Poles and Cultural Politics in the Whitlam Era*, 2001.

- 11 Benjamin, 1992, p 235.
- 12 Ibid p 82.
- 13 Even in the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, Benjamin offers this hope, particularly in his assessment of the work of Picasso (Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", 1992, pp 227 - 228) and also when he considers the work of the Dadaists (ibid pp 230 - 232). However the clearest indication of Benjamin's continuing faith in art can be found in the second last sentence of the first paragraph of Section "X" in the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay.

We do not deny that in some cases today's films can also promote revolutionary criticism of social conditions, even of the distribution of property.

Ibid p 224.
- 14 Ibid pp 81 - 82.
- 15 This is how Mikhail Epstein describes the word painting art of Ilya Kabakov;

Art [...] becomes a rite of circumnavigating emptiness, of slow, cautious, and deliberate capitulation. It is Kutuzov's, not Napoleon's tactics of encountering emptiness: instead of attacking it with militant cultural projects, one retreats, ceding [...] where emptiness least expects to find a place - at the heart of the artist's creation. In order to prevent emptiness from swallowing up this creation, depriving it of meaning from the outside, it is made to curl up inside it, like a quiet, well fed, docile wild animal in a cage.

Mikhail Epstein, Alexander A Genis, Slobodanka M. Vladiv-Glover, *Russian Postmodernism; New Perspectives on Post-Soviet Culture*, 1999, p 326.
- 16 For more on the work of art as an osmotic body, see John Grech, "Empty Space and the City: The Reoccupation of Berlin", 2002, pp 132 - 135.
- 17 See Torben Graag Grodal, "Art Film, the Transient Body, and the Permanent Soul", 2000.
- 18 Cited in John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods*, 1996, pp 18 - 24.
- 19 Benjamin, 1992, p 249.
- 20 A comparison between *Blue Poles* and *Blue Heelers* is arbitrary in a sense, and is intended as an example of a situation where the comparative value between artifacts of different cultural values can be established using popular opinion.
- 21 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its origins, its transformations, its prospects*, 1974.
- 22 From the sleeve notes, Jonathan Raban, *Soft City*, 1998. Some writers have used the notion of the postmodern city to deal specifically with the construction of "the cinematic city". See for example, Elisabeth Mahoney, "The People in Parentheses": Space Under Pressure in the Postmodern City" in David B. Clarke (ed), *The Cinematic City*, 1997, pp 168 - 185. Other writers in this collection also make use of the term to indicate a range of aspects generally associated with life in cities during the 20th Century. For example, Colin McArthur relates the idea of the postmodern city with the representation of the dystopian city. See Colin McArthur, "Chinese Boxes and Russian Dolls: Tracking the Elusive Cinematic City" again in Clarke, 1997, pp 19 - 45, particularly pp 31 - 32. The notion of the "postmodern condition" plays an important role in framing discussions of contemporary life in the city in this Thesis. For a history of the origins and use of the word 'postmodern' see Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity*, 1998. Useful sources that define terms and aspects of the postmodern are Walter Truett Anderson (ed), *The Fontana Postmodern Reader*, 1996; Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, 1998; Stewart Sim, *The Icon Critical Dictionary of Postmodern Thought*, 1998. For outlines and broader historical and cultural analyses of modernity and postmodernity, see Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1987; Fredric Jameson,

- Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1996; Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*, 1988; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990; Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 1990; and Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on Postmodernism, 1983 - 1998*, 1998. For critical responses to initial analyses of the postmodern condition, see Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*, 1989; Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, 1997; John Frow, *What Was Postmodernism?*, 1991; Suzi Gablik, *Has Modernism Failed*, 1987; Hal Foster (ed), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture*, 1991; E. Anne Kaplan (ed), *Postmodernism and It's Discontents*, 1989; Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, 1989; Mark Poster, *Cultural History and Postmodernity: Disciplinary Readings and Challenges*, 1997; Richard Shusterman, "Postmodernist Aestheticisms: A New Moral Philosophy?", 1988. Finally, although not concerned with postmodernity as such, Peter Wollen's *Raiding the Icebox, Reflections on 20th Century Culture*, 1993, tracks the development of art in relation to developments in culture, and thus offers a bridging text between historical and critical analyses located in art, culture, and social history.
- 23 For more on how these two films indicate the nature of the postmodern city in a global context, particularly relating to the mediated experiences of time and space in the global economy, see Harvey, 1990, pp 308 - 323.
- 24 See for example, H. P. Martin & H. Schuman, *The Global Trap*, 1997; Alan Scott (ed) *The Limits of Globalisation: Cases and Arguments*, 1997; Allen Scott (ed), *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, and Policy*, 2001; David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, 2001; Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, 2000; Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, 2000; Saskia Sassen, *The Global City, New York, London, Tokyo*, 2001, and Saskia Sassen (ed), *Global Networks, Linked Cities*, 2002.
- 25 There are many sources one can refer to in discussing the rise and characteristics of post industrial society although Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society*, 1992, and Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scot Lash, *Reflexive Modernization, Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, 1994, have been useful in developing my thinking about the modern city. I also find Lewis Mumford's *The City in History*, 1974, enduringly instructive while Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*, 2002, also provides an early evocation of the placements and displacements of life in early modern Paris.
- 26 For documentation of the diminution of the State's power to regulate and control the economic and social conditions of those living in cities in Western economies during the 20th Century, see Donald Sassoon, *One Hundred Years of Socialism, The West European Left in the Twentieth Century*, 1997. For an indication of Left-leaning responses to these developments at the end of the century, see also Will Hutton's *The State We're In*, 1997a, and *The State to Come*, 1997b.
- 27 Jean Baudrillard, *America*, cited by Clarke, 1997, p 1.
- 28 This is exemplified by Peter Falk's depiction of the city in the opening sequences of *Wings of Desire*.
- 29 In traditional art, as Benjamin also shows, the social bond and cultural relations between individuals and their culture and world are embedded in the aura of the art object. However, in traditional contexts, the work of art is not mobile in the sense that transnational communication media are. Furthermore, traditional art had always to be seen in its proper ritual setting. The display of traditional art was a sacrilege outside its traditional setting. See Benjamin, 1992, pp 217 - 219.
- 30 For more on the compression of time and space in postmodernity, see Harvey, 1990.
- 31 "Heterotopia" in the global cinematic city describes a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein ... the modern heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing

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in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. ... the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space. See Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces* (online).

- 32 In *Lola Rennt* (1998), Tom Tykwer presents three different versions of a race against time that actually only takes place in 20 minutes.
- 33 Living with illusions of fluid social relations, Marion and others in *Wings of Desire* show how they paradoxically experience the alienating Wall at the city's heart as the last remains of security that Berlin afforded. This points to one of the ironies and contradictions of the global city in that, amidst the freedom promised by the fluidity of the postmodern city, many individuals experience an increased sense of anxiety and insecurity that seems to have resulted in their longing for a re-imposition of familiar borders and personal boundaries.
- 34 For an analysis of how Berlin was subject to a range of external as well as internal socio-political and economic pressures in its reconstruction during the 1990s, see Howard Caygill "The Futures of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz", 1997. For portrayals of everyday life (including the impact of war and military power) in Berlin during the 20th Century, see Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, 1998; Dietfried Müller-Heggemann, "The Berlin Wall Illness", 1974, and Alexandra Ritchie *Faust's Metropolis; A History of Berlin*, 1999. For some general impressions of what makes life in Berlin unique, see Jacques Derrida, Kurt Forster and Wim Wenders, "The Berlin City Forum Symposium", 1992. Other useful writings about Berlin include Jürgen Habermas, *A Berlin Republic: Writings on Germany*, 1998, and Fredric Jameson, "Ramblings on Old Berlin", 1997.
- 35 There are many other cities in the world, such as Melbourne in Australia, the third largest Greek city in the world, where place-location may no longer reflect the composition, histories, and sources identifications of the people living there. Like all multicultural cities, Berlin is challenged with the task of evolving structures of inclusion that represent the interests of its global citizenry.
- 36 Toby Miller, "Exchange-Value Citizenship", 1998, p 46.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 For example, see Harvey, op cit, 1990, pp 308 - 328, Andrew Murphie, "Sound At The End Of The World As We Know It", 1996; Roger Cook and Gerd Gemunden (eds), *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: Image, Narrative, and the Postmodern Condition*, 1997; David Caldwell & Paul W Rea, "Handke's and Wenders' *Wings of Desire*: Transcending Postmodernism", 1991; Clarice Botkus, *Shifting Sands; An Analysis of Wim Wenders' 'Wings of Desire' & 'Faraway So Close' in Relationship to Postmodernity*, 1996.
- 39 Thomas Mautner identifies four different aspects of 'subjective experience', each of which may be argued against for being in some ways limited or partial to beliefs or opinions held by an individual. This is how Mautner describes them;
- 1 a subjective experience is introspective, i.e. it is a subject's direct experience of itself, in contrast to experience of things and states external to the subject.
  - 2 more generally, subjective is that which belongs to any subject conceived as a self, a mind.
  - 3 in another sense, similar to the above, more restricted, subjective is that which belongs to one, or a number of subjects, but not necessarily to all.
  - 4 what is subjective is a mere matter of personal taste or preference; lacking in truth or validity; arbitrary.

See Thomas Mautner (ed), *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1997, p 546. In a philosophical argument, Mautner states that 'it is often taken for granted that it is legitimate to criticise a belief or opinion for being 'subjective'; [but ...] the criticism only amounts to saying that someone holds the opinion, [... or] that not everyone

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agrees, which is not much of an objection' (p 546). Mautner continues that it is only the last of the four types of subjective experience that can sustain serious objection, 'but to be effective it will of course have to be backed by reasons' (p 546).

40 The concept of 'subjective experience' used here is best thought of Mautner's (op cit, p 546) third category (see note above), as a way of negotiating between the experiences of different individuals relating together in social contexts. However, in itself, this does not completely indicate how living beings (subjects with minds of their own) interact with the world around them. I find systems theorist Heinz von Foerster notions of 'trivial' and 'non-trivial' machines useful in developing a systematic approach of how 'conscious self regulating beings' interact together. Foerster's notions of 'trivial' and 'non-trivial machines' are anecdotal, for although he developed these to pioneer his cybernetic theory, the scope of his work clearly indicates he was trying to understand what makes a living system of consciousness such as the human mind work. In thinking about living system as 'non-trivial machines', von Foerster defines an abstract set of principles that identify how an autonomous, self regulating or self governing system functions. I think these principles can be usefully applied to understanding how individuals work in relation to the world outside as well as to the internal functioning of a community made up of self determining subjects. Von Foerster's systematic analysis is productive both in terms of how it can illuminate how a complex system like a city works as well as how an individual functions in terms of their interactions within living structures such as social bonds and relations. Summarising von Foerster's thought, a trivial machine is one that, upon receiving a particular input, processes that input and produces an output that remains identical, irrespective of the internal (*eigen*) state of the machine itself. A non trivial machine, however, is one that, upon the reception of a particular input, will again run a series of internal processes, but in this case, the internal state of the machine plays an indeterminate role in producing that machine's eventual output. Von Foerster also attributes certain differentiating properties to non trivial machines. They are;

- i) They are historically dependent, that is, what a non trivial machine does is determined by its experience and its history.
- ii) One cannot analyse a non trivial machine because it is too complex. Non trivial machines are analytically indeterminable.
- iii) Because it is analytically indeterminate, a non trivial machine remains 'analytically unpredictable.'

See Lynn Segal, *The Dream of Reality: Heinz von Foerster's Constructivism*, 1986, pp 97 - 104, 106 - 108, 109, 112 - 113, 129 - 130, 151. (The features of non-trivial machines outlined above are on page 108.)

I prefer von Foerster's living systems approach in conjunction with other theories such as Antonio Damasio's cognitive neuroscience model of consciousness (which I deal with in Chapter 3) over theories dealing with other attributes found in conscious interacting beings. Von Foerster offers a way of understanding the process of interaction between autonomous beings without having to enter into the debates concerning 'consciousness'. A immediately apparent problem in literature dealing with theories of consciousness is the number of different theories available. See for example, Michael V. Antony, "Concepts of Consciousness, Kinds of Consciousness, Meanings of Consciousness", 2002; Mark Bickhard, "Consciousness and Reflective Consciousness", 2005, and Ned Block, "What is Dennett's Theory a Theory of?", 2005. Block's essay tries to understand Daniel Dennett's *Consciousness Explained*, 1991, a book that seems to have sparked discussion better than what it explains. For an extensive bibliography on consciousness, see also David Chalmers' "Online papers on consciousness, part 1: Philosophy of consciousness", online.

41 See, for example, Jean Baudrillard's *Simulations*, 1983; *The ecstasy of communication*, 1988; *Simulacra and simulation*, 1994; *The Gulf War did not take*

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- place, 1995.
- 42 See, for example, John Grech, "Living With the Dead: Sharkfeed and the Extending Ontologies of New Media", 2002, which examines how immersive interactions with artifacts such as web sites creates experiences that conjoin daily living experiences with mythical, historical and fictional imaginary projections.
  - 43 See, for example, the collection of essays taking a philosophical perspective on the impact of televisual forms of mediation on ontology in Tony Fry (ed), *RUA TV: Heidegger and the televisual*, 1993.
  - 44 See also Benjamin's account of how participation through art perpetuates social bonds in "Section V" of "The Work of art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in Benjamin, 1992, pp 218 - 219.
  - 45 Benjamin too arrives at this conclusion early in his "Translation" essay. See *ibid* pp 71 - 73.
  - 46 For a critique of this tradition, see Michel Foucault's discussion in "What is Enlightenment" in Rabinow, 1984, pp 32 - 50.
  - 47 This is how Habermas describes the role of art in the Romantic tradition. See "Excursus on Shiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" in Habermas, 1992, pp 45-50.
  - 48 A final point regarding the Australian situation. Government attempts to limit funding to sensible, economically beneficial, socially important work and not the 'useless' and supposedly 'anti social' research that, for example, Andrew Bolt's article "Paid To Be Pointless", 2004, points at, is limited not only to education, but to art and science generally. Such a move echoes the erosion of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's and Special Broadcasting Services' independence and commitment to the Australian people's arts and cultural expressions, as varied and as incoherent as a whole as they are, as well as recent erosion of the Australia Council through the disbanding of the New Media Arts Board and the Community Cultural Development Unit (see also the on-line discussion of New Media (Art) Board Axed at the 'fibreculture@lists.myspinach.org'). These acts of Government reduce the channels of response-ability that individuals have in society to actively participate in the creation of the currencies that make up social meaning and truth. The homogenisation of meaning and truth certainly helps to make societies coming into contact with different globally oriented norms more governable, but such homogenisation counters the choices individuals have available to choose from. In a democratic global culture, choices between different truths and meaning, as well as ways to explain global relations between individuals ought to increase. Attempts to limit the scope of cultural expression co-coincide with conservative reactions to the cultural pluralism associated with Postmodernism.
  - 49 There are many sources one can turn to in analysing mass culture in contemporary society. However, Elias Cannetti's *Crowds and Power*, 1992, and Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society, 1780-1950*, 1978, are until now two of the most enduring and perceptive analyses available.

## Chapter 2

# Towards a General Theory for the Work of Art in Culture

### Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 theorise and articulate the nature of the work that art does or can do in realising global society. This Chapter develops a theoretical model to understand what happens when an individual watches a film. My purpose is to explain how films such as *Wings Of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*, in 'throwing' the world of the angels in the city of Berlin onto the cinematic screen, not only project an imaginary reality captured by Wenders' films, but mesh that reality with the senses of the world of the individual viewing them. This propagates cognitions or 'structures of feeling'<sup>1</sup> of the world experienced ('felt') by the individual in which both they, the individual in the audience, and the film exist.

My method is derived from Walter Benjamin, most importantly "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."<sup>2</sup> While relating his discussion to art in general, Benjamin focuses on the work of cinema, particularly the work it does in its relationship between the audience and the film. Likening film to the hand of the medical surgeon,<sup>3</sup> Benjamin argues that film enters the mind of the individual and manipulates their sense of being in the world. So radical is this manipulation, argues Benjamin, that film transforms the individual's identification with the worlds both on and off the screen, inducing them to reproduce the social bonds and relations embedded in the film. Benjamin's analysis suggests that these are the bonds of property and industrial relations of the capitalist system. In making this

connection, his analysis provides a powerful tool to examine the role of art in the making of the social bonds and relations in global culture.

My reading of the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay is complemented by excursions into "The Task of the Translator" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History". The notion of translation helps to think about what happens when the two Wenders films are seen in places faraway from where the angels' walk the streets of Berlin. This essay develops a way of approaching the transmission of the meaning of art as it travels from one cultural environment to another. This is particularly useful in thinking how art performs in different (multi) cultural contexts. "Theses on the Philosophy of History" develops a stance for an active re-engagement between an individual and an artifact. Benjamin's "angel of history" is a good companion to Wenders' own angels, who experience their suspension in time and space as well as their inability to participate and intervene in the life of the city as distressful. The angel is a good tool too, in understanding the audience's own suspension in the cinema as they sit and watch the films. These two essays contribute additional elements to the general mapping "Mechanical Reproduction" provides in understanding the work of art in industrial society. I conclude the Chapter by discussing Benjamin's contribution to understanding the work of art in contemporary global culture.

There are two potential uses one can put Benjamin's analysis to. The first is to understand what happens when someone goes to the cinema and watches a film and the second is to predict the outcomes of that act in future. While I use this model in both senses, I acknowledge that this theory remains provisional, tentative, and speculative. I do not claim that this theoretical analysis explains all that may be happening in the interactions between individuals and films. What I claim is that Benjamin helps to explain some of

what is taking place when the individual goes to see films. The analysis of the actual interaction between Wenders' two films and the individual at the centre this study is the subject of the final Chapters of this Thesis.

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## I

### **An Overview of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"**

The objective of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936) was to analyse how the reproduction of the artifact has affected modern society. Directing his analysis of the impact of photography and the cinema on society, Benjamin contextualises his discussion by distinguishing the work of art in the age of capitalism from the art of earlier eras. Benjamin's concept of art differs significantly from many of his contemporaries. Conventionally, art is understood in the terms of an appreciation of a culture's highest artistic achievements. Even radical thinkers such as Adorno and Horkheimer<sup>4</sup> place greater value on the work of art when it enables an individual to contemplate and refine their thinking over an aspect of life or culture or society. Art, in this highly refined sense, is about achieving higher states of 'enlightenment'.<sup>5</sup>

Like Adorno and Horkheimer, Benjamin recognises the significance of art as an object of contemplation.<sup>6</sup> He does not deny that encounters with art may sometimes lead to enlightenment. But this is inconsequential. For him the lack of utility of art, except in the pursuit of enlightenment, the pursuit of personal refinement, connoisseurship, even art's value as a decorative object, or the contemplation of artistic beauty, are all facets of bourgeois society and the relations that promotes with art.<sup>7</sup> For Benjamin the work of art is not a prerogative of social elites but is available to all individuals.

In contrast, Benjamin situates the work of art at every level of cultural production. Even objects from everyday popular life - so disdained by Adorno and Horkheimer - becoming important to Benjamin. Indeed, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" shows that mass culture is a significant arena in which to observe the workings of modern artifacts. Even in its most banal forms, Benjamin sees important cultural work becoming manifest through the artifact. The individual's mystical relationship with the artifact becomes the foundation of their relations with other individuals, artifacts, and eventually, with the rest of the world. Every individual must participate<sup>8</sup> in this work for without it, the individual's relations and bonds with their fellow members of society would dissolve. Thus the work of art is precisely that of the renewal of humankind.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is relevant to this Thesis because it analyses;

- a) the role of art in renewing social bonds and cultural relationships;
- b) the nature of the interaction between the artifact and the individual who encounters it;
- c) the role that art plays in perpetuating global capitalism and contemporary culture;

I now detail the main points of Benjamin's argument.

#### 1) The Role of Art and Aura in the Renewal of Culture

We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual - first the magical, then the religious kind<sup>10</sup>

Aura is how Benjamin thinks about the cult value of art. He begins to define 'aura' as an object's "presence in time and space". This vests art with a uniqueness derived partly from "where it happens to be", that is, its history (including ownership) and the patina that affects its physical condition and appearance.<sup>11</sup> In addition, aura becomes manifest when the cult object is

encountered in the context of its ritualised display. Benjamin then links the 'presence of the original' with the 'concept of authenticity' adding that aura represents a 'formulation of the cult value of the work of art in categories of time and space perception'.<sup>12</sup> Thus aura implicates a 'unique phenomenon of distance however close it may be'<sup>13</sup> to the individual standing before it. Spanning distance and proximity, aura enables the individual to experience a sense of closeness and connection at the same time as maintaining the individual's sense of distance between and with the traditions, lores, and conventions the artifact represents. Aura is what vests the cult object with authority to facilitate the 'renewal of mankind'.<sup>14</sup>

Benjamin believed that for aura to do its work, the individual must be fully initiated to the social lores and conventions to which that object belongs. Only an encounter between initiated individuals and an original artifact in its traditional setting enables individuals to authenticate and renew their contact with the object's meaning. Aura embodies knowledge concerning the object's relations with the traditions to which it belongs at the same time as, when encountered within its ritualised setting, embodying bonds and relations between the object and the persons who encounter it. Through this encounter, the individual participates in the renewal of their bonds and relations with the object as well as the perpetuation of their bonds and relations with their fellow (initiated) members of society.

In its ritual context,<sup>15</sup> the artifact is a medium through which the traditions of society - sometimes thought to be the mind of God, the spirits of the elders, or the lores, legends, and traditions the object represents<sup>16</sup> - are communicated to initiated individuals. In addition, the direct encounter between initiated individuals and the original artifact is crucial because only such an individual can perceive the aura and through that decode the meaning of the tradition. In this encounter, the individual and the object

stand before each other on a one to one basis, or, as Benjamin puts it, as if 'man to man'.<sup>17</sup> The unique one to one interaction allows the individual to freely associate with the object, enabling a communication and transmission of cultural information between the individual and the object. A feature of this interaction is that it enables the individual to incorporate and re-align their inner intimate senses or "feelings" of their relations with other members of society as well as with the rest of the world. Thus the individual's sense of reality is incorporated by and within the aura of the cult object.

i) The Traditional Context in the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay

There are a number of contexts in which Benjamin's concept of aura and the traditional work the artifact performs could be applied. One is found in tribal societies where the renewal of social bonds and relations takes place in the performance of magical rituals, the retelling of mythological lores and legends, and in tribal spiritual practices. In a Western European context, however, there are two additional contexts of tradition Benjamin imagines. In a religious setting such as in Medieval France, for example, a peasant standing before a stained glass window in Chartres Cathedral is 'enlightened' - just as they are indoctrinated - by the lores and legends represented by the Scriptures. The aura of the glass window renews that peasant's bonds with the Church and through that their relations with the rest of the world. While the articulation of these relations remains constructed by codes of meaning and truth within which the Cathedral's window and the peasant remain embedded, the encounter between the artifact and the peasant hinges on the individual's perception and sense of existence within the rituals surrounding the window. This unmediated - or immediate - presence enables the peasant sense of reality to participate directly in the process of social renewal.

There is another scenario in which the aura of the artifact is essential to the renewal of the bonds and relations in the European tradition. In the theological sense, as Benjamin points out, contemplation of art enables the individual to make contact with and be 'alone with one's God.' As Benjamin continues, contemplation became a method used by the bourgeoisie 'to strengthen the freedom to shake off clerical tutelage.'<sup>18</sup> Later in secular contexts, this new found independence led the individual initiated to the lores and legends of cultural history to seek out and stand before significant objects of that traditions, such as Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* or the *Parthenon* in Greece, or even a Pyramid in Egypt, and, in the presence of such an object, renew their bonds and relations with the narratives of the Western Art historical tradition. Embedded within that tradition, the initiated individual would be aware of the accounts conferring meaning and significance to the artifact in relation with the tradition as a whole. This embodied social bonds that the individual renews with and through the object. This included bonds the object had with other significant objects belonging to that tradition. The implications of these bonds further embed relations the object and the individual had with the rest of the world.

ii) The Modern contexts that "Mechanical Reproduction" addresses

As the title suggests, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is not concerned with the role of art and the renewal of traditional society. Rather it is the role that modern artifacts such as film and photography play in the renewal of capitalist culture that interests Benjamin. This makes his essay useful still in studying the work of art in global culture.

Benjamin points out that the reproduction of traditional cult objects in capitalist societies has a significant impact on art's aura.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the authentic object retains precedence over the replica because only 'the

original preserved all its authority'.<sup>20</sup> (p 214) In addition to the object's loss of authenticity, the significance of the reproduction is further reduced by the fact that the individual standing before it need not be initiated to the lores and legends surrounding the object. Reproductions of cult objects thus need to incorporate additional information<sup>21</sup> in order to explain their significance. This dramatically alters the encounter between the individual and art objects. In contrast, the encounter between an individual and the stained glass window in Chartres did not rely on producing a structurally privileged position (as there is in mechanically reproduced art) standing over the peasant telling them what they should look for in the artifact, how they should interpret it, and what meaning this should be given.

Benjamin then recalls that reproduced art is intended to address mass audiences. Now the individual must be willing to habitually immerse themselves in a collective experience of the artifact's exhibition.<sup>22</sup> What becomes essential now is that a reproduction of an artifact satisfy the masses. It is not important what significance the reproduction has, its history,<sup>23</sup> the state of its patina, or where it is seen. Neither is the relationship between the reproduction and the individual in the mass based on authenticity. Intimate knowledge of the reproduction and it's original's history and significance, including any spiritual or religious value it may have possessed, becomes superfluous. What is important is that the reproduction divulge whatever information its audience requires to satisfy their curiosity and give them suitable reasons why they should have encountered the object. A reproduction must be adept in giving its audience the ways and means to interpret it's significance, whereas an encounter between an individual and an original art object in a traditional setting requires the individual to already be in possession of a certain level of cultural information before the encounter can begin. Aura is thus not only made less valuable, and less visible, it becomes insignificant as the source of meaning in reproduction.

In addition, in order to facilitate the commercial exploitation of the artifact, capitalism insists that it is the exhibition and exchange value of art - which is now tied to an audience's capacity to experience an identical and unchanging repetition of its display - that becomes important.<sup>24</sup> Now any individual can be congregated, their subjectivities homogenised, and feel connected as a mass to the (re)produced experience of a standard encounter with the artifact. This standardisation, Benjamin argues, no longer calls for unique encounters the individual used to have with the tradition bound object bearing the fullness of its aura. Yet if the auratic quality of the traditional cult object is no longer required, art still plays a role in renewing bonds and relations in modern societies. Benjamin suggests this continues to be achieved by a mutation of the modes of perception, existence, and participation between the individual and art.

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The power of the aura laden artifact encountered in traditional settings is that, through its ritualised display, art transmits essential information necessary for the preservation and renewal of tradition. This depends, however, on an authentic relationship between the individual with and to that tradition. Although Benjamin does not say this in so many words, the relationship between the individual and the object enables the individual to re-align their sense of everyday reality and the reality represented by the object in this encounter. This additional cultural information is then embedded within the aura of the artifact and henceforth becomes a part of the body of that tradition. This enables a tradition to incorporate new information from each passing generation so that tradition continues to correspond and resonate with the living experiences of those who inherit it. This in turn renews that tradition with fresh vitality.<sup>25</sup> Art in traditional

contexts thus preserves and perpetuates the cultural relations between past, present, and future.

Benjamin's analysis shows that in modern capitalist society the reproduction of art has eroded the significance of the aura. He further argues that the shift in the means of production has altered and propagated new bonds and relations between the art object, culture and society, and the individual. The reproduction of the artifact no longer transmits the voices of a culture's mystics, Gods, or the traditional elders who were once thought to be the source of the creative and regenerative powers of society. Instead, modern technology replaces those voices with the machinic sounds of production. Now the voice of the human mind - be it the mind of a film Director, a Medical Surgeon, or even that of the audience - has usurped the mind of God or society's Elders - as it used to be expressed by the Magician, Shaman, Priest, or Witchdoctor - that once spoke through the object's authority. With this change, the interpretive narratives that now surround the object masquerade as natural laws that define the object's supposedly innate significance. Benjamin's analysis shows that paradigmatic shifts of this magnitude affect not only the ontological states of the artifact itself, but every aspect of culture including the individual, language, and society. 'Instead of being based in ritual, it [art] begins to be based in another practice - politics'<sup>26</sup> continues Benjamin. This essay maps these shifts onto the modes of existence, perception, and participation between the individual and the artifact.<sup>27</sup> Benjamin concludes that in modern capitalist culture, technical reproduction has delivered the regeneration of society that takes place in the encounter between art and the individual to those who control production.

This Thesis argues that while the reproduction of the artifact has depleted its aura, films like *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*

nevertheless continue to play a major if largely sublimated role in perpetuating global cultural relations.<sup>28</sup> Rather than being seen to display overt qualities associated with the cult of fetish objects, however, such films become a tradeable cultural commodity. Shimmering in the spot light and equally at home in an art house cinema, art gallery, or film festival, the encounter with such artifacts produces a certain kind of kinship between individuals who may never come into contact with each other except through the mediation of the films. As Benjamin's analysis shows, the capacity to relate with others through art objects gives individuals a sense of bonding in a community. I suggest that the bonding that these films facilitate can be considered a form of cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship enables individuals to associate with others encountering the same artifacts anywhere in the world.<sup>29</sup> The sense of community generated by such films can thus be said to produce bonds and relations in a global cultural context. Chapters 4 and 5 map the work Wenders two films produce and analyse their role in renewing global culture. There I argue that the relationship developed by and between these artifacts and the city and its citizens on one hand, and between the viewer and the films on the other, reveals ways in which these films perpetuate and renew existing social bonds and cultural relationships with others as cultural citizens in a global city. Presented as adjacent properties found in cities throughout the world, these films project aspects of Berlin with a sense of 'being' as well as a sense of 'feeling' that might be considered as symptomatic of the life of cities elsewhere today. Rather than simply reflecting what might be going on in cities around the world, however, the international projection of such films instructs individuals on how and what to 'see' and how and what to 'think' as well as how and what they 'sense' and how and what they 'feel' of the cities they experience in their everyday lives. For the moment, I return to

Benjamin and continue to analyse changes in cultural production and how art's reproduction has impacted on its reception.

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## 2) The Work of the Individual and the Work of the Audience

The work performed by the individual, be it in a traditional setting such as a theatre, or a mass mediated context that accompanies a reproduced form such as film, remains central to understanding the work that art performs in modern society. Benjamin thinks that in periods of revolutionary paradigmatic shifts such as those associated with modernity and industrialisation, the ability to learn to renew the bonds and relations in society through the reproduction requires more than just mental contemplation. Entirely new modes of seeing, being, and doing must to be realised for the realisation of such a society.<sup>30</sup> Such major overhauls of the human perceptual, existential, and participatory apparatus involves the entirety of the human cognitive processes. Benjamin suggests that this overhaul takes place not only in the processes of art's reproduction, but also in the reception of the artifact. While maintaining his focus on the work performed by the artifact, Benjamin thinks the audience's role in the work that art performs remains integral.

### i) Mass Spectatorship and the Individual's Alienation from Art

Benjamin argues that mechanical reproduction forces individuals to abandon their unique stance with the artifact and accept a new, unified and infinitely repeatable viewing position. The new 'mode of existence' engendered by mechanical reproduction is the sense of being in an audience. The audience is a mass of individuals who accept a 'mode of perception' of artifacts like film from a singular and unified position.<sup>31</sup> This leads to a new 'mode of participation' in the encounter with the artifact in

which the individual must suspend their personal relationship with the object.<sup>32</sup> It is no longer important for the individual to visit the Sistene Chapel to see what is there, for its mass reception through the reproduction of it in art books, magazines, and film and TV documentaries means that it no longer hinges on the unique perception of individual in the presence of the original artifact in order to encounter it. This leads to further adjustments to that individual's 'mode of existence' for not only must they acknowledge the life of the reproduction, but they must also aspire to a unified experience of their encounter with that object in its exhibition. The implications of these new modes go beyond the cinema and impact on the global relations of the individual.

Reproduction alienates the individual from the particular and unique qualities of both the object and the individual's own reality. Benjamin makes this point by comparing seating in live theatre with that of the cinema. The cinema auditorium unifies and homogenises the once unique relationship the individual had with the actor on the stage.<sup>33</sup> No longer constrained by the physical displacement of their seat, the particularities of each individual's perspective on the actors performance in the theatre has been replaced by a generalised viewing position focused through the camera's lens. The actor's own performance has now been alienated from the audience too, for each performance no longer hinges on the connection and response the actor develops with each individual audience. What the individual sitting in the cinema now sees is a standardised unity of events as presented by the film's singular perspective on the edited performance of the acting 'star' on the screen. Reproduction thus devalues both the individual and the object because the state of the object, its context, and individual perspective are no longer central nor essential for what a film seeks to transmit. In contrast to traditional forms such as theatre and painting, Benjamin adds that the singular reception position mechanical reproduction constructs conditions

the relationship between the unified mass of individuals in the audience and the actor on the screen. As Benjamin states

The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so. No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed. It cannot be arrested. [...] The spectator's process of association in view of these images is indeed interrupted by their constant, sudden change.<sup>34</sup>

The alienation of the individual from their own process of encountering the film is further reinforced by the cinema's means of production in which the quality of the actor's living performance is reduced to the public image generated by the Studio system. Bolstered by their identification with the 'Star'<sup>35</sup> on the screen, the individual becomes too distracted to connect with the reification of the actor's actual work in their living performance behind the scene on the screen, or relate the alienation of the actor to the individual's viewer's own reality at work in the world outside the cinema.<sup>36</sup> The new 'mode of perception' that cinema encourages thus further conditions the individual into self denial, alienating them from the work they produce, even as they participate in giving the film its meaning. This, Benjamin observes, is part of the new reality capitalism requires in the systematic perpetuation of its economic bonds and property relations.

## ii) The Art of Learning and Forgetting How to Look at Films

Benjamin argues that the reproduction of art requires habituated learning. This 'tactile appropriation'<sup>37</sup> of the new modes of existence, perception, and participation takes place while the individual sits distracted<sup>38</sup> by the cinema and thus fails to notice how this repeats the capitalist mode of production. Whereas in traditional society, aura mystified the individual's participation in the renewal of the social bond by making it appear to be the work of the Gods or the Ancestors, the individual's participation in their encounter with a film is hidden by the cinematic

apparatus. What distinguishes the individual in the modern audience from their traditional siblings, as Benjamin remarks, is the stance the individual adopts in approaching the film. Linking the audience's role to the film's Director, Benjamin compares this stance to that of an examiner or a critic who stands in judgement of the actor's screen 'test'.<sup>39</sup> However, whereas the Director of the film always remains conscious of their intention as they judge every aspect of the actors performance on the screen, the audience is an 'absent minded'<sup>40</sup> critic, judge, and examiner. Like the Director, the audience is be presented with, appraises, and approves every action in the actor's work, but unlike the Director however, the audience sees not the performance of actor as a whole, but the actor's performance as it has been sliced together from the 'multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law.'<sup>41</sup> This new law is the expression of the mind and will of the 'movie-maker'.<sup>42</sup> Unlike the theatre, a film's screening will only produce what the Director intended the actor to express. In the Theatre, the actor's being and presence retains the whole integrity of their total body which shapes and determines every aspect of every performance irrespective of what the Director wants. For Benjamin, the fate of the actor's work in film equates to the 'reification'<sup>43</sup> of the worker generally from process of production under capital. This fate is again repeated when the individual watches a film but forgets the significance of their own work in giving it meaning. Under the spell of the magic lantern, the audience is immersed by the moving images of technology and they forget that the film hinges on their reception in order to bring the film to life. While Benjamin stresses that the individual remains the source of 'apperception'<sup>44</sup> of each flickering image, he also argues that the individual's reactions to film 'are predetermined by the mass audience'<sup>45</sup> they now form a part. Thus Benjamin again shows how the mind of the individual in the audience is subjected to the will of those who control production.

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So Benjamin shows how the interaction between the mass produced artifact and the individual perpetuates the bonds and relations in capitalist societies. His argument is that mass audiences habitually confer the work that they produce in their encounter with a film to properties within the film itself. This work in turn is attributed to those who own production. The individual in the audience is thus coaxed at every opportunity into accepting the bonds and relations embedded in the industrial system at the same time as forgetting that without their intimate engagement, the film remains, empirically and evidentially, a fleeting set of lightning flashes projected in a darkened room. So the cinema induces the individual to deny their contribution to the film's production as well as to forget their unique relationship with the artifact and adopt instead a homogenised reaction to the film as entertainment.<sup>46</sup> According to Benjamin, mass communication inhibits unique subjective engagements with the artifact while privileging the bonds embedded by the technologies of (re)production. And so the relations of capital come to appear innate, natural, and universal with every reproduction of the film. Benjamin thinks the cinema is deeply implicated in the perpetuation of capitalist bonds and relations in modern society by habituating modes of perception, existence, and participation each individual has with the commodified artifact. I turn now to Benjamin's analysis of the role films play in the renewal of the bonds and relations that underpin what has now become a global culture.

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### 3) Cinema and the Renewal of Capitalism

The actor's alienation<sup>47</sup> dissociates the actors actual physical presence and performance in real time and space from the later public performance they

give every time the film is screened so the film can realise its producer's intentions. Only now, the Producers include the variety of sources such as the financiers and Studio executives as well as film reviewers who help to shape and contextualise what the film represents. This renews relations of authority and power that subject the life of individual workers to the circulation of goods and services and the accumulation of capital. Turning to Charlie Chaplin's mass oriented cinema, Benjamin suggests that films replace the individuals' malcontent in the loss of control over their working lives with the pleasant afterglow of a tragi-comic spectacle on the screen while ensuring that the worker in the audience returns to work at the earliest opportunity. The knowledge that the heartless laughter directed at Chaplin's suffering is only fiction eases the individual's sense of guilt and discomfort at their own self mockery, but their money still helps fill the studio moguls' pockets. Chaplin's films indeed help people achieve a mass catharsis, but the Director knows that film will never cure them of their illness. With entertainment value now feeding the individual's false consciousness, the cinema over-writes whatever desire they might have had to demand a better deal. Thus in the state of capital, art works like a doctor administering to a willing patient the anaesthetic necessary for the individual to gain some quick relief without addressing the reality of their condition. At the same time, the cinema ensures that the mass continues to make its contribution to the on-going operation of the market economy. The doctor's voice carried in reproductions knows full well that it is not in the business of healing people, but making money. If the individual's disease now becomes incurable, well, at least the artifact can still play its vital role in perpetuating society.

The work produced when the individual encounters a film is thus of the same nature as when the initiated individual encountered a traditional art object - the engagement with art still works to renew society. What is different now is that the reproduction of art renews the imperatives of

industry. Many aspects of the economy become involved here, from production crews to PR Departments<sup>48</sup> to the building of cinemas and the publication of pulp weeklies. Even scholarly monthlies contribute to the circulation of money surrounding the film. For the individual in the audience, however, what matters is that they accept the effacement of the value of their work while instilling the idea that even in idle pass time they can participate in the trade of goods and services. In the analysis Benjamin develops, the victim of the actor's dismemberment from their work remains the suffering worker, that individual sitting in the audience who shares the same fate as the actor. Ignoring self interest, the mass finds the effacement of the worker on the screen entertaining. If Marx was first to analyse the erasure of the worker under capitalism, Benjamin puts this process in an entirely new light.

For Benjamin, instead of developing a personal belief, political conviction, or even appreciation for a refined object, cinema coerces the individual to fund the dissolution of their unique and intimate relationship with art while renewing their bonds with the exchange economy. Art now only aestheticises the renewal in society while entrenching and preserving practical political relations in everyday life, a practical politics tied to the imperatives of industrial capital. The establishment of the individual's consumption patterns only re-inforces the masses relation with production. As invisible and habitual as this process becomes, the individual participates all the more profoundly in the renewal of capitalism. In short, Benjamin finds in the cinematic apparatus the prima facie evidence of how capitalism uses reproduction technology to replicate itself. Cinema realises and nuances the mode of perception, mode of existence, and mode of participation so this system can work. Thus cinema perpetrates daily acts of violence on the individual, a violence which it projects as a spectacle for mass enjoyment. Now comes the crucial point of Benjamin's analysis.

In the 'Epilogue,' Benjamin concludes that reproductions of art service the economic State by giving the individual the sense of free 'expression while preserving property.'<sup>49</sup> The freedom to express one's self while being unable to change political, property, as well as social and cultural relations is what Benjamin sees as the main outcome of the Industrial Revolution. He concludes that 'All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war.'<sup>50</sup> Benjamin then cites Marinetti, spokesman for modern art most Fascist movement, the Futurists, who openly embraced the destructive power of technology,<sup>51</sup> as proof of the war that art now wages on humanity. The last lines of his essay are devoted to the followers of creative destruction,<sup>52</sup> death, violence, and the perverse fascination of watching the dismembered human body rotting slowly on the cold metallic skin of modern technology. Apart from communism,<sup>53</sup> Benjamin offers no solution to the death of the individual and the destruction of humanity. What he does concede is that 'in some cases today's films can also promote revolutionary criticism of social conditions, even of the re-distribution of property.'<sup>54</sup> He makes another promising observation when he contrasts Picasso's critical originality to the work of Chaplin.<sup>55</sup> He follows this up with an analysis of the trashy uselessness of Dada art and its attack on bourgeois society. His final glimpse of Nirvana suggests that rather than using reproductive technology to produce a Führer cult, modern media technologies can serve the 'newly created proletarian masses'<sup>56</sup> by acknowledging that the 'masses have the right to change property relations.'<sup>57</sup> Benjamin fails, however, to indicate how such a revolutionary art might work. for he is too aware of how even critical art becomes co-opted by the system simply by participating in society's daily processes.<sup>58</sup> Although published more than 70 years ago, this essay still proves useful in applying its analysis to contemporary contexts.

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In concluding this excursion into "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", it is important to recall that Benjamin never states that the death of the individual's unique relationship with art is inevitable with the reproduction. What he indicates is that there is a link between the industrial production of the artifact and the reproduction of certain property relations. As Marx indicates, the alienation of the worker from the process of production is necessary for the accumulation of capital, the development of private property, and the circulation of money in exchange for goods and services. The reduction of the artifact's aura and its dependence on localised ritual and tradition does more than coincide with the promotion of art's mass display and entertainment values. Not only is art now made saleable, but the commodification of art makes it appear that everyone can freely participate in the giving of expression to any aspects of everyday life.

While the focus of this Thesis is on the role art plays in the renewal of global culture, Benjamin's theory can be applied to other contemporary forms of technology such a video and computers. Brave as the Linux open source project, blogging, hacking, and on-line and off-line piracy attempts to break the relationship between economic bonds and relations and media and technology are, studies<sup>59</sup> show that modern technological devices are becoming ever more successful in encouraging greater dependencies between users and manufacturers. These social relations are not only in-built by the design of technology, they are also replicated in increasingly standardised forms by the information individuals receive about the world. What is increasingly being lost is the uniqueness of every individual's locus, the uniqueness of every situation and every individual relationship, even though, paradoxically, new forms of technology appear to tailor information to suit the individual's personal needs and desires. A wider application of Benjamin's analysis thus shows how the apparent localisation of information through new media such as the internet is helping to further conceal how

the individual is being *conditioned* by such devices and how, in turn, these reinforce a global economy based on principles of capitalist accumulation. Benjamin's theory provides a critical and incisive tool that is useful in examining what happens when the individual interacts with many forms of mass media technologies such as the world wide web and not just the cinema.

Now according to the analysis in "Mechanical Reproduction", I should expect that the individual who goes to see films like *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* will perpetuate existing social bonds and cultural relations embedded in the global circulation of capital. However I should not expect that this encounter will alter the conditions governing the production of everyday reality. Theoretically, therefore, Benjamin's analysis shows how artifacts circulating within global economies limit the individual's authentic participation in the renewal of society. The question my Thesis must try to respond is this: Does viewing films like *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* finally restrain the individual's capacity to authentically participate in and contribute to the regeneration of contemporary culture or is there some prospect of salvaging the work of art in producing an authentic renewal in a global society? If an answer to this double barrelled problem can be found to affirm a democratic role for art in global culture, then it must be possible to show how these two can contribute to the ongoing 'creative evolution'<sup>60</sup> of human culture? I undertake this task in the later chapters of this Thesis. Chapters 2 and 3, however, assemble the theoretical model to frame the problem as well as provide a means of conducting that analysis.

In returning to Benjamin, I suggest that capitalism does not so much as over-rule the 'one-to-one' engagement between individuals and objects, it merely sublimates that relationship, subjecting the individual and subordinating the artifact to authorities sanctioning of the flow of money according to the ideology<sup>61</sup> of the so called free market economy.<sup>62</sup> The

embedding of the operational codes of this economy within global communication systems such as international art house cinema helps enshrines the values embedded in the Western capitalist systems of property relationships and private ownership in a global cultural and intellectual community. At the same time, this reinforces a re-distribution of the world's wealth and the diversity of values in human cultures to match existing social arrangements in Western societies, reflecting in particular the values of the United States. Analysing these two Berlin films by Wenders sheds light on the process of global homogenisation, and furthermore, whether the process can be arrested or at least made to accommodate and/or incorporate alternative meanings, points of view, approaches, and values. In particular, these films indicate how possible it may be to productively intervene, deviate from, and incorporate non American, non Anglophone values of art, culture, and human society. However, as Wenders himself is strongly influenced by American culture, the analysis of his films also sheds light on the internal processes shaping the nature of the production of meaning of the artifacts that themselves act to precipitate the homogenisation of global culture. The next section of this Chapter looks at how Benjamin might have approached and tried to respond to these problems.

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## II

### **Translating Art into a Global Context, or, Learning to Communicate with Strangers**

In "The Task of the Translator" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin develops theories about how the individual might approach the tasks of interpreting artifacts such as a literary works of art or historical artifacts and narratives from different socio-linguistic contexts or from

different points in time and space. Key concepts from both these essays compliment and shed additional light on the theoretical propositions this Thesis adopts from Benjamin's "Mechanical Reproduction" essay.

"The Task of the Translator" provides a method for the interpretation of art in a global context. The concept of translation offers a way of thinking about the movement of expressions or utterances from one social, cultural and linguistic context to another. In the same way that filming a live theatrical performance moves an actor's dramatic techniques into the languages of cinema, the incorporation of Peter Handke's genre defying *Das Gewicht de Welt* into Wenders' *Wings of Desire* moves the book from one medium to another. Translation is a way of thinking about how the individual deals with a work that is encountered in new medium such as film even though the individual or the original work are not 'native' to the languages, cultural, and artistic traditions of that film. If translation is way of thinking how a film transmits information to individuals existing beyond the context of its origin, it is also a way of thinking about how to approach a work when films like *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* move the living performances of an imagined or real city like Berlin into a global auditorium. Now the individual needs to think about how to translate the information the films transmits to an audience who occupy a new cultural, linguistic, spatial and temporal setting. Translation provides a way of thinking about the movement of artistic representations of the city and its citizens from a local to a global city when that representation originates in contexts other than that of the individual. This describes the nature of the encounter between Wenders film and the individuals in a global auditorium. The reception of the films by a global audience must not rely on them possessing the intimate cultural knowledge that only an individual sharing the immediate proximity of the film's production can be expected to possess. Benjamin's concept of translation revises the idea of language. This is

important because the language of the translation of Wenders' films must do more than what is conventionally expected of language in its written and spoken forms. This language must include the matrix of semiotic systems developed in *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* This calls for an expanded idea of language and translation in thinking about how films are being authentically encountered in global contexts.

"Theses on the Philosophy of History" suggests ways of encountering artifacts as part of a historical representation of living experiences in time and space. This provides a way of approaching objects whose meaning is 'now'<sup>63</sup> rendered uncertain due to changes in time and space. In this essay, Benjamin shows how to approach artifacts from the past, as Wenders' two films 'now' are, as remnants of their context of production. Along the way, Benjamin identifies the attitudes some historians adopt in writing and reading about the past. Benjamin problematises two positions in particular, those of historical materialism and historicism,<sup>64</sup> before presenting a claim that history can redeem the past in the living present. Thus history should not seal off the individual's accesses to past, Benjamin emphatically argues, nor should the past be barred from the individual from experiencing its expressions in the present. This is what historians conventionally do by presenting documentary and material evidence that purports to represent the causes and events of history. Rather, Benjamin's angel of history redeems Wenders' films by releasing them from their time capsule and so that the individual sitting in a global auditorium is not held captive by time and space. Instead the angel of history enables the individual to resume relating with the objects and the subjects in the films not in the fiction of the past but in the living present of that individual's 'now'.

"The Task of the Translator" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History" thus further refine the analysis of the work performed by Wenders' films.

Specifically they develop ways to deal with artifacts that issue from one historically specific location in time and space, and are thus uttered in languages appropriate to that location, but are then encountered and interpreted in other contexts. This describes the condition under which the analyses of Wenders' two films is being undertaken.

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#### 1) Translation, Art, and Language

The task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect (*Intention*) upon the language into which he is translating which produces the echo of the original.<sup>65</sup>

In theory, it has always been possible to encounter a work of art anywhere, anytime. A book written in German might be found by an individual anywhere in the world. Yet understanding that book requires an intimate knowledge surrounding the circumstances and language(s) of its production. The task of finding the intended effect upon the language of an individual who cannot speak German is, according to Benjamin, the task of translation. Yet even if a person can read German, or, even if a book is translated into the language of the reader, there may be situations embedded in the book that are unfamiliar to the individual, the significance of which become invisible. This might have happened to Austrian writer Peter Handke's *Das Gewicht de Welt*, the book from which the script of *Wings of Desire* was developed.<sup>66</sup> Unless the reader is familiar with German literary theory and practice of the 1970s, *The Weight of the World* may seem nothing more than fragments of loose reflections masquerading under the guise of a travel journal. While some thoughts may be interesting, there is little to hold an unfamiliar reader's attention. This would obscure the 'intention'<sup>67</sup> of the book, no matter how careful the translation chooses its words, because there is no context into which the reader can relate it too.

While Wenders' *Wings of Desire* is not in any literal sense a translation of *Das Gewicht de Welt*, the fragmentation of Handke's book, particularly in the first half of the film, reproduces the effect the book has on its reader. In effect, this faithfully reproduces the fidelity of Handke's book in the language of Wenders' cinema, translating the effect Handke's book had on his literary audience to the audience of *Wings of Desire*. Yet, Wenders clearly wants his film to stand as its own original. This is reflected in the credits of *Wings of Desire* which state that it was 'Written by Wim Wenders together with Peter Handke'.<sup>68</sup> Now as Benjamin points out, for a translation to remain faithful to the original, it has to retain the intention of its forbearance while at the same time not incorporating additional content so as not to impair the fidelity of the progenitor.<sup>69</sup> It would be wrong to think of *Wings of Desire* as an unintentional translation of Handke's book therefore, even if it owes its genesis to *Das Gewicht de Welt*. There is too much extraneous material for it to do that.

Yet ignoring *Wings of Desire's* claims of originality for an instant, the film does reflect, in a second degree, the representations the book makes about aspects of the life it articulates. In this sense, there is a relationship developed between *Wings of Desire* and *Das Gewicht de Welt* and this takes place between their respective languages. This throws no light on the situations that Handke wrote about, however, but rather, on the nature of Handke's relationship with Wenders. What differentiates a work of art from a translation, argues Benjamin, is that a work of art intends to express something about real life while a translation intends only to confer the original's expression in a new language.<sup>70</sup> So the credits in *Wings of Desire* point accurately and directly to Wenders' subordination of Handke's book within the film. Now the issue of the obscurity of the original resurfaces in the film just as it did in the book, but Handke's work remains invisible.

#### i) Authenticating the Translation of Wenders' films for a Global Audience

An individual who encounters a film like *Wings of Desire* will, depending on the respective cultural contexts of the individual and the film, in different degrees understand the significance of the film even if only by looking at the procession of images. Perhaps they will also understand some of the film's dialogues. The full significance of the film, however, will only be available to an individual who shares an intimate knowledge of the circumstances of the film's production as well as the totality of its language.<sup>71</sup> For an individual sitting in the cinema this is rarely the case. Such a work, whether it is translated or not, may frustrate some individuals because they find the significance of passages, or even the film as a whole, mysterious or inexplicable.

Now sometimes, a translator of a book may take 'licence'<sup>72</sup> to include extra information not found in the original text to help an unfamiliar reader understand the context of the work. Unlike such a book however, films encountered around the world are rarely - if ever - translated in the sense of being re-produced or re-made in the languages and/or circumstances of their audiences. In film, what translation takes place is usually limited to dialogues which may be overdubbed or subtitled. Such a film must rely entirely on its own resources and the capacity of the audience to meaningfully understand it in the contexts under which the work is encountered. One of the factors of film production, as Benjamin pointed out in "Mechanical Reproduction", is to embed directions on how the film is to be interpreted.<sup>73</sup> This is particularly so when films such as Wenders' are made for global audiences. However, this conditions the individual's relationship with the film, forcing them to reproduce the bonds and relations the producer establishes in making it. In contrast to the individual in a global audience, however, Wenders had not only the opportunity to encounter the

original of Handke's book, he collaborated with the writer in incorporate it in his film. The individual in the audience, on the other hand, participates only through the way they 'echo'<sup>74</sup> the work in the production of meaning associated with the film. If, on the other hand, the individual seeks to freely associate with the film and through that, authentically participate in making the bonds and relations it produces - rather than simply following the directives of the producer - then they must encounter the film as the original. The notion of translation shows that it is not so bad to encounter a film that has not or only been partially translated. For this at least allows the individual to encounter with the film in its original form, even if that original form is infinitely reproducible.

Benjamin states that a good translation makes the original work available to the individual by allowing them to come into contact with the essence of the 'intention'<sup>75</sup> of the original. The task of the translator is thus to make the reproduction echo or produce the original's reverberation in the translator's cultural and linguistic context. Only now, with the individual encountering the original production of the film in the global cinema, the task of translation is being performed by every viewer. Showing how an individual can authenticate their encounter films like *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* is one reason to introduce the notion of translation. Deciding when the individual encounters an original or a translation of the work of art in global contexts is another.

#### i.i) Are Wenders' films Translations or Originals

The display of films far from the context of their production can in some ways be compared to the removal of traditional art from its ritual setting. It decontextualises the work while introducing it to individuals who may not be sufficiently acculturated to understand it. Benjamin identified these problems in his "Mechanical Reproduction" essay. Although

translation is not the same as a technical reproduction of an object, Benjamin indicates that the movement of art from one social, cultural, and linguistic setting to another can have a similar effect. 'A literal rendering of the syntax completely demolishes the theory of reproduction of meaning and is a direct threat to comprehensibility'<sup>76</sup> he says. In "Mechanical Reproduction", we saw that the interaction between original artifact, ritual context, and the initiated individual is what traditionally confers significance to art. This significance imparts a renewal of the social bonds and cultural relations of humankind. But when art is displayed outside its traditional context, the aura of the object is depleted.<sup>77</sup> With the loss of aura, the authority of the unique relationship between the individual and the artifact is denied and the significance of art becomes unrecognisable without the provision of additional information such as a caption. The notion of translation introduces an additional element to Benjamin's analysis of the reproduction therefore - that of language - and his method of translation introduces a way to approach a foreign object not as a reproduction, but as an original.

"The Task of the Translator" suggests ways to translate an authentic encounter with films into new social, cultural, and linguistic contexts. In it one learns that translation transforms the art object so that the bonds and relations of its originating context are not, however, simply reproduced and imposed literally onto the translator's social, cultural, and linguistic discourse. Conversely, translation does not then imply that the bonds and relations of the translator's reality can simply be projected onto the artwork either. Benjamin's method of translation offers an interlinear space where linguistic signs and the meaning they signify may play freely together so that they can adopt different relationships with each other and restore the authenticity of the original to the translation while maintaining art's accessibility and portability in a global context. Translation may however bring unintended consequences not apparent in the languages of the

artifact's original formulation or in the language of the translation. Although the consequences of translation may not always correspond to the original articulations of the author or the translator, that, as Benjamin shows, is what happens when art achieves a life of its own by being translated.<sup>78</sup>

#### i.ii) The Impact of Translation on Wenders' Films and the Individual Watching them

A translator takes the liberty to re-make the object so as to preserve the essence of the original while moving it into new social, cultural, and linguistic settings. In so doing, the translation assumes the freedom to transform the language of the translator so the original can be faithfully echoed in a new socio-cultural and linguistic environment. This may, however, sometimes lapse into an abyss where language and meaning become strangers. There is a moment in translation when language itself is transformed, and when that happens, the translator must allow the translation evolve the individual's language.<sup>79</sup> However, in transforming Wenders' films into the individuals language, which, says Benjamin, may also transform the language of the translator as well as the original object, the history of the films and the history of the language into which the films are translated, gives the films and the translators language a resilience to resist their total transformation. If this does not occur, the process of transformation would obscure the originals and the translations from each other altogether. This obscurity would destroy not only the authenticity of the films, it would also obstruct access to and recognition of the translators language. Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History", to which I later turn, provides a way of dealing with this problem.

Translation helps to theorise what happens in the transmission of artifacts across time and space. Now, not only is it important to take account

of the roles of the production process of the artifact and the individual in understanding the role of art in contemporary society, it becomes imperative to take account of the different languages and circumstances surrounding the artifact as well as the different languages and circumstances carried by the individuals coming into contact with it. In the age of global culture, artifact, language, cultural and production context, as well as the individual coming into contact with these films become intimately intertwined when the formation of meaning remains authentic. The basic proposition of this Thesis is that this authenticity is what gives the individual the ability to participate in the global renewal of human culture. If this is achieved, then the individual enters the global auditorium and participates as a global citizen. In a final irony, this precisely explains how Wenders' *Wings of Desire* actually translates Handke's *Das Gewicht de Welt*.

Approaching the reception of Wenders' films in a global context as a translation likewise enables the individual to encounter them in their authenticity because their translation by the individual enables the films and the individual to maintain their 'fidelity'<sup>80</sup> with their origins. The key in Benjamin's notion of translation has to do with producing the echo of the 'intended effect'<sup>81</sup> of that original in the language of its translator.

## ii) Translation and the Evolution of Language

For Benjamin, the purpose of making an artistic expression such as *Das Gewicht de Welt* is to communicate something essential about life in language.<sup>82</sup> Translating this expression into a global forum, however, evolves language towards what Benjamin terms 'pure language'.<sup>83</sup> Translation does this by bringing together different tongues like the broken shards of an imaginary and yet to be constructed clay vessel. The juxtaposition of these fragments simultaneously prefigures 'pure language' as well as giving expression to Handke's purposive intention as manifested in

his book into other languages.<sup>84</sup> Translation moves the intended purpose of this communication from one social cultural, and linguistic context to another. Benjamin thinks that all languages - including the language of the cinema<sup>85</sup> - aspire to this 'pure language' - in which art can finally express the essence and purity of the life of things. Benjamin suggests that the evolution towards expression in 'pure language' is the only contribution a translation can aspire to make. Translation evolves languages into 'pure language' by manifesting previously localised expressions in other social, cultural, and linguistic settings. Thus the translation of *Das Gewicht de Welt* into *The Weight of the World* and *Wings of Desire* gives Handke's book a life beyond its point of origin. This, it should be added, is a positive side of globalisation which is sometimes attacked for eradicating localised forms of identification.

However, Benjamin radicalises the idea of purity in language even further when he cites Rudolf Pannwitz as saying that

Our translators, even the best ones, proceed from the wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have a far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works.<sup>86</sup>

Through Pannwitz, Benjamin attacks conventional notions of translation that seek to preserve the translator's language over and above their commitment to translating the original's intention. For him then, foreign objects should never be reduced to the language of the translator. On the contrary, Benjamin shows that the language of the translator can only evolve towards 'pure language' by adapting the translator's language to the qualities of the foreign object or foreign language. Language evolves when the translator's allows their articulations of the artifact to transform not only the foreign object but also the translator's tongue. So Benjamin finally introduces his concept of translation as the 'interlinear',<sup>87</sup> which he

explains by using a metaphor of an intersection between a line and a sphere,<sup>88</sup> a somewhat mystical description to describe contact between two foreign bodies. But when a line meets the circle, a very significant, if disturbing event takes place. Recalling the fate of Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles, Benjamin continues, 'the gates of language thus expand and modified may slam shut and enclose the translator with silence.'<sup>89</sup>

The space of the 'interlinear' is where 'pure language' comes into being, but in this instant, the 'word' - or whatever the basic units of articulation in the original and its translation are - loses its grounding in everyday linguistic practice and the potential of language in all its expressiveness is released. Meaning, in its specific localised sense, now threatens to become 'extinguished'.<sup>90</sup> In the 'bottomless depths of language',<sup>91</sup> the translator finds no comfort in the unruly habits of freely associating signs. Some critiques of globalisation focus precisely on this freedom because migrating subjects in the interlinear loosen the grip that local linguistic authorities have on expressing living experiences. However, this has more to do with maintaining the power relations local authorities exercise over the individual rather than the freedom that art assumes when it expresses some aspect of life that has not been made before in a local language.

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In rounding up this excursion into translation, I return to the idea that art represents expressions of something that has a life of its own. Art is the afterlife of something living until art has been translated into another language. In opening languages to the possibility of translation, art shows a way of articulating something new and strange, even if that provisionally returns language to an abyss where meaning and meaninglessness become companions. Translation is a way of provisioning language so that the

individual can encounter expressions about life that are “beyond [the present] being”<sup>92</sup> of their language. Yet when films like *Wings of Desire* or *Faraway So Close!* are seen in cinemas around the world, their work as life’s translation and their work as their own translation co-incides. Global cinema is an interlinear space where translation takes place constantly. It is where the self and the other encounter each other. As Hölderlin’s syntactical translation of Sophocles shows, this may result in a kind of silence and a feeling of being empty, an evacuation of mind from language that could arrest communication. Benjamin suggests that this is only a momentary loss and as long as the echo of the original remains, then the original’s intention to communicate can not be obliterated. The cinema keeps the syntax of the original present because the very means of film production is at the same time a means of reproduction. Thinking provisionally about a film as a translating object for a translated subject that continues to exist beyond its manifestation in filmic language reminds the viewer that there remains an independent life of the film as object. Yet through the provisionality of cinematic language, the individual may encounter other people’s creative expressions about something living in a global context. Unfortunately, such encounters are unlikely to conform to the translator’s linguistic and cultural codes. Yet neither will they conform to that of the artifact. This is not necessarily because strangers do not or cannot respect each other or each other’s languages, but rather because a direct interaction between different states of being is ‘irreparable’.<sup>93</sup> Articulating a stranger’s expressions in a foreign city syntactically may conceal what a film intends to communicate to an individual who does not think in the same linguistic structures. Yet this is useful to help recall that beyond the film there remains an actually living subject, in this case, the city of Berlin. The final task of the individual standing in front of a work of art that acts as its own translation is to remember that neither the film nor the translation are absolute authorities

over their subject either. Rather, in the plenitude of its infinite translation, art remains its subject's medium. The movement through the sum of its manifest translations may make mobile artifacts like Wenders' films appear to have increased artistic purity and dexterity that gives them a life of their own, but the artifact and its translations finally remain a medium of communication between individuals. I now turn to Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" to identify some of the characteristics of the individuals of mobile artifacts like Wenders' films.

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## 2) The Angel of History

Benjamin derived the motif of the angel of history from Paul Klee's "*Angelus Novalis*".<sup>94</sup> In Klee's painting, Benjamin sees an angel standing with mouth open, looking in horror as his eyes fix on a disaster that is daily taking shape before him. Meanwhile the winds of time play cruelly with the angel's wings, propelling him relentlessly forward so that he cannot avoid observing that with each passing moment, more and more debris accumulates in the name of historical progress.

