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Alice in den Städten (Part I)

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Abstract

Alice in den Städten Part I

Alice in den Städten/*Alice in the Cities* (1974) is one of Wim Wenders' most important films and remains as fresh and relevant today as when it was first made. It offered a new way of telling a story on film (partly influenced by the style of such Japanese films as *Tokyo Monogatari* by Yasujiro Ōzu) different in pace and tone from that of the usual Hollywood movie at that time. Wenders has called *Alice in den Städten* "the most important film in my life" and "the turning point" in his career as a film-maker, when he realized that "this [i.e., film-making] would be my profession." This paper intends to examine the background of *Alice in den Städten* and how the literary allusions, cinematography, music, and acting all contribute to a unified whole. This paper will also suggest why *Alice in den Städten* is timeless in its reflections on individuality versus family and on the search of individuals for answers to how we are to live.

Key words: literary allusions, cinematography, *Angst*, road movie, 1970s pop culture

Alice in den Städten : Part I

Alice in den Städten, first released in 1974, was directed by Wim Wenders from a story written by him and German director and actor Veith von Fürstenberg (*Internet Movie Database*, hereafter referred to as *IMDb*). Wenders had been previously signed by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk/West German Broadcasting company (WDR) to direct the film *Der scharlachrote Buchstabe*/*The Scarlet Letter* (1973) based on the Nathaniel Hawthorne novel of the same name. For Wenders, making *The Scarlet Letter* was an unpleasant and dissatisfying experience, except for one scene in which two actors in *Alice in den Städten*, Rüdiger Vogler and Yella Rottländer, appeared. In the documentary *One Who Set Forth: Wim Wenders' Early Years* (Marcel Wehn, 2007), Wenders states, "This is the reason why I made *Alice in den Städten*. That was the only scene I enjoyed

doing. The rest of the film was torture. But this was nice.” Wenders then went to New York City to begin work on *Alice in den Städten* (henceforth to be referred to as *Alice*). While in New York, Wenders went to see Peter Bogdanovich’s *Paper Moon* (1973)

... and discovered, to his horror, that the film that he had been developing had an identical storyline to *Paper Moon*. In desperation, Wenders contacted maverick director Sam Fuller at his home in Hollywood (the pair had met in Germany during Fuller’s shooting of *Dead Pigeon on Beethoven Street* [1972], which had also been produced by WDR). Together they reworked the story of *Alice* and Wenders, who had been considering giving up filmmaking, was able to make the film that cemented his resolve to continue. (David Tacon, *sensesofcinema.com*, 2003).

Wenders said of *Alice*, “*Alice in den Städten* was actually the most important film in my life, and I projected everything onto Rüdiger [Rüdiger Vogler, the main actor in *Alice*], that one project, as a director, into a main role. My elder ego. We always said ‘elder ego’ instead of ‘alter ego’ *Alice in den Städten* was really the film where I realized that this would be my profession. It was the turning point. I was on the verge of quitting filmmaking. *Der scharlachrote Buchstabe* [*The Scarlet Letter*] had been a disappointment. So now I gave everything. Hoping to prove I could do something unique, or tell a story differently.” (*One Who Set Forth*).

Wim Wenders, as a student in Paris, had watched more than a thousand films at Henri Langlois’ Cinémathèque, and many of those films he had watched were Hollywood films, including Westerns, some directed by John Ford (alluded to in *Alice*) (David Tacon, op. cit.). But in the way he came to tell a story in *Alice* and in later films, in his pacing, tone, and the slow, fluid photography by Robby Müller, the superb cinematographer for *Alice*, Wenders turned away from typical Hollywood films, having been greatly influenced by the Japanese filmmaker, Yasujiro Ōzu :

Wim Wenders ... declared that Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ōzu is his “only master,” although Wenders did not actually encounter Ōzu’s films until 1973. By that time Ōzu was dead and Wenders had completed film school, made seven shorts and three feature films ... and begun the script for *Alice in den Städten*. Japanese films are rarely shown in West Germany ; Wenders first saw Ōzu’s films in New York City. He then introduced the films to his friend and sometime collaborator, avant-garde writer Peter Handke, who evidently was also enthusiastic, for he made frequent visual references to Ōzu in his film *The Left-Handed Woman*

(1978) and even included a clip from Ōzu's silent *Tokyo Chorus* (1931) (Kathe Geist, "West Looks East: The Influence of Yasujiro Ōzu on Wim Wenders and Peter Handke", *JSTOR: Art Journal*, vol. 43, No. 3, Autumn 1983, www.jstor.org).

Handke describes this new style of storytelling: "It was like being liberated from the narrative. It was a time when people wanted to get away from stories, from plots. From Hollywood. It was natural. It was liberating that nothing had to happen" (*One Who Set Forth*). Rüdiger Vogler elaborates on this idea of concentrating on little moments, of highlighting the quotidian:

One of the main experiences or qualities that I remember and that's stayed in my head is that he [i.e., Wenders] was always close to the camera doing shooting, and that he watched everything very closely. He is the only person of whom I can say that he watched everything very closely. He is the only person of whom I can say he saw you, he saw what you did. Every tiny movement, and even the most tiny change in facial expression, even if it was only visible in the eyes or the mouth ... He has the ability to recognize how people are. And he observes people, even when they're not on set, like at breakfast, or evenings after shooting. Or the way you sit during a break. And it often happened that he wanted to have the kind of mannerisms one displayed in private in front of the camera (*One Who Set Forth*).

(One small example of such a mannerism is when Philip picks his nose abstractedly while waiting for Alice to come out of a bathroom stall.)

