Filmmaking as a Practice in Critical Theory: Fredi M. Murer and Wim Wenders

A Thesis Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Cora Lay

December 2022

I would like to dedicate this work to Matthew and Alex.

I also want to thank Maria Stehle, my other committee members, and all my professors over the last two years for supporting my desire to make a documentary.

Preface

An undergraduate internship guided me to this project, which has grown in scope over the past year. My work has always centered on media depictions of farming, agricultural laborers, production methods, and the current disconnect between consumers and food systems. Working on a farm in Southern Germany, I encountered the importance of regional, seasonal agriculture in a way utterly different from what I had seen farming here in the United States. Support systems and distribution methods connected small-scale farmers to consumers who wanted fresh, ethical, and flavorful products. Through the documentary, I hope to visualize ideas about land stewardship, and community building, and ultimately impact the way people who watch it think about how their food is produced and arrives in their homes. In preparation for filming, I chose two filmmakers I consider masters of documentary and narrative film. Through watching their movies and investigating how Murer and Wenders became social, cultural, and even critical theorists through their filmmaking, I conceived my style that blends essayistic traditions with investigative interviews. The film can be viewed on its own or in conjunction with the research I've done about filmmaking, and I hope you enjoy it however you please.

Abstract

This multipart project pulls together all my fields of research under the umbrella of my ultimate interest– agriculture and its future. The film portion focuses on regional and seasonal agriculture in Southern Germany near Lake Constance. It focuses on several families who do small scale agricultural production utilizing various methods, but ultimately touches on our current disconnect from our food systems and nature. The written portion found in this document focuses on filmmaking as a practice in critical theory, a tool to visualize what written theory cannot. Filming happened over a three-week period in Summer 2021for the portion shot in Germany. The research for the written portion on film involved watching all available films from Fredi M. Murer and Wim Wenders, choosing a few from each and detailing the involvement of theory. I was not a filmmaker when I began this project, so much of this endeavor has been trial and error with many changes being made to the scope and intention of the project over the last year. I see this as only the beginning and intend to make a longer version of this film with more interviews, including some here in the US to show the dichotomy between capitalist systems and the growing disconnect from our food. The longer version will be more essayistic in style with my voice being more apparent as I grow in my filmmaking abilities. For now, though this version of the project is a culmination of all my areas of interest, and doesn't seek to prove anything, rather hopes to impact the way people think about film and agriculture.

Table of Contents

Section 1 Filmmaking as a Practice in Critical Theory: Murer and Wenders …..... 1

Section 2 Fredi M Murer: Ethnography Broaching Transnational Cinema through Theory.....4

***Swissmade (2069)* 6**

***Wir Bergler in den Bergen* ….....9**

***Hohenfeuer* ….....12**

***Der grüne Berg* ….....15**

Some closing thoughts on Murer, his films and how he informs my practice.....18

Section 3 Wim Wenders: Filmmaking Style's ability to Recondition audience Perception ……...22

***Alice in den Städten* ….....25**

***Tokyo-Ga* ….....28**

Some closing thoughts on Wenders, his films and how he informs my practice ….....31

Section 4 About *Am Bodensee nah und frisch* .....…… 32

Section 5 The Neoliberal Adoption of Fine Arts & Economic Control of Popular Media 36

Bibliography..... 37

Vita 41

List of Attachments

Where to stream the documentary:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dou2VeOvHa04cZ4YUrF5eTCDJy71-me4?usp=sharing

Legal documents relating to the film:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1H9CO5XWuncxyWzWq4srMQXeNjI262iMh?usp=sharing

Section 1

Filmmaking as a Practice in Critical Theory: Murer and Wenders

As scholars we use theory to frame our views on certain types of media. Film theory hones—as in the sharpening effect theory has on the aesthetic allure of screens and movement images— in on film and television showing the ways that framing, dialogue, score, color choice, and mise en scène etc. make arguments and allow for specialized critique of form. Further, auteur theory, though now out of fashion, focuses on the work of a single director, what their favored styles, tropes, and thus their transformations say about the topics and groups they depict. But what if one chose to look at the auteur as a theoretician? Certainly, we can frame their work using theoretical lenses, and see the work as a receptacle for other's theories, by which they become conveyors of theory. So then why not also frame them as the creators of theory? Not just creators of film theory or aesthetic theory, but impactful critical and social theorists. We often do this already, indirectly. Though we often claim auteurs are theorists, we withhold their ability to become critical social theorists. This is rooted in ideas put forward by the Frankfurt School. While other art forms, such as literature, are often thought of for their ability to convey the complexities of critical theory. The root cause for this is twofold and obvious to me. 1) The nature of the form, seen through the lens of entertainment. 2) The number of people who contribute to a film being made. The actors, set designers, writers, producers, illustrators, costume designers, as well as the audience consuming it, all contribute to the types of films being produced.

Adorno and Horkheimer contributed massively to undermining film as theory through reason number one in their works on the culture industry, mainly *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* though they do make exceptions for films outside of the Hollywood industrial complex. Jonathan

Beller, a recent scholar of Mediology and the *visual turn,* reinvigorated the discourse on film as a processor and promoter of ideology in his work on the attention economy, namely *The Cinematic Mode of Production: Attention Economy and the Society of the Spectacle.* Similarly, Siegfried Kracauer, in his seminal work *From Caligari to Hitler,* credits and discredits the medium by describing the ways that film is in fact a work of the people by and for the people, nationally or rather societally speaking. I, while admiring, utilizing, and believing in all these great theorists' work on film, do believe qualifications should be entailed, detailed, and examined, because there are works capable of subverting ideologically oppressive narratives.

As research for the documentary, I made for my thesis, I chose two filmmakers: one Swiss and one German. I watched most of their films, and then traced the ways they utilized or created theory in their films. In the following sections I will look at four carefully selected films from each director: including both narrative and documentary works. In each section I will quickly detail the content or plot of each and then sometimes choose one or two scenes and a corresponding theory or theories, I posit is embedded in each scene through their authorship in order to capture each film's transcendent message about modern and contemporary society. Finally, I will end each section with clarifying statements and a description of how each directors' work is significant in the context of my own filmmaking process.

Let's start by creating two main subsections: **Fredi M Murer: Ethnography Broaching Transnational Cinema through Theory,** and **Wim Wenders: Personal Filmmaking Style's ability to Recondition audience Perception.** I'll begin each auteurs section with some necessary biographical information. This will require a discussion of their specific peers and influences, and the national-historical context in which they made films. In my conclusion, **The Neoliberal Adoption of Fine Arts & Economic Control of Popular Media,** I will negotiate space for

reflection on the medium of film as conscious mode of thought production rather than ideology machine, specifically in the context of independent filmmaking. I attempt to demonstrate the possibility of liberatory film I will utilize the works of Murer and Wenders in conjunction with detailed explanations of the theories like the attention economy, culture industry, and the idea of mass visuality as a means of control, all of which are necessary to navigate and dismantle the control film has on society, and special attention will be paid to each.

