Notre Dame Film Students Interview Wenders on Wings of Desire and Related Issues

Introduction

While visiting the University to screen Pope Francis: A Man of His Word, Wenders met with students and faculty in German and film studies. A group of students from Professor Ted Barron and William Donahue's course, *Germany in Postwar Cinema*, sat down with Wenders for the following conversations. The first, conducted in English, focuses on Wenders' Himmel über Berlin (Wings of Desire), which had been screened in the class just prior to his visit. The second, conducted in German, takes this same film as its principal focus but goes beyond it to discuss larger issues, including Wenders' treatment of religion, the role of Jews (in the film and in German society), as well as interwar German history. Wenders was extraordinarily open to students' queries and observations and eager to respond in some detail.

The interviewers are Brendan Burke, Monica Fallon, Brooke Littman, Sabrina Muckle, and Vitus von Hirschberg.

Image 1: Wim Wenders (center) at the Nanovic Institute for European Studies with University of Notre Dame Students

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Part I

Brendan Burke: The scene that I found most moving in Wings of Desire was the scene where Cassiel is trying to comfort the man about to jump off the building. Could you provide more background on that scene, the inspiration behind it, and how you decided the particular motion of the angels – putting their hand on shoulders – as how they would be aiding humans?

Wim Wenders: Well I found that, in a lot of representations of angels in paintings, there was a gesture of putting a hand on somebody's shoulder, standing behind, or having both hands on them, or the hands on the back. I saw that quite often, and I liked it. It is understood that the person does not know it, and it is unnoticed. I liked the effort to be close and I like the affection that is seen in these gestures, but it is also painfully ineffective, especially in the scene where the young man jumps off. Cassiel, of course, would love to hold him and keep him back but just cannot. That was one of the things I wanted to show: that angels have to respect our free will, and that they are unable to interfere. That was a tough scene, and the young man who played it was good. Cassiel was heartbroken and kept asking me until the end if we shot a different ending. But I said, »No, sorry, my dear angel, but it's important that he jumps and that you cannot do anything about it.«

Brooke Littman: In the scene that follows, or I believe follows shortly after, Cassiel himself jumps and we see visuals of movement through the city – very rapid shots that are blurry and cut through. My question is a question of intention at that point: are we intending to believe that Cassiel is trying to associate with human beings by taking that fall, or is it a means of showing us once again that the angels are able to go through any space, and they're able to be a part of anything without being hindered?

Wenders: Yes. I figured that they could not just cross any space and appear wherever they wanted to appear, or of course cross the wall that was dividing the city at the time. I figured they could also cross time, and so Cassiel, just before this guy jumps, does jump himself in solidarity, so to speak, but of course he cannot fall. That jump is a jump in time. He also remembers – it's probably more memory than anything else – remembers the Hour Zero of Berlin, which is the big bombardments in '45 and the enormous amount of death in the city. Basically, the most horrible time in the history of this city that, of course, these angels witnessed.

Littman: He seems particularly tied to that time period, because we see even when he's in the car, he's remembering; or we see outside the windows, he's remembering. When he is walking through the movie set, he seems very attached to a lot of the people and the story that's going on. Is there a particular reason he is very attached to that moment?

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Wenders: Well, as he was already the guardian angel of the old storyteller, I decided that he was the one that should be more involved in history. I needed to find a focus for his character, because the focus for Damiel was his love for this circus trapeze artist and his conflict of whether or not he should leave his eternity to become a man. I figured I needed to give something strong to Cassiel, so I gave him a relationship with history. But they could both have had that link.

Monica Fallon: Going back to when you said that one of the main themes is unconditional love – I was surprised by that answer. Could you explain more what you mean, and do you think that there's – the first relationship that comes to mind is Damiel and – I can't remember her name.

Wenders: I think the unconditional love is really both before and after. It is also the relation of the angels to people and that their affection for them is unconditional. I mean, we love to mention »unconditional love,« as the highest possible form of love. I figured these angels were capable of that, that they loved as immensely as we can, and the way they look at us was with very loving eyes. That is why I said unconditional love, because it refers to both their feelings for us as well as, for example, for Damiel's relation to Marion and his love for her. After all, he gave up more for her than you can possible think, even if you didn't know her. Quite a chance he took!