Edda Köchl-König, who plays Philip Winter's former girlfriend in *Alice*, also suggests that Wim Wenders' own personality is partly responsible for the slow, fluid style of storytelling in *Alice*:

The early films have an incredibly deep inner calm. And I think one sees that. It was something he had. Without this deep, inner calm, he never would've become so famous. Because that is ... that is particular to him. And becoming famous is part of that. Just being in the public eye, to simply be yourself, you can only do that when you have a truly deep sense of inner calm. And I think that his films demonstrate that. (*One Who Set Forth*).

Also crucial to the smooth pace and transitions between scenes in *Alice* is the editing/cutting done on *Alice* by Peter Przygodda, whom Wenders calls "a kind of twin brother" (*One Who Set*

Forth).

Another way in which Ōzu's style influenced *Alice* is that *Alice*, like Ōzu's films, is in black and white. John Patterson has this to say of Wenders' use of black and white: "Life is in colour, but black and white is more realistic.' Wim Wenders put these words in the mouth of Sam Fuller, who played a cinematographer in Wenders' 1982 film about filmmaking, *Der Stand der Dinge/The State of Things ...*" (John Patterson, www.theguardian.com). Perhaps black and white seems more realistic than color because we associate black and white with old newsreels and the sepia of historical photographs, while the technicolor brightness of films seems more vivid than color in the "real" world, which is often seen—or rather, not seen—when one is bored or depressed, so that the vibrancy and wonder of colour seems absent from our lives. The world of film is often a world of dreams, of heightened awareness (for example, Wenders contrasts the black and white world of the angel Daniel in *Der Himmel Über Berlin/Wings of Desire*, (1987)—a world which Daniel finds lacking and unsatisfying—with the brilliant colors of the human world which attract Daniel and compels him to quit life as an angel to become a human being).

Also essential in creating the shifting mood of *Alice*—haunting, melancholy, and dreamlike by turn—is the music created for *Alice* by the German experimental rock group Can. Irmin Schmidt, a member of Can, recalled in an interview that Wenders

rushed to Cologne and said, 'Listen, I can't even show you the film. I'll tell you the story. But I need some music, and I need to leave with it tomorrow morning because the studio is booked and I have to mix it.' Basically it was Michael [Karoli] and me, and I played most of my sounds inside the grand piano with Michael and Jacki [Liebezeit] doing some sounds to it. And Wim said yes, this will fit, and no, this won't, and that was very collaborative in a productive way. And he happily left at about 5 am for Munich and started to mix. It was not a big score, but it helped the film the way he wanted it. (www.screenslate.com)

This score was finally released in 2012 (Can 2012). Individual songs or fragments of songs also contribute to the musical tone and significance of the film: "Under the Boardwalk" by The Drifters (1964); a cover of "Brother Louie", originally done by Hot Chocolate, by Stories (1973); "Smoke on the Water" by Deep Purple (1972); "Psychotic Reaction" by Count Five (1965); "On the Road Again" by Canned Heat (1968); "Memphis, Tennessee" by Chuck Berry (1963); and "Softly" by Sibylle Baier (recorded in the early 1970s but not released until 2006) (*Wikipedia*). It is not only the music, but the lyrics as well, which contribute to the subtext of *Alice*. Furthermore, Mascagni's

“Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*” is used in a scene in which Philip listens to the intermezzo on a hotel radio. All of these songs will be looked at in turn in the context of the scenes in which they appear.

Something can be said as well about the names of the two main characters: Philip and Alice. As mentioned before, Wenders has called Rüdiger Vogler his “elder/alter ego”, and the character played by Vogler in *Alice* is, in a way, a stand-in for Wenders, who himself was filming in the U. S. for the first time. “Winter” is close to the name Wenders and can be seen as symbolic of Philip Winter being, at the start of *Alice*, in the “winter of his discontent”. Although Philip is on the road in the U. S. (and thus *Alice* is the first of Wenders’ “road movies”), he has reached an impasse, a state of stasis: he is unable to finish the book about the U. S. he has been commissioned to write and instead has taken to taking photographs of his travels instead. He is self-involved and cannot, therefore, see others; he is unable to focus on other people, is even unaware of them and their needs.

Alice is a nine-year-old girl who has had to deal with the disappearance of her biological father and his replacement by another man whom her mother, Lisa Van Dam, was living with in New York City but from whom she has separated. Alice then has to deal with being placed in Philip’s care when her mother is delayed in joining Philip and Alice on the jet to Amsterdam that Philip and Lisa have booked for the three of them. Alice has to deal with the troubled relationships of the adults around her and how these affect her and also, ultimately, sort things out and decide what she will do in the future and how she will grow up. It is not too much of a stretch to connect Alice with the Alice of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-glass*. Carroll’s Alice also has to negotiate with adults and manage to survive their complex machinations, and both Carroll’s Alice and the Alice of Wenders’ film try to cope subconsciously with the problems they face. Carroll’s Alice, of course, begins her own journey symbolically by disappearing underground, and one remembers that *Alice in Wonderland* was in fact originally titled *Alice Underground* (Morton Cohen, *Lewis Carroll: A Biography*, 1995 89–91); Wenders’ Alice has trouble sleeping (in the hotel in Amsterdam where she and Philip stay, she has a troubled dream about being a captive of television, echoing one of Philip’s own preoccupations, and in the hotel in Wuppertal she tells Philip she has to sleep with a light on and asks Philip to tell her a story to help her fall asleep).