Section 2

Fredi M Murer: Ethnography Broaching Transnational Cinema through Theory

Murer was born in Beckenried Switzerland in 1940. He was raised in Altdorf in the Uri Canton, which strongly influenced his work, as we will see in his documentary making. He later attended Kunstgewerbeschule Zürich, where he studied drawing before settling on photography– though he remains an avid visual artist and had a 700-page sketchbook published in 2010. In the 1960s, he began making films. His style and rise to prominence in Switzerland contributed to the revival of Swiss cinema. Leading filmmaking back to the hands of the innovative, independent filmmaker, for which he later received the Innerschweizer Kulturepreis, the only director to ever do so. In 2019 he was awarded the 'pardo alla carriera' at the Locarno Film Festival for his life's work.[1] Additionally, he has judged the festival on many occasions including, in 1986, after winning the golden leopard the year before for *Höhenfeuer*. His works have been described as "exemplary for the power of its message" in the world of Swiss cinema.[2]

As an independent filmmaker early in his career he produced all his own work, while working closely with friends and fellow artists, such as H.R. Geiger, known for his set design and costuming work for *Alien.* Outside of Switzerland he is largely unknown besides by cinephiles. He has, however, made massive contributions to the ethnographic capabilities of documentary, and the ways ethnographic film can easily be transmuted into transnational works through simplicity and apt uses of theory. Since only a few of his films have found commercial success in the US it is relatively difficult to find English language scholarship and interviews on

[1] Locarno, "Swiss Director takes Seat on Jury," *Screen International*, 26.
[2] Ibid.

him. I will pull from sources in a variety of languages to give a background on this auteur and his work. Translations will be included in parentheses. Those in German provided by me, and some in French, for which I rely on my minimal knowledge of the language assisted by technology when necessary.

In an interview in 1986 for *Postif,* we find one of two comprehensive interviews with the filmmaker. He speaks to Michel Egger. The work provides a Biofilmographie up to the point of it being published, which luckily means all but one film I chose is detailed in their conversation. "I made my first few films as a happy amateur… As my own producer and sponsor, I used to see myself as a sort of conjurer… My last few films I've made as a grim professional."[3]Starting in the 1980s, after some commercial success he has been tied to production companies, which is also a symptom of the current market for film and realities of funding. In the *Postif* article published before Murer encountered even more commercial success following *Höhenfeuer* he presupposes the way funding will come be an issue he faces through the rest of his career. He says, “je m’autofinaçais; j’étais libre, complétement apolitique.” (I self-financed; I was free, completely apolitical.) Michel responds by asking if the cultural climate of Switzerland was favorable to his filmmaking process and endeavors, to which Murer responds, "Non. Je me sentais très isolé dans cette voie. Le désir de fiction, la recherche de nouvelles formes cinématographiques étanient forte- ment refoulés. Pour la simple et bonne raison qu'à l'époque déja, on ne trouvait pas d'argent pour des ‘films’, mais pour des a ‘thèmes’ sociaux, politiques” (No. I felt very isolated in this way. The desire for fiction, the search for new cinematographic forms were strongly repressed. For the simple and good reason that at the time already, one did

[3] Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, "Fredi M. Murer." *Positif,* 1986, 11.

not find money for 'films,' but for 'themes' social, political.) Here he is speaking to his earliest films, in particular *Vision of a Blind Man*. At this point in the interview, we can enter with the films I have chosen his feelings about them, their plots, and what filmmaking looked like for him as he transitioned from having no funding to some.

Swissmade: 2069 (1969):

"Swissmade is a trilogy of minifilms about the future of Switzerland, in the first, *1980–Der Neinsager* by Yves Yersin... Fritz E. Maeder's *Alarm*... [and] the third is... *2069*."[4] These films are all loosely related in that they are reactions to Switzerland at the end of the revolutionary 60s. Murer's *2069* has a subtitle, that reads, "oder dort, wo sich Futurolgen und Archeologen gute Nacht sagen," referencing the saying, 'Wo Fuchs und Hase gute Nacht sagen,' which as an expression means the middle of nowhere. In this comparison then the futurologists are foxes and archeologists hares. The film takes place 100 years after the film was made in the year 2069, and follows an extraterrestrial being, designed by H. R. Giger, known for his work on Ripley Scott's *Alien*. The being has a camera to record its interactions with the various people of a re-imagined Switzerland. Europe has flooded and Switzerland has become an isolated island, far different from its landlocked nature. Society has rearranged itself around the 'Brain Center,' and integrated citizens use cameras to spy on one another for the organizational, surveillant system. People only live to their peak age of 44, waste and laziness have been nearly eliminated. A group of outsiders, however, still exist, resistant to the control of the 'Brain Center.' They are loosely connected groups of misfits, scientists, and prophets. The extraterrestrial being observes all these people, as well as the highly organized society.

[4] Lorenzo Tanini, "Swiss Made 2069-1969," *Classic 2 Vintage*.

The theory I first pinpointed in this work comes from Foucault's ideas about panoptocism. Quoting Foucault directly, "Panopticism is the general principle of a new 'political anatomy' whose object and end are not the relations of sovereignty but the relations of discipline. It programmes, at the level of an elementary and easily transferable mechanism, the basic functioning of a society penetrated through and through with disciplinary mechanisms."[5] In his terms panopticism is rooted in the political world through the power dynamics of discipline, the idea is clearly expressed in the societal surveillance of *2069.* In this film a web of surveillance exists from the control of the 'Brain Center' to the spying of citizens on one another through photography. In direct juxtaposition to this form of surveillance of a specific group for the sake of maintaining order and dolling out disciplinary measures, the recording of interactions by the extraterrestrial being becomes purely observational. We as viewers experience several scenes through the lens of its camera made obvious by the framing of shots in a pseudo bubble helmet. Where this becomes interesting in relation to the idea of filmmakers being theorists is that "the film reporter is Murer himself. Without exception, the performers in real life were authentic 1968 activists, some of whom later made political or artistic careers."[6] So, in his early days as a filmmaker, he not only works with future activists and artists, but already understands the role of the filmmaker as observer and conveyer of thought.

Tied to the panoptic nature of the film, there is also the idea of apocalypticism, which brings me to my focus on the way film as a form is more capable than other mediums to engage in discussion of ecocriticism in terms of ecophobia. The ecophobic tendencies of other media forms tend today to focus on the validity of climate change, the damage caused by cataclysmic

[5] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : the Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 204.
[6] *Filmingo*, https://www.filmingo.de/en/films/460-chicoree-swiss-made.

events, but not really on anything besides warnings about the future. The intensity of these dialogues often leads to radicalization or intense fear of what's to come. In the case of films, they have a unique ability to not only imagine a future shaped by climate change, but also to give a visual interpretation for what that may look like. While most Hollywood films tend toward doomsday scenarios, zombie apocalypses, films outside that mechanized method of filmmaking have a special capability to portray futures that demand thoughtful engagement with the realities of climate change and extreme weather events. Greg Garrard states, "[b]ut most importantly… apocalypticism is inevitable bound up with imagination, because it has yet to come into being. And if, sociologically it is 'a genre born out of crises', it is also necessarily a rhetoric that must whip up such crises to proportions appropriate to the end of time."[7] In the case of this film's apocalyptic nature, a scene near the end of the film demands attention. The observing extraterrestrial is taken in by scientists working for the 'Brain Center.' A mechanical heartbeat methodically pulses sound into the scene until the view of the being is covered, and the heartbeat stops so we are led to believe it has died. In the following scene a map of Switzerland slowly fades as Europe reappears, and the country becomes a body of water, and the outsiders of society find themselves sailing across the now land locked lake that was once Switzerland.

The importance of these last few minutes and scenes is twofold. First, we see in the killing of the being a symbolic death of independent cinema under the state's panoptic vision. Through the assumed death of the being we see an end to observational media, or more explicitly media without underpinning intentions, that exist in all forms of funded media whether they be intentional or not. This leads to a discussion Regarding the Frankfurt School which I'll loop back to in the final section. Second, we see the impending apocalypse that is brought through a society

[7] Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012) 12.

alienated from one another and their environment. The isolated group of real-life artists and activists are presumably the only ones to survive the flood, through their isolation and ardent fight against assimilation with the highly organized society of the 'Brain-center.'

The isolation of the outsiders on their boat meshes with the isolation of life in the Alps, leading us into our discussion of the next three Murer Films.