Burke: Would you say that chance or that sacrifice he made speaks to the human condition, and how does it relate to the ending of the movie? How does it relate to the entire theme of unconditional love and the relationship between Damiel and Marion as it relates to the human condition?

Wenders: We do not see much about their relationship because the film more or less ends with that. The strongest thing that I could imagine was that, I mean symbolically, because who knows how their life together would begin or how it was going to be. I liked the idea that he would help her with her art, her living, and her profession and that he actually operates the rope at that last scene when she's turning. It was a beautiful image to me of him enabling her to be her best. And then, well, we can only imagine afterwards. I actually made a film with the same people five years later, because two years after our film the wall fell – amazingly – and a couple of years after reunification, I felt it was time to make another film in Berlin to show the mind-blowing difference. I thought of all sorts of movies, and eventually decided to use the same set of characters and all of the people from the film except for the old man, who had died by then; he was already in his mid-nineties when we shot. So the two angels, Peter Falk, Marion, they're all in the second film, Faraway, So Close! There you see that Damiel and Marion have a little girl and are living happily ever after. Damiel became a pizza baker. He has a pizza shop in the sequel and is a very happy pizza baker. After all, probably one of the nicest professions

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I could imagine. And the pizzeria was called »Pizzeria dell'Angelo,« because that was, at least, the only way he could admit where he was coming from.

Fallon: We read about how this film had a very loose beginning idea when you started and that you liked to work in the moment and see what happens. What was that experience like? Were you ever nervous that you would not get a product that you wanted, and how did that free up your artistic intentions?

Wenders: Well, it put the whole thing wide open. We shot the film, more or less, in chronological order so that at any given moment we were able to steer it into another direction, which you just cannot do if you have a script. I would have been much more scared if I had been, to say, a prisoner of a script than to really take the film into any spontaneously appearing direction. It sounds scary, but it actually was not. I had a set of great actors. I knew all the places where I wanted to shoot in Berlin, except I did not know what was going to happen there – but I knew all of the places. Marion had learned for three months to be a professional on the trapeze and the circus. I had a great cameraman, this old French guy. This was his last film – he came out of retirement to do the film; he is a master of black and white photography. I had all these great ingredients. I did not have a full script, but I had many ideas. Actually, I had way too many ideas. I could have made three movies with the amount of ideas we had. With the angels, everything is possible. Every day we came up with new ideas, new possible scenes, and the problem was that we had to just choose them, decide every day, what we were going to shoot, and what we shot meant eliminating everything we could not shoot. In the end, it was amazingly free and loose, yes, but not scary because I had everything I needed and I had enough money to shoot for eight weeks. The problem was, after six and a half weeks, we realized that we still were in the black and white first half. I had initially thought, half of the film is with the angels in black and white and then we have the second half of the film in color, where Damiel's a human being. I also intended for Cassiel to jump a day or two after because he was so lonely without his friend. We could not get all this done because we spent more than six weeks on that first half, and then I realized I had enough money to shoot for another week and a half or something, and we'd better get him over there. We had one week left to shoot the whole ending in color. And that's what you get if you're improvising.

Burke: So from the very beginning you had the conception of the angels' world in black and white?

Wenders: Yes, that was part of my initial idea for the film, that there should be a distinct difference between the way they see us and between the way we see the world. And I figured black and white was perfect for that. I like black and white – I did not do it much after that, but black and white has a strange propensity to show you the essence about a thing, about a person. A black and white portrait, in my belief, reveals more who that person is than any color picture. I figured

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black and white goes on into their invisibility and to their vision, and colors are much more sensual. I figured as angels, they are not part of that sensuality. We also concluded that they were not really into smell or taste. What did coffee taste like? He will only find out later. Or what colors are? I thought that was a given, more or less from the beginning, that the angels would be in black and white. Not many decisions were made at the beginning, but that was one of them. Then on the look of the angels and that kids could see them, those were the dramaturgical decisions we made before. We shot for eight weeks and had to hurry up in the end to get the story done, and then poor Cassiel could not jump anymore. He had to stay up there alone, and that's why the sequel, Faraway, So Close!, is about him becoming a human.