"Theses on the Philosophy of History" provides an aperture to (re)consider the nature of two relationships in the experience of watching Wenders' films. The first is the direct relationship between angels and people, and in particular how the angels Daniel and Cassiel relate to the people of Berlin whom they observe as the films go by. The nature of this relationship is amplified at a secondary level in the relationship the individual sitting in the cinema develops while watching the actors play out their roles in the film. Along the way, Benjamin's "Theses" asks that individual to reconsider the relationship they have with the artifact, not as a

piece of evidence put before them to prove an historical argument, but rather as the thing within itself.

Roger Cook<sup>95</sup> writes that *Wings of Desire* encourages the individual to identify with the angels who act like narrators guiding the audience through the narrative of the film. In identifying with the angels, the individual in the audience identifies with themselves in fact as they sit watching the unfolding tale of the actors playing out their roles in the city before them on the screen. As "angels", they are impotent, observers of life while the protagonists in the city struggle, tragically sometimes, with each other and the situations they encounter. Cook then argues that *Wings of Desire* breaks out of the usual filmic convention of film narration by shifting the angel Damiel as the primary enunciator of the story from the narrating position to a protagonist in the story when he becomes human. Unlike the individual in the cinema and Benjamin's angel of history, the angels in Wenders' films show that they can intervene in the on-going lives of the people inhabiting the city. In fact, the angels in the films only seem to have to jump into 'the stream of time'<sup>96</sup> to start participating in the life. If the films fail to really show how the angels become participants in the city, for falling from the sky is not to be recommended for the individual sitting in the audience, by suggesting that participation might be possible, Wenders' films invite the angel-like viewers in the audience to imagine that they may aspire to being more than mere observers of the life in the city in these two films. Benjamin's "Theses" of history provides a clue on how to assume a greater role than simply that of the spectator.

The method Benjamin proposes is that the angel relates with the artifact as if it derives its significance from and within the present moment rather than the past, and that, in the present, the individual participates in giving the object its meaning. So the individual, with the guidance of the

angel, situates the artifact in the 'now' [*Jetztzeit*]<sup>97</sup> - a 'now' that includes the 'potentiality to not to be'<sup>98</sup> - for 'now' is where the individual encounters it. What the artifact comes now to signify is not an objective fiction of an other world, an imaginary sense of an 'empty time',<sup>99</sup> but rather a reflection of reality that is governing the social bonds and cultural relations the individual and the artifact are situated in, in the moment. For Benjamin, this requires a change of stance in the relations between the artifact and the individual, emphasising not the stories within which the artifact is embedded, but rather that the individual relates with the artifact as it is, in the present moment. This alters the nature of the artifact, for it now no longer stands as evidence for its story but rather as a whole object within itself. What is more, this whole object is encountered by another equally whole being, the individual sitting in the audience. This change of stance between the individual and the artifact is the basic argument in Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History". It proceeds from the proposition that a fragmentary, incomplete, and ultimately incoherent image presented by an artifact, when it is asked to act like evidence, can never represent the totality of life, past or present, no matter how extensive such material evidence is. Rather, what happens when the artifact is related to as evidence, is that it begins to promote the story within which it is presented over other potential, equally viable, and possible narratives. Benjamin makes the points most eloquently in his "Mechanical Reproduction" essay when he refers to Eugene Atget's 'scene of a crime'<sup>100</sup> photography. 'With Atget, photographs become standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance'<sup>101</sup> he says. In "Mechanical Reproduction" he qualifies what he means by that 'political significance' by indicating that it is the embedding of the bonds and relations of the capitalist state. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History", his targets are historical materialism and historicism respectively.<sup>102</sup>

In thinking about the work of artifacts in an age of global culture, it remains important to remember the political dimensions the relationship between the artifact and the individual and the implications this creates. In his "Theses" about history, Benjamin argues that the individual must avoid seeing the artifact as a shard of evidence because only then can the artifact avoid becoming enmeshed in the political intrigue of the present. Thus Benjamin's mode of historical interpretation, guided by his angel, resists the temptation of asking the artifact to speak as if it stands in and for the past. Benjamin suggests that the individual should not be fooled into thinking that this enduring piece of debris cluttering up the present represents the evidence of some great strides in human progress. Nor does he believe that artifacts should be allowed to become the victory trophies that witness the 'ruling classes'<sup>103</sup> survival<sup>104</sup> as the living survive the dead. If you want to remember how Carthaginians felt about their subjugation to Rome, you have to speak with Carthaginian<sup>105</sup> and not their self-congratulating Roman conquerors, as Benjamin says.

By regarding artifacts such as *Wings of Desire* as part of the present, rather than remnants from the past, Benjamin suggests that artifacts can begin to reveal the 'fullness of [humanity's] past'.<sup>106</sup> This, however, alters the authority of the film's interpreter, who can no longer mask their interpretations behind a social institution such as "History" or "Film Studies", or encumber the validity of such interpretations with an ideology of universal truth or objective reality. With the angel of history standing beside them, the individual enters instead into a series of provisional dialogues with the art object, and through that, self consciously tries to learn how to speak the language of the individuals who made it. The problem that confronts the angel and that individual now, however, is that, unlike Wenders' direct engagement with Handke, the individual in the cinema can only engage with what remains of art's creator through the traces they

leave behind. That trace is located in the creative expressions Wenders and his collaborators made about their lives at the time and that now reside in his films. Benjamin's notion of translation offers a way to approach such expressions in terms of what they represent and the independent life they gain when such expressions are translated into the languages and cultural contexts of the strangers sitting in the global auditorium.

Now the individual is almost ready to authenticate their encounter with the films by and in so far as they now have a method to relate the films to their lives beyond the cinema. This encounter, as Benjamin indicates in his "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, reproduces the patterns, bonds and relations that are implicated in world the individual observes by simply watching the films. In this way, the individual does indeed participate in the making of the bonds and relations of global society, not only because they participate in the making of their own realities in the encounter with the films, but also because they encounter and perpetuate the realities of others from elsewhere who contribute to the production of meaning surrounding the film. More importantly, however, in a Western democratic city, that individual is free to alter the way they participate in realising such relations should they choose. But to do that, they must be consciously aware of what is going on within the screening of a film and how to relate that directly with their own experiences. If the assertions being made about the regenerative power of art are true, then it should not be necessary for an individual to read a Ph D thesis in order to learn how this can happen. It should be possible to achieve this simply by going to watch a film. The next Chapter deals with how individuals become conscious of the processes they are participating in when they watch a film. The purpose of this present Chapter is to identify the nature of the work of art in culture.

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Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" posits an angel of history who 'remember[s] the Carthaginians'<sup>107</sup> through the manner in which they encounter their remnants. This enables Benjamin's angel to abandon the stories woven around the artifact by its historian for such stories inevitably reflect the tales spun by the 'victors'<sup>108</sup> and 'survivors'<sup>109</sup> of time. Just as the angel of history remembers the Carthaginians, the angels in Wenders' films signal that the living performances of the actors in the city in the films have long been vanquished and that the story that survives them is a fabrication of Director, the process of production, and exhibition. Indeed, the elaborate orchestrations necessary for a film to go into production suggest that even a Director is not free to determine the nature of what 'their' work produces. A film's narrative, its script, its eventual editing, the context of display, are all essential aspects that shape the nature of the reception a film gets. These are determined by many individuals whose faces, motivations, and interests remain masked by the industrialisation of the films' production. It is more accurate to think of film authorship as a combined effort comprising of bankers, film producers, production studio executives, government funding agencies, production crews, movie distribution companies, cinema proprietors, film festival organisers, as well as film critics, reviewers, and even film scholars. However, as Benjamin shows, the collaboration of the individual in audiences is the most essential in realising what a film produces. Without the guidance of someone like Benjamin's angel, everyone in the audience becomes an unsuspecting accomplice in completing the falsification of the story the actor's fate foretells.

If the tale on the screen has been subjected to the approving and disapproving scrutiny of so many, the individual in the audience has little capacity to accurately determine who or what is the authentic source of the film or what the author intended to communicate. Benjamin's angel of history invokes the individual to trust their own capacity to establish the

meaning of an artifact irrespective of what someone else says about it. However, the individual must trust their own responses in this encounter as well as remember that the job of creating a relationship with it is their own work. Now the individual can remember (re-member) the authenticity of their relationship with the film's actors by allowing that relationship to take place in the here and 'now'. This determines the film's significance.

So the mystery of the "Star" that surrounds the actor on the screen falls away and reveals another individual standing alone. In their singular isolation, the individual realises that they can only relate with a fractured mirror image of the actor whose role is now reduced to a signifying function in a meaning-laden field of social relations developed by and bonded through the production process in which they're both participating. Faced with the actors' dismemberment, the angel of history licences the individual to encounter and confront the artifact and relate its meaning and significance back onto the world they know best - their own. So the individual may stand freely with artifact and together with the angel, they can negotiate the meaning of the film as they will. Wenders' angels show that his films do not hold their meaning independently in time and space but, like all artifacts, meaning is continually dependent on the individuals who encounter it. Whether they acknowledge it or not, that individual's inner sense of reality authorises and authenticates the legitimacy of what an artifact appears to communicate. However, under the auspices of translation, when the angel becomes a participant, they restore the equality between the individual and the artifact even though this now carries with it the burden of recognising that other individuals remain involved in the production of the films' meaning. This obliges the individual to remember that there are still further potential contributions available and waiting to be made in its production. Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" does not licence the individual to limit the artifact within a closed system of social, cultural, and

linguistic relations of their own making, but rather a field of floating meanings and associations. The angel of history authorises the individual to stand response-ably before these films and communicate with them as 'man to man'.<sup>110</sup>

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### III

#### What Benjamin's adds to this Analysis

Benjamin poses and enables a response to crucial problems in identifying the work of art in the age of global culture. These are;

1) How the work of art as a fundamental expression of human life produces such expressions to propagate the bonds and relations in culture and society.

2) How the translation of artistic expressions from one social, cultural, and linguistic context to another can authenticate, renew, and evolve the creative practices of human culture.

3) How the individual perpetuates different social, cultural, and linguistic bonds and relations through different stances they adopt with art.

From the start of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Benjamin states that "In principle a work of art has always been reproducible."<sup>111</sup> The critical move came when the mechanical reproduction gave capital control over cultural production. What concerns Benjamin in his "Epilogue" and what Nietzsche termed the 'will to power'<sup>112</sup> is how the human mind seeks to exercise power and control over the world. Modern technology has given individuals who exercise their 'will to power' over production the means to dominate encounters and interactions with the artifact. This is the totalitarian State Benjamin warns about at the end of his "Mechanical Reproduction" essay. What makes modern societies different to

their traditional counterparts, however, is that this totalitarian 'will to power' no longer expresses itself as the aura of the Father masquerading as the mind of God or as religious dogma of orthodoxies of the elders but rather as innate and natural economic bonds and property relations of the physical Universe. The reproduction of art habituates the individual to accept their alienation from the right to alter these bonds and relations through their interaction with art objects. If Benjamin's analysis holds true, then the individual no longer participates in the renewal of culture through their encounter with art. The alienation of individual participation from the renewal of society is an act of violence perpetrated by technology in the realisation of a totalitarian global economic State.

I think that "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" is unrealistically pessimistic. The "Task of the Translator" and "Theses on a Philosophy of History" essays show that even a work of art made in conditions governed by capitalist production does not just simply reproduce the monetary (hence social) bonds and property (thus cultural) relations of capital. Cinematic space is a space where individuals act, but in the global city, the cinema provides a space where people enter, sit down, and can start talking with strangers. Now in this global auditorium, the production of signs like angels and Berlin no longer mean what they seem. The interlinear spaces between these signs indicate that the global city is a terrifying place where meaning and reality cannot be taken for granted, but the individual in the cinema is still in a position to discern what is real about the city and what it means. An interlinear translation is, in the age of global culture, the work of art and the work of the individual in the 21st Century. This is a space where the individual is not only an angel of history, but is also an actor in time and space. Here the individual encounters the realities of other inhabitants in the global city and, learning something from the past, jumps back into the fray and participates in what happens in that ever mounting

pile of debris some call human culture. When the individual in a global auditorium assumes the role of translator, they decide where and when they fit between the spaces and the signs of the city that is now part of their everyday reality.

The additional forays into Benjamin thus help restore a sense of authenticity depleted by the reproduction and decontextualised transmission of art. These two essays refine the methods of this Thesis by enabling the individual to re-authenticate their encounter with Wenders' films, even when that encounter takes place far away from the context of the film's production. With the authenticity of the artifact restored, the individual may incorporate the reality within which both the films and the individual exist. An individual who incorporates their subjectivity in encountering art re-invests the meaning of the artifact and a living interaction between the work of art and the individual comes into being. If artifacts like Wenders' two films do continue to embody the values, bonds, and relations of the producer,<sup>113</sup> which they undoubtedly do, this Thesis indicates that the individual sitting in the audience can adopt an independent stance in their encounter with such films. Thus the work of art does not merely subject the individual who encounters it to the totalising power of the voice controlling art's production. The individual and the artifact may still associate freely, even in the languages of the cinema.

However, Benjamin's method still does not identify if, how, and when that individual is aware that they are free to associate with the object, and that the work produced out of this encounter belongs to them. What this method lacks is a way of theorising a knowing individual who is aware of the work they do in the making of art. The next Chapter introduces Torben Graag Grodal's cognitive film theory to examine how Wenders *Wings of Desire* and Brad Silberling's *City of Angels* (1999) engender higher levels of

consciousness in the individual. Grodal indicates how such encounters may result in the individual gaining greater awareness of the work the cinema produces. Thus, if Benjamin brings the global city a little closer by showing how art renews humanity, Grodal shows how art can help the individual can to remain conscious of their participation in the making of human culture. So the artifact demonstrates that it enables the individual's participation in the renewal of society in the global context and act as a global citizen.

There is one problem that Grodal does not address, however. The free association between art and the individual is still clouded by the sometimes muddy and deceptive, often hidden and unconscious claims made about art. Here the Messianic voice of Benjamin can be heard grumbling as he thumps his staff on the floorboards and re-enters on this Thesis' stage. Warning that the return of aura threatens to return of the mystery of "The Creator" at a more fundamental level, Benjamin reminds us that instead of speaking as if it is the voice of God or Elders of society, or crafty Magus or stealthy medical surgeon, aura might now speak with the voice of the film scholar, the art historian, the social critic and theoretician, and sometimes, even the acclaimed artist themselves. Lurking further back in art's auratic field are social institutions, art academies, and museums that scowl ever more threateningly in warding off intruders on their territory. The survival and preservation of culture's most precious objects is tied, now more than ever, to the ability not only to assert authority over the artifact but also to lock the individual's creative, cultural, and intellectual responses to art to the meanings signified by those arty institutions, now also deeply embedded in the global system of the circulation of money. Now and again, old Benjamin turns up the light of his remarkably prescient intelligence and shows how to unravel the knot surrounding the complex web that is the subject of this Thesis. Chapter 3 examines the return of the aura to the work of art by

investigating claims that some artifacts are the result of higher forms of practice because they engender higher levels of consciousness .

## Endnotes

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- 1 Marx's analysis of industrial society identified an interrelatedness between culture, intellectual knowledge, technology, and the accumulation of capital resulting in a two tiered development in capitalist economies; The first, the base, is the (economic) means of production which, in modern societies, is constantly undergoing modernisation and is tied to advances in scientific knowledge, engineering, and technology. The second, the superstructure, is the cultural reaction and response to that process of modernisation, what Raymond Williams described as the 'structures of feeling' in being modern (what it feels to be modernised). This second tier is the source of the sometimes reactionary, sometimes critical, at other times ambivalent, and sometimes positive attitudes to the processes of modernity. From here comes the intellectual capital to fuel further developments in cultural, intellectual, and scientific knowledge. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1996, pp xx - xxi, 310 - 311.
- 2 I acknowledge that these readings of Benjamin may be unorthodox, particularly the concept of the aura, as well as his methods of translation and the notion of the 'angel of history'. According to Michael Keith, there is a 'vast and rapidly growing secondary literature on the work of Walter Benjamin (see footnote 3, p 424 in Michael Keith, "Walter Benjamin, Urban Studies, and the Narratives of City Life" in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (eds), 2003, pp 410 - 429). Keith indicates that the two major Anglophone authorities on Benjamin's work are; Susan Buck-Morss' *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, 1989, and G. Gilloch's *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*, 1996. Other sources that Keith cites are; Andrew Benjamin, *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*, Ch. 7, 1989; Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience*, 1998; Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, 1981; D. Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity*, Ch 4, 1985; G. Smith (ed), "Walter Benjamin: Philosophy, History, and Aesthetics" in *The Philosophical Forum*, 15, 1-2, 1983; G. Smith (ed), *On Walter Benjamin: Critical Essays and Recollections*, 1995; Steinberg, *Walter Benjamin and the Demands of History*, 1996, and S. Weigel, *Body and Image-Space*, 1996.
- 3 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, 1992, pp 226 - 227. See also Appendix B.
- 4 For an indication of how Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, for example, identify the important qualities of art's audience, see "The Culture Industry", in *Dialectic Of Enlightenment*, 1999, pp 120 - 167, especially pp 157 - 159.
- 5 Stemming from Kant's notion of *Aufklärung* as an attainment of greater maturity, enlightenment here refers to the Romantic insistence that the encounter with the work of art must lead to some form of experience that generates a greater sense of self awareness and self realisation in order for that object, and the encounter with it, to be seen as having a true artistic (and hence higher cultural) value. For Adorno and Horkheimer, an enlightening contemplation of an art object appears to be, in and of itself, non utilitarian in terms of social and economic value. The contemplation of art is something the individual undertakes purely out of a desire for self enrichment. For a discussion of enlightenment in Romantic thinking, see Michel Foucault, "What is

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Enlightenment?" / "Was ist Aufklärung?" in Rabinow 1991. For an elaboration and an indication of early 20th Century arguments concerning the (decline of the) project of Enlightenment (through its commodification and commercialisation in the culture industry), see Adorno and Horkheimer, 1999, pp 120 - 167.

6 However, Benjamin associates this with the bourgeoisie approach to art while clearly indicating that this period of high bourgeoisie art is over. Note, for example his wording in one of his notes. 'During the decline of the bourgeoisie this awareness had to take into account the hidden tendency to withdraw from public affairs those forces which the individual draws upon in his communion with God.' See endnote 18, in Benjamin, 1992, p 243.

7 Seeing a rupture between his approach and that of his predecessors, Benjamin states the task which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning point of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.

See *ibid* p 233. Contrast this with the classical and Romantic descriptions of the work of art in Adorno and Horkheimer, 1999, pp 157 - 159.

8 This participation must include a capacity to alter and change as well as renew social bonds and relations controlling cultural production in accordance with the wishes, desires, needs, and aspirations of the individual.

9 Although Benjamin doesn't situate his discussion of the work of art as the realisation of social bonds and cultural relations, he repeatedly indicates the implications of these as conditional on the work of art he is seeking to identify. For example, in concluding the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, he states '

Fascism attempts to organise the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves. The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property.

Benjamin, 1992, p 234. This can again be deduced in other sections of this essay, for example where Benjamin explains how the reproduction of art deteriorates its aura and authenticity. Embedded in the object's authentic value is its relations to the world, or as Benjamin puts it ...

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive durations to its testimony to the history which it has experienced.

*Ibid* p 215.

10 *Ibid* p 217.

11 *Ibid* p 214.

12 *Ibid* p 216. See also note 5, pp 236 - 237.

13 In "A Small History of Photography", Benjamin asks 'What is aura, actually?' then responds to his question by stating that aura is ...

A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be. [... Later Benjamin adds] The stripping bare of the object, the destruction of the aura, is the mark of a perception whose sense of the sameness of things has grown to the point where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness - by means of its reproduction.

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Walter Benjamin, "A Small History of Photography", in *One Way Street*, 1998, p 250.

In the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, Benjamin states that, in the tradition setting

The magician heals a sick person by laying on of hands; the [medical] surgeon cuts into the patient's body. The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority. The surgeon does exactly the reverse; he greatly diminishes the distance between himself and the patient by penetrating into the patient's body, and increases it but little by the caution with which his hand moves among the organs. (Benjamin, 1992, pp 226 - 227)

Then in endnote 5 of the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, Benjamin restates ...

The definition of the aura as a 'unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be' represents nothing but the formulation of the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image. True to its nature, it remains 'distant, however close it may be.' The closeness which one may gain from its subject matter does not impair the distance which it retains in its appearance (ibid pp 236 - 237).

See also ibid p 216.

14 Benjamin also states that aura is the 'authority of the object', the depletion of which results in the 'shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind.' Ibid p 215.

15 Although the exact nature of traditional setting Benjamin refers to may be interpreted to mean the (by then) traditional relationship between art and the 18th and 19th century's bourgeoisie connoisseur, I think Benjamin also has in mind the traditional ritual setting found in pre-modern societies. In this sense, when Benjamin talks about aura and the art object renewing the social bond and relationship an individual has with others in society and with the world, he is also talking about the transmission of information containing myths of the origins of the people, the sense of character or spirit of a society, the lores and legends of its elders and ancestors as well as the lores, taboos, and traditions that give meaning to a way of life. See ibid pp 216 - 218.

16 For an analysis of the relationship between individuals and the cult of the ancestors, see Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 1992, pp 305 - 317.

17 Benjamin, 1992, p 227.

18 See endnote 18 in ibid p 243.

19 See endnote 1 accompanying Benjamin's essay in which he cites the case of the Mona Lisa's and the number of copies made of it during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Ibid p 236.

20 Ibid p 214.

21 "For the first time, captions have become obligatory" in order to explain the significance says Benjamin in respect to the photograph. See ibid p 220.

22 Ibid pp 218 - 219

23 Ibid p 215.

24 See also the discussion of the commodification of art and its 'exchange value' in Adorno and Horkheimer, 1999, pp 156 - 159, 161.

25 Benjamin alludes to this by saying "tradition itself is thoroughly alive and changeable." See Section IV in Benjamin, 1992, p 217.

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26 Ibid p 218.

27 Refer to Appendix B for an elaboration of what Benjamin means by these modes and the roles they play in the renewal of the social bonds and cultural relations of capitalist systems.

28 Benjamin does concede, however, that mechanical reproductions do not totally obliterate the cult value of the object. He makes this point in reference to portrait photography (p 219), he states that

It retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time, the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man withdraws from the photographic image, the exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value.

Ibid p 219.

29 The concept of cultural citizenship is hotly debated today, both in theory but more importantly in practice, as Western Nation States seek to establish new and increasingly rigid bounds of inclusion, rights to participate, and exclusion through citizenship. Such debates are outlined by a variety of authors including Alisdair Rogers' "Citizenship, Multiculturalism, and the European City" in Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson's *A Companion to the City*, 2003, pp 282 - 291. Other useful sources include Bridge and Watson's *The Blackwell City Reader*, 2002, where again Part Three "Reading Division and Difference" is complimentary. Toby Miller also makes valuable contributions to this debate, see his "Exchange-Value Citizenship?", 1998, and "Introducing ... Cultural Citizenship", 2001. Nick Stevenson too makes contributions in his *Cultural Citizenship: Cosmopolitan Questions*, 2003.

30 See Benjamin, 1992, pp 231 - 234.

31 Ibid pp 226 - 227, 229.

32 Ibid pp 227 - 228, 232 - 233.

33 No longer able to freely associate with the film, Benjamin makes his point by quoting Georges Duhamel as saying

'I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images.'

Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, 1930, p 52, cited in Benjamin, 1992, p 231.

34 Ibid p 231.

35 The individual becomes seduced by the image of the actor on the screen, with whom the audience identify and project their own life stories onto. On the one hand, Benjamin argues, the cinema promises a democratisation of expressive creativity by making it seem that 'Any man today can lay claim to being filmed' (ibid p 225). Later, however, Benjamin qualifies this optimism by again referring to Duhamel that cinema is

... 'a pastime for helots, a diversion for uneducated, wretched, worn-out creatures who are consumed by their worries ..., a spectacle which requires concentration and presupposes no intelligence ..., which kindles no light in the heart and awakens no hope other than the ridiculous one of someday becoming a "star" in Los Angeles.' ...

Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, 1930, p 58, cited in Benjamin, 1992, pp 232.

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36 Framing this distinction in terms of 'concentration' and 'distraction', Benjamin states that ...

A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art.

Ibid p 232.

37 Ibid p 233.

38 Benjamin adds

The distracted person, too, can form habits. ... Distraction as provided by art presents a covert control of the extent to which new tasks have become soluble by apperception. Since, moreover, individuals are tempted to avoid such tasks, art will tackle the most difficult and most important ones where it is able to mobilise the masses. Today it does so in the film. Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise. The film with its shock effect meets this mode of reception halfway.

Ibid p 233 - 234.

39 Benjamin develops the metaphor of the film's audience as a critic who examines the success of the actor's testing by the camera on page 222. He connects this role with the role of the film Director in footnote 10 (page 239). And in Section XIII (pp 228-230), he argues that film and photography encourage a deeper and more precise analysis of what they represent for much the same reasons as psychoanalysis encourages a closer examination of every day slips of the tongue. "The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses."

Ibid p 230.

40 As Benjamin states,

The film makes the cult value recede into the background not only by putting the public in the position of the critic, but also by the fact that at the movies this position requires no attention. The public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one. (p 234)

Benjamin describes how the actors work is dismembered by the movie camera and put to a series of tests which the audience look at as critics in Section VIII (ibid p 222).

41 Ibid p 227.

42 Ibid p 224.

43 For a discussion of Marx's concept of reification or the erasure of the producer from the process of production see Jameson, 1996, p 314.

44 Benjamin, 1992, pp 228 - 229.

45 Ibid p 228.

46 Benjamin argues that the mass-ification of the audience predetermines mass audience responses to the artifact, locking the reactions to the mode of reception. This, for him, explains the 'public which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque [Chaplin] film is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism.' Ibid.

47 Benjamin cites Luigi Pirandello's *Si Gira*, (who himself was cited via Léon Pierre-Quint, "Signification du cinéma," in *L'Art cinématographique*, Paris, 1927, vol 2, pp 14 - 15) to argue how the film actor loses his aura in comparison to the stage actor. Benjamin describes this alienation through words like 'exile' (p 222), 'emptiness', loss of 'corporeality', 'deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises caused by his

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- moving about', and 'vanishing into silence' (p 223), and again on page 224, Benjamin describes the 'oppression' of the actor as the film industry builds a cult of personality around the film actor. See *ibid* pp 222 - 224.
- 48 Benjamin makes a comparison between the "Film Star" and Politicians, arguing that the controlled production of public image and the development of the cult of personality is identical to the strategies and manipulations adopted by Dictators, films most powerful students. As he states,
- The film responds to the shrivelling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the 'personality' outside the studio. This cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of the personality,' the phoney spell of commodity.
- Ibid* pp 224 - 225, also footnote 12, p 240.
- 49 *Ibid* p 234.
- 50 *Ibid*.
- 51 For a more recent account of the creative destruction thesis of capitalism in global culture, see Tyler Cowen, *Creative Destruction: How Globalisation is Changing the World's Cultures*, 2002.
- 52 Dressing his criticism in the mythico-religious garb of a political theology, Benjamin states;
- the artistic gratification of a sense perception [...] has been changed by technology. [...] Mankind, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicising art.
- Benjamin* 1992, p 235.
- 53 See Benjamin's positive assessment of the work of Russian art during the 20s in *ibid* pp 225 - 226.
- 54 *Ibid* pp 224 - 226.
- 55 *Ibid* pp 227 - 228.
- 56 *Ibid* p 234.
- 57 *Ibid* pp 234 - 235.
- 58 In his analysis, Benjamin suggests that Dada ...
- sacrificed the market values which are so characteristic of the film in favour of higher ambitions [...] The Dadaists attached much less importance to the sales value of their work than to its uselessness for contemplative immersion.
- Ibid* p 231.
- 59 See, for example, Andrew Feenberg's *Alternative Modernity, The Technological Turn in Philosophy and Social Theory*, 1995, and Kevin Robins, "The Politics of Silence: The Meaning of Community and the Uses of Media in the New Europe", 1994.
- 60 I borrow this term from Deleuze who in turn borrowed it from Bergson whereby Deleuze uses Bergson's philosophy of 'creative evolution' to develop a taxonomy for the 'cinematographic apparatus'. Deleuze thus models the development of the cinema as a metaphor for the evolution of human consciousness (see Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema I: The Movement Image*, 2000). In "The Task of the Translator", Benjamin uses the word 'evolution' to signal the on-going emergence of a 'pure language' that stands above the manifestation of all languages in the realisation of the absolute intention of language. He also suggests that the intention to communicate through language has to do with

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expressing something - anything - about life between one or several co-respondents. See Benjamin, 1992, pp 70 - 82.

- 61A scour through the internet today provides a huge surplus of literature extolling the virtues and the vices of capitalism driven by a free market ideology. Although the debate concerning controlled capitalism and free market economy goes back several centuries, two of the most recent and influential gurus are Milton and Rose Friedman. Perhaps it is they, more than anyone, who managed to capture the imagination of governments, particularly in the US, shaping the development that capitalism and globalisation has taken since the 1970s. See Milton Friedman, *Essays in Positive Economics*, 1953; Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 1962; Milton Friedman, *Dollars and Deficits: Living with America's Economic Problems*, 1968, and Milton Friedman and Rose Friedman, *Free to Choose*, 1979. For an extensive bibliography on the free market, see <http://www.acton.org/research/reading/free-market.html>.
- 62 Benjamin, 1992, p 231.
- 63 Ibid pp 252 - 253.
- 64 Benjamin does not engage or critique historicism and historical materialism, both complex conglomerations of ideas in themselves, directly. Rather he deploys both terms as a way of articulating a further set of positions in his "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" and it is in these thetic suggestions that he addresses the shortcomings of both. For a brief description of historicism and historical materialism, see Thomas Mautner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1997, pp 250, 342. The description of Karl Popper's notion of historicism on page 250 also makes an interesting compendium to these and to Benjamin's essay.
- 65 Benjamin, 1992, p 77.
- 66 Handke's book was originally published in German but was also translated into English under the title of *The Weight of the World*. Interestingly, the book itself is a translation of earlier fragments of writing by Handke, some of which were published in *The Paris Review*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Translation* (see biographical details that preface *The Weight of the World*). Peter Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 1979, 1984.
- 67 Benjamin, 1992, p 77.
- 68 Refer to the sequence of opening titles in *Wings of Desire*.
- 69 As he states, 'Contrary [...] to the claims of bad translators, [... good] translations do not so much serve the work as owe their existence to it. The life of the originals attains in them [the translation] to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering.' Ibid p 72.
- 70 For an excursion into what Benjamin sees as the "intention" of the work of art and the "intention" of the translation, refer to Appendix C.
- 71 Benjamin thinks that all forms of mental representation come to be expressed through language. This includes film language, visual language, and so on. Benjamin's thinking is in line with later semiological approaches to languages in which signs, even smoke, when seen in a forest or seen coming from a chimney, are regarded as conveying different bits of information. For Benjamin's thoughts on language, see "On Language as such and on the Language of Man" in Benjamin, 1998, pp 107 - 123.
- 72 Benjamin, 1992, p 78.
- 73 As Benjamin argues  
The directives which captions give to those looking at pictures in illustrated magazines soon become even more explicit and more imperative

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in the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones.

Ibid p 220.

74 Ibid p 77.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid p 78.

77 Benjamin does concede that mechanical reproduction may not totally, or may not immediately, obliterate the cult value of art. He makes this point in reference to the early predominance of portrait photography where he states that

It [cult value] retires into an ultimate retrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait was the focal point of early photography. The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead, offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time, the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face. This is what constitutes their melancholy, incomparable beauty. But as man withdraws from the photographic image, the exhibition value for the first time shows its superiority to the ritual value.

Ibid p 219.

78 Ibid p 72.

79 Jean Piaget speaks of the transformation of language using structuralist terms. For him, the laws that govern language are never static, but self structuring. Language structures not only structures language as a whole but become themselves part of the on-going structuring. Structures are thus not fixed or passive formations but constantly transform both themselves (the laws that govern language), the corpus of the language, as well as new material entering them. See Jean Piaget, cited in Hawkes 1982, pp 15 - 17.

80 Benjamin states "The traditional concepts in any discussion of translations are fidelity and licence - the freedom of faithful reproduction and, in its service, fidelity to the word." Benjamin, 1992, p 78.

81 Ibid p 77.

82 Ibid p 73.

83 Ibid pp 77 - 79.

84 Ibid p 79.

85 Benjamin 1998, pp 107 - 109.

86 Benjamin, 1992, p 81.

87 Ibid p 82.

88 Ibid pp 80 - 81. Mathematical models suggest that there is no such thing as a straight line in the universe. A better image Benjamin could have used to describe the interlinear of the translation would be a meeting between two spheres, however proportionate or disproportionate the relative sizes of each might be. This suggests that a translation always takes place between two bodies, whether these are the bodies of language that of the original and the translation of the work of art, or whether these are the bodies of the maker of the work of art and the body of the viewer or the translator. See Stephen J. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, 1989.

89 Benjamin, 1992, p 82. Earlier, Benjamin states that

A literal rendering of the syntax completely demolishes the theory of reproduction of meaning and is a direct threat to comprehensibility. The nineteenth century considered Hölderlin's translation of Sophocles as monstrous examples of such literalness.

Ibid p 78.

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- 90 As Benjamin puts it, "In this pure language - which no longer means or expresses anything but is, as expressionless and creative Word, that which is meant in all languages - all information, all sense, and all intention finally encounter a stratum in which they are destined to be extinguished." Ibid p 80.
- 91 Ibid p 82.
- 92 Levinas, 1986, p 347.
- 93 See Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 2001, pp 92 - 93.
- 94 Benjamin 1992, pp 245 - 255, the description of the angel is found in Section IX, p 249.
- 95 See Roger F. Cook, "Angels, Fiction and History in Berlin: Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*," 1991, pp 36. See also Assenka Oksiloff's analysis of the technique Wenders developed through the angels in "Eden is Burning: Wim Wenders' Techniques of Synaesthesia", 1996.
- 96 Both the angels Damiel and Cassiel use this term to describe human existence in the films.
- 97 Benjamin, 1992, pp 252 - 253. For a Critical Theory discussion of Benjamin's notion of the 'now' in "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 1992, pp 11 - 16.
- 98 There is a correspondence between Benjamin's notion of the 'now' with Agamben's theorisation of the 'potentialities' of the individual in the singularity of the moment and the transience of the self. Releasing the potentiality of the now is, according to Agamben, stronger because only the ability *not to be* or *not to act* confers the fullness of the potential moment. The potential to act, on the other hand, places limits on the potential of the now, for once an act is consummated, the potential for other actions is eradicated. I suggest that the reason Benjamin uses the word 'now' in describing the angel's relationship with the past has to do with reclaiming the potentiality to not to have been and not to have acted in the way that a historical account of past (which is written by the survivor of history, the victors in time) have suggested. See Agamben, 2001, pp 35, *passim*.
- 99 Benjamin, 1992, p 252.
- 100 In "A Small History of Photography", Benjamin has this to add about Atget's photography  
 Not for nothing have Atget's photographs been likened to those of the scene of a crime. But is not every square inch of our cities the scene of a crime? Every passer-by a culprit? Is it not the task of the photographer - descendant of the augurs and haruspices- to reveal guilt and to point out the guilty in his pictures?  
 This Benjamin, 1998, p 256.
- 101 Benjamin 1992, pp 218, 220.
- 102 Benjamin does not engage or critique historicism and historical materialism, both complex conglomerations of ideas in themselves, directly. Rather he deploys both terms as a way of articulating a further set of positions in his "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" and it is in these thetic suggestions that he addresses the shortcomings of both. For a brief description of historicism and historical materialism, see Thomas Mautner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1997, pp 250, 342. The description of Karl Popper's notion of historicism on page 250 also makes an interesting compendium to these and to Benjamin's essay.
- 103 Benjamin, 1992, p 247.
- 104 For more on the complex relationship between the survivor's and the ruler's authority in society in the present and in the past, see Canetti, 1992, "The Double

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Crowd: [...] The Living and the Dead" (pp 72 - 78) "The Survivor" (pp 265 - 324), in particular the sections dealing with "The Ruler as Survivor" (pp 270 - 274), "The Despot's Hostility to Survivors, Rulers, and their Successors" (pp 283 - 288), "The Resentment of the Dead" (pp 305 - 317), and the "Epilogue: The End of the Survivor" (pp 541 - 547).

105 For an indication of the stance Benjamin advocates, see his descriptions of the fate of Carthage in Benjamin, 1992, pp 247 - 248.

106 Ibid p 246.

107 Ibid pp 247 - 248

108 Ibid p 248.

109 For a thought provoking and thorough analysis of the 'survivor' as used here, see Canetti, 1992, pp 265 - 324, and in particular, Canetti's Epilogue, pp 541 - 547.

110 Benjamin, 1992, p 227.

111 Ibid p 212.

112 As Thomas Mautner puts it, Nietzsche's notion of the will to power accounts for the desire that "human beings (and all of life) essentially seek to enhance their power." See Mautner, 1997, p 387.

113 In contrast, this is how Benjamin sees it ...

So long as the movie-maker's capital sets the fashion, as a rule, no other revolutionary merit can be accredited to today's film than the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art.

Benjamin, 1992, p 224.

## Chapter 3

### Art and Consciousness : Where to after Benjamin

#### Introduction

In Chapter 2, I developed a model to analyse the work of art in global cultural contexts, particularly when that culture remains embedded in capitalist industrial relations. Drawn from three essays by Walter Benjamin, I argued that art remains essential to the renewal of human culture by fashioning the nature of the relationship the individual adopts with the world around them. One thing Benjamin's analysis does not do, however, is show whether that individual is aware of the work that goes on in their encounter with art. Indeed, one of the strengths in Benjamin's analysis is to show how most of the work going on is taking place unconsciously. The individual need not know what is happening in order to participate in the work that art does, all that is necessary is that they are habituated in the proper manner of engagement with it. With the exception of the stance adopted by the angel of history, Benjamin is content to show how art works irrespective of whether the individual is conscious of their contribution to it or not.

However, until the individual becomes aware of what the interaction with art produces, the role they play in the re-making of society remains that of an unconscious supporting actor, an unwitting collaborator, or an unknowing accomplice. This Chapter asks whether art may aspire to encourage the individual to become more conscious of the work they do with art. This awareness may become manifest over any aspect of the expressions of life that art represents, or even in the manipulation of the individual's sense of reality that the encounter with art produces. In achieving this, I introduce the work of Torben Graag Grodal, who spent much of the 1990s developing a theory that

analyses 'the role of emotions and cognition in producing the aesthetic effects of film and television [using] neuroscience and cognitive science in combination with narrative theory and film theory [to find an] alternative ... to psychoanalysis [in] explaining identification and the correlation of viewer reaction with specific film genres.'<sup>1</sup> In more recent work, Grodal has turned his attention to distinguishing art films from mainstream cinema in terms of the different levels of consciousness they address. Grodal states that 'the main argument' in "Art Film, the Transient Body, and the Permanent Soul"<sup>2</sup> is "that the typical difference between an art film and a mainstream film is based on a difference between portraying 'permanent' meanings and 'transient' meanings."<sup>3</sup> While I conclude that the meaning of a film is performed every time it is encountered, rather than it being transient or permanent, Grodal nevertheless compliments the critical cultural method derived from Benjamin by providing a way of thinking about art when films enable the individual to become more aware of the work that is produced in that encounter. The first section of this Chapter identifies and tests Grodal's theory by applying it to Wenders' *Wings of Desire* and Brad Silberling's Hollywood remake of it called *City of Angels* (1998). Yet in appending Grodal's cognitive and neurophysiological scientific method of film analysis, the object of my Thesis remains committed to the work of cultural theory because it seems that it is culture and not science that conditions the way humans interpret and react in their environment. Section II of this Chapter does not privilege natural phenomena or physical science, such as Antonio Damasio's studies of the biological basis of human consciousness, over the role of culture in determining human reality. Rather this Section takes account of physical aspects affecting the individual's interaction with film within a framework of a scientific analyses of human culture. This Section does not, therefore, seek to justify conclusions reached on a cultural level of analysis by recourse to physical science, but rather to take account of physical and environmental

factors as part of this Chapter's overall argument. Section III of the Chapter reconciles Grodal's cognitive approach with Benjamin's critical method and concludes with a discussion on how they shape the analyses of Wenders' films that then follow.

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## I

### High Art and Higher Consciousness

Grodal distinguishes his categories of art and mainstream films by referring to long standing debates concerning both the nature of art and its relation to higher spiritual life, as well as to ideas of popular mainstream art as dealing with everyday mundane situations.<sup>4</sup> Basing his argument on the work of Portuguese-American neurologist Antonio Damasio,<sup>5</sup> Grodal links the notion of high art and mainstream films respectively to 'permanent' and 'transitory' cognitive states of consciousness, attaching notions of a 'permanent soul' to art films and ideas about a 'transient body' to commercial productions. Appropriately enough, therefore, the Producers of *City of Angels* say that they 'didn't want to tell the story in exactly the same way'<sup>6</sup> as Wenders' art house production although, as the credits indicate, Silberling's Hollywood films is based on Wenders' more arty *Wings of Desire*. Before looking closer at how Grodal's theory handles these two films, I want to spend a moment outlining the basic features of both of them.

#### 1) The Similarities and Differences between Wenders' and Silberling's Films

The pivot of Grodal's argument hinges on establishing the difference between art and permanent meaning on the one hand, and popular mainstream productions with more transient 'meaning'<sup>7</sup> on the other. With this proposition

kept in mind, Wenders' *Wings of Desire* should be expected to encourage viewers to reflect on their subjective realities while identifying basic aspects of life's transcendent meaning. A mainstream production like *City of Angels*, on the other hand, should meet its audience expectations by depicting how the protagonists remain immersed in the action play of their everyday lives yet manage to successfully respond to the challenges of the immediate and urgent realities of the situations confronting them in the moment.

According to the basic proposition of Grodal's theory, Silberling's film should produce an immediately gratifying romance with little lasting intellectual, spiritual, or metaphysical value<sup>8</sup> while *Wings of Desire* should produce a perceptive and enduring philosophical meditation on contemporary life in the postmodern city. Although shot mostly in Los Angeles, *City of Angels* tells a story of an angel named Seth (Nick Cage) who decides to become human after he falls in love with a heart surgeon named Maggie Rice (Meg Ryan). Like the angel Damiel (Bruno Ganz) in *Wings of Desire*, Seth is accompanied by a close angelic friend named Cassiel<sup>9</sup> (Andre Braugher) who challenges, consoles, and encourages Seth to follow his heart's desire. It isn't until Seth meets a former angel named Nathan Messinger (Dennis Frenz), however, who describes himself as a 'glutton, hedonist, former celestial body and recent addition to the human race', that Seth learns that angels can choose to become human if they wish.<sup>10</sup> Thus like Peter Falk, the former angel in *Wings of Desire* who tempts Damiel to become human, Messinger too tempts Seth to abandon his angelic work of guiding the souls of the dead to their celestial resting place in preference for the unashamed pursuits of human sensual pleasures like eating ice cream, having sex, and smoking cigarettes. Unlike the more restrained Falk however, Messinger's hedonism brings him to meet Seth in the hospital where he is soon to be operated on by Maggie Rice for the heart problems his gluttony has created. Thus in spite of some clear differences, there are major correspondence between *Wings of Desire* and *City of Angels*.

Another of the correspondences between the two films is the use of library scenes. There the angels seem to spend most of their time watching tenderly over their human charges. In Berlin's *Staatsbibliothek*, Daniel and Cassiel often encounter a frail old man named Homer who regularly comes searching through books like August Sander's *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts*.<sup>11</sup> Homer does this in an effort to recollect what he has forgotten of his pre war life in Berlin. In *City of Angels*, the library is, appropriately enough, San Francisco's Main Public Library, an equally imposing building where Seth comes across a man reading a passage from Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*. The correspondence between Homer in *Wings of Desire* and the old man in *City of Angels* resonates on little more than a formal level, however. At this point the two films digress in terms of the levels of meaning they address.

In Wenders' film, Homer ruminates sadly over the fate of Weimar Berlin while his reflections are accompanied by Sanders' portraits of Jewish people in Nazi Germany during the 1930s. In contrast, the old man in *City of Angels* reflects on the failure of a Spring due to persistent bad weather.<sup>12</sup> Although Hemmingway compares the death of Spring to the unnecessary death of a young person, the tone of *City of Angels* library scene fades into the shadows of Homer's references to the fate of the Jews in Nazi Germany. In another departure from *Wings of Desire*, Seth later borrows Hemmingway's book from the Library and leaves it on Maggie's bed-side table. When she later meets Seth while returning the book to the Library, Seth indicates that what he really likes about Hemmingway is that 'he never forgets to describe how things taste.' Thus while Seth emulates Daniel's desire for physical sensation, the use of words like 'taste' and 'touch' connotes a more physical and immediate level of signification. In contrast, Wenders' film puts the angel's aspiration to 'know what no angel knows'<sup>13</sup> in abstract terms such as 'sensuality', 'love', 'time' and 'eternity'. In general *City of Angels* conceptually develops themes through

concrete action words like 'feelings'<sup>14</sup>, 'marriage'<sup>15</sup>, and 'heaven',<sup>16</sup> while visually it frames these with acts of eating, touching, and the expression of raw feelings. Wenders' film, on the other hand, tends to neutralise Damiel's wish for physical sensation by framing his desires in a more refined language that expresses physical properties in existential and philosophical terms.

*City of Angels* thus finally becomes a story about an angel named Seth who falls in love with a mortal woman and renounces immortality in pursuit of a relationship with her. However, this romance-tragedy no sooner allows the lovers to find each other and decide to share their lives together than Maggie dies in a cycling accident. *City of Angels* thus gives its audience a roller coaster series of concrete emotional experiences as they follow Seth's transition from a disembodied angel to a sensually embodied human being, his success in winning Maggie heart, his grief for her when she is killed, and his reassertion that it is better to have experienced one moment with her to have lived eternally without her. He then triumphantly washes away his grief for her at the end of the film by immersing himself into the physical sensation of swimming in Pacific Ocean. Silberling's film, which works primarily to elicit from its viewer a series of emotionally driven identifications with its protagonists, thus appears to confirm Grodal's theory by demonstrably functioning on a more basic, immediate, and narrative level meaning derived from an of immersed and embodied state of consciousness.

*Wings of Desire* also centres on an angel's wish to know physical sensation and the desire for human love, wishes which are realised when Damiel finally meets Marion (Solveig Dommartin), the woman of his desire. However, the film makes much more of the everyday experiences of life, couching even the lover's eventual meeting in a more highly refined and even philosophical discourse of a new beginning in life of the city. Unlike the sentimental *City of Angels*, *Wings of Desire* is crafted to produce an

ideologically sophisticated, aesthetically rich, historically nuanced, and emotionally complex experience for those watching the film. It develops a narrative that explores life in Cold War Berlin, the erosion of cultural memory, and the important role of story-telling in cohering a sense of self and identity in the modern city. I will not expand on how this film does this here as I return to Wenders' films with greater detail in the next two Chapters. Now I will continue to examine how *Wings of Desire* demonstrates that it has higher aspirations as a work of art than Silberling's more popular driven mainstream film.

## 2) Applying Grodal's Theory to *City of Angels* and *Wings of Desire*

Grodal establishes a three tiered hierarchy of film production that he associates with different types of film. The first level is a form of production that deals with 'abstract'<sup>17</sup> concepts, memory,<sup>18</sup> or imaginary realities. Dealing with past or future possibilities, these abstractions give rise to overarching or more lasting thought dealing with metaphysical, spiritual, philosophical, or subjectivity. The second level of production deals with transient action which he associates with canonical narratives. Here the film directs the individual's attention directly at the problems that confront the film's protagonist in the present. The third is about style, which is about the history of innovative developments in form and design.<sup>19</sup> Grodal attaches permanent artistic meaning with both the highest and lowest forms of production levels because they cohere the subject through time by tying values in the present with past and future manifestations. The middle level is what Grodal suggests constitutes the ground for mainstream concrete narrative and where the film's viewer associates transient meaning with the value of the protagonists actions directed at the fleeting present. *City of Angels* and *Wings of Desire* both demonstrate values that them fit this taxonomy. *Wings of Desire's* stylistic innovation in using black and white and colour film stocks in the same film at the same time

as canvassing abstract philosophical problems such as 'the true identity of Berlin, Germany, and Humanity'<sup>20</sup> gives it ground for claiming to be a film of higher artistic value. *City of Angels*, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with developing a love story which aims at exciting its audience's immediate emotional responses but which may hold little lasting presence in the mind of its viewer. Furthermore, being made in Hollywood, *City of Angels* fits into other criteria that Grodal establishes for mainstream productions.

An initial assessment based on these two films indicates that Grodal's theory might be useful in identifying the work of films with higher artistic value. In the following three sub-sections I take a closer look at how this theory deals with *City of Angels* and *Wings of Desire*. Section i) looks at how Grodal identifies properties of art and mainstream film narration. Section ii) looks at how Grodal links the director's intentions and the context of production to art and mainstream productions. Finally, section iii) looks at how Grodal constructs the difference between art house and mainstream audiences.

#### i) Hollywood Action Narratives or a Contemplative Artistic Space

Grodal distinguishes art film narration from mainstream stories by citing David Bordwell<sup>21</sup> who suggests that art film narratives produce 'experiential periods in which nothing takes place'<sup>22</sup> but which are filled with prosaic and reflective portrayals of the 'presentic moment'.<sup>23</sup> According to Grodal, the flows of experience in art films are often 'highly charged'<sup>24</sup> perceptions that stand in isolation from their narrative significance. This explains why characters like Travis in Wenders' *Paris, Texas* (1984) 'are more often observers than participants'<sup>25</sup> in the realities they are depicted in. Like Bordwell, Grodal associates art films with *auteur* narration as the vision of artistic genius<sup>26</sup> that only shows itself in the work of great film directors like Wenders. In contrast, mainstream films' 'pragmatic, action-oriented'<sup>27</sup> canonical narratives drive the protagonists, and the audiences who follow them, to constantly respond to

whatever is going on in the plot at that moment. This brings Grodal to conclude that 'mainstream narration [...] is often perceived as being anonymous',<sup>28</sup> as if they are the innate consequence of the sequence of events depicted by the film.

i.a) The Style of Narrative in *Wings of Desire* and *City of Angels*

At first glance, *Wings of Desire* would appear to support the distinction that Bordwell and Grodal make, as Wenders' film depicts the angels Daniel and Cassiel walking incessantly through the streets of Berlin, observing the city as they go. To that extent this film does produce a narrative that punches its way out of the seamless flows of a conventional stories about a city, but the idea of a discontinuous contemplative space is too simplistic a way to categorise the effect this film achieves. Firstly, Wenders plays with the form of storytelling in *Wings of Desire*, as Homer's reflexive monologues throughout the film indicate, suggesting that the modes of narration this film produces are deliberately self reflexive and thus more complex than the stories he tells in films like *The Buena Vista Social Club* (1999). In addition, *Wings of Desire* draws attention not to conventional stories of the city, or to orthodox histories of Berlin, but rather to the angels' view of the way people are living in the city today. Their perspective gives the film's narrative a mythological and semi religious distance beyond a situated position in space and time.

In *City of Angels*, Seth and Cassiel also prowl along the streets of a city, although these two sentient beings appear more like negligent cops on the beat as they stumble obliviously from one street scene to another without noticing anything particular going on. The affect this creates in Silberling's film is that the angels seem to be in a state of complete self absorption and distraction from their environment whereas the angels in *Wings of Desire* remain present and appear to be part of Berlin's streets, albeit invisibly. If this allows the audience to feel that Wenders' angels have a greater sense of empathy with Berlin, I suggest that the lack of connection in Silberling's film between the angels and

the streets of Los Angeles produces a more critical perspective of the street culture of modern cities. For ignoring what is going on in the city's streets is sometimes the only way the individual can survive the constant barrage of visual and auditory stimulus that constantly assaults the passer-by, distracting them with flashing window advertising and police and ambulance sirens, or by junkies pleading hands, or by drunks, and homeless beggars, that they sometimes forget to engage with the deadly game of dodgem cars being played out on pedestrian crossings.

What my reading of Seth and Cassiel's walks through Los Angeles hinges on, however, is the engagement of a critical perspective that the individual in the audience brings to their reception of the film. In engaging that perspective, critically and consciously, the individual must relate the films to their experience of the city in which they live and not remain immersed in the narrative realities produced by the film. The proposition that higher works of art move their audience to contemplation thus appears to have some basis, but contemplation may also be produced by mainstream films like *City of Angels*. This suggests that while Grodal's category has some validity, in practice it works in reverse in these two films.

#### 1.b) Returning to the Idea of Art as Contemplation

Yet Grodal maintains that an important feature of a typical mainstream narrative is that it results in the film's protagonist taking up some form of instrumental action. This leads him to make a somewhat ambitious claim that classic mainstream (ie. Cowboy Western) stories are founded on a materialist philosophy because 'materialist philosophy aimed at changing the world.'<sup>29</sup> Art narratives, on the other hand, lead their characters towards a relative state of passive intellectual contemplation and spiritual reflection because, as Grodal states,

the problems of interpretation precedes and often blocks concrete actions, [... and] in art film narration, the problems of understanding the world often make actions impossible.<sup>30</sup>

Kathe Giest agrees that *Wings of Desire* typifies the type of response that Grodal thinks the 'artistic' sensibility engenders. As she states;

For Handke and Wenders the artist may perceive more than his fellow man, but he does not necessarily perceive it to better ends. For them everyone is trapped by his own arbitrary perceptions and valuations and an inability to act meaningfully or, indeed, to act at all.<sup>31</sup>

Maintaining this passive/active dichotomy puts Grodal's theory in danger of reinforcing conventional stereotypes that art is an inward looking, intellectual experience that reduces the individual's capacity to do something in the world. Protagonists in art films thus appear to suffer from chronic alienation or Attention Deficit Syndrome and who cannot focus on what is taking place before them.

#### i.c) The Political Implications of Contemplation

What is more problematic however, is that, accepted at face value, the idea that higher works of art produce contemplative narratives would impede a researcher's ability to consider the work art actively achieves by reducing the subject's response to passive relativity. For if Benjamin's analysis in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* has any lasting value, then art must be seen as principally concerned with actualising relations between the individual, the artwork's subject, and the world in which they both exist. In a capitalist State, Benjamin continues, art acts even more decisively because it inhibits the individual's desire to challenge or change their relations with property and money. Furthermore, Benjamin suggests that this passivity is by no means the only form of response that art may promote, its just that most films that he saw at the time worked to deny their audience's responsibilities. Yet still Grodal suggests that it is 'epistemological uncertainty'<sup>32</sup> that he typifies with art films which produces higher artistic 'representations of the

world that are more true'.<sup>33</sup> As Benjamin's work indicates however, the pacification of the audience can be seen as a main objective of a film that seeks to reproduce existing social relations. Such conventional notions that art induces contemplation appear to obviate the urgent work that art is constantly undertaking by inviting audiences to accept and perpetuate the 'state of things'<sup>34</sup> in their world. It would thus appear more accurate to conclude that the form of actions art induces through its narrative may sometimes result in a state of quiet contemplation, but this passive quietness may in fact be precisely the desired work the producers of the artifact seek to achieve.

#### i.d) The Value of 'Epistemological Uncertainty'

A more productive line of argument emerges when Grodal suggests that the 'epistemological uncertainty'<sup>35</sup> he attributes to art films intercedes to block reactionary responses to situations in a film's scenario so that individuals may consider a more thoughtful response before acting. Now 'epistemological uncertainty' may indeed produce a film of higher artistic value because it asks its viewer to re-examine assumptions underlying the narratives within which the subject in the film is being constructed. Yet again, *City of Angels* shows that it is determined to break out of the straight jacket that Grodal would place around it, for Silberling's film does require its audience to reflect on and question the choices made by its protagonist. This is well demonstrated when Seth expresses his desire to become human in order to help Maggie understand that she did not fail in her responsibility as a doctor after she loses a patient. *City of Angels* raises legitimate objections to Seth's proposed course of action when Cassiel quickly demonstrates that angels don't need to become human in order to help someone.<sup>36</sup> Silberling's film thus presents some powerful existential, epistemological, as well as moral problems that counter Seth's determination to directly intervene in Maggie's life. Seth has to deal with these objections, and he does, but his response does not convince anybody, neither

Cassiel nor Seth himself. The audience too can immediately recognise the shortcomings of Seth's rationalisation. Yet Seth still decides to become human for actualising his desire for Maggie is more appealing than keeping his attraction for her a disembodied thought in his angelic state. Indeed, even after Maggie dies, Seth never doubts his decision to become human, even though he recognises that his intervention in her life may have helped to realise her untimely demise. 'I would rather have had one breath of her hair, one kiss of her mouth, [...] than an eternity without it' concludes the former angel.<sup>37</sup> It may be true that some directors employ a more subjective diction in telling their stories, but Grodal's assertion that 'art film directors are more sceptical to the possibility of understanding the true nature of the world than directors of mainstream narrative film'<sup>38</sup> appears questionable. It is also irrelevant from the audience's point of view. Looked at from their perspective, an individual in the audience of these films may indeed find visions of truth and reality in Wenders' *auteur* form of film narration, but they may also find it in Silberling's Hollywood style storytelling too.

#### i.e) Art and The Mind/Body Split

There is another reason to think that a contemplative narrative style may not be a good guide in distinguishing a higher work of art. Contrary to the line Grodal argues, both *Wings of Desire* and *City of Angels* dissolve the active/passive split when both films require the main protagonists, Daniel and Seth, to take up embodied human becoming in preference to the eternal state of inactive being and disembodied thought. Although Grodal concedes that notions of 'permanent soul', consciousness, and abstract thought<sup>39</sup> - as cognitive activities seated in a distinctly located 'mind' that focus on factors beyond immediate reality - are fictions of 'folk psychology'<sup>40</sup> to help distinguish different and sometimes conflicting apprehensions of reality in the moment, he maintains this distinction is necessary to identify the work of higher art. The separation of the 'mind' oriented towards long term goals and ideals from the 'body' focused on immediate realisation of the subject's impulses, needs, and desires is an outmoded and counterproductive proposition that even Wenders' *Wings of Desire* emphatically rejects.<sup>41</sup> Maintaining the separation between body and mind in order to distinguish the work of higher artistic merit is starting from a wrong premise. What is more, while Silberling's film develops a series of pragmatic narrative problems, it nuances their articulation in more than simplistic binary terms and even manages to resolve them, at times with remarkable sophistication and philosophical insight. Seth's choices are presented with complex ambiguity and the individual in the audience does encounter situations that present them with considerable nuance that could be relevant to their lives beyond the film. The consequences of these problems and of Seth's responses may indeed be related directly to the immediate situations that confront him, but the lack of abstraction of these problems does not lessen the significance of the dilemmas that face him, either in terms of their abstract or pragmatic dimensions.

i.f) Why the Story of *City of Angels* does not make it High Art

What trivialises *City of Angels* aspirations to being a work of art is its overarching commitment to an intellectual concept which one might articulate as 'the joy to be alive' over and above what Seth actually experiences while he is living. It finally and emphatically expresses this commitment in the last scene of the film which takes place at the beach where the angels gather every day. There Seth finally thumbs his nose at what has happened to Maggie and decides to go body surfing. It is this conclusion to Seth's story more than the style of narrative that makes *City of Angels* a work of lesser artistic worth.<sup>42</sup> For this is where the film abandons its commitment to the themes of love and human relationship, themes that would have given it a more enduring presence in the minds of its audience, in order to promote an idea of the value of carnal knowledge and physical sensation. Let me explain.

Seth's pleasure in immersing himself in the ocean turns what might have been a powerful but somewhat tragic conclusion to a film about a blossoming relationship between two individuals prematurely ended into an affirmation of the sensual pleasures of the body and its joy in living. This pleasure and joy, so the film appears to say, should be both felt and experienced irrespective of the tragedies that mark and maim that body along the way. Yet when Seth's re-affirms his decision to become human by parading himself in front of his former colleagues, he minimises and even erases the significance that Maggie played in motivating him. The failure of this ending may be partly due to Cage's hollow acting, but mostly it's because this move structurally and formally trivialises Maggie's death and the bonds of human affection between her and the fallen angel. This is where Seth's re-affirmation of life and his determination to manifest his destiny coincides with the Hollywood expectation for a happy ending with disastrous effect. It is not that *City of Angels* should have concluded with Seth in a state of grief, depression, and endless mourning

for Maggie, however, or that it was wrong to re-affirm his decision to stay alive, for these would be necessary steps in successfully concluding Seth's story. Had Silberling's film been of exceptional artistic value, he would have found a way of allowing Seth to express his love for Maggie and the grief he felt for her loss as well as show his determination and commitment to continue living.<sup>43</sup> Such an ending would have honoured the role Maggie played in his choices without neglecting that sooner or later Seth would probably have found a sense of returning joy and pleasure in being alive. Had Seth's human emotions been taken more seriously, *City of Angels* would have gained one of the significant features that marks *Wings of Desire* as a film of exceptional value.<sup>44</sup> In respecting the human response to the loss of a loved one, *City of Angels* could thus have captivated the longer term interests of its audience and with that, perhaps deliver it the stamp of a work of greater merit. Unfortunately, the film's ending obliterates whatever lasting appeal it might have had by marginalising the human aspects of its story for a commitment to an idea. This is what undermines *City of Angels*' claims to be a work of high artistic merit.

#### i.g) Reassessing Grodal's Approach of Film Narrative

In a somewhat symmetrical move reminiscent of Silberling's film, Grodal's separation of abstract mental activity from immediate narrative and embodied emotions fails to grasp what distinguishes higher forms of artistic practice. While I agree that a 'unified, conscious experiences of subjecthood' is functionally situated in what is popularly thought of as the human mind, I would not conclude, as Grodal does, that the 'central function of this unified "conscious subject" is to control the body'.<sup>45</sup> The relationship between mind and body is not one in which the mind issues orders that the body is supposed to dutifully follows, for minds and bodies don't exist in a hierarchy in which the bodies and minds relate either as a quietly subservient body-politic deferring to its colonising sovereign authority, or as a rebellious subject caught up in a civil

uprising. Neither do I think that the experience of a 'conscious subject as a disembodied spiritual one'<sup>46</sup> is 'universal' to all human cultures in the way that Grodal implies. In this respect, the 'post-modern' theorists Grodal has in site for his critique of the 'decentered subject' offer a more plausible explanation; the construction of disembodied subjectivity as a 'unified conscious self' situated in an abstract concept of mind is indeed a 'Western, male, ideological construction'.<sup>47</sup>

On the contrary, the successful functioning of the individual certainly combines with what Grodal calls 'higher consciousness' and abstraction in the 'mind', both of which contribute to the successful performance of the individual in response to the situations they find themselves in, but this does not reduce the body to an object for the *controlling mind* to exercise corrective power over as if mind is a Chief Executive Officer issuing directives to the working body of a corporation. I suggest a concept of a critical performing body as the locus of the subject's cohering *dasein*<sup>48</sup> provides a more plausible explanation and more accurately describes the nature of a higher form of interaction when art is encountered by a living being. I will return to the concept of performance later in this Chapter, but for the moment, my intention is to refute the mind/body dichotomy and the insistence of abstract narratives in Grodal's theory as a way to distinguish a work of higher artistic aspiration.

## ii) The Higher Work of Art and "Auteur" and "Mainstream" Productions

Grodal also maintains that it is possible to identify a film of higher artistic merit by looking to the director's intentions as it is embedded by the context of production. This draws Grodal to associate 'European' with 'art house' cinema while 'Hollywood' becomes the centre of the more banal commercial productions. The application of this aspect of Grodal's theory to Wenders and Silberling's films leads to further problems however. For one thing, Grodal makes no mention of Asian or Bollywood cinemas, which aim at producing

commercial mainstream products while embodying different cultural, artistic, and production sensibilities to Hollywood and European styles of film-making. Such films further emphasise that context of production does not adequately account for the actual work a film actually achieves in its interaction with the individual in the audience. This is further stressed by Grodal's own analyses of films like *Gone with the Wind* (1939)<sup>49</sup> in which he suggests that there are many overlaps between popular mass oriented commercial films and a higher work of art.