Alice’s situation reflects the disintegration in the family structure that was occurring in the late 1960s and 1970s, with its background of “free love” (with, furthermore, freedom at that time from the fear of AIDS), the rise of feminism, the problems of children of divorced parents, parental

responsibility, generational differences in opinion on the Vietnam War, the increase in the number of young people who were able to travel abroad, etc. David Tacon says of Wenders that, “As part of the '68 generation, Wenders was drawn into politics at this time, at one time being arrested and charged for resisting arrest at a demonstration ... he was active in protesting against the Vietnam War ...”. As for feminism, Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken (Robert Phillip Kolker and Peter Beicken, *The Films of Wim Wenders: Cinema as Vision and Desire*, 1993 82) comment,

Feminism in the seventies pressed in upon male certainty and self-contentment, and Wenders' men reflected this. As his men slip further out of confident subjectivity, they slip further out of satisfying relationships with women

These troubles with women extended to Wenders' personal life: Edda Köchl-King, who played Philip's former girlfriend in *Alice*, had been married briefly to Wenders' in 1970; Lisa Kreuzer, who played Alice's mother, was Wenders' partner and “[h]is abrupt departure from her caused a brief scandal” (Kolker and Beicken). Similarly, Philip is both attracted to and frustrated by Alice's mother, is criticized for his self-involvement by his former girlfriend, and has a one-night stand with the woman who invites Philip and Alice home for dinner after they have gone swimming.

Furthermore, Philip is ambivalent in his feelings about his own parents. When he is finally forced to take Alice to stay with his parents because he is broke, Alice asks him, “Looking forward to seeing your parents?” Philip merely shrugs his shoulders to show his uneasiness or indifference about seeing them again. The story he tells Alice to help her get to sleep in the hotel in Wuppertal is a story of a boy and his mother; we realize that Philip finds the basis for this story in his childhood relationship with his own mother. *One Who Set Forth* makes clear that Wenders himself had a troubled relationship with both of his parents and felt that his mother, living in the shadow of Wenders' father, was not able to express an opinion unless it had first been approved by her husband.

Alice is timeless because such problems—generation gaps, relationships between men and women, the problems of children growing up in dysfunctional families—have always existed and exist today in conditions which are even more fraught than those of the 1960s and '70s. The film does not seem dated; the social upheavals it reflects still resonate.

The original New York Times review of *Alice* also nicely encapsulates themes in the film which are still pertinent today:

Alice in the Cities is a film with a great deal to say about Europe and America, about the exhaustion of dreams and the homogenization of nations, about roots and the awareness of time, about sterility and creativity, about vicarious and real adventure and, eventually, about the possibilities of the future. (Nora Sayre and Robert Van Gelder, “*Alice in the Cities* (1974),” *The New York Times*, October 9, 1974).

Alice begins with a scene of a jet flying across the sky. It is a symbol of flight and freedom, and other symbols of this theme of flight and freedom occur throughout the film: e.g., Alice’s view, through a telescope atop the Empire State Building, of a seagull in flight; the scenes of Alice and Philip on the jet from New York to Amsterdam; the scene of Philip and Alice driving away from the police station in Wuppertal in a rented automobile; the scene of Philip and Alice crossing the Rhine on a ferry; the overhead view of the Rhine flowing toward the sea as Philip and Alice, below, travel toward Munich by train.

The camera then takes in the view of Philip Winter lying underneath the boardwalk of Rockaway Beach in Queens, New York City, by Beach 67th Street (“The Worldwide Guide to Movie Locations”, www.movie-locations.com). Philip sings some lines from the Drifters’ song “Under the Boardwalk”: “Under the boardwalk/down by the sea/On a blanket with my baby/is where I wanna be.” The original song says “Where I’ll be”, but Philip changes this line to “where I wanna be”. This scene of Philip alone and the way he changes the line of “Under the Boardwalk” reveals that he would like to be with someone, but isn’t. When he later meets Alice’s mother, she refuses to sleep with him. Later, when he visits his former girlfriend, she refuses to let him stay with her. He is stuck with taking care of Alice when Alice’s mother doesn’t show up at the hotel in New York where she had promised to meet Philip and Alice, and is annoyed by this unwanted burden; at one point he angrily says to Alice, “Do you think I’m crazy about driving little girls around? And spending my last cents. I have better things to do.” Philip wants a relationship with a woman, but isn’t ready yet to acknowledge the other person’s needs or to accept his responsibility to take care of others as well as himself (as Alice points out to Philip, it isn’t her fault that Philip has had to assume responsibility for her; the decision for Philip to take care of Alice was decided by Alice’s mother and Philip).

We also realize that Philip likes American music, although, as we find out later, he is also disillusioned with the U. S. David Tacon quotes Wenders as saying, in Wenders’ essay “Der amerikanische Traum” (1984), that the U. S. A. “has ‘betrayed and sold’ its own dream, something that the character of Winter seems to agree with wholeheartedly. As in Wenders’ essay, Amer-

ican television is used in *Alice* as a point of reference for Wenders' harshest criticism of American culture." Alexander Graf (Alexander Graf, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: The Celluloid Highway*, 2002) comments that *Alice* is the film "in which Wenders begins to relativise his idealistic picture of America as 'the land of free vision'" and begins "to question the validity of the 'American Dream', exported to all parts of the world through the successful export of American musical and cinematic culture worldwide" (p. 73).