Fallon: I find that shocking, I never would have thought Cassiel would become human.

Wenders: There you go. I mean, between the two actors, it was sort of a toss. Damiel, played by Bruno Ganz, really wanted to remain an angel. He said, »This is so good, I feel so good being an angel. Let Cassiel jump.« Well, we had already started, of course, him falling in love with Marion. He was joking a bit, but he really thought being an angel was fantastic while Cassiel from the beginning always said, »Oh, come on, let me go. I prefer being a human being.« So, he was the leftover one. That's why we also said at the end, »To Be Continued.« He was heartbroken because he had so much prepared himself for that first moment of being a person, and he was so much looking forward, and he eventually had to settle – break it to him that he wouldn't, we didn't have the time anymore. But he was the hero of the second film, Faraway, So Close!, and it's all about him really becoming a fallen angel, and sort of getting sidetracked, and getting involved with gangsters and a sinister world before he comes to his senses. But that's another movie.

Muckle: Which character do you most identify with?

Wenders: In Wings of Desire I think it was Bruno Ganz's character, Damiel. I think it was the one that I really knew the most about. Maybe because he fell in love with my girlfriend. I was living with Solveig at the time, long before the film we were already a couple for four or five years. I had to identify with Damiel.

Fallon: I was wondering, who translates the titles from German to English? And those are two relatively different titles, so is there a significance in the translation?

Wenders: Well, the film was called Der Himmel über Berlin, period. I had a French co-producer, sort of also a legendary old French producer, Anatole Dauman, one day call me and say, »Wim, Der Himmel über Berlin,« because he spoke a little Yiddish and a little German, »sounds pretty good to me in German, but in French, it's impossible. I cannot keep the German title in France, you have

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to understand. We have to find a different French title.« And he said, »I also got a call from our future American distributor« – that was Sony at the time – »and they said we cannot call it Heaven Above Berlin or The Sky Above Berlin. It sounds like a war movie, or something. So, you have to realize, as much as we love your title, for English and French audiences, and we are only thinking about those, you have to find a better title.« I was a little pissed off, and I said, »Well then, just call it Wings of Desire.« But I really said it, like, »Give it just any title. Call it,« out of the blue, »Wings of Desire.« There was a long silence after, and he said, »Oh, perfect!« I had only sort of meant to get rid of the problem, but that name did stick. In all the territories, it's either the German translation in those countries where it works – like in Spanish, Cielo Sobre Berlin works really well, in Italian it works really well, Japanese works really well, the translation of Himmel über Berlin – but in other countries it is Wings of Desire in that language. It became a film with two titles. Already with »Himmel,« you have a problem with is that sky, or is it heaven? In German, actually, there is not even a word for the two. In English it had to be decided, is it Heaven over Berlin or is it Sky over Berlin, and »sky« really sounds like a war movie, and »heaven« sounds sort of like paradise, more metaphorical or religious. I did not like that either, so we went for Wings of Desire.

Littman: With the shot in the library, the tracking scene where you are moving the camera through the library by the students, I think the most profound moment is the open space where you're panning by the desks there's the columns, and the angels, I believe, are sitting on the ledge as you're panning by. Obviously, that library has so many columns, and filming in a library is difficult anyways because of shelves and spacing. How did you manage to capture that kind of open space? The shot is beautiful. It is always fun to ask how another person manages to get that kind of look.