Wir Bergler in den Bergen sind eigentilicht nicht Schuld dass wir da sind (1974)

Wir Bergler in den Bergen sind eigentlich nicht schuld, daß wir da sind (1974), known to as *Wir Bergler* from now on, is heralded for its poetic nuance and lyrical camera work, the film occupies a unique space in between the many realms of German language cinema.[8] The film is often described as," an ethnographic documentary film in three movements, along the lines of a symphony." Each movement of this symphony tells a different story of economic development and modernity in a hyper specific location. I argue the film benefits from the essayistic form by delving into filmic techniques not always associated with ethnographic documentary making. Beyond the inherent malleability of essay film form is, another consideration makes this view possible, namely, the state of Swiss cinema in the seventies. Martin Schaub states in his essay, "Utopie aus den Relikten," Swiss film of the seventies was suddenly obsessed with the relics of the near past, and "als Ahnung einer Welt, die nicht nach den verheerenden Regeln der Moderne funktionierte."[9] *Wir Bergler* sets itself up for this type of exploration through the intense specificity of its subject matter, people living in varying degrees of isolation and all amid different economic and social transitions.

[8] *Filmingo*, https://www.filmingo.de/en/films/458-wir-bergler-in-den-bergen.
[9] Martin Schaub, ”Utopie aus den Relikten,” in *die eigenen Angelegenheiten*, (Frankfurt a. M.: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1983), 33.

The beginning intertitles announce the films subsections or movements, giving a quote from each section to describe and in a way preordain an interpretation of each:

1. Göschenenertal- “Es muss eine ganz andere Änderung geben im ganzen Ding da.” (The whole entire thing had to change completely.)

2. Schächtental- „Diese Kinder haben bereits die Leidenschaft vom Alperwesen geerbt.” (These children have inherited a passion for alpine living already.)

3. Maderanertal- „Aber wir sagen uns manchmal hier oben, wir sind so Burger 2. Klasse.” (Sometimes we tell ourselves we are second class citizens living here.)

Each section of the film is made up of interviews, meetings, landscape shots, families performing daily tasks, and all focus on their specific location. By establishing a three-part structure from the beginning, Murer informs the audience of each segment's location. By going a step further and providing a sentence as a description for each section, he has already set up the content expectation. Essay films blend the factual and the real, and in doing so, allow for complex meta-narratives on present social structures or histories. Murer explores ethnographic documentary in the telling of his film, utilizing purely observational interview practices, keeping his narration to a minimum, opting instead for disembodied voices of the Bergbauer. However, through the intervention of these quotes from the start he begins to create a narrative form capable of releasing the *uberspecificity* of place and people, that seems inescapable in most ethnographic studies.

The film begins with an enigmatic and unnerving scene, constructed visually through a series of tunnel shots with only brief glances of the surrounding environment. There is no action other than driving, and the tunnels are nothing out of the norm for anyone who has driven

through the Alps. The scene, however, still causes uneasiness due to the music. Instead of the typical whooshing of air, the audience hears György Ligeti's Requiem Kyrie Section, which is most known for its appearance in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*. To create an ominous atmosphere, the piece blends human voices and micropolyphony. Using Kyrie as the soundtrack for the beginning of his film marks this the filmic arrival to the Uri canton purposefully alienates the audience. To fully appreciate the ordinariness of the film's nearly two-hour essayist view of Swiss mountain life, the audience must enter the same isolation endured by its subjects. The utilization of the sound and tunnel shot as a means of pulling the audience from their current location also imparts an essayistic tone, even though Murer does not impose his voice. His methods of imbuing his thoughts on to a film tend to be subtle, and I'm sure many would sneer at me calling this film essayistic. As someone who has seen his films many multiple times, however, I find this to be a beautiful and refined mode of essayistic documentary making. This initial scene is alienating on purpose the music pulls from the famous scene in 2001 when the monolith is first encountered. So, in a way we as audience members are engaging with the monoliths that are the mountains, but in a way that implies we may never know the meaning of these monoliths. The scene simultaneously indoctrinates us to the scenery while purposefully alienating us from the landscape via the use of tunnel shots. My interpretation of this is his desire to show such a hyper specific place, while still creating enough distance to reflect on wherever an audience member feels there is a similar feeling of 'home.'

Murer, though showing the region of his ancestors and the lifestyle they once knew fading away, favors a narrative that is relatable to many countries and people in the latter half of the twentieth century. In the US, the shift away from agrarian life really solidified in the 40s, but when looking at statistics, small farms held their ground against the takeover by big agriculture

well into the 70s. This also communicates the socioeconomic situation of the 70s on a geopolitical scale as countries around the world were 'restabilized' by outside powers. This metaphor will make more sense in the conclusion of the essay but suffice it to say for now that through an essayistic treatment of groups separated by economic disparagement, we can apply this film to many a society in the 1970s. His shifting from a purely ethnographic portrayal of the people in the film into an essayistic telling of how modernity affected the Swiss Bergbauer, leads us to the next film and its treatment of isolation and alienation as a transnational contemporary experience.

Höhenfeuer (1985):

The narrative film that brought him commercial success and acclaim in 1985 with a win at Locarno, again revolves around a family in the alps, and though a fictional telling is accessible to a transnational audience of people, particularly those living in mountainous regions. The film tells the story of a brother and sister, Bub and Belli, who live with their parents in a very remote part of the Alps. Their closest neighbors are their grandparents who though their home is visible from their own requires about a day's travel to visit. The film is about incest and isolation. Bub is deaf and mute, and Belli returns home from school to be his teacher. Their father is a very angry man who regularly refers to a curse on their family. Later in the film, the curse is realized when Belli becomes pregnant with Bub's child, and in a fit of rage their father tries to kill them both.

The film's topical treatment of isolation is layered, presented both literally in the family's isolated geography and figuratively in the characterization of the family members. Bub is deaf, and Belli is kept from returning to town to finish school. She is left a servant in her own home. The family is obviously also extremely isolated from the outside world, shown by a hike to town to sell some livestock and pick up provisions for winter that takes Bub and his father nearly a

week. To further impress upon the audience the isolation of the film, there is very little dialogue, instead, the sounds of weather, digging in dirt, and soft humming are often the only sounds in scenes.

Mountain landscapes in German language films often harken back to the Heimatfilm's of the post-Nazi fifties, when audiences sought the comfort of prewar times and a soft idealized world before the war. Thus, it is hard to make a German language film that takes place in the Alps without it becoming too *kitschig.* Marcy Goldberg proposes a way to create 'Antiheimatfilms.' She posits that the way to do this is through imagining the displaced filmmaker or filmmaker in exile that Hamid Naficy writes about and attempting to create film in the mountainous regions as 'accented cinema.' By looking at the landscape, subject matter in this fashion it then opens the film up to become a 'dialect cinema.'[10] While I think the use of Naficy's work is a bit underdeveloped here, I do understand what Goldberg means, and though she doesn't draw on the work of Murer in this piece, he is certainly making accented cinema possible, before Naficy even defined it. Accented cinema acknowledges, chiefly on a diasporic level, the multiplicity of dialogues that must be negotiated for a film to be understood as a social practice.[11] While Murer certainly isn't the typical or idealized creator of an accented cinema according to Naficy's definition, because he is a white male westerner, in this film we see the ways that leaving his home affected him. Through the plot he engages with a dialogue about isolation he may never have arrived at without leaving Switzerland. He left the canton where many of these films take place, living abroad in the UK and in Zurich, mainly. In aF sense he is

[10] Marcy Goldberg, ”Suspekte Schönheit,” (Marburg: *Cinema*, 2008), 48.