The picture Grodal outline is further complicated by the fact that Wenders has always freely admitted that he has been deeply influenced by Hollywood directors like Nicholas Ray and John Ford. What is more, Wenders' films have sometimes enthusiastically embraced American popular culture. As Kathe Geist notes about Wender's development as a film-maker from his earliest productions down to *Paris, Texas* (1984), Wenders 'went [...] from an infatuation with America to an ambivalent love-hate for it to an acceptance'<sup>50</sup> of it. Further evidence from his recent production, *The Land of Plenty* (2004), suggests that Wenders has again fallen in love with his adopted country. However, Wenders is not an art-film *auteur* who becomes seduced into the mainstream by commercial success. It would be quite wrong to suggest that Wenders has gone through an 'American' or 'mainstream phase' at one time and an 'artistic period' at another. Irrespective of the dates of production, Wenders' films consistently display American influences and, in some instances, even use techniques typical of Hollywood films.<sup>51</sup> This has prompted one film scholar to argue that Wenders 'nationalises' Hollywood genres as German at the same time as 'naturalising' them in (his) European films.<sup>52</sup> The evidence provided by over 30 years of film-making suggests that Wenders maintains a passion and a fascination for Hollywood and mainstream film production as well as a commitment to making films with a purer artistic sensibility, making Grodal's assertion that the artistic merit of a production can

be gauged through the European *'auteur'* tradition decidedly Euro-centric. This becomes even more questionable when the decision making processes of the audience choices about what films to see is taken into consideration.

### iii) Mainstream Audiences and Abstract Symbolic Thought

Arguably the most significant problem with Grodal's theory is the insistence that 'mainstream' audiences lack the capacity to engage with the abstract nature of art films. Grodal maintains that the majority of cinema goers reject art films because they find such films demand extended periods of 'saturated'<sup>53</sup> viewing. Yet there are many variables involved when individuals decide on what films to see, not least is the accessibility a film has in terms of the venues it is shown at. Other factors such as reputation of the actors and director directly influence individuals' decisions about what films to see while the advertising budget a film receives re-inforces such decisions. Advertising is often informed by and even derived from 'professional' film reviewers who are themselves embedded within and committed either to the 'art-house' or 'mainstream' sectors of the film industry. And as one IMBD correspondent<sup>54</sup> indicates in her comments on *City of Angels*, American audiences refuse to see foreign language films. It has long been known that national and language preferences as well as regional film distribution policies play a less visible but equally important role in determining what choices an individual is presented with and can make.

Further complicating the conditions under which the individual decides what films to see, Thomas Elsaesser has pointed out that Government intervention into European film production 'evolved closely in relation to two contradictory impulses: safeguarding the national film culture [...] while trying to develop a cinema formally distinct from that of Hollywood.'<sup>55</sup> As Grodal admits, the emergence of movements like the New German Cinema to which Wenders belonged 'could be partly explained' by the film-maker's need to

'cater for the pretences of those state run institutions that funded film.'<sup>56</sup> Prevailing cultural policies thus also play a role in determining the nature of the films that get produced.

### iii.a) The Problem of Theorising Mass and Art House Audiences

The binary constructions underpinning Grodal's theory forces him to repeatedly make over-simplified generalisations about films' audiences. This can be detected in his reference to Terence Davies' *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (1988) about which he states that

[...] the way in which the film cues a mental, 'disembodied' experience of the implied concrete 'pro-filmic event', suggests that the film is addressed to those viewers for whom symbolic and abstract meanings have more appeal than a more concrete narrative.<sup>57</sup>

The problem is not so much in what Grodal is trying to say, although perhaps he might have found a simpler way of articulating it, but the assumptions he makes about art and mainstream audiences while continuing to ignore the subjectivities of the individual. For it is highly unlikely that individuals base their decisions on what to see and what not to see because of how concrete they expect a film's narrative to be. Nor will many individuals decide to see a mainstream film because they consider such films are more emotionally satisfying. On the contrary, the individual is likely to expect an emotionally as well as intellectually satisfying experience irrespective of the genre of film they see. On the other hand, when Grodal typifies art film audiences in terms of a preference for higher levels of 'symbolic and abstract meanings' he ignores the fact that such individuals may also abstract higher levels of 'lyrical'<sup>58</sup> meanings from mainstream stories. Grodal consistently constructs mainstream audiences with considerable (and somewhat orthodox) condescension while art's audience are constructed in equally ideal, conventional and canonical terms.

As Raymond Williams warned in *Culture and Society*, words like 'mainstream' and 'the masses' are becoming "new word[s] for mob, [...retaining] the traditional characteristics of the mob [...such as] gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit."<sup>59</sup> The tendency to reduce and homogenise the complexity of the individual who happens to be doing something in the mainstream to a simplistic, uncritical, and sometimes threatening 'other'<sup>60</sup> seems to underpin Grodal's distinction between the mainstream and art film category. That his assumptions draw on the work of Lakoff and Johnson suggests that sectors within the academic community continue to systematically produce negative and conservative stereotypes of popular masses in order to construct positivistic theories of ideal audience and passing them off as scientific.

### iii.b) Re-thinking the Individual's Role in the Work of the Audience

The continuing inadequacies in Grodal's theory finally sent me looking in other directions to try to establish some qualitative differences between art films and mainstream movies and their audiences. Eventually I asked one correspondent if she would like to review *City of Angels* for me, and here is a summary of her response;

The film got good when Seth fell to earth. [...] Really good - they didn't hold back on the sort of things that could happen. [...] I think this part of the film should have been longer. It was more interesting to explore what might happen if you just fell to earth like that with no social security number or history or anything - I found this an interesting concept, more so than the idea that there are angels watching over us which [...] is a little creepy and more than a little pointless.<sup>61</sup>

Such comments again suggest that Silberling's Hollywood remake of *Wings of Desire* achieves some unexpectedly complex and abstract interpretations that extend the meaning of this film beyond the expectation of instantaneous gratification that Grodal typifies with Hollywood productions. For this correspondent, the most interesting aspect of Silberling's film is that it appears to be dealing with the ways in which contemporary societies handle

strangers, a theme that, co-incidentally, resurfaces in Wenders' *Faraway So Close!* Naturally, such interpretations depend on the many idiosyncratic qualities of the individual watching, such as whether they have a University education, what they know about film production, and what they might expect from art. What is clear is that it is exceedingly difficult, and probably pointless, to generalise what expectations an individual may have of a mainstream film and a film with higher artistic aspirations. As my earlier examination of the angels' walk through the streets of Berlin and Los Angeles demonstrated, individual subjectivity always complicates and conditions the reading of a film.

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Grodal's theory has only been partially sustained by this closer examination of how it handles Wenders and Silberling's films. What I find is that, after examining Grodal's attempt to distinguish higher forms of art from mainstream work, it is more revealing and more rewarding to analyse films in terms of the impact they have as they are encountered by their audiences. The basic element in either art and mainstream audiences remains the individual however. Dichotomies that homogenise and reduce the viewer into mass or art-house fail to grasp potential and possible implications that may come out of (conscious and unconscious) interactions between the work of art as film and the individual watching it. As Benjamin points out in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", modern forms of communication do embed particular relations between individuals. Yet, as Ien Ang's research into mostly Dutch female audiences of the American soapie *Dallas* suggests, it remains difficult to extrapolate a singular authoritative meaning of the nature of the relationship between individual receptions and mass mediated transmissions.<sup>62</sup> Although acute and still pertinent to the present context, even Benjamin's analysis must be approached carefully if it is used to make a generalisation about the masses of individuals in society or the work that art does with them.

Yet ignoring the relationship between “crowds and power”<sup>63</sup> in society would deny the possibility of understanding aspects of the work that art in global culture may be producing. Unless a researcher draws attention to those potentialities, their research is at risk of perpetuating that work by making it invisible. However, with technologies such as television and the internet have so complicated the modes of receptions today that it impossible to locate where the crowd is or who is in it. Whether in a crowded cinema or in the solitude of the living room, the isolated individual increasingly encounters film in the privacy of their own *lebensraum*. There one may find the lack of interest or desire to engage with abstract thought and reflection, like the ‘herd-like prejudices’ and ‘lowness of taste and habit’ that Grodal attributes to mainstream audiences, even in the most sophisticated cultural contexts and, surprisingly, amongst the most refined individuals. The work of film in global culture seems thus better considered from the point of view of it’s potential effect on individuals, irrespective of whether that reception takes place in a mainstream cinema, or a sparsely populated but culturally oriented art-house auditorium, or any other place that this can happen.

If Grodal’s theory is only partially successful in identifying a work of higher artistic merit, he does provide a framework to think about what constitutes a work of high artistic value and the associated problems of properly evaluating it.<sup>64</sup> In important ways, Grodal’s theory shows what a film theory or film philosophy should avoid in order to identify the role that a work of high artistic merit plays in contemporary culture and society. The answer to the question this Chapter poses is thus not found in artistic modes or means of production, nor in the style of narrative an artist uses, or indeed the idea that high art induces disembodied contemplation or permanent meaning. Neither is the answer found in the context within which an artwork is encountered, although naturally every factor affecting the production of art necessarily plays a role in the overall outcome it produces. What Grodal’s theory finally

indicates is the crucial importance the individual continues to play in art's work. This brings me to conclude that the value of a general theory about the artistic merit of a film based on whether and how it succeeds in generating higher levels of conscious reflection can only be applied to the individual viewer on a film by film basis. On this point, Grodal's theory has something more to add about how one can identify when an encounter with art heightens the individual's awareness of the work that results in their interaction.

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## II

### **Human Biology, High Art, and Higher Consciousness**

Grodal grounds his argument that art films can lead to heightening individual states of consciousness by linking the polarity he makes between mind and body to human biology through the work of Antonio Damasio.<sup>65</sup> Briefly I want to indicate the basic structure of Damasio's theory before looking at how Grodal appropriates it in his own work.

1) Damasio's Three Tiered Theory of Human Consciousness and Grodal's Theory

Table 1 - Antonio Damasio's Systems of Consciousness

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| UNCONSCIOUS SELF ----->   | regulation of basic physical functioning of the body.                          |
| CORE SELF ----->          | motivated/responsive to presentic-immersive-immediate phenomenon               |
| AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SELF --> | motivated by dreams, hopes, differed desire, and memories of past experiences, |

Damasio's theory about human consciousness is based on evolutionary and biological evidence that consciousness in homo sapiens is based in three distinctive neurological systems. The first is sometimes called the unconscious or autonomic nervous system and is concerned with the basic maintenance of the body's processes such as breathing and other organic operations. This level of consciousness 'does not engage in world-directed actions'<sup>66</sup> but is concerned with the internal functioning of an organism and so does not interest Grodal. Damasio's second neurological system is concerned with 'basic interactions' between an organism and the realities of the world it finds itself in. This 'core consciousness' is directed at maintaining the functioning of the 'core self'. Grodal adds that this core consciousness

is a transient one: it directly confronts the world based on a relatively minimal memory of personal identity, as the typical situation-controlled action hero. The core self is [...] 'opportunistic': it immediately reflects on the impulses coming from the exterior world. The perceptions are salient because of this transience.<sup>67</sup>

This is where Grodal connects core consciousness and immediate 'on-line' responsiveness to the concrete canonical narratives he associates with mainstream cinema. The subjective autobiography, history, 'future-directed' desires, and 'global identity' (including things like ethical and moral considerations<sup>68</sup>) of the individual are part of Damasio's third system of consciousness which is termed the 'autobiographical self'. This is where off-

line past and future-oriented consciousness are evaluated against the incoming 'on-line' stimulus and impulses derived from the 'core' experience of the individual's existence taking place in the subject's immediate physical proximity. Grodal adds that the 'autobiographical self' calls upon memory to enable the construction of a continuing sense of identity through time.<sup>69</sup> Grodal links higher consciousness with art films by arguing that the 'representation of higher meaning in film is typically linked to different aspects of and problems with establishing a permanent self, based on extended consciousness'.<sup>70</sup> The distinction between higher states of consciousness in the 'autobiographical self' and the concrete consciousness of the 'core self' is what Grodal uses to make his divisions between art films and mainstream cinema. This is also how Grodal locates his art film's ability to abstract concepts at higher levels thought while maintaining that mainstream film narratives are embodied in on-line and immersed concrete actions. Although remaining careful in phrasing his account so as to retain the distinction between body and mind, Grodal is compelled to remind his reader that Damasio's theory of human consciousness is in fact rooted in embodiedness, and that emotional and intellectual experiences are expressions of the body's interests.

[Damasio's] basic idea is that the root of the phenomenon of consciousness reflects the way in which consciousness is based on our embodiedness. The interests of our bodies are represented in the brain by means of emotions. By means of neurological evidence, he [Damasio] shows that if the brain is cut off from the feeling and emotion evoking information about our body states, we lose consciousness.<sup>71</sup>

Ignoring the contradictions in his own words, Grodal is careful in his phrasing to maintain the fiction that higher states of consciousness and mental activity are somehow distinct from the direct, embodied conscious state of being in the body. While Damasio's theory might be useful in identifying higher states of consciousness, Grodal linkage with disembodied mind leaves him with two problems. The first, which he ignores, is indicated by the quote above and has to do with acknowledging that without the body, consciousness is

impossible. The second Grodal does try to resolve which he identifies as the conflict created when the 'core' and 'autobiographical' selves respond to different impulses. The concept of performance provides another way of handling this problem that doesn't involve an idea of a disembodied mind one step removed from, and sometimes in conflict with, the interests of the body,<sup>72</sup> but first I will look at how Grodal deals with the problem.

i) The Conflict between the Acting Body and the Contemplative Mind

Grodal resolves the conflict between 'core' and 'autobiographical' selves by referring to Lakoff and Johnson. Although Lakoff and Johnson argue strongly against a mind/body split, Grodal's incorporation of them into his argument here makes it appear that they too consider that a unified subject is finally directed by the 'mind' and that the 'mind's' supremacy is a functional necessity if the individual is to act coherently in the world. This controlling mind approach is problematic in itself, but Grodal's slippage from Damasio's research on human consciousness to his interpretation of Lakoff and Johnson is a dialectical ploy that is not convincing.<sup>73</sup> For if higher consciousness is, as Damasio suggests, an embodied act, then looking inward and engaging in a period of deep thought - such as during the screening of a film - may not be thought of as a period in which the individual ignores what is going on around them or disengages their consciousness from the unravelling narratives within which their bodies would be otherwise wrapped up within in order to contemplate. Rather, contemplation of what is going on in the films becomes a moment in which that individual decides to think and observe about what is happening rather than reacting spontaneously. The act of contemplation can only be realised, however, if the tendency is already latent in that moment. If someone stepped into the cinema and started throwing lollies at its inhabitants, it is highly unlikely that the individual would continue contemplating uninterruptedly. Furthermore, the individual's decision to observe rather than

act spontaneously can manifest future actions that later become significant, important, and productive *performative* acts in themselves. Seen in this light, contemplation is, in two respects, a concrete embodied response to a certain situation. The first is the taking of the opportunity to observe and contemplate simultaneously while watching a film and the second is that the individual may later draw on what results from that contemplation when they are confronted by a real situation which they somehow associate with the film. In either situation, however, the individual's response, whether contemplative or not, remains burdened with the same political implications that Benjamin's analysis of the work of art exposes. In acting spontaneously or in choosing to contemplate, the individual responds to the stimulus of the film, and in this they tacitly or overtly engage with, and can accept or reject, the relationships the film establishes with them. I suggest that thinking of contemplation as a performance better describes what happens when an individual watches a film and contemplates its meaning and significance. This describes what is going on whether the film is an action oriented, emotionally driven blockbuster such as Wolfgang Petersen's *Troy* (2004) or it is a thought provoking work like Fred Schepisi's *Six Degrees of Separation* (1993).

## ii) Reconciling the Mind/Body split through Performance

The idea of performance provides a more productive way of understanding what goes on when an individual watches a film, performance as a culmination of all activity going on in the individual. This includes processes within the brain and mind, spiritual being and the soul, as well as breathing, shifting their body on the seat, coughing uncomfortably, covering their eyes to a violent scene, or even shedding a tear when someone dies. Performance also provides a way to understand how the meaning of a film is actualised. Giorgio Agamben explains what he means by the idea of performative meaning in this way;

no-one has ever been able to explain satisfactorily the meaning of the syntagm: 'I love you', so much so that one might think that it has a performative character - that its meaning coincides, that is, with the act of its utterance.<sup>74</sup>

Statement like "I love you" act in a similar fashion as films because it is only in the instant of their utterances that the meaning of "I love you" and the meaning of a film can be asserted. Like the concept of "I love you", a film cannot be reduced to a simple, singular linguistic concept or image that can be articulated in a permanent form of language that describes the meaning one attaches to it. The meaning of a particular film can only be spoken of in terms of its performance in the context of its screening and from the point of view of those who see it. Now rather than mobilising a false dichotomy of transient and permanent meanings, the concept of performance explains what happens when a film is seen. And there is still room in a theory of performance to deal with incoherent acts such as when someone decides to leave the cinema unexpectedly. But performance can also account for critical acts such as when the individual finds or is able to construct a choice of responses to a situation a film presents. This idea of performance shows the individual making choices in situations they are in without asking that every performance will or should be analytically justifiable or rationalisable in terms of evidence presented to the mind. Neither is performance based or dependent on a distinction between higher and lower levels of consciousness where a higher conscious mind sits like a wise old guru issuing directives to the lower body that meanwhile goes by unrecognised as both source and seat of sentient intelligence.

Like all works of art, a film presents the individual with a range of choices in their encounter and sometimes, a film may even enable that individual to construct new, novel, and potentially innovative performances. However, the realisation of one performance over others, that is to say, such as a decision to watch *City of Angels* and not another film, discontinues the potentiality of other performances at a particular time or space. This may lead

the individual into scenarios that reconciles, disables, immobilises, or maybe sometimes incites conflict between competing meanings, interests, and impulses. That is what presenting choices between different trajectories that may have incompatible histories or future scenarios and that intersect in the individual's present subjective space does. Benjamin hinted at this when he suggested that 'the masses have a right to change property relations.'<sup>75</sup> But dealing with this conflict is not a matter of reconciling differences arising from an idea of a permanent and transient meaning but a matter of dealing with the conflicts that exist in the present living situation of the individual. The idea of performance does not pacify the individual. On the contrary, the idea of performance insists that everything the individual does should be considered as a deliberate act.

However there is one qualification that should be made to the idea of performance. Some films do encourage the individual to reflect in such a way that they find themselves performing in a spontaneous fashion such as when they decide to leave the cinema rather than continue watching a depressingly tragic but ultimately rewarding film like Ken Loach's *Ladybird* (1994). However, such a performance will rob the individual of seeing how the scenario the film depicts is satisfactorily concluded. Other films deliberately withhold or distort information, a technique highly refined by propaganda films, so as to encourage a particular kind of response from the individual even though they have inadequate information about the implications of the acts they are about to commit. Not all kinds of performances lead to or depend on higher levels of conscious awareness, therefore. The work of a film and its encounter with the individual should not be automatically regarded as worthy of the term 'a work of art of higher artistic merit'. On the contrary, a work of high artistic value will act, in the sense that Raymond Williams describes in *Culture and Society*, as its own source rather than as an agent for a hidden author or agenda.<sup>76</sup>

## 2) Performance and the work of high artistic merit

The argument this Chapter has been assembling is that films with higher levels of artistic value raise the individual's awareness over some aspect or expression of life and whatever one may associate with it, be it something signalled within the film, or something associated with the film. Through their encounter, the individual arrives at or initiates a conscious choice in the way they perform their response in and to a given situation. In choosing one performance over others, the individual acts in a way that becomes critical even if they are not aware of the critical decisions they are making. A critically conscious performance, on the other hand, is a performance in which the individual, when presented with a certain situation, can imagine or construct a variety of performative responses with an awareness of the implications of each response. A work of higher artistic merit enables the individual to not only access different choices in attributing meaning to a particular film, it also encourages them to be aware of the implications of such choices. In a democratic society, while every work of art gives the individual space to construct and rehearse alternative performance acts, such as leaving the presence of the artwork for instance, or provides data that informs the individual's response to situations that art imagines, not every work draws attention to the choices an individual makes or the availability of different performative acts.

In terms of performing the meaning of a film, an individual may find themselves manifesting a critical performance in their interaction with a film, be it a Hollywood production like *City of Angels* or a reputedly artistic work like *Wings of Desire*. The performance of the meaning of art by the individuals who encounter it destroys the privileged positions that conservative Art Historians and Film Critics have long been taking for themselves. Benjamin predicted the reactions of the elite to the erosion of their powers over art, its meaning, and

the work it does when he refers to Aldous Huxley's lament for the decline of art through the increasing access of authorship by even the most lowly individual in the public domain.<sup>77</sup> I see no danger in individuals resuming the right to determine for themselves what art is and what it means as well as the work it does, as long as they respond to the artwork as well as to other individuals responses to that work too. As I argue in Chapter 2, with the help of Benjamin's "Task of the Translator" and "Theses on the Philosophy of History", this Thesis shows how this can be achieved in a global context. What remains to be said is that if people aspire to a democratic global society, then allowing individuals the freedom to participate with the work of art as they wish must be seen as a fundamental and inalienable right.

### 3) Assessing Grodal's Theory

The application of Grodal's theory to *Wings of Desire* and *City of Angels* has shown that it is not possible to distinguish a work of higher artistic merit from its more mundane and mainstream cousin in terms of its modes and means of production. Nor is it possible to determine such a difference in terms of the audience that it attracts. While neither the nature of the object nor the nature of the audience are enough to identify a higher work of art, the nature of the interaction in the encounter between the individual and the object does provide sufficient proof to determine when art produces a work of exceptional artistic value. As the nature of the encounter can be determined by each screening of the film, so the nature of the interaction can only be determined by the individual who encounters it. This makes generalisations about films like *City of Angels* and *Wings of Desire* futile, at least in a discussion about their role in global culture. Both films contribute to identifying global society, both imagine aspects of the global city, and both circulate in the global economy. The performances these two films actualise suggest that they are now part of the ideas, materials, and products that propagate each other in the global

exchanges going on through the individual. Both films should thus be properly regarded as works of art in an era of global capitalism.

What remains analytically determinable, however, is the qualitative nature of the encounter and the interaction between the individual and each specific work. I have only suggested a range of qualitative encounters that these two films are capable of producing. I have only hinted at a range of qualitative interactions that different individuals may be inspired to make. The aim of this Chapter has not been to argue why *Wings of Desire* should be regarded as a higher work of art and *City of Angels* not. I have indicated the relative artistic merits of the two films, as well as some of the grounds to consider them both as mainstream and higher artistic works. But the object of this Chapter has been to test the validity of a theory about the nature of films of higher artistic work while the goal has been to develop a criteria to judge the relative merits of different works of art. I have identified the most important aspects of Grodal's theory in line with these objectives, and I have indicated where I think it works and where I think it does not. Nonetheless, Grodal's theory does identify some of the conditions under which the individual can consciously reflect on lived reality while watching these two films. Seen in the light of Benjamin's *Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, this theory does indicate how a film with higher artistic value raises the individual's awareness of the world by making them conscious of their responses to scenarios conjured up in or by the film. Where Grodal's theory is the falsely based dialectical binaries it constructs in order to distinguish art and mainstream films rather than recognise that meaning in art is always contingent on its performance with the individual.

It is now plausible, I believe, to suggest that a film that makes the individual aware of some aspect of this performance helps that individual to authenticate their participation both in the renewal of the meaning of the film.

This includes the social bonds and relations the film imagines. With that awareness, the individual gains an opportunity to alter those relations by performing the film's significance in a way that more meaningfully expresses and represents their own desires, needs, and interests. This highering of the individual's consciousness is what Grodal's theory contributes to Benjamin's analysis, but unless Grodal gives the work of art back to the individual, his theory remains a mouthpiece for the work of art and the institutions that backed it. On the other hand, while Benjamin shatters the illusion artistic elites have about the divine right to determine what art is, what it means, and what it does, his method does not distinguish a progressive work of higher artistic merit from more conservative and orthodox art. In synthesising Grodal's theory with Benjamin's work I have endeavoured to draw on the relative strengths while identifying and correcting the weaknesses of both. I conclude this Chapter by indicating how this method of analysis will be applied to Wenders' two films.

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### III

#### **Reconciling Benjamin and Grodal with the Object of this Thesis**

In Chapters 2 and 3 I have theorised this Thesis' mode of analysis of the work of art in global culture. These two Chapters articulate some of Walter Benjamin's and Torben Graag Grodal's propositions to support my method and interpretation of Wenders' two "Angels in Berlin" films. In Chapters 2 and 3, I identify;

- 1) The work that art does in contemporary culture and society.
- 2) How to deal with the task of translating art into global contexts.
- 3) The stance the individual should adopt in approaching the work of art.

#### 4) How to identify a work of higher artistic merit.

Starting with Benjamin, I propose that the role art plays in society begins when the individual translates the work of art into their everyday reality. Thus I begin with the proposition that *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* represent the expression of the social bonds and relations between citizens in the global city. I introduce Grodal's theory to suggest that higher works of art help the individual may achieve a greater awareness of those bonds and relations through their encounter with the films. With respect to Grodal, however, *City of Angels* shows that an encounter with any artifact can produce a higher level of performance depending on the individual's subjective response ability. Returning to Benjamin, this performance does not permit the individual to dictate what other individuals will produce in their interaction with the artifact. The engagement between art and the individual remains authentic only when the encounter reciprocates a one to one relationship. This, however, amends Benjamin's position because an authentic interaction may take place irrespective of whether the object is infinitely reproduced or the means of production is unique and particular to the object. Through this authentic interaction, the individuals at both ends of the artifact - its production and its reception - encounter each other - eye to eye as it were - through the art object. Art now acts not to impose the producers' world view on the recipient (and the social bonds and relations that this implies), but rather art acts as a medium or interlinear point where two bodies meet. So new social bonds and relations take shape in each new encounter between art and the individual and the performances they realise in negotiating a common ground in an ever changing field of meaning and signification. This is where the angel of history, to borrow Benjamin's phrase, jumps in to remind the individual that there remains residual and potential meanings and significations each time an interaction between an artifact and an individual is performed. This living interaction is what keeps human culture and society

alive. And with that so the work of art continues to play its vital role in forming human relations. This is how I reconcile and modify both Benjamin and Grodal and establish the argument that this Thesis builds on. And with that I conclude the theoretical discussions concerning the methods of this Thesis. What is left now to do is to indicate how the films will be engaged in the Chapters that follow as well as how that engagement is informed by Benjamin and Grodal.

#### Applying this Thesis to Wenders' Films

The basis of the discussion to follow is, naturally enough, drawn from the films themselves. This is where the Thesis derives its primary empirical data and experiences from. These are the texts that are now waiting to be translated. In addition, however, I consider Wenders' own recollections of the films, industry and critical reviews, in conjunction with related scholarly and academic work. These confer important and additional contextualising information that extends the primary encounter with the films so as to take account of the cultural corpus that now forms these objects. In encountering the films, however, and let me for a moment suggest that they are historical documents as well as works of art, Benjamin charges the individual to engage the objects of their interest with the response-ability to interact with them in the 'now'.<sup>78</sup> Developed in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History", this stance insists on two conditions being met in order to justify the understanding one adopts in relating with historical documents. The first is that the individual engages in their own way with the object and as the object is, in their own time and in their own space. The second condition is that the individual should validate the meaning of the object with their perception of the object itself and not the narratives that accompany it through time.

Giorgio Agamben also talks about the manner in which a scholar or a scientist or a researcher should relate with the object of their interest. Positing his discussion in terms of 'philosophy', Agamben draws attention to a long

standing debate concerning the interpretation of what 'philosophy' means. On the one hand, modern philosophers like Derrida take up a stance, purported to belong to Aristotle, who said '*oi philoi oudeis philos* (he who has (many) friends, has no friend)'.<sup>79</sup> Yet according to Agamben, this is not quite correct, for what Aristotle wrote is a far more enigmatic (although almost identical) phrase the exact meaning of which remains mysterious. '*O philoi oudeis philos* (oh friends, there are no friends)'.<sup>80</sup> Agamben then spends the rest of this short essay exploring the relationship between friendship and philosophy, much of which is devoted to Aristotle's verse. Discussions around Aristotle's well known theses on friendship have, according to Agamben, ignored one important passage in which he (Agamben) finds the 'ontological basis of the theory'<sup>81</sup> of friendship. Agamben identifies a manifold of ideas in this passage including kernels for perceiving one's own existing as being 'pleasant' and that, in the experience of 'Being: we have no other experience of it than "to live"'.<sup>82</sup> However, the most salient point Agamben makes for this discussion is that

Inherent in this perception of existing is another perception, specifically human, [...] a concurrent perception (*synaisthanesthai*) of the friend's existence. Friendship is the instance of this concurrent perception of the friend's existence in the awareness of one's own existence. But this means that friendship also has an ontological and, at the same time, political dimension. The perception of existing is, in fact, always already divided up and shared or con-divided. Friendship names this sharing or con-division. There is no trace here of any inter-subjectivity - that chimera of the moderns - nor any relation between subjects: rather, existing itself is divided, it is non-identical to itself; the I and the friend are the two faces - or two poles - of this con-division.<sup>83</sup>

From Agamben I take it that, in philosophising about the nature of 'existing', be it in the world of Ancient Greece or the world of the global city, the nature of existing is pleasing in itself, but in being human, this immediately brings with it the awareness of another - the friend - who is other to the self. But this otherness is not, as Agamben also points out, totally other in the generic sense, for "we" - a term I now use to denominate the biological dimension of being - are still human after all. Yet, as Agamben continues, the

other is an 'immanent in self-ness, a becoming other of the self.'<sup>84</sup> Thus, with Wenders' films acting as a medium for the "I" writing this Thesis and the others who stand at various points in the potentially open ended spectrum of these films' productions and receptions, "we" - that is, Agamben's con-division of the manifestations of the human self - may come to recognise ourselves in extending the same condition, which is namely, that of being alive and perceiving each other as human through the artifacts. This, I think, gives another slant to Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" and the way in which the methods of this Thesis informs the stance it takes to Wenders's films. However, through Agamben, this stance is put onto a 'friendlier' footing that should not erode the critical independence of the individuals involved, but rather posits them in a politicised sense as part of a community. Agamben again cites Aristotle to define what this means;

In that case, he needs to be concurrently perceiving his friend - that he exists too - and this will come about in their living together, conversing and sharing, (*koinonein*) their talk and thoughts; for this is what would seem to be meant by "living together" where human beings are concerned, not feeding in the same location as with grazing animals.<sup>85</sup>

It seems to me that this is a good description of the bonds and relations "we" - which now carries Aristotle's political dimension also - may adopt through this Thesis about "The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture".

And with such thoughts this Thesis embarks upon its interpretive mesh of textual and theoretical material in constructing an overarching horizon upon which two films by Wim Wenders, in conjunction with the subjective and historical dispositions that determine even the Thesis itself, are situated. From this, a better understanding may arise of the roles and signs that are both identified and articulated by these films, as works both of lesser important mundane fiction and of higher forms of art, and through them, the performances that emerge in their interacting with the individual. Perhaps then it may be possible to claim that this moves a little closer to the world the

films have conjured up, and from that, perhaps, to gain a sense of the peculiar fate and roles that are being assigned to the work of art in the age of global capitalism. Through the aperture these films provide, it may even be possible to gain a sense of the role the individual may choose for themselves, and with that, the coming of what will hopefully become a more democratic society.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> According to the University of Technology, Sydney Library catalogue, Grodal's work provides a way of categorising and differentiating different films in terms of different genres, and the feelings and cognitive processes they engender in their viewer. His general theory of film can be found in Torben Graag Grodal, *Moving Pictures: A New Theory of Film, Genres, Feelings, and Cognition*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, from the University of Technology, Sydney Library online catalogue at <http://orac.lib.uts.edu.au/search/q?author=Grodal%2C+&title=Moving+Pictures>
- <sup>2</sup> Torben Graag Grodal, "Art Film, the Transient Body, and the Permanent Soul", 2000.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid p 33.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid p 34.
- <sup>5</sup> Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens. Body and Emotions in the Making of Consciousness*, 1999, cited in Grodal, 2000, p 39 - 40, 43 - 46.
- <sup>6</sup> See Dawn Steel's account of her motivation for purchasing the adaptation rights to Wenders' film in the Production notes on the *City of Angels* official website.
- <sup>7</sup> Meaning is difficult to define, but, even if a satisfactory definition were to be found, there remains a further question. What, or should I say, to whom does 'meaning' refer? For the purpose of argument, I take Grodal's configuration of the terms 'transient meaning' and permanent meaning' to refer to the on-going interests of the individual sitting in the cinema watching the films I examine. Whoever the addressee is, 'meaning' gains sense by being grounded in the sense of the 'now', which contains the present and immediate aspirations and needs of that individual as well as in the conceptual presence of the interests and needs that the individual projects into past and future imaginaries.
- <sup>8</sup> As Ralph Shargel states, *City Of Angels* is an 'excruciatingly slow film [that] appeals chiefly to the emotions.' Later Shargel adds, '[Wenders'] angels were mere recorders, unseen figures who stood helplessly by as they overheard the desperate thoughts of a populace living in West Berlin, on the edge of the free world. *City of Angels* reduces these lyrical monologues to a series of one-liners that occupy only a scene or two.' See Shargel, "Fallen Innocents", 1998.
- <sup>9</sup> In Wenders' two angels in Berlin films, Cassiel is acted by Otto Sander.
- <sup>10</sup> As Messinger tells Seth, He [presumably God] gave people the greatest gift in the Universe, you think he didn't give it to us too.' To which Seth asks 'Which gift?' Messinger responds 'Free will.'
- <sup>11</sup> August Sander and Gunther Sander with a text by Ulrich Keller, *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts: Portraitphotographien von 1892-1952*, 1997.
- <sup>12</sup> This is what the old man reads from Hemingway's book;  
You knew there would always be a Spring, as you knew the river would flow again after it was frozen. When the cold rains kept on and killed the Spring, it was as though a young person had died for no reason.
- <sup>13</sup> These are Damiel's final words in *Wings of Desire*.
- <sup>14</sup> At one point in the Library, Seth tries to convince Maggie to trust her feelings and asks if he can touch her. Taking a deep breath, she decides to allow him, at which point Seth touches her on her hand and asks "What am I doing?" "You're touching me" she says.

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- “How do you know?” Seth again asks. “Because I feel it” she responds. “You should trust that! You don’t trust it [feeling] enough” Seth concludes.
- 15 Maggie tries to find out more about Seth by asking him whether he is married or not. She again uses the word marriage at the end of the film to describe the commitment she and Seth make to sharing each other’s lives. Maggie’s lack of ability to articulate what love is, is indicated earlier when Seth asks her to describe what love is. Her immediate response is to describe the physical responses people undergo when they feel strong emotion attractions to someone before finally admitting that she is ‘full of crap’.
  - 16 When Maggie suggests that everything ends when someone dies, Seth asks her “How do you explain it [...] the enduringness of heaven?” *City of Angels* makes several other references to ‘heaven’, a much more loaded word that connotes a place tied to religions such as Christianity or Islam. This contrasts with the language in *Wings of Desire* where the word heaven is never used, although the angels refer constantly to ‘eternity’, quite a neutral word that refers to the endlessness of things rather than to a specific religious, spiritual, or ideological concept.
  - 17 Grodal, 2000, pp 34 - 35.
  - 18 Grodal states that “our ability to memorise creates fields of ‘permanent’ (‘off-line’) meanings and that our ability to produce ‘abstract’ concepts likewise produce experiences that are beyond the ‘transient’ level of concrete interaction.” Ibid pp 33 - 34.
  - 19 Grodal states that “High art will typically avoid the middle level of concrete (narrative) interaction in order either to evoke ‘abstract’ and/or subjective ‘permanent meanings’ , and/or to activate a ‘lower’ level of ‘perceptual meaning’, ‘style’. [...] permanent meanings are often felt as existing only in minds, not in ‘objective’ exterior worlds (that is, works of high art will often be experienced as subjective and at the same time as expressions of some permanent, ‘eternal’ spiritual meanings)”. Ibid p 34. In academic structures at the end of the 20th Century, we see the top and bottom extremes of this hierarchy situated in Visual Arts divisions between Schools or Faculties of “Art” and “Design”.
  - 20 Ibid p 47.
  - 21 David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, 1986, cited by Grodal, 2000, pp 46 - 47.
  - 22 Ibid p 46.
  - 23 Ibid p 43.
  - 24 Ibid p 47.
  - 25 Ibid.
  - 26 Grodal neglects to discuss why mainstream Directors such as Steven Spielberg, Quentin Tarantino, and Francis Ford Coppola don’t also present strong visions of the way they see the world.
  - 27 Ibid p 46.
  - 28 Ibid p 47.
  - 29 Ibid p 48.
  - 30 Ibid.
  - 31 See Kathe Geist, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: From Paris, France to Paris, Texas*, 1988, p 24.
  - 32 See Grodal, 2000, pp 47 - 49.
  - 33 As Grodal states,  
subjective, ambiguous and transient representations - anchored in the visions of the auteur - are more true and realistic than unambiguous and objective representations. [A little later Grodal adds that] On the one hand art film presentations claim to provide representations of the world that are much more true than the mainstream film, on the other, they argue that there is no objective representations of the world, just ambiguous transient ones.  
Ibid p 47.
  - 34 I use this phrase to ironically refer Wenders’ *The State of Things* (1982) because while Wenders has repeatedly been critical of the way the film industry operates, his stated

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commitment to maintaining a critical film-making practice beyond the structures of the film industry's institutions is difficult to show.

35 He contrast this with mainstream films saying that the typical Hollywood films produces a

basis for a continuous interaction between characters and environment. The environment produces certain problems or opportunities for the characters, and then the characters act on these problems and opportunities according to the following flow: exterior causes - physical and mental processes of these causes, followed by some actions directed at exterior causes.

Ibid p 48.

36 This takes place when the two angels discuss the wisdom of Seth's wish to help Maggie in a supermarket. In what can only be described as a very powerful, yet subtle counter to Seth's impulsive desire for the woman, Cassiel points out that they can help humans better by exerting quiet influence over the course of events in human existence.

37 After Maggie's death, Seth is visited by Cassiel at which point the former angel expresses his anger and frustration over her death. "Why did He do it, because her number was up. Am I being punished?" he asks Cassiel. Cassiel responds

You know better than that. That's life. you're living now, and one day, you'll be dying.

A few moments later Cassiel asks Seth if he would have done what he's done if he'd known what was going to happen. Seth's response, while predictable, is still profoundly the only one worth making.

I would rather have had one breath of her hair, one kiss of her mouth, one touch of her hand, than an eternity without it. One!

38 Ibid p 48.

39 The problem of locating the human 'mind' and 'consciousness' distinctly in relation to the body is crucial in Grodal's argument even though biological scientists are unable to situate the human mind discretely, either within or outside the human body. What scientists generally agree is that the idea of mind and consciousness are extensions of the human condition. Yet in all its expression, mental life remains sourced within the body. Indeed Grodal's own Guru, Antonio Damasio, suggests that it is better to think of mental life and human consciousness as normal functions of the sensual body. Grodal's adaptation of Damasio appears somewhat strange at this point, perhaps indicating an attempt to give his continuing mind/body binary greater scientific credence by drawing on physical phenomena. At the same time he uses 'biological imperatives' to argue against 'postmodernists' whom he posits as a unified and cohesive theoretical body of opinion. Grodal appears to be more interested in continuing to reproduce outmoded disciplinary boundaries and academic hierarchies rather than tackling the way the individual functions when they watch a film. Grodal's position seems deliberately provocative in order to counter contemporary theoretical notions of the de-centred subject. He sources this debate mostly through Robert Stam's *Film Theory, An Introduction*, 2000, which he refers to in identifying the de-centred subject as a postmodern ploy. Then turning to Mette Hjort's *The Struggle of Letters*, 1993, Grodal criticises postmodernists for the use of obscure terminologies that 'veil' this obscurity, 'even to themselves' (Grodal, 2000, p 42). Leaning on cognitive film theorists Lakoff and Johnson (see Georges Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy of the Flesh*, 1999), Grodal then argues that in spite of the contradictions between rational thought and reason on the one hand and practical, daily lived experience on the other, the notion of subjecthood unified by the mind is not an ideological or philosophical attempt to falsify subjective unity, but rather, is a pragmatic necessity. With subjectivity unified under notions of 'consciousness' and 'mind', Grodal adds that the individual can once again intellectually rationalise and unify their experience of the world and continue acting coherently within it. Thus Grodal develops the argument for his use of mental, abstract thought as indicators of higher works of art. For another overview of the history and development of cognitivism, artificial intelligence, and 'mind', see Howard Gardner, *The Mind's New Science*, 1987.

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40 Grodal, 2000, p 42.

41 Wenders' in fact re-states a major theme in art during the second half of the 20th Century as a shift away in artistic practice from mental contemplation to physical embodiment and performance. This move can be corroborated by numerous artists and their works made since the 1950s, starting with Jackson Pollock's 'action painting', the Austrian Actionists performances of public masturbation, self-mutilation and animal slaughter in the 1960s, and Gina Pane's self mutilation performance art beginning in the 60s, through to Jo Spence photography about her body in the 70s and 80s and Cindy Sherman reconstructions of her body into mythical film stills and painted works from the late 70s to now, and even Jeff Koons' 'Made in Heaven' (1989 - 1991) with Ciccolina, down to the more recent "Translated Acts: Performance and Body Art from East Asia, 1990-2001" exhibition exhibited at Berlin's Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2001 in Berlin followed to the more recently completed 14th Biennale of Sydney, June 4 - August 15 2004. See Katerina Valdivia Bruch, "The Sydney Biennale - My body is my home", online. See also Eleanor Heartney, "The body east: the proliferation of performance and body art in Asia, often with an implicit political charge, was chronicled in a recent exhibition at the Queens Museum - Import/Export", online, and The Artists Org's "Performance Art" website.

42 I distinguish story from narrative here by using narrative to refer to generic styles, such as a Hollywood narrative, or an art film narrative, and story to refer to the specific narratives a film develops concerning its subject, such as Seth's story in *City of Angels*, or Damiel's story in *Wings of Desire*.

43 There are signs in the film that Silberling tried to do this by showing Seth getting angry at Cassiel for taking Maggie away from him, and later Seth, with Messinger at a table, when both men look glum and inconsolable. There are even signs that the film tried to show Seth learning to accept Maggie's death when he returns to the market where they went together to buy some vegetables. Yet the film skips over these without articulating the significance of what is going on, which continues to marginalise the importance of the maturation of the former angels' understanding of human existence. What the film finally appears to valorise seems more like a teenager's response that significant others die sometimes, but the pleasure the subject finds in life continues with little interruption.

44 One need only look to the way Wenders' film deals with Marion's feeling of insecurity when she learns that the circus is about to close and she is out of a job to see how much more weight *Wings of Desire* gives to human embodied responses - i.e. emotions - to everyday situations.

45 Grodal states that "conscious will needs to carry out unambiguous actions, and therefore constructs a 'unified identity'." Grodal, 2000, p 42.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 A term used by many philosophers, including Heidegger, in reference to the totality of the self. The term itself translates as 'being there' or 'there being'. See Thomas Mautner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1997, pp 120 - 121. See also Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 2002, pp 26 - 27, 46 - 48, 65, 84 - 85, 91 - 92, 228 - 229.

49 Grodal, 2000, pp 50 - 51.

50 Geist, 1988, p 124.

51 Two examples that strongly demonstrate these influences are *The American Friend* (1977) and *Lightning over Water* (1980), but one can also pick the American and Hollywood influences in films like *Alabama, 2000 Light Years* (1969), *3 American LPs* (1969), *Alice in the City* (1973), *Hammett* (1978-82), to the more critical *The State of Things* (1982). In more recent films during the 1990s, it can be argued that Wenders has adopted more techniques that one associates with Hollywood films.

52 Lee Kirsten, "Wim Wenders Nationalises/Naturalises Hollywood Genres", 1998.

53 As Grodal states,

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Fewer people will accept viewing films that for extended periods of time show scenes that cue saturated (mental, disembodied) emotions than films that cue tense (embodied) emotions, based on action tendencies.

Lakoff and Johnson have provided some clues to explaining the problems that many people have with abstract representations (Grodal, 2000, pp 36 - 38).

Grodal then adds that Lakoff and Johnson show

how central elements in human thoughts are based on a basic sensory-motor level experience, with activities like 'seeing', 'walking along a path', 'manipulating objects' etc. The more our thoughts deal with phenomena that can easily be comprehended by means of such schema derived from our basic interaction with exterior reality, the easier the thought process, because they are conceptually, as well as emotionally, backed up by our basic embodiedness" (ibid pp 36 - 38).

Then towards the end of the essay, Grodal makes the following assertion;

The problem with the art film is, of course, that its impressive appeal for its core audience, the intellectuals, is not matched by an equal appeal to the mainstream audience. Some of the reasons for this is fleshed out in Noël Carroll's *A Philosophy of Mass Art*: high art presupposes special skills and for that reason it is not addressed to the masses, and their rejection of (parts of) high art is a logical consequence of this (ibid pp 50 - 51).

- 54 See Paula57's comments amongst other viewers responses to both *Wings of Desire* and *City of Angels* on the IMDB Message Board, online.
- 55 See Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History*, 1989, p 40.
- 56 Grodal, 2000, p 33.
- 57 Ibid p 51.
- 58 Grodal uses the term 'lyrical modes of experience' to differentiate the disembodied states of spectator ship that he associates with art films. See ibid p 49.
- 59 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780 - 1950*, 1979, pp 287 - 290, the quote comes from page 288.
- 60 As Williams puts it, "masses are other people", see ibid p 289.
- 61 Justine Carlisle in correspondence with the author about *City of Angels*, 11/4/04.
- 62 Cited by John Storey, *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture: Theories and Methods*, 1996, pp 18 - 24.
- 63 Elias Canetti's Nobel prize winning book *Crowds and Power* still provides one of the most powerful and insightful sources for understanding how masses work. See Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 1992.
- 64 See Appendix D for further elaborations of Grodal's theory.
- 65 Damasio, 1999, cited in Grodal, 2000.
- 66 Grodal, 2000, p 39.
- 67 Ibid p 40.
- 68 Grodal later addresses the question of moral and ethical behaviour, adding that "The ideas of a free will and of a moral responsibility are to some extent a very real, practical and functional construct. Giving up such ideas would lead to a total pragmatic and moral meltdown (no motivation for active, will-controlled behaviour, no personal responsibility for any possible action, no sense of personal identity). By portraying all those factors that may lead into experiences of 'alienation' and lack of an experience of a unified subjecthood, art films do not perform 'ideological criticism', but extend psychological realism into new domains." Again referring to Lakoff and Johnson, he constructs an elaborate theorisation to justify a practical and pragmatic base for the existence of moral and ethical behaviour. However worthy such constructions are, they only satisfy propositions associated with Western oriented ideological and philosophical assumptions. Grodal, 2000, pp 42 - 43.
- 69 Grodal summarises Damasio's theory into three 'prototypal' ways of self-experience (see also Table 1) which he describes as ,

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a. non consciously as a proto-self, linked to basic biological processes as in the state of coma; b. as a core self, based on transient consciousness living in the online present; and c. with a permanent self, based on an extended consciousness that interprets the online present in the context of past memories and future goals and aspirations.

Ibid p 40.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid pp 39 - 40.

72 Grodal argues that Lars von Trier's *The Elements of Crime* presents a decentred subject which leads to the collapse of a continuing sense of self and a confusion between the identities of the characters of Grey and Kramer. This condition, Grodal states, is associated with diseases such as schizophrenia. Turning his attention to postmodern critiques of essentialism and the unified post-Cartesian subject, Grodal stresses that the notion of the decentred subject living entirely in the present and relying on the impulses of the 'core self' is implausible. Ignoring what his own sources argue, Grodal conflates Damasio's account of the physical states of the brain with psychological conditions of the mind and human consciousness. Grodal thus repeatedly blurs the boundary between theories about the physical brain and the concept of 'mind' (ibid p 44). Nevertheless, Grodal continues to argue that the 'autobiographical self' finds itself in a conflict with the core self because "the core self wants to solve problems in the light of salient events of the present, whereas the 'autobiographical self' tries to solve problems by experiences and norms laid down during a lifetime of experiences" (p 40). Referring to Resnais' *Last Year in Marienbad*, Grodal describes how a modernist unified subject in art films (as distinct to von Trier's postmodern decentred subjects) dealt with the separation of mind and body and the conflicts between 'autobiographical' and 'core' selves. The 'autobiographical self' moves the subject towards a future that resolves the aspirations of the 'core self' with that of the 'autobiographical self'. Grodal then states that 'Because although the mind may be unable to synthesise different and maybe contradictory experiences and action impulses, ... there are very good (and universally manifested) reasons for trying to construct a unified (essentialist) subject as the control mechanism for actions' (ibid p 44). Thus Grodal returns to the idea of the Cartesian mind-body split and presents his 'essentialist' cognitive way of reconciling it.

73 Grodal makes these moves on ibid pp 39 - 42.

74 Giorgio Agamben, "Friendship", in Esther Anatolitis et al (eds), *Contertemps: An Online Journal of Philosophy*, 2004, online.

75 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, 1992, p 234.

76 Williams, 1979, pp 292 - 293.

77 See Benjamin, 1992, pp 225 - 226 and footnote 13, p 241.

78 Ibid pp 252 - 253. See also Habermas' Critical Theory discussion of Benjamin's notion of the 'jetzzeit' in "Thesis on the Philosophy of History" in Habermas, 1992, pp 11 - 16.

79 Agamben, 2004, p 3.

80 Ibid p 2.

81 Ibid p 5.

82 Nietzsche, from *The Will to Power*, cited in Agamben, 2004, p 6.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, cited in Agamben, 2004, p 7.

## Chapter 4

### The Berlin Quarter and the Global City

#### Introduction

This Chapter examines how Wenders' *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* represent Berlin. In doing so, I draw on discussions of how films construct perceptions of modern cities and propose that, as with other cities around the world, Berlin is a sector or a quarter of the global city.<sup>1</sup> Section I introduces the concept of the global cinematic city. This draws largely from David B. Clarke's *The Cinematic City*,<sup>2</sup> arguably the first comprehensive study of the representation of cities in films.<sup>3</sup> I conclude this section with a brief description of the global city at the end of the 20th Century. Sections II and III analyse how *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* respectively construct the city of Berlin. A range of projections of the city are considered, from a divided Cold War city in *Wings of Desire* to a re-united and soon to be Capital city starting to reassert its place in the global economy in *Faraway So Close!*. Section IV concludes the Chapter by outlining some of the issues that emerge from this discussion. In particular, this section considers how the notion of the global city is limited in its present discourse, and how, in considering these two films by Wenders, that discourse is expanded.

#### I

#### The Global Cinematic City

The neglected relationship between the city and cinema by film theorists as well as urban planners and social geographers is quite remarkable, says David Clarke, who suggests that 'the city has undeniably been shaped by the cinema, just as cinema owes much of its nature to the historical development

of the city.'<sup>4</sup> The importance of film in shaping perceptions of the city is stressed, continues Clarke, when anyone says they have 'experienced that sudden, strange feeling whilst walking in the city that we are walking through a film'.<sup>5</sup> Yet if film is shaping people's perceptions of cities, so capitalism and the global economy appears to shape discussions about globalisation. From factors such as the capacity of money and industry to move freely across national borders to the migration of workers in pursuit of jobs, capitalism plays a central role in how writers describe the experience of the global city today.<sup>6</sup> This section of this Chapter brings these two topics together as facets of the same phenomena - the articulation of the global cinematic city.

#### 1) Walter Benjamin and the Cinematic City

In introducing *The Cinematic City*, Clarke wastes no time indicating the crucial role Walter Benjamin<sup>7</sup> has played in identifying how cinema has transformed the human perceptual apparatus, transformations essential to the inception of the modern cinematic city. Taking a leaf from Benjamin's analysis, Clarke, citing Jonathan Crary, adds that

the spectacle of the cinema both drew upon and contributed to the increased pace of modern city life, whilst also helping to normalise and cathect the frantic, disadjusted rhythms of the city (Crary, 1990); [this] reflected and helped to mould the novel forms of social relations that developed in the crowded yet anonymous city streets.<sup>8</sup>

For Clarke, Benjamin is significant not only for identifying the new modes of perception, existence, and participation in the development of the cinematic city, but, with concepts like the flâneur, Benjamin offers a way of dealing with the individual's sense of estrangement in encounters on the city's streets. The image that emerges in Clarke's book is of a city that is inhabited by strangers who no longer live according to traditional values and familiarities and who are being constantly driven into higher gear by technology. Rather they relate with others on a principle of commercial and

monetary exchange. As George Simmel states, 'The desirable party for financial transactions - in which, as it has been said quite correctly, business is business, - is the person completely indifferent to us, engaged neither for nor against us.'<sup>9</sup>

Like the shopping arcade in Benjamin's Paris, the cinema satisfies and stimulates the urge to consume, both through the role films plays in reinforcing the new modes of participation with others, as well as by enabling a vast consumption of virtual experiences. This consumption just by looking coincides with techniques such as editing, montage, and the unexpected juxtapositioning of sounds and images in films to create a new 'cognitive ordering of space, in favour of a self defined and self centred *aesthetic* [italics Clarke] spacing.'<sup>10</sup> These new ways of experiencing the world are unlike conventional forms of human perception and experience because they re-construct everyday life according to the principles and capabilities of the movie camera. As Benjamin points out, the cinema is instrumental in developing a new 'tactile'<sup>11</sup> form of learning that enables the individual to relate with the world through images. Cinematic images do not therefore merely represent the real in the same way that traditional artists such as painters imagine. In the cinema, the individual looks *through* images as if they are the virtual simulation of reality. This simulacra enables the production of space that is imbued with a sense of equidistant proximity of what is simultaneously close and yet so far away. Through film, the entire world becomes an elaborate audio-visual arcade for the flâneur to stroll through.

Many of the contributors to Clarke's book stress the importance of Benjamin, the significance of whom I have already dealt with in Chapter 2. In this Chapter, I focus my attention on Colin McArthur's essay as it provides a overall schema of the cinematic city that both defines what it is as well as

putting this definition into the historical context of the 20th Century. I now turn and commence analysing how Wenders' representation of Berlin in his two film fits into McArthur's history.

i) Mapping the Emergence of the Cinematic City

Colin McArthur's "Chinese Boxes and Russian Dolls: Tracking the Elusive Cinematic City"<sup>12</sup> is a structural analysis of Hollywood's representations of cities in film. The main point of McArthur's arguments is that the cinematic city is a discursive construction that establishes a range of antinomies in films in which the primary binary that produces meaning is an opposition between city and country. McArthur adds that the values embedded in these representations should be seen as relative and evolve with the discourse surrounding the city in films through time. For the first part of the 20th Century, this discourse was constantly adapting as each new film added its representation of the city to the emerging dialogue. Nevertheless, McArthur is able to suggest a basic attribution of meaning to what could be described as the prototype of the cinematic city. Opposed by a concept of the country as an Arcadian garden, the city in film began to be portrayed as if it were a modern day Sodom.<sup>13</sup> McArthur further refines this general discursive representation in musicals and crime film genres that developed a more nuanced notion of the utopian city and the dystopian city.

In contrast to McArthur's primal antimony between city and country, Wenders' *Faraway So Close!* offers the *Bildungsroman* image of the sea<sup>14</sup> as the setting where Wenders' protagonists finally realise their ambitions. This can be seen in this film's closing sequences when Patsky, a criminal figure who appears to be Polish, and his dull minded henchmen are captured and towed in a small dingy behind a large river boat called the *Alekan*.<sup>15</sup> On the *Alekan* is a cache of guns and ammunition from Tony Becker's gun running operation, the foiling of which became the objective Cassiel sets himself in

his attempts to 'do what a good man should'.<sup>16</sup> The culmination of Cassiel's intervention in the life of the city takes up a central role in the plot of this film. This results in the re-unification of Becker with his sister Hanna and her daughter Raissa, a reunion which brings with it the hope that Becker may now be convinced to abandon his crooked life and become part of the freshly freed heroic community about to re-inhabit Berlin. The symbology of Christ's sacrifice to redeem humanity permeates the closing sequences of this film when Cassiel, who is killed during his rescue of his friends, finally achieves his desire to "do what a good man should". With the last shot of the film zooming out from the boat to reveal the opening horizon of the sea, the ending of the film suggests that once the arms cache has been dumped at sea, a new future will emerge for those reunited in the German family and that is now secured in the hold of the vessel they are in. In this new beginning, even the sins of a returned son of a former NAZI who fled with his father to America at the end of World War II can be forgiven. While the film offers Becker the opportunity to be included in the human family, no such grace is given to Patsky, who seems to be a symbol many Germans have that the people from the former Soviet Union states such as Poland are about to invade the richer Western European countries and bring with them all their criminal and corrupt proclivities.<sup>17</sup> Although the symbol of the sea breaks with McArthur's city-country antinomy, *Faraway So Close!* continues to underpin a basic structural binary McArthur identifies in Hollywood's construction of the city. For the sea is, in contrast to the city, an environment in which natural law, rather than the legal conventions invented by humanity, predominate.

According to McArthur, the most important film to emerge in Hollywood's early discourse of the city was King Vidor's *The Fountainhead* (1949). Based on an Ayn Rand novel by the same name, *The Fountainhead* focuses on an architect's megalomaniac dream to build a city along aesthetic

lines that le Corbusier would have undoubtedly much appreciated. Not only did this film introduce a modern Futurist aesthetic into Hollywood, it also started to associate high modernism in art with anti-communist sentiments prevalent in the USA. For Rand intended her book, says McArthur, to rebuff Roosevelt's "New Deal" of social programmes that set about employing artists to depict the success of the programme<sup>18</sup> by using an aesthetic of realism.<sup>19</sup> Predicting the Abstract Expressionist movement soon to blossom in the US, McArthur suggests that *The Fountainhead* gave expression to the idea that artistic productions should be regarded as expressions of artistic freedom and not be reduced to a broader social or political objective. *The Fountainhead* played a vital role in evolving Hollywood representations of the city in addition to untying the work of art from playing a social role. This appears to have introduced the idea into Hollywood's and America's psyche that art is for entertainment while at the same time embodying the individual's right to freedom of expression.<sup>20</sup> The alignment of this idea of art could thus reinforce the ideology underpinning common myths associated with capitalism in the USA in which artistic expression could be a lot of fun, uplifting, and entertaining, but that the real work of art should have nothing to do with the expression of social or political ideologies. On this point, Wenders' films show that Cassiel and Damiel have a greater understanding of the social dimensions of the work of art in producing the bonds and relations in cities within which they act, even if this awareness may not translate into an overt political commitment expressed by his films.

Turning to gangster films, McArthur identifies the emergence of the dystopian city during the 30s and 40s. Here the 'gangster' and '*noir*' city becomes a dark, ungovernable matrix of threatening streets full of

dingy rooming-houses and office blocks; bars and nightclubs; precinct stations; and luxury penthouses. [...with] a recurrent motif of [...] the gangster being shot down in the street or, memorably in *Underworld USA* (1961), being shot elsewhere and crawling into an alley to die.<sup>21</sup>

The dystopian city that provides the dimly light backdrop in the gangster genre becomes erotically charged when *noir* female actors like Lauren Bacall strut confidently on the screen and mingle, often immortally, amidst her law-breaking male consorts who inevitably lose their lives around her. There are aspects of the *noir* city in *Faraway So Close!*, particularly around the character of Winter, whose work is shrouded by illicit activity and who (unsuccessfully) tries to chat up a husky voiced Marion serving drinks at the *Bar Purgatorio*. McArthur continues that gangster films introduced the techniques of montage, originally developed in the Soviet Union in the 1920s,<sup>22</sup> into Hollywood. Montage fragmented time and space, often showing rapid sequences of 'speeding automobiles, blasting machine-guns, and newspaper headline'<sup>23</sup> to suggest a rapid succession of events in time and space. This too is a technique Wenders uses in both *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* to depict the angels' experience of time and space in the city. In general, it appears that crime and *noir* films have strongly influenced Wenders' depiction of the city, just as other films by Wenders, in particular *The American Friend* (1977), *Hammett* (1978-82), *The State of Things* (1982), and *The End of Violence* (1997), show strong traces of *noir* influence.

In contrast to the down beat gangster, 'policier', and *noir* portrayals of the city, McArthur argues that film musicals offer a much more positive view of cities, even describing them as 'maniacally upbeat'.<sup>24</sup> Drawing from Richard Dyer's 1977 essay "Entertainment and Utopia",<sup>25</sup> McArthur describes the up side of the cinematic city in musicals as energetic, abundant, intense, and transparent as well as providing a strong sense of community. McArthur also suggests that Woody Allen's films depict what seems to be Allen's continuing love affair with New York City, an affection that is particularly strong *Manhattan* (1979).<sup>26</sup> Although the utopian city is never fully realised in Wenders' two films, there are projections made of it in the images of the

people's return to the city's plaza and streets in the conclusion of *Wings of Desire*. Here the cinematic city again becomes, as McArthur states in the opening lines of his essay, 'a key domain within which the sense of place is articulated.'<sup>27</sup> This is, above all, what, arguably, one should expect of the portrayal of the cinematic city; a means of uttering the potentialities, both good and bad, of human existence within cities at a time when mediation through technology enables those utterances to be encountered globally. This is a promise made by both Wenders' film and perhaps it is a sign of the way Western and European cultural discourses generally function that in making such utterances, Wenders appears to continue to couch the city in terms of opposed and mutually exclusive dystopian or utopian values rather than as a relative and arguably more factual continuum. The portrayals of Berlin in Wenders' two films both conclude on an ideal of life in the city opening onto a more promising future. This style of conclusion suggests that *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* may be considered as modernist works of art if modernism is taken in part as a commitment to a project leading to a progressive future or enlightenment.<sup>28</sup>

McArthur continues that by the 1960s, however the first portrayals of what is sometimes known as the postmodern city are made. These depict the 'worsening condition of 'real' inner cities in the last two or three decades [of the 20th Century being] paralleled by cinematic representations of the city as a desolate battleground traversed by human monsters on the very margins of sanity.'<sup>29</sup> McArthur picks up on Fredric Jameson's phrase here and agrees that postmodern cities contain 'a new Third World space within the First World city'.<sup>30</sup> McArthur then suggests that there are two generic forms in the portrayal of the postmodern city; the first a 'battleground' effect, which McArthur associates with the films of John Carpenter, and the second linked to comics like *Batman* and *Dick Tracy*, both of which became movies at the end of 1980s. Yet for McArthur, the 'most forceful' representation of the

postmodern city remains Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) with its neon, concrete, steel and glass city, overlapping multicultural streets inhabited by 'cosmopolitan denizens' of both human and machine origin. Although Wenders' postmodern Berlin is unlike Scott's representation of the city, it is nevertheless inhabited by a mix of supernatural (Christian inspired) angelic half humans along with other more mundane mortals, bringing David Harvey to compare Scott's and Wenders' films in analysing the cinema's role in realising the time-space compression of "the postmodern condition".<sup>31</sup>

McArthur rounds off his history of the cinematic city by looking at Italian Neo-Realist depictions of the city in film. Seen primarily through children's eyes, one striking image that emerges from films like Roberto Rossellini's *Germany, Ground Zero* (1947) is of a post war city left in ruins. This overlaps with the interests of one of the co-writers of *Wings of Desire* - Peter Handke - whose interest in the way children perceive the world he explored in *The Child's Story*.<sup>32</sup> Handke's influence in writing this film's script suggests that *The Child's Story* also helped to shape the way *Wings of Desire* portrayed adult life in the city. However, the child's view of the world is an interest which Wenders continued in *Faraway So Close!* although Handke's absence from the second film's writing team modified and made the child's vision less sophisticated. Nonetheless, other Wenders films, such as *Alice in the City* and his more recent *Land of Plenty* continue to feature children and young people.<sup>33</sup>

The child's perspective is not, however, the only innovation the Neo Realists offered, for as McArthur points out, a binding feature of the Neo Realist movement was the use of non-actors. Combined with the Neo Realists' preference for location shooting, the exponents of this film movement aimed at 'tracing of the impact of social (and sometimes metaphysical) forces on the weakest members of society (e.g. women, children, unemployed workers).'<sup>34</sup>

This gives the Neo Realist movement an expressed political commitment that Hollywood films rarely achieve. While it would be wrong to suggest that Wenders' films demonstrate a commitment to the lowest ranks of Berlin's society, his angels do endeavour to identify with personalities that are less fashionable and well to do. Indeed, Cassiel's life as a human is developed for a time as a vagabond, a homeless derelict, and a petty thief loitering in the city's train stations, on the banks of the *Spree*, and in public parks.