A subtle, underlying note in *Alice* is that American pop and rock music derives from African-American culture and/or was and is performed by African-Americans. This music had its origins in Africa and the status of African-Americans as slaves, and the blues, music of lamentation, as the basis of popular music not only in the U. S., but worldwide. The fact that African-Americans had achieved more freedom and mobility by the time *Alice* was made is undercut in the film by scenes in which African-Americans are still shown as members of the lower class (e.g., the black taxi-driver who gives Philip a ride in New York City; the black janitor who passes by in hall when Philip goes to Lisa's and Alice's New York hotel room). However, when Philip goes to see Chuck Berry in concert near Wuppertal, he realizes again that, paradoxically, many African-Americans have also risen to great heights and gained great freedom in the United States through their musical ability, and that their music has broken down barriers between whites and blacks (not only in the U. S. but elsewhere in the world as well). Tacon states that

Wenders' inspiration for *Alice*, came paradoxically via American rock 'n' roll, as he sat in the editing booth for *The Scarlet Letter* with the Chuck Berry song "Memphis" in his head, whilst viewing a short scene featuring Rüdiger Vogler and five year old Yella Rottländer. Wishing that all of the film could work like that one particular scene, Wenders was taken with the idea of the scene combining with the song to make a film ... Just as the Chuck Berry song "Memphis" worked as a catalyst for the genesis of the film, it also plays a pivotal role in the film's plot in a documentary-style scene when Winter views a live performance by Berry after handing Alice over to the police. This moment of identification for Winter leads him back to Alice, who has fortunately slipped away from her new charges. The two then set off in search for Alice's grandmother, who lives in Düsseldorf.

Part of the reason that Wenders' identification with "Memphis" leads him back to Alice is, as will be seen, that the lyrics of "Memphis" are about a father separated from his daughter who wants to reunite with her, and this triggers (perhaps partly unconsciously) an awareness in Philip that he

is responsible for Alice and in fact has started to miss her.

Philip is next seen shooting a Polaroid photograph of the sea and sky and, after it has developed, laying it in a line with several other photographs he has taken of this view. The camera Philip is using is an T SX-70, a folding SLR camera that took instant photographs and were first sold publicly in 1972 (“Land Camera”, *Wikipedia. com*). Therefore, when *Alice* was released in 1974, this camera was still relatively novel and some people still marveled at how the film that came out of the camera was blank for a moment, then quickly developed into a photograph. Wenders took advantage of this fact to show, in *Alice*, first Alice, and later the police inspector, in *Alice* being surprised by the fact that the film emerging from the camera is initially blank. In the jet, Alice says to Philip, “There’s nothing on it.” Phil smiles and replies, “Wait a few minutes, then it’ll appear real clear.” On the ferry, the police inspector looks at the film emerging from Philip’s camera and says the exact same words: “There’s nothing on it.” This time Philip, more sure of himself than before, merely nods and lets the photo speak for itself.

Philip’s photography, of course, relates to Wender’s filmmaking. The Polaroid photos are blank, but what appears on them are what the photographer has chosen to take a photo of. In other words, we decide ourselves how our lives will develop and what will show up in the pictures of our lives. In the same way, Wenders, in a film, is showing us images, just as photographs show images, and whether we are looking at a photograph or film (or at real people and events) we have to interpret these images. Wenders’ films do not offer us any ready-made answers; rather, they pose questions, and we the viewers must reflect on the questions and come up with the answers ourselves.

Philip shows his photographs to the agent for his publisher in New York City, only to have the photographs dismissed by the agent as “picture postcards” and told to “stick to writing”. Philip has already had doubts about his photographs; when he had earlier taken a photo of a gasoline station, he had said to himself, when looking at the photograph, “They never really show you what you saw”. In the same way, when Wenders made *Alice*, he was making the film to dispel his own doubts about his worth as a film-maker and to ascertain whether he could, in fact, successfully communicate a story to other people through moving images. At the same time Wenders realized that what is seen and the image of what is seen are different: the object and its image may reflect each other, but they are not the same, and an image cannot completely convey the reality of the object.

Another point to be made here is that, when a young African-American objects to Philip’s taking the photo of the gas station, saying, “Why you taking a picture, man? The owner won’t like

it", Philip shrugs his shoulders and responds, "I just like it," and takes the photo anyway. But later on, when Philip starts to take a photo of a public housing building and a couple who seem to be Turkish (the husband has dark hair and mustache and his wife is wearing a head scarf) walk by and look disapprovingly at him, he thinks better of taking the photo. In other words, he has started to take other people's views into consideration as well as his own.

Philip started to take photographs of his travels through the U. S. because, as he tells the publishing agent in New York, "But the story is about things you see, about signs and images ... When you drive across America, something happens because of all the images you see. The reason I took so many photos is part of the story. I can't explain it right now." He can't explain his situation at that moment to the agent because he himself isn't fully aware of the reasons why he is taking photographs rather than writing. He has embarked on a journey both of self-discovery and a discovery of others.

When Philip visits his former girlfriend, she makes clear to him further reasons for his taking photos. When Philip tells her that he has "lost touch with the world", she replies :

You did that long ago. You don't have to travel across America for that. You lose touch when you lose your sense of identity. And that is long gone. That's why you need proof, proof that you exist. You treat your stories and your experiences like raw eggs. As if only you experience things. And that's why you keep taking those photos. For further proof that it was really you who saw something. That's why you came here. So someone would listen to you and your stories that you're really telling yourself

Philip realizes the truth of what she says and responds, That's true. Taking polaroids does have something to do with proof. Waiting for a picture to develop, I'd often feel strangely ill at ease. I could hardly wait to compare the finished photo with reality. But even comparing them wouldn't calm me. The pictures never caught up with reality ... I went on as if I were possessed.

Philip keeps talking and doesn't hear his girlfriend tell him, "You can't stay here." She then says, "You really are out of touch. You can't stay, understand?" Philip, dismayed, asks, "Are you serious?" She replies, "*Ja, mein freunde*. I can't help you. I'd like to comfort you, though." Philip says, "I don't get it." She says, "I don't get how to live either. No-one showed me how ...".

These lines convey to us that, of course, we all need someone to help us learn how to live ; we are isolated, but we don't and can't live alone. Communication—whether through words or im-

ages—is of the essence.