Wenders: We looked for a long time for what I figured would be the home of the angels. They needed to live somewhere in the city. They couldn't just roam around. I wanted to find one place where they would be, where they would gather, where there would be other angels. Initially, I wanted it to be the Brandenburg Gate, but that was in the East and they did not allow me. It was too complicated to build, too big and too expensive. I then thought of all sorts of churches, but the connotation was too simplistic, I felt. Then I came up with the idea of the library, because it is really a tremendous building and one of the most beautiful buildings in Berlin. It is actually somewhat ugly from the outside but from the inside, it is fantastic. It is really like a cathedral for reading. It is made out of a great love of books. Hans Scharoun, the architect who was considered a degenerated artist in the Nazi period so he could not build anything – this was his masterwork. He really built it for books and for reading. I figured that building was a good place. It had this beautiful roof with daylight coming in, sort of strange clouds, round clouds, and it had ma-

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gnificent views of three or four stories of emptiness, and all these columns and all these different levels. The problem was that because it was always used, seven days a week, they initially told us »You can't shoot in here. We don't want to disturb the students and other people who come to read. You cannot shoot with readers there.« I almost walked away from the idea, but I loved it so much. I looked at their opening times and saw on Sunday mornings they had six hours of cleaning. I asked, »If we come Sunday mornings, would you allow us in?« And they said, »Yes of course Sunday morning you can shoot. We are open Sunday mornings for the cleaning at six; you can come at six, but you'd have to be out by twelve. You can't get everything done that you want to do,« they explained to us, »in six hours.« I said, »No, no, but we can come in every Sunday.« So we ended up shooting every single Sunday in the library. Every Sunday morning, we were there, like for mass almost.

Vitus von Hirschberg: Wasn't the house Potsdamer Platz part of the library or the main building?

Wenders: It's the main building near the Potsdamer Platz. It is on the other side; across from it is the Philharmonic, built by the same guy a few years later. No, the other way around – he built the Philharmonic first, then a couple of years later he built the library. It is the same architect. It offered all these amazing views and it was really so beautiful. I spent a long time in there beforehand in order to imagine these shots. I could go in, even with readers there, so I knew well the angles I wanted. In the film, you only see extras. But we were very smart, we put ads on the library door that anybody who wanted to come in earlier on Sunday would be welcome as long as he or she was aware that we'd be making a movie. The extras were actual people who came to read, and they were not bothered by us.

Muckle: Even the little kids?

Wenders: No, they belonged to some of the mothers who were readers and, of course, wanted to have them in the film. They were all actual readers so that they are not pretending to be reading.

Fallon: In class, we are looking at films through lenses of different movements, and Professors Barron and Donahue talked about Wings of Desire possibly being a film that transitioned out of New German Cinema. Would you agree that this is kind of a movement away from New German Cinema?

Wenders: Well, New German Cinema is a term that applied to the movies of the seventies. I left myself in '78, and lived in America from '78 until '84. I made a number of films in America, and as far as I was concerned, this so-called New German Cinema – the term that New York critics would coin – was over by the end of the seventies. This was the first film I made when I came back, so it was really a film of homecoming. For me, it was no longer part of the New German

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Cinema but by then just German Cinema. If you look at it, yes, it is a departure from it thematically and stylistically, but I think New German Cinema strictly applies to the movies of the seventies, maybe into the early eighties. Then any new wave, or whatever you call it, ends, necessarily. Can't keep it up, can't keep New German Cinema up if you're seventy years old.

Fallon: It is not new anymore.

Wenders: No. But as many of these things go, like Neorealism in Italy, these have a certain strength for a number of years stylistically, in terms of content, or in terms of cohesiveness, and then it falls apart. I mean, the dogma films, how many years did they last? The same, five, six, seven years and the idea is past. All these »schools« they last for – or whatever you want to call it – they last for a number of years, and it's exciting as long as it lasts. There was an exciting new period in Eastern Europe after the fall of the wall; there was some years with amazing films coming out of Romania, so there was sort of a New Romanian Cinema, and it lasts for a while and then, obviously, new is no longer new. What is the latest? What is the latest »happening« school?

Littman: Classic Art Film is big. It is not big and upcoming, but it is more prominent. There is a lot of independent films that are being made.

Wenders: Yes, but it's not really so much of a »school.« Maybe. Mexican Cinema had its great heydays in the late 90th, early 21st century.