## ii) Berlin as Cinematic City

McArthur first mentions Berlin in reference to Paul Citroen's *Metropolis* (1923 - not to be confused with Fritz Lang's 1927 film bearing the same title) which conveys 'a vertiginous sense of "cityness", capturing both the sense of the city's oppressiveness and its breathtaking excitement as felt by part, at least, of the population of Weimar Germany'.<sup>35</sup> He again refers to Berlin when discussing Hollywood's hegemony<sup>36</sup> in the filmic construction of the discourses of cities elsewhere in the world, this time by referring to Bob Fosse's *Cabaret* (1972). McArthur argues that like other 'exotic' cities around the world, Berlin is construed from 'within the dominant narrative of Weimarian decadence (the point of view of National Socialism, incidentally)'.<sup>37</sup> It is not until the final pages of his essay that McArthur seriously turns to consider the role Berlin has played in assembling the discourse of the cinematic city. By this point, however, his discussion is deeply committed to maintaining the 'Hollywood hegemonic' argument that frames his history of the cinematic city.

The representation of Berlin is not only determined by American visions of the city, McArthur claims, they almost obliterate the prospect of seeing the city from a German perspective altogether. Nevertheless, referring to a cluster of ideas around 'modernity/city/cinema' attributed to Benjamin<sup>38</sup> and Siegfried Kracauer,<sup>39</sup> McArthur points out that films like

*The Joyless Street* (1925), *Metropolis* (1926), *Tragedy of the Street* (1927), *Berlin, Symphony of a Big City* (1927), and *The Street* (1929) do manage to articulate another vision of Berlin during the 20s.

From McArthur's revealing history of the cinematic city I conclude that even if Hollywood still preconditions filmic experiences of the city, Berlin does appear to introduce alternative perspectives of how the individual interacts with the cities around them. Often taken from the point of view of the street, such films offer a view of the city from a walker's or a traveller in a tram or train or bus perspective. Walking and travelling in trains are the two main modes of transport associated with the angels' views of Berlin in *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* To this I also add that films that represent the city from the point of view of the street contrast with films that continually and predominantly see the city from the private and privileged spaces of the automobile. While the motor car does offer its occupant a more personalised internal space from which to experience the city, it depersonalises as well as externalises the city as a world beyond the private intimacy of the car. So the city experienced from an automobile is reduced to a passing series of images through a window much as it is seen on a cinema screen. As Benjamin points out in his "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, modern technology has a tendency to homogenise and mediate human contact and interaction with the world, reducing individual encounters to those of a spectator, and the motor car, which predominates as the mode of transport in Hollywood films no matter which genre one considers, appears to support a passive mode of experience.

In contrast, the street-walker's or train/bus/tram commuter's perspective seems to be a feature of other, non-Hollywood based, representations of the cinematic city. The depiction of an individual's embodied street experience of the city can be detected in a range of non-

Hollywood productions, from Dziga Vertov's inventive depictions of the Soviet city in *The Man with the Movie Camera* (1929) to French depictions of Paris in *Hôtel du Nord* (1939) and *The Red Balloon* (1956). Even Lucian Emmer's Dutch/Italian production *La Ragazza in Vetrina* (1961) develops a more intimate, if somewhat stereotypical relationship between its main protagonist and one of "the girls" in Amsterdam's shop windows. Scenes from the city's streets such as those presented in *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* suggests that an alternative although yet to the theorised discourse about the cinematic city is possible, although this would lean on already identified readings of the relationships between cities and the individual as developed by Walter Benjamin and later theorists like Michel de Certeau.<sup>40</sup>

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McArthur's analysis of the cinematic city seems somewhat over-committed to the 'Hollywood hegemonic' line of argument he develops in this essay. This, it seems to me, over-determines the sensitivity of his history of depictions of the city in films, obscuring the role that cities like Berlin have played in shaping the discourse about the cinematic city. Perhaps reflecting a 'desire and anxiety'<sup>41</sup> often projected onto 20th Century Germany, the city of Berlin occupies a complex and ambiguous terrain that both attracts and repels individuals from the English speaking world with the promise of an encounter with their exotic Continental 'other'. Yet as Wolfgang Natter argues, one should not be

awe struck today by the cultural brilliance of the avant-garde, for whom the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Berlin represented the best impulses of Weimar Germany, [...] for a broad spectrum of the anti-modernist and folkish Germans, Berlin and all that it stood for was the devil incarnate. Berlin became the crystallisation point of resentment against industrialisation, capitalism, democracy and the cultural influence of the West following Germany's defeat in World War I.<sup>42</sup>

Berlin was certainly all that, but Goethe had already associated many of these qualities with modern cities more than a century before Hollywood rolled into business.<sup>43</sup> McArthur's commitment to an argument that defines the cinematic city from within a Hollywood paradigm, to which he returns in discussing *Berlin, Symphony of a Big City*, continually stresses the city/country binary and suggests a city seeped in an Anglo-American cultural imaginary.<sup>44</sup>

## 2) The Global City

Citing Peter Wollen, McArthur describes the cinematic city as a 'post-Fordist city of deindustrialisation, casual and freelance employment, large-scale immigration, the privatisation of welfare, and social polarisation.'<sup>45</sup> These descriptions correspond with wider discussions about the global city. This makes the link between the cinematic city and the post-industrial free market economy of the late 20th Century principally driven from New York, London, and, to a lesser extent, Tokyo. In discussions that give the economy prominence, these are the three leading cities in a global hierarchy,<sup>46</sup> although Hong Kong, Shanghai, Buenos Aires, and Amsterdam sometimes get a secondary mention as ancillary nodes associated with the delivery of goods and services, as exchanges for capital, or as grids of communication in what are described as 'digital networks'.<sup>47</sup> What becomes apparent in discussions about the global city is the constant definition of these discourses in terms of postindustrial, or more generically, late capitalist economies linked with pre-eminent cities like London and New York.<sup>48</sup> Globalisation in this form has inevitably brought with it cultural and linguistic biases that makes global culture seem to be an extension of a US led global imperium.<sup>49</sup>

Wenders' two films support associations between the economy and life in the modern city. For example, the Circus Alekan in *Wings of Desire* is constantly under threat of closure due to poor audience attendance. It has

been said that 'the constancy of change'<sup>50</sup> is what distinguishes modern (and postmodern cities) from their more traditional premodern forms.<sup>51</sup> Yet, as Susan Fainstein and Michael Harloe<sup>52</sup> point out, some older sectors of the economy such as the entertainment, creative, and culture industries continue to be major, although transient sources of employment, often associated with tourism, in the global city. The constant state of uncertainty hanging over the Circus' future may be regarded as 'normal' in the contemporary economy. The post-Fordist economy has certainly unhinged many of the structures and institutions that once secured the worker's 'station in life'<sup>53</sup> in the modern city. When the Circus Manager finally announces that the Circus is closing, Marion decides to stay in the Cold War city, for that is where she feels 'at home' in the world.<sup>54</sup>

Marion puts a positive slant on her 'condition' by suggesting that she is 'liberated' from the fixed structures that lock older notions of belonging to an unchanging sense of 'place' in the world. Yet she also concedes that this erodes her sense of identity and familiarity with the people near her. Left standing, empty handed, in the desolated holes in the city's heart, it is the singular echo of Marion thoughts as she prepares to confront her future single handedly while her fears of loneliness resound strongly off the city's walls around her.

Notions of freedom and mobility attached to the global economy can be deceptive when divorced from the individual's continuing realities through time. Of course a modern troupe like the Circus Alekan remains enmeshed in the contemporary realities of the modern world, even when, as Marion chooses, they give up the wandering journey of their pre-modern minstrel brethren. Yet still they must satisfy their material needs and desires. Marion's move into the walled-in city runs parallel with her growing desire for a greater sense of meaning and secure her longer term identity. And as

her story unfolds across these two films, she continues to work as a professional performer. However, in *Faraway So Close!*, she is also shown working as a bar attendant at the *Bar Purgatorio*. There is thus a double movement in her (re)turning to the enclosed circle of the Cold War city in *Wings of Desire*. Unlike the continuing journey that her free-roaming circus companions embark on, the fate of the contemporary performer in the global city is as a member of an underclass that stumbles from one short term lucrative contract to another while fending for themselves as best they can in between by doing odd jobs. Yet amidst the mounting rubble of the dismantled welfare state, Marion should be counted lucky, for many of her fellow citizens in the New World, especially those subjected to the fickle directives issued by the New World Order, the welfare state has never existed. Most global citizens don't have the privilege of withdrawing into the fortified cloisters offered by the German state.

In summary then, if the global economy as articulated through discourses surrounding London and New York is to define the global city, the significant features that frame contemporary life, including the life of art, in that city are

- a) the financial sector;
- b) the availability of a small, skilled, specialised, sometimes creative and sometimes mobile jobs;
- c) a tendency towards female and migrant workers (although women's and non WASP migrants access to the higher echelons of the income hierarchy remain limited);
- d) job instability and uneven distribution of income at all levels of the economic hierarchy; and
- e) a shift in the balance of industrial relations towards employers.<sup>55</sup>

If economic discourses are allowed to dominate analyses of the global city, the focus of questions arising in studies of emerging global culture would mostly be directed at;

- i) the de-industrialisation in modern cities;
- ii) the re-structuring of local spaces in terms of regional economic imperatives rather than social, cultural, or demographic considerations;
- iii) changes in working conditions affecting the quality of life of those living in cities;
- iv) rising disparity between incomes not only in terms of those who are employed and those who are unemployed, but also in terms of relative redistribution of wealth towards a few very highly paid jobs and the surplus of other low paid and insecure modes of employment; and finally
- v) the emergence of migration patterns that offer limited or no access to culture, citizenship, social security, health, or education.

In concluding this initial sketch of the global cinematic city, it is clear that existing Anglophone, Hollywood dominated discourses alone do not give sufficient scope for a thoroughgoing and extensive framework that deals with the work of art in global culture. While recognising that there are limits in applicability of the parameters and paradigms these theories provide, they are nevertheless a useful starting point from which an analysis of how *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* identify different geographic and cultural spaces, urban sectors, forms of artistic practice and material production, as well as ways of relating with others so that a culturally, linguistically, and discursively diverse and yet singularly inclusive global community can begin to be articulated.

## II

### The Representation of Berlin in *Wings of Desire*

In contrast to earlier eras in the 20th Century when Berlin played an instrumental role in forming ideas about the cinematic city through such films as *Metropolis* and *Berlin, Symphony of a Big City*, the catastrophe of World War II saw the city lose its role as the Capital of Germany and with that, the city began playing a more passive role in cultural developments. Cold War animosities may not have been as openly destructive as the bombing of

Hitler's city was, but for those who continued living in Berlin after World War II, there was always an element of danger as one superpower and then the other flexed its muscles in maintaining or asserting its authority over the other occupying forces in the city. Consequently, in the first decade after Hitler, Berlin had to endure a Soviet Blockade followed by an American led airlift as growing tensions between the former allies became more pronounced, while anonymous fingers poised nervously over nuclear triggers that threatened to annihilate not just the city, but the entire world. The people of the city could be forgiven for feeling that they had entered a new nightmare far worse, if that was imaginable, than the Nazis dreamt up for them. Then finally, in 1961, the East German authorities decided to close off their half of the city in an effort to stem the flow of people from East to West, which, inspite of Western propaganda, succeeded in lessening the tensions between the two Germanys. With the erection of the Berlin *Mauer*, an uneasy *detente* finally settled in over the city, only to see Berlin become a staging post for Cold War intrigues as East and West tried outmanoeuvre each other in their public relations battles. Sinister, spy inspired stories of imminent global warfare were followed by plots designed to make the other look as dangerous and as threatening as possible. Subsequently, in the Western world, Berlin took on a mystique that made it seem both highly exotic and extremely dangerous, the final frontier before the abyss at the end of civilisation. By the time Wenders came to shoot *Wings of Desire*, the city already bore an eerie sense of presence in people's imaginaries all over the world. This was a city in which the inconceivable and the mundane walked hand in hand.

#### 1) West Berlin as a Mobile City full of Strangers

Are there still borders? More than ever! Every street has its border line. Between each plot there's a strip of no-mans-land. [...] Whoever dares, will fall into bloody traps or be hit by laser rays. [...] Every home owner, or even every tenant nails his nameplate on the door, like a coat of arms, and studies the morning paper as if he were a world

leader. Germany has crumbled into as many small states as there are individuals. And these small states are mobile. Everyone carries his own state with him and demands a toll when another wants to enter: [...]. one can only enter each state with a password. The German soul of today can only be conquered and governed by one who arrives at each small state with the password. Fortunately, no-one is currently in a position to do this So, [...] everyone migrates, and waves his one-man-state flag in all earthly directions.

Abbreviated transcript from the English subtitles  
of *Wings of Desire* of the driver thoughts  
as he treads his way to the film set in  
*Wings of Desire*.

Foreignness ... is just a through-way to a notion of identity.<sup>56</sup>

One of the strongest evocation of the postmodern city is provided by a driver as he weaves his way through the streets of West Berlin in *Wings of Desire*. As in *Kings of the Road* (1976) and *The American Friend*, Wenders uses the motif of driving as a way of negotiating through a 'maze'<sup>57</sup> of different worlds and identities. In *Wings of Desire*, the driver navigates through a city filled with strangers that has some correspondences with Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*.<sup>58</sup> Although the driver's reflections suggest the global city is made up of independent single person nation states, there is a disturbed sense of fragmentation and displacement underpinning his portrayal of Berlin and the image that emerges is of a deeply divided city in which foreigners and immigrants have transformed the home town atmosphere of 'place' in which he lives into unrecognisable, disconcerting, and sometimes threatening 'space'.<sup>59</sup>

It is the film's use of documentary World War II footage to accompany the driver's reflections that is most interesting, however, for the juxtapositioning of black and white images of the city's destruction ironises the phobia of strangers that underlies the driver's sentiments. Although the film fails to make the point, Hitler's Germany shoulders much of the responsibility for the enormous waves of people who swept out of Europe in the middle decades of the 20th Century. For while the end of World War II

concluded Hitler's reign of terror, Europe after the end of hostilities could only offer the millions of homeless, unemployed people a one way ticket and a migrant visa to New World nations like the USA, Canada, and Australia. By the end of the 1960s, however, Germany and much of Europe had become a emigrant destination, with many (including large numbers of people from Turkey) coming to take up lowly paid jobs that local workers were not willing to do. In addition to the influx of migrants from other parts of the world, West Berlin became a refuge for thousands of young men from Western and Southern Europe who moved there to escape several years of military or social service. The sense of foreignness the driver feels in Berlin could have made reference to these great movements of people and thus have shown the city as an important epicentre of the great global diaspora of the 20th Century.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the history that overshadows his words, the driver might have also considered that the sense of estrangement he feels in his city is also partly due to the role of technologies such as the car that he is driving. Despite the age of his vintage automobile, the flimsy insulation of its primitive driver's cabin seems to have been sufficient to obscure the fact that his own increased mobility brings with it greater contact with strangers. This mobility is inextricably part of the culture of the modern city.

Now one might have thought that a driver living in a city that has suffered so much might have concluded that the mixing of people from different cultural origins is one way to positively dilute the rigid signifying and authorial systems that gave enormous venom to Hitler's Germany. But by the end of the 20th Century, with increasing threats to individual security and welfare - due principally, one should add, to the operations of a global economy dedicated to, and at the service of a free market ideology - many individuals have begun to share the discomfort the driver expresses. Even Marion, whose circus rehearsal was foreclosed when the Manager

announced that the company was broke, enters a protracted internal monologue in which her sense of identity becomes linked to the ebbs and flows of the Circus' precarious financial fortune. Alone in her caravan and deep in thought, she begins a protracted, inner monologue that takes place over several scenes in which she finally expresses the distress she feels in the wake of the meltdown of her identity caused by the loss of her job in the Circus. "Here I'm a foreigner, yet it's all so familiar", she says, in emphatic ambiguity, as the topsy-turvy state of her inner reality becomes clear. Taking distance from the understandable emotional upheaval she experiences at that moment, Marion presents a sense of her relationship with the city that has two potential meanings;

- a) Berlin is a familiar place to her, even though she is a foreigner. Therefore the city makes her feel familiar, and with that, potentially comfortable; and
- b) Marion feels like a foreigner wherever she is in the world. Thus her sense of being a stranger is not specific to Berlin. In this case, it is being a foreigner that is familiar.

The financial failure of the Circus robs Marion of the one thing she feels she has that secures her fragile fluid sense of identity in a world made up of strangers. This throws her into a crisis that signals the significance of money in determining the basic parameters in her life. Now, if Marion's sense of the city is mixed, both good and bad, this only makes the film's depiction of Berlin more convincing, for cities have become places of infinite possibilities and identities today, as those who can enjoy the sense of freedom the global city brings may testify. Yet just as those possibilities and identities can be quickly realised in the global city, they can also just as easily disappear. Amidst the uncertain flux that modern cities produce, the ability for people to form stable relationships as well as create a sense of community and daily routine with which they may identify has been drastically eroded.

As the driver elsewhere in the film suggests, the establishment of identity and community requires a certain kind of 'secret password'. No-one, he thinks, holds the key that Hitler once did when, in uttering myths of origin and racial superiority, he cohered the German people into the fictional genus he called the *Herrenrasse* (master race) that he and his party nevertheless attempted to manipulate to extinction. In *Wings of Desire*, Homer repeatedly suggests that narrative myths of origin can provide a key to open the doors to the infinity of one-person-kingdoms existing in the city, but fortunately, no one in the film seems to heed the old man's words.

Like an expert seducer, the driver in this film opens doors that draw his viewers interests, but he finally fails to deliver any real insight into the challenges that face modern cities and their occupants. For if everyone is to be granted a form of citizenship that confers the rights to equally participate and express their individuality in the on-going realisation of the city, ways need to be found that enable individuals to identify with others as like-able and respected beings while continuing to acknowledge the other's equal rights to live out their varied cultural and idiosyncratic differences with equal opportunity. Only when the individual identifies with others as different but equal beings who, in and through themselves, actualise the endless potentialities that the global city is capable of actualising, can the individual avoid being reduced to a single minded mass. More importantly, however, only when global culture is made up of individuals relating with each other as equal but different and authentic human beings will the danger that they can be formed into a singular totality that can be manipulated by someone like Hitler, or a party like Stalin's Socialists,<sup>61</sup> be eradicated.

The driver's tentative drive through Berlin's war ravaged streets is only a partially successful attempt to meet that challenge as he negotiates

through the social networks and historical webs in which people in the city today live. Paul Virilio has argued that the cinema itself is a means of providing a way of binding strangers in the modern city. Cinema enables individuals to share the experience of watching a film even though they may continue to act as strangers if they happen to sit across each other on the train journey back to their suburban homes.<sup>62</sup> In Virilio's view, the cinema is a 'black mass' which brings individuals together at the same time as allowing them to experience themselves as the only one who occupies their singular isolated life-worlds. With techniques as readily available to Hollywood as much as it was to Goebbels, Virilio shows that even a movie character like Homer can be used to unify and mobilise the masses even though each individual feels that the Homeric Gods have spoken to them personally.

The city of Berlin, and in particular the presence of the Berlin Wall, gives *Wings of Desire's* a striking edge in its portrayal of the individual's (dis)placement and loss of orientation in the global city. Marion expresses this when she innocently states that you 'can't get lost [in Berlin]. You always end up at the wall.'<sup>63</sup> Reassured by this final physical barrier, it ought to be alarming, even if it is understandable, that Marion feels secured by being physically restrained by the brute expression of (military and political) power the Wall represents. Recalling the important role that Benjamin's translator plays in transl(oc)ating texts (and I use that in the broader sense to include the meaning of the Berlin Wall as a textual symbol) into a global context,<sup>64</sup> she expresses the need to retain something that gives her life some meaning, for maintaining a sense of meaning is what prevents her total disappearance into the abyss beyond the Wall, that same abyss of meaninglessness that Benjamin's translator must dutifully enter. Yet it is important to remember that Marion's sense of displacement and uncertainty is due, at least partly, to her lack of employment which makes her future

uncertain This is something that many living in modern cities around the world will recognise and who, like Marion, find that the city no longer offers the protection it once did.<sup>65</sup>

Marion expresses contradictions that many living in the global city experience and may relate to. Due not insignificantly to the economic conditions imposed upon their lives, the danger and threat to the individual's future can be easily associated with perceptions of strangers as threats to job security and lifestyle. In a capitalist culture driven by a free market ideology, the need to maximise corporate profit has manipulated the global economy in such a way that has laid the foundation for the widespread reception and regeneration of racist and xenophobic reactions evident throughout the West at the end of the 20th Century.

The benefits of the hyper-mobility promised by late capitalism has been largely limited to the business sector, who now freely move goods and services quickly around the world while coercing national governments into disinhibiting transnational corporations capacity to make money. When individuals choose to migrate - irrespective of whether they do so legally or illegally - they experience not just the loss of belonging in a community where they have a history but they also often attract the resentment of the new local communities into which they enter, where they are constructed as foreigners taking local jobs away and eroding local cultural values. In addition, migrating individuals may find that the jobs they get in the new global economy offers even less security and, with the exception of the most highly paid executive positions, workers find that their work now exposes them to physical danger that may even threaten their life, but without the legal support or interest of the governing authorities.

The unaccounted side of post-Fordist corporate ledger is the worker's loss of control over their destiny in conjunction with a reduction of social

mobility and capital through physical migration. Fortunately, *Wings of Desire* also shows that the global city is not only characterised by increasing isolation and a rising fear of strangers. Marion recognises that the city offers both a sense of freedom and a reassuring sense of familiarity and belonging, even if that is gained - almost by default - when the city around her reflects a sense of estrangement that she feels inside her. Wenders' depiction of Berlin as 'a specific multiplicity'<sup>66</sup> does show how the global city allows strangers to feel at home but not because, as the driver wishes, the individual may identify with others who reflect and reassure them of their inner sense of doubt and insecurity, but because social arrangements in the global city remove the barriers between *auslanders* and *vreemdelingen* that such strangers experience when locals indulge in "insider trading".

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Although money is never raised as a problematic in *Wings of Desire*, it is nevertheless signified at a number of important junctures in the film as a preconditioning factor of human existence in West Berlin. If the film does not directly address this issue, it nevertheless indicates how life in modern Western cities revolve increasingly around money. Locating such a film in Berlin contextualises this relationships in terms of the long standing ideological stand-off between communism and capitalism as well as the military and political conflicts between East and West the city symbolised. Just as the driver's comments cannot be separated from the history of the city, the context of the city's reality during the Cold War cannot be kept apart from the film's exploration of the individual's relationship with the community in which they live. The significance of money in conferring the individual's right to participate in the city becomes even starker when Daniel is handed a few shillings by a stranger soon after becoming human.

Over the next few scenes, Daniel quickly learns how his angelic freedom to be and move about the world as he once wished has been curtailed by becoming human in West Berlin. Now money is the medium through which he must procure his sense of identity as well as sustain his existence while he lives in the city. This contrasts with qualities associated with the angels world, which in some ways is associated with East Berlin, to which I now turn.

## 2) East Berlin and the End of Utopia

Cassiel; [...] Do you remember how, one morning, out of the savanna, - its forehead smeared with grass - the biped appeared, our long awaited image, and its first word was a shout: was it "ch" or "Ah" or "Oh", or was it merely a groan? [...]

Daniel; A long story. [...] the fire places, the leaps, the circular dances, the symbols, the writing. Then one broke out of the circle and ran straight ahead. As long as he ran straight ahead, - swerving sometimes, perhaps from joy - he seemed free, and we could laugh with him. But then, suddenly, he ran zigzag and stones flew. (*Shot of Berlin Wall*). With his flight began another story. The history of wars. It is still going on.

Cassiel; [...] Do you still know how one day the highway was built on which the Napoleonic retreat took place one day, and then it was paved? Today it is covered with grass and has sunk like a Roman road along with the tank tracks.

[...]

Daniel; Yes! To conquer a history for myself! I want to turn what I've learned from my timeless downward watching into sustaining a hasty glance, a short shout, an acrid smell. I've been outside long enough. Absent long enough. Out of the world long enough! I'll enter into the history of the world! If only to hold one apple in my hand! Look, that feather there on the water. It's already vanished. Look the tyre marks on the asphalt, and the cigarette butt, rolling. The primeval river has dried up, and only today's raindrops still quiver. Down with the world behind the world.

Abbreviated transcript of Daniel's last walk with Cassiel along the Berlin Wall. From the English subtitles of *Wings of Desire*

Reminiscing together like old friends, Daniel and Cassiel develop an angels' account of human history, charting as they do the emergence of Western civilisation that embodies an the ideology that history is a progressive transversal of space in linear directions.<sup>67</sup> The runner's

revolutionary path out from the circle of traditions opens the way to modern the future. However, Daniel reminds his listener, the intermittent wars that have plagued European history have slowed the progress of this human endeavour. The runner's progress produced momentary swerves expressing his joy in being free. The metaphor of human progress through history lies at the heart of the Enlightenment tradition, although the concept goes back to Plato and Aristotle, long before it was handed down through the philosophical tradition of Descartes, Kant, Hegel,<sup>68</sup> and Marx, before coming to grief in the corrupted idealism of Lenin and the ghost of Stalin who lingers in the hollow hulk of the Eastern Block just over the Wall. Hidden in this angels' cosmology is a suggestion of the relationships the city of Berlin has with other cities in history as well as in the present. This is an analogy that suggests that the origins of Berlin rejoin Stalin's, Hitler's, and Napoleon's city with the ancient roads leading from Imperial Rome .

It is significant that the angels' walk culminates at the interstice of the Berlin Wall where Daniel finally leaves his spiritual existence and crosses the border into West Berlin where he begins life as a human. The siting of this scene along the Berlin Wall indicates a relationship this film constructs between the Eastern and Western sides of the divided Cold War city. *Wings of Desire* associates the angels' black and white world with the East - also colloquially said by West Germans to have appeared like the grey city that appears in black and white photographs - as a repository of a (seemingly) failed European tradition. The film then appears to position Daniel in relation to the worlds in the sister cities when the angel says "Down with the world behind the world", a phrase that suggests a condemnation of the secret inner enclaves of the high-minded world behind the Iron Curtain.

The film suggests that not even the angels can believe in the ideals of eternal freedom without addressing simultaneously the physical needs and immediate realities of life. Meanwhile, over the border and to the West, the material existence of Marion in her postindustrial reality beckons enticingly like a dark erotic figure standing with lures of transient sensations, idiosyncratic identities, and the ever challenging modes of existence based in constant change.<sup>69</sup> On the East stands a seemingly immovable and immutable state inhabited by immortal angels espousing commitments to human love and spiritual value, but who lack the wherewithal to realise what they imagine. The film associates the sensually impoverished existence of the angels with an ideologically inspired East, suggesting that both the spiritual and ideal domains are in fatal decay. The slow, enduring, photography of Henri Alekan and Robbi Muller accentuates the graceful but contained Cicero-like walk of the angels, distinguishing it from the racy and spontaneous clamour to the West where people engage energetically in realising their dreams and realities. The distant disconnection between the angels spiritual idealism and the material world is stressed by the angels sense that they no longer understand the human condition and nor do humans appear to listen to their whispering voices any longer. The image of a man and woman embracing each other in the background visually emphasises Daniel's desire for Marion and the sensual experience of embracing an other body. Then an ambulance siren rises in the soundtrack, as if to alert the angel of the urgency in the moment waiting to emerge while he prepares himself for the transition to the living being that he will soon 'become'.

*Wings of Desire* uses all the means the cinema places at its disposal to portray the two cities on either side of the Wall during the Cold War as being different. Both are associated with their own sense of identity, time, and place. The sensual and sensationably embodied temporality of human

existence is situated to the West while a grey and drab angelic world associated with ideology, political commitment, and communism, seems to be situated in the East. In addition, the decaying state of East Berlin portrays the Soviet East as fixed in time and unable to stay abreast of the changes rapidly taking place in the West. As Damiel puts it, the angels' world is all 'dried up.'<sup>70</sup>

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I conclude this examination of how East and West are imagined in *Wings of Desire* by suggesting that two pictures, two Cold War cities, emerge in this film, both possessed and governed by distinct notions of how time and space are experienced by the occupants of the city. These are;

- a) East Berlin, which openly preserved a sense of empty, silent space inherited partly from the legacies of a Fascist State and partly from the destruction of war, which the Communists filled with fear. This, the Communists hoped, would simultaneously capture and buffer the citizens of East Berlin against the traces of a competing capitalist West as well as contain and control the body, mind, and imaginary of the people's polity; and
- b) West Berlin, where the Marshall Plan's objective to correct and edify the people of the city in behaving like a Western oriented Democratic state based on the eradication of authoritarianism (the "German Problem") as well as the gaping wounds left by World War II while transforming West Berlin into a symbol of capitalist reconstruction, a young, vibrant, and forward looking city embracing freedom by embodying movement and fluidity over and above, beyond and through, all attachments to physical and cultural space.

### III

#### *Faraway So Close!:* Berlin as Global Cinematic City

Although the physical barriers that multiplied the realities of the walled-in city<sup>71</sup> in *Wings of Desire* were already disappearing by the time Wenders began working on *Faraway So Close!*, Berlin still offered a rich and complex textual terrain that few other cities in the world could match. To the East, a helpless, newly liberated people's city stood, open handed, hoping that the miracle that had made West Germany an economic powerhouse would soon be repeated in their sector. Many exaggerated expectations about life under capitalism flourished, some a direct result of propaganda projected over the Wall during the Cold War, for none of the Cold War propagandists considered that one day the West might have to account for the "factual information" they sent through the Iron Curtain. Meeting those expectations became even more urgent when it became clear that not everyone was prepared to wait another lifetime for history to repeat itself. With disillusionment quickly spreading, some individuals turned to whatever means they had available to procure the standard of living the bloodless revolution promised. Rummaging through the ruins of the German Democratic Republic, profiteering was not confined to individuals from the East however, and many of those who succeeded in taking advantage of the fall of empire were smart entrepreneurs from the West. Although Bonn set up the *Truehand* corporation to manage, restructure, and redistribute the former DDR's assets, some people in the East felt that there was little equity in the price they were made to accept when they threw down their doors, opened their arms, and traded autonomy for Helmut Kohl's dream of a united Germany in the mainstream of the open market. Meanwhile, the vanquished rulers of the former State, its symbols and its icons, were made to embellish smoke stained walls like hunting trophies. Without the bulk head of a nation-state, East

Berlin became a buyer's market and the people had to take whatever they could get. As Benjamin suggests in "Theses on the Philosophy of History", victors write history while losers pay the price in servitude by propping up their rulers houses. This was the fate awaiting the People's State after the Wall came down, and this was the image Wenders' film decided to adopt.

### 1) The End of Winter's City

Most of us are so boring because our cities are so boring. Long ago the nomads must have been overcome by boredom, so they said: "Let us build here, and there and there some hideous cities made of stone... so that our world weariness lies in the squares and streets, houses and apartments. Because we're empty and we're all in! We're all empty and all in." What's that called? "Chasing the wind..." Something is needed, some kind of joy.

Extract of Winter's thoughts as he spies on Hanna and Raissa  
at the beginning of *Faraway So Close!*

*Faraway So Close* articulates aspects of life in the newly united city around the wispy and mysterious Philip Winter. Winter is a private investigator who works for the American gangster named Tony Baker. Formerly known as Becker, Baker was the son of a film-maker who worked in Goebbel's Propaganda Unit during World War II. Both son and father escaped to America in 1945, leaving mother Gertrude and sister Hanna behind. The film does not indicate what happened to Gertrude, although her brief appearances in the film suggest that hers was not a happy conclusion. Hanna, on the other hand, was adopted by Becker's military Chauffeur, a man named Konrad, who seems to have tenderly cared for her as a loving parent. The background narrative of the film implies that Becker returned to Germany after the collapse of the DDR and hires Winter to track down the whereabouts of his sister living in East Berlin. As Winter finds out, Hanna now lives alone with her daughter Raissa. Winter's perceptions of the city are privileged by the film, whom it suggestively presents as an undisclosed former angel. Although it seems that Winter may have accurately perceived the nature of reality in the Cold War city, his sordid and clandestine existence has

corrupted his capacity to separate truth and reality from fact and fiction of human existence after the Cold War. His portrayal of Berlin is generally negative, jaded, and somewhat sinister. Yet still the film depicts a range of facets of Berlin through his eyes, including a sense of the city as an empty repository of humanity, as a bored city, a forger's fake city, a disappearing-reappearing city, a drifter's city, and a gambler's underworld city. In the end, however, Berlin is shown as a city where change and the unexpected walk hand in hand as the world that Winter knew begins to die.

#### i) The Forger's City

Winter's sense of the Cold War city begins to emerge when he spies on Hanna and daughter Raissa at the beginning of the film. Their mundane, homely conversation causes him to complain how boring the lives of people are. The city must have been settled by nomads, he speculates outside their Soviet era apartment, who, overcome by boredom, projected their boredom on everything they built. Winter offers an underbelly perspective of the city, and his role as Becker's private investigator links Berlin's history as a hub of Cold War espionage to the on-going reality of intrigue and mystery after the collapse of the Wall. Winter's view of the city is not without humour and witty sarcasm however. 'Most people's behaviour makes little sense. It's just a pass-time, game playing, exploiting time! [...] They're all basement dwellers, to be exact' he says as he enters the basement studio of a counterfeiter. The first thing Winter sees as he enters the studio is a Renaissance painting sitting on an easel, the latest masterpiece from a budding grand master of the 15 Century. Winter then opens his briefcase and shows the man some photographs, and asks him to reprint them without leaving any trace of the people in them. The images depict Hanna and Konrad standing next to the vintage World War II car that Konrad still possesses. "I want no trace of their Nazi past." says Winter. Complaining that Winter will one day push him too

far, the man begs for forgiveness for 'choosing to become a forger'. The themes of the invention of identity, falsification of memory, and the forging of history returns when the angel Cassiel comes to the forger after he becomes human in *Faraway So Close!*. Throwing photos of himself on the counter, Cassiel demands a passport in the name of Karl Engel, a choice of name that both masks and marks the socialist realm associated with the angels in *Wings of Desire*. These two scenes depict photographic images not as truthfully representing reality - as the myth that photographs never lie states - but as a means of creating and forging identity, memory, and history. This falsification of history and the forging of reality gains its fullest articulation in the film in Winter's request to eradicate Becker's NAZI past. The forger's studio continues to associate intrigue and mystery that were part of everyday life in Berlin during the Cold War.<sup>72</sup>

#### ii) Purgatory in a Sinful City

Winter presents a view of Berlin in which the artificiality of the city's lights only faintly outline the sordid mystery lurking beneath the surface of its inhabitants. His dim and somewhat cynical vision of the city is indicated at a number of significant points in the film. In one example, he sparks up a conversation with Marion while she is working at the Bar Purgatorio. Winter informs Marion that the city is inhabited by missing persons. For Winter, the falsified lives of those living in the city are based on a game of bluff and make-believe, "Its all posturing" he says to Marion as she refuses his invitation to share a drink. The night has 'gone to the dogs,' he then continues, disappointed with her rejection. Marion, disillusioned with bar work and frustrated with her acting career, responds with annoyance and says that 'every night is a dog.' Retorting in English, Winter then tells her he'd forgotten that and promptly leaves her standing behind the bar. 'Actually they're missing persons who have reappeared' Winter then

concludes as he stumbles onto the street. Winter then determines not to complete his assignment for Becker and decides to immediately go to Becker and announce his resignation. Turning away from the Bar, Winter runs into Peter Falk coming around a corner who excuses himself apologetically. Falk continues on his way, leaving Winter in shock at the thought of who he thinks he just ran into. Exclaiming his disbelief, Winter says it "Can't be him .... in Berlin"

Now Berlin is shown to be a city in which not only does the unexpected constantly happens, but the people who inhabit it are so used to the unexpected - and bored by it - that they no longer respond spontaneously to the world around them. Through Winter's eyes, the city seems full of people whose past and present realities are built on hollow foundations. The boredom he perceives in the citizens appears to be derived from the hollow foundations of the people Winter encounters in a city made up of lies, deceit, and intrigue. In the context of the quote from Matthew<sup>73</sup> in the opening frames of the film, Winter's dim view of the city appears to emerge from his own heart. So the film constructs the darkness in his eye and the boredom he overhears as outmoded projections his Cold War experiences impose on the daily routines of the people he observes.

In another scene, the Bar Purgatorio is further associated with the city. It begins with the screen filled with an image of violence and an apparent breakdown of social order as a man violently throws a chair out of a window. In a sequence in which the viewer cannot at first tell that they are looking at a TV news report, a voice over says..."No trace of the police yet ... and we're trapped." The TV camera pulls out of the window and reveals some men held captive by an angry crowd. Then suddenly the building bursts into flames. Wenders now introduces Johnny Cash's "The Wanderer"<sup>74</sup> into the soundtrack. Cash's song illustrates a mixed, post nuclear city with streets

crowded with wondrous but mostly frightening possibilities. The visual focus on the TV screen relates Cash's song to the newsreel footage of a riot in an inner city neighbourhood where the inhabitants (possibly squatters) burn down the building around them out of some unexplained anger and frustration.

The Bar Purgatorio thus appears to be a site that *Faraway So Close!* offers as a context for sinister images of a sinful city to be situated. It is difficult to avoid concluding that, with the religious significance of the name, the Bar is being presented as a place in which individuals living in this sinful city can go either to pay penance for their sins, or to gain a resting place from the penetrating light of day for those who choose to remain 'in sin'.

### iii) The Underworld City

Winter's decision to leave Tony Becker's employ enables the film to reveal the lies his investigations into Becker's family history was intended to fabricate and conceal. Storming in on Becker, Winter finds a four-cornered round of poker in progress. Now the image of the city that emerges is as a gambling den full of mysterious characters with shady lives hidden in the artificial shadows of the city's street lights. The circle of gamblers comprises of Becker himself, Patsky, whose name suggests he is of Polish origin, a man who is heard thinking in Russian, and a fourth man who speaks in Turkish or an Arabic language. This gaming den is where underworld figures from both East and West come to launder and turn a buck, confirming Elsaesser's observation that, in a German context, "the [crime-] thriller format made it seem as if Nazism had been a conspiracy perpetrated by a clique of fanatics, lunatics and underworld criminals."<sup>75</sup> The epicentre of Winter's underworld city is Becker's apartment, where Winter threatens to expose the former

Nazi's son's sordid history. Realising the danger, Becker hastens Winter into a backroom where he hears out Winter's story.

Winter; I found another person. A certain Anton Becker, ... father, ... joined the Nazi Propaganda Ministry.... 1945, ... the boy and his father emigrated to America. Raised in Los Angeles ... USA. In Germany, he is presumed dead. No contact with his sister, living all that time in the Soviet Zone. The mother disappeared in the post war chaos. Ah ... education ... none ... wait ... yes, majored in history ... quit studies. He became a car dealer in Detroit. ... Back in Berlin since 1990. Various post office addresses, East and West. Since the reunification, Tony Baker, Film Distributor. Import-export, joint ventures with many eastern block countries. Except most of your business has nothing to do with movies! ....

Winter reveals the devils playground hidden under Becker's American facade, pointing to German willingness to allow the sleeping dogs of the past lie. This sequence completes the picture that started to emerge at the forger's studio as Winter establishes the links between Becker, Konrad, and Hanna that can only otherwise be rejoined by Konrad's fading memory. Now the German-American's character starts to take on chameleon properties as he changes appearance depending on the light he is seen in. From a small time American businessman purportedly returning home to his roots, the gradual emergence of his shady existence reveals the sinister aspects that the anonymity of life in the modern city can conceal. The underworld sector of Berlin as global city is nevertheless strongly associated with the former Eastern parts of city as *Faraway So Close!* presents iconic sites such as *Alexanderplatz* - where Cassiel is arrested for gambling soon after becoming human<sup>76</sup> - and Becker's flat - which appears to be near the *Gendarmenmarkt*<sup>77</sup> - as the home of the city's criminals. The corroboration between German-American Becker and the shady characters from the East reflects the capitalist's flexibility to fight an opponent one day and hop into bed with them the next.

For Winter, however, his confrontation with Becker in the middle of the night is the last successful act he performs for soon, time itself,

personified in the film by the character of Emit Flesti, completes Winter's story by shooting him dead with a cross-bow. Signalling that the Cold War era is finally over, the penetration of 'time's arrow'<sup>78</sup> into Winter's heart prevents him from warning Konrad and Hanna that her older brother has returned to the city and is trying to find her.<sup>79</sup> On his dying breath, instead of delivering his warning, Winter whispers exhaustedly that 'Winter is over'. So Winter's death brings to an end the existence of the divided and somewhat isolated Cold War city propped up and managed by the intelligence and propaganda units of unimaginably destructive and competing military superpowers. The end of the Cold War brought with it an end to an era when Berlin was a potent symbol of the walled-in city that offered uncertain refuge for occasional misfits like Marion to take harbour in a sea of hostile forces. Winter's death may signal the end of the ungovernable city made up of different one person states the driver in *Wings of Desire* identifies, but the intrigue, secrecy, and shady dealings that used to go on there have not disappeared.

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Winter is a key textual intersection in the film, developing different senses of Berlin as a global city. His is a fading, disappearing city that re-appears like a ghost in the fog of an endless night. This is a city full of shallow shadow people, of half forgotten memories, and realities forged and falsified, an ungodly city where death engages life in a daring game of Russian roulette.<sup>80</sup> Winter's shady apparitions are particularly focused by his diggings into Becker's past, unearthing Nazi connections alongside criminal activity in the everyday pragmatic realities of conducting business. On another level, Winter refrains the angel's role as he spies about through people's lives. Only Winter appears to be a dark angel, and the realm he belongs to is the Bar Purgatorio, a no-man's place in a sleeping city in which

the sinful individual can 'hold-up' and pay for their misdeeds. In his cynical way, Winter illuminates the darker aspects of the city<sup>81</sup> as he searches through the rubble of history and discovers how everyone in the city is playing some sort of game. The scenes in the forger's studio show that money really can buy anything, including reality and a new identity. These falsifications were necessary for the "un/wanted" foreigners who entered the city after the collapse of the Berlin Wall to alter pre-existing relationships in the world and realise new significations in the global city. Yet still the forger is disgusted by his job and loathes the people he works for. The Bar Purgatorio, on the other hand, offers little comfort for a lovelorn man as Winter finds out when he tries to chat up the unreceptive bar girl who continues to perform her menial task mindlessly, barely disguising her loathing of him and longing to escape his dreary company.

For Marion, on the other hand, the promise of life with Daniel, the company of a race of giants promised at the end of *Wings of Desire* has turned out to be an elaboration of reality in which a job at the Purgatorio sustains her and her family while she continues to aspire to find occasional work as a performer. Although never stated, it is Marion's and Daniel's young daughter Doria who has given their lives meaning. Amidst this sordid intrigue in Winter's formerly cloistered city, even well intentioned strangers like Cassiel, whose interests are no more sinister than to satisfy a curiosity about life in the city, cannot avoid getting caught up in the underlife of the city. For the likes of Tony Becker however, the emergence of Berlin in the global network offers just another opportunity for sharp business operators to make a profit. All this is in the line of business these days, as Berlin enters upon the global stage.

## 2) The Power of Money in the Global City

David Harvey's analysis of the geography of the global economy in the 20th Century suggests that there has been a compression of space and time<sup>82</sup> in what he terms *The Postmodern Condition*. For Harvey, new forms of capital accumulation are linked to an interchangeability between time and space and is facilitated by technology. However the production of technology is mediated by money that now underpins the post-Fordist global economy. The interchangeability through money is evident in the fluidity (value) and constant fluctuation (temporality) of commodities in the market place in which the pre-eminently heroic figure is the stock exchange entrepreneur, the capitalist ideal of the successful gambler. Consistent with Harvey's analysis, *Faraway So Close!* appears to link the freedom in/off/from time and space that Cassiel longs for to money, the possession and flow of which seems essential to confer to the former angel the material to sustain his existence in the human world. The film shows this over a number of key scenes after Cassiel becomes human.

After being arrested at the *Alexanderplatz U-Banhof*, Cassiel, unable to verify his identity or provide a permanent residential address, is thrown behind bars. Looking out the skylight of his cell, the former angel sees a black bird flying appealingly by, highlighting the former angel's captivity. The caged jailbird laments his inability to live up to the name of 'Raven' he adopted in hoping to satisfy the Desk Sergeant's persistent questioning and until Damiel arrives at the Police Station to bail him out, Cassiel remains more thoroughly alienated from the life on the city's streets in ways he never experienced as an angel or expected as a human. So Cassiel starts to understand that freedom in the city is neither granted to a human being nor can it be taken for granted as it could in the angels' state. In contrast to his existence as an angel, life, identity and freedom in the modern city are

mediated by money which is both a signifier of the individual's status and a means of legitimating the individual's relations in the world.<sup>83</sup>

The relationship between money, time, and the angel's new life in the city is later made explicit when Flesti is seen collecting money from Damiel. Stressing the point, Cassiel, who enters Damiel's pizzeria wearing a new suit, dazzles both Damiel and Flesti by his material transformation. After persistent questioning, Cassiel finally admits that he has become a partner in Tony Becker import->export business. Cassiel gesticulates as he describes his business activities by pointing his fingers in a movement between two points. So Cassiel provides an image for himself as a border crosser, a transgressor between two different worlds in a sense, or, at least a transforming agent of time and space. *Faraway So Close!* shows that this kind of mobility in the global city comes at a price, however, as Damiel, also a 'boundary rider',<sup>84</sup> who was just seen literally paying Flesti for the freedom to remain in the city testifies. To survive in the modern city, Cassiel too must find a means of establishing his identity as well as to maintain his life and freedom.

The role of money - as signifier of capitalism and a signifier for capitalism - in shaping the life of the city is subtly played out in these two films. Both can be read as a partial commentary on the nature of human relations under capitalism. If, as Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken argue,<sup>85</sup> Wenders is determined not give his films a political message, still he cannot avoid the significance that the economy plays. With money in his pocket, Cassiel gains some status and respectability but without it, he falls foul of the city's authorities. Money in the global city not only enables its possessor to transgress, transcend, and transform their situation, it erodes and relativises properties that once were immutable and inalienable from the value embodied within and by things (including living beings) in

themselves. Money in relation to being in time<sup>86</sup> is what Emit Flesti, a seemingly immoral and pitiless character in the film, appears to signify. Yet Flesti remains an intriguing character whose real significance in the film is never satisfactorily articulated. An example of this enigmatic character's undefined role can be seen at Daniel's pizzeria, where Flesti approaches Cassiel and ominously says

Flesti; Long Ago, there must have been a Golden Age of Harmony between Heaven and Earth. High was high, low was low, inside was in and outside was out. But now we have money. Now everything is out of balance. They say time is money. But they got it all wrong. Time is the absence of money. Would you agree Karl....

Cassiel turns around to respond to Flesti but finds that it is the mysterious figure who has run away. Cassiel then enquires why Daniel was giving money to the stranger who answers that 'few things fall from the sky' for nothing, 'time is precious' Daniel rejoinders. Perhaps one reason Wenders leaves Flesti's mysterious role unexplained is that to have said more about his power over Daniel would have been too pointedly political. Linking Flesti with the power of money to determine the human dimensions of time and space in the global city may have been too banal point for this film to make, but that would at least explain the source of Flesti extraordinary power.

Through these scenes, Wenders arrays a somewhat puzzling picture of the relationship between time, space, and money in the contemporary city. Several ideas associated with money emerge in the film. As Flesti pointed out in Daniel's pizzeria, in the beginning, or primordial (original time), heaven and earth were in balance. Because of that, everything lay in its proper place, the world was correctly oriented, and life accorded to its divine or natural order. Flesti words imply that money is a co-relative that appears with the onset of modern or revolutionary time. With Daniel paying Flesti off, money appears as something to be used to barter for time, to pay out for a place in time, or even suspend the relationship between the individual, space

and time and continue to participate in the unravelling life of the city without being limited or fixed to a specific locality or identity. Mobility through space and flexibility in time is enabled through the technologies that money can buy. Failure to pay one's dues, however, sees time (Flesti) return the subjects of time (personified in these two films by the human incarnations of Damiel and Cassiel) to the abyss of eternity where things and beings are again reduced to their essential properties - that is to say - the signs an individual produces in their relations with others become meaningless, inconsequentiality, or in Benjamin's translator's terms, no longer able to play a significant part in determining meaningful expressions of life. Again the underlying cosmology Flesti's role signifies is that being without money in the global city brings with it a state of existence associated only with the right to observe rather than to participate actively, even in determining one's own state of being.

The faith that the individual can change and improve their lives by actively intervening in time and space may still be attributed to a core principle of modern culture, but the capacity for the individual to undertake such a task rests on the degree of capital they can muster. So the values the film's signifying relationships produce attributes that it attributes to the ambiguous textual site of Emit Flesti. There seems to be a parallel between the life of a pre-modern nomads (elsewhere in the film, Cassiel tells Damiel's daughter Doria that before arriving in Berlin, he came from Lapland where he was chasing wild beasts and struggling with nature to survive) and the life of angels imagined by the film. As long as Cassiel remains outside the world of money (capitalism) he is regarded with suspicion and remains confined and excluded from participating in the life of the city even after becoming human until he finds a way to market his own (monetary) value. Flesti's role reminds Cassiel that he needs to exchange money in order to maintain a place in time and space. Although arbitrary in value and without

just reason, monetary exchange seems to be a basic factor that conditions Cassiel's and Daniel's existence in the city identified in *Faraway So Close!*.

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The glimpses of the city offered by *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* collage a variegated picture of an emerging global city. *Wings of Desire* presents an exotic but ultimately alienated city where the individual struggles to realise themselves amidst the overwhelming powers that occupy the city. The representation of the city evolves in the treatment it receives in *Faraway So Close!* as it appears to be a place to avoid in order to escape from the corrupting influences of contemporary life. The city in this second film becomes reminiscent of the city in Goethe's *Faust*. Thus from a multicultural, complex, fragmented, foreign, and sometimes lost city full of individuals acting like self appointed sovereigns amidst the ruins of a never quite realised utopian city in *Wings of Desire* to the disappearing-reappearing sinful city that, in Winter's mind, is built on fabrications, lies, and fading memories replete with missing, half forgotten, individuals fleeting through the eerie shadows of artificial street lights that replace the natural order of day and night with an endless extension of a long and sleepless twilight,<sup>87</sup> the city remains an incidental although powerful context within which the films' protagonists act. Over the progression of the two films, the city seems to have been corrupted and the promises at the conclusion of *Wings of Desire*. In *Faraway So Close!*, the global city appears more as a classical "B" grade construction of the *noir* cinematic city.<sup>88</sup> If the city in these films remains beyond redemption, a world of dark recesses where secret deeds lie shrouded in foggy memories that no-one cares to disturb, it is nevertheless a fully embodied sensational city, brimming with vitality as glassy, wide eyed night owls looking endlessly, sometimes desperately, in all directions as they seek to satisfy their insatiable carnal needs and desires. Even in the most

negative terms that the dystopian cinematic city sometimes portrays the life of human kind, human beings still crave to satisfy some basic requirements in order to survive; from satisfying their erotic pleasures to fulfilling their desire for warmth and sensual comfort, from seeking intellectual stimulation to the pursuit of higher forms of (spiritual?) enlightenment, none of which needs to be tied to values attributed to with money. If the global city never quite lives up to its promise, its attraction is enduring, as Daniel's experiences of life testifies. Yet, as Cassiel finds in *Faraway So Close!*, the individual may also find that the global city is 'nowhere to go, nowhere to call home.'<sup>89</sup>

#### IV

### The Global City beyond the Global Economy

This Chapter has considered aspects of the films' representations of Berlin as a global city. Although both films continue to specify a Berlin through sites like the *Siegesäule*, the *Berlin Mauer*, *Alexanderplatz*, and the *Brandenburger Tor*,<sup>90</sup> these are subsumed within the gradually emerging mass of an amorphous global city. The study of Wenders' two films shows that it is possible to develop alternative ways of thinking about the global city. I have argued that the lenses offered by these two films offer access to expressions of global culture that are not instantly mediated or reduced to market oriented economic exchanges. What is more, films about cities like Berlin extend the global city and make it more demographically and geographically accurate. The significance of Emit Flesti's role in *Faraway So Close!* suggests however that money has increasingly come to determine the relations between individuals in the evolution of the city's culture as evidenced by these two films. For example, when, after being introduced to

the full scope of Becker's import-export business as a porn and gun running operation, Cassiel accuses Becker of being insane, Becker replies;

Becker: No Charlie, this is business. And if we don't do it, somebody else will.

Becker amplifies an oft made retort when blunt questions are made about the way someone earns a living. In significant ways the global city appears to have limited human existence only to terms prescribed by the economy, irrespective of the impact this creates on other individuals. If Wenders was right in concluding earlier in his career that "the Americans have colonised [German] subconsciousness",<sup>91</sup> these two films suggest that with the end of the Cold War, capitalism moved one step closer to colonising East Berlin and the rest of the former communist world. For proponents of the "American Mantra",<sup>92</sup> the stock exchange may seem to be a value free system of free floating signs without stable referents, ideological baggage, or fixed meaning. But to those living in the shadows of the market, there is still the ring of ideology and self serving interest in their rhetoric. As Alan Scott suggests, however,

it remains insufficient to analyse globalisation exclusively as though it were the outcome of social and economic *processes* [Scott's emphasis] however complex. Globalisation must be seen in part at least as the outcome of an idea, and specifically the idea of a free market; 'free' in the sense of freed from all political, social, or '*gemeinschaftlich*' constraint.<sup>93</sup>

If Wenders' films help their viewer to recognise that the discourse surrounding the global city has become too closely tied to a free market ideology, they can also have worked to prefigure an alternative discourse for global culture. This, as Stuart Hall points out, is one thing that is missing in modern society.

We don't have alternative means by which adults can benefit from the ways in which people had released themselves from the bonds of traditionalist forms of living and thinking, and to exert responsibilities for others in a free and open way. We have no notion of democratic citizenship in this sense.<sup>94</sup>

The representations of life in the city of Berlin imagined by Wenders Angels in Berlin films broaden as well as deepen the participation of individuals in the global city that charges their viewer's imagination. While overwhelmingly Christian and European in their vision and cultural orientation, Marion, Daniel, Cassiel, and even Tony Becker offer glimpses of values such as love, citizenship and responsibility, as well as a desire for belonging to a human family which they regard as being at least as important as the value of money. However, one must not stop here, for in every human act, in every city, and in every work of art, there are expressions of something uniquely that carries with it the potential of enriching our understanding of global culture as long as the individual gains insight into their relations with the world through an encounter with the artifact. The global city needs to incorporate individuals and cities everywhere in the world, and, recalling Benjamin again, this is work that art can do. While both *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* refer to the significance of money and the economy, they still manage to suggest values that expand discourses about the human condition and how the individual may set about realising their participation in the global city. These are the themes that I turn to in the final two Chapters of this Thesis.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Perhaps the classic starting point for a study of the global city is Saskia Sassen's *The Global City, New York, London, Tokyo*, 2001.
- <sup>2</sup> David B. Clarke (ed), *The Cinematic City*, 1997.
- <sup>3</sup> Since Clarke's book was published, Mark Shiel and Tony Fitzmaurice have edited and published their collection called *Cinema and the city : film and urban societies in a global context*, 2001.
- <sup>4</sup> "Introduction: Previewing The Cinematic City; Take One" in Clarke, 1997, p 2.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid p 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Significant studies on the emerging global structures of capitalist societies in the late 20th Century started accumulating in the 1980s, with perhaps Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1996, and David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990, being two of the earliest important texts. Numerous other books have been published since, however, with some taking a more alarming tone such as H. P. Martin & H. Schuman, *The Global Trap*, 1997, while others such as Alan Scott's (ed) *The Limits of Globalisation: Cases and Arguments*, 1997, are more concerned with analysing, though not necessarily less critically, the global

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phenomena. More recent publications have focused more directly on the links between urban, regional, and metropolitan spaces and the emergences of capitalism at the end of the 20th Century such as David Harvey's *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*, 2001. Edward Soja's *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*, 2000, recapitulates Lewis Mumford's thesis in *The City in History*, 1974, by looking at the future of urban spaces in the 21st Century, while Saskia Sassen's *Cities in a World Economy*, 2000, takes a *Pax Americana* view of relations between cities in the capitalist global economy. Finally Allen Scott's (ed) *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, and Policy*, 2001, tries to provide an overarching discussion of both the problems and possibilities of the global city.

- 7 Clarke cites a number of authors whose work in more recent times owes its origins or takes its lead from Walter Benjamin. Amongst others, Clarke cites Jean Baudrillard, *America*, 1988; Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, 1989; A. Lant, 'Haptical cinema', 1995; T. Y. Levin, 'Walter Benjamin and the Theory of art history', 1988; W. Natter, "The city as cinematic space: modernism and place in *Berlin, Symphony of a City*, in S. C. Aitkin and L. E. Sonn (eds), *Place, Power, Situations, and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*, 1994; W. Schivlesbuch, *Disenchanted Night: The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, 1988; S. Shaviro, *The Cinematic Body*, 1993; M. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity A Particular History of the Senses*, 1993; and Paul Virillio, *La Machine de Vision*, 1988.
- 8 Clarke, 1997, p 3.
- 9 George Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, 1978, p 227, cited in Clarke, 1997, p 4.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid p 9. See also my discussion of Benjamin's thoughts on the tactile forms of learning that cinema encourages in Chapter 2.
- 12 Colin McArthur, "Chinese Boxes and Russian Dolls: Tracking the Elusive Cinematic City" in Clarke, 1997, pp 19 - 45.
- 13 McArthur, 1997, p 21.
- 14 As Kathe Geist points out in relation to *The American Friend*, the significance of the sea to German Romantic painters such as Casper David Friedrich has had an influence on Wenders' imaginary in his films. See Geist, 1988, p 80.
- 15 The name of the boat, like the name of the Circus in *Wings of Desire*, honours Henri Alekan, the 79-year-old Director of Photography who worked with Jean Cocteau (*La Belle et La Bete*) as well as other filmmakers such as Abel Gance, Carne, Melville and Losey. Alekan had already worked with Wenders on *The State of Things* before doing *Wings of Desire*. See the reviews in *The Nation*, vol 246, no 19, May 4 1988, p 691 and *World Press Review*, vol 35, no 8, August 1988, p 59.
- 16 The desire to 'do good' is articulated by Lou Reed's song called "Cassiel's Song". See Appendix E for full lyrics.
- 17 As the discriminating laws passed recently by some member states of the European Union indicate, this fear continues to haunt the people of when eight former Eastern Bloc nations were "welcomed" into the EU in 2004 while these new European citizens are denied their right to move beyond their native borders until they could show that they had a job or could survive without drawing on the social security systems of other member states.
- 18 The Farm Security Administration's photo-documentary project was also funded by Roosevelt's New Deal programme. Its purpose was to document America's rural workers in their struggle to overcome both the Great Depression and years of drought that had hit the middle states of the USA. See Hiag Akmakjian, 1975.
- 19 According to McArthur, there were about 6000 artists employed by the Works Administration in 1936 alone, most of whom being commissioned to paint realistic murals depicting scenes of significant national or regional history on local post offices and other public building. See McArthur, 1997, p 26 - 27.

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- 20 This argument is developed by Frances Stonor Saunders in *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA And the Cultural Cold War*, 1999, in which she shows how the CIA worked to shape and influence the course of cultural and artistic development, allegiances, and sympathies in Western Europe after World War II. Although throughout the 40s and 50s, European artists and intellectuals were generally sympathetic to Communism, by the beginning of the 60s, with the CIA financing the development of what became known as the non-Communist left, sentiments had begun to change.
- 21 McArthur, 1997, p 29.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid p 31.
- 24 Ibid p 32.
- 25 Richard Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia", *Movie*, 24, Spring, 1977, pp 2 - 13 cited in ibid McArthur, 1997, p 32.
- 26 McArthur, 1997, pp 27 - 31.
- 27 Ibid p 19.
- 28 A concise articulation of this argument can be found in Jürgen Habermas' "Modernity - An Incomplete Project", 1991.
- 29 McArthur, 1997, p 31.
- 30 Fredric Jameson, "Remapping Taipei" in N. Browne, P. G. Pickowicz, V. Sobchack and E. Yan (eds) *New Chinese Cinemas: Forms, Identities, Politics*, YEAR?, pp 117 - 50, cited in McArthur, 1997, p 31.
- 31 See Chapter 18, "Time and Space in the Postmodern Cinema" in Harvey, 1990, pp 308 - 323.
- 32 Peter Handke, *Kindergeschichte*, 1981, later translated and published in English in the short story collection as *Slow Homecoming*, 1986.
- 33 In *Land of Plenty*, Wenders' children seem to have become young adults whose innocence and openness allows them to re-evaluate the world in which they are in and see new potential for its 'salvation'.
- 34 McArthur, 1997, p 40.
- 35 Ibid p 29.
- 36 McArthur's argues that a Hollywood hegemonic has determined the filmic discourses of all representations of cities around the world. This is a thesis I would not entirely agree with, and instead suggest that German cinema's representations of Berlin, particularly in the first three decades of the 20th Century, offer alternative discursive strategies for the representation of the city. Although McArthur also recognises the vitality of the German film industry, particularly during the 1920s, he declines from suggesting that these represent an alternative, non Hollywood based, discourse around the representation of the city in cinema. When he finally does turn to the representation of cities outside the USA, his argument is already well established along the lines that Hollywood determines even the self representations of non American cities through 'America's sense of the Other'. Interestingly, however, he makes an elaborate case for London's portrayal in the movies in which the depiction of London incorporates a home grown Dickensian sensibility of the city 'particularly *Bleak House*' (p 34) as well as images of Jack the Ripper, and London thus seems to gain a somewhat more autochthonous representation. However, even here, McArthur eventually concedes that this image is still determined by Hollywood and more generally American sensibilities. See ibid pp 34 - 37.
- 37 Ibid p 34.
- 38 McArthur refers to Benjamin's *Illuminations*, but undoubtedly he is principally referring to Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" essay which it contains.
- 39 Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film*, 1947.