Rüdiger Vogler, in discussing this scene, praises Edda Köchl-König's acting in this scene :

I think Edda put something of herself into it, because of the way she says it. I find it totally fascinating the way she stands at the door, and the way she says—her charisma. The way she says her lines is unique. An actor can't do that, but she wasn't an actor. But she was so true to herself, so special. I think it was because it came from her personal experience, her knowledge, that she was able to say lines like that (*One Who Set Forth*).

Wenders remarks of this scene that he wrote the conversation between Philip and his former girlfriend, but that "I drew on conversations that Edda and I had. I was trying to process dialogues that we'd had years before" (*One Who Set Forth*).

Vogler himself makes Philip real and convincing to us, even as Philip is filled with self-doubt due to his loss of identity. As the *New York Times* review of *Alice* previously mentioned says, Philip is "played with a seemingly effortless skill by Rüdiger Vogler".

Alice, being young and not self-conscious like the adults around her, later takes the initiative with Philip and reaches into Philip's bag, pulls out his camera, and says, "I want to take a picture of you." She does take his photograph and, when the photo appears, Alice hands it to him and says, "So you'll at least know what you look like." She is giving him back, as it were, his sense of self, a self seen by another person, not himself. And when Philip and Alice look at the photo together, both his face and hers are reflected in the glossy surface of the photograph and merge together : their identities have merged and their destinies have united. Unconsciously Philip will come to realize that he and Alice need each other and can help each other.

This union is reinforced later by the four photos Philip and Alice take together at a photo booth : Philip makes a comical face in one photo and Alice imitates him, and Alice feels comforted later when she looks at these photos, especially when they stay at the house of the woman who offers them dinner and a place to stay. She has already started to see Philip as a father and Philip himself acknowledges to the woman that Alice has made him feel as if she is his daughter.

Alice also brings Philip an awareness of reality rather than images when they actually find the house where Alice's grandmother used to live, identifying as the same house the one in a photograph of her grandmother's house that Alice has with her. While Alice runs up to the actual house to ask about her grandmother, Philip stares at Alice's photograph of the house and says, "Unbelievable!" He has seen proof that the object reflected in the photo actually exists. He is starting to

believe in images because he has seen, in the photograph of the house, that images can, in fact, convey some aspects of reality and turn us back toward that reality, not just turn us away from it.

Initially, however, Philip, leaving Rockaway Beach and driving across the U. S., says to himself, “To shoot pictures—blowing away everything you can’t stand”. In other words, Philip uses photos to distance himself from the American landscape, to retreat into himself, becoming more isolated. As he drives along and talks to himself, he says, “Talking to yourself—that’s actually more like listening than speaking.” Philip is listening to himself to try to find what and how he feels, since he’s ambivalent in how he feels about the U. S. and U. S. popular culture. But in listening to himself, he tunes out other people and fails to connect with them or to recognize them as worth caring about.

As he drives during stormy weather (a cinematic equivalent of *Sturm und Drang*, or Storm and Drive, with the double meaning of drive as forging ahead or, as Philip is doing, driving a car), Philip listens to the song “Brother Louie” on the radio. The version he is listening to is a cover version by the American group Stories, a white group, of an original by the British group Hot Chocolate, a black group, released in 1973, recorded six months after the original release. The song is about a white guy, Louie, who brings his black girlfriend home to meet his parents, who are upset that he’s dating a black girl, which causes a row between Louis and his parents. Before the song on the radio finishes, however, a DJ interrupts the song. Philip, angry, kicks the radio with his right foot, shouting, “Shut up! I’ve never heard the ending.” This incident encapsulates the ambivalent feelings Philip (and in turn Wenders) has toward American culture. On the one hand, Philip is attracted to American pop songs and the way they express social problems and the yearning to be free; on the other hand, he is disturbed by the way U. S. culture is commercialized and undercut, in this case by the DJ talking over the song. A similar incident happens later at the Skyway Motel (yet another allusion to flight and escape) where Philip stays for the night, when he’s watching a John Ford film on television which is interrupted by a commercial.

As Philip watches TV that night, he switches from channel to channel, looking for something interesting. He briefly watches a scene from *Lost Weekend* with Ray Milland—as Philip is having his own “lost weekend”. He falls asleep and dreams of driving on a long road stretching into the distance, with the ocean on either side (perhaps a scene of the Florida Keys). John Ford’s film *Young Mr. Lincoln* comes on, with Henry Fonda as Lincoln playing a Jew’s harp. The sound of the Jew’s harp wakes up Philip, and he starts to watch the film. The film is interrupted by a commercial, with the words “A mind is a terrible thing to waste: give to the United Negro College Fund”—another reminder in the film of the struggle of African-Americans to be free and equal. This

commercial is followed by one featuring Red Barber, a sports commentator of the time, saying, “Hi friends, Red Barber, speaking from my part of the world, sunny Florida, at Silver Springs shores, the new community which offers you a new way of living, free from big city—” at this point, Philip, angry at seeing yet another commercial shilling for customers, throws his shoe at the TV, then goes up to the TV, hits it, and knocks it over, so that the TV smashes on the floor, destroyed, as smoke seeps out of the back of the TV.

Graf has this to say about this scene :

... Winter gets up from his bed and knocks the television set from its table, suggesting that television rather than the film itself provokes the unusually aggressive outburst in the normally composed Winter. The last sequence of *Alice in the Cities* completes the picture when we see the headline announcing Ford’s death in a newspaper Winter is reading. The associations made in the introductory sequence, the final sequence and in the motel sequence when Winter smashes the television set are complex, but fully consistent with Wenders’ belief that it is above all the introduction of television and the resulting inflation of commercialised images that brought about the demise of the mythical American cinema that was such an inspiration to him and many other film-makers of his generation.