[11] Hamid Naficy, An Accented Cinema, (Princeton University Press, 2001), 27.

creating films about his own exile and the diaspora of Bergbauer, through the lenses of disturbance caused by shifting economic systems

With *Höhenfeuer,* the methods of accented cinema are realized, namely because the narrative form lends itself to the required elements of transnational viewership. Though he does aptly tell the stories of the people in *Wir Bergler,* in such a manner that their experiences become relatable, in this film he comes into his own as director of transnational cinema. While Naficy's work focuses on the diaspora from a post-colonial viewpoint, I think his commentary of being stuck between worlds is appropriate when looking at Murer's films. 'Accented cinema' requires independence from a studio, which Murer had in his early films, including this one to an extent. It also requires, "ideological constructs masquerading as neutral categories," meaning indiscernible and deeply embedded meta-narratives of exile for Naficy, and in the case of Murer– isolation. While ideologies tend require a neurtral-ness in all cultural production the key to accented cinema Is the introduction of ideologies not present or not widely accepted in the current society, as neutral so that their adoption may happen without major disruption to the norm causing repercussions for the population that is introducing new modes of thought.

Additionally, the language of diasporic films is key to encoding ethnicity and retaining the voice of diasporic communities. While this film is in German, it is OV Swiss German, and the actors have heavy Urner accents when speaking, making it difficult for speakers of Hoch Deutsch or other dialects to understand. This again leads us to our next film and the language of visual metaphors in filmmaking.

Der grüne Berg (1990):

Borrowing from the filmingo description of the film sets up my arguments about metaphor in the film very well.[11] "The Swiss National Association for the Storage of Radioactive Waste plans to build a permanent waste disposal site in Wellenberg, Canton of Nidwalden... Murer not only interviews supporters and opponents, in particular the Alpine farmers living on the Wellenberg. He starts by raising the question of a timescale that is out of all proportion to the human lifespan... Fredi Murer dedicated the film to the "children and children's children", both of the farmers on the Wellenberg and of all of us...[the] generation that lives and works as though they were the last people on this earth." We immediately see the introduction of the importance of children in the film's dedication, and it is deeply embedded throughout the film.

One scene finds Murer in the dining room a Wellenberger family's home young Seppi sits on his mother's lap and through their discussion and Murer returns to this scene repeatedly a metaphor about children today representing future generations emerges. Charles Forceville changed the scholarship on filmic metaphor by broadening research from the 'moving image' view of metaphor in film to a multimodal viewpoint. "Most films convey their meaning in combinations of moving images, sound, music, and language…This had consequences for the ways in which metaphor can manifest itself in film." [12] Forceville offers nine modes, of which only six can be applied to film: visuals, spoken language, written language, sound, music, and gestures. These modes work together in film to convey metaphor and meaning through their relations to one another and socially and culturally imposed schema. For example, interior and exterior settings ability to relay a metaphor concerning power structures is rooted in the

[12] Charles de Forceville, ”Visual and Multimodal Metaphor in Film“ in *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games*, 17–32. (New York: Routledge, 2016), 20.

paradigm of man's supposed triumph over nature. The spoken language in the film, quite literally the dialect, becomes a means of separating certain groups as a means of showing who is alienated from nature and who is not. The written language, such titular elements to introduce different groups again sets the two groups against one another. Sound is another important piece of the metaphor where city or nature noises dominate certain scenes as a reality but also as a means of creating this dichotomy between the two groups.

Children in *Der grüne Berg* are a metaphor for the future, introduced by young Seppi's presence, at the table of the farming communities' adults. As the film comes to its close, Seppi's mother says,

> Die Frauen halten vielleicht mehr dagegen, gegen die Technik, weil wir eine Intensivere Beziehung zu Kindern haben…heute aber frage ich mich manchmal, in welche Welt ich meine Kinder setzte. Sich zu viele Gedanken machen bringt aber auch nichts, sonst kann man ja keine Kinder mehr zeugen. Man hofft natürlich, dass die Menschen endlich kluger werden und besser zur Natur schauen. Wenn Seppi einmal dreißig ist und uns fragt, wieso wir nicht mehr Sorge getragen haben, mit welcher Entschuldigung sollen wir uns rechtfertigen für unsere Taten? Zu Fehlern sollte man stehen und es in Zukunft besser machen.
>
> (Women may be more opposed to technology because we have a more intense relationship with our children... but today I sometimes wonder what world I brought my children into. But there is no point in worrying too much, otherwise you can no longer care for your children. Of course, one hopes that people will finally become wiser and take better care of nature. When Seppi is thirty and asks us why we haven't

been more careful, what excuse can we use to justify our actions? You should own up to mistakes and do better in the future.)

Even though they are inside when the woman talks about her children's future, Murer edits her message into exterior landscape shots. The mountain landscape will soon be dominated by Nagra's plan for a nuclear waste site, a vault inside '*Der grüne Berg.'*

Human domination of nature is common to ecocritical theory. Specifically, when talking about the ecophobic tendencies of humans in the past 100 years. We have become so alienated from our home, Earth, that we now fully believe in our domination over nature rather than our existence within it. Ecophobia at its core means a fear of home. However, Simon C. Estok redefined the term in his work *The Ecophobia Hypothesis*. "Ecophobia is an ethical undervaluing of the natural environment that can result in cataclysmic environmental change."[13] This definition confirms what George F. Will describes in his Chicago Sun's article from 1988, where he writes about 'the fear of an increasingly inhospitable Earth.'[14] These definitions explain a modern understanding of ecophobia and are at the heart of the environmental crisis we currently face. As Estok says, "ethical undervaluing" has led to the domination of humans over the environment with serious consequences. As a species we are still very much a part of the natural world but justify our superiority in the face of catastrophic events.

Murray Bookchin was already warning us about this during the anti-nuclear movement of the late sixties and seventies. In a speech he gave at a conference on futurism he states," [b]ut first and foremost, without those roots that place you in nature, and in a specific form of nature, it is a deception to talk about cosmic oneness, it is a deception to talk about spaceships, it is a

[13] Simon C. Estok, *The Ecophobia Hypothesis*, (London: Routledge, 2018), 6.
[14] George F. Will, "The Politics of Ecophobia," *Chicago Sun*, Sept. 18, 1988.

deception even to talk about ecosystems without having this sense of unity with your immediate locale, with your soil, with your community, with your home. Without that community and without that sense of home, without that sense of the organic—of the organic and the developmental rather than the mere inorganic and 'change' in which you merely change place—you are changing nothing, the problems are merely amplified or diminished, but they remain the same problems."[15] This quote is interwoven into *Der grüne Berg* and its metaphors about the future, nature, and man's spatial relationship to each other.

Some closing thoughts on Murer, his films and how he informs my practice

Regarding his ability to direct transnational cinema, I think it is important to clarify how I view the practice outside of the strictly post-colonial view. Though obviously Murer is not coming from a position of being a citizen of a country caught between traditional and colonial cultures, or a member of the diaspora caused by colonialism, he comes from a place that is drastically altered in two ways. First the relation of humans to a certain and specific place has become disjointed, and we see this in the how certain Bergbauer exist in a realm of dual-consciousness. Specifically, we see this in the final movement of *Wir Berlger*. Secondly, the people in his films, and indeed his ancestral way of life have been eradicated by the realities of the capitalist economic system. Borne out of this second social changes comes a major shift in the way people relate to the way natural world. From Fanon, Naficy, to Solonas and Gettino, the concepts of third world cinema, accented cinema, and diasporic cinema, take their names and parameters. In the case of Murer, he doesn't necessarily fall directly in line with the qualifications these men set forth however, he does make a case for the role of the intellectual in

[15] Murray Bookchin, ”Utopia not Futurism,” *Uneven Earth*, 3 Oct. 2019, https://unevenearth.org/2019/10/bookchin_doing_the_impossible/

filmmaking, and the independent filmmaker as a decolonizing force in the medium. "Marx considered religion to be the opium of the people, but has he witnessed the mass appeal of Hollywood movies, he would have rated these 'sugar coated pill' as an equally powerful drug."[16] Film is necessarily seen namely through this lens, though through subversion of the Hollywood formula something revolutionary is possible.