- 40 de Certeau's much quoted essay "Walking in the city" features in many discussions concerning the postmodern city in which cities are posited neither as utopian or dystopian, but rather as a complex multicultural matrix. As with many European films, de Certeau emphasises a walker's vision of the city. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1988, pp 91 - 110.
- 41 McArthur, 1997, p 36, citing Wolfgang Natter, "The City as Cinematic Space: Modernism and Place in *Berlin, Symphony of a City*" (in S. C. Aitkin and L. E. Zonn (eds), *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle A Geography of Film*, 1994, pp 214 - 215).
- 42 Natter, 1994, pp 214 - 215, cited in McArthur, 1997, pp 36 - 37.
- 43 Goethe published the first 'fragments' of *Faust* in 1790, with the first part then being published in 1808, and the second part being published posthumously in 1833. See the introductory notes accompanying Harvard Classics' web publication of the play. According to Alexandra Ritchie, Goethe had a bleak view of Berlin, prompting her to name her history of the city *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*, 1999, pp xv, xix, passim.
- 44 Simon Schama offers another perspective on the relationship between the wild natural countryside and the civilised human made world of the city in his *Landscape and Memory*, 1996, in particular Chapter 2, *Der Holzweg: The Track Through the Woods*, pp 75 - 134.
- 45 Peter Wollen, "Delirious Projections", *Sight and Sound*, August 1992, p 26, cited in McArthur, 1997, p 32.
- 46 Sassen, 2001.
- 47 See Saskia Sassen (ed), *Global Networks, Linked Cities*, 2002.
- 48 See Harvey, 1990, 2001; Jameson, 1996; Martin & Schuman, 1997; Sassen 2000, 2001; Scott, 1997; Scott, 2001; Soja, 2000.
- 49 See Toby Miller and Geoffrey Lawrence, "Globalisation and Culture", in Miller, 2001b, pp 490 - 509.
- 50 Richard Shusterman presents an argument against this idea, critiquing Richard Rorty's essays "Freud, Morality and Hermeneutics", 1980, and "Freud and Moral Reflections", 1986, where Rorty spoke positively for change to achieve 'self-enlargement'. See Richard Shusterman, "Postmodernist Aestheticisms: A New Moral Philosophy?", 1988, p 350.
- 51 This is not to say that life in premodern societies did not change of course, but rather, change in traditional culture was managed and regarded as part of a cyclical repetitions of life. The Circus is itself a remnant of an archaic mode of cultural production.
- 52 See Susan Fainstein and Michael Harloe, "The Ups and Downs in the Global City: London and New York at the Millennium" in Bridge and Watson, 2003, p 160. While acknowledging that the Circus is over, the last Circus scene depicts the performers farewelling each other with the certainty and optimistic words 'till next year.' These Circus troupers live out the realities that performers have known since feudal times and before. Even the word 'Circus' suggests the circularity that the travelling minstrel experienced since time immemorial. In leaving the Circus, and planting her belongings in the centre of the sandy circle the Circus made in Berlin, Marion signals a desire to enter the time-space echoing off the walls of the domiciled life of the city.
- 53 The rigid identities found in modern cultures have not always offered the citizen greater security, however. For instance, Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* evokes an equally bleak picture of the limits of modernity during the Industrial Revolution. More recently, Will Hutton has pointed out that Margaret Thatcher's reforms of the work force have created a Britain where the notion of flexible mobility is largely illusory as retrenched and displaced workers of the 80s and 90s rotate through a cycle of unemployment, temporary employment, and unemployment again. Hutton stated that while the average period of unemployment has decreased as a result of a de-regulated work force, an analysis of unemployment trends show that over a two

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year period, the majority of unemployed people will hold a job for only six months before rejoining the unemployed (see Will Hutton, *The State To Come*, 1997a, pp 36-37). Anthony Giddens proposes that, contrary to some perceptions, modern society has replaced tribal and familial traditions with traditions belonging to institutions. This may help to explain Pip's experience of life in *Great Expectations* and supports Hutton's views of unemployment. See Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 1984; Will Hutton, *The State to Come*, 1997a, pp 33 - 41; Anthony Giddens' "Living in a Post-Traditional Society" in Beck et al 1997, p 56.

54 As Marion states "I couldn't say who I am, I haven't the slightest idea. I'm someone who has no roots, no story, no country. And I like it that way. I'm here, I'm free, and I can imagine anything. Everything is possible I only need to raise my eyes and, once again, I become the world. Now ... In this very place a feeling of happiness that I could have forever."

- 55 Susan Fainstein and Michael Harloe identify six features of the global city;
- 1) The decline in manufacturing and the partial rise of flexible systems of production.
  - 2) The desegregation of the geography of production which this development, as well as changes in transport and communication, allows.
  - 3) The rise of producer services (ie. services such as accounting, management consulting, corporate law, etc, that are sold to businesses) highly concentrated in large cities such as London and New York.
  - 4) The growth of international financial systems even more highly concentrated in the three "first division" global cities - London, New York, and Tokyo.
  - 5) The use of public policy to stimulate private investment, especially through the mechanism of public-private partnership.
  - 6) The growth of more specialised consumer services to meet the needs of the high status, high income workers in the expanding sectors of the economy, plus the growing demand for international tourism.

See Susan Fainstein and Michael Harloe, "The Ups and Downs in the Global City: London and New York at the Millennium" in Bridge and Watson, 2003, p 159.

56 Wim Wenders cited by Geist, 1988, p 42.

57 Geist uses the words 'maze' and 'circle' to describe similar searches for identity, coherence, and understanding, by the protagonists of these two earlier films. See Geist's discussion of *The American Friend*. and *Kings of the Road* in *ibid* p 79.

58 Jonathan Raban, *Soft City*, 1998.

59 A number of theorists have spoken of or related notions of space and place to the sense of home, belonging, and familiarity, although one of the most polemic is Doreen Massey's "A Place Called Home?", 1992, where Massey also provides a summary of some issues on this debate. Agnes Heller develops another sense of home in "Where are we at Home?", 1995, which is also useful in thinking about what differentiates European, North American and other regional senses of space and home. Heller takes a less confrontational, and perhaps more conventional line of argument towards male geographers like Harvey that Massey seeks to redress.

60 Another factor that influenced this general background might be termed the "Great Tourist Diaspora". The technological and socio-economic changes in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s brought about different kinds of mobility based not so much on permanent physical relocation and migration, but rather temporary travel and unending movement. As Malcolm Crick pointed out, '1967 was declared by the United Nations to be 'International Tourism Year' [and] before the rise in price of oil in the early 1970s, tourism was the single largest item in world trade'. (Malcolm Crick, "Sun, Sex, Sights, Savings and Servility: Representations of International Tourism in the Social Sciences", 1988. The quotes come from pages 44 and 39.) However, as Peter Wollen points out, 'Tourism - the movement of consumers - is the inverse of immigration - the movement of producers.' In the opening paragraphs of the chapter "Into the Future: Tourism, Language and Art", Wollen states that tourists often dramatically

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distort local economies (Peter Wollen, *Raiding the Icebox, Reflections on 20th Century Culture*, 1993, pp 190-191). Yet in spite of this overt distinction, even consumers produce something - they create demand. The difference between migrants and tourists is that tourists never settle in the places they visit. Tourists today, particularly those touring the West, share things in common with guest workers as much as with migrants. If a tourist's experience of time is intensified, their identification and attachment with space is diluted, even connections with spaces of origin after tourists return 'home.'

- 61 It is important, however, to distinguish important differences between Left and Right wing dictatorships. For while life for those living in a totalitarian regime may be experienced in much the same way, Right wing Dictators mobilise myths of national identity, blood ties, and ancestral origins as preclusive factors of inclusion. Left wing dictators such as Stalin, on the other hand, while acting just as brutally towards those who may oppose their authority, mobilise myths aimed at the universal realisation of humanity.
- 62 Virilio argues that the cinema is a kind of international "homeland" for migratory and commuting workers in the 'military industrial proletariat'. See Paul Virilio, *War & Cinema*, 1989, p 39.
- 63 Lutz Rathenow and Peter Schneider recognised the importance of the Wall to signify both division and unity.... it was an ideal national symbol, affirming a divided German self as well as an underlying unity.  
Lutz Rathenow and Peter Schneider cited in Brian Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin*, 1998, pp 30-31, 37.
- 64 See my discussion of "The Task of the Translator" essay in Chapter 2.
- 65 Will Hutton argues that under Thatcher, employment mobility has *fallen* since the mid-1970s... the new job-seekers allowance - an overt contract in which the unemployed promise to search for and accept any available job in return for unemployment payment which they receive as a matter of right for only six months...[and the] collective system of insurance ... corroded into a contract in which the recipient accepts the individual responsibility to look for work in return for income, the assumption being that there is always work if you look hard enough. But it is a very one-sided bargain; there is no symmetrical obligation on the state to offer training or to stimulate a flow of reasonably paid jobs.  
See Will Hutton, 1997a, p 37.
- 66 Murphie, 1996, p 33.
- 67 Daniel's account of an ancient, Olympian-like runner breaking from a circle, suggests that his is a radical break-out from the prison-like repetitions of eternally fixed social patterns established in traditional culture. This appears to be an analogy for European pursuit of historical progress and modernisation. Many have asked why Europeans took up the pursuit of linear, historical progress and modernisation based on a rational, materialist, and scientific thinking. Back in the 60's, Jacob Bronowski suggested that  
The seafarers of the Mediterranean since Greek times had a peculiar inquisitiveness that combined adventure with logic - the empirical with the rational - into a single mode of inquiry. The New World did not. (p 119)  
See Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man*, 1984, pp 117 - 139. More recently, Jared Diamond considered that the difference had more to do with the geography, population, and the 'ease of diffusion' of new ideas and technologies, concluding on page 264 that "... Eurasia's distinctive geography rather than of distinctive human intellect" was the real difference. Diamond goes on to point out that, technologically, Western Europe lagged behind China and the middle East until about 1500. See Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel; A Short History of Everybody for the last 13000 Years*, 1998, pp 239 - 264.
- 68 For an account of what Martin Bernal termed the "Aryan Model" of European history, see Bernal, *Black Athena, The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation*, 1991.

- 69 In her review of *Wings of Desire*, Karen Jaehne compares the alluring image that West Berlin had developed for itself during the latter decades of the Cold War to a Macy's shop window at Christmas. See Karen Jaehne, "Angel Eyes: Wenders Soars", 1988.
- 70 Brian Ladd also noted that "the Wall was a temporal barrier, dividing past from present", Ladd, 1998, p 23. With hindsight the Berlin Wall created a gaping hole in the imagination of the people in the East which the West obligingly filled promises like an advertiser hawks arguments for buying their product. As Dick Hebdige pointed out in his travelogue "Guilt Trips: Coming Up Against The Wall", 1990, the Allies filled the interstice with the voice of President Kennedy, the sounds of Pink Floyd, and the advertising glitter of an endless array of consumer goods broadcast on radio and TV waves. The West, so apparently unlike the East, celebrated activity, exchanges, and flows, by encouraging divergence and embracing difference. In spite of all the walls and barriers, silences and spaces the Communists erected, nothing could stop the advertisers jingles from entering the hearts of the people through their living rooms, that sanctity which is a *Lebensraum*, and filling it up with unfaithful promises, unfulfilled desire, fuelled by living in a state of poverty and scarcity. William McBride's elaboration of Sartre's analysis of scarcity in the socialist project (in McBride, *Sartre's Political Thought*, 1991, pp 125-130) provides an insightful analysis of the use of scarcity in creating capitalist communities. By the end of the Space Race, and certainly by the beginning of Star Wars, not long before the end of the Cold War, the West had completely succeeded in promoting itself as the state of freedom - the freedom to move and fill in space. There was even room for dissidents, artists and intellectuals to mark out difference, utter critiques, and speak, like the conscience to the self, for and on behalf of the other. Unfortunately for the Communists, one of the most significant features about the empty, silent space that they created at the Berlin Wall is that it is always available to be filled. The course of events since the collapse of the Berlin Wall reiterate that, in a Capital city that also claims to be a city for capital, all space is capable of being colonised and filled.
- 71 For a classic history of the city see Lewis Mumford, *The City in History, Its origins, its transformations, and its prospects*, 1974. Other views on the contemporary city may be found in Jonathan Crary, Hal Foster et al (eds), *Zone 1/2, City*, 1986.
- 72 For an account of the spies and intrigues during the Cold War, see Markus Wolf (with Anne McElvoy), *Man Without a Face: The Memoirs of a Spymaster*, 1997.
- 73 The light of the body is the eye  
If, therefore, thine eye be clear,  
thy whole body shall be full of light.  
But if thine eye be evil,  
thy whole body shall be full of darkness (Matthew VI, 22)
- 74 See Appendix F for the full lyrics of the song.
- 75 Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema, A History*, 1994, pp 251-252.
- 76 The significance of money in the life of the city is signalled soon after Cassiel becomes human in the scene in the *Alexanderplatz* U-Bahnhof where a group of men are playing a game of chance. Intrigued, Cassiel moves closer in what will be his first encounter of the contiguity of time, chance, money, and freedom in human society. Appearing suddenly, Emit Flesti says to Cassiel "In the beginning there was no time. After a moment, time began with a splat." Bewildered by Flesti's words, Cassiel decides to take a gamble but realises he is penny-less. Flesti offers him a hundred marks in exchange for the angels armour but Cassiel bargains this up to two hundred marks before accepting. Laying out his fortune on the mat, Cassiel tries (unsuccessfully) to pick the box containing the pea. Then with the sound of a whistle, bedlam breaks loose and the gathering of gamblers vanishes as two policemen enter the subway. Innocently, Cassiel remains with the match boxes, pea and mat, but his money is gone. He is then arrested for illegal gambling. With a watch ticking in the soundtrack, the film associates the random game of chance, money, and the ticking of mechanical time as the angel learns how these are linked to human existence in the modern city. David Harvey explores the notion of the mechanisation of time and space

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as a significant element of the rise of modern culture. Harvey argues that modern culture attributes an absolute quality to time even though there are many obviously competing subjective and intersubjective measures of time. Yet there is 'a tendency to regard the differences as those of perception or interpretation of what should fundamentally be understood as a single, objective yardstick of time's ineluctable arrow of motion.' In Harvey, 1992, p 203 . See also "The Time and Space of the Enlightenment Project" on pp 240 -259.

77 I base this on the view from Becker's apartment which is seen when Becker takes Cassiel there after Cassiel has saved Becker from an assassination attempt from Patsky. For an indication of the iconic value and significance of the *Gendarmenmarkt* in relation to the reconstruction of *Mitte* in the last decade of the DDR, see the discussion about in Ladd, 1998, p 226.

78 Emit Flesti is a palindrome for 'time itself'.

79 The following remarks from Colin McArthur's essay suggests that Baker's desire to return to his native homeland shows that *Faraway So Close!* fits the conventions of the gangster film genre.

*Little Caesar* [1930] dramatises the tension between the old, agrarian European societies from which the gangsters sprang and the heartless, wide-open world of the American city in which they make their way. This tension is particularly acute in one gang member, on the one hand seduced by the money and the easy life of the city and, on the other, drawn to his Italian-speaking mother, his home and his church. It is this figure who, in a scene which was to become archetypal of the [gangster] genre, is shot dead in the street from a moving car as he mounts the steps of the church to confess his involvement with crime.

McArthur, 1997, p 29.

80 In their analysis of *Blade Runner*, Marcus Doel and David Clarke see a link between death and life as a symbolic exchange mobilised in the post-Fordist city such as Los Angeles in 2019. See Marcus A. Doel & Arthur B. Clarke, "From Rumble Fish to the Screening of the Eye: *Blade Runner*, Death and Symbolic Exchange" in Clarke, 1997, pp 140 - 167.

81 Homer plays a similar role of cautiously reflecting on the reality in the city in *Wings of Desire*. For a more optimistic view of Berlin as global city, see James M. Skidmore "Berlin, the unchanging symphony of a big city: Determining story in *Der Himmel über Berlin* and *Lola Rennt*", online.

82 Harvey, 1990, pp 201, passim.

83 Zygmunt Bauman explores different kinds of relationship between adults in society, before concluding that modern social relations have yet to find a successful way of creating relationships. What is needed, he argues, is a way of relating with others that takes into account the mobility of the modern world and that can identify people without fixing them or mediating them through artificial means such as money. See Zygmunt Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity" in Hall and du Guy, 1996, pp 18 - 36.

84 I borrow this title from a postcard that used to be printed in Australia and that, according to sources, describes an "Australian type". This type was an outback worker who used to patrol the boundaries of sheep and cattle stations, ostensibly to keep the boundaries in order. "The Boundary Rider" was the title of the 1992/3 Sydney Biennale that was directed by the Art Gallery of NSW's Contemporary Art Curator Tony Bond. In recalling that exhibition, Bond states

it was a very interesting time: boundaries were collapsing, the Iron Curtain was coming down, and there was a shift in the economic balance away from Wall Street towards South East Asia. 'Shifting boundaries' was the current theory. It was the buzzword that included physical borders as well those to do with gender and difference and also psychological boundaries. (See website)

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- 85 Kolker and Beicken argue that Wenders demonstrable 'political reticence' is reflected in his disinterest in socio-cultural analyses and has avoided any strongly phrased addresses to 'politics, economics and the ... media ... because, finally, they are too earthbound.' See Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*, 1993, pp, 143, 160.
- 86 Needless to say, this choice of words refers to Heidegger's philosophy dealing with contemporary existence which extensively deals with the perplexing questions that Flesti's confusing role in *Faraway So Close!* only touches upon in passing. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 2002.
- 87 See also Virilio on the sleepless virtual city created through electronic technology and the world wide web. A powerful image in this essay is Virilio's image of light exposing the city endlessly, converting its inhabitants into zombies which it uses and disposes of in keeping itself alive. Where once the city was regulated by the diurnal cycle, the electronic age has created an overexposed city in which an endless day circumnavigates the world, turning the citizenry into the means whereby the city itself, rather than those who live in it, is the object to be realised in its existence. See Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, 1991, pp 9 - 27.
- 88 For a description of the *noir* city, see McArthur, 1997, p 29 *passim*.
- 89 Frank Krutnik, "Something more than Night: Tales of the *Noir* City" in Clarke, 1997, p 99.
- 90 Once known as the "Gate of Peace", the *Brandenburger Tor* was officially renamed the "Gate of Victory" when the quadriga returned to Berlin from Paris where Napoleon had stolen it. The gate and the statue thus increasingly came to symbolise German nationalism and its resistance against the invader. There may have also been links between the significance of the statue and Gate with Hitler's ambitious, but never to be realised, reconstruction of Berlin (which was to be renamed *Germania*). As the seat of the re-born superior German nation, *Germania* was supposed, in the mythological imagination driving Hitler's and Albert Speer's redesigning of the city, to realise a city empire that would rival Ancient Rome. As Simon Schama explored in his *Landscape and Memory*, 1996, pp 75 - 134, the origins of Hitler's megalomania may have arisen out of the legendary tale of Arminius' (Hermann the German) defeat of the Romans led by Germanicus in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD (p 87). But the *Brandenburger Tor* and the quadriga were not, apparently, intended to be a part of the new *Germania* and, if Albert Speer's plans had proceeded any further during the war, the angels might well have had to contemplate the perfection of the child's tooth in the shadows of the ruined symbolic realisation of The Master Race's perfection instead. See Ladd, 1998, especially pp 72 - 81, 134 - 141.
- 91 A comment in reference to *Kings of the Road*. See Wim Wenders, *The Logic of Images*, 1992, p 98.
- 92 See Peter Phillips "American Mantra: Free Market Capitalism", online.
- 93 Scott, 1997, p 9.
- 94 Stuart Hall, "Thatcherism Today" in *New Statesman and Society* 26th November, 1993, p 16, cited in Bauman, 1996, p 35.

## Chapter 5

### The Subjects and Citizens of the City in *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*

#### Introducing The Citizens of the Global City

The desire to participate in the life of the city motivates the angels Daniel in *Wings of Desire* and Cassiel in *Faraway So Close!* to become human. The nature in which the city enables individuals to participate in its affairs is the focus of debates about citizenship. This Chapter investigates how *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* depict their protagonists desire to become "citizens" of Berlin. By examining how Wenders' angels succeed in doing this, this investigation reveals how these films model the individual's own attempts to participate in the global city.

In the opening sequences in *Wings of Desire*, Wenders fleetingly introduces many themes as he exposes the secret intimate worlds of the daily lives of some anonymous Berliners. In an aeroplane somewhere above the city, Peter Falk, on his way into the city to star in a film, wonders what distinguishes Berlin from other cities around the world. Sitting near Falk, a young girl, after evidently having lived elsewhere for a long time, ponders over her imaginary 'homeland' to which she and her parents are returning. Meanwhile, in the city below, a handicapped child struggles to put on a leg brace. Elsewhere, a woman gives birth in an Ambulance. Then the camera joins a Turkish family for a glancing moment as they drive through the streets of the city. So the complex, multicultural world that is life in the modern city forms the backdrop for what is about to take place in Wenders' film. So *Wings of Desire* presents the substantial 'guest worker' community talking incomprehensibly before returning them back to the backdrop behind the screen. After a few seconds of overhearing their untranslated

Turkish, they too, like many of the other characters who appear in these opening scenes, disappear into the meaningless maze of urban streets, never to be seen again.

Nevertheless, it is surprising that this opening sequence is the only instance that depicts non-native Germans living in the city. This passing representation of the Turkish family has been criticised by bell hooks, who argues that one of the film's 'blind spots'<sup>1</sup> is its ignorance and continued stereotyping of non Westerners in the city. Wenders remarkable oversight of Turkish-Germans in *Wings of Desire* is amplified in *Faraway So Close!* where the only significant presence of a non-Europeans appears to be a man, possibly of Arabic origin, who speaks indiscernibly around a gambling table alongside the underworld figures of the German-American Becker, and Patsky, whose name suggests he comes from Poland, and his henchmen who may also come from an unidentified former Communist state. The association of an Arab speaking person in the context of a ring of criminals again does nothing to break down existing stereotypes<sup>2</sup> that many whites apparently hold of people from the East. In these stereotypes, East comes to signify anyone from anywhere beginning from Central and Eastern Europe - or more specifically, any of the States from the former Soviet Bloc - to the furthest flung points of the mythical 'orient'.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of hooks criticisms, *Faraway So Close!* continues to represent a 'pure' 'White-ness' in its vision of people occupying Wenders' cinematic city.<sup>4</sup> In spite of these limitations, *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* introduce an array of individuals, some of whom become dutifully and carefully tended by an invisible and silent band of angels, whom the viewer is coaxed to identify with.<sup>5</sup> The opening sequences of both films present an experience that can be likened to walking down a busy street or shopping arcade, where an endless stream of individuals bustle by anonymously. When

*Wings of Desire* finally finds a principal human protagonist, Marion compares herself to “a small animal lost in the wood”. Associated visibly with a young elephant<sup>6</sup> seen moments earlier when the film introduces the Circus Alekan in which she works, the city’s skyline dwarfs her and the baby animal, making both seem out of place in a strange inhospitable environment made up of high rise apartments and abandoned buildings. This is how Wenders introduces the citizens of the city living in the ruins of the Cold War city. Both his films begin in a seemingly incoherent flurry of images representing the different lifestyles of the city’s inhabitants. This chaotic polyglot appears to bring into question the very capacity of the city to foster a culture capable of sustaining the survival and well being of the people who make up this community.

The theme of the ‘dystopian city’<sup>7</sup> has echoed in many films dealing with the city over the years. Compared with crime genre representations in the 1930s and 40s, or Jean Luc Goddard’s 1960s depiction of the unpredictable irrationality of modern life in his bizarre *Weekend*, Wenders’ is relatively understated in his depiction of contemporary life. Even Ridley Scott’s sometimes life-threatening articulation of the postmodern megalopolis in his 1980s film *Blade Runner* is more extreme in its representation of the lot of the contemporary citizen and their endless struggle to survive amidst the madness of the city. The corruption of the individual as they struggle to survive in the modern city, another theme in *Faraway So Close!*, is also found in Peter Medak’s *Romeo is Bleeding* (1993), another neo-noir representation of the modern city that depicts corruption in the dystopian modern city.<sup>8</sup> Adopting a more fairytale approach, Wenders focuses on how two angels, Damiel in *Wings of Desire* and Cassiel in *Faraway So Close!*, survive in the city after becoming human.

*Wings of Desire* shows how Damiel realises his wish to experience the physical sensations of the living human body, which he articulates through his desire for Marion. I suggest that his decision to become human is a metaphor for an attempt to participate with and contribute to the life of those he sees living in the city. Damiel's wish is, in a sense, a desire to become a fully enfranchised citizen of the city. In *Faraway So Close!*, Cassiel unintentionally follows in Damiel's footsteps when a girl falls out of the balcony of her home. This forces the angel to spontaneously decide on whether to become human and save her from falling to her death or remain seated in his position as an eternal observer. After taking the irreversible step of intervening in the life of the city, Cassiel decides to devote himself to doing something worthwhile with his life. He decides that one way he can achieve this is by regularly reporting back to Raphaela about his experiences as he discovers what it means to be alive in the city. With this, Cassiel hopes to facilitate the angel's insight into the human condition. His second resolution to make his life as a human being worthwhile is articulated through the lyrics of a Lou Reed song which the former angel constantly repeats throughout the movie.<sup>9</sup>

Even more directly than *Wings of Desire*, *Faraway So Close!* articulates its concern with the individual's participation in the life of the city as Cassiel constantly reiterates his desire to "do what a good man should". Yet despite the former angel's commitment to live out the words of his adopted swan song, it is the sense of the seedy underbelly of the city that rapidly emerges in his experiences of life. This is the underside of the city that Cassiel brings to light when he becomes enmeshed in a porn and gun running operation being conducted by the German-American Tony Becker. In spite of Cassiel's attempts to "do good", he soon learns just how difficult it is to live according to the eternal codes governing the individual's sense of good and bad, right and wrong. If those codes seemed so self-apparent, innate, and natural to him

as an immortal angel, Cassiel soon is disappointed in himself as his sense of morality become compromised by his need to secure his material sustenance and survival in the city. What becomes apparent in Wenders' depiction of the city's denizens is an almost disheartening impersonal anonymity facing the individual as Cassiel struggles with - and sometimes against - his fellow humans for the right to occupy and live there in peace. Finally, in a conclusion redolent with Christian symbolism of self sacrifice, Cassiel is shot dead while rescuing his friends being held captive by Patsky and his henchmen on the boat called the "Alekan".<sup>10</sup>

This Chapter explores the dilemma facing the individual as they participate in the life of the global city and the problems that face the angels challenge every citizen who tries to consciously realise their lives successfully while respecting the right of others to do the same. In so far as Wenders' films create a context to encounter such issues, his films contribute to their viewer's awareness of the perplexities confronting their existence. To discuss whether Wenders creates conditions in which the viewer can reach a better understanding of the concerns that face them as they seek not just to survive but also to be good citizens in the global city is another of the objectives of this Chapter. I begin by relating discussions about citizenship to the way individuals can participate in the global city. Section II looks at how Wenders constructs different subjectivities in his films, and how he includes and excludes them in these films. In Section III, I consider how the protagonists in Wenders' films struggle to realise their needs and desires in the city before discussing the relative successes and failures of Wenders' depiction of individual attempts to participate in the human family living in the global city.

## I

### What is Citizenship in a Global City?

The struggles facing the characters in Wenders' films are those every individual confronts as they struggle to gain, retain, and fulfil the 'common rights, responsibilities and symbols of membership that define the political community'<sup>11</sup> of the city. These struggles bring into question both existing and progressive notions of what constitutes an individual's rights, responsibilities and membership in a community. Debates about citizenship have re-emerged in recent years because the conventions defining rights and responsibilities by the nation state no longer seem to be adequate in responding to individual needs as they adopt and adjust their realities to situations created by globalisation. The shift in the nexus of participation in civic society has diminished the strategic importance of the relationship between the individuals and the nation based on orthodox ideas of a homogenous citizenry tied through blood and racial allegiances, common languages and histories, and a belief and commitment to a common lifestyle. Yet while the nation state jealously guards its authority over the individual, it can no longer shelter its citizens from the forces of globalisation. National governments cannot expect to continue to homogenise their constituents through myths that once procured and constituted a people's common identity.<sup>12</sup> The fragmentation of notional identities and the increasing proliferation of individuated subjectivities has both complicated and amplified the manner in which individuals can be approached and addressed. The erosion of the common languages that once used to cohere national identity in conjunction with the breaking down the structures that once secured the individual's role in their community has brought into question the role that nations have to play in the future of humanity. Yet as long as existing social institutions continue to insist that individuals relate to their

world as if they are part of a homogenous and unified body politic, in other words as a coherent group of citizens founded in orthodox ideas of national, regional, or even tribal identity, then the individual and the authorities governing the nation state will come increasingly into conflict. This section introduces some of the issues and debates concerning new approaches in contemporary citizenship. Although these debates are deemed important because they address an increasingly apparent apathy and lack of interest in politics that people seem to have adopted towards the democratic processes of their nations, my interest in outlining these debates here is to sketch the significance of the impact they have on the individual's rights and responsibilities as a citizen of the global city.

#### 1) The Struggle for Inclusion in Global Society

The alienation of individuals from the cities in which they live is a theme underlying the monologue of the man driving to the film set in *Wings of Desire*. What the driver fails to mention, however, is that his struggle to find a common ground with others has always accompanied the individual's assertion of their right to be who they are while at the same time participate fully in the goings on of the society around them. Unfortunately, the freedom to participate independently in society is often accompanied by some degree of conflict between individual interests. The right of participation in society has a long and protracted history and has often come at a high price to that individual. Citizenship rights are rarely granted automatically and, as the long and slowly evolving story of citizenship reveals, the capacity to act autonomously in pursuit of one's own interests in society is never fully gained nor irrevocably assumed. As long as any individual must raise their voice to be heard, or struggles to be understood, or must assert their right to participate in decisions affecting their future, or have to remind others that they too belong to the human family, individuals

must reassert their autonomous existence, their need for uncensored self expression, and their right to peacefully cohabit with others while pursuing their lives in a manner they choose. The problem facing Marion as she pursues her acting career is an issue that concerns not only a foreigner's right to participate and express themselves in their host communities, but goes to the core of the rights of every individual to articulate themselves authentically, especially when that challenges existing the normative codes of a society.

For example, the emergence of subcultured identities<sup>13</sup> such as the gay community during the 1960s and 70s challenged the coherency of assumed universal norms of behaviour in many Western societies. Besides making individuals impossible to totalise, the free expression of sexual difference highlights the lack of cohesion in human experiences, differences in meaning even of common terms and languages, and multiple cultural realities making up even the most coherent community. The bewildering array of individual realities presented in the opening sequences of *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* are a fact of life in modern cities. Such an array makes contemporary society difficult to control and maintain using orthodox authoritarian models of coherent language and homogenised identity. The increasing diversification and proliferation of individual experiences and expression in global society make it all the more difficult to assemble social systems of control, to assert a centralised authority, and to maintain a universally coherent language that constructs and presents specific expressions which confer meaning in a consistent, natural, innate, and comprehensible manner. Increasingly the breakdown in social cohesion is attributed to multiculturalism and postmodern culture, and there have been critiques, some more reactionary than others, of the relativistic self expressiveness of complex multiple identities. Some of these critiques have defined populist discourses that seek to reassure those threatened by

economic globalisation, particularly in the spheres of work and social security. Such discourses seek to remedy problems by limiting the individuals' freedom to both move around the world as well as to express themselves in ways they feel appropriate. Yet, even against this backdrop, individuals continue laying claims for inclusion in affairs governing both their immediate lives as well as remote decisions that may also have a significant impact. Short of a catastrophe in which the individual becomes subjugated by a centralising authority using military force and/or technological surveillance, individuals will continue to assert their sovereign<sup>14</sup> rights to be different, indicate and press their interest in the preserving their universal global heritage, increasingly demand respect as legitimate members of the human family, as well as continue to express themselves in infinitely varied and idiosyncratic ways. As Nick Stevenson writes,

cultural citizenship means that we take questions of rights and responsibilities far beyond the technocratic agendas of mainstream politics/media [... and] seek an appreciation of the ways in which 'ordinary' understandings become constructed, of issues of interpretative conflict and semiotic plurality.<sup>15</sup>

For Stevenson, cultural affiliations between individuals, whether they take place within the physical and geographical boundaries of the Nation State, or beyond it, have become an important factor in defining the rights and responsibilities of the sovereign subject. In a global context where different societies rub up against others constantly, making the interdependence and mutual co-existence of every community in the world increasingly apparent, the key elements of global citizenship can be described as;

a) The right to engage and determine cultural affiliations and relations between individuals irrespective of where one lives.

b) The responsibility to relate respectfully and the right to relate in difference with others through and within one's own languages and systems of meaning without communicants imposing their own semiotic systems on others.

c) The right to choose the kind of lifestyle an individual pursues while responding to the rights of others to pursue their own lifestyles independently and co-dependently.

d) The right to determine the manner in which one expresses one's self, and the responsibility to alter those expressions in response to others as one chooses.

e) The right and responsibility to determine the production of meaning when signs and symbols move freely from one locus of production to another through global media.

An inclusive discourse about citizenship provides a mechanism that enables, maintains, and expands global relations. Global citizenship acknowledges and recognises that rights and responsibilities go beyond structures that confine individuals to affiliations within local, regional, and nationally defined spaces. In such a context, the individual will increasingly demand and complicate authoritative attempts to construct and maintain the sense of identity, common uses of language, and the application of systems of meaning.

Some of these concerns affect the relationships established by Wenders' two films. For example, the ability to live and express herself freely, both in her work as well as through the people she relates to, is an issue for Marion in both *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*, and she visibly becomes depressed when she is unable to control either her present and future reality as well as her self representation. Yet in spite of her occasional sense of alienation from the world within which she lives, Marion is a relative insider when compared to the *vreemdeling* (stranger) that Damiel is as he tries to enter the everyday life of the city. His need to participate in her world expresses dimensions that can be associated with a universal package of human rights and obligations that are inalienable from any group or individual, whether they are a majority or a minority in any specific locality.<sup>16</sup>

Focusing on the rights of the individual rather than an identified collective or group means that anyone can assume the right to participate in the production of culture, and that anyone can assume to right to express themselves in the representations of that culture, as well as expect that others will respect their contributions equally. This also means that the individual is responsible for enabling others to also participate by allowing them the freedom and respect that they too have a right to expect. If the objectives of citizenship rights movement during the 18th and 19th Centuries were to establish economic rights and political suffrage,<sup>17</sup> the social rights envisaged by today's discussions of citizenship incorporates the recognition of what Raymond Williams called 'a whole way of life'.<sup>18</sup> As the driver's monologue *Wings of Desire* suggests however, enabling those with different cultural realities to participate as full citizens in the city may open doors to xenophobic or simply paranoid reactions. This makes it all the more important to incorporate (rather than simply pay lip service to) the cultural realities that constitute global society. Even at the time of writing *Culture and Society*, Williams recognised the critical role the media play in giving different cultural realities a legitimate voice. However, as Stevenson points out, debates about citizenship

go beyond rights for welfare protection, political representation or civil justice and focus on the right to propagate a cultural identity or life style [... t]hese claims [...] are likely to be as problematic as the implementation of social rights. Pakulski suggests that there is already a perceived backlash against 'politically correct' programmes and unease about bureaucratic attempts to regulate the cultural sphere.<sup>19</sup>

Without minimising the popular extent of the reaction against 'political correctness', it is important to recognise that the 'perceived backlash' against cultural citizenship is fuelled by media constructions that present cultures such as Islam as both radically different and hostile towards Western life styles. The media is instrumentally responsible for constructing reactionary public discourses, a discourse that is compounded by limited

opportunities and restricted avenues individuals have to represent and express counter views and values. The contributions of films like *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* to this discourse should not be underestimated. Yet 'cultural citizenship', as Stevenson continues, 'should be viewed in terms of satisfying demands for full inclusion into the social community'<sup>20</sup> and not an attempt by government to redress inadequate cultural sensibilities of the populace. It is the top down approach that the authorities have adopted that is the source of the popular backlash. This is what gives the individual's justified attempts to participate in society the 'political correct' imprimatur.

In constituting a debate on social inclusion, it is important to remember that the most compelling and forceful calls that citizenship rights and obligations be dispensed more equitably than they presently are in Western societies comes not from refugees and immigrants trying to gain access to better jobs, health care, and social security, but from people and groups who have a long and legal indigenous presence in society. In spite of their exclusion, most individuals continue living peacefully even as they struggle for their rights to participate, even though, for the majority of those excluded from society, to protest their exclusion within the codes provided by existing channels of communication means that they remain silent in their expressions and their presence becomes invisible.<sup>21</sup>

In the context of a global culture, notions like cultural citizenship seek to provide an adequate means of representation and participation. An important step towards global citizenship is to open the channels of communication and give the individual control of not only what they say, but how they say it. Only then will individual efforts to authentically establish relations with others in the multicultural contexts of the global city be achieved. Cultural citizenship ensures the right of the individual to choose and to adopt different forms of expression without then finding that their

deviation from the communicational norms of society forming the grounds for their exclusion.<sup>22</sup>

The idea of global citizenship does not just recognise the legitimate needs of native-born individuals to participate in culture even if they do not conform to the conventional norms of that society, however. Global citizenship enables everyone, from those with physical or intellectual impairments such as dyslexia to those who choose to express themselves in difference such as in their sexual relations, as well as migrants, refugees, and other outsiders to participate in the production of culture. The media driven populist frenzy feeding the backlash against 'political correctness' targets young people, women, gays and lesbians, and indigenous groups, as well as migrants, refugees, and other strangers. This backlash is against the individual's need to authenticate their expression in ways that challenge existing bonds and relations of society.

## 2) The Role of the Media in the Proliferation of Cultural Identifications

The driver's commentary in *Wings of Desire* indicates how easy it is to attribute the fracturing of subjectivity and the fragmentation of contemporary society to the assertion of the right to identify and express oneself with greater determination, diverse originality and authenticity, as well as confidence. For although he puts his thoughts in terms common in popular representations of difference, the driver appears to experience a sense of alienation from other individuals living in the city who claim the right to be and to express themselves authentically in the language and semiotic code of their choice. The first thing one should note, therefore, is the importance of distinguishing the drivers' discomfort and alienation from others because they express themselves freely. Had Wenders granted the Turkish family a chance to express themselves in his film, this would not have represented a repressive move against the driver. However, it could

have perhaps indicated how individuals like the driver censor and control their own expressions according to what they think is acceptable in society. The driver's complaints about the freedom others take in expressing themselves reveals either a desire to control others, or indicates his self censorship and self repression. Self repression is not comparable to general forms of repression that systematically subject individuals to and alienates them from the production of social and cultural practices, the processes of participation, and the means of representation.

The creative expressiveness of individuals identifying with sub- rather than dominant cultural codes explains the driver's inability to understand every semiotic code he encounters in the city. In itself, the emergence of alternative modes of expression is a response to, and a complication from, and emergence of global culture. In the global city, individuals can identify with others in ways that are no longer subject to local, regional, or even national codes of behaviour. What becomes apparent is that the diversification of subjectivity and expression of difference is due to many factors. Another contradiction in modern society is the role the media plays not only in constructing totalising discourses that limit the expressive potential of the individual, but also the capacity media has in exposing individuals to new, exotic, non-indigenous and non-local influences.

The increasing diversity in the global 'public sphere'<sup>23</sup> has laid the ground for a greater particularity and range of expressions of the individual's sense of personhood and identity. The cost of including individual expressions in producing a culturally diverse global society is that locally homogenous groups, their normative codes of behaviour, and their universally coherent languages no longer carry the same currency or hegemonic meaning, even in their native "homelands". Freud and other

psychologists considered the increasing 'individuation'<sup>24</sup> to be part of a gradual realisation of adulthood as human psychology and sociology evolves and matures.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, some have concluded that this individuation negatively impacts on the life of society<sup>26</sup> because communication between individuals increasingly takes place in the context of the individuals inner world and reality. The sense of community as is traditionally understood thus suffers because communication between individuating persons becomes increasingly founded in idiosyncratic semiotic dialects generated by the individuals involved in each act of communication rather than the overarching grammars of the authorities who seek to govern the individual. In global culture, the media distributes as well as limits the proliferation of these different cultures, languages, and systems of signification. However, as Raymond Williams argues, not all forms or genres of media allow the individual to express themselves authentically as 'sources'.<sup>27</sup> News reportage, for instance, with its culturally loaded bias towards 'objectivity',<sup>28</sup> forces individuals to deny and ignore their subjective positioning in relation to what they are reporting on. Media conventions insist that the news reporter present the facts as they truly are. Individuals working in news production hide their opinions behind an array of facts and quotations from others defined as "experts" or "authorities". This reduces the individual to an 'agent', argues Williams, because the individual no longer expresses themselves through the articulations they produce.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, the apparent freedom of self expression associated with artistic practice gives art films an important role in the formation of the 'coming [global] community'.<sup>30</sup> Yet even the work of an art film can become distorting if the viewer adopts a position that such a film expresses an objective truth or absolute reality. The way that the individual learns to participate in the global city through Wenders' two films is one, but only one, articulation of global citizenship, in a field of other potentially infinite

articulations. So if Wenders decides only to show a Turkish family in a car for a few seconds, this is not an absolute expression of Turkish contributions to global culture. It is the structures of global media as much as anything that exact a limitation on those contributions by making that Turkish family represent all Turkish individuals. Where the media more partial to different representations of the individual, however, Wenders' perspective would be seen as only a (re)production of distortions of a particular cultural perspective, and the circumstances that have influenced such perspectives.

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To the extent that cultural biases continue to be embedded in media productions, even in the work of a liberally educated individual such as Wenders whose practice is informed by the Romanticism, with all its emphasis on individual enlightenment, does not mean that their work is faulted or inferior but rather emphasises the importance of including others non conventional perspectives, outlooks, and orientations in all global cultural processes. The active inclusion of the other is not a token expression but gives others status in the context of and equal standing with others. Inclusion of difference and of the other cannot take only place by allowing others a right to represent themselves. Inclusion gives equal access to and through the media so that individuals participate in the perception as well as the meaning of what they signify.

The shortcomings of Wenders films indicate that individuals who do not fit the normative codes of global media are nevertheless still being conditioned by the terms of the ideological sensibilities of those who control global media practice and production, and that the individual still has great difficulty in gaining unfettered access to the public discourses that constitute the global city. Approaching these issues as aspects of global citizenship means insisting on the recognition and granting of equal rights

to every individual so that they can speak and be heard, be understood as well as participate in the production of their own as well as others representation in the global media and society. While recognising that such rights are difficult even for members of large identifiable groups and social classes such as women and workers to establish, it remains crucial to critique media representations that determine and constrain individual rights to participate and express themselves through their representation. It is now time to take a closer look at how Wenders' two films determine and constrain a range of individual's capacity to participate in the production of the representations of their expressions in the city in his films.

## II

### Inclusion and Exclusion in Wenders' City

There is a particular poignancy in considering the exclusion of others from society in Germany, for few examples can compare to the systematic exclusion devised by the Nazis to exterminate of the Jews. However, it should also be said that since the 1970s, some Israeli people have concluded that the manner in which Germany has attempted to confront the horror of its past has been exemplary.<sup>31</sup> According to Thomas Elsaesser, members of the New German Cinema were at the forefront of a generational shift in which Germans at last began examining their past.<sup>32</sup> Like his fellow New German film-makers, Wenders does not avoid German history or the treatment of Jews under Hitler. However, as Kolker and Beicken point out, *Wings of Desire* is not a visionary film that identifies social issues that are then seriously engaged with so that the films help their audience to arrive at practical solutions that the individual can relate to their everyday reality. Rather, Wenders seems to be content to parade images of 'redemptive vision'<sup>33</sup> that make it seem that the social issues his films identify have somehow already

been magically resolved. This makes a critiquing his films all the more important.

#### 1) Peter Falk and the Freedom of the Global City

Peter Falk's appearance in *Wings of Desire* is one example where the stranger has been able to participate in the production of global culture. His role reinforces the actor's ability to change identity while retaining his authenticity in whatever part he adopts. Falk underlines the freedom some individuals possess as they move about the global city. His chameleon like persona contrasts with the German actors he encounters. In some respects, the identities of the German actors, particularly those who act as extras, remain fixed by the history of the society they and the film are situated in. For identified groups such as the Jews, however, historical forms of exclusion have sometimes provided a basis for legitimating their roles in the contemporary world. Some forms of exclusion can sometimes be transformed and their exclusion from history can sometimes become a means for including them in the present. However, as Falk's role in this film demonstrates, there is still great disparity in the level of freedom that individuals gain by being the benefactors of discredited forms of discrimination when compared to the freedom an individual like Falk appears to have gained.

There is a scene in *Wings of Desire* in which Falk sets out to create a new identity for himself. In a slap-stick routine reminiscent of a Marx Brothers film, Falk tells his wardrober that he wants "to look like a German... anonymous... melt into the crowd". The woman presents him with an unending array of hats from her wardrobe and, with each new *accoutrements*, Falk nominates a new identity.<sup>34</sup> So Falk, the actor, nonchalantly asserts his right to assume the 'freedom of the city'.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Falk's costume parade signals how the city can offer a state of freedom in

which 'everyone can be a unique individual simply by fashioning oneself'.<sup>36</sup> All his efforts prove pointless however, for a little later, a group of building workers immediately recognise the actor as he strolls by the ruins of the *Anhalter Bahnhof*. To make things worse, the labourers joke about the state of Falk's 'moth eaten' jacket, a jacket he insisted on retaining in spite of the Wardrober's attempts to rid him of it.<sup>37</sup> It remains unclear whether Wenders really admires Falk's rejection of popular expectations of how a famous actor ought to dress, or whether Wenders is again displaying his ambivalence towards Americans' lack of modesty and sensibility such as he did with the character of Ripley and his colourful display of clothing in *The American Friend*?<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, Falk's aestheticisation of poverty emphasises the freedom he possesses. Partly due to an actor's ability to whimsically play with his appearance, Falk's assumption of different roles and identities is linked to his international fame. So Falk's ability to participate in the on going life of the city is unlike that of many strangers, for his scruffy appearance does not appear to alarm Berliners nor does he appear to run the risk of being rejected by them. Falk's appearance as *himself* in *Wings of Desire* is further underscored when he returns to the city to stage an exhibition of his drawing in *Faraway So Close!*. This stresses the privileged "prodigal son" like status he has received in the signifying system the underpins the production of Wenders' films.

Falk's appearance in Wenders' films ironises the discriminatory treatment dished out to native Germans like Fritz Lang.<sup>39</sup> For 'Germany', says Volker Schlöndorff, 'does not forgive her emigrants. They are only allowed to return posthumously, preferably with a Nobel Prize.'<sup>40</sup> For Lang, the consequences of his moral objection to the Nazis before World War II meant that he spent the rest of his life in exile, a refugee and outcasts even from his own artistic community. If Lang's inability to return home after the War was due, partly at least, to the fact that he challenged his contemporaries to

confront their moral passivity, Falk's participation in Wenders' film can be connected to a sensitivity about the fate of outsiders. According to Elsaesser, the New German cineastes propagated an admiration for their pre War progenitors like Lang and the Brechtian trained actor Curt Bois (who plays Homer in *Wings of Desire*),<sup>41</sup> an admiration that may have helped Falk gain additional cultural leverage even though his connections with Germany are only tentative. Unlike Lang, however, Falk does not confront those whom he encounters with memories of the darkest period of German history. Nor does Falk have to bear the resentment that conscientious objectors such as Lang had to endure. Falk's appearance in *Wings of Desire* signals an ambiguous but finally non-threatening position. By appearing in *Faraway So Close!* Falk again exercises his freedom to participate in the cultural and artistic life of the city when he returns to stage an exhibition of his drawings. The enigmatic freedom Falk assumes in these films raises questions about who Wenders films include and who they exclude from participating in the life of the city.

#### i) On Jews and Other Extras

Although the significance of Falk's participation may have been unintended, his role in the film throws into relief the discriminatory treatment dished out to "others" such as Jews in German as well as in global history. The film introduces the theme soon after Falk arrives on the film set where the American actor immediately begins to argue with two youths about whether Hitler really committed suicide in 1945. A few moments later, the angels overhear a film extra thinking that all his fellow actors are "not really natives" after all, but "refugees". With the star of David embroidered prominently on his costume, however, Wenders appears to satirise the man's sentiments. This sets the stage for *Wings of Desire* to develop the theme of the Nazi's treatment of the Jews. However, Falk's presence and identity as a

foreigner countermands the usual positioning of the outsider even though Falk then produces his own semiotic system that acts as a form of exclusion in itself.<sup>42</sup> Falk's assessment of the 'extras' segues his relationship to them that is prescribed by the roles they respectively have in the film and reveals the system of privilege and authority the film appears to embody. Only now, it is the foreigner who articulates the terms of exclusion when Falk openly nominates his fellow actors as '*life's extras*'. In an instant, with Falk's authorisation, the extras become the Jews that Wenders' film has cast them as.

Later, Falk again reveals the limits of the film's system of privilege and authority which performs by inscribing signs of identification, inclusion and exclusion, on the bodies of its actors. This happens when Falk approaches a woman on the film set and asks her in mock broken English if he may sketch her. "Yes please" she answers with a heavy German accent. Nevertheless, the woman's grammatically perfect response highlights Falk's condescending use of *migrant* English in communicating with her. Then as he starts to draw her, Falk reveals how banal and superficial his interests in the woman are. Starting with an appreciation of her 'nostril', he then moves through a ramble of associations between her role as an extra, the yellow star of David as a sign of death, before concluding with Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and the Dutch painter's suicide. While the woman derives her sense of self from unspecified personal circumstances combining history, psychology, and physical characteristics, Falk nevertheless feels justified in contemplating the true nature of her identity according to the symbolic role she has been given by the film. That Wenders allows the significance of Falk's encounter with the woman to play such a prominent role in determining her significance in the film raises questions about the nature of the relationships this encounter develops.<sup>43</sup> With nothing more substantial than a cursory glance, the free-wheeling Falk starts attaching properties to

her that simultaneously consigns her to the fate of the Jewish people and their exclusion from history as well as limiting her from further participation in the story of the film. With the defining feature becoming her nostril, Falk simultaneously claims the power to *look* and *identify* the woman, and thereby consign her to a minor place in the history of the film. Although Falk's language does not appear to disable her existence as an independent being (he does not extinguish her role as "Jewish" extra in the city in the same way that the Nazis did, for instance) he nevertheless limits her role according to associations he identifies with her appearance. At least symbolically, Falk violates the woman by dismissing her authentic acts of speech while subsuming her independent existence into the rationales the film constructs for her as a Jewish extra in a film set in Berlin.

ii) The role of media and language in freeing the individual to participate in the life of the City

If, as Falk's relationship with the film extra suggests, the naming of an individual plays such a critical role in determining the relationships that individual can develop in the global city, this stresses the importance of language as the means of signifying meaning as well as the role the media plays in transmitting such linguistic descriptions through the images of the cinematic city. For just as the woman's nomination as a film extra determines how Falk relates to her in Wenders' film, so Falk's role in both Wenders' films can at least partly be attributed to the mediated denomination he derives from his extra-signifying role as *Colombo* (1971, created by Richard Levinson and originally directed by Richard Irving). Falk's multiple media identities are crucial in conferring him the freedom to move both through and beyond these film's fields of signification without being accountable or becoming attached and overwhelmed by any of the signifiers he adopts. Falk's freedom to assume different personae highlight other's lack of

freedom in the film. If the 'extras' assumed an equal role in the city, they would have actively participated in producing not only what they articulate, but also in producing the meaning of their articulations. As Stevenson writes,

Whether we are talking about the risk society, network capitalism or the concerns of social movements, ideas of symbolic challenge and exclusion remain central. The power to name, construct meaning and exert control over the flow of information within contemporary societies being one of the central structural divisions today.<sup>44</sup>

Irrespective of how one defines global society, Stevenson suggests that access to the media and the language of representation is key to the individual's capacity to participate in global culture. Falk again offers a good opportunity to analyse and understand the importance of language and articulation in delivering the individual the freedom to participate in Wenders' city. This makes the relationship between Falk's family name and his television character an important factor in analysing his role in the film.

In German, *Falk* and *Falke* are family names that mean falcon or hawk. Although a co-incidence, Falk's surname gives the American actor a foothold in the linguistic culture of Berlin. *Colombo*, on the other hand, is a late Latin name meaning "dove" and is a modern masculine derivation of Saint Columba, a 6th-century Irish monk credited with the conversion of Scotland to Christianity and who also established a monastery on the island of Iona.<sup>45</sup> Not every theorist looking at these films has taken the strange linguistic coincidence lightly. For David Caldwell and Paul Rae, the relationship between Falk-hawk and Colombo-dove suggest that Falk signifies a counterpoint between war and peace that resolves the Cold War conflict that divides the global city in *Wings of Desire*.<sup>46</sup> For Caldwell and Rae, the strange correspondence of the textual significations that intersect over the personification of 'Falk/Colombo' introduces a thematic that, in spite of his

own categorical limitations of the "Jewish" film extras, Falk's 'ignorance about the past implies a freedom to define himself in the present'.<sup>47</sup> The paradoxical significance of Falk's denomination suggests a linguistic link in his ability to move freely through different identities in Wenders' films.

However, Zygmunt Bauman thinks that identities established through mediated 'telecity'<sup>48</sup> gives the individual only a superficial engagement with others. The formation of identity in language suggests that the sort of freedom Falk gains by his mediated personality of Falk-Colombo establishes only a passing engagement with others rather than providing him with an intrinsic grounding for a permanent set of living relationships. There would appear to be some basis for Bauman's argument as even Falk himself looks incredulous at his own image that he sees bouncing back and forth from one screen into another as if staring at himself standing in hall of mirrors.<sup>49</sup> While the foregrounding Falk gains through his Colombo character allows him to participate freely in the global city, his mediated personality does appear to undermine his sense of self when he looks face to face at his public image. This takes place in a scene in *Wings of Desire* where he comes across himself being interviewed on TV while walking along the street one evening. As Baudrillard has argued, the mediated spectacle of the postmodern simulacra may not convince those involved in media production of its authenticity, but this does not stop others from believing that what they see on the screen corresponds when reality when they see it standing before them. The superficiality generated by the screen may thus infect Falk's own faith in his own credibility, but this is the superficial image that makes the American actor appear to be a "safe" transnational persona who can move about the global city without appearing to be a threat. For his viewers, Falk remains Colombo whether they encounter him on the screen or on the street.

The film being made within the film in *Wings of Desire* repeatedly collapses one diegetic 'world' into another as the reality of Falk's 'world' during the television interview becomes the diegetic reality of Falk watching himself on the street in the film. At the same instant, however, this is factually just another layer in a fictional world created for the benefit of the diegesis of the viewer in the cinema. With film and television appearing simultaneously on the screen, the genres of fiction and reality, fable and documentary, become indistinguishable and the languages of realism and the imaginary fuse as *Wings of Desire* loops around Falk and carries him and his audience into the 'liminal'<sup>50</sup> domains of the global city. This confusion of realities highlights the modes of participation that Benjamin identifies as becoming available in the global city in which media such as film and television play an instrumental role in constructing.

The subject of the 'unreality of the film frame world'<sup>51</sup> and the impact this is having on the individual's sense of self and others, a feature of mainstream art discourses during the 1980s, was a central theme in Cindy Sherman's untitled self portraits called 'Film Stills'. Sherman explores how mediated representations of the world and self structure the reality in what Lloyd Spencer has termed the "increasingly synthetic fabric of [contemporary] social life".<sup>52</sup> Although Ulrich Beck sees this as a positive manifestation in contemporary reality because it allows the individual to turn into the dramaturges and directors of their own lives,<sup>53</sup> Falk's scepticism of himself also shows how easy it is for mediated projections to start to determine one's life as if one is part of a constructed televisual drama. The problem now confronting Falk's incredulity in his own self image is the flip side of the 'language game'<sup>54</sup> he himself falls into when he wonders whether the woman he is looking at is Jewish. The dangerous potential of the media, like all forms of representation, is that it can indeed start to look so real. The danger of this is that it reduces the individual to the myths and

metaphors projected on the media screens and that then make the individual feel that they have to live by.<sup>55</sup> Yet for the same reason, the fictions created by linguistic mediations are also the basis for releasing the individual from the fixed forms of identity that have kept the city's citizens in their place as extras for so long.

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The reflexivity created between Falk's image on the TV as it is framed within the image of Falk as living reality in *Wings of Desire* highlights the constructions of the self through language as a socially constructed representation. The conflation of images and other linguistic representations through the media in the postmodern city reveals that the myths that people have always lived by in constructing their everyday social arrangements have always been a fiction. The constant slippage between media image, linguistic representation, and material reality offered by the global city thus provides an opportunity to liberate the individual from many forms of social discrimination based on their "untouchable" denominations. The question that should be pressing the extras lips is why Peter Falk is free to act as he does while their roles are being so constrained. If the possession of a "media personality" is a key in obtaining the freedom of the global city, the question now is how to make such personalities available to everyone. As hooks' criticism of Wenders' treatment of the Turks shows, the recognition of the discrimination suffered by the Jews in history is no guarantee that others will not be likewise treated in the city today or in the future.<sup>56</sup>

There is a long and shameful history of systematic exclusion that individuals have suffered in pursuing their lives in the city that *Wings of Desire* could have reminded its viewers of. In the topsy turvey world of the driver's postmodern world however, the signs of the excluded other now appear to have become the grounds for their potential inclusion in his

society. The Star of David appears to have gone through an inversion of significance both in the film as well as in the history of the city. Once a sign of supposed impurity and danger to the German people, the driver expresses his distress when the signs that were supposed to fix his perceptions of reality are unhinged from their locus in time and space and begin to move freely through the mediated realities of the contemporary world. The confusion of meaning in these films highlights the significance of the role language in both conferring inclusive identity as well as producing signs of exclusion.<sup>57</sup> For a system of exclusion to gain adhesion, however, subjects must attach the rigid codifying system to others just as they must be subject themselves to the same signs of exclusion. So Falk and the film extras discriminate their own behaviours, beliefs, and experiences, including those that fall within the systematic boundaries validated by the realities of the city in the film while censoring and passively accepting those that fail to conform to the structures that govern both their fictional and real lives in the city. Falk's appearance as his own character and actor in *Wings of Desire* and as a second rate artist-draughtsman and storyteller in *Faraway So Close!* tellingly suggests the fluid intertextuality that exists between the production of public and private personae. Although this allows him an uncommon ability to participate in and contribute to the cultural life of the global city, the same cannot be said for others appearing in Wenders' films.

The flexibility Wenders affords Falk, underscored by his not always convincing cameo performances in both films, highlights the American's freedom to participate and play different roles in global culture. Although inverting the power relations between insider and outsider, Wenders' insensitive disregard of the extras' significance in his film multiplies Falk's shallow association of the fate of the Jews with van Gogh's suicide. Compounded by his fascination of the extra's capacity to passively accept the circumstances of their fate, Falk's uncanny ability to roam freely through

these films raises questions and doubts not only about the privileged treatment he gains in the film, his cameo appearance points to the privileged subjectivity he has gained through his Hollywood appearances. This hints at how the cinematic apparatus exercises power both to establish and maintain Falk's identity and signification, giving his face an international transportability that confers upon him a right to mingle with others as a friendly, unthreatening, and acceptable outsider-insider. This is in spite of the multiple transformations and transmissions his media images and personalities undergo. At the same time, Falk's bumbling attempt at being a draughtsman, the ground for his return in *Faraway So Close!*, implicates the production of roles such as his and the marginalisation of others in media representations generally. This throws into relief filmic systems of signification and identification that both nominate and privilege those who are shown and heard in sometimes flaunting relations with how they are *presented* in contradistinction to those who are excluded. By allowing Falk to express himself freely while insisting that others nominated as Jews, Turks, and Arabs remain rigidly governed by their roles, Wenders reveals the contradictions embedded in the representational systems within which he works.

It might be argued that Wenders could have used the woman's excellent use of English to highlight the superficiality with which Falk relates to her. However, this would have involved spotlighting the film's own systems of inclusion and exclusion by indicating the arbitrariness of its identifications. In such an instance, instead of reproducing the structures of global exclusion based on white, male, Western oriented media, Wenders could have adopted strategies Homi Bhabha identifies with some migrant communities as they try to come to terms with the limited roles they are granted in their host societies and the limited powers they have over their representations.<sup>58</sup> For Bhabha, the act of mimicry enables foreigners,

migrants, and others, to parody the dominant cultural formations that govern their lives which can (sometimes) unmask the unfair collective assumptions that exclude them from participating fully in their inhospitable host society. Yet even if this strategy does not result in the outcome Bhabha believes is possible and the global city continues to identify and position individuals as outsiders, the assumption of a hegemonic language may enable that individual to understand, articulate, and negotiate their everyday experiences more successfully.

However, parody has its limits, and eventually the individual must be able to assert who they are, and who they want to be - linguistically as well as in actuality - in whatever forms of expression they think and feel befits them. Present reactions against policies such as multiculturalism suggest that the dominant sectors of global society are actually in the process of re-asserting their grasp on power and authority irrespective of how hypocritical their actions appear. The power the individual assumes when they adopt the language of their oppressor may be used to highlight and mock the premises and exceptions underpinning their oppressor's position, but this can only work when the dominant body restrains itself (or is restrained) from repressing such expressions. Furthermore, however blatant the hypocrisy of the situation may be, the dominant body may still ignore the contradictions and inconsistencies that mockery and parody point to. Nevertheless, the persuasive and mediating power of language, when used effectively, is one way a stranger can make their presence felt and legitimated in the global city. By adopting the other's language, the individual can sometimes turn the signs of their exclusion and enter through the gates of the oppressor's language. However, such an individual can only test the success of their entry into the city when they again express themselves and their reality in the dialects of their own choosing. This is the

real test of how successful the excluded other has been in attaining their inclusion.

### III

#### Individual Participation in the Life of the City

If Wenders' does not provide the circumstance for the film extras to move from being passive observers of life to significant actors, he certainly is not reticent in allowing his two angels, Damiel and Cassiel, to "make the switch". I propose that the angels' decision to "jump into the stream of time" expresses their desire to adopt a more active role that allows them to participate and contribute to the on-going affairs of life in the city. In preference to his passive eternal vigilance over the city, Damiel wants to write a story for himself, to experience the full bodied sensuality of human existence, in short, to "know what no angel knows." Although Cassiel's entry into the city, on the other hand, is circumstantial, he too is determined to make a contribution to the life of the city that goes beyond his own immediate interests. This commitment begins even before Cassiel becomes human, for when a young girl falls out of a balcony, he is faced with the dilemma of whether to try to save her or let her fall to death.<sup>59</sup> Saving her, however, means that he has to forsake his eternal state of being an angel. In a split second he decides to take the plunge. This sets the scene for his endeavours in the rest of the film. Rather than passively perpetuating the way of life in the city, Cassiel resolves to do some good with the time he has gained in becoming a human. Although the conditions under which Cassiel decides to enter the city appear to be more altruistic than Damiel's, Cassiel and Damiel both try to balance the individual's rights and individual's responsibilities in making their contributions to the life of the city.