The lost dream of American cinema is, for Wenders, present in American music. ‘One should be able to make films about America that are only made of long shots’ are the first words said by Wenders in his short film *3 American LPs*. ‘That already exists in music, in American music.’ ... Wenders elaborates on the notion of films consisting entirely of panoramic shots in his 1970 article on Ford, ‘Emotion Pictures: Slowly Rockin’ on’. Whilst expressing his disapproval at most contemporary films here—‘pictures that block off your vision’—he describes what he missed about Ford’s cinema :

I miss the friendliness, the care, the thoroughness, the seriousness, the peace, the humanity of John Ford’s films ; I miss those faces that are never forced into anything ; those landscapes that aren’t just backgrounds ... Music from America is more and more replacing the sensuality that the films have lost : the merging of blues and rock and country music has produced something that can no longer be experienced only with the ears, but which is visible, and forms images, in space and time. This music is above all the music of the American West, whose conquest is the subject of John Ford’s films ... San Francisco and Los Angeles also gave birth to the American cinema. Meanwhile, ‘Motion Pictures’ has become a definition of music. Wenders’ character, Philip Winter, would like to believe in the promised dream, but finds that

it is empty in a land where images have pervaded every aspect of life, to the extent that he, in a sense, becomes blinded by them. (Graf, pp. 73, 74)

Philip starts to write in his notepad. He has finally started to try to express what the images mean. The scene fades out and another fades in: Philip driving again. He closes his eyes while driving for a few seconds, opens them again, and grins, perhaps testing whether he is dreaming or awake, and relieved to find that he still exists. He heads into New York City and finds a dealer to buy his car. The dealer asks him, “Ya goin’ home?” and Philip nods, smiling wryly. But what does it mean to return home? In a later scene Philip tells Alice he’d just as soon stay in New York, but can’t because he’s short of money. Going overseas, living abroad, complicates things; one’s sense of home becomes confused, and can result in a divided self, torn between the original home and the adopted one. One can’t go home again, it’s true, in that neither home nor the person returning there is the same; change is inevitable. But returning home can be crucial in helping to sort out one’s sense of place and to find what is valuable or not in both places.

As he talks with the car dealer, Philip hears organ music. He asks the dealer what the music is, and the dealer tells him that it is the organ music at Shea Stadium. The next scene is of a baseball game being played in Shea Stadium, and then of a middle-aged woman playing the organ, her eyes vacant, a vacuous expression on her face. One is reminded of Delmore Schwartz’s poem about Americans turning to sports to avoid introspection or critical thinking, “All of Us Always Turning Away for Solace”:

All of us always turning away for solace

From the lonely room where the self must be honest,
All of us turning away from being alone (at best
Boring) because what we want most is to be
Interested,

Play billiards, poking a ball
On the table, play baseball, batting a ball
On the gridiron,
seventy thousand applauding.

This amuses, this indeed is our solace:

Follow the bouncing ball! O, fellow, follow,
See what is here and clear, one thing repeated,
Bounding, evasive, caught and uncaught, fumbled
—Follow the bouncing ball; and thus you follow,
Fingering closely your breast on the left side,

The bouncing ball you turned from for solace.
(Schwartz, *Summer Knowledge : Selected Poems*, 1967)

But Philip is alone, a foreigner in New York; he has been “in the lonely room where the self must be honest” and, in following the “bouncing ball” of his heart, he has become lost.

After leaving the car dealer and taking the subway downtown, Philip buys a copy of two German magazines at a kiosk: *Kicker*, a soccer magazine, and *Der Spiegel* (The Mirror). On the cover of *Der Spiegel* is a photograph of a group of pilots standing in front of a jet and the caption “Lotsen Streik: Diktatur der Spezialisten?” (Pilots Strike: Dictatorship of the Specialists?). This foreshadows what Philip will find out later at the Pan Am office: that pilots in Germany are on strike and therefore he (and Lisa and Alice) will be unable to fly directly to Germany. He next goes to the office of the company which is to publish the book he is supposed to be writing about the U. S., Birnback Publishing. There he meets the publishing agent. At first friendly, the agent is upset when he finds that Philip has been taking photographs rather than writing and can’t meet the deadline for finishing the book. Philip tells the agent that he’ll “finish the story” in Germany—which, of course, means both the book he’s writing and the film he’s in—his own story. He tries to cadge a loan from the agent, but the agent tells him he’ll “get sweet nothing.” Philip takes a photo of the agent as he is leaving, which understandably annoys the agent even more.

Next, Philip goes to the Pan Am building to book a flight back to Germany. As he goes through the glass revolving door to enter the building, we see that a small blonde girl—nine-year-old Alice—is pushing the door from the opposite side, so that Philip is forced to go around one time before entering. Annoyed, he stares at Alice and she stares back. Already he and she are involved in a test of wills, with Alice readily fending for herself in spite of Philip’s opposition. Yella Rottländer, who played the part of Alice, is now a costume designer in Munich (*Wikipedia*). In *Wim Wenders : One Who Set Forth*, she recalls the experience of acting in *Alice* as a very happy time :

There are many interconnected fragments ... riding through New York on a tandem, going to an ice cream shop which seemed to have hundreds of flavors and getting a huge ice cream with about 10 to 15 scoops. Those are my memories of that time. Those real events were always connected to Wim. It was really important. He was everywhere. If I look into myself, he's always there. That he held me on his arm so often was neither strange nor unnatural. I'm moved when I see it today. I find it really sweet. It was totally normal to be wrapped in a blanket and be carried in his arms. I think it's wonderful.