As I mentioned in the beginning there is a Hollywood industrial complex, capable of ideological dissemination of the same destructive force as its militaristic right arm. Capable of disseminating culture and canon across borders that are imbued with capitalist material fetishism. How can film then liberate, and how do Murers works do it? A knee jerk for the American film connoisseurs might be to point to the A24s and other independent studios, or international cinema– the auteurs of France in the 50s, or the slow cinema of Hong Kong– but these all fall under its rule. Quoting Fernando Solanas and Octavio Gettino these are the '*progressive wing of Establishment Media.'* The reasons for this are numerous and would require a paper themselves, so instead let's turn to the films that fall outside of this complex system of controls. Solanas and Gettino founded Grupo Cine Liberación in the tumultuous 1970s in Argentina. In their maifesto pulished in 1976s they wrote about how film can be a tool in movements of decolonization. "It has become very common for intellectuals and artists to be found at the tail end of popular struggle...Films offer an effective pretext for gathering an audience, in addition to the ideological message they contain. The capacity for synthesis and the penetration of the living image, the possibilities of a living document and naked reality... make the film far more effective than any

[16] Cynthia Ramsey, review of *Third Cinema in Latin America: Critical Theory in Recent Works*, by Michael Chanan, Tomas Gutierrez Alea, and Teshome Gabriel, *Latin American Research Review* 23, no. 1 1988. 266.

other form of communication."[17] In their terms films are not important for what they show, but for what they are capable of igniting and inspiring in their audiences.

Both of Murer's documentaries above do this. *Wir Bergler*, made in a time when shifting populations caused a loss of traditional life in the mountainous regions of the Alps, as seen in the scenes of pagan ritual, and in the words of the farmers he interviews. *Der grüne Berg,* also calls the audience to reflect on the realities of nuclear waste, half-life, and the future of our planet during a time of major protest against nuclear power. Schaub in his writings on Murer says, “Wir sind da weltenweit entfernt von der kalten Soziologie und der Kapitalismuskritik, die beim gleichen Stoff auch möglich ist, und die Murers Film so nebenbei auch leistet.” (We are a world away from academia’s cold sociology and critique of capitalism, though Murer’s film is still capable of it somehow). [18] Murer's films are intended to evoke responses and thoughtfullness, not just impose narratives and insist on ideologies. He affirms his stance of being ethnographic and weary of capitalistic media forms without having to hyper regulate the messages of his films. He is in this way the opposite of mainstream documentary making in the last few decades. Think of the films of Michael Moore or Bill Maher, and their constant presence in their films, reiterating their intended message through as many channels as possible in the length of a feature film, thus they become polarizing even to audiences that may largely agree with their message. Murer on the other hand is subtle and thought provoking, making space for audiences to intuit messages and reflect on their own experiences. While both may be effective methods depending, in my own work I opt for Murer's method.

---

[17] Solanas and Gettino, ”Towards a Third Cinema,” *Black camera: the newsletter of the Black Film Center/Archives 13, no. 1* (2021): 388.
[18] Martin Schaub, ”Utopie aus den Relikten,” in *die eigenen Angelegenheiten,* (Frankfurt a. M.: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1983), 38.

Most indicative of his ideas about the media, the environment and our future is the first film, *2069,* and its premonition of a society on the edge of disaster, controlled by a brain center, and constantly surveilled. His early films all involve themselves with ideas that presuppose the technochratic world we live in now. Of *Chicoreé* (1966), one film theorist says, "[e]s geht um Autonomie Freiheit und Anarchismus,"(It's about autonomy, freedom, and anarchism).[19] Certainly, *2069,* made afterwards then furthers the conversation to point out what will be lost if autonomy isn't maintained. I'll return to the lost autonomy of a Art in my conclusion.

I admire Murer's ability to home in on hyper specific regions, down to the valley at times, but hope to emulate his ability to create meta-narratives that liberate his films to the stages of transnational cinema. Though hyper specificity in other documentaries may be seen in a purely ethnographic sense, Murer brings the audience into the world of the Alps so completely that they then escape, left to think about the ways of life around them being altered irrevocably. I shot roughly 85% of my film in southern Germany in and around Bodensee Krise. The accents, agricultural products, and landscapes are all incredibly similar, as well as their love for seasonality. My film seeks to transport the viewer to this place and imbue the audience with a new appreciation for the work agricultural production necessitates. Additionally, I hope people leave and reflect on what seasonality means. Namely, that they'll leave questioning if access to every form of produce at all times of the year is necessary, or a capitalist construct that has now become an expectation. I may not be able to bring everyone who sees the film a fresh picked, still warm from the sun, sweet and aromatic strawberry, but I can hope they seek connection to their region and the agricultural producers around them.

[19] Felix Aeppli, "Zehn unvergängliche Momente des Schweizer Films," *Cinema* (2005), 125.

Section 3

Wim Wenders: Filmmaking Style's ability to Recondition audience Perception

Wim Wenders was born in destroyed Düsseldorf at the end of WWII. In an interview with Judith Benhamou-Huet, he laments the destruction of his home city, but acknowledges that this is what propelled him to look for beauty in the world. He says, "The whole world is more beautiful than the place I grew up in."[20] Wenders rose to prominence in conjunction with the New German Cinema of the 1960s. He won the Palm D'Or at Cannes for *Paris, Texas*, in 1984. He is also known for the 1987 film that won him Best Director at Cannes, *Wings of Desire*. As far as documentary making goes, he is best known for *Buena Vista Social Club*. He is also a talented photographer and has exhibited shows since the eighties, with shows *Written in the West* and *Landscape and Memory*, which utilize photos taken while scouting for films. Most recently he exhibited films in a collection called *Pictures from the Surface of the Earth*.

Though he is grateful for his success as a director, he lamented that his most difficult moment as one was when he won Cannes, because of the expectations that entrapped him after that moment.[21] Wenders is definitively one of the major directorial voices that came out of New German Cinema, along with Herzog, Fassbinder, and Kluge. Wenders' renowned lurched forward with his wins at Cannes, though it had existed previously– just less on a world stage. His early films started his trajectory toward the world stage, and similarly to Murer he worked with tight crews on those early films and even well into his career, particularly when it came to his documentaries.

[20] Judith Benhamou-Huet. “Wim Wenders about fate, images in the digital age and loneliness.” (0:14).
[21] Wim Wender’s, The Act of Seeing (London: Faber, 1997), 35.

My first encounter with Wenders happened early. I was not forced to seek him out as I did Murer. My mother introduced me to his work through the *Buena Vista Social Club*. While I, a sleepy four-year-old at Downtown West here in Knoxville, did not know what I was seeing, I remembered the film when I re-encountered Wenders years later. My first reintroduction to his work came with *Alice in den Städten,* which became one of my favorite films in my early twenties. Mainly because it is a film about being lost, lonely, and full of longing to belong, with a great soundtrack and poetic coordination. This statement holds true for nearly all Wenders films, with the exception that they are not always about being lost, but occasionally about knowing exactly where one is and why that time or space needs you.