This Section considers how Wenders has historically constructed his film's protagonists in examining the significance of his two angels decisions to participate in the city. Looking at his earlier films, some have argued that many of Wenders heroes stand remotely from life and passively observe rather than actively participate in what is going on around them. Often they become motivated only when they embark on a lonely journey of self discovery. One of the problems that such critics ignore, however, is the loss of orientation Wenders' protagonists face when confronted by the changing realities of modern life. Focusing on the relations art makes available in constituting social bonds between individuals and their world, this Section considers how memory, monuments, and other spatial and temporal landmarks orientate and facilitate the individual's journey through life. The act of walking through space gains particular attention in this section. Not only is walking an innately human form of personal mobility, walking can be regarded as an important way of forming a person's subjectivity.<sup>60</sup> As the angels and the ambling Homer suggest, walking is a fundamental way of cohering and constituting individual interactions with the city both time and space. However, other modes of mobility, such as trains, aeroplanes, and even mediating technologies such as cinema and the internet, can also be regarded as vehicles to facilitate the realisation of the personal relations with the world that brings with it a renewal of the individual's bonds with self and others. The nature of this individual journey has strongly been associated with the Romantic quest, an influential feature of Wenders' film-making aesthetic. Now the journey (and travel generally) can be regarded as a form of narration through which the important work of constituting the social bond is achieved. This discussion shows that the journey undertaken as a metaphoric narrative act can take place through projections situated in art just as much as it can through a real walk in the city. Such a journey becomes a mode of both narrating and constituting virtual, mediated,

physical, and linguistic relations between self and the world, and the orientations derived from them enables individuals to actively and fundamentally identify, pursue, and participate in the constitution of the social world that is global culture. The following discussion shows how Wenders angels move from a mode of reflective passive and spectating subjectivity to assuming an active participation in the life of the city they observe. In the process of their movement, I shall argue for the benefit of the strangers fully engaged entry into foreign cities activates relations between individuals that bonds both a critically reflective and instrumentally participatory role. The critically reflective observations of foreigners and strangers can be an important contribution that others make to the development of culture in the global city. If the contributions of the other are not fully incorporated in the on-going life of the city, global culture loses its capacity to reflect upon itself and its future. This section argues that enabling the participation of others in the lives of the city's citizens is crucial to everyone's success and survival.

I start by considering the angels' role of observing life in the city. I argue for the contribution that the act of observation and thoughtful reflections on life can make in facilitating an on-going critical awakening of the global citizen. The reflective, guardian-like role of the angels is a useful metaphor for thinking about the contributions of subjectivities such as migrants, tourists, and other journeymen and women can make to the life of every society. Yet individuals may also become strangers even in their own societies when they undertake a mediated virtual journeys through art such as film or the internet. The estrangement one sometimes finds through art is somewhat like the conventional reflective positions such as those adopted by philosophers, artists, and researchers. These are some of the subjectivities realised and legitimated in global citizenship. I start this

discussion by looking at what might be described as the disoriented subject in the technologically mediated postmodern city.

#### 1) Subjective Disorientation, Technology, and the Mediation of the Global City

In an article tracing the influences of other films and directors on Wenders, Ronnie Schieb has argued that, particularly in his early films, Wenders' heroes appear to

wander in space because they cannot place themselves in time, seduced by the Lorelei call of Hollywood because they have no story or, being German, no story that can be told and lived with. ... when Wenders tries to regain what's lost, to recapture the plenitude of an image that belongs to an alternative, continuous system of representation, he finds neo-Hollywood reproducing itself in an incestuous nightmare of remakes and sequels to the Reaganist myth of the eternal return. ... find a love story that will erase history, and you'll find a story you can "really" live with.<sup>61</sup>

According to Schieb, Wenders' characters' inability to grasp their present situations leads to them to experience an existential failure in which they are unable to radically take hold of, change, and direct their own lives.<sup>62</sup> Unable to establish meaningful relationships with others and the world, Wenders' protagonists seem incapable of forming meaningful relationships nor act coherently to integrate their past and present realities and future aspirations. Schieb thinks that these heroes' passive, non-committed existence explains their drifting into love stories to hide their paralysis. Yet the shortcomings surrounding such characteristics may not be entirely due, as Schieb suggests, to the particularities of not having a story to believe in, or the particular problems one confronts in German history, but has to do with the individual's experience of life in the postindustrial city.

Fredric Jameson has another explanation for the individual's disorientation in modern society. He develops his argument by analysing the spaces created by postmodern architecture, looking particularly at the disorientation generated in undifferentiated shopping malls<sup>63</sup> such as that found inside John Portman's Bonaventure Hotel. Confirming Jameson's

analysis, one sees similar levels of disorientation emerging in art including early websites where the individual, unused to the emerging forms of the internet, often found themselves lost in a maze of information. He then concludes that one of the features of capitalism in the second half of the 20th Century is that the individual could no longer render relationships between themselves and the world in which they live into the cognitive maps of social relations then available such as Marxism. As Jameson suggests,

the alienated city is above all a space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves in: grids such as those of Jersey City, in which none of the traditional markers (monuments, nodes, natural boundaries, built perspectives) obtain, are the most obvious examples. Disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories.<sup>64</sup>

Jameson's analysis suggests that postmodern culture is more concerned with the creation of exclusive enclaves in the city such as privatised complexes and centres such as luxury hotels and shopping mall. This prognosis of contemporary society appears to be supported by Richard Sennett's study of the decline of 'public man'. Although Sennett models his idea of the city in terms of a '*res publica*',<sup>65</sup> it is the way that the individual encounters others on the streets, in plazas, town squares, and other public spaces that enables them to form and realise the (republican) city's social relations. Sounding somewhat reminiscent of Walter Benjamin,<sup>66</sup> Sennett connects the experience of being a citizen in the city by focusing on the importance of the street as an integral part of the performance of 'public life'. With his own examples of the erosion of public spaces of the city, Sennett analyses the International Style, in particular the Lever House in New York, the Brunswick Centre in London, and the Defense Centre in Paris, and suggests that the public domain has increasingly become tied to and traversed by private forms of transport, in particular the motor car. Yet, in contrast to Benjamin, for Sennett it is the privatisation of transport rather

than the technology itself that has eroded the amenity of public space in the city. In distinguishing public interactions between strangers to those between friends, intimates, and family, Sennett argues that private ownership reduces the individual's contact and interaction with others. For Sennett, it is in public interactions that the individual performs their role in fulfilling their capacity of being a citizen in the life of the city. Sennett then suggests that the generations born after World War II have intensified the 'vulgarisation of the Romantic "quest for personality"',<sup>67</sup> turning what once was a spiritual journey of personal realisation and fulfilment into a pursuit for material gain and accumulation. (As already pointed out, the Romantic journey to self realisation as a feature of Wenders' films and offers another analytical aperture for this discussion to which I will later return.) For Sennett, 20th Century reworkings of the 19th Century Romantic journey has resulted in a chase for individual self realisation that focuses on the procurement of the individual's private life, a life realised through the possession of the goods, services, and other properties that procure one's personal domain. Sennett thinks that the drive towards privatisation has emptied public space, turning the city's streets and plazas into cold, run down, and often frightening *autobahns*. Sennett summarises the thesis of his book as 'the physical destruction of the public domain ... that began with the fall of the *ancien régime* and the formation of a new capitalist, secular, urban culture'.<sup>68</sup>

In *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*, Wenders shows a remarkable awareness of this condition and even finds ways to address the individual's spatial and temporal as well as interpersonal disorientation in the modern city. Two strategies stand out; In terms of a discussion on the nature of the individual's participation in society, Wenders' introduces a complex terrain that emphasises the equal importance of enabling individuals to observe as well as act in realising their everyday life in society. His second strategy

emphasises the role of walking and remembering as ways to enable individuals to cohere relationships with others in the city through time and space. In *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*, Wenders presents three characters, Homer and the angels Daniel and Cassiel, in suggesting the importance of individual's journey through life in the city. Taken mostly at a walker's pace, all three characters set about enlivening their relationships with others by creatively realising actual correspondences between their thoughts and reflections and the living material conditions they observe around them.

## 2) An Argument for Observing and Participating in the Life of the City

As if taking a cue from Jameson's analysis, Wenders uses monuments like the *Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtniskirche* and the *Siegesäule* as significant sites from which to frame the passing unformed fragments and emotionally disconnected impressions the angels have of Berlin. For the angels, these sites become resting places where, in the chaotic madness of the modern city, they sit and try to make sense of what they see. Yet if memorials like the *Gedächtniskirche* enable the angels to establish both for themselves and for their displaced international audience an intellectual foothold into the daily terrains of Wenders' city, such monuments in themselves cannot complete the experience of really 'being' in physical space.

The distance that confronts the angels as they look remotely upon the lives of the city's inhabitants occupied Sartre's mind for many years, as he tried to address discrepancies between the intellectual's projected rationalities based on abstract thought and analysis with the sometimes catastrophic outcomes arising from the instrumental implementation of even the most reasonable ideas. In a mental 'case study', Sartre devises an analogy of an intellectual looking from a balcony at two workers nearby. Through this analogy, Sartre tried to reconcile the role of the observer with that of

the actor as they both, in their own way, set about realising their performances in everyday situations. Acknowledging the failure of even the Marxian intellectual project into the totalitarian state of Stalin, Sartre sought to theorise a new philosophical approach that would allow him to continue with a method of dialectically critiquing everyday life without reducing it only to the totalisation of the observer. Mark Poster documents this attempt to understand the 'critically reflexive' position Sartre sought to maintain, what philosophers call the 'regulative third', that the angels appear to occupy in relation to the living reality of the city.

Looking out from a balcony while on vacation, the (bourgeois) intellectual perceives two workmen in either side of a wall oblivious of each other. The intellectual's view unifies or totalises the field, introducing a meaning to the entire scene where otherwise there would be none. This totalisation of the field, however, is not the only one possible: from another balcony opening onto the same street scene, Simone de Beauvoir might retotalise the field. Perceiving Sartre observing the workmen, she might intervene with a new meaning, one that notes the unity in difference of men, the commonality of Sartre and the workmen, and the relative privilege of all in comparison to women. Behind her, a black servant, having visual access to the street, Sartre, and de Beauvoir, might retotalise the field again, this time introducing a meaning about the unity in difference of whites, be they workmen, intellectuals, or women. Like Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the dialogic, Sartre's insistence on totalisation gives priority to the infinite polysemy of self-creation.<sup>69</sup>

Poster's description of Sartre's analogy suggests that Sartre tried to show how distant observations can sometimes productively theorise situations and find solutions in ways that those closer to the scene cannot.<sup>70</sup> Through this distance, a new set of meaningful relations may become possible, leading to interpretations that sometimes lead to alternative understandings of what is actually going on. However, rather than maintaining the observation point as an absolute Archimedian fulcrum that stakes out a right to determine the understanding of a given situation, Sartre relativises the observing position by introducing other potential observers. So Sartre's critique of the observer's authority shows that the totalising rationalities an observer produces should not be dismissed, but that they cannot be taken as comprehensively factual either. Sartre not only

challenges the assertion that reality can be totally understood through critical reason, intellectual reflection, and dispassionate observation, he challenges the very basis of Western epistemology based on scientific objectivity based on an ideology that the observer produces absolute rather than relative and subjective knowledge. However, pointing to a relation between Sartre and Foucault, Poster adds

The pathos of Sartre's [*Critique of Dialectical Reason*] is the impossibility of this totalisation and the equal impossibility of giving it up. For on the other side of this totalisation lies the frightening nothingness that the philosophical subject is not transcendent but rooted in power, that dialectical reason is not a condition for the possibility of human freedom. ... There was for [Foucault] something in the Enlightenment which the methods of archaeology and genealogy did not confront, some 'attitude' of the Enlightenment which had to be preserved. This attitude concerned the nature of the subject.<sup>71</sup>

So Poster reminds his reader of a continuing desire of the human subject to strive for higher forms of realisation, the sort of realisation Foucault defends in his "What is Enlightenment"<sup>72</sup> essay. Nevertheless, Sartre's balcony metaphor indicates that critical, reflective observations cannot and do not reveal the absolute nature of reality. This explains why the God-like angel Damiel cannot apprehend what Marion feels without participating in her material world. In addition, as Cassiel's attempt to destroy the cache of arms shows in *Faraway So Close!*, a successful intervention in life must take into account the subjectivities of everyone involved in order to be successful. This means, however, that in the process of actualising his plan, Cassiel has to creatively respond to both Becker's and Patsky's reactions to his interventions.

As angels, Damiel and Cassiel produce critical insight over what they observe but only by becoming human can they contribute to and thus alter the realities they perceive. The question that confronts them is not, however, how to retain the clarity of their angelic vision once they become embroiled in the daily intrigues of human affairs, but rather, as Sartre's analogy

cleverly suggests, how to acknowledge that their subjective positioning and their privileged perceptions continue to be relative to others' positions in the first place. What is implicated in Sartre's self reflexive acknowledgment is the sense of the infinity of others lurking further and further away. Even in their undisclosed positions, they reveal the "blind spots" that lie behind, beyond, and beneath every subject's fading field of vision. Wenders shatters the absolute diegesis of the observer's world in film by finally including his angels. This is a radical move that reminds the viewer in the audience of their own positioning further back behind each screening of the film. Confronting the angels' desire to participate in the city thus draws attention to the need to acknowledge and incorporate the infinite potentiality of others still left sitting on the perimeters in the global cinema.

Sartre's balcony metaphor is again suggested in *Faraway So Close!* at a point when Cassiel, who has already become human, takes to the sky in a bungy jumping harness. "It's just like the old days!" the former angel excitedly shouts as Marion and her daughter Doria sit observing him from a nearby balcony. In a happy and colourfully human scene, the camera then takes up Cassiel's point of view and simulates for a moment what all humans can experience; this is the angelic point of view made available through technology. With techniques like film, it has become possible for individuals to observe and critically reflect on everyday life from many different angles in ways never before thought possible. What is missing, however, is a mechanism to enable individuals to make use of these new capabilities so they may contribute meaningfully to the situations that they observe. For while it is true that many societies recognise the value of the contributions outsiders can make, few have provided proper avenues for their incorporation, and even fewer communities take any steps to facilitate or expedite the stranger's contributions to the hosting culture.

Sartre's analogy shows that it is impossible to theoretically continue to justify a selective inclusion of some outsiders while maintaining a line for the exclusion of others. A reasonable assessment of such a situation (such as when Falk approaches the film extras) only highlights the unfair privileging of those included. As Stevenson, citing Raymond Williams, reiterates, even the subjective reflections of those considered to be the lowest servants of society make a valuable contribution to everyday life. Limiting their inclusion in any way only impoverishes that society, but it does perpetuate the privilege of the native's social bonds and relations.<sup>73</sup> Unfortunately, Sartre's attempt to theorise a truly revolutionary method for a dynamic practical philosophy of human group and ensembles has been left unfinished even though, as Cassiel's gymnastic performance in the living theatre of the city in *Faraway So Close!* stresses, the necessity to incorporate others in the global city remains critical. Nevertheless, Sartre's analogy both supports and acknowledges the importance of the angels' contribution - over and above any contributions they may make once they are enculturated into human society - because of the stance they have outside and beyond the social relations of the city. I now consider how their social relations are constituted in the living realities of the city in Wenders' films.

### 3) Modes and Methods of Constituting Social Relations in the City

In the conventional city, as Jameson suggests,<sup>74</sup> the individual defines their place in society by constructing a practical assemblage that both affirms and asserts their right to be and belong by occupying and moving through the city's spaces.<sup>75</sup> *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* depict many modes of transport as a way of traversing space in the city, from trains, cars, motorcycles, and aeroplanes, as well as a hyper-real thought journeys of the virtual angels.<sup>76</sup> Many of the central characters in these films, Homer, Cassiel, Daniel, and even Falk, spend much time walking through Berlin,

ruminating as they go over questions of identity, memory, history, and the sense of place.<sup>77</sup> It is often in these ruminations that the most profound observations of the city are made, observations that can help the films' audiences to thoughtfully reflect on, and perhaps even arrive at new understandings of their own particular relationships with the city within which they live.

Arguably, however, it is Homer's measured walk through the city that best *meters* the individual's passage through life. In his stumbling meandering around Berlin in *Wings of Desire*, Homer seeks to rejoin his present experience of life in the city with the past. Homer charts a direct relationship between past, present, and future, linking memory with the traversal of space, particularly through walking.<sup>78</sup> In doing so, he not only tries to reclaim his memories buried beneath the ruins of *Potsdamerplatz*, but the old man also makes a claim that the past can play an important role in shaping the city's future. The forgetfulness of the immersive present that Homer works so assiduously to overcome can be linked to the warning against the absent mindedness of the contemporary spectator that Benjamin foresaw in his "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, giving Homer's and Benjamin's aims some strategic correspondences.<sup>79</sup> A direct engagement between the individual and the world around them is implicit in this films' representations of the city, even if Wenders does not attempt to heighten the political implications of those engagements further, than those found in many films typified as being made in Hollywood.<sup>80</sup>

#### i) Memory and Walking

Nevertheless, in road movies, a genre Wenders' films are often considered to belong to, Bennet Schaber writes, 'road events are linked to memories ... [they] take on meaning because they always go in two directions at once.'<sup>81</sup> In *Wings of Desire*, Homer returns repeatedly both to the

*Potsdamerplatz* and to the *Staatsbibliothek*, Berlin's Public Library, which is associated to an idea of a storehouse of social history, in order to materialise his grasp on the remnants of his city's history. Walking as the first, and perhaps most basic, form of spatial orientation, engages both the mind and the body of the walker as they feel and 'cognitively map' their way through every inch of their journey. In a double sense of both the mind and body, walking constitutes the individual's relationship with the world around them, rejoining their present location and situation with their past trajectories as well as their future orientations. Walking through the city gives the walker a primary level of experience that grounds them in ways that a technologically mediated journey in a car, train, or an aeroplane, as well as the simulated journey undertaken through a cinema or a website on the internet about the city can never replicate.<sup>82</sup> While techniques such as they cinema can facilitate a person's ability to simulate an experience of other places in the world, technology in itself can never reproduce the real life physical engagement that even the most "absent minded" stroll through a city gives. As Michel de Certeau suggests in his walker's analysis of the city, the

walker constitutes [the spaces of the city], in relation to his position, both a near and a far, a *here* and a *there*. ...Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it 'speaks'<sup>83</sup>

For de Certeau, walking is a process of articulation that allows the individual to narrate their place the city, adding weight to Jameson's and Sennett's assertions that walking in the streets - just as the angels' in Wenders' films do - is a basic way for individuals to develop their relationships with the city around them. Frances Yates' account of the classic art of memory also suggests a relationship between walking and the act of narrating. Yates account shows the ancient art of memory relied extensively on making connections between space, observation, and memory. Cicero credits Simonedes of Rhodes with having developed a technique of

associating complex tracts of rhetoric articulated in narrative which is serially projected upon a leisurely but specific walk through physical space. De Certeau's essay, on the other hand, deals with the idea that walking through space becomes a performance through which the walker renders their relations with the spaces around them into a narrative form by travelling through it. Although aimed at different outcomes, Simonedes and de Certeau show how the act of narration, spatial practices, memory, and walking are linked. Their work shows just how important these practices and capabilities are in establishing the individual's real living relationships with their world. Finally, Kathe Geist sources the significance of mobility and transportation in facilitating the protagonist's journey through Wenders' films to the German 19th Century *Bildungsroman* tradition. Geist identifies three elements in this Romantic journey, aspects that represent the inner spiritual search for the personal truths of a traveller through life on their way to self realisation. These are the motivation or yearning for the individual to embark on the journey, the vehicle that facilitates that protagonist's journey, and the goal they seek to realise at that journey's end.

The discussion so far has been aimed at identifying how important walking and other spatial journeys are in developing the cognitive maps that Wenders' Romantic protagonist's might deploy as they make their way through these films. Synthesising these discussions together, they can reveal how these films are gradually constituting their protagonist's growing realisation of a sense of self co-relative to identifications they develop in relation to the rest of the world. Next I consider the significance these journeys in relation to the Romantic tradition as well as the road movie genre before concluding the section by turning to the goals these journeys realise.

## ii) The Romantic Journey and Wenders' Protagonists

According to Kathe Geist, Wenders' travel narrative is a metaphor for the search for identity. For Wenders, travel is literally a means of discovering one's identity [...] Travelling to discover one's identity has a long history in German culture, for it forms the basis of the *Bildungsroman*, the German literary genre in which the young man travels to find his true being and purpose in life<sup>84</sup>

Pointing out that Wenders is often indebted in some ways to visual art, Giest calls on Art Historian Lorents Eitner's interpretation of Casper David Friedrich's paintings to elaborate her interpretation of Wenders' films. For example, Friedrich's *Views Through A Window* (1806) and *Woman at the Window* (1822) depict a woman standing in front of an open window, beyond which she can see a boat that has taken refuge in a harbour. With its sails furled, the vessel awaits its manly crew quietly to resume their journeys through the world. The women's gazes in both paintings seem deep in dreaming as if firmly focused on something beyond the boat, their minds' vision conjuring up perhaps exotic and far away ports. This brings Eitner to suggest that 'the open window' is a distinctive German Romantic symbol and signifies 'the lust for travel or escape'.<sup>85</sup> Geist expands her analysis of Wenders' romantic symbology by drawing on Eitner's interpretation of Friedrich's *Stages of Life* (1835). In this painting, an old man can be seen walking into the sea in a search of death and destiny. This successful Romantic journey, Eitner concludes, ends in death by the sea which both symbolises and represents the natural revelation of the old man's inner nature. Giest then corroborates Eitner's analyses with Wenders films by arguing that in *Alice in the Cities*, the sea is at the end of Philip's search for Alice's mother, while in *The American Friend*, Jonathan dies at the wheel as his car speeds towards the sea. Although threatened by illness all through this film, Jonathan avoids death long enough to resolve the issues that

confront him in his life. With his journey resolved, Giest then adds, his vehicle continues

moving, at least for a short time afterwards, which suggests a momentum which death does not stop, a confrontation rather than a capitulation.... each of these deaths characterised by confrontation and passage is accompanied by a dramatic reference to light.... The light suggests self realisation and transcendence.<sup>86</sup>

Although Wenders' heroes search for self realisation results in death, Giest reads his protagonist's journeys as a search that culminates in an ultimate engagement with their true inner nature and spiritual being. This realisation of the inner self is be gradually and processionally revealed to Wenders' heroes through the quest they undertake in these films.

As with their 19th Century forebears, Wenders' Romantic journeys are essentially a male undertaking in which the conclusion of the journey represents not a morbid fascination with death but rather death becomes a natural development in which the mundane aspects of everyday material life are both abandoned and transcended. While the narratives of Wenders' earlier films appear to represent male master travellers yearning for release from the mundane realities of everyday life, the impulse to replay this narrative and the need to embark on a lonely male journey to self realisation that culminates in death appears to have waned after the making of *Kings Of The Road* (1976) and *The American Friend* in 1977. By the time Wenders came to make *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*, there appears a new correspondence between his male protagonists and the female domiciled roles in the city that Eitner characterises in Friedrich's paintings. I suggest that Damiel's and Cassiel's desire to enter and write their story across the social terrain of the city represents an evolution in the motivation of Wenders' male characters. No longer functioning within the conventional parameters of the 19th Century *Bildungsroman* aesthetic, Wenders appears to have embraced contemporary life of the modern city as the "native" and

"natural" domain in which his heroes go to realise themselves in their cinematic lives.

iii) Homer, Childhood, and The Romantic Journey

not only are Handke and Wenders avowedly Rilkean in sensibilities and in specific motifs; this aestheticism is put to use to depart from the modern world entirely, to follow a route back to archaic and primeval forms, to replace narrative with a ritual which begins by depicting 'long-lasting catastrophes,' but comes out of the other side as a vision of new beginnings.<sup>87</sup>

For Les Caltvedt, the exposition of Homer's story-journey in *Wings of Desire* represents an attempt to re-enliven traditional and archaic techniques of myths and rituals in the renewal of contemporary society.<sup>88</sup> In linking *Wings of Desire* with Rilke's Romantic subject's desire to write the(ir) narrative,<sup>89</sup> Caltvedt shows how Wenders' film can be rejoined with Benjamin's understanding of how art in traditional society is implicitly involved in the renewal of social bonds and relations. This suggests that, historically at least, Romantic art realised not just an increasingly self-determined journey towards subjective individuation and unique personal reality, but also that increasing the autonomy of the individual does not necessarily threaten to dissolve the social bond that individual has with others. On the contrary, with greater authenticity in the correlations between their stories and their lives, it can be said that the journey in Romantic art could strengthen the social bonding of a culture founded on a notion of autonomous freely associating individuals.

Caltvedt's analysis makes it possible to link Homer, the storyteller, to the goal of the journey in *Wings of Desire*. This link reinforces the connection Benjamin made between ritual, the production and display of art, and social renewal in traditional culture. The contribution Wenders and Handke make through their film is to link the child's sense of innocence, originality, and spontaneity to this renewal. Caltvedt's suggestion that the

*Wings of Desire* functions in such a way as to 'depart from the modern world entirely' opens possibilities to explore how contemporary art may follow its traditional art and again authenticate a renewal of the social bond. Basing his argument on a distinction between modern literary narratives and pre- and post-modern non-literary forms, Caltvedt thinks that Homer's insistence on a new kind of (hi)story is both a pre and post Hegelian impulse that sets *Wings of Desire* on a course out of conventional modernist discourses. In creatively combining narrative, childhood, and renewal through art, Homer promises a narrative that can congeal the story of peace he longs to write. Then as the film unravels, the viewer learns that the story Homer wants to write also includes memory, history, and reality in producing an imaginary realm ruled by the "Kings of Peace".<sup>90</sup> This is the story that will finally revitalise his listener's inner child and through that renew and release the individual to participate in repopulating the city. Daniel and Marion together conjure up at the Hotel Esplanade. There is one further twist in the narrative the film develops however. The innocence and freedom Homer finds in the child appears to again have been transformed by the time Daniel and Marion espouse their vision of the city in the former 'favourite meeting place for the upper echelon Nazis during the Third Reich'.<sup>91</sup> Now the stuff that is essence of the child has grown into of the race of giants the lovers imagine living in the city's plazas. This is the optimistic conclusion that one can reach in viewing *Wings of Desire*.

Homer's image of the child should thus be understood as an adjunct to the narrative form and is part of a metaphoric vehicle that realises the renewal of society. This explains why Homer's memories of *Potsdamerplatz* during the 1920s are presented as if that was the city's childhood. Following the establishment of that relationship, Homer appears to suggest that the childhood of the city was taken prematurely when his recollections of Berlin during the 30s are presented alongside images of dead children during World

War II.<sup>92</sup> When the film later links the restoration of childhood with Marion's and Damiel's imaginary future city, the storyteller emphatically returns in the closing scene to warn that the future city must take with it the lessons it has so painfully learned from its past. The incorporation of that past can take place through storytelling, that is, an artifice, a work of art, that preserves the past as narrative, history, and a memory.

While the old man longs to incorporate a child's capacity not just to believe but live in mythical and imaginary stories, *Wings of Desire* is caught in a struggle between telescoping this old man's tale in such a way that congeals fact and fiction onto a totalised futuristic horizon while avoiding the fate the city has already realised when it was the staging ground for another myth-weaver's disastrous projections of "utopia".<sup>93</sup> In order for Homer's story to become a useful guide, the old man must somehow write his myth of peace - a contradiction as the future can never be totalised into a singular unifying story without foreclosing other equally valid and potentially alternative narratives - while avoiding a repetition of the past. The strategy he must adopt in doing this is neither modern nor traditional, and to that extent Homer must indeed step out of both tradition and modernist projection. Caltvedt does not elaborate the path that Homer follows beyond saying that it is linked to an archaic ritual. As Benjamin suggests

the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual - first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual setting. In other words, the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original setting.<sup>94</sup>

When art is connected to a ritual, the display of art takes place as a performance in real time in which audience and art come together as a signifying community living out the ritual's meaning. This makes the ritual display of art a performance that is unlike a conventional theatrical production, an exhibition of a painting, and unlike a written narrative such

as a book. What distinguishes ritual is that the work of art is not kept separate from its viewer or recipient, but rather the audience immerses itself with and in the re-working of art's ritual significance. Caltvedt is right to suggest that for art to again be connected with ritual and regain its aura, it needs to be encountered in an archaic and not modern context. The question is; How does Homer intend to achieve this?

As the storyteller implicitly recognises, the conjurers crafty art of metaphor remains dependent on a child-like ability to ignore inherent contradictions. The old man does not, therefore, seek to evoke discourses of peace based on realism, fact, and explanation, or show how his Kings of peace will act differently to other rulers by producing material evidence or documentary information. Like Sartre standing on his balcony, Homer remains haunted by the ghosts of his city's former rulers and the old man knows that his epic tale must both capture and (re)turn the inner child to the individual in the city. Homer's invokes the naive child because the child is his ideal listener. The recourse to the child in his audience is a Socratean move in the sense that a child is supposed to possess a capacity to pose innocent questions<sup>95</sup> about the inherent belief systems that they are about to inherit and that the adults living in those systems no longer question.<sup>96</sup> Handke's<sup>97</sup> Homer challenges the adults in Wenders' films with the responsibility of remaining open, to be spontaneous, like the child. But Homer must also call upon the maturity of the individual so that youthful enthusiasm does not lead his listener into thinking that his story is a final totalised expression of reality. The adult relativises the child's innocent faith in the signifying capacity of the story. So the storyteller opts for a form of symbolic cognition expressed through ritual storytelling. This is how Homer, as the actor-writer-storyteller in the film, proposes to become the progenitor of the work of art he seeks to create.

So for Homer's story to do its work, it must become a vehicle that both conjures and unveils a continuing but yet to be realised story. For Calvett, Homer promises that the divided, deteriorated, and degraded adult-world may yet rejoin with the child's innocence and, through that, rediscover a poetic tale that both reveals the underlying reality of the human condition at the same time as capturing the child's ability to both imagine and realise a 'new beginning'. This cannot be achieved without re-engaging with the past.<sup>98</sup> However, as Benjamin's angel of history warns, the past is not an independently existing reality in the present. History is made up of illusions created by a narrator's ability to elaborate an authoritative artifice that succeeds in convincing the individual to accept the argument the historian is presenting. Benjamin's critique of history suggests that conventional histories (and Benjamin has both the historical materialist and the historicist in his sites) do not allow the individual to engage artifacts from other eras independently. Although Homer doesn't address the contradictions implicit in his position, he nonetheless performs and overlaps the ritualising and realising of the film's unending story.

The absence of a Homeric storyteller in *Faraway So Close!* suggests that the emphasis on storytelling shifted when the collaboration between Handke and Wenders came to an end at the completion of this film. Although the ability to tell a good story remains a feature of *Faraway So Close!* by the time Wenders came to make his second film, the storyteller's role is now associated with a wilful act of deceit. This is revealed when Peter Falk is enlisted by Cassiel to help him and Damiel gain access to Becker's underground bunker.<sup>99</sup> The story of one's life remains significant to the old man Konrad, who longs to hear that what he has done can be adjudicated to have been good and proper,<sup>100</sup> but now the role of the story is to sentimentalise the old man's life. Elsewhere in *Faraway So Close!*, Cassiel too devises a story that he uses to explain to Damiel's daughter Doria about why he came,<sup>101</sup> but again,

the driving function of Cassiel's narrative serves only to establish a tale of his origins for the amusement of the child. The significance of the storyteller in the making of the human story has lost the intellectual rigour it gained through Handke.

#### iv) Road Films as Vehicles for Social Renewal

Bennett Schaber's analysis of road movies elaborates the link between Romantic travel narratives, the road movie genre, and the renewal of society, shedding light on the narratives *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* develop. Referring to Frank Capra, whom Schaber calls the father of the road film genre, Schaber concludes that 'the road movie as political in the broadest sense [...develops a narrative in which] "the road" is very much the locus of the revelation of the people.'<sup>102</sup> Dividing the road film genre into two major categories separated by World War II, Schaber argues that pre-War road movies were primarily concerned with mobilising an image of the 'Exodus' of people along a desert road leading

at once [to] the place of a gathering and a promise of a new homeland ... [The pre-War road movie was] a vehicle of self-presentation of the people... [like] the Nazi "unanimism": *Ein Volk, ein Führer, eine Kamera...* the Führer is the people is the land is the nation<sup>103</sup>

Typified by the Western, Schaber suggests that the road can be interpreted as a metaphor for the trial/trail that a group of people may endure in order to reach the promised land. Schaber concludes that narratives associated with some road films appear to constitute each other and 'reveal' both the trajectory and conclusion of the film's journey as the unravelling story of the people.<sup>104</sup> Shifting focus on to post World War road films Schaber then adds that the road film genre produces a sense of an

Apocalyptic' in which a 'community progressively defies its own self presentation ... its own proper image... [and self presentation becomes] the channels of communication through which its members expose themselves one to another. ... communities ... called unworking, unavowable, or arriving.<sup>105</sup>

With the pervasive disillusionment towards authorial notions of the unified people sweeping through the Western world after extreme Right Wing Dictators Hitler, Mussolini, and the extreme Left Wing Stalin,<sup>106</sup> Schaber shows how road films evolved after World War II in line with the general cultural milieu within which such films were produced. He then divides the post World War genre once more and, drawing a line that, on the one side, reproduces Foucault's notion of *petite histoire*, develops two additional categories of road film. The first of these two sub groups articulates a politics of the 'minor' story and includes films like Wenders' *Alice in the Cities*, *Paris Texas* (1984) and *Until The End of The World* (1991). Terming these 'minor story films', Schaber suggests that they produce metonymic systems<sup>107</sup> in which the narrative now 'links more than it leads, connects, assembles, and exposes more than it issues, unifies, and reveals.'<sup>108</sup> The second post war group, in which Schaber nominates films like *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Thelma and Louise* (1991), realise a 'dialectic of marginality'. Linking these to adventure, travel, and touristic film narratives, Schaber adds that these road films take part in a much longer tradition in the 'global extension of the West'.<sup>109</sup> Thus the road film genre in this second post World War II branch is, according to Schaber, an extension of the colonial cultural realities of the 19th Centuries and early 20th Centuries.

In significant ways, however, the two films in this study rejoin with both their pre-War genre's form as well as showing traits that suggest they belong to both the two sub groups of the post World War era. For example, the resolution of Marion's and Daniel's journey at the end of *Wings of Desire* imagines a horizon that reconstitutes the people in an imaginary plaza of the city and is much in keeping with a Capra-like 'revelation of the people'.<sup>110</sup> In spite of Homer's and Konrad's moves away from 'major' colonial discourses and towards the personal minor keys of their relative and subjective stories, Daniel's move into the city and Peter Falk's constructions

of the extra's stories in *Wings of Desire*, and Cassiel's "heroic" attempts to save the city from Becker's ring of criminals in *Faraway So Close!* continue to announce strong Christian overtones shaded with hints of opportunist, male adventurism, 19th Century's colonial narratives, as well voyeuristic journeys that can be attached to more recent forms of postcolonial domination evident in some forms of tourism.<sup>111</sup> Although made long after the fall of empire and the demise of Hitler, *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* do not finally sit easily in the post World War 'minor story film' category that Schaber optimistically describes. The home at the end of the journey undertaken in these films seems to have become a place for the delivery of the people, as family and as nation. The nostalgic return to safety and to home territory in the closing sequences of *Faraway So Close!* suggests that a selectivity continues operating in Wenders' films. Although Cassiel is the one who dies, this film seems to have become a realisation of Becker's and not the angel's journey. Now it is a small time criminal from Detroit, and not the one from nearby Poland or Russia, who is going to be rehabilitated by being re-united with his sister Hanna and her daughter Raissa.<sup>112</sup> If blood ties and relations are going to remain thicker than water, then one must be careful, or so it seems, about whose culture and company one perpetuates.

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As road films stemming from the German Romantic tradition, *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* map a multifaceted terrain in which the story of the journey on the road leads Wenders and his protagonists from the lonely outlands in *Kings of the Road* and back into the main streets of the city in the mainstream of society. In the heterogenous density of the urban landscape, Wenders' later heroes resolve their desire for self realisation by transplanting their personal reality to the increasing complexity of the metropolis. The way Daniel and Cassiel resolve their Romantic quests

documents not only Wenders' growing maturity and his changing understanding of what constitutes self realisation, but also how the individuality of his masculine protagonists has become part of a greater story linking other individuals together to form a larger human family. So the stories that Daniel and Cassiel develop in and through the city become vehicles that helps them both to sequence and realise independent ambitions while functioning within the context of their collective as well as individual realities. The goal or end of what Wenders called his vertical road movies are the objectives of a person whose life journey seeks to be integrated within and amongst others. So these films augment the way Wenders' articulates the road movie genre.

However, while the idea of arrival and conjuring up of people as a unified nation may seem typical in early Cowboy Westerns, road films, as well as in the Nazi imagination, it is in some ways a perversion of the Romantic journey. For as Eitner's analysis of Friedrich's paintings suggests, the conclusion of the journey in death strongly disassociates links between the protagonist's realisation and an idea of place. The *spiritual* home in the *Bildungsroman* journey does not therefore appear dependent on the production of singular identities situated in a particular space. Doreen Massey has developed an alternative discourse of home that carries with it a multiplistic sense of place and belonging. This seems more appropriate to the rendition of a Romantic's journey to the global city. As Massey states, the conclusion of the journey

is in contrast to many readings of place as home, where there is imagined to be the security of a (false ...) stability and apparently reassuring boundedness. Such understandings of the identity of places require them to be enclosures, to have boundaries and ... to establish their identity through negative counterposition with the Other beyond the boundaries. An understanding of the socio-economic geography of any place, certainly in those parts of the world where the debate is now rife, reveals that such a view is untenable. The identity of a place does not derive from some internalised history. It derives, in large part, precisely from the specificity of its interaction with 'the outside.' ... [this] reverberates ... in the fear which is apparently felt by some, including many writers on the subject,

when the boundaries dissolve (or are felt to do so), when the geography of social relations forces us to recognise our interconnectedness [sic].<sup>113</sup>

Filmic discourses of the city, when projected in the global cinema, can not define fixed notions of space, time, culture, language, nation, or even “the people”, although the viewer’s understanding of such discourses may remain situated within the discursive parameters of the cultural milieu within which they operate. This raises questions about the assumptions, interpretations, and understandings one makes, and that remain based in and particular to the location of the watcher rather than to the origins of the film, as they are watching it. What this suggests is that there is a need for a general evolution of cinematic discourses in which the governing assumptions an individual makes while watching film takes into account the non-specific nature of the projections being made in and by the film. So the global city thus imagined becomes more fluidly arranged as the composition of it’s citizens who take into account the real nature of their individuality, experiences, and histories that are contributing to its formation.

## VI

### Conclusions

This Chapter has outlined a range of approaches that might be taken in thinking about how films constitute a ground for the individual’s participation in the global city. The first section arrayed a range of issues and debates going on in contemporary discourses concerning citizenship. I then related these discussions to circumstances identified by and in Wenders’ two films. The next sections analysed how Wenders enables a range of subjects he identifies to participate in the on-going affairs of the city. I have sought to show both the strengths and weaknesses of Wenders’ approach to his protagonists. In examining how these enable, limit, and proscribe his

protagonist's involvement in the world, I have suggested that some, but not all, these limitations are due to the nature of the global media. Without exonerating Wenders, however, I have also shown how his particular style and aesthetic maturity as an artist and film director as also partially responsible for the depiction of the subjects and events in these films.

Nevertheless, within these limits, Wenders two films make important contributions to discussions concerning the role of art in contemporary global society. In *Wings of Desire*, Wenders develops a story about the renewal of the city in which the films' protagonists strike boldly for a new future even though the danger of totalising that future still hangs over Daniel's and Marion's projections of their city. This film seeks to moderate this danger through the significance of the stumbling presence of Homer, the film's old story teller. In *Faraway So Close!*, a more self conscious and systemic (if still not particularly critical) analysis of the city emerges in which Cassiel appears to embark on a self defined and self defining process of human individuation. Situated in a wider social reality, Cassiel's motivation is in some ways more altruistic than Daniel's. Here I argue that Wenders has synthesised the Romantic tradition with the road movie genre to produce a narrative of social renewal that combines traditional ritual with contemporary imagery. However the conclusion of *Faraway So Close!* on motifs of Christian self sacrifice<sup>114</sup> preserves and perpetuates a state that continues to privilege select forms of cultural and social subjectivities. While this may tap re-emergent trends towards religious fundamentalism after the Cold War, the inclusiveness of the system that Cassiel leaves behind after his intervention into the life of the city is highly selective. The perpetuation of such a city in a global context is unlikely to lead to futures that can peacefully resolve differences between individuals. This suggests that Homer's vision of the city has been abandoned or forgotten by the time Wenders came to make his second film.

There is also one further caveat one should make about Wenders' heroes. In the Romantic protagonist's journey to self realisation as well as the journeys in Wenders' films, there is a strong gender construction and identification in the general predisposition of the protagonist . This gender specificity informs the way these films indicate the nature of the subjects who occupies the global city. As Kathe Giest and bell hooks note, Wenders appears not only to be ignorant of the Turkish and other migrants in the city in his films, he also constructs his male and female protagonists from particular sex role stereotypes. These stereotypes generally conform to predominant Western norm that limit the expression of alternate masculinities as well as feminities. In considering the contribution his films make in configuring the global citizen, further studies need to be made of films that portray individuals who express themselves in ways that do not conform to Western, white, dominant male norms. With the emphasis this study has given to the individual, however, approaching films in terms of the production of normative codes becomes counterproductive. The value of this method is that it validates as well as limits the study of each film to the terms of the individual who interprets the protagonist attempts to participate in world represented in the film. This limits the claims of such a study to precisely the specificities of the encounter with the films in each study. This is so whether such a study is of films such as Wenders or it is of a film that represent blacks, women, and non Western, non-dominant males in more sympathetic terms. Yet even when a film articulates an image of women, or non whites, or non typical Western heterosexual male in ways that correspond more closely to others experience, such a study would still totalise these identities unless the film (and its study) are proscribed from speaking for the whole and are made to address instead the individual's interpretations in that study.

The issues raised in this and preceding Chapters do not end here, however, for the questions confronted in Wenders' films by the viewing subject continue to have repercussions not just in the cinema but in the daily routines of the individual irrespective of where they happen to be around the world. In concluding this Thesis, the next Chapter will consider some of these implications in relation to recent events in other sectors of global society. By correlating these discussions with contemporary daily life, I conclude this study by returning to the nature of the continuing work of art in the age of global culture.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See bell hooks, *Yearning; race, gender, and cultural politics*, 1990, pp 165 - 171, esp p 166.
- <sup>2</sup> An interesting film that both challenges and re-inforces these stereotypes is the more recent and generally well received *Gegen die Wand* (2004) by Turkish-German film maker Fatih Akin. Set in Berlin, the film follows the life of a young Turkish-German girl named Sibel who, in order to escape her family, is forced to marry a German-Turkish man named Cahit. Their life together proves to be both sexually sordid and destructive and Sibel eventually goes to Turkey in search of purification in the origins of her parents culture. There Sibel disappears after a knife attack and is presumed dead. Unexpectedly she reappears again at the end of the film, as if reborn, at which point she is seen to have fully recovered from the knife attack and has married a middle class Turkish man. This film thus appears to present a narrative in which the girl is shown to have been spoilt by the sexually explorative culture in Berlin, only to have to endure an incredible series of torture before she eventually finds peace in the nostalgic return to her parent's homeland.
- <sup>3</sup> Edward Said's analysis of the Western perception of the orient seems not to have made much impact on Wenders. See Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1995.
- <sup>4</sup> See Ghassan Hage, *White Nation*, 1998, for an analysis of Australian self representations as 'white'.
- <sup>5</sup> As Roger Cook argues, the angels give these films a first point of identification for their viewer, However, as the films progress, the 'annunciating position' of the angels as the film's narrators is disturbed when Damiel decides to leave his lofty seat and join the action taking place on the ground of the city he sees below him. For Cook, the narrative strategy in Wenders' film creates a  
 subliminal anxiety and stir the [spectator's] longing ... to see more disclosed. ... suture is always occurring in the viewing subject and thus within the cinematic apparatus that envelopes the spectator.  
 See Roger F. Cook, "Angels, Fiction and History in Berlin: Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*", 1991, p 35. For an account of various spectator expectations surrounding the New German Cinema, see Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema, A History*, 1989, pp 58, 70-73, 151-152.
- <sup>6</sup> The baby elephant symbolises innocence and childhood as well as an animal with an extraordinary gift to remember. Notions of memory, childhood, and innocence are important themes in this film.

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- 7 See Frank Krutnik, "Something more than Night; tales of the *noir* city" (pp 83 - 109) and Colin McArthur, "Chinese Boxes and Russian Dolls; Tracking the Elusive Cinematic City" (pp 28 - 33) in David B. Clarke, *The Cinematic City*, 1997.
- 8 According to one description of the film, *Romeo is Bleeding* is about  
 A corrupt police sergeant who supplies tips on the locations of safeguarded witnesses to the Mob bites off more than he can chew when he attempts to assassinate a beautiful but ruthless Russian hitwoman in this no holds barred noir thriller.  
 See The Internet Movie Database, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107983/plotsummary>
- 9 Refer to Appendix E for the lyrics of Lou Reed's song.
- 10 The boat was carrying the arms cache from Becker's underground bunker out to sea where the cache was to be dumped.
- 11 This is a definition that Nick Stevenson supplies in the glossary at the conclusion of *Cultural Citizenship, Cosmopolitan Questions*, 2003, p 155.
- 12 For an analysis of the myths underpinning the constructions of the nation state, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1994.
- 13 For a seminal study of the subcultures of these decades, see Dick Hebdige, *Subculture; The Meaning of Style*, 1979.
- 14 The sense of individual sovereignty is derived from Giorgio Agamben, particularly his enunciation of sovereignty in *Homo Sacer Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1998. In *The Coming Community*, Agamben adds an analysis of language in what has been described as a 'rare philosophical meditation on community as a kind of linguistic belonging that moves beyond both identity and universality' Attributed to Judith Butler, sleeve notes (back page), Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 1993.
- 15 Nick Stevenson (ed), *Culture & Citizenship*, 2001, p 2.
- 16 For further discussion of what this package may entail, see, for example, Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society; Towards a New Modernity*, 1998; Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens, Scot Lash, *Reflexive Modernization, Politics, Tradition, and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, 1994; Toby Miller, "Exchange-Value Citizenship", 1998; Toby Miller, "Introducing ... Cultural Citizenship", 2001; Gillian Gane, "Migrancy, the Cosmopolitan Intellectual, and the Global City in The Satanic Verses", 2002; Guillermo Gomez-Pena, "The New Global Culture: Somewhere between Corporate Multiculturalism and the Mainstream Bizarre (a border perspective)", 2001.
- 17 Citing T.H. Marshall, Stevenson traces the recent evolutions of citizenship, stating that 'the principle of civil and political rights had been granted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whereas the twentieth century had seen the acceptance of the idea of social rights.' See Stevenson, 2003, p 6 where Stevenson paraphrases Marshall's *Citizenship and Social Class*, 1992.
- 18 Raymond Williams cited in Stevenson, 2003, p 8.
- 19 Stevenson, 2001, p 3.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 A case in point is the state of the Aboriginal people in Australia, who must still struggle to regain traditional rights, cultural and material heritage as well as equal participation in the "commonwealth" of contemporary society, many people of Aboriginal descent accept the inherent discrimination against them. For example, the life expectancy for Aboriginal people highlights the structural discrimination facing them. The most extreme discrepancy can be seen in male life expectancy where an Aboriginal man can expect to live for 55 years compared to 78 years for Australian males generally.
- 22 See also Jan Pukulski, "Cultural Citizenship", *Citizenship Studies*, 1 (1), pp 73 - 86, cited in Stevenson, 2001, p 3.
- 23 See Stevenson's account of Habermas' theory in *ibid* pp 99 - 105.

- 24 A term used by Carl Jung to describe the process of maturation of the individual. See Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, 1968. For a summary of Jung process of individuation, see Eric Pettifor online.
- 25 See Richard Rorty, "Freud, Morality and Hermeneutics", 1980.
- 26 This has come from both "Left" and "Right" sides of the political spectrum with some of the more intellectually respectable critics being Alex Callinicos (see his *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*, 1989), David Harvey (*The Condition of Postmodernity*, 1990), Terry Eagleton (*The Illusions of Postmodernism*, 1997), Francis Fukuyama (*The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992), and Robert Dossaix's "Nice Work if you can get it", 1997. For one critique of Dossaix's controversial essay, see Ali Alizadeh, online. A more positive account of the diversification of subjectivity, selfhood, and identification is presented in Rorty, 1980, to which Richard Shusterman's "Postmodernist Aestheticisms: A New Moral Philosophy?", 1988, responds intelligently.
- 27 See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 1979, pp 301 - 306.
- 28 See Stevenson's discussion of Habermas' analysis of the public domain, particularly the limits of objectivity in enabling public discourses in Stevenson, 2003, p 100.
- 29 Williams, 1979, pp 301 - 306.
- 30 The reference to Agamben's book indicates an important source in which the work of art in a global society is considered in linguistic terms. One can relate Agamben's poetic analysis of the power of language in determining a new sense of community to the languages of the media. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 1993.
- 31 In an interview on BBC World television leading up to Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27 2005 , Avi Primor, former Israeli Ambassador to Berlin, argued that since the 1970s Germany has given been exemplary in dealing with the Holocaust.
- 32 Elsaesser, 1989, pp 239 - 278.
- 33 See Peter Beicken and Robert Phillip Kolker, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*, 1993, p 160.
- 34 The fluid identities conferred by the changing localities in the (post)modern city has been described by Raban as a process of 'veneering,' a process where people shed identities like snakes and who instead assume the caricatures of the roles they play in the life of the city. See Jonathan Raban, *Soft City*, 1998, pp 23 - 32, also p 51. Other important sources in analysing the fluid identities and the fashioning of self identity in the postmodern city are Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self: Survival in Troubled Times*, 1985, particularly pp 32, 34, 38, 57, and 62, and Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*, 1992.
- 35 On arriving in the city, Falk expressed doubts about his ability to depict role he is being asked to play in the film he is about to star in.  
Falk;                   Amazing how I don't even understand this character, it's amazing how little I know about this part. Maybe we'll discover it during the shoot but I'll get a good costume, that's half the battle.
- 36 See Shusterman, 1988, p 352.
- 37 Note the exchange between the workers as they walk by Falk;  
1st Man;                Isn't that Colombo?  
2nd Man;                I don't think so. Not with that moth eaten coat!  
1st Man;                He wouldn't be running in the mud!
- 38 See Kathe Geist, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: From Paris France to Paris Texas*, 1988, pp 73, 78.
- 39 Lang found it impossible to resurrect his career in Germany after the war as his fellows in the film industry made no secret of their resentment of those who fled the country rather than deal with the Nazis and face the consequences after the war. See Elsaesser, 1989, p 13.

- 40 See Wim Wenders, "Death is no solution: The German film Director Fritz Lang", 1988, p 102.
- 41 For an account of the New German cineaste's sympathies for anti-Nazi pre war German film makers, see Elsaesser, 1989. In his review of the film, Stanley Kauffmann points out that Bois became 'one of Brecht's favourite actors' (see Stanley Kauffmann, "Immortals and Others", 1988, p 26, also Sheila Johnston, "Wim Wenders' New Romanticism", 1988) and thus was recognisably a communist in his sympathies. The intertextual narrative created by Bois acting as the storyteller may represent a strategy to add nuance, depth, and authenticity to the film through the 'history' he bears through his body into the film. As Linda Ehrlich states  
 On a metafilmic level, an actor (Curt Bois), trained by Reinhardt and Brecht but who left Nazi Germany in the early '30s, reappears - not only as Homer - but also as a former refugee. Images of renewal rise from the ashes.  
 See Linda Ehrlich, "Meditations on Wim Wenders' *Wings of Desire*", 1991, p 245.
- 42 The complete transcript of Falk's encounter with the film extras is;
- Peter Falk; S'cuse me, may I draw you.... (asking woman if he can draw her) Good Morgen, sketch you, so right? (Falk puts on an accent in mock of people who can't speak English)
- Woman; Yes please (she says laughing in good English - better than Falk's)
- Peter Falk; Perfect. Don't move. (Then Falk thinks) I wonder if she's Jewish? What a dear face.
- Woman; Is it good, his drawing? (smiles)
- Peter Falk; Interesting (girl looks over Falk's shoulder) What a nostril. A dramatic nostril. These people are extras. Extra People (Damiel looks around - thinking about what Falk is saying) Extras are so patient. They just sit.
- Woman (in German); I'd like to see it. Maybe he'll give it to me?
- Peter Falk; Extras. These humans are extras. Extra Humans.
- Woman (in English); Oh very good. (smiling) A very nice picture (laughing)
- Peter Falk; Yellow star means death. Why did they pick yellow? Sunflowers. Van Gogh killed himself. His drawing stinks. So what. No-one sees it. Some day you'll make a good drawing. I hope I'll ... I'll .... (cut to new scene.)
- 43 Kolker and Beicken also see problems in this treatment of the extras and the relationship this creates with the historical process. They argue that while the film comments on  
 the degradation of history in mass mediated representations, ... why is he [Wenders] so affectionate about Peter Falk and his musings about "extra people" and their expendability at the process of history.  
 Kolker and Beicken, 1993, p 143. The relationship Falk develops with the extras is both superficial and impersonal, leaving him open to the criticism of exploitation because the extras would have recognised Falk as the lead actor in the film. This is further complicated by the fact that Falk is both a famous actor, a stranger, and an honoured visitor on the set. The extras, as locals, may have felt a certain pressure to ensure that they  
 make his visit to the city memorable.
- 44 Stevenson, 2001, p 2.
- 45 See the website *Behind the Name: The Etymology and History of First Names*.
- 46 The conflict underpinning the realities of the driver on his way to the film set is both highlighted by and symbolised in the central significance the Berlin Wall and *Potsdamerplatz* play in the film. For Marion, the Wall becomes one of the main features that binds her life in the city, while *Potsdamerplatz* is a crucial site for Homer's imagining of and historical continuity between the old and new city.

- 47 By 'ignorance of the past', Caldwell and Rae are referring to the assumptions and relations Falk makes between the female 'extra' he draws, Vincent van Gogh, and the fate of the Jews under Hitler. See David Caldwell & Paul W Rea, "Handke's and Wenders' *Wings of Desire*: Transcending Postmodernism", 1991, p 49.
- 48 Zygmunt Bauman suggests that "the screen mediated world of the telecity exists only by way of surfaces; and, tendentially, everything can and must be turned into an object of the gaze ... [T]here is, by way of 'readings' of the surface signs, opportunity for a much more intense and changing empathy in and out of identities, because of the possibilities of uninterfered and continual watching ... Television is totally non-committal' [Henning Bech cited by Bauman] The ultimate freedom of the screen directed, lived in the company of surfaces, and called zapping". Bauman, "From Pilgrim to Tourist - or a Short History of Identity", in Hall and du Guy, 1996, pp 27-28.
- 49 For a discussion of the implications of the supposed superficiality of the postmodern self in reproducible representation, see Harvey, 1989, pp 336 - 337. For a discussion of how Falk looks at himself, see Kolker and Beicken, 1993, p 153.
- 50 Susan Broadhurst puts it even more strongly when she suggests that Wenders' *Wings of Desire* forces its audience to participate by seeing the space and time of the city in ways that would otherwise have been ignored. The aesthetics of Wenders, in this instance, provide a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, in the way that certain 'natural' features, such as the depiction of urban spaces and institutions, the use of media, even the identities of the main protagonists, are highlighted and subverted.  
See Susan Broadhurst, *Liminal Acts: A critical overview of Contemporary Performance and Theory*, 1999, p 125.
- 51 Peter Schjeldahl, "Introduction," *Cindy Sherman*, 1984, pp 7 - 11, especially p 9.
- 52 Spencer, "Postmodernism, Modernity, and the Tradition of Dissent", 1998, p 159.
- 53 Beck et al, 1994.
- 54 The fictions created in language is underscored by Wittgenstein's unsuccessful attempts to assemble a philosophy of language based on indisputable links between signs and 'factual discourse'. For an expansion of Wittgenstein's work, see David Pears, *Wittgenstein*, 1985, pp 55 - 68.
- 55 For an cognitivist account of the role of film in producing such metaphors, see George Lakoff & Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980.
- 56 Although Jews are now welcome in German society, it is the exclusion of the Turkish people from German and other West European communities since the 1960s that pinpoints the on-going problems faced as non-indigenous others seek to legitimate their presence in and participate fully as citizens in the life of the city. Until the election of the Schroeder government in 1998, German citizenship was notoriously difficult to obtain unless one was born to a German parent. Even today, becoming a German citizen may involve the renouncement of other allegiances. In a state where over seven million people are first or second generation immigrant workers, many of Turkish origin, this is an extraordinary situation.
- 57 Anthropological studies have shown that there is a long tradition of human groups using signs to unify a sense of internal constituency by producing signs of what constitutes that community that differentiates it to the outside. See Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, 1963; *Totemism*, 1963; *The Savage Mind*, 1966.
- 58 See Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", 1984.
- 59 To Ron Holloway, Cassiel 'accidentally' becomes human as a consequence of his decision to act and save 'a child falling from a 10th-floor balcony [in which] Cassiel suddenly finds himself the rescuer - and a human in spite of himself'. See Ron Holloway, "Film Review; *Faraway So Close!*", 1993.

- 60 In Chapter 4 I also argue that walking is an important way that many European films both indicate and constituted their sense of the cinematic city.
- 61 Ronnie Scheib, "Angst for the Memories", 1990, p 15. In 1993, the year that Wenders' screened *Faraway so close!* at the Cannes Film Festival where the idea of love seems to have taken over the consciousness of a number of film-makers, prompting Mary Corliss to surmise as one of the overall themes that years festival with the words "love will find a way". See Mary Corliss, "Cannes '93 Counting Blessings", 1993, p 70.
- 62 As Scheib puts it,  
 They are Hamlets all; opportunities, kingdoms, Ophelias slip through their fingers almost unnoticed. They're not really adapted to action, any more than Wenders' compositions are adapted to narrative. Stuck on an apolitical fence, unwilling to name the social logic of revolt or acceptance that would link image to image, Wenders can find no narrative framework other than that of dissociation (*Goalie*, the first part of *Paris, Texas*), false starts (*Wrong Move*), or multiple unfinished stories (*Kings, American Friend, State of Things, Wings of Desire*).  
 Scheib, 1990, p 15.
- 63 For Jameson's analysis of the spaces created by postmodern architecture, design and technology in Portman's Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, see Jameson, 1991, pp 35 - 42. Jameson's analysis suggests that postmodern capitalism is more concerned with the creation of exclusive enclaves in the city such as privatised complexes and centres such as luxury hotels and shopping mall.
- 64 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1996 (1) and Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 1991 (2), p 51.
- 65 See Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 1986, pp 3 - 27. Sennett defines what he means by his republic on pp 3 - 4.
- 66 I refer to Benjamin's emphasis of the *flâneur*, who makes his appearance in several of Benjamin's works, although not always with the same guise. The most precise articulation of this character can be found in Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, 1997, pp 35 - 66. Baudelaire also used the term *flâneur* but much less favourably to describe a shallow traversal of life. This is how Foucault interprets Baudelaire's acclamation of the painter Constantin Guys:  
 Guys was not a *flâneur*, an aim more general, something other than the fugitive pleasure of circumstance. ... Constantin Guys is not a *flâneur*; what makes him the modern painter *par excellence* in Baudelaire's eyes, is that, just when the whole world is falling asleep, he begins to work, and he transfigures that world. ... For the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissoluble from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it otherwise than it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is. Baudelairean modernity is an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it. (See Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment", 1991, p 41).  
 If Foucault's reading of Baudelaire is correct, then this suggests that Benjamin actually re-works and rehabilitates Baudelaire's description of the *flâneur*, removing from him the superficiality of his casual passing glance and attributing a more insightful - if disconnected - criticality in the ambler's turtle pace. But there are other indications that Sennett's understanding of public life correspond with those of Benjamin, particularly Benjamin's depiction of the *ancien regime* (See Benjamin's "A Small History of Photography" in Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writing*, 1998, pp 240 - 257). However, it is Benjamin's unfinished *Das Passagen-Werk* that best indicates the entirety of the way Benjamin sees public life in the modern city and the correspondences with Sennett. In this appropriately "incomplete" magnum opus, Benjamin wanted to construct the modern world as a shopping arcade. This was the metaphor that Benjamin wanted to develop that agglomerated a mad

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disarrangement of texts irrationally gathered together under an overarching rationality that resembles a shopping arcade. So Benjamin wanted to develop a textual reconstruction of the city in a book that could implicate how capitalist inspired commercialism aimed entirely at enticing the passing consumer to take purchase of whatever could be put on display, and take purchase of it, even if only by the look. Benjamin's *Das Passagen Werk* was posthumously edited and published in German by Rolf Tiedemann and translated into English by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin and now appears as *The Arcades Project*, 2002. In its very incompleteness, Tiedemann and his translators have perhaps best given Benjamin the chance to round off his project, for Benjamin intended to identify the subliminal structures of capitalist society, a project that, given the fluidity of capitalism, actually requires a type of writing that is and remains, in itself, open and fluid. So Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, in all its penultimate translations, remains, in and by its very incompleteness, an accurate and precise document that writes only the second last line of Benjamin's conclusive description of capitalism. The final sentence of Benjamin's analysis of life in the capitalist city remains always waiting to be articulated, a task that can only be done by his reader. So Benjamin's work is, again, strangely affirmed and concluded by the fickle, somewhat tragi-comic circumstances surrounding his life and work.

67 Sennett 1986, p 6.

68 Ibid p 16.

69 J-P Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, vol 1, 1976, p 100, cited in Mark Poster, *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In search of a context*, 1991, p 57.

According to William L. McBride, the analogy of Sartre's balcony is about the ... the existence of the Other, or of Others, ... remains a primary concern of Sartre's, but now the metaphor of the Look has been replaced by the more concrete, complex, and extensive descriptions of reciprocal relationships that constitute the bulk of the new work. Its very first noteworthy phenomenological analysis, that of an intellectual on vacation at a country inn who from his window sees two workingmen, one a gardener and the other a roadworker, separated by a high wall that prevents them from seeing one another, already marks Sartre's new emphasis on the Third Party as a unifying force, positive or negative ... in the most diverse situations and hence his departure from the primarily dyadic model of interrelationships that effectively dominated his earlier thinking.

William L. McBride, *Sartre's Political Theory*, 1991, p 129. See also, pp 124, 141, 154. See also Ronald Aronson's essay, "Sartre and the Dialectic: The Purpose of *Critique, II*", in Jameson (ed), *Sartre after Sartre*, 1985, p 99 where Aronson cites Sartre as writing

"We have seen how the mediation of the Third party realises the transcendent unity of positive reciprocates {That is, how individuals each engage in the same practice form themselves into a coherent single fused group through the mediation of a third person engaged in the same activity}. But is this unity still possible when each action is aimed at destroying that of the Other and when the observable results of this double negation are nil - or as usually happens - when the teleological significations which each adversary has inscribed in it have been partly erased or transferred by the Other, so that no trace of the concerted activity is any longer to be seen?" [Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, I, 816-817].

70 Alberto Pérez-Gómez makes some valuable arguments for incorporating critical intellectual reflection in everyday affairs, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, 1983 (1990), pp 3-14.