As Philip French says in his review of *Alice in the Cities* (French, 2008), "Yella Rottländer is unforgettable as Alice." She is utterly natural and believable as a sensitive, quick-witted nine-year-old girl who has been exposed to and shaped by the problems of the adults around her, yet able to roll with the punches due to her innate toughness and sunny regard for life, come what may. She seems unaware of the camera, a world away from the self-conscious coyness of Hollywood child actors, yet with one of those faces that the camera loves. One is reminded of Jean-Pierre L aud as Antoine Doinel in Truffaut's *Les Quatres Cents Coups/The Four Hundred Blows* (1959), and the fact that Antoine ends up, in the film's conclusion, at the edge of the sea, as, in the final scene of *Alice*, Alice, with Philip, is heading along the Rhine toward the sea. But at the end of *Les Quatres Cents Coups* one feels that Antoine has reached an end: as he turns to face us his face is captured in a freeze-frame shot that shows him disturbed, wary, not knowing which way to go or what lies before him. He is alone, rejected by his parents, an escapee from reform school, not allowed to meet or talk to his best friend. Alice, however, although she indicates to Philip that she doesn't know what lies in store for her, is united with him in looking out the open window of the train, both of them smiling, as the camera rises to take in the whole landscape and reveal the direction of the train, along the Rhine, toward the sea. The conclusion to *Alice* is open-ended, but is one which can be interpreted as offering hope, the possibility of redemption and affirmation, rather than the downbeat ending of *Les Quatres Cents Coups*.

At the Pan Am counter, Philip finds that he will be unable to fly back soon to Germany due to a ground personnel strike. Alice's mother, Lisa, is standing near by and asks Philip to tell her what the female Pan Am representative said, as her (Lisa's) English isn't so good. Philip explains the situation to Lisa and helps book both his own ticket and tickets for Lisa and Alice to Amsterdam, the nearest they can get to Germany, in the afternoon of the next day. (Philip stumbles a little in English to arrange this with the Pan Am representative, and one can sense that it is because he is a bit self-conscious about having been put on the spot by Lisa and having to display his ability to

speak English. This is a small detail, but it is, as Vogler pointed out, the kind of small detail that Wenders notices and employs to convey underlying meaning. Immediately after this exchange with the flight representative is a scene which suggests the feelings which, although not verbalized, are nevertheless revealed through our slightest facial expressions and gestures. The flight attendant smiles at Philip in an inviting way ; Lisa notices this and glances at Philip. We can feel and see her appraising Philip ; this becomes clearer when she later reveals to Philip that she has left a man she was living with, invites Philip to stay with her and Alice in their hotel room that night (as Philip is very short of money), and tells Philip that she would like to share her bed with him but cannot sleep with him. We know that Philip has been attracted to her too when Lisa leaves early the next morning, thinking Philip is still asleep, and leaving Alice behind : Philip pretends to be asleep so that Lisa can leave unhindered, but as soon as she's gone and he turns back to sleep, he smells her scent on her pillow and buries his head in the pillow to breathe in her scent more deeply. It is clear that, though Philip is alone, he is not happy about it.

Throughout *Alice*, we find ourselves having to compare what people say with what they express, consciously or unconsciously, through their eyes, their facial expressions, their gestures. Thus, after Philip has booked the tickets, Alice asks Philip to wait with them for a while—"I don't know if I could stand it otherwise." Philip consents, saying, "But I'm not very entertaining." Alice responds, "You could be dumb for all I care", leaving Philip a little taken aback. But we know, from Lisa's body language and what she subsequently says to Philip, that her indifference to him is feigned ; she is leaving one man and facing the idea of being free again, but in the meantime Philip is there and offers her a very handy crutch for support until she finds her feet. When Philip leaves Lisa and Alice to make a phone call to his old girlfriend to tell her he is coming to see her, Alice reproaches Lisa : "If you could speak English, things would be easy." Alice forces a smile, acknowledging that what Alice says is true, but one can see she is also angry at Alice for zeroing in on a weak spot, one which we have seen she is sensitive about because of the way she instantly seized upon Philip as someone who could procure tickets for her and Alice without having to say anything herself.

Alice, perhaps in imitation of her mother, shows Philip her own ambivalence toward him in a more obvious way : at a café where she and Lisa meet Philip for breakfast the next morning, Alice gives Philip a patently fake smile, really more of a grimace, and just as quickly stops smiling to show Philip that she's on to whatever he's trying to put over. To annoy him even more, she asks Philip who he called ; Philip, duly annoyed, doesn't reply.

Alice imperiously insists on a hot dog this time rather than the hamburger she usually gets ;

Philip and Lisa exchange a “what can you do?” glance, sharing their annoyance that Alice is being such a pain in the neck. After that, when Philip takes Lisa and Alice by taxi to a hotel he has recommended for them (one where the concierge speaks German), Alice slips into a sleepy mode, the default of children bored by their elders but also, one senses, a means Alice uses to withdraw from what is around her in order to protect herself. Lisa tells Philip that she has just split up with a man, but immediately adds, “I don’t want to talk about it now.” Philip, in a self-deprecating and mock-defensive manner, lifts his arms slightly and waves his hands, smiling, to show that he is not involved and has no desire to get involved. He will repeat this gesture toward the end of the film when the police inspector asks Philip why he drove away with Alice rather than reporting back to the police station, but the feeling behind Philip’s gesture the second time is different: not defensive, but instead a good-humored demonstration of his innocence, a return of his self-assurance due to the bond he has formed with Alice. This scene is also a filmic demonstration of how life moves forward in cycles, but never in exactly the same way, with something changed, and perhaps learned, each time.