When first thinking about making a documentary I felt just using Murer by grounding my work in his ethnographic approach coupled with compelling mountain scenes was what would suit the film best. Especially when initially sitting down to edit I clutched his style so tightly. It took me about 72 hours of editing work to realize this was not the film I had nor what I was trying to make. Around that time, I rewatched *Alice in den Städten* with my partner, and in rewatching I realized I was too focused on an ethnographic style bound together with sweeping beautiful shots of countryside. What I needed to focus on more was how the stories of the individuals I interviewed blended with my experiences and with each other's, because in those connections that I made with individuals, and I was able to tie a poetic vision together that was unique to my experiences. Wenders brought the importance of uniqueness to my attention. This craft should not be an emulation of anyone else's style or thoughts but one's own. In an interview I found from 2014 he confirmed my self-doubt and sent the film on a different trajectory. "My

advice to a young artist— Don't do anything […] that you know, deep in your heart, somebody else can do better. But do what nobody else can do except for you."[22]

So, I sat down to see what he does best, and after watching or re-watching nearly his entire filmography, I can confidently say that he blends his own voice with his films. He is ever present in the way his film flows from scene to scene, even when the narrative plot may be minimal or nonexistent, he is still telling the story how he chooses to tell it. He steadfastly fights currents that push images into the monotonous whirlpool of sameness that the medium is so inundated by now. One dissertation I found on Wenders put it thusly, "Sadly, the shrinking audience for non-mainstream and noncommercial cinema raises the question of why it would even matter whether Wenders succeeds in creating narrative alternatives to Hollywood cinema. Wenders would probably argue that therefore it matters more than ever, and as a member of his audience, I'd gratefully agree. In this context, Wenders' suspicion of video and digital image technologies become more comprehensible, for as media for the masses, these technologies may someday be the only ones available to the next Wim Wenders,"[23] I must agree with her summation, and in this next section hope to provide readings of his films through theoretical lenses.

The films I chose span his career, are *Alice in den Städten* and *Tokyo-Ga*– a narrative film and a documentary. These two films tend to linger slightly in the shadows, less acclaimed or studied than his other films, but telling of his filmic genius. Additionally, more useful to the invigoration of my own practice as a filmmaker. Drawing again from the dissertation on him above, "Wenders privileges, as the opposite of manipulative narratives, the simple act of seeing.

[22] Wim Wenders, ”Filmmaking Tips,” https://filmschoolrejects.com/filmmaking-tips-wim-wenders/
[23] Heather A. Horn, "Origins, Identity, Home: Sites of Subjectivity and Displaced Narratives in Marguerite Duras and Wim Wenders." PhD diss., The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1998, 241.

He even opposes seeing and thinking; the latter would distance one from the world while the former allows one to approach the truth of the thing-in-itself."[24] In Wender's own words," There are no opinions in seeing; in seeing you can come to a view of another person, an object, the world, that doesn't imply an opinion...It suggest you can have truth and understanding just from seeing. Much more than thinking where you can lose yourself or lose touch with the world."[25] To Wender's sight is an immersive experience that brings you closer to a subject, while thought is a detaching force that unmoors you from reality. In the case of my work, the filmic intervention on reality is what gives understanding to complex ideas, which is in line with Wender's sentiments. It is hard to visualize climate change, food production, and theoretical ideas in one's mind, especially with dominating forms of media that have so heavily distanced us from these realities and concepts. Through film and through sight a space is reopened where such things can be explored even without preceding knowledge. Let's begin now with the films, and how they create images of the world based off something many images lack today– a resurrected Barthian aura, which I will touch on in the final section.[26]

Alice in den Städten (1974)

One of his earliest films, and the earliest of his road movies that made him famous, *Alice in den Städten*, is a film about searching and seeing. It begins with a young German man, Philip, who has been tasked with photographing and writing about the United States. After losing this job he's back in New York preparing to fly back to Munich, where he runs into a young mother. She ends up pseudo-forcing her young daughter, Alice, onto Philip promising to meet them via

[24] Ibid.
[25] Wim Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, 46.
[26] Walter Benjamin. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* ed. Hannah Arendt, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019) 166.

the plane landing the next day after they arrive in Munich. She doesn't meet the pair and they end up on a wild goose chase hunting for the home of Alice's grandmother, which the young girl can't recall any helpful details about, all she has is a photograph of the house. This photograph and the polaroid photos Philip takes along the way become souvenirs of their lostness. Estranged from their home country, Philip from himself, and Alice from her mother.

The film just traces the day to day, with little plot direction, and in doing so creates a film about a relationship between the two, a silly pair of lost children. "And something of this same alchemy develops between Alice and Phillip during their travels. There's a sense of play, of teasing, that grows between them that is simply lovely to watch... The rapport, the sense of themselves that they develop, becomes their own saving grace in a world portrayed otherwise bleakly. Their vulnerabilities, their sensitivity to each other's vulnerabilities, become their strength."[27] Their bond is a means of reconnecting to reality. The film culminates in an undramatic way typical of Wenders. Alice's mother and grandmother are located and the police in turn find the two, then they both take the train to Munich. Philip has been reinvigorated by the trip though, when Alice asks him what next, he responds that he will finish this story. The film ends with a wide shot of them zooming out to reveal more of the landscape.

In the broader schema of Wenders films, this semi-autobiographical work deals with his own internal struggles with what it means to be German at this point in history. The weight of knowing about the atrocities committed during WWII coupled with the knowledge that you weren't directly responsible. The work becomes an exploration into memory studies, and road

[27] Michael, Covino, "Wim Wenders: A Worldwide Homesickness." *Film Quarterly (ARCHIVE)* 31, no. 2 (77, 1978): 10.

map to begin healing the unresolved trauma of being born into a world shredded by war and now imbued with America-centric culture and capitalist systems. Wenders produces a "mise-en-scene of this invisible and living dimension of memory, exalting the film's shared lineage with the process of remembering,"[28] according to Silvestra Mariniello and James Cisneros. In their discussion of Alice in den Städten they focus mainly on the scenes at the start in the US. Claiming that experiencing the US is an audiovisual encounter, and therein lies the reason Philip is unable to write an article about his travels.

While I agree with this and Wenders intentionally includes, television screens, views through the windshield, and radio snippets while he is driving. I think there is a deeper reason than just the untranslatable static of America's audiovisual nature into written form. When the film begins, he is lost and overwhelmed by the barrage of a familiar unfamiliarity that is American culture to Europeans in the decades following WWII, as globalization waxed on, and American media and ideology diffused around the world. The embodied homesickness of this early film, I think pulls from Wenders own disillusionment about then divided Germany, and aptly captures the alienating world of the last 50 year. Homesickness or non-belonging seeps into many of his works whether it is embodied in the characters, words or even simply the images themselves. Aptly put by another Wender's scholar Roch C. Smith writes, "[a]nd so, it seems almost accidental that what Wenders's films leave us with finally is simply a mood-a chilling and exacting mood, a sense of things, that somehow corresponds to what our own nerves tell us about

[28] Silvestra Mariniello, and James Cisneros. “Experience and Memory in the Films of Wim Wenders.” *SubStance* 34, no. 1 (2005): 162.

the world."[29] The accidentalness is inherent to the charm of Wenders films, and ties into his own views on how images convey reality better than thought. This is the reason his films so effectively touch on difficult subjects like Germany's division, or in relation to the next film the emulsification of cultures into a homogeneous-capitalist system of consumption.

***Tokyo-Ga* (1985)**

"The whole world has changed. And if it's not quite true to say that it's cinema that has changed the world, it is at least partly true. Storytelling has changed, images have changed, the transmitting and receiving of images has changed, our sense of the world has changed ... It's a turbulent time for cinema."[30] This is an excerpt from a speech given by Wenders on the occasion of him being awarded the Murnau Prize in 1991, six years after the release of *Tokyo-Ga.* He is speaking referentially to how the world and film have changed since the days when Murnau was a director, but he is also self-referential in looking at the course of his career and the film industry progression.