71 Mark Poster, *Critical Theory and Postmodernism; In Search of a Context*, 1991, pp 57-58.

72 Foucault, 1991.

- 73 Raymond Williams cited in Stevenson, 2003, p 8.
- 74 Jameson, 1991 (2), p 51.
- 75 See also Michel de Certeau, "Spatial Stories", in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1988, pp 115 - 130.
- 76 In *Wings of Desire*, Cassiel goes on a hyper-frenzied journey through the city at about the mid-point of the film, while in *Faraway So Close!*, Lou Reed's account of what he couldn't remember "doing last night" accompanies a rapid collage of sped up images of the city seen at night. Both these hyper-real journeys move rapidly through a succession of images that seem to consume the city, in the sense of just showing and seeing as much as the film can show in just a few seconds, more than they appear to represent an experience of the passing places.
- 77 According to Tom Kelly, Damiel and Cassiel "patrol" the city, looking and listening to the murmured thoughts as if they were disembodied versions of the *Stasi*. See Kelly, "Defecting From Eternity", 1988, p 279.
- 78 See "The Three Latin Sources For The Classic Art of Memory", in Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1992, pp 17 - 41. See also Michel de Certeau, "Walking the City" in de Certeau, 1988, pp 91 - 110.
- 79 See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in *Illuminations*, 1992, p 234.
- 80 See also the arguments in "The Higher Work of Art and "Auteur" and "Mainstream" Productions" Chapter 3, and 4 "Berlin as Cinematic City" in Chapter 4 herein.
- 81 Bennet Schaber, "Hitler Can't Keep 'em That Long", 1997, pp 25 - 26.
- 82 See for example, J Grech, *Interempty Space: The Global City* at [www.jgrech.dds.nl](http://www.jgrech.dds.nl)
- 83 Michel de Certeau, 1988, p 99. De Certeau would agree with Susan Stewart, however, when she says that the city can never be totalised by walking. As Stewart puts it, To walk in the city is to experience the disjuncture of partial vision/partial consciousness. The narrativity of this walking is belied by a simultaneity we know and yet cannot experience. As we turn a corner, our object disappears around the next corner. The sides of the street conspire against us; each attention suppresses a field of possibility.  
See Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, The Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, 1993, p 2.
- 84 Geist, 1988, p 42.
- 85 Lorentz Eitner cited in *ibid* p 80.
- 86 *Ibid* p 90. In *Faraway So Close!* the sea becomes the destination for the successful completion of Cassiel's quests, although this requires his sacrifice.
- 87 Les Caltvedt, "Berlin Poetry: Archaic Cultural Patterns in Wenders' *Wings of Desire*", 1992, p 121.
- 88 For a classic analysis of the relationship between myth, history, and the renewal of society, see Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of The Eternal Return: Cosmos and History*, 1989.
- 89 Caltvedt, 1992, p 121.
- 90 See Appendix G for a transcript of Homer's thoughts as he stumbles through the rubble of the *Potsdamerplatz* in search of his story of peace that rejoins the history of the city with the future.
- 91 Kolker and Beicken take a harsher view of the ending of the film, arguing that the religious sentiments of romanticism, which strove to redeem the ordinary world by elevating it to the ideal ... [and] ... The poetic apotheosis of human passion and domestic need that ends the film trivialises its high concerns and endangers the complexity Wenders set out to construct. ... When Marion and Damiel finally meet, "in the flesh," in the bar of the rundown Hotel Esplanade (a favourite meeting place for the upper echelon Nazis during the Third Reich), the everyday is replaced by postmodern dawn of the gods.  
See Kolker and Beicken, 1993, pp 147, 156.

- 92 This is poignantly signalled in the *Staatsbibliothek* when Homer looks at photograph of a dead child in a coffin. The photo was taken by August Sander and by Gunther Sander under the title of *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts: Portraitphotographien von 1892-1952*, 1997.
- 93 Hitler's ambitious, but never to be realised, reconstruction of Berlin was to be renamed Germania. As the seat of the re-born German nation, Germania was supposed, in the mythological imagination driving Hitler's and Albert Speer's redesignation of the city, to realise a global empire that would rival Ancient Rome. As Simon Schama explored in his *Landscape and Memory*, 1996, pp 75 - 134, the origins of Hitler's megalomaniac mythography of the German people had its originate in the legendary tale of Arminius' (Hermann the German) defeat of the Romans led by Germanicus in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 AD (Schama p 87). But the Brandenburger Tor and the quadriga were not, apparently, intended to be a part of the new Germania and, if Albert Speer's plans had proceeded any further during the war, the angels might well have had to contemplate the perfection of the child's tooth in the shadows of the ruined symbolic realisation of The Superior Race's perfection instead. A close reading of Homer's text reveals many of the same mythographic motifs. See Appendix G for the transcript of Homer's search for a new story for the city. See also Ladd's, *The Ghosts of Berlin, Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*, 1998, especially pp 72-81, 134-141.
- 94 Benjamin, 1992, p 217, passim
- 95 Socrates used a number of questioning strategies including 'elenctic argument' to pose questions to which he refused to then answer himself. At other points in Plato's *Diaolgues*, however, Socrates does attempt to provide answers to the questions he poses. See William J. Prior, *Socrates Metaphysician*, p 2, available as a pdf file online.
- 96 Homer's monologues often seek to rejoin images of the past, childhood, purity, and the primordial innocence of humanity with idealistic, future oriented images in which the eternally recurring propensity of fighting, declarations of war, and other forms of human conflicts have been finally overcome and eradicated. For example:  
Homer; Why doesn't everyone see, from childhood on, the passes, the doors and crevices on the ground and above the sky? If everyone saw them, there would be a history without murder or war.
- 97 In describing the origins of the Homer character, Wenders has admitted that... One character is entirely (Handke's) invention. He has a postcard by his desk, a reproduction of Homer, Rembrandt's painting of a lonely, blind old man chanting. It is half of a bigger canvas, in which there were a young disciple and other people listening. But someone bought it in the 19th century and cut it in half ... Peter liked the idea of Homer having lost his audience. There is a line in the film: 'If a nation loses its storyteller, it loses its childhood.'  
Sheila Johnston, "Wim Wenders' New Romanticism", 1988.
- 98 Habermas makes this point in several essays and newspaper article, in which he calls on Germans to learn from their past and avoid repeating the mistakes as they rush head long into a new German unity, a point that needs to be observed by every human community. See Jürgen Habermas, *A Berlin Republic: Writings on Germany*, 1998, especially pp 3-56.
- 99 See Appendix H for a transcript of Falk's intervention into the narrative of Cassiel's journey through life in the film.
- 100 "Somebody has to tell me whether I lived right." Konrad begs, as Cassiel, who the old man thinks has come to kill him, sleeps nearby. See Appendix I for the full transcript of the scene in which Cassiel begins to tell Konrad his story but which is completed by Raphaela.
- 101 See Appendix J for Cassiel's story to Doria.
- 102 Schaber, 1997, pp 18 - 19.

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103 Ibid pp 20 - 21.

104 As Schaber states, the road film genre brings together a specific kind of narrative itinerary (the road) and a specific kind of image production (film) is what I have called the road movie as concept. It is as if the narrative and the filmic suddenly find themselves in one another's grasp precisely at the end of the road. That is, while the road constitutes itself as a specific (if sometimes aimless) narrative trajectory, an extended metaphor of discovery and invention, the filmic (the second term of the designation "road movie") constitutes itself as a specific mode of encountering the metaphors.

Ibid pp 24 - 25.

105 Op cit Schaber 1997, p 38.

106 Although life for those living under Left and Right wing Dictators may amount to the same forms of oppression, one can distinguish Dictators of Left from Right-wing dictatorships in that Right wing conservative Dictators invariably mobilise myths of national identity, blood ties, and ancestral origins as a preclusive factor of inclusion. Left wing dictators such as Stalin, on the other hand, while still brutal in the way they dealt with those opposing their regimes, mobilised notions of a universal realisation of humanity according to their own particular vision of what that realisation may have been.

107 According to *The Macquarie Dictionary*, metonymic refers to situations when the name of something is used in place of another with which the two things have some logical relationship. See Delridge et al, *The Macquarie Dictionary*, 1998, p 1355.

108 Schaber, 1997, pp 17 - 41, the quotes come from p 20. One of the limitations in Schaber's essay is the lack of analysis of these 'channels of communication' - the entertainment and allied industries and all the apparatuses that go into making them through which people may expose themselves.

109 Ibid p 21.

110 See Appendix K for the closing sequences of *Wings of Desire*.

111 Dick Hebdige makes the following links between the tourist's adventure and the Romantic's journey of self discovery, suggesting that

The authentic journey lurks inside the imaginary of tourism as the "voyage of self discovery" along with the *drive* waiting to leap out and enclose it no less than the encounter - for which there can be no preparation - with otherness as Other, to turn it back into a guilt trip as the holiday ordeal, to turn it inside out as the ironised *Bildungsroman*, the Package That Went Wrong

See Dick Hebdige, "Guilt Trips; Coming up against the wall", 1990, p 54. For Hebdidge, tourism provides a way for individuals to embark on encounters with the unexpected, prove that they are up to the task, and return home again a better person. For a tourist this often means assuming the freedom to go to exotic locations, partake in whatever such locations offer at the same time as leave a door open for the unexpected to happen. However, Hebdige thinks that the tourist's secret desire is to successfully endure the trauma of being away from one's familiar surroundings and, in meeting the challenges of being out of control, return home with the scalp of the adventure tied around one's waist. The purpose of the tourist's holiday is to manufacture situations in which the individual may engage with the otherness of the situations in which neither they or the individuals they are with are in control. When the encounter goes according to plan, it provides the individual with an opportunity to overcome their fear as well as prove that they are up to the challenges posed by the unknown. Tourism thus enables the individual to re-assert their supremacy in the world, both to their significant others in the places from where they come who dared not to undertake such a hazardous journey, and to the others they encounter 'on the road' who remain caged up in their immediate surroundings and are thus unable to demonstrate that they themselves are equal to the challenge. It might be said that such views of tourism are somewhat jaundiced.

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112 The notion of home can be associated with several characters in Wenders movies, not least in the name of Homer himself, who also suggests a pigeon that can find its way home from anywhere. The notion of home can also, however, be related to Konrad in *Faraway So Close!*, if, as seems likely, there is a connection between Konrad and the first post-War German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer and Konrad's role as the young Hanna's guardian in Wenders' film. In this sense, Konrad becomes a site/role that is nuanced with being the guardian-patron father of the re-born German nation during the 50s and 60s much as Konrad became the guardian-foster parent for the fatherless Hanna in *Faraway So Close!* Thomas Elsaesser adds another slant to the analysis of the New German cineastes *ancestral anxiety*, calling the phenomenon the *Kaspar Hauser Complex*, a term derived from Werner Herzog's *The Mystery of Kaspar Hauser* (1975). Elsaesser suggests this 'complex psychoanalytical motif [was about a] fantasy of being abandoned, fatherless, with an uncertain relationship to all forms of socialisation, to sexual identity and adulthood, attempting to survive between a good father substitute and a bad father image' (Elsaesser, 1994, p 226). Elsaesser elsewhere adds that the complex was made up of three conflicting factors; i) German history as both a continuity and discontinuity with its past, prior to as well as including Fascism, ii) a fractured family in which sexual power was asymmetrical and out of balance, and in which an absent father implicated the family's role in founding Fascism. and iii) post-war German desire to gain legitimacy as a viable but *new* form of German culture. This third aspect could, Elsaesser suggests, incorporate and subsume the first two elements. By addressing the need for legitimacy, New German cineastes could resolve the other factors and lead to some form of redemption.

113 Doreen Massey also earlier states that

the 'identity of a place' is much more open and provisional than most discussions allow. ..what is specific about a place, its identity, is always formed by the juxtaposition and co-presence there of particular sets of social interrelations, and by the effects which that juxtaposition and co-presence produce. ... a proportion of social interrelations will be wider than and go beyond the area being referred to in any particular context as a place. ... places are inevitably unfixed. ... because the social relations out of which they are constructed are themselves ... dynamic and changing. They are also unfixed because of the continual production of further social effects through the very juxtaposition of those social relations. Places cannot 'really' be characterised by a recourse to some essential, internalised moment. ... All of which means ... that the identity of any place, including that place called home is in one sense forever open to contestation. ... this reading of space and place the identity of place is in part constructed out of positive interrelations with elsewhere.

Doreen Massey, "A place called Home", 1992, pp 13 - 14.

114 See the description of the ending of *Faraway So Close!* in Chapter 4, pp 4 - 5, *passim*.

## Chapter 6

### The Work of Art in the Age of Global Culture

This Thesis has investigated the nature of the work of art in the age of global culture. I used Walter Benjamin (Chapter 2) to identify how art is connected to social bonds and relations. Benjamin focuses on cultural situations that typify modern capitalist societies and provides a method that analyses films which gives this Thesis its basic proposition: The work of art perpetuates cultural bonds and social relations between individuals and through them the renewal of society. Benjamin also shows how the work of art can be translated into socio-linguistic contexts far from the point of the works origin. His concept of translation helps to understand the work of art in a global context. Finally, Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" indicates how an individual encountering an artefact made to represent a cultural moment foreign to the viewers' own location in time and space can approach it as the work of others who have participated in the production of the artifact but who are effaced or erased from the object either by the passage of time or the process of exhibition in their living situation. Chapter 2 provided the basic analytical thrust that identified how the work of art in global culture takes place. The strengths of the analysis is the insight Benjamin provides into the ideologies that underpin the production of art in modern capitalist societies. The analytical approach outlined in the "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, when used in conjunction with the notion of the 'interlinear'<sup>1</sup> in "Translation" and the 'angel of history'<sup>2</sup> in the "Philosophy of History" essay, helps to identify how the work of art takes place in contexts where art is removed from its locus of production and from its socio-cultural and linguistic setting and seen in a global context. The weakness of a method solely based on Benjamin, however, is that it does not clearly indicate how one may assess when the work of art allows the

individual to alter the bonds and relations perpetuated in individual encounters with the object. In addressing this, I introduced the work of cognitivist film theorist Torben Graag Grodal in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 introduced a theory that art can produce higher states of consciousness. Through Grodal's work on art and mainstream films, I examined how a work of higher artistic merit can be distinguished from the production of more mundane artefacts. By using the work of neuroscience, Grodal argues that the work of art results a state of higher consciousness. Through Grodal I suggest that it is possible to show how works of art do indeed heighten the conscious awareness of the individual, which helps that individual to participate in the production of social bonds and cultural relations with others. I tested Grodal's theory by analysing two films, the first, *Wings of Desire*, is a film that Grodal defines as an art film. Grodal's theory shows that Wenders' film may be regarded as a work of art because it induces higher states of awareness of the viewers reality. The second film I examined was *City of Angels*, Brad Silberling's Hollywood financed remake of *Wings of Desire*. Although Silberling's film fits generally into Grodal's taxonomy as a mainstream production, a category which he proposes does not indicate a work of higher artistic merit, I found that this film can produce higher states of reflective consciousness in its viewer, depending on the cultural information that viewer associates with the film. From this I concluded that the most important determinant in the nature of the work of art is derived from the interaction between the individual who encounters art and the qualities of the object on display. This modifies Grodal's theory, who focuses on the artistic style, aesthetics, and intention of the producer as the most important sources in arts capacity to produce higher states of consciousness in the individual. While certainly the context of display, surrounding critical material, producers interests, and institutional acceptance of the artifact all influence how an individual will approach the

work, my conclusion is that these should remain secondary to the role played by the individual. Nevertheless, Grodal's method provides a framework that identifies the work of an exceptional artifact from the work of more mundane products.

Chapters 2 and 3 assemble an interdisciplinary method. This method draws primarily from the work of Walter Benjamin but it is complimented by neuro-cognitive approach of Torben Graag Grodal. In bringing the approaches of Benjamin and Grodal together, however, this Thesis does not claim to produce an analysis that conforms to either cognitive film analysis nor to the methods of social inquiry tradition linked to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. The combination of these approaches produces findings that differ from both a purely cognitive or Critical Theory analysis, but the insight this combined method produces in looking at what actually happens when an individual encounters a film has made the move a valuable and productive one. In realising this method however, the aspects of the method derived from Grodal's approach are applied selectively, on a film by film, individual by individual basis. In addition, such findings remain subjected to a political and ideological analyses derived from Benjamin's three essays.

In Chapter 4 I looked at Wenders' two "Angels in Berlin" films in terms of how they identify the global city. I focused on the cinematic city as a locus for the formation of the bonds and relations between individuals in global society. This Chapter introduced discourses surrounding the global and by mapping the history of the cinematic city before examining how Wenders two films identify aspects not always seen as central in these discourses. In particular I argued that European films such as Wenders' introduce different perspectives of life in the city not evident, or evident as strongly, in Hollywood representations. I also took issue with economic as well as cultural and linguistic assumptions that dominate discourses

concerning the constitution of the global city. I then examined how Wenders' two films deepen the perception and understanding of individual experiences of the global city. *Wings of Desire* identifies and articulates how the cultural realities of the Cold War impacted on the everyday life of the citizens. This Chapter deconstructed the symbolic significance of East and West Berlin, relating that to individual reality in the city. In particular I show how this film develops a strong sense of alienation in the Cold War city, portraying the individuals sense of displacement and dislocation amidst a transnational struggle for global power and domination. This Chapter also moves towards understanding reactions and responses to the emergence of the global city, as evidenced by individuals in the film and corroborated by discussions of experiences in reality. I then turned to analyse how the depiction of Berlin evolves in *Faraway So Close!*. Here I looked at how the character of Winter symbolised the fate of people acculturated in the realities of the Cold War struggling to translate their lives into the challenging new realities presented by the post-Communist world. Although the end of the Cold War reduced military tension and the threat of nuclear war, a factor that helped reduce the individuals alienation in the world, a new danger has arisen. With the collapse of the German Democratic Republic, the darker aspects of Berlins history again came to the surface, as the ghosts that had long lay hidden returned to make a profit from the East German State's dismemberment. With the conversion of the global city's economy to an ideology of free market capitalism, the city's inhabitants now became exposed to new dangers, namely becoming vulnerable to exploitation by those wishing to take advantage of the dismemberment of the Cold War structures and turn a quick profit. In concluding this Chapter, I look at how Cassiel responds to the challenges posed by the city's re-integration into the global economy by reasserting the importance of other values upon which to

base their relations with others such as love, family, and the individuals moral sense of responsibility.

Chapter 5 examined how *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* depict a range of individual subjects as they struggle to participate in the life of the city. Beginning with an outline of some of the debates concerning citizenship, I considered the media's role in the proliferation of different identities in the city. I then contextualised this discussion historically by looking at the exclusion of the Jews from Nazi Germany, and how Wenders enables different subjects in his films to be included or excluded from participating in the city. This brought me again to look at how naming and language mediates the subjects successful entry or denial in the global city, opening an excursion into a range of strategies individuals can adopt when they are strangers seeking to gain access into different sectors of the global city. I then began to consider how Wenders' films construct the successful introduction of his angels in the city. I then linked Wenders' road films to the *Bildungsroman* journey and discuss the sense of disorientation many of his protagonists seem to express. However, rather than suggesting that his protagonists indecisiveness is a weakness of Wenders' film aesthetic, I suggested that Wenders' construction of his heroes reflects a general sense of spatial disorientation many experience in the life of the global city. I considered the value of Daniel's and Cassiel's contributions to the life of the city not only as active participants, but also because of their reflective contemplations as outside observers. This suggests the continuing importance and value of the strangers' disinterested observations and critical reflections of the life of a community and presents a case for the need to include all outsiders in the life of the global city. Tracing this discussion through the evolution of Wenders' earlier films, this Chapter argues that the Romantic journey to self discovery can provide the ground for the individual to establish new relations with others based not on

traditional notions of blood ties or historical connection, but on the common experiences gained by undertaking the journey itself. This appears to be the point that Homer emphasises when he insists on the role that narrative can play in *Wings of Desire*, a theme Wenders returns to in *Faraway So Close!*. Reflecting on how Wenders portrays his characters' attempts to participate in these and earlier films, this Chapter concludes that Wenders has reworked the Romantics journey to self realisation through to narratives of the road film genre so that the journey in his films can be seen as a realisation and a renewal of the social bond and cultural relations of the new peoples city. This opens a way of reassessing Wenders' angels trajectories into the city as examples of how strangers can be included in contemporary life of the global city, and why their inclusion is important. However, *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* still emphasise a male oriented subjectivity in Wenders' *Bildungsroman* tradition and there remain aspects in these films representations that are still unrepresentative and exclusive.

Thus Chapters 4 and 5 showed how Wenders' two "Angels in Berlin" films contribute new understanding of the global city. Chapter 4 established an extended perimeter of the global city and Chapter 5 how the films deal with and realise the participation of a variety of different characters. Rather than condemning Wenders for the limitations and selectivity of his films representations, however, I argued that no individual or film can ever represent the life of others effectively, although it remains important to point out the shortcomings. It is also important to continually undertake additional research and production, both in making cinema and in analysing it, for the scope of the life of individuals can only ever be provisionally articulated by each new expressive and interpretative intervention. There are practical reasons for insisting on this constant re-working of both the creation of artistic expressions and the re-interpretation of them.

## I

### The Importance of Mediation in the Formation of Society

One of the features of life in the global city is the focus on and portrayal of difference and identity. Few contexts offer individuals such an array of strangers using a profusion of languages to express their ever changing perspectives of and within the world. This makes global culture both extraordinarily rich and extraordinarily enriching. However, as Chapters 4 and 5 indicate, life in the global city has unseated notions that once secured the individuals sense of place and identity as well as what constitutes acceptable forms of behaviour. Consequently, there have been attempts to construct and re-construct locally situated, alternative, and particularist discourses to situate individual relations with a specific space, place, and identity. On a global level, such responses appear to re-assert cultural difference and regional identity amongst and within a proliferation different communities. Often these discourses get articulated around "traditional" notions such as blood ties, family, and ways of life.

When global culture is governed by economic relations however, this has very different implications on the individual, depending on the economic positions they present on arrival in different parts of the world. An economically empowered (usually Western) "outsider" is often made to feel welcome when a local community learns of the significance of the money such a stranger brings. In this situation, the "outsider" experiences local practices as exotic assertions of difference which they, as strangers, may come to value as they pursue cultural enrichment and cultural stimulation through contact with others. However, when an "outsider" who does not possess a strong economic base arrives in the same situation, they may find that the same "traditions" represent powerful human responses to

their presence that restrict their access to participate in that culture. Now "tradition" takes a form of resistance against the changes that the strangers presence actualises in indigenous cultural relations and social bonds. The imposition of such limitations are particularly severe when the presence of the stranger is thought to affect and threaten the social or economic status of a locality. In fact, many "traditional" practices often turn out to be revisionist attempts to re-establish totalising normative codes of dress, personal conduct, and modes of speech that constrain the individuals freedom of expression to notional constructions limited by overarching myths of national identity.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to the fate of some individuals in contemporary global society, for many film-makers, art offers a way to engage with life in unique and personally meaningful ways. Wenders himself suggests that 'cinema has something to do with our lives'.<sup>4</sup> Wenders' realisation of the cinemas capacity to express something about 'our lives' brought Thomas Elsaesser to describe Wenders' post war generation of West German film-makers as

an authors cinema growing confident of its audience only by a gradual process of self-definition and self-representation, ... a cinema self-consciously social (almost in terms of the contemporaneous Third World national cinemas), unsure of its stylistic traditions, but 'political' and prepared to be provincial.<sup>5</sup>

Elsaesser was talking about an art-film movement that was born in the 1960s and came of age in the 1970s, a time when individuals had not been subjected to the restructuring of the global economy. This was a period when many Western nations are said to have overtly embraced many additional rights of the individual over and above the rights of the State or corporation. Such rights included what might be thought of as modern republican guarantees of personal privacy and the right to believe whatever one wanted, the freedom to associate with whom one decided and in whatever way one chooses, as well as the removal of State and other forms of censorship. In addition, the notion of individual rights began to incorporate then newly

defined rights to be different and the freedom of express that difference - including sexual difference - with equal respect for and from others in a multicultural context. This was the world within which Wenders and his generation of film makers came to prominence.

In spite of the freedom of expression artists like Wenders were able to assume, however, their work was still 'constrained' by the sensibilities of their audience. When art leaves the locus of its progenitors studio and steps onto a wider stage, there must be a transformation of their work that takes it beyond the 'provincialism' of being its creators own expression. Benjamin's theory of translation suggests that a work of art that 'speaks' to a global audience gains a life of its own because the language of its articulation no longer functions in a singular discursive plane, but reverberates across the different expressive articulations that it assumes in being translated into each new receptive context. The translation of art transforms both the language of the audiences and the language of the artists and moves the work art closer to expressing something in what Benjamin calls 'pure language'.<sup>6</sup> The extent of this transformation can be testified by the varied responses given to Wenders' films. For example, in Chapter 5 I argued that Wenders' self-defining, self-representing 'provincialism' represents a Western, white, male orientation. However, as Kathe Giest points out in relation to one of Wenders' earlier films, *The Scarlet Letter* (1973), Wenders presents a surprisingly feminist perspective which she explains away as being a reflection - in 'spirit if not in detail'<sup>7</sup> - of the book the film is based. Although Giest concludes this is an anomaly in Wenders' work and points out that after the disappointing reception he received for *The Scarlet Letter*, Wenders staunchly maintained 'that it's important that women make films about themselves and men make films about themselves'.<sup>8</sup> As bell hooks incredulously recounts however, when Wenders came to address what he perceived as reality in Berlin in *Wings of Desire*, at least one film reviewer

could still detect a 'feminist' message in his film.<sup>9</sup> This was so even though Wenders has confessed that 'As a man you can't just make unqualified statements about women'.<sup>10</sup> Deciding who is right and who is wrong about whether Wenders is a closet feminist or a rabid masculinist is not what interests me here however. Rather, this as an example of the open endedness of meaning and cultural values that art assumes when it moves beyond the locus of its creators studio and expresses itself freely in its encounter with others in a global context.

The capacity of art to send language into an abyss of contradictions and meaninglessness is a phenomenon Benjamin deals with in the "Task of the Translator". However, as I argue in Chapter 2, an art form such as film does not rely as heavily on its translator in order to be translated into a global context. To be precise, the translator of a film is not simply the person who writes the subtitles or does the overdub for a film's translation in a global context. The multi-media nature of a filmic perception means that, unlike a written text, the signifying autonomy of the visual and aural material of a film enables it to act more as its own translation. However, as Benjamin points out in his "Mechanical Reproduction" essay, the apparent autonomy of this perceptual material can be misleading, for the work of the audience in translating its perception meaningfully into their viewing context remains both central and crucial, even if, as Benjamin also points out, many individuals viewing this material remain unaware of their own participation in the re-production of a film's meaning. As I argue in Chapter 3, a superior work of art helps its viewer to become aware of their positioning in relation to the subject and the object of art as well as act accordingly and consciously in response. This means that both views about the apparent feminism or lack thereof in Wenders' films are correct, depending on the relative position of each individual viewer.

The contradictions this creates can be explained by again referring to Benjamin's method of translation. For Benjamin, art assumes a life of its own when it is translated because a translation signifies relationships that function only on a symbolic level of language and have nothing more to do with the living relations art had with what it was originally created to express. This is when art enters into an 'interlinear' domain that prefigures what Benjamin terms as 'the true language'.<sup>11</sup> This is when the language of the translation becomes 'so profound that sense is touched by language only the way an aeolian harp is touched by the wind.'<sup>12</sup> Benjamin's notion of translation thus frees art and language from the authority of both arts maker or transmitter as well as its viewer or communicant. Yet Benjamin shows throughout this essay that the actuality of 'pure language' remains idealised, something that the combined efforts of all translatable expressions can only work towards. For Benjamin, the manifestation of 'true language' remains progressive and each translation is merely a prototype for what is yet to come. The infinite polysemy of art that is 'unconditionally translatable'<sup>13</sup> unseats grammar as the governor of language and rejoins Benjamin's notion of the 'interlinear' with Nietzsche's proposition that God is dead and that, beyond a certain point, human life is ultimately meaningless. However, while Nietzsche's proposition may be of great concern to philosophers, it has little bearing on the actual lived experience of the human subject who is neither dead and nor is their life in the global city meaningless. For the majority of individuals, and for Wenders and his viewers, the absolute authority of (the) God(s) to determine a film's meanings continues to reside in the voice of the speaker residing in each of viewer when they assume their undeniable place in the pantheon of minor Gods in interpreting what a film is saying.

Rather than producing a universal proposition to summarise the life and work of art in global culture through Wenders' films, therefore, this

This thesis finally advocates on-going research and production so as to continually map and redefine the complex interactions taking place when individuals interact with art in everyday life. Each new study of art enhances our understanding of the nature of contemporary relations in global society and culture, and so, every study remains crucial in itself to conduct although it also remains limited. This brings me back to how possible, feasible and desirable is it to ask "what is the work of art in the age of global culture?" In addressing the validity of this question, it is time to open the discussion to include a wider range of material from other situations and contexts. I turn to more recent events in Holland where the work of artists and the work of individuals engaging with art in the public domain have co-incided with dramatic consequences.

## II

### **Citizenship and Self Representation in the Global City**

The questions raised about the role of art in enabling participation in and representation of the global city and its citizens in the previous Chapters highlight the continuing importance of the individuals ability to control their self representation. Although this Thesis has concentrated on the role of film, every form of cultural production plays a role in the mediated world of global culture. A lot of discussion has focused on the role of the internet, yet older media such as film, television, and radio continue to play a strategic role in the developing culture of the global city. With an explosion of representation across an expanding horizon of media screens, there has been a marked reaction in some sectors of the global community to the profusion of cultures competing with and impinging on the individuals sense of identity and cultural orientation. Some reactions attempt to include new cultural formations engendered by globalisation, other responses have

adopted a reactionary stance. Some of the most determined resistance to globalisation has come from autochthonous and indigenous groups who have re-asserted themselves against a perceived invasion of outsiders.<sup>14</sup> While such reactions can be understood in terms of the increased insecurity in the face of changes to the global economy, the reproduction of localised and traditional social bonds, cultural relations, and regional identities as a response to perceived threats from others does not guarantee the survival of an individual's culture nor does it rescue the individual from having to articulate new, innovative, and authentic expressions in order to establish who they are, what they think, and how they feel in relation to a changing world around them. This makes the work of art in articulating and integrating different individuals' sense of place, bonds and relations with others, and personal identifications more important than ever. Yet, as the study of Wenders' *Wings of Desire* and Silberling's *City of Angels* in Chapter 3 shows, not all artefacts are equally successful in facilitating this work. Indeed, what this Thesis emphasises as a whole is the importance of a continuous re-assessment of the work of art so that our understanding of its critically reflexive social work is continually brought up to date with the ever changing realities of the individual in contemporary society.

The discussion that follows demonstrates why the continuous re-assessment of the work of art needs to be constantly undertaken. The discussion shifts focus away from the city of Berlin and on to more recent events in Holland. This is done partly to bring the Thesis up to date with how the work of art continues to shape events in cities around the world. Shifting this discussion away from Berlin and on to another society at this point also helps to establish whether this Thesis has validity in a global context. That Holland has long been recognised as an exemplary tolerant society in which difference and openness to others are foundational principles is another reason for looking at what is happening in Dutch society. This discussion

examines how Dutch culture, which itself occupies a predominant position in the longer evolution of modern global culture, is dealing with different individuals attempts to participate in the life of the society around them. The seriousness of events considered stresses again the significance of the work of art plays in forming the realities of the individual, irrespective of the nature and context of that individuals encounter with art. .

#### 1) The Limits of Tolerance

The issue of who gets represented in the city, and the manner of their representation brings into question the fundamental way media, culture, and society deal with the issues of equity, rights, and obligations of not only those who are identifiably different, but all individuals in a society. This goes to the core of a persons' ability to participate in the everyday affairs of their culture, indicating how the modern city cultivates the basic rights of all its inhabitants. In *Culture and Citizenship*, Nick Stevenson warns that one of the problems that may arise when culture is used as a basis for establishing citizenship is racism.<sup>15</sup> The relative objectivity in the treatment and representation of people expressing difference in the media may depend on ones perspective, sympathies, and cultural alliances, yet there appears to be a lack of opportunity for unconventional individuals to express themselves through the Western media. The representations of Arabs in *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* not only indicate blind spots in Wenders' films. As bell hooks suggests, 'we must [all] be willing to explore the cultural blindness'<sup>16</sup> that exist in our culture and media representations respectively. The Netherlands provide a fruitful context in which to examine Western blind spots because Dutch society is historically reputed to be one of the most tolerant, open, and accepting in Europe. The myth of Dutch tolerance began to show its shortcomings, however, in the circumstances surrounding the

murders of the radical anti-immigration politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and film director Theo van Gogh in 2004.

The emergence of the *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* as a political force in Holland during the 2002 elections, Jörg Heider's party in Austria, or the One Nation Party in Australia during the 1990s should not be dismissed as short-lived aberrations embodying a passing fear that Dutch, Austrian, and Australian culture was about to be overwhelmed by foreigners. As with Leon de Winter's *Vlaamse Blok* in Belgium, Fortuyn's party publicly challenged the rights of immigrants and other non-Dutch nationals to continue living in their host country while still bearing allegiance to other cultural identities. The basic point Fortuyn promoted was the idea that if someone wants to live in the Netherlands, they should assimilate into Dutch culture and society. For Fortuyn and his followers, assimilation meant that foreigners desist from publicly displaying or expressing experiences and histories that do not reflect Dutch culture and beliefs. Fortuyn further specified that the greatest single source of the problem came from the Turkish and Moroccan Muslims. For Fortuyn and his followers, there seems to be a basic conflict between Islam and Christian values. As a Christian, Western democratic society, Holland, so it seems, should not be asked nor can it be expected to tolerate the presence of other cultural or religious expressions within its constituency unless such expressions defer to and accept their submersion within Dutch culture.

Indigenous Dutch are not the first nor are they unique in thinking that their culture is about to be overwhelmed by an influx of 'others', or that the Dutch language, Dutch codes of behaviour, and Dutch cultural values are being 'eroded', particularly by people bearing attachments to other languages, religions, beliefs, and life-styles. On the contrary, the fact that Dutch culture is constituted on myths of tolerance and respect for others

indicates the depth of fear and perception of threat that many people in the world feel. This sense of threat has arisen in a context when those who have long been subjugated and subdued by both national and international forms of colonisation have finally begun to gain access to, or are assuming for themselves, forms of representation, expression, and articulation on the global stage independently of their former colonial rulers. The increasing assertiveness of others in the global arena appears to have unhinged the apparent peaceful equilibrium that settled on an increasingly comfortable West for much of the second half of the 20th Century, bringing to the surface latent tensions underpinning a global community founded on and striving towards a modernity that is supposedly based on progressive notions of universal rights and obligations, equality, justice and fraternity, and a sense of identification with others in an open, inclusive democratic, culturally diverse community that purports to give everyone the freedom to express themselves frankly, respectfully, and without fear.

The repercussions of growing uncertainty, loss of confidence, and failing good will and understanding towards others has been felt most by those whose position in society is the weakest, and whose voice is easiest to ignore, silence, and manipulate. It thus appears that violence on the global stage may be set to escalate as Governments try to reassure their constituents that there really is someone in control. It is not unusual that, with apparent threats to civil society and an outbreak of violence, governments implement harsher laws and expectations of conformity, ostensibly in order to establish peace and maintain social cohesion. Invariably, greatest damage is inflicted on ordinary citizens whose rights to live and express themselves in accordance with their authentic experiences are curtailed. The exertion of greater control and restriction on people amidst rising xenophobia and increasing incidences of violence will not, however, ease global tensions, but rather heighten individuals awareness that they are being further

excluded from participating in and contribute to finding solutions to problems facing their society.<sup>17</sup>

## 2) The Role of Media in a Participatory Society

The violent expression of opinions and points of view can be gauged by events surrounding the recent murder of film director Theo van Gogh. Although van Gogh's killers motivation is yet to be conclusively established, it is relatively clear that it is linked to a television drama van Gogh directed called *Submission: Part 1*.<sup>18</sup> Commissioned by the VPRO, Holland's highly respected culturally oriented free to air television broadcaster, *Submission* is a fictional documentary written by VVD<sup>19</sup> politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali and portrays Ali's criticism of the treatment of women in Muslim cultures. Ali's attacks on Muslim culture are well known in Holland and, in this television drama, she continues to highlight injustices against Muslim women both forcefully and in an emotionally provocative manner.<sup>20</sup> Located in a fictional country called Islamistan, Ali's and van Goths film develops stories concerning the lives of four women. Each story is told by a narrator named Amina who documents the submission of the women to the Koran. Each story portrays the woman in circumstances where selected texts from the Koran are projected over her body. Despite all their earnest attempts to live according to the word of God, each women tells a tale in which they must endure rape, shame, the threat of punishment such as public whipping, and even execution.

A film like *Submission* highlights the significance the media plays in modern society, not only in moving forward social agendas, but also in providing avenues through which individuals legitimate their claims for social participation and cultural inclusion. As Stevenson points out,

The progressive enframing of key political debates within print and radio, and the dominant medium television has been one of the major 'cultural' transformations of the twentieth century. The development of a sophisticated array of visual codes

and repertoires that interrupt the agendas of more hegemonic institutions and cultures is an essential armament within the semiotic society.<sup>21</sup>

The implications surrounding the murder of van Gogh are complex and the repercussions stemming from it raise many profound questions that face all those living in today's global society. In addition to increased racially motivated violent street attacks against both white and 'coloured' Dutch nationals being attributed to the rising tensions between different sectors of the Dutch community, churches and mosques have been defaced and burned as well as a number of Muslim private schools ransacked in both Germany and Holland. Taking a leading role as a clearing house for public debate, internationally oriented broadcasters like Deutsche Welle TV and the BBC have invited leaders of the Muslim community to be subject to a merciless form of scrutiny by media interview as they are repeatedly called to answer questions about Muslims ability to adapt and live peacefully according to European custom.

In Holland however, the discourse surrounding van Goths death has been framed within a context of the right to express ones self. In the context of a liberal, Western style, Christian democracy like the Netherlands, it has been argued, the basic right an individual has to express themselves has become paramount as long as they do so in a socially acceptable manner. On the surface at least, there appears to be a strong case in support of Ali's and van Goths rights to make their television drama therefore. Yet while researchers and European administrators have for a long time recognised the importance of expressive freedom in artistic productions as well as the broadcasting media in helping to bring about a sense of community in the EU, less attention has been spent on the potential damage such expression may generate.<sup>22</sup>

An 'in principle' expression of support for Ali's and van Gogh's liberal rights to express themselves ignores the fact that, in Holland, spokespersons and apologists for Muslims generally have few avenues open to them to credibly counter the views put through Holland's most intellectually sophisticated broadcast channel.<sup>23</sup> In addition, van Gogh himself was a highly regarded film maker as well as being a distant relative of Vincent van Gogh. It is not difficult to recognise how hard it would be to counterbalance van Gogh's prominent place in the cultural psyche of indigenous Dutch people by individuals with a relatively recent history of attachment to the Netherlands. Dutch debate on this issue has generally failed to recognise that the right of expression that van Gogh was granted, re-inforced by Ali's pre-eminent position as an outspoken, articulate, and generally well known politician in the Dutch Government, was not shared by the people whose values were attacked by their programme.

The consequent attacks on Muslim as well as Christian churches and other institutions in Holland have shown that even in a tolerant culture such as the Netherlands, Western societies are as yet unable to find peaceful ways of managing, respecting, and resolving what are being constructed as *essential cultural differences* between Western and non Western people. Yet after what happened when Salman Rushdie's published *The Satanic Verses*, it is impossible to plead ignorance of the seriousness of the threat that Ali and van Gogh were inviting. Media organisations like the VPRO, politicians like Ali, as well as those working as media practitioners like van Gogh, and even artists like Wenders need to re-think the way they produce their work, particularly when a work has a potential to incite violent responses from its public exhibition. In a global context, such a move would not automatically be dismissed as an act of 'self censorship' nor should it be disparaged as adhering to a line of 'political correctness'. Rather it should be seen as

taking pragmatic responsibility for the work art does by remaining sensitive and aware of its potential repercussions on others.

What ought to be obvious is that it is not sufficient to allow elite members of society unlimited freedom to express themselves in the public domain while other individuals are denied access. If global culture is to represent and enable individual subjects in the global city to communicate with each other, and through that communication participate actively in consciously authenticating the formation of the cultural relations so that the social bonds created both represent and reflect equally and appropriately the interests of all individual in that society, then the individual must be able to engage in the process of cultural production irrespective of who they are, where they come from, what language they speak, what they have to say, and how they say it. Citing Raymond Williams, Stevenson states 'society's communicative channels [must give] a voice to those excluded from the centres of cultural and political power.'<sup>24</sup> Continuing on from Williams' thoughts, Stevenson adds that enabling the participation of the individual in cultivating global culture means giving them unfettered access to the production of meaning and aesthetics.<sup>25</sup>

#### i) Democratising the Production of Cultural Meaning and Aesthetics

In concluding *Culture and Society*, Williams presents an optimistic view about the role that media and art can play in realising a democratic community.<sup>26</sup> Williams puts a strong case for enabling the individual to act within the structures of society while enabling them to act as sources rather than merely agents.<sup>27</sup> Williams turned to the question of intention in communication, distinguishing along the way two aspects in both the artist/producer as well as in the audience;

If our purpose is art, education, the giving of information or opinion, our interpretation will be in terms of the rational and interested being. If, on the other hand, our purpose is manipulation - the persuasion of a large number of

people to act, feel, think, know, in certain ways, the convenient formula will be that of the masses.<sup>28</sup>

The first of the two categories of cultural producers, those involved in the production of art, education, information, or opinion, Williams called 'sources' while the second he termed 'agents'. Agents can be characterised when the individual whose 'expression is subordinated to an undeclared intention... [An agent is] not a source, because the intention [of their communication] lies elsewhere' (p 304). These are important categories that refine understanding of the relationship between the producer and the audience as well as shedding light on the role of the culture and media industries more broadly. They also rejoin the discussion of the relationships between art, mass audiences, and the culture industry back to the question of propaganda. Williams then added that

Any practical denial of the relation between conviction and communication, between experience and expression, is morally damaging alike to the individual and to the common language.<sup>29</sup>

In the context of communication forms such as the cinema, television, and radio broadcasting, Williams suggests that even the production of artistic, educational, informational, or opinion driven content may be rendered to propaganda and ideology if the intention of either the creator or the medium through which the communication takes place acts to deny relationships between their convictions and experiences from communication and expression.<sup>30</sup> At such a point, Williams suggests, the art object is no longer a source (of information, education, opinion, and so forth) but becomes merely the agent for a particular form of communication whose intention is kept hidden from its recipient. The production of artefacts by agents communicating something whose actual intention remains hidden irrespective of their own convictions and experiences is the point where art loses or ignores its capacity to respond to the cultural realities from which it

emerges and which art must finally re-address if it is to become part of living cultural exchanges. When art adheres to or seeks to reproduce a particular set of propositions or meanings rather than remaining open as a source of research and production of new, innovative, and original reflexive knowledge, art loses its cultural, communicational, performative, and intellectual integrity. This is the propaganda art Benjamin saw in the unquestioning perpetuation of capitalism. As the analysis of Charlie Chaplin's films suggests,<sup>31</sup> this sort of art arises not only out of totalitarian regimes; Hollywood and commercial productions are just as adept at producing fascist art.

ii) Are "Others" and 'Cultural Differences' really the problem?

The conflation of conflicts between individuals coming from increasingly varied cultural realities can be at least partly attributed to the role of media in representing the nature of contemporary life in a global, postindustrial, postcolonial, and postmodern society. Unlike earlier colonial periods in which colonising nations such as Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, France were shielded from having to deal with the other on equal terms, every culture in the world today is confronted by an increasingly vocal and sometimes pro-active presence of others who refuse to adhere to indigenous or traditional notions of self and identity in time and space. This has led to a confusion of what are acceptable norms and codes of behaviour, what constitutes respect for others, what constitutes an act of violence, as well as what constitutes an act of free speech. It is evident that a global consensus on such values are far from being established or worked through rigorously and inclusively. As Cassiel constantly says as he travels down the various paths that open before him in *Faraway So Close!*, every individual living in the global city must struggle to know what 'doing good' means when there are no governing codes of behaviour, ethics, and morality

in contemporary society. As long as inequity remains in the way some individuals can gain access to, participate in, and express themselves in the emergent realities of global society, it should be apparent that violent conflicts will remain a feature of human interactions in the global city.

Stevenson's early warning in the opening pages of *Culture and Citizenship* points out how culture can be made to act as an exclusive and counterproductive determinant of citizenship. There are good reasons for remaining cautious in approaching the notion of cultural citizenship therefore, but it is also clear that if citizenship is to remain a mechanism of democratic inclusion, our understanding of citizenship must incorporate people who form part of and make up the realities of global society. It is not sufficient to remain content within existing understanding of what citizenship entails in terms of both rights and responsibilities. Concerted efforts must be made to include the expressions of all those living in and whose lives are subject to the entirety that now makes up global culture. As van Goths programme demonstrates, media forms like television, film, and the internet provide important avenues for allowing individuals to express themselves, but these must be available to everyone equitably and fairly. What is also clear is how effective the work of artists like van Goths continues to be in forming of the bonds and relations between individuals in society. What van Goths assassination also indicates is the seriousness of their work in society.

### III

#### Concluding

This Thesis refines the understanding about art by confirming the work that art does in society. It has shown that Benjamin's analysis in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" remains a valuable tool and, when

considered in relation to the body of Benjamin's work, continues to produce valuable insight even when applied in a global context. This Thesis stresses the continuing importance and significance of the individual over and above other authorial sources such as those institutions that seek to determine the value of the work of art in a global context. What emerges from this is that the work of art may realistically aspire to exert strong moral as well as practical influences on the individual. By showing how art draws the individuals attention to the ideological and political dimensions affecting their bonds and relations in the production of culture, this study of the work of art suggests that there is a role that art plays that is greater than that of a fetish commodity the art market assigns to it. Furthermore, the understanding of culture that emerges in this Thesis indicates that if global culture is to live up to its name, it must include every potential subjective experience of the work of art because of the potential that experience has to contribute to the on-going formation of global culture.

In terms of Wenders' films, the Thesis has shown that *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* remain important not just because they identify significant aspects of the individuals experience of life in contemporary cities, but they track the cultural developments during the last decade of the Cold War and the first decade of the post-communist era. Although Wenders is a complicated film-maker who, it must be said, does not embody a pure German or European art sensibility - he is too heavily influenced by Hollywood to be that - *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close* open new, non-Anglo and non-economics oriented discourses concerning life in the city at the end of the 20th Century. Further analyses of these films suggests that they may also reveal how the era of the Cold War, generally identified in the West with the 'postmodern condition', has given way in the decade(s) immediately following to a re-assertion of earlier forms of modernism. Putting this in tentative terms, I suggest that further research tracking the

narrative trajectories between *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* will indicate how, with the collapse of Communism, there has been a resurgence of a utilitarian modernism,<sup>32</sup> a move that combines both a nostalgic desire for a return to colonial sensibilities and securities of the 19th Century along with a contemporary re-working of faith in what art historian Kenneth Clark once called "Heroic Materialism".<sup>33</sup>

Consequent to making these films, Wenders' has both departed from and continued to develop themes found in *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* In terms of his departure, he has not returned to make any further films about Berlin, and his interest in the city seems to have waned. With films like *The Beuna Vista Social Club* and *Willie Nelson at the Teatro* (1998) Wenders returned to a musical theme he first established in *3 American LPs* (1969). Nevertheless, Wenders has continued to develop themes in films like *The End of Violence* (1997), *The Million Dollar Hotel* (2000), and *Land of Plenty* (2004) that promise serious social critiques. These include issues such as crime and corruption, human love and spirituality, social angst and disillusionment, and his inexhaustible passion for American culture. But, as with his earlier work, Wenders is more adept at opening doors that promise to lead to serious social criticism but which he fails to fully realise. In the *Land of Plenty*, this seems to have reached a hiatus in which he seems to deliberately fall back from confronting the self delusional world of the US, perhaps for fear of upsetting his audience. In recent years, Wenders has struggled to live up to the brilliance and originality of his early career films and has managed only to re-invent second rate re-makes. Arguably, his greatest international success since *Faraway So Close!* has been *The Beuna Vista Social Club*, a documentary film set in Cuba that is excellently shot and beautifully set. In general terms, therefore, Wenders' career as a film director appears to have gone into decline since his Berlin films.

In concluding, this study of Wenders' two "Angels in Berlin" films has tested a hypothesis concerning the continuing work of art in global culture. Although, as the conclusion of Chapter 5 suggested, no study should be regarded as comprehensive or complete in itself, this study has shown that Wenders' films I have considered can contribute to discourses about the global city as well as identifying how some individuals contribute to the cultural life of the global city. However, I have also identified some of the shortcomings in these depictions, and, in so far as such shortcomings can inform the individual on how to enhance their own individual participation, such shortcomings may be regarded as productive in themselves. Encounters with these films - both in the 'real' physical proximity of the cities in which the viewer lives as well as in the 'virtual' imaginary proximity of the individuals entry into the mediated global city - produce further encounters between individuals whereupon subjects arriving from potentially 'anywhere' in the world can engage together while continuing to act as differentiated beings seeking an authentic social discourse with others. The work of these and other films are bringing about the production of a global discourse that incorporates each and every individual coming into contact with them as participants in the production of meaning.

Films create this discourse by producing common experiences that shape how the individual relates to the world around them. Although the semiotic material that makes up global discourse is derived from the specificities of each individual's personal experience, it is nevertheless related together through associations made by the films. This produces what C.S. Peirce termed the 'ground'<sup>34</sup>, that is, a terrain that allows each new interpretant who encounters the signs produced by linguistic expressions such as a film to engage with and negotiate the film's meaning. When this negotiation takes place in a global context, the common experience of having encountered the films gives the individual the 'ground' through

which they can relate with other individuals meaningfully. This is so even when the significations each individual attributes to the film varies considerably. This process of global enculturation can be applied to any film that two or more individuals encounter in a global setting. Whether conscious of their participation or not, every individual who engages in the production of meaning of such film thus simultaneously engages in the production of a global semiotic systems whereby the parameters of contemporary life are simultaneously defined and promulgated. I therefore conclude this study has shown that the work of art in the age of global culture continues to renew the cultural relations and social bonds between individuals.

In addition, I have also shown that an exceptional work of art is one that helps the individual to become more aware of how they contribute to this process. What is more, the nature of this "social discourse" mitigates against the subjugation of the work of art to the 'voice of authority'<sup>35</sup> whether that is the authority of tradition or the art historian. To the extent that capitalism embodies a value free system of exchange between freely associating individuals independent of the individuals traditional relationship with the art object, capitalism has freed art and the individual to do their work in a more democratic context. However, by the time Wenders made *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!*, the freedom of association between art and the individual in capitalist culture had become reduced and fetishised to that of a decorative commodity. As American based art critic Robert Hughes concluded as long ago as 1980,

A cloud of uneasy knowingness has settled on American painting and sculpture. Its mark is a hapless scepticism about the very idea of deep engagement between art and life: a fear that to seek authentic feeling is to display naïveté, to abandon one's jealously hoarded "criticality" as an artist.<sup>36</sup>

Hughes' appeal to the 'authentic feeling' of the human subject reveals more than just a sensualist predisposition. It reproduces a worn out

Western binary that keeps creative 'criticality' as an intellectual activity distinct and separated from the embodied integration of the individuals emotional sensuality. As Torben Grodal's deferral to Antonio Damasio's work on human consciousness suggests however, physical scientists today agree that critical intellectual work is founded in a functional integration of human emotional responses generated by and through their biological and physical predispositions and experiences. The distinction between higher levels of critically reflexive intellectual thought and lower levels of sensually embodied stream of consciousness can no longer be thought through as opposed and distinguishable activities. It should now be possible for human scientists to both theoretically and analytically show that emotional and intellectual cognition are equally important and represent part of a continuum that is the performance of the individual in response to the world within which they live. Where distinctions continue to be made between such responses, it is now possible to show that such distinctions represent social rather than natural bonds and relations. For as long as the bonds and relations between individuals are defined by those individuals' social (and not natural) predispositions, such bonds and relations will continue to be contestable. The work of art in the age of global culture focuses the individuals attention on those bonds and relations, and, when necessary, enables them to contest them.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1992, pp 81 - 82.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid p 249.

<sup>3</sup> Some examples are the emergence of Jean Le Penn's party in France, Jörg Heider's party in Austria, the Neo Nazis in Germany and the U.K., and Pauline Hanson's party in Australia. In France, there has recently been a focus on re-establishing secular education in France, a move that has increased tensions between Muslim and the secular-Christian sectors of the community. Over the years there have been many studies of national identity. I find Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1994, an important one that links notions of national identity with the relatively recent development of the nation state in human history. Read in conjunction with works such as Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel; A Short History of Everybody for the last 13000 Years*, 1998,

- Theodore Zeldin's *An Intimate History of Humanity*, 1994, and Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man*, 1984, Anderson's book helps put notions of national identity in the broader and longer context of human identity. This reveals that human history has a long standing "tradition" of cultural diffusion through migration that stems back to pre-historic times. Putting the reactionary imposition of boundaries on strangers and the limitation of migration in recent decades in the former colonising nations of Western Europe in a critical perspective, it seems more accurate and scientifically sustainable to assert that migration and multicultural diffusion are in fact a more traditional source of human identity and social relations.
- 4 Wim Wenders cited in Eric Rentschler, *West German Filmmakers on Film: Visions and Voices*, 1988, p 153.
  - 5 Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema, A History*, 1994, p 73.
  - 6 Benjamin's thoughts on the evolution of language through translation are very significant both for the language of the translator as well as their audience. For example, he states, 'just as the tenor and the significance of the great works of literature undergo a complete transformation over the centuries, the mother tongue of the translator is transformed as well.' See Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" in *Illuminations*, 1992, p 74.
  - 7 The book was written by Nathaniel Hawthorne and is also called *The Scarlet Letter*. See Kathe Geist, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: From Paris France to Paris Texas*, 1988, p 32.
  - 8 Edward Lachman, Peter Lehman, and Robin Wood, "Wim Wenders: An Interview" in *Wide Angle* 2:4 (1979) p 78, cited in Geist, 1988, p 32.
  - 9 See bell hooks' reference to an interview in *Film Quarterly* in which the interviewer and Wenders 'were so congratulatory and confident that this film had a "feminist" message'. bell hooks, *Yearning; race, gender, and cultural politics*, 1990, p 170.
  - 10 Carina Zacharias, *Abendzeitung* (Munich), 29 July 1977, cited in Geist, 1988, p 32.
  - 11 Benjamin, 1992, p 82.
  - 12 Ibid.
  - 13 Ibid.
  - 14 The use of the words indigenous and autochthonous here may seem somewhat unconventional and even controversial here. This is so in terms of how the words are used in English more than in terms of what the words actually mean. In order to avoid confusion I shall cite an example from a non-English context. In Dutch, for instance, the word *autochtoon* is regularly used to describe native born Dutch individuals. This precisely indicates the problem associated with using such words, for someone born in Holland, just like someone born in Australia and in Japan, is indeed a native of that country, whether or not their ancestral origins are in that country or not. However, much effort is put in societies all over the world to distinguish autochthonous individual with long standing ancestral connection with a piece of territory from individuals with shorter and therefore non-indigenous connections with those places. This is so even though some of these non-indigenous individuals may have three or more generations of connection with that same territory. In "Indigenous Struggles and the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie", 1999, Jonathan Friedman takes up the case of indigenous groups in colonised context and argues how the discourses of native Americans, Australian Aboriginals, New Zealand Maoris and so on, have been exoticised by the 'voice of Wisdom, a way of life in tune with nature, a culture in harmony, a *gemeinschaft*, that we have all but lost' (p 391). However, the main thrust of Friedman's essay is that claims of indigeneity in terms of identity and inclusion are contradictory and that  
Indigeneity is not about concrete indigenous groups as such. It is about a process of identification in the contemporary global arena that is a powerful expression of the transformation of the global system. [...] It is important to take these contradictions into account when trying to understand the trajectory of indigeneity in today's world. (pp 408 - 409).

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The complexities of global culture means that the particularities of each individuals social context is what determines the nature of their relations with the world around them. Indigenous individuals of Belgium face different issues when wishing to participate in the societies within which they live from indigenous individuals living in former colonial situations such as Australia. This means that one cannot talk generally about autochthonous and indigenous identities but the particularities of each indigenous situation. The context of the indigene in this Thesis can be identified as that of West European society such as Germany, France, and Holland.

15 Nick Stevenson (ed), *Culture and Citizenship*, 2001, p 1.

16 hooks, 1990, p 171.

17 In the light of events over the last few years, the city of Den Haag has implemented a series of open forums in which citizens of the city are invited to participate in a series of on-going discussions about what it means to be a citizen of the city. In recognition of the large population of non-Dutch residents in the city, one of the forums this year (2005) will take place in English. It would appear that already Dutch society is working hard to address any lack of cohesion that may exist. While on the surface this would appear to be a laudable move, a closer look at the situation in Den Haag would suggest that this move targets still the most privileged of the foreigners who live in Holland. For a significant number of foreign nationals living in Den Haag are directly connected to foreign consulates and embassies, and many more to organs like the International Court of Human Rights. If such a forum were to be repeated in Rotterdam, where migrants make up the majority of the city's population, many of whom originating from poor countries and who are themselves poorly educated, and whether such a forum would be conducted in one of the community languages, then this move could be regarded as a genuine attempt to give access to those individuals who least have a voice.

18 See Appendix L for a full transcript of the films text.

19 According to the VVD Party manifesto;

The *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (Peoples Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD) is a political party founded on the liberal philosophy. Its aim is to further the free intellectual and social development of each individual, without making distinctions according to religious or ideological conviction, nationality, sex, race, colour of skin or language. Central to its beliefs is freedom of choice for everyone.

The nature of Dutch politics often necessitates the formation of coalitions between what might once have been regarded as traditionally Left and Right Wing parties. The VVD has a history of being in government in coalition with both the PdVA (the Dutch Labour Party) and the more conservative CDA (Christian Democrats). The VVD has been part of many coalitions in forming the Dutch national Government since its inception in 1948, mostly in collaboration with the CDA, which itself has been in Government for almost the entire 20th Century. Only for brief periods before 1918 and for two terms in the 1990s under the leadership of Wim Kok was Government in Holland unfettered from the Right-leaning CDA and was government able to develop a more Left oriented agenda. Thus in practice, the liberal manifesto of the VVD has been realised in the context of a conservative political praxis. See the English version of the VVDs homepage.

20 An example of the discourse being generated around Islam in Western societies can be found in Senior Editor Theodore Dalrymple's "Why Theo Van Gogh Was Murdered", in *City Journal*, 2004, online. This is an interesting journal because it describes itself as both a local voice and 'national force with a readership that spans the US - and an especially enthusiastic audience in the nations capital' (see website). Further down this page reveals that the "Publication Committee" behind the journal comprises of representatives of a range of individuals including a number of citizens of New York as well other corporate and Government representations. The full committee consists of Richard Aspinwall, New York, N.Y., Gary Bogard, *New York, N.Y.*, Eugene D. Brody, *Picanet Partners*, Geoffrey Colvin, *Fortune Magazine*, Edward N. Costikyan,

- Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, John Craig, *The Commonwealth Fund*, Michael J. Fedak, *New York, N.Y.*, Edward W. Hayes, *New York, N.Y.*, H. Dale Hemmerdinger, *The Hemmerdinger Corporation*, Edward R. Hintz, *Hintz, Holman & Hecksher Inc.*, Steven Klinsky, *New Mountain Capital*, Marie-Josée Kravis, *Hudson Institute*, Roy Marden, *Philip Morris Companies*, Howard Milstein, *Douglas Elliman-Gibbons & Ives*, Joseph L. Rice III, *Clayton, Dubilier & Rice, Inc.*, Peter D. Salins, *State University of New York*, Joan C. Schwartz, *New York, N.Y.*, Howard Shawn, *New York, N.Y.*, Thomas J. Tisch, *FLF Associates*, Barrie A. Wigmore, *Goldman, Sachs & Company*, Louis Winnick, *Fund for the City of New York*, Kathryn Wylde, *New York City Investment Fund* (see website).
- 21 Stevenson, 1998, p 5. See also Chapter 4 in Stevenson, 2003, pp 96 - 125.
- 22 See Kevin Robins, "The Politics of Silence: The Meaning of Community and the Uses of Media in the New Europe", 1994.
- 23 For more on the role of art and media in giving expression to non-traditional voices in multicultural, postmodern, and postindustrial societies, see Gillian Gane, "Migrancy, the Cosmopolitan Intellectual, and the Global City in The Satanic Verses", 2002; Guillermo Gomez-Pena, "The New Global Culture: Somewhere between Corporate Multiculturalism and the Mainstream Bizarre (a border perspective)", 2001; as well as Gitta Honegger, "Theater in Berlin: Last Stop. Amerika and the Volksbühne Experience, Plus New Voices and Ekkehard Schall", 2002; Jacqueline Loss, "Global Arenas: Narrative and Filmic Translation of Identity", 2003; Susie O'Brien, "Introduction: The Globalization of Fiction/The Fiction of Globalization", 2001.
- 24 Raymond Williams cited in Stevenson, 2003, p 9.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Williams, *Culture and Society*, 1967, pp 314 - 322.
- 27 Ibid pp 301 - 306.
- 28 Ibid pp 303-305, the quote comes from p 303.
- 29 Ibid p 304.
- 30 Williams is again useful here in framing this issue, particularly because he attempts to establish a framework that deals with situations in which a producer is aware that they are about to address an audience of millions whose subjectivities are inevitably going to work in unexpected and unpredictable ways to that of the producer. Ibid pp 295 - 338.
- 31 Benjamin, 1992, pp 227 - 228.
- 32 According to William Sweet, Bentham was an important influence on John Stewart Mill who described utilitarianism as 'Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.' See online James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; also online William Sweet's entries on Jeremy Bentham and John Stewart Mill.
- 33 In fact this was the name of the final episode of Clark's history of Western art and culture called *Civilisation*. The episode begins with an aerial view of Manhattan, a city which Clark describes as a celestial city, although, unlike older celestial cities, 'New York was built to the glory of mammon - money, gain, the new god of the nineteenth century' (Clark, 1992, p 321). Clark continues that although not without tarnish, 'the first discovery and exploitation of those technical means which made New York possible coincided exactly with the first organised attempt to improve the human lot' (p 321). With that Clark launches into a passionate assessment of both the failures and the successes of the 19th Century's heroic faith in human technical ingenuity to remedy the ills of society. I suggest that further analysis of *Wings of Desire* and *Faraway So Close!* will reveal a re-emergence of the 19th Century's faith in a Western project founded on a technological conquest of the problems that confront humanity. This line of inquiry promises a rich terrain that roots Wenders' imagination of the city of Berlin in Imperial Rome. Further analysis of these films promises to reveal the ideological premises that continue to haunt the contemporary Western imagination.

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- 34 In an elaborate system of communication, C.S. Peirce uses the word 'ground' to describe the triadic relations between a sign and other signs in the same class or category and the way they perform with their interpretant in relation to each other and in relation to the referent or object of the sign. As Terence Hawke's describes Peirce's analysis of the process of communication,

A sign thus *stands for* something (its *object*); it stands for something *to* somebody (its *interpretant*); and finally it stands for something to somebody *in some respect* (this respect is called its *ground*). These terms, *representamen*, *object*, *interpretant* and *ground* can thus be seen to refer to the means by which the sign signifies; the relationships between them determines the precise nature of the process of *semiosis*.

The relationship, Peirce argues, normally involves the three elements, *representamen* or sign, *object*, and *ground* in three kinds of 'triadic' structures or 'trichotomies' in whose terms the fourth element, the *interpretant*, perceives: These are [...]

(b) 'triadic' relations of performance' involving actual entities in the real world, based on the kind of *ground*. These are *icon*, something which functions as a sign by means of features of itself, which resemble its object; the *index*, something which functions as a sign by virtue of some sort of factual or causal connection with its object; and the *symbol*, something which functions as a sign because of some 'rule' of conventional or habitual association between itself and its object. (See Terence Hawke, *Structuralism and Semiotics*, 1982, p 127)

Different aspects of this process become emphasised when semiosis is taking place in a global context. This will depend on the qualities each individual brings to their interpretation of the film. However it is clear that of the three triadic aspects of sign, it will be the iconic signs of a film that carry the greatest universal meaning. The least universal in significance will be the symbolic as the grammars or rules that govern the meaning of a symbolic sign will be most highly dependent on the personal context of each individual. In a global context, one should expect that these will vary considerably. By thinking through and applying the implications of Peirce's analysis of the semiotic process on to Wenders' films, one could start to arrive at a series of broad generalisations that start to map what they may begin to mean in a global context. However, this mapping must remain only provisional and in the most general of terms, as the actual significations of the film will remain primarily determined by the idiosyncratic qualities of each individuals experience, and their production of value and meaning.