Philip goes to visit his old girlfriend, hoping he can stay with her. When she opens the door to his knock, he enters the apartment as if everything is settled, not noticing her distress at his appearance. He immediately starts telling her about his recent thoughts and feelings and again the crassness of mass culture, in particular that of radio and television, is revealed:

I made a mess of things. It was a horrible trip. Soon as you leave New York nothing changes any more. Everything looks the same. You can’t think any more. Especially the thought that things could ever change. I completely lost my bearings. I thought it would go on forever. Some evenings I would keep on going and listen to that sickening radio. A night in the motel, which looked like all the others. I’d watch that inhuman TV. I lost touch with the world.

His girlfriend tries to stem the flow of his talk, but he doesn’t notice. This scene shows Wenders’ attention to every detail: the books on top of a table at the girlfriend’s apartment are briefly shown, and their titles are telling. Among the books are *Sew and Stitch* (a possible metaphor for how a film is put together?), a book with a drawing of Dumbo the Elephant on the cover (Dumbo can fly, so is yet another allusion to the idea of flight and escape in *Alice*, as well as being a reference to American popular culture), F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Tender is the Night*, and, most importantly, *Wunschloses Unglück* (*A Sorrow Beyond Dreams: A Life Story*) (Peter Handke, trans. Ralph Manheim, 1974, original German edition 1972, *Wikipedia*) by Peter Handke, a close

friend of Wenders, author of *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter*, (*The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*), 1970, the screenplay for Wenders' film of this novel in 1972, and co-writer with Wenders of the screenplay for Wenders' 1987 film *Der Himmel über Berlin*, (*Wings of Desire*).

In his introduction to *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*, Jeffrey Eugenides says that the original German title of the novel, *Wunschloses Unglück*, "is a play on words. The German idiom, *wunschloses Glück*, means roughly 'more happiness than you could wish for. Handke changes it to mean 'more misfortune than you wish for.'" The book is a mixture of autobiography and fiction and is based on the life and suicide of Handke's mother. Thus the book is connected to Wenders' own life, in the problems he had with his own mother (see *One Who Set Forth*), and is also a reflection of *Alice*, since Alice has problems with her own mother and loses her mother temporarily.

And Philip loses his girlfriend. She tells him that he can't stay there, that she can't help him, although she'd like to comfort him, and finally says, "I don't get how to live, either. No-one showed me how ... When you come to an intersection in this city, it's like coming to a clearing in the woods."

This is an arresting simile. Where does it come from? Surely it is an echo of the opening lines of Dante's *Inferno* :

Nel mezzo del cammin de nostra vita

Mi ritro vai per una selva oscura,

Che la diritta via era smarrita ...

(Midway on our life's journey, I found myself

In dark woods, the right road lost ...) (Dante, *The Inferno*, trans. Robert Pinsky, 1994 4)

Philip is lost in America just as Dante was lost in a wood, and he will find himself being led out of his quandary by Alice as Dante was led out of the wood by Beatrice. The idea of being at a crossroads in New York City will later be echoed in Philip's bedtime story for Alice in Wuppertal, when Philip tells her of a little boy (i.e., Philip himself) who is on a journey which changes when he comes to a road.

Philip leaves his girlfriend's place and decides to take a taxi back to the hotel where Lisa and Alice are staying. He rolls down the window to peer outside, at which the African-American taxi driver says sarcastically, "That's a good idea." Philip asks him, "What do you mean?" The taxi driver answers, "Opening the window. I close mine when it starts to rain." Philip points out to the

driver that “It hasn’t been raining since this morning.” The driver explains his mistake: “In this city you lose all sense of time.” Like Philip, he is lost, as if in a dream, and the present moment has been arrested.

Lisa tells Alice it’s time to go to bed. Philip, sitting across from Lisa, tries to surreptitiously look in Alice’s bag, on the nearby lamp table, to see if there is any money in it. The bag tips over and Philip, embarrassed, sees that Lisa has noticed what he did and is staring at him half indignantly. Philip attempts to right the bag, but it falls over. Naturally enough, Philip is even more embarrassed, but grins and tries lamely to shrug it off. Lisa, also embarrassed for Philip, and embarrassed that Philip needs money, tells him, “You can stay here with us. There’s plenty of room.” Then she looks over to Alice in case Alice also noticed. Alice, lying down, has been looking at her watch, but puts it down, looks at Philip, then turns over to go to sleep.

Note: This is the first of two parts. Thanks to David Burger for German translation.

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映画「都会のアリス」(前編)

アンダスン ケネス

抄録

映画「都会のアリス」全編

ヴィム・ヴェンダース (Wim Wenders, 1945-) 監督作品、映画「都会のアリス」(独 *Alice in den Städten*/ 英 *Alice in the Cities*, 1974) は、ヴェンダースによる最重要作品のひとつであり、製作からおおよそ40年を経てもなおその輝きを失わない名画として広く評価されている。「都会のアリス」は、通常のハリウッド映画とは全く異質なペース (ストーリー展開の速さ) とトーン (話し方の響き) を特徴とし、映画による新しい物語の語り方 (それは小津安次郎監督作品「東京物語」に代表される日本映画の作風から部分的に影響を受けている) を世に示す作品となった。ヴェンダース自身、この作品を「自らの監督人生において最も重要な映画」と位置づけるとともに、自らが映画人として生涯を歩む決意をする契機となった作品であることを認めている。

本論文は、映画「都会のアリス」の製作背景・事情と、文学的引喩、映画撮影技術、音楽、演技が個々にどのような役割を果たしながら一つの統合された作品に結実したのか検討するものである。加えて本論文では、映画「都会のアリス」が、「個としての存在」と「家族」の関係、そして「個性的存在としての自己の追求」と「あるべき人生の生き方」の関係を豊かに描き出すことで、時代の移り変わりを経た今もなお鑑賞者の心を捉える力に満ちた作品であり続けていることも示したい。

キーワード；文芸的隠喩、映画撮影法、苦悩、ロードムービー、1970年代大衆文化