Tokyo-Ga is a diary film, in which Wenders films a visit to Tokyo, which he made in honor of his favorite director, Yasujirô Ozu. Wenders hunts for the Tokyo of Ozu's films, and finds a city he doesn't recognize, and yet knows either through commonalities he finds or mis-en-scène he creates and films using Ozu's directorial techniques. This whole film is about images. It is about seeing, and it gets the minimal narrative structure it has from Wender's voice and his reflections on the trip. One of the first scenes he is on the plane flying to Japan, and he says, "[i]t

[29] Roch C. Smith, "Open Narrative in Robbe-Grillet's 'Glissements Progressifs Du Plaisir' and Wim Wenders's 'Paris, Texas.'" *Literature/Film Quarterly* 23, no. 1 (1995) 37.

[30] Wim Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, 172.

felt good just to look out the window. 'If only it were possible to film like that' I thought to myself, 'Like when you open your eyes sometimes.'"[31] It is of course impossible to make a film like this, film is necessarily and intervention upon reality, but this is perhaps the best explanation of what Wenders attempts to do in his films– to show reality. He in this film is of course imposing his own thoughts upon it, but it becomes a meditation rather than a thought exercise. It is a meditation on what film is, what it has become, and what will it be.

Memory once again comes into play in this film, reflecting only for a moment on the Japanese psyche in the decades since the horrors of WWII. After visiting pachinko parlors, he explains how the game first appeared and became popular after the war, when a national trauma needed to be forgotten.

> "Late into that night, and then late into the following nights, I lost myself in one of the many pachinko parlors and the deafening noise where you sit in front of your machine, one player among many, yet for that reason all the more alone, and watch the countless metal balls dance between the layers, on their way to out or once in a while into the winning gate. This game induces hypnosis, a strange feeling of happiness. Winning is hardly important, but time passes, you lose touch with yourself for a while, and merge with a machine, and perhaps you forget what you always wanted to forget."[32]

But in this way he is also dealing with the present and future realities of Japan, a country now as bound to capitalism and consumerism as the US.

Throughout the film Wenders ardently critiques television and the ubiquity of the medium globally referring to them as 'the center of the world' noting the hyper-relevance of

[31] Wim Wenders *Tokyo-Ga* (7:30)
[32] Wim Wenders, *Tokyo-Ga*, (17:06).

American media on them. He seems to blame television for the loss of films' aura and ability to capture the world. In a taxicab he laments the loss of, "[a] view which still could achieve order in a world out of order. A view which could still render the world transparent. Perhaps such a view is no longer possible today, not even for Ozu were he still alive. Perhaps the frantically growing inflation of images has already destroyed too much. Perhaps images at one with the world are already lost forever."[33] Later in a meeting with Werner Herzog, the two directors discuss images. Herzog refers to it less as a degradation or loss rather a lack of' adequate images 'in tune with our current society. Wender's in this way takes on a view similar to that of Walter Benjamin, in a way claiming that film is capable of an auratic composure that television is not. While Herzog seems to take on a view more akin to later Frankfurt school writings on the Culture Industry's invisible infiltration into the form of film. Both men, however, are describing a contemporary landscape where capitalist intervention onto cultural production is increasing at a dramatic pace.

In an essay he wrote titled, "The Act of Seeing" found in a collection by the same name, he states, "[i]t is my conviction that a film has to be preceded by a dream... a lot of films don't have any truck with dreams, they are the product of calculation and the type of investment they represent is not emotional but financial."[34] In this way the films of Hollywood, meaning those that must make a profit with teams of people ensuring it will, are not films. There is no dream pining them besides a desire or rather need for profit. I'll touch on this more in the final section, but in *Tokyo-Ga*, Wenders is meditating on a world where the old way of making film is dying and the new subversive way has yet to be born. The days of Murnau and Ozu are gone, no longer is there a national or societal basis for making films, rather we were entering a time where

[33] Wim Wenders, *Tokyo-Ga*, (21:08).
[34] Wim Wenders, *The Act of Seeing*, 18.

oversaturation lead to the degradation of the medium, turning it into the ultimate system of control.

Some closing thoughts on Wenders, his films and how he informs my practice

Though in this initial cut I do not impose my own voice into the film besides a few utterances of ‘ja’ and my editorial signature, I do think in a longer version, my thoughts and reflections as well as my own experiences in the area will be more present. The way Wenders has shaped my ideas on film through his writings and work is invaluable. This film is in fact bound to and born out of dream and a passion. I want to be the impetus for people to truly start looking to the food systems that sustain them, and to the places they exist within. When making a film you become hyper aware of your own existence as a storyteller even if as in the case of this work the interviewees are the only voices you hear. By blending the diary style of Wenders with what I already have I can hopefully achieve a film that does not lead, pull, or sway an audience to anything other than their own self-reflection.

Section 4

About *Am Bodensee nah und frisch*

The film is comprised of three interviews with people somehow linked to food production and distribution in the region surrounding Lake Constance, Bodenseekreis. I worked in this region on Obsthof Walser for about six months in 2019. I knew a few of the people I interviewed from my time there, and others I met through their connections to people I knew. In total over the 3-week period we filmed, I interviewed 7 people, but only three appear in the cut of this film. The only imposition I have besides the obvious one that comes through the editing of the film is the inclusion of scene titles and a Wendal Berry poem at the beginning of the film. The poem is "Mad Farmer liberation Front" which I have had an affinity for since first reading it in my early twenties. Barry is from the same region of Kentucky, where my family has land, and where I feel most connected to place.

The first interview is with a woman I came to know, Katharina, who operates a three-generation family farm called, Lorenzhof, which is a Demeter certified farm- meaning they are the top tier of ethical and organic farming in Germany. They have milk cows mainly, but also some regenerative planted fields of wheat and lentils. In the end of her interview, she speaks candidly about their future in the face of extreme weather events caused by climate change. The second interview is with my former employer and roommate, Sebastian. His family operates a mid-size fruit farm that uses traditional agricultural methods, meaning they use pesticides. The final interview is with Katrin who a non-farmer, rather she runs a Markschwärmerei. Which is a style of community market that seeks to bring farmers and suppliers closer to their customers. The film ends with some shots from various markets we visited during the trip.

I want to reiterate that this is not the end of the project, but the beginning of something larger. I hope, however, that you will take the time to watch it, and maybe reflect on regionality and seasonality wherever you call home.

Section 5

The Neoliberal Adoption of Fine Arts & Economic Control of Popular Media

Recall in the first film I discussed how the observational extraterrestrial being's killing is a metaphor for the death of small cinema caused by societal perfunctory modes and tropes. The is the death of film's ability to infiltrate and invigorate the thoughts of viewers. Instead, film of today is now a placating balm meant to pacify the masses during their 'leisure time.' The form has lost its capacity to observe reality in any subversive or reflexive way. Wender's ability to create, "cinema revolves around this uncertain threshold between images, which mediates our experience and memory as well as the 'reality' that supposedly exists before but that is in fact inescapably conflated with them,"[35] is something we should hope a camera is still able to achieve and will continue to be able to. I am convinced it will, though my main concern is in the existence of an audience seeking out reality in film, or at least film that provokes thought.