- 35 See Bill Nichols' analysis of the different modes of address documentary films can take in espousing their views of reality in Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, 1991, particularly on pp 34-37, 56.
- 36 Robert Hughes, *Shock of the New*, 1993, p 425.

The Work of Art  
in The Age of Global Culture :  
Theory And Practice

Part 2

Appendices and Bibliography

# Appendices

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## Appendix A : The State of Art in Australia at the Beginning of the 21st Century

Under the taxation system introduced in 2000, an artist must show a profit from their work three years out of five. When a net profit from artistic production is shown, the production expenses may be deducted against that artist's income from art. This means that a commercially successful artist can write off the cost of their artistic production, but only to the extent that they can still demonstrate a real profit three years out of five. A further consequence is that artists who cannot deduct their artistic production expenses from other earnings must subsidise the full cost of producing their work in addition to finding sufficient employment to support their existence. Unlike the previous taxation system, no tax benefit can be accrued against other sources of income such as part time teaching. Historically, teaching has been the main source of income for the vast majority of artists in nearly every advanced capitalist economy. It is notoriously difficult to make a profit from a labour and technologically intensive activity like art making. For example, a 2 meter by 2 meter painting may take up to six months to complete, but the retail value of that painting may be little more than AU\$2000. Rarely the price of the painting will rise exponentially but only when the name at the bottom of the canvas is surrounded by an aura of high artistic success (the artist's fame and critical acclaim, both of which depend on the artist's standing in the art industry which is not related to the cultural viewer of the work or intrinsic values in the work).

Assuming a buyer for a \$2000 painting can be found, the return on that painting will cover four to six weeks of the artist's time in producing the work, less once the cost of materials and the Gallery commissions are taken out. The same disproportionate equations between artistic production and the retail value (even when a commercial market can be established) can be

shown in other more technologically reliant art practices such as photography and film-making. Even writing, which principally requires the writer's time, a computer, and a printer, is difficult to undertake profitably if the actual hours of labour, research, and the time spent training and updating one's skills are taken into account. By limiting the deductibility of artistic production costs to income directly related to that cost, the Taxation system introduced in Australia in 2000 effectively meant that any artist who cannot maintain a significant profit margin in their work will not be counted as an artist, and cannot therefore deduct their production costs from other sources of income such as teaching. This makes it more difficult for that artist to produce their work. Consequently, instead of producing the work that they felt they had to, artists are induced to either produce work for an identified market, or to finance their work as a non commercial activity, or to reduce or even stop working altogether due to the financial burden of finding employment in conjunction with trying to maintain their artistic practice.

Some artists find the main clients for their work are State run Galleries, National Museums, and International Festivals like the Sydney Biennale or the Cannes Film Festival. At a fundamental level, however, such state run initiatives increasingly embrace the ideology of the modern state founded on principals not of a democratic participation of individuals with artistic production, but rather of art produced for educated elites who appreciate it as a cultural adjunct of their lives in an increasingly global economy. While it can certainly be said that such works of art maintain their role in forming and reflecting the social bonds and relations between individuals in that global economy, few individuals in society are actively able to participate in producing such bonds and relations.

On the other hand, an artist who fails to show a profit through their art may be counted an amateur (sometimes disparagingly called a "Sunday painter") and is not thought to take their work seriously. The rationale behind this is that an artist who is serious about their work will invariably be interested in making money out of their activity. An amateur or 'Sunday painter' may find it difficult to be taken seriously in so-called "professional" contexts of display such as public galleries, and may only be able to display their work in galleries that cater for 'Sunday painters'. The contexts such galleries provide may be lacking a critical cultural discourse and therefore fail to provide a challenging or thought provoking encounter with such art. Many times, these galleries address only the lowest expectations of what the work of art can be. Often these expectations are nothing more than that art be an attractive item for the decoration of the home or office. The poignant social or political significance of art's work must be subtle enough to be avoided or overlooked otherwise that work may be deemed unattractive. If it is so easy to avoid the social and political significance, then one must ask what the point of producing that work is if it can so easily be negated. Thus in a culture in which artistic excellence is inextricably locked in to values of professionalism and the ability to show a profit, the amateur or "Sunday painter" can no longer claim to produce a work of social value.

Artists are thus being forced from many sides either to focus on producing commodities for an identified market or to drastically reduce the scope of their artistic production. In either case, what the artist cannot do is concentrate on producing the work that they need to produce - that is, work of pure artistic expression - unless those expressions can be defined in terms of professionalism tied to a necessity of making money. And yet, what goes unrecognised is that an artistic practice is not a profession at all, but requires almost a monkish dedication to the pursuit of a single minded idea or feeling or sensation. This is the commitment required to create an artistic

expression that can communicate an idea or feeling or sensation to others that no-one else in the world may have expressed before. This, in part, is the social nature of the work of art. The production of expressions enables individuals to encounter each other, in the depth of their feelings and thoughts, with greater sophistication and understanding. In these encounters, individuals learn how to relate with others and through those relations form and negotiate the common understanding that are going to make up the collective culture of their community.

## Appendix B

### The Modes of Perception, Existence, and Participation and the Renewal of Traditional and Modern Cultures in Benjamin's Analysis of "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

#### I

#### The Modes of Perception, Existence, and Participation with Traditional Artifacts

The traditional mode of perception of the work of art is a way of perceiving the thing in such a way that makes available the aura surrounding that object. Benjamin thinks that the aura can only be experienced close to hand but the thing that aura represents can only be apprehended from an "unapproachable distance." On page 216, he draws a parallel between the aura of artifacts with the aura of natural objects. He uses the example of aura as the shadow of a distant mountain which touches the individual even though he or she is far away from the mountain itself. Yet one has to be close enough to the mountains to be 'touched' by their shadows. This is what he means when he describes the aura as both a closeness and an un-bridgeable distance. Yet it is not natural aura that concerns Benjamin here. Rather it is the aura of the traditional artifact. In order to perceive the aura of the cult object, that is, the traditional artifact such as a painting, one has to be fully seeped in to the *culture* of the tradition the surrounds it. Thus to see the aura of a landscape painting, one had to have already developed a very particular kind of personal relationship with it, a kinship one might say, with the tradition that painting represents. This kinship rested on an understanding derived from the individual's deep and

direct identification with the presence of the auratic, that is the tradition, at the same time as remaining distant and removed from it. The painting too had to have and maintain a direct link to tradition it signifies (like a mountain has a direct link with its shadow). Traditional societies typically developed these relationships through the individual's rights of passage and initiation into a society and by the ritual display of the original tradition-laden object of the original landscape painting. The aura is lost to that object, however, when the painting is merely a replacement, a reproduction.

Traditional modes of perception thus also required a certain mode of existence or attitude or manner of being between the object and the individual. This particular state of being situated the individual and the object in a direct (authentic) relationship with each other. Only then could the individual experience the shadows or auratic surrounding a painting. At the same time, however, the individual has to acknowledge that there remained an inescapable distance between themselves and the tradition the painting signified. This mode or manner of existence thus places particular requirements on both the state of being of the painting as well as the state of being of the individual. Both had to remain authentic in representing both themselves and in representing their relationship with tradition: The painting has to be an authentic representation of the tradition it stands for and the individual had to be an initiate of the tradition from which the painting issues. This gives the painting and the individual the authenticity to stand before each other as total and independently complete authorities, that is, one to one beings standing in a direct and particular relationship with each other. In relating as one to one authorities each has the ability to authenticate the transmissions and receptions (interactions) taking place between them and through the auratic.

The one on one relationship of traditional modes of existence also implied a particular mode of participation between the maker of the painting, the subject of the painting, and the individual who later encounters it. "The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into [reality's] web" (p 227). Marked by the directness of their relationship, the initiated individual and the painter of the aura-laden painting stand 'eye to eye' with each other, each acknowledging their 'natural' relationship, particularities and proximity to the landscape as well as to each other through their relationship with the painting. Comparing the painter to a witch-doctor, Benjamin adds ...

The magician heals a sick person by the laying on of hands. [...] The magician maintains the natural distance between the patient and himself; though he reduces it very slightly by the laying on of hands, he greatly increases it by virtue of his authority.<sup>1</sup>

In ritual interactions and re-enactments between cult painting and initiated individuals, the living individual rejoins the authenticity of tradition surrounding that object in the presence of the object and the ritual. This process of cultural renewal in traditional settings thus depends entirely on a certain proximity - both a nearness and an unapproachable distance - between initiated individuals, the ritual object and whatever that object represents, and the traditions within which they are embedded.<sup>2</sup> Ritual incorporates these different elements (including the individual's perception of the object in the presence of it) in the 'now'.<sup>3</sup> The 'authentic' renewal of the culture surrounding the aura bearing painting takes place precisely because the power of the ritual has the authenticity to transform as well as renew the "bonds" in the relationships between the painting and its content, the tradition from which it arises, as well as the individual standing before it. The individual theretofore realises that authenticity of the tradition through their continuing everyday relations with other inauthentic paintings and

their representations. Thus every initiate who participates in a traditional ritual encounter with the cult(ure) of the painting simultaneously renews and reinvests the tradition in the cult(ivating) of the object with their experience of tradition both by performing that ritual as well as in their performance of reality beyond that ritual setting. This re-embeds the individual and the cult of the painting in the present, authenticating and renewing relations between all landscape paintings and the tradition. In the instant of such renewal, the individual revitalises the bonds with every other individual (painters and viewers) who has ever been initiated into the tradition and looked at an original landscape painting, past as well as present. At this same instant, however, the relationships between the traditional painting and the individual is re-aligned to correspond with present day reality (the independent state of being of both the individual and the painting and how their states of being inform each others' representations/transmissions/receptions of the tradition) from which the individual and the painting address each other. Every re-enactment of cult ritual thus renews the object's relationship with tradition as well as its relationship with the individual. In this intimate intersection, the individual and the auratic object both make and renew the nature of the bonds and relations within which they exist.

In taking the present day condition (or state of being) of the painting, Benjamin insists that the cult object is paradoxically an original "source" of cultural authority at the same time as it resists becoming sealed off as a totalising "agent" of cultural value.<sup>4</sup> This means that traditional bonds and relations bend and blend as well as flex in a reflective symbiotic relationship between the cult painting and the individual. Although the power of reforging the bond in traditional culture appears to remain mysterious, the nature of the interaction between the painting in its present day state and the individual's perception of the painting ensures that the social bonds and

realities that they forge remains both self reflective as well as being seated in the state of being of the individual. Thus while the individual must be fully initiated in the traditions of landscape painting (society) in order to participate in its rituals (for only then is the aura of the object truly apparent), the individual and the object retain the authenticity of their unique presence of being in each other's present time and space.

Although the individual may not recognise it, it is they, and only they, in accordance with their unique relationship with the painting and their independent state of being who realises the nature of the bond arising in their interactions. The retention of total integrity of both the individual's and the painting's bodies - that is their independent state of being - is crucial in the mode of participation between them and is always maintained by the tradition of the cult of objects. Traditional modes of participation between painting and individual do not enter into the state of the individual's being and reconstruct it according to the logics of the cinematic apparatus. Returning to the metaphor of the magician, Benjamin contrasts the witch doctor's methods of healing his patient which, while it includes a laying on of hands, nonetheless respects the total integrity of the body of the patient. The surgeon, on the other hand, cuts directly into the patient's body, and does so even with the express desire of re-arranging the internal reality or state of being of their patient. Like the modern medical practitioner, the cinematic apparatus enters into the reality of the individual watching the film, prizing apart the innate (or 'natural') totality of their 'web' of reality, and re-arranging it according to the cinema's logics.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the cinema's relationship with its audience, in the tradition laden culture of painting, there remains a reciprocal relation and respect between the painting and the individual. For just as a painter can never reconstruct the individual's vision of a landscape through their painting, neither can the individual completely overwhelm or transform the present state of being of the

painting and the way that embodies the aura of tradition either. Thus traditional culture continues to evolve in relation with the present realities and states of being of both the cult object and its aura as well as that of the individual.<sup>6</sup>

For the individual and tradition to remain open to further and continued transformation, there must, however, be some greater source than either the individual or the object, a source that can re-integrate and re-work the individual and the object within on-going cultural formations. In traditional societies, this usually takes place in the mysterious space of the divine. Modern science replaces the mystical, religious, and magical power that underpinned traditional societies. Yet in reality, it is the creative and imaginative power of the individual upon whom the renewal of social bonds and relations rest, even though, in traditional settings, individuals remain oblivious of the centrality of their role - the ego-I - in this process. Yet it is the projective power of the individual and their capacity to act on and through the artifact that makes the renewal of culture possible.

Thus the individual's participation remains essential in the renewal of social relations just as the individual empowers the artifact with the authority to renew and transform existing social bonds and relations. The work of aura-laden cult objects is thus facilitated and utterly dependent on the uniqueness of the states of being, modes of participation, and modes of perception between the individual, the cult object, and the tradition referred to by the aura in a one to one relationship that is neither reproducible nor ever again repeatable.

## II

### The Modes of Perception, Existence, and Participation with Reproduced Artifacts

Benjamin argues that the reproduction of the art object has engendered a new mode of perception, a new mode of existence, and a mode of participation. These now overwrite the traditional sense of the aura altogether. Instead the mode of perception of mechanically reproduced artifacts gives the modern viewer an infinitely repeatable message via easy to reproduce objects such as photographs and films. The same is true of the mode of existence such artifacts engender. Modern individuals experience reproduced art objects *en mass*, and their relation with such artifacts is always totalised into a unified field. The field that they are in as they encounter is occupied by the mass which the individual can enter by becoming part of a mass audience. When the individual becomes part of the mass, the uniqueness of their subjective perspective of a film is reduced and becomes conditioned to the singular point of view of the camera. The mechanical reproduction of a singular point of view through the camera's eye from which the audience can observe the film makes it possible to apply Benjamin's theory even to a situation where the individual sits at home and watches a film on video alone, or encounters a text, even a so-called interactive text, on a computer screen. The potential variations of the individual's viewing positions have already been determined by the production of the machine.

Thus a mechanically produced artifact must be both perceptible and meaningful to a crowd in which none of the individuals share may ever a bond with either the film as object in itself, or with the history or culture surrounding the subject of the film, just as they do need to have a sense of

relationship with the rest of the audience that is watching the same film. This changes the traditional mode of participation between individual and the artifact. Auratic initiation into the tradition of the object is no longer a pre-requisite in the appreciation of modern art. Rather it is the techniques of reception, and the techniques of the media, which the individual must have learned and be thoroughly practiced in.

The reproduction of the work of art gives the art object a new mode of existence. This new manner of being leads to a new 'mode of perception' and 'mode of participation' between individuals and art objects. These contrast with traditional modes because the 'one to one' relationship between the individual and the art object has disappeared. So too has the object's aura. Modern modes of perception don't depend on an active participation of the unique individual in the audience. Contrasting the nature of watching a film with the viewing of theatre, Benjamin argues that even factors such as seating - which can make such a qualitative difference to the impact of a live performance - have been systematically reduced and homogenised in the viewing arrangements of the cinema. In the cinema auditorium, it doesn't matter where one sits, each viewer's perception of the action on the screen remains much the same. Modern reproductive technologies (and the auditorium should be properly seen as part of the reception apparatus of the cinema) seek to standardise individual experiences to the same viewing positions. This totalising unification of the individual into a mass audience is one of the most alarming aspects of the proletarianisation of the individual that Benjamin sees taking place in modern society.<sup>7</sup> Although the individual remains a distinct atom of experience in the cinema, they nonetheless look for as well as expect a uniform experience from the cinematic text. Potential differences in perceptions and the relations these produce with the work of art are reduced by both physical as well as technical qualities of production.

This simultaneously homogenises the meaning of a text as well as conditioning the audience into singular mass.

What is more, Benjamin argues, the passive nature of the relationship between mass audience and film discourages the recognition of the individual's role and participation in imparting on a film its meaning. The magic of the cinematic apparatus is that it makes it seem as if the story belongs to the film as it appears naturally taking place on the screen. Individual subjective relations with the film and their necessary participation in giving it meaning are thus doubly suppressed, not only by being amassed into a general viewing position, but also by the reduction each individual's awareness of their subjective participation in giving the film a meaning. Yet the individual continues to play the essential role of imparting significance on each and every frame, every passing sequence in the cinematic projection.

This new mode of existence alienates the individual's sense of participation in the derivation of meaning from the reproduced object. Both the artifact and the individual are reduced into discrete parts of an entire process rather than remaining as total, complete, and independent beings within themselves interacting with each other in an existentially continuous field of global relations. This process of reduction - from independent beings relating in global fields of interactions to molecular collectives of atomic and sub-atomic components - is essential in the reductive commodification of ontological being to the state of object. The starting point as well as conclusion of this process is the alienation and commodification of the individual themselves. Individuals must accept and assume a position - an existential state of being - in the world, in which relations between self and other (individuals as well as objects) are separate, alienable, and capable of being experienced close to hand, but only on the basis of the acceptance of

certain pre-conditional parameters. The reduction of the aura thus also takes place in the reduction of the sense of inapproachable distance between the states of being (object as well as individual) and a corresponding depletion of the sense of respect for the integrity and independent totality of being-ness of the cult object as well as the individual. Like the medical surgeon in the operating theatre, every frame of the film enters into the sense of reality of individual in the cinema and composites it into the sequence and arrangement of the Director's will. Thus new relations between objects and individuals are established which are now susceptible to the influences governing the property rights (ownership and the exchange of money for goods and services) embedded in and by the film. What is more, the individual in the audience willingly participates in other ways in the systemic operation of those property rights and monetary exchange relations - unlike the privileged initiate attending a traditional ritual display of the painting, the member of the cinematic audience must pay to see the film. Mechanical reproduction renews the existential state of alienation of both individuals and objects thus perpetuates the founding principle of capitalist cultural relations. While cinema and theatre both rely on the individual's active perception and participation with an actual performance in order for that performance to be made meaningful, the individual in the cinema' is unaware of both their role in the signification of the reproduced object and the actual nature of the transmissions taking place. For Benjamin, modern reproduction has called for new modes of existence, participation, and perception. Individuals must be trained into becoming good audiences who are both proficient in these new modes of interaction as well as in absent mindedly overlooking the nature and meanings of these new exchanges.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin, 1992, pp 226 - 227.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid pp 216 - 217, passim.

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- <sup>3</sup> The notion of the "now" (*Jetztzeit*) also informs an important aspect in Benjamin's conception of history as a return to origins. See "Theses on the Philosophy of History" in *ibid* pp 252 - 253.
- <sup>4</sup> See also Raymond Williams' "Conclusion(s)" regarding the authenticity of 'sources' and the duplicity of 'agents' in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 1979, pp 290 - 323, especially pp 289 - 294.
- <sup>5</sup> Benjamin, 1992, p 226 - 227.
- <sup>6</sup> As Benjamin states that "tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable". *Ibid* p 217.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid* pp 234 - 235.

## Appendix C

### Benjamin on Intention in Art and Translation

Benjamin begins his essay into translation by asserting that a work of art and a work of translation are different modes of the same object.<sup>1</sup> Already he is pointing to a basic problem in traditional notions of translation. 'No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener',<sup>2</sup> he (11)be expected to address its audience? What is the intention of the translation if not to remain faithful to the intention of the original? The paradoxical task of the translator is how to reproduce something that is original without making it a literal reproduction. For that would reduce the intended effect of the original to the mere transmission of information and is not, therefore, a translation of the effect of the original into a new language but rather a deceitful replica. At the same time, Benjamin warns, in avoiding its reduction to a literal replication, a translation must not transmit inaccurate information about the original by incorporating content not essential in the original expression of the artifact<sup>3</sup> Now that would simply turn the translation into a commentary on the original.

Benjamin distinguishes art from its translation by saying that art always begins as an original linguistic expression concerning an aspect of human life. Benjamin adds that 'The concept of life is given due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely a setting for history, is credited with life.'<sup>4</sup> Life in this sense is not just the existence of organic creatures, but refers to the experiences associated with things through time and space. Returning his attention to art, he relates the existence of art to its manifestations in language, adding that

Languages are not strangers to one another, but are, a priori and apart from all historical relationships, interrelated in what they want to preserve.<sup>5</sup>

What language wants to preserve, according to Benjamin, is the 'intention' to express the 'life and afterlife' of living things.<sup>6</sup> The 'truthful'<sup>7</sup> expressions of life is the 'purposiveness'<sup>8</sup> of artistic objects, and these 'have their end not in life, but in the expression of its nature, in the representation of its significance.'<sup>9</sup>

Now it is important to recall that "The Task of the Translator" began life as an "Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*." According to Michel Blix, Baudelaire often refers to works of art as translations that 'signify that the major value of a work of art resides in the original impression the author is struggling to reconstitute', adding that Baudelaire's idea of the 'original impression' was that of a 'beautiful picture [that] is faithful to the dream which brought it into being.'<sup>10</sup> For Baudelaire then, the work of art is the translation of something imagined or dreamt into a representation. Benjamin adopts this stance in *imagining* Baudelaire, however, he modifies it to the extent that he then suggests that art is in a general sense a translation of anything that has a life of its own into language. Yet art is not to be confused with life, nor is art's purpose to replace life. An original artistic creation fits around the life that it expresses like a cloak fits around its wearer. Through that cloak, the individual encountering the artifact instantly re-cognises the life of the object that it defers to. The work of art is therefore, to return to Benjamin's proposition in "Mechanical Reproduction", to preserve bonds and relations in human life. This is how he puts in the "Translation" essay...

All purposeful manifestations of life, including their very purposiveness, in the final analysis have their end not in life, but in the expression of its nature, in the representation of its significance. Translation thus ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages.<sup>11</sup>

For Benjamin there is a clear distinction between the work of art and the work of the translation. While art is concerned with representing the significance of what it manifests, the purpose of translation is to preserve the original purposiveness of the artistic expression in another language. Translation is to the work of art what the work of art is to life. In this sense, translation points to the differences between the languages of artistic expression and its translation. However, Benjamin explains, translation is not a new skin made to fit around an original object but is rather more like a loosely fitting garment or a cloak. Translation should never obscure the original from the individual's view, it should continuously refer them back to the article. For Benjamin, translation aspires to transparency while the original gains total visibility.

So the work of the translation signals reciprocal differences between different artistic expression - and this takes place in their respective languages. Yet just as art should not be confused with the expression of life itself, so the translation should not be confused with its original. Rather, art is the representation of living expressions while the translation is the after-life of that artistic expression in contexts removed from its original point of articulation.<sup>12</sup> Only with the preservation of the original expression through its translation does the original work of art gains a life of its own.

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1 Benjamin, 1992, p 71.

2 Ibid pp 70.

3 Ibid pp 70 - 71.

4 Ibid p 72.

5 Ibid p 73.

6 Benjamin defines the life and afterlife of things as

The idea of life and afterlife in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity. Even in times of narrowly prejudiced thought there was an inkling that life was not limited to organic corporeality. But it cannot be a matter of extending its dominion under the feeble sceptre of the soul, as Fechner tried to do, or, conversely, of basing its definition on the even less conclusive factors of animality, such as sensation, which characterise life only occasionally. The concept of life is

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given its due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely the setting for history, is credited with life. In the final analysis, the range of history must be determined by history rather than by nature, least of all by such tenuous factors as sensation and soul. The philosophers' task consists in comprehending all of natural life through the more encompassing life of history.

Ibid p 72, although the entire discussion on pp 71 - 73 worth following.

- 7 Benjamin brings the notion of truth in relation to an overarching language by citing Mallarme ...

The imperfection of languages consists in their plurality, the supreme one is lacking: lacking is writing without accessories or even whispering, the immortal word still remains silent; the diversity of idioms on earth prevents everybody from uttering the words which otherwise, at one single stroke, would materialise as truth.

Ibid pp 77 - 78.

- 8 Ibid p 73.

- 9 Ibid.

- 10 See Michel Blix, "Modern Beauty versus Platonist Beauty" in Patricia A. Ward (ed), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*, 2001, p 12.

- 11 Benjamin, 1992, p 73.

- 12 Ibid pp 71 - 73

## Appendix D

### Other Features of Torben Graag Grodal's Theory of Art Films

#### 1) Permanent Soul and Transient Body

Stemming his discussion from debates in Ancient Greece, Grodal posits two positions - the first derived from Aristotle and the second from Plato - before subsuming both into his argument about High Art. Aristotle believed that the work of art is a form of technical and stylistic innovation or, that is to say, a development in the history of design. Plato, on the other hand, harboured grave doubts about the arts, and proposed that art's mimetic relationship with life meant that artistic representations were a false and misleading imitation that could only conceal the truth.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Plato argued that truth and reality would never be found in the superficial appearance of things but only "in the subjective contemplation of an inward, immaterial Idea".<sup>2</sup> For art to be of any value, it had to represent what lay beyond "the grosser, more empirical *Eide*"<sup>3</sup> (the image-illusion of material reality, appearance, or phenomena of things). Only then would art enable the individual to apprehend the "*aletheia* or reality of things"<sup>4</sup> that was, for Plato, the essential truth of 'being' beyond material manifestation. The true reality of things, Plato logically continued, can not be *re-presented*, it must be experienced as a living presence with the reality of things. Plato thus concluded that absolute truth and reality would only be revealed when the individual engaged with the world directly, and not through the mediation of an artistic representation. Furthermore, for Plato, reality would only become revealed when the individual apprehended the true nature of things beyond the superficial level of their appearance. The individual could attain this primary engagement with the 'real' through their soul.

The angels in *Wings of Desire* are often heard contemplating the nature of everyday human existence. They draw attention to questions of meaning in everyday human reality, enabling the film's audience to reflect on the nature of their existence even as they remain embedded in the passing moment of watching the film. In addition, statements uttered by Marion at the Hotel Esplanade refer both back in time to Homer's search for the lost city of Weimar Berlin as well as forward to an imaginary, republican state in the future that they have yet to realise together, thus inviting the viewer to consider the nature of life in the contemporary city in relation to the modern city of the early 20th Century as well as the potential city of the future. *City of Angels*, on the other hand, continually refers to and metaphorically implicates the significance of its meaning in relation to the immediate physical realities confronting Seth as he experiences life in the film. This can be clearly detected in Seth's carnal and physically oriented descriptions and expressions of his love for Meg. Although neither film can respond to Plato's objection that they are mere representations (no film can avoid this when one considers that the viewer of films is led to ignore what they are actually doing as they are watching a film), we can argue that *Wings of Desire* at least attempts to draw attention to some pressing and perhaps important questions that confront the individual as they continue to live out their lives in the city where they live. On the other hand, *City Of Angels* seeks more modestly to entertain its viewer for a period of time, which it attempts to do primarily by diverting them from thinking about whatever might be happening in their lives beyond the cinema, and enjoy a passing escape into a world of make-believe. The distinctiveness of the narrative styles a film produces leads Grodal to mark what is arguably the most significant feature distinguishing art and mainstream films.

Grodal points out that many art films seek to represent 'truth and objectivity' in a 'strongly subjective form'.<sup>5</sup> Again returning to Bordwell,<sup>6</sup> Grodal

explains this paradox as a typical response by art film directors to opt for ambiguity. Epistemological uncertainty, he adds, results in

subjective, ambiguous and transient representations - anchored in the visions of the auteur - [and] are more true and realistic than unambiguous and objective representations.<sup>7</sup>

Grodal tries to reconcile his argument with films like Lars von Trier's *The Kingdom* (1994) "in which epistemological doubt dissolves the unambiguous world of science and rationalism" (p49), reveals the contradictions in this argument, however, as it shows that the investigator always projects themselves into the way they construct their subject. Grodal makes his theory appear scientific by presenting his thoughts in a rational logical manner that fail - because the rationalisations limit his ability to look beyond the narrowness of conventional dichotomies between elite, commercial, and mainstream artistic practices - to take account of all the factors influencing his subject and its viewer. Scientific studies of art must deal with what happens their subject rather than maintaining a set of theoretical propositions as defined within disciplinary boundaries in order to facilitate scientific inquiry but which finally obviate essential and important aspects from their study.

## 2) Romantic Notions of Art

Grodal develops what turns out to be an orthodox history of European art<sup>8</sup> returning to the Romantics. In linking Romanticism to *auteur* theory, Grodal connects art with Plato's idea of the soul,<sup>9</sup> stating that Romanticism required that art be an "individualised, 'original' and 'subjective' vision of the world, and art should express emotions."<sup>10</sup> Grodal attaches other signifying attributes to Romantic notions of art such as cult value, eternal truth, the sublime, intellectual disinterestedness, and psychological distance. These qualities distinguish the sometimes emotionally cooler, sublimely complex

and somewhat more intellectually disinterested perceptions of the city that distinguish Wenders' film from Silberling's romantic narrative.<sup>11</sup>

### 3) The Art of "Making Strange"

Brecht's idea of *Verfremdung* adds another important dimension to the idea of art. *Wings of Desire* produces a *Verfremdungseffekt* in the way it represents the city. This can be particularly seen in Marion's monologues in her caravan at the circus, but it also occurs when a man drives a vintage car to the film set being shot in the film. Along the way the driver speaks of his fellow citizens in the city as isolated, independent nation states. According to Brecht, the *Verfremdungseffekt* is also a reflexive strategy that distance the audience from 'empathising' with the main characters in a play so that they can think about how and why things are happening in the ways that are depicted by the play's narrative. *Wings of Desire* achieves this kind of distancing when the voyeuristic Daniel observes Marion changing in her caravan. The political implications of the reflection this film creates here draws the viewers attention to the relationship between the male gaze and the female body as object of desire.<sup>12</sup>

### 4) Art as an Open Texts

Another claim that Grodal says is sometimes made of art films is that they are 'open texts'. Mainstream films, on the other hand, tend to resolve the narrative problems they establish. Grodal qualifies this distinction, however, saying that narrative 'closure' does not exclusively indicate 'lower meaning'. Grodal requires that art films develop textual strategies which promote symbolic meaning and abstraction of problems or situations in everyday life. This contrasts with the work of a mainstream film which seek rather to establish immediate concrete problems that the individual in the audience will identify with, before providing them with a satisfying

resolution in the film's conclusion. In a mainstream film, closure is "concomitant with 'non-symbolic', 'embodied' representation of the world [...] linked with 'profane' meanings [...] to achieve mundane goals of concrete actions".<sup>13</sup> It is, therefore, the level of abstraction from direct sensual stimulus and everyday narrative realities and not than the open-ness of the text that is important in marking Grodal's distinction between art and mainstream cinema.

#### 5) The Inexhaustiveness of Art

Another innovation during the twentieth century requires that art be seen as a dense and inexhaustible source of meaning, a distinguishing quality of Wenders' thematically saturated *Wings of Desire* with its ambiguous and somewhat problematic ending.

#### 6) The Institutionalisation of Art

Grodal adds that with increasing institutionalisation of art and culture during the 20th Century, art became "defined historically [...] so that art is whatever some art institutions accepts as art."<sup>14</sup> This empirical criteria shows that the critical reception given to *Wings of Desire*, that it won acclaim at Cannes rather than a Hollywood Oscar, the cinemas that exhibited it, all point to an institutional positioning of it as an art film. *City of Angels*, on the other hand, received a general release in mainstream cinemas around the world, was a number one box office hit,<sup>15</sup> and has generally failed to attract the same quantity of scholarly reviews or academic study, suggesting that it is more commonly regarded as a mainstream film of minor significance.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Truth, Plato believed, was about perceiving the real nature of things over and above, under and beneath their appearance as phenomena. In "The Simile of the Cave", Plato described enlightenment as a journey from the darkened cave of everyday reality into the penetrating light of the sun. With the aid of the light of the sun, the illusions embedded in the appearance of everyday reality vanishes and the true nature of

- actual reality becomes visible. Enlightenment, according to Plato, is derived from understanding the appearance of things in conjunction with understanding their intrinsic function. Once having seen the real nature of something, Plato compels the enlightened individual to “return again to the cave below and share” their new knowledge with the rest of society. See Plato, “The simile of the cave”, in *The Republic*, 1975, p 323.
- 2 See R. W. Lee, “Ut Pictura Poesis”, 1940, p 207.
  - 3 J.N. Findlay, *Plato, The Written And Unwritten Doctrines*, 1974, p 190.
  - 4 I.M. Crombie, *Plato's Doctrines*, vol II, 1971, p 87.
  - 5 Torben Graag Grodal, “Art Film, the Transient Body, and the Permanent Soul”, 2000, p 47.
  - 6 As Grodal states, “Bordwell has pointed out that one of the differences between canonical narration and art film narration is anchored in epistemological differences between the two types of narration. The canonical narrative is based on an unproblematic access to reality. There are no problems of representation, the problems in a canonical narrative are linked to problems for characters to cope with situations posed by reality, whereas in art film narration the main characters will often experience the world as opaque and difficult to understand.” See David Bordwell, *Narration and the Fiction Film*, 1986, p. 212, cited by Grodal, 2000, p 47.
  - 7 A little later Grodal adds that “On the one hand art film presentations claim to provide representations of the world that are much more true than the mainstream film, on the other, they argue that there is no objective representations of the world, just ambiguous transient ones.” Ibid p 47.
  - 8 For a philosophically informed history of art, see M. Barasche, *Theories Of Modern Art: From Plato To Wincklemann*, 1985, and M. Barasche, *Theories Of Modern Art: From Wincklemann To Baudelaire*, 1990. For an outline of the humanistic tradition in the arts, see R. W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis, The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, 1967.
  - 9 For discussions on important figures in Romantic thought such as Kant, Hegel, Schiller, Schelling, and Hölderlin, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, 1988, and Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 1992. For discussions on the importance of Baudelaire, see Patricia A. Ward (ed), *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*, 2001. For Benjamin's thinking on Baudelaire, see Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, 1973. For what is arguably the most important essay in Baudelaire's own writing on art, see Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life”, 1964. For a contemporaneous account of 19th Century art, culture, and society, see John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 1898. For a 20th Century view of 19th Century art, culture, and society, see Williams, 1979.
  - 10 Grodal, 2000, p 34.
  - 11 However, both Damiel in *Wings of Desire* and Seth in *City of Angels* express their dissatisfaction with the ‘second hand’ distanced reality they experience as disembodied angels. Although appearing to erode Grodal's categories, this might be best explained by recalling the fact that *City of Angels* is, after all, a remake, and that Silberling attempts to remain true to Wenders' *Wings of Desire*.
  - 12 See Grodal, 2000, p 34. According to German anthropologist Christiane Hellermann, “*Verfremdung* literally means ‘to make something different’, to ‘strange’ it, to distance it – and it's the sister word of “*Entfremdung*”: the Marxian notion of ‘alienation’. *Verfremdung* is more active, ‘I make something different/strange/distant’, while *Entfremdung* is more passive, something is getting strange from/to myself, distant, different.  
“*Fremd*, or as a noun: *der Fremde* (masc.), *die Fremde* (fem.) – is the stranger, the alien, the Unknown. *Der Fremde* as opposition and difference, opposed to the self, to the ‘norm’, the ‘normal’. *Der Fremde* also as the migrant, as *der Ausländer*, the one from a different country. With Freud and Simmel: ‘*der Fremde*’ is perceived as something essentially different, which, as a consequence, is often perceived and

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interpreted as something/somebody threatening (and at the same time attracting & fascinating). The word '*der Fremde*' has a slightly dark connotation, more dangerous and self-threatening than exotic – nevertheless, '*das Fremde*' (in particular in its neutral gender form, describing all unknown things, objects, distant exotic countries) is, in difference to '*der/die Fremde*' as a person, often and in easier ways perceived as something positive, attractive: but definitely in a pure exotic-romantic-difference meaning, like going abroad as an adventure trip, with the idea of discovering new wonderful worlds etc. (note the colonial background, but also German-Romantic: like Goethe travelling to Italy for learning about the history of civilisation and the habits of other people/nations = to go abroad, 'in *die Fremde*', for the purpose of expanding your knowledge and also developing your own personality further). Thus, the term '*fremd*' is clearly ambiguous – as most terms later used in Freud's theories of psychological and psychiatry are. However, there is a strong connection to philosophy in general, and to German Romanticism & idealism in particular.

"Thus '*Verfremdung*' always seeks to make something different: actively/consciously/willingly or as if by purpose, or at least there is a very strong tendency to do so within the word/concept, for an equivalent to the English word 'always' doesn't actually exist in German.

"Brecht relied heavily on the notion of *Verfremdung*, even developing his own term *Verfremdungseffekt* or simply: "*V-Effekt*", in art and literature etc, where it is used for disturbance, "for making people think" and to transfer the attention of the audience away from their empathy with the actors and their absorption into the story and from what is happening in the theatre-work to: HOW things are happening and how and why the people/actors are behaving as they do. Thus, a certain distance should come into play inside the head of the spectator, a critical distance to what he/she sees, thinks – and then also how s/he lives, in what world/society s/he lives... and thus too, they should/might become aware of the contradictions and the differences between ideal and reality in their own real life – and begin to feel the need for changes/revolution. So Brecht thought and wanted that distance/*Verfremdung* to create a possibility for change in real life, in society."

From correspondence with Christiane Hellermann, Sunday, 18 Jul 2004.

- 13 Stating that *Wings of Desire* is a closed text, Grodal adds that:  
the film starts with a problem, the experience of emotional isolation felt by the angel Daniel, by his position as a spiritual creature [...] and his high culture isolation from the 'warm' mainstream experiences linked to American mass culture, [...] and other aspects of embodied life. He is transformed into an earthly form [...] But the film aspires to 'higher meaning' by the way in which Daniel's life is a 'symbolic' one: he is not an individualised human being of the same kind as Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*, he is a symbolic construct, supposed to subsume some typical experiences, and the narrative closure expresses mediation of abstract oppositions, like German high culture vs French and American 'low culture', and the opposition between 'soul' and 'body'.

Grodal, 2000, p 39.

- 14 Ibid pp 34 - 35.

- 15 See Raphael Shargel, "Fallen innocents", 1998.

## Appendix E : *Why Cant I Be Good*

by

Lou Reed

Verse 1;

Why can't I be good, why can't I act like a man.  
Why can't I be good and do what other men can.  
Why can't I be good, make something of this life.  
If I can't be a god, let me be more than a wife.

Chorus;

Why can't I be good, Why can't I be good  
Why can't I be good, Why can't I be good

Verse 2;

I don't want to be weak, I want to be strong.  
Not a fat happy weakling with two useless arms.  
A mouth that keeps moving with nothing to say.  
An eternal baby who never moved away.

Chorus;

Verse 3;

I'd like to look in the mirror with a feeling of pride.  
Instead of seeing a reflection of failure a crime.  
I don't want to turn away to make sure I cannot see.  
I don't want to hold my ears when I think about me.

Chorus;

Verse 4;

I want to be like the wind when it uproots a tree.  
Carries it across an ocean to plant in a valley.  
I want to be like the sun that makes it flourish and grow.  
I don't want to be what I am anymore.

Chorus;

Verse 5;

I was thinking of some kind of whacked out syncopation.  
That would help improve this song.  
Some knock 'em down rhythm that would help it move along.  
Some rhyme of pure perfection a beat so hard and strong.  
If I can't get it right this time will a next time come along.

Chorus;

Why can't I be good Why can't I be good  
Why can't I be good Why can't I be good -aca

From *Faraway So Close!* Film Soundtrack CD Road Movies/EMI/Phonogram,  
1993.

## Appendix F : *The Wanderer*

by

Johnny Cash & U2

Sung by Johnny Cash

I went out wandering through streets paved with gold  
lifted some stones, saw the skin and bones  
of a city without a soul

I went out talking under an atomic sky  
where the ground wont turn and the rain it burns  
like the tears when I said goodbye

chorus

Yeah I went with nothing, nothing but the thought of you  
I went wandering

I went drifting through the capitals of tin  
where men can't walk or freely talk  
and sons turn their fathers in.

I stopped outside a church house  
where the citizens like to sit. They say they want the kingdom  
But they don't want God in it.

chorus

I went out talking, down that widening road,  
where no-one's trusting no-one  
and conscience .... too heavy load  
I went out riding, down that ol' eight lane  
I passed by a thousand signs  
looking for my own name.

chorus

I went out searching, looking for one good man.  
A spirit who would not bend or break  
Who would sit at his father's right hand  
I went out walking with a bible and a gun  
The word of God lay heavy in my heart  
I was sure I was the one  
Now Jesus don't you wait up  
Jesus I'll be home soon. Yeah I went out for the papers  
told her I'd be back by noon

Yeah I left with nothing  
but the thought you'd be there too  
looking for you .6ing but the thought of you ....  
I went wondering.

From *Faraway So Close!* Film Soundtrack CD Road Movies/EMI/Phonogram,  
1993.

## Appendix G : Homer's Search for the "Story of Peace"

About forty minutes into the film, immediately after a scene with Damiel on the *Siegesäule*, the camera cuts away to Homer in the Library, surrounded by plastic globes of the world. Cassiel stands watchfully behind him while Homer looks at a working model of the inner solar system.

Homer; The world seems to be sinking into dusk but I tell the stories as in the beginning, in my sing-song voice which sustains me, protected by the tale from the troubling present, and protected for the future. *(Cut to another part of the Library, Homer has just sat down and prepares to open a book. Looks at the cover for a few moments. He turns and opens the book from the back then he continues thinking...)* No more sweeping over the centuries. No more going back and forth as in the past. *(looking at photos in the book)* Now I think only day by day ... My heroes are no longer the warriors and kings, *(footage from the war of some men and women looking down at strewn rubbish on the floor...a soldier walks into the view, looks at what the people are looking at)* but the things of peace, each equally good. *(cut to other documentary footage of woman holding handkerchief to her mouth, in the background are many dead bodies laid in a line, with building debris and rubble behind them. German soldiers in background. The an image of a dead baby appears.)* The drying onions being equal to *(cut to shot of other dead children)* the tree trunk that guides through the marsh... *(cut to view of Homer looking down at book with Cassiel leaning over him with eyes closed, listening intently to Homer's thoughts.)* But so far no-one has succeeded in singing an epic of peace. What is it about peace that keeps it's inspiration from enduring and makes it almost un..... Should I now give up? If I do give up, mankind will lose it' story-teller. *(view of two portraits - one of a man, the other of a woman. Homer moves his hand over the woman's photo and tries to caress her...)* And once mankind loses it's story-teller, then it will have lost it's childhood.

Cut again to Damiel sitting on the *Siegesäule's* shoulder again, harp music enters the fray again also. Cut to street-level view of *Siegesäule*, with traffic passing by... Cut to West side of the Wall (full of graffiti) with a walking bridge nearby, two people walking along on bridge, while on the ground Cassiel strolls with Homer. They walk along with the Wall as backdrop.

Homer; I cannot find the *Potsdamerplatz*. Here? This cannot be it. *Potsdamerplatz* ... that's where the Cafe Josti was. In the afternoon I used to chat there and have some coffee, and I'd watch the crowd, after I smoked my cigar, at Losse and Wolf, the famous tobacconist. Just about here ... This can't be the *Potsdamerplatz*. *(Stumbles a bit, take a breath, Cassiel puts his hand on Homers shoulder. Homer is commenting on the unrecognisability of Potsdamer Platz as a flattened ruins, the only structures being the Wall itself, the pedestrian footbridge on the West - to allow people to avoid coming into contact even with the ground of the ruins of the past)* And there's no-one whom you can ask .... *(Camera switches to documentary footage of bombed buildings - presumably Potsdamer Platz during or*

*just after the War) It was a ... lively place. (camera comes back to Homer and Cassiel walking along the desolate, flattened landscape) Trolley cars, horse -drawn omnibuses, and ...two cars (Closes eyes in remembrance): mine and that of the chocolate shop. (Camera falls behind the two men, who are seen walking along pot holes full of rain water, assorted bits of building debris, and in the far distance, the buildings on the shoulder of the Potsdamer Platz, some old, and some new.) The Wertheim store was there, too. And then, suddenly the banners appeared. Here ... (referring to Nazi banners I think) The whole Platz was lined with them. And the people weren't friendly any more. And the police weren't either. I will not give up ... until I have found the Potsdamerplatz. (Cassiel stops walking, Homer continues to a dumped lounge chair - single seater - and proceeds to sit down with a thump. Tired, he takes off his hat to cool down a little and continues to reminisce....) Where are my heroes? Where are you, my children? (Homer's children are the heroes, the characters he wrote into existence, the personae he acted as a young man.) Where are my own, the dull-witted, the first, the original ones?*

Camera slowly pulls into Homer putting his hat back on, wraps the ear flaps around his head, scratches his left ear somewhat comically, and lies back, grabs his walking stick, a most familiar object, and close his eyes to rest. Camera cuts away to Cassiel looking on smilingly, while the sound of helicopter blades are heard overhead. Camera switches back to Homer, from a different angle this time, with long grass in the immediate background, the pedestrian footbridge and buildings of modern Berlin in the distance.

Homer; Name me, muse, the immortal singer who, abandoned by his mortal listeners, lost his voice. *(Quick camera movements, across Potsdamer Platz, then to Homer standing near a souvenir shop with a music box in his hand.)* How, from being the angel of story-telling he became an organ-grinder, ignored or mocked, *(smiles as he starts to turn the arm of a little music box)* outside on the threshold of no-man's-land.

Then about midway through the film, this short scene squeezes in between the end of Peter Falk's attempt to draw the film extras and a scene where a man from the East commits suicide by jumping off the Europa Centre.

Homer; Only the Roman roads still lead into the distance. *(Looks up at the sky full of birds flying away from camera.)* Only the most ancient traces lead further. Where is the top of the pass here? *(camera panning across and down)* Even the flat-land ... even Berlin has its hidden passes, and its only there that my country begins, the country of story-telling. *(Camera pans across flat foreground of Potsdamer Platz with city in background. Comes to rest on Homer and Cassiel standing next to each other.)* Why doesn't everyone see, from childhood on, the passes, the doors and crevices on the ground and above the sky? If everyone saw them, there would be a history without murder or war.

Then at the very end of the film, immediately after Marion and Daniel meet at the *Esplanade* and the two begin their lives together, there is one final appearance of Homer interposed by the solitary figure of the now singular angel Cassiel sitting on top of the *Siegesäule* where he continues in his solemn duty of watching over the life of he is

charged with living in the city below. Cassiel thoughtfully looks around and hears the voice of the old man Homer again.

Homer; Name me the men, women, and the children who will look for me -  
*(cut to back view of old man walking with umbrella up, walking towards the Wall) - me, their story-teller, their spiritual guide -*  
*(he walks along in the centre of a set of tram tracks going right into the Wall and over the border into the East side of Berlin) because they need me more than anything in the world.*

Cuts back to Cassiel on the *Siegesäule*, who leans back against her face, as if taking comfort from her enduring strength. Cut to view of the sky over Berlin with a bright light coming just off centre and the old man is again heard to say...

Homer; We have embarked!

## Appendix H : Falk's Storytelling

Cassiel finds Falk trying to talk Raphaela into becoming human at an Imbiss Cafe. Interrupting Falk's attempt to find the angels' hands, Cassiel tries to enlist the actor's help in his scheme to steal the arms cache from Becker's bunker.

Falk; I can't see you, but I know you're here. I wish I could talk to you eye to eye. I know you're beautiful. I can sense it. Ohh it's always the same problem. I know you're here and I know you're not afraid of me, but I can't see your face. Come on, take my hand...

Cassiel; You want to talk to somebody? Compagniero, talk to me I am here!

Falk; Hey, you made index H : Falk's Storytelling  
319) Well good for you. What's your name?

Cassiel; Cassiel. No! Karl Engel now...

Falk; Engelnnow, when did it happen?

Cassiel; Not so long ago. But I feel much more happier then ever before.

Falk; You see I didn't promise you too much. You want a coffee.

Cassiel; No thanks. (*Raphaela joins the two men round the table*). I have a problem.

Falk; What is it, money, papers....? (*Cassiel waves those away with his hand.*) Well is there anything I can do to help you?

Cassiel; Can you tell a good story?

Falk; A good story? Does it have to be true?

Cassiel; No in the opposite, it has to be phoney as hell.

Falk; This is a very strange request.

Cassiel; Can you do it for me, for a very exceptional situation?

Falk; Casselli! Life is a very exceptional situation.

Cassiel; I want you to meet an old friend. You remember the last time you were in Berlin?

NEW SCENE - two security Guards sit behind a bank of surveillance cameras.

1st Man; (*Reading newspaper.*) I think we're getting cable.

2nd Man; We've had cable for two years.

1st Man; Not at home, dummy! Here!

2nd Man; That's bullshit! (*Falk and Daniel appear in one of the security screens.*)

1st Man; Look at monitor six. (Reading the TV programme from the paper.) That's "Colombo".

2nd Man; (Turns to look at the screen where Falk and Daniel are). You're right. But that can't be!

1st Man; But it is. It's weird. A technician should check it out. This cable stuff is beyond me.

2nd Man; That's Gate 16, right above us.

1st Man; You're nuts! That's "Colombo"!

2nd Man; What's the Actor's name?

1st Man; Falke, Peter Falke. Every kid knows that!

2nd Man; Yes. He's at gate 16.

1st Man; It's a TV series. Eh?

Falk holds up a film shooting script right up to the Camera, trying to attract the Guards attention.

2nd Man; Maybe someone's playing a tape.

1st Man; No! It's him! He's motioning to us! What do we do now?

2nd Man; My wife won't believe this. Switch on the audio.

1st Man; Ja Hello?

Falk; Fine. What took you so long?

The two men together; That's him!!

Falk; Can you hear me?

1st Man; Yes, ... Yes we hear you, umm ... what do you want?

Falk; Would you open the door please. We have an appointment at 11-00.

1st Man; See? The coat.

Falk; 20 minutes (*taps the watch on his wrist restlessly, with annoyance...*)

Daniel; Good evening.

Guards; Ja. He speaks German,

Daniel; This is Mr Falk, as you can plainly see. He says we have an appointment for eleven o'clock ... to scout this location ... the security centre down there, where you are.

1st Man; Ja. Oh you have written permission? Have you got a written permission? We weren't notified.

Damiel; Ach so. That, yes. *(pulls a letter out of his envelope.)* We have it. Here. We've been authorised. Here. *(starts to wave a letter head with ROAD MOVIES as its head.)*

1st Man; Come in. You hear the buzzer?

Damiel; Yes, thanks. We're coming.

The two guards immediately turn and put on their jackets.

2nd Man; If that's Falke, that's a real scoop! You, me and Colombo.

1st Man; Better than any autographs. *(Falk and Damiel enter down a metal set of stairs.)*

Falk; Look *(pointing to the bank of screens.)* Monitors. Right here. We have the first shot. Master from above, include the monitors.

Guards; Its him! *(The 2nd Man puts his hand out to shake Falk, who walks right by saying hello.)*

Falk; Second shot here.

Damiel; He says the second shot here.

Falk; Reverse Master, include the monitors.

Damiel; and then....

Falk; And the room is very nice.

Damiel; *(Pulls out a walkie talkie and says)* Cassiel, we're inside.

Falk; It's a good ceiling. Oh I like this - for a lighting effect, Damielli....

Damiel; *(to the two men)* He likes it because ... and we have doors ...  
1,2,3,4

On a monitor viewing outside the airport, the acrobats from the "Variete" start entering the underground hangers of Becker's arms stash.

Falk; Room is good. Room ist gute

Damiel; Yes Good.

Falk; First thing now, video tape.

Damiel; First we'll shoot it all on video... with this gadget.

1st Man; I'd better turn off that camera. You're filming here?

Damiel; We're filming here. Yes! *(Security Guard covers the internal security camera.)*

Falk; In the first scene, Colombo is looking for hi contact lens ...

Damiel; In this scene Colombo searches for his contact lenses ... the actor who plays Colombo. It is tony. He plays Colombo. Sure.

Falk; *(pointing a pencil at the 1st guard)* Colombo.

Daniel; He's asking you to pretend you're Colombo.

2nd Guard; Him, be Colombo?

1st Man; My name is Peter. *(Everybody laughs, and Peter finally shakes hands with Colombo.)*

2nd Man; *(also now shaking hands with Colombo)* Horst.

Daniel; Wonderful. Daniel. *(also shakes hands with the two guards.)*

Falk; Dustin Hoffman ... Dustin Hoffmann ...

1st Man; Ya.

Falk; is schlafen. You, Dustin Hoffmann. *(pointing to the second man.)*

2nd Guard; Me play Dustin Hoffmann?

Daniel; He wants you to play Dustin Hoffmann, sleeping.

1st Guard; Sleeping ... sleeping. *(laughs and points to the chair that Falk is fixing for him. The two guards shake each other's hands.)*

Daniel; He means... sit down here and sleep.

Falk; So the Guards cannot see the monitors.

Daniel; It' logical. One sleeps, the other looks for his lenses. *(Sees the monitors.)*

Falk; Because the murderer comes through the door here.

Daniel; The Murderer, the murderers come through this door.

1st Guard; Sure. It's great that you're here.

Falk puts his hand on the 1st guards head to press him down to the floor

1st Guard; Right I'm looking for the contact lenses. *(moves down to his knees)*

Daniel; You look down there.... *(pointing to a space below the table.)* and I'll be filming you. Yes, very good.

Falk; And looking, looking and schlucking. Looking and schlaucking.

Daniel; *(talking to the walkie talkie)* Cassiel, go to the runway.

Falk; Very good. *(general noise and hubbub)*

Daniel; Now we'll film you from further back. *(moves away from the centre of the room and starts to climb the stairs.)*

Falk; Now quiet, because the music comes on. *(Falk also retreats back to the stairs)*

Damiel; Mr Falk says the music starts here. As you snore, the music starts.

1st Guard; I keep looking?

Damiel; Yes.

Falk; You can move when you look... You can move. (*Damiel and Falk are now half way up the stairs and nearly out.*)

Damiel; Move but keep looking. Close your eyes and stay down. Wonderful! (*camera cuts to the gang of men now entering the bunker through the manhole in the runway.*) Thank you. Mr Falk is very pleased.

With the two security guards pretending to be asleep, Damiel and Falk leave the security centre, their diversionary story having worked.

## Appendix I : Konrad's Story

In a garage, Cassiel holds Winter, who moments earlier was killed by Emit Flesti, in his arms, Konrad enters, carrying a gun.

Konrad; He's dead, isn't he? (Cassiel nods) did you come to shoot me, too?  
Are you .... Is that you? (Konrad sits down on a chair nearby, putting the gun across his knees. Konrad thinks that Cassiel has come to kill him too) I'm not afraid of you. How long have we known each other ... without ever having met? I don't even know your name ! I ... I remember so little. When you die... you should know you have lived. Come on ... tell me my tory.

Cassiel removes himself from under Winter's body. Konrad stands to leave the garage.

Konrad; Come along.

Cassiel; Your story ... (Inside of Konrad's caravan, Konrad and Cassiel sit next to each other as Konrad listens intently.) ... How did it start? I still remember... for a long time, you resisted repeating baby words ... but all those years your face had a cunning expression. Once when I leaned close to you... I heard your little body ... filled with very loud laughter. (*Raphaela appears, listening and smiling as Cassiel recounts Konrad' life*). Your favourite tree was the walnut tree in your grandfather's garden. You would sit under it for hours...

Konrad; Ja.

Cassiel; ... holding a small puppet, that you allowed to dance only when a passing grown-up complained loudly about the mosquitoes... that they didn't bother you under your walnut tree. When you turned 14, you fell deeply in love, with a girl called Milda Kosewort.

Konrad; Oh ja... yes (Cassiel moves nearer to Konrad) I remember that.

Cassiel; And what happened later? (Cut to an aerodrome where a Nazi plane stands in the foreground as a fighter aircraft flies past the scene. A car pulls up next to the aircraft on the ground..)

Becker's Father; Hanna, hurry! Come Anton! (Steps out of the car, pulling the boy behind him. Becker's mother Gertrude and Hanna sit in the back of the car, the child looking up at her mother.)

Gertrude; We're not getting out, Konrad! Drive on. (Konrad pulls the door closed. Becker and son Anton - later to return as Tony Baker - get into the aeroplane.)

Becker Senior; Gertrude, Hurry! Gertrude! Hurry! don't dawdle!

Gertrude; He has Anton. He mustn't get Hanna, too. (Hanna nods to Konrad.)

Konrad; I understand Mrs Becker. (Konrad starts to drive off. The plane immediately moves off too.)

Back in Konrad's caravan, Cassiel appears to have fallen asleep during the telling of Konrad's story. Konrad turns to look at him...

Konrad; Did you fall asleep? (*turns back to the open book in front of him, a diary like book, with a pen sitting in the middle, and continues thinking...*) Somebody has to tell me whether I lived right. (*Raphaela moves in from behind where she was sitting.*) I don't think I was a courageous man. Proper yes .. but not courageous.

Raphaela; (*puts her hand on Konrad's shoulder and whispers into his ear*) Wasn't it courageous, when you took in that frightened little Hanna?

Konrad; That wasn't anything special. Any decent person would have done that. She had no family left.

Raphaela; You had little Hanna to protect, and became protected yourself. Your life had finally found a mirror. Another life, still young, had begun to grow... because, in you, because in you she found all she needed. What else can I say Konrad? You're someone who was found.

Konrad; (*opens his eyes as if he had been in a deep trance, or meditation.*) Danke. (*Raphaela strokes Konrad's head, kisses it. He shuts his eyes momentarily, and nods, accepting the story he has been given, the story of his life.*)

## Appendix J : Cassiel's Story to Doria

When Damiel returns with a ragamuffin like Cassiel whom he has just bailed out of jail. Doria laughs and asks

Doria; He's the ringing in your ear?

Damiel; Yes.

Cassiel; Miss, from now on you can call me uncle Karl.

Marion; Damiel told us a lot about you but we really don't know anything.

Doria; did he stop travelling to stay with us?

Damiel; He'll tell you.

Doria; Tell us about your travels ... Uncle Karl!

Cassiel; Al right. Recently I came from the far north ... (pointing up at the ceiling) from Norway, which you could guess from my clothes. I had planned to catch raindeer ... and elk. (Marion and Damiel look cynically at Cassiel)

Damiel; I told you he was a good for nothing. (pointing at Cassiel).

Cassiel; Actually, I was bitten by one of those animals. There I was with my bite, wondering .... who could heal me? Then I knew. A Laplander, of course! (Doria laughs) So I slogged on ... towards Lapland, through blizzards, fighting off wolves, ... squinting all the while because of the northern lights!

Marion; You understand his story?

Doria; Yes I understand it completely. It's interesting, Uncle Karl. My papa also told me a mysterious story. He said he fell from the sky.

Marion; *(laughing, interjecting, as Cassiel looks quizzically at Doria, trying to understand the implications of what she has just told him)* Doria, leave him alone now. *(Cassiel shakes his head at Damiel's suggestion.)* Karl hasn't eaten in a long time. *(Damiel brings a tray with food and brandy. Cassiel looks at Marion, who returns his look knowingly.)*

Cassiel; (to Doria) I'll be staying a while. I'll tell you many stories.

Doria; So much *(exclaiming at the large quantity of food that Damiel has put in front of Cassiel.)*

Damiel; The uncle is hungry. Ok *(takes up an olive and feeds it to Cassiel.)* Olive. *(Cassiel accepts the olive as if it is the milk from his mother, or the holy Eucharist from a priest.)* Watch out, it's stuffed.

Cassiel; uummmm.

## Appendix K : The Concluding Scenes of *Wings of Desire*

Marion leaves the concert and moves through the crowd at the Esplanade. Back on stage, Cassiel moves slowly and collapses against the wall, looking thoughtful. Perhaps he's contemplating on the nature of eternity and how it will be now that he has lost his long time companion Daniel. Eventually he turns his face into the wall behind him.

Meanwhile Marion walks into the Bar at the back of the concert hall. Marion stand a moment and looks straight in to the Bar, then proceeds towards where Daniel is sitting. She stops next to him, her red dress standing her out against his darker suit. They both ignore each other and continue looking straight ahead. Although both are aware of the other next to them, neither know how to break the infinit327they turn towards each other simultaneously, Daniel holds a glass in his hand, looking down into it as if it were a magic ball about to reveal something they both want to know. Marion looks at the glass too. He offers her the glass like a priest gives the chalice to a member of his congregation. She accepts. Slowly their faces start to rise and look at each other. She drinks from the glass and hands the glass back to Daniel who puts it down on the Bar. He moves forward towards her, but she puts out her palm of her right hand to stop his movement.

Marion; Its time to get serious. (*Daniel puts his hand over Marion's which now rests on his left breast.*) I was often alone, but I never lived alone. When I was with someone, I was often happy, but I also felt it's all a matter of chance. These people were my parents but it could have been others. Why was the brown-eyed boy my brother, and why not the green-eyed boy on the opposite platform? The taxi driver's daughter was my friend, but I could just as well have embraced a horses head. I was with a man, I was in love, but I could just as well have left him there, and continued on with the stranger who came towards us. Look at me, or don't. Give me your hand , or don't. No, but don't give me your hand, and look the other way. I think there's a new moon tonight. No night is more peaceful. No blood will be shed in the whole city. I never played with anyone, (*now speaking directly into Daniel's ears*) and yet I've never opened my eyes and thought: "This is it." "It's finally getting serious." So I've grown older. Was I the only one who wasn't serious? Is it our times that are not serious? I was never lonely, neither when I was alone, nor with others. I would have liked to be alone at last. Loneliness means: At last I am whole. Now I can say it, because today I am finally lonely. No more co-incidence! The new moon of decision! I don't know if destiny exists. But decision does exist. Decide! (*she says directly to him*) Now WE are the times. Not only the whole city, but the whole world is taking part in our decision. (*camera cuts front CU of Marion's face talking*) We two are more than just two (*looking straight into the camera, at the audience, a glisten off her eyes*) We personify something. We are sitting in the people's plaza (*Potsdamer Platz?*) and the whole plaza is filled with people, who all wish for what we wish for. We are deciding everyone's game! I am ready (*she says lowering her head in determination, looking the camera straight in the eye - eyeballing the audience*) Now it's your turn. You're holding the game in your hand. Now .. or never! (*Camera cuts to Daniel, CU. Smiles, looks down*) You need me. You will need me. There's no greater story than ours, that of man and woman. It will be a story of giants, invisible, transposable, a story of new ancestors. Look, my eyes! They are the

picture of necessity, of the future of everyone on the plaza. Last night I dreamt of a stranger, of my man ... Only with him could I be lonely, open up to him, completely open, completely for him, welcome him completely into myself, surround him with the labyrinth of shared happiness. I know it is you.

They slowly move to a kiss and gradually embrace each other fully. The camera cuts away to give them a bit of privacy, and observes them from the ceiling. Cut to the *Siegesäule* face, looking down. This time there is no Cassiel .... Camera pans to the left and for the first the sky is seen in colour. As the camera continues to pan left across her wing, the image of Marion on a trapeze rope halfway to the roof of a studio fades in. The roof of the studio is made of glass and the wings are seen through it as the image of Marion starts to move and resume her work ...

Damiel; Something has happened, (*cut to Damiel holding the rope below Marion*) it is still happening. (*The sound of the Circus Band comes back*) It is binding! It was true at night and it's true in the day. (half of the image is in colour and the bottom half in B&W as Cassiel sits on a flight of stairs and looks at Marion practicing her trapeze.) Especially now. Who was who? I was in her ... and she was around me. Who in the world can claim (camera at wide view now with all three in view) that he was ever together with another person? I AM together! No mortal child was created but an immortal common image. I learned amazement last night. She took me home, and I found my home. (*The camera cuts to shadow of Marion upside down projected onto the wall. She turns around a bit like cupid's arrow in the bow, about to be released.*) It happened once ... It happened once, and so it will be forever. The image we created will be with me when I die. I will have lived within it. Only the amazement about the two of us, - the amazement about man and woman - only that made a human being of me. I ... know now (camera goes to CU of hand writing in book just like the opening sequence) what no angle knows....

## **Appendix L : Transcript of *Submission (Part 1)***

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