Having witnessed what these filmmakers could do behind a camera, with and without trained actors, scripts, sometimes with minimal film equipment and low budgets, let's look at the film world of today. As I mention numerous times throughout this paper, the domination of film and media by Hollywood is undeniable and deeply imbedded in the medium. Early on in Murer and Wender's careers, this was semi-escapable as they made truly independent films. Audience expectation now is for seamless films- meaning films where you can hardly tell there is someone behind the camera let alone the tens to hundreds of people. This has left a void, which is the reflexivity of the medium itself, once its greatest asset.

[35] Mariniello, Silvestra, and James Cisneros. "Experience and Memory in the Films of Wim Wenders." *SubStance* 34, no. 1 (2005): 159–79. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3685625.

Looking at documentary filmmaking the form has always been marred by its truthful telling, when it is imbued with subjectivities. There is however a case to be made that again places the filmmaker at the center making them a generator for critical theory. The 'Autoethnographic' lens when looking at the documentary form especially as a research tool, opts to look at film as an art form akin to other forms, a uniquely individual poem imbued with the creator or artist's spirit. This normally requires a first-person narrative or commentary and personal interjection by the filmmaker, but when looked at as if it were any other art form, does the artist even without direct mention bring their own emotions and ideas into a painting? Filmmakers are then in an even more unique position to pursue meaningful creation thanks to moving image's inherent ability to draw audiences into the world imagined by the filmmaker. "As creative practice researchers, we need to keep questioning the rules, the law, the attitudes, the systems. We need to cross boundaries in order to stay faithful to our internal compass and question that too. Whilst aware of the pressures coming from institutional demand and goals...the importance of generative dialogue about the importance of creative practices as a site of critique and resistance through a profound personal reflection vis-à-vis the work one creates."[36] Through the world we experience, and the way we can convey those experiences through film, the medium can regain its usefulness to dismantle. We also are living in a time where the dissemination of the form is faster and easier than ever before.

I am not the first person to approach filmmaking and scholarship, and the link that must be re-made between them as we move into a period where forms of communication outside the traditional become increasingly more important. Subverting the world of film in today's market

[36] Agniezszka Piotrowska, *Creative Practice Research in the Age of Neoliberal Hopelessness,* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020), 17.

requires attention to previously established ideological productions and norms in the industry. As scholars these theoretical texts we read build a ground to dismantle the film industry's ability to oppress people and planet. Scholarly filmmaking as it has come to be called is likely the one operative mode of being behind a camera in a way that opens the form up to become a meta-discourse on society. "Documentary is too complex of a phenomenon to be succinctly defined. What I do aim to provide however, is a critical evaluation of some of the definitions of documentary in order to get an idea as to what documentary can look and sound like and how particular formalist conventions can impact on audiences."[37] There is no need to define documentary beyond what Bill Nichols has done in his description and categorization of the genre. Simply by utilizing his six categories and understanding that all will contain a narrative imposed by the lens and filmmaker, we allow more space to discuss the contents and how a scholarly narrative becomes possible when a filmmaker is also a theorist.

[37] Keith Marley, ”The Art of Fact: An exploration of the relationship between theory and practice in documentary filmmaking,” (PhD thesis, Liverpool John Moores University, 2017), 11.

Bibliography

Aeppli, Felix. "Zehn Unvergängliche Momente Des Schweizer Films, 1954-2004." *Cinema* (2005): 122-132. https://utk.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.utk.idm.oclc.org/scholarly-journals/zehn-unvergängliche-momente-des-schweizer-films/docview/2259379/se-2?accountid=14766.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections,* edited by Hannah Arendt. 166-178. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019.

Bookchin, Murray. "Utopia, Not Futurism: Why Doing the Impossible Is the Most Rational Thing We Can Do." Uneven Earth, 3 Oct. 2019, https://unevenearth.org/2019/10/bookchin_doing_the_impossible/

Carroll, Noël. "A Note on Film Metaphor." Journal of Pragmatics 26, no. 6 (1996): 809–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0378-2166(96)00021-5.

Covino, Michael. "Wim Wenders: A Worldwide Homesickness." Film Quarterly (ARCHIVE) 31, no. 2 (77, 1978): 9-19,1. https://utk.idm.oclc.org/login.

Estok, Simon C. *The Ecophobia Hypothesis*, London: Routledge, 2018.

Forceville, Charles. "Visual and Multimodal Metaphor in Film: Charting the Field." In *Embodied Metaphors in Film, Television, and Video Games.* New York: Routledge, 2016. 17-32.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012.

Goldberg, Marcy. "Suspekte Schönheit: Über die Darstellung Der Berge Im Neueren Schweizer Film." *Cinema,* 2008, 38-49,203, https://utk.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.utk.idm.oclc.org/magazines/suspekte-schönheit-über-die-darstellung-der-berge/docview/212527706/se-2?accountid=14766.

Horn, Heather A. "Origins, Identity, Home: Sites of Subjectivity and Displaced Narratives in Marguerite Duras and Wim Wenders." Order No. 9829114, The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 1998. https://utk.idm.oclc.org/login.

Jeancolas, Jean-Pierre and M. Egger. "Fredi M. Murer." *Positif,* 1986, 9-16, https://utk.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.utk.idm.oclc.org/magazines/fredi-m-murer/docview/1746015043/se-2?accountid=14766.

LOCARNO film festival: Swiss director takes seat on festival jury. (1986, Aug 02). *Screen International (Archive: 1976-2000),*, 26. Retrieved from https://utk.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.utk.idm.oclc.org/magazines/locarno-film-festival-swiss-director-takes-seat/docview/963218396/se-2?accountid=14766

Marley, Keith. ”The Art of Fact: An exploration of the relationship between theory and practice in documentary filmmaking,” PhD thesis, Liverpool John Moores University, 2017.

Mariniello, Silvestra, and James Cisneros. “Experience and Memory in the Films of Wim Wenders.” SubStance 34, no. 1 (2005): 156-76.

Murer, Fredi M. Director. *2069 – oder wo sich Futurologen und Archäologen gute Nacht sagen*. 1969.

---, Director. *Der grüne Berg*. 1990.

---, Director. *Höhenfeuer*. 1985. ---, Director. Vollmond. 1998.

---, Director. *Wir Bergler in den Bergen sind eigentlich nicht Schuld das wir da sind*. 1974.

Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton University Press, 2001.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Third edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017.

Piotrowska, *Agnieszka. Creative Practice Research in the Age of Neoliberal Hopelessness*. United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

Roch C. Smith, "Open Narrative in Robbe-Grillet's 'Glissements Progressifs Du Plaisir' and Wim Wenders's 'Paris, Texas.'" Literature/Film Quarterly 23, no. 1 (1995): 32–38.

Schaub, Martin. "Utopie aus den Relikten," in *die eigenen Angelegenheiten.* Frankfurt a. M: Stroemfeld/Roter Stern, 1983. 33-40.

Sobron, Fernando. "Re-Evaluating Creativity in Documentary Filmmaking, Creative Analysis and Creative Constraints". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019.

Solanas, Fernando and Octavio Getino. "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World." *Black camera: the newsletter of the Black Film Center/Archive*s 13, no. 1 (2021): 378–401.

Tanini, Lorenzo. “Swiss Made 2069 - 1969.” Classic2Vintage, July 2, 2021. https://www.classic2vintage.com/en/swiss-made-2069-1969/.

Wenders, Wim. *The Act of Seein*g: Essays and Conversations. London: Faber, 1997.

Wenders, Wim. Director. *Alice in den Städten*. 1974.

---, Director. *Tokyo-Ga*. 1985.

Vita

Cora Lay lives in Knoxville, Tennessee, though she calls Clover Bottom, Kentucky home. Her interests include agriculture, film, and the media representation of agricultural workers. This is her first film, and you can expect to find a longer cut at independent festivals in the next year. She keeps bees and is an avid gardener.