Part II

Sabrina Muckle: Wir alle haben den Film Himmel über Berlin gesehen und haben, so glaube ich, alle Fragen zu diesem Film. Meine Frage ist zum Anfang, wenn Sie nur ein Thema des Filmes nennen könnten, also das Hauptthema des Filmes, welches würden Sie nennen? Wie ich weiß, gibt es viele Möglichkeiten, es tut mir leid.

Wim Wenders: Ja, der Film hat viele Finger. Das Hauptthema des Films ist – so *Brendan can get it* – unconditional love. Ich würde sagen, das ist das Hauptthema des Filmes. Aber jetzt fühle ich mich schon wieder schlecht, ich hätte ja auch andere Themen nennen können. Aber für mich ist das Thema der Liebe schon das größte Thema des Filmes. Sterblichkeit ist auch ein wichtiges Thema. Aber nehmen wir erst mal dieses, Sie wollten ja nur eines.

Sabrina Muckle: Ja, nur eines.

Wim Wenders: Da musste ich mich ja entscheiden.

Monica Fallon: Ich frage mich, wie sehr beeinflusst Ihre Religion Ihre Filme?

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Wim Wenders: Es ist eigentlich unmöglich, als Künstler zu arbeiten, ohne dass die eigenen Überzeugungen ins Spiel kommen. Und ich bin katholisch aufgewachsen. Ihr müsst wissen, dass ich jetzt Protestant bin. I converted. But I was very – aber ich bin froh, dass das einem in Notre Dame nicht böse angerechnet wird. Aber ich bin eigentlich auch weder Katholik noch Protestant, ich bin eigentlich beides, ökumenischer Christ. Und das ist auch meine Überzeugung. Es gibt keine denomination that's called ecumenical, es gibt keine ökumenische Denomination, aber ich praktiziere sie trotzdem. Ich gehe also sowohl in katholische als auch in evangelische Kirchen und meine Überzeugung ist zutiefst christlich, und das hat auch meine Filme von Anfang an bestimmt. Was nicht heißt, dass man nicht in alles, in tausend Themen reingucken kann.

Vitus von Hirschberg: Ein Thema, das Sie immer wieder in Himmel über Berlin verwenden, ist der Engel. Einmal als religiöses Zeichen und einmal wahrscheinlich als Zeichen der Kunst. Warum benutzen Sie ihn genau in dieser Szene als eine schwarz-weiß dargestellte Person? Und warum haben Sie in den meisten Szenen einen Engel ohne Flügel gewählt?

Wim Wenders: Wir haben uns schwer Mühe gegeben mit dem Bild der Engel, wie Engel aussehen. It wasn't easy to figure out what angels look like. Und wir haben alles studiert, was es da gibt an Repräsentationen in der Kunst. Und da gibt es Rüstungen, armors, Flügel natürlich, lange, weiße Gewänder. Engel sind auf die verschiedensten Arten gemalt worden in der Kunst, und wir haben auch alles versucht. Wir haben Rüstungen für unsere beiden Engel gemacht, wir haben Flügel angefertigt, verschiedene Flügel, wir haben verschiedene Gewänder probiert, und letzten Endes hat mir das dann alles nicht gefallen. Und ich fand dann, gerade mit den Flügeln: *It's nice without the light, it's nicer. And we see the outside a little better*. Und dann habe ich mich gegen die Flügel entschieden. Weil die Flügel so viel gekostet haben, verwendeten wir sie dann trotzdem ein-, zweimal. Aber im Prinzip haben wir es ohne die Flügel gemacht, weil das Bild mit den Flügeln die beiden Figuren, die beiden Hauptdarsteller, ja doch sehr entrückt hat. Ich wollte eigentlich, dass die Engel eher so eine Art Metapher werden für die besseren Menschen, die wir gerne sein würden, die jeder gerne sein würde. Und da war das mit den Flügeln irgendwie zu entrückt und zu abstrakt. Und dann haben wir uns schließlich entschieden, alles wegzulassen. Wir lassen die Rüstung weg, die langen weißen Haare, die Flügel, wir lassen alles weg und machen nur zwei mit den dunklen Mänteln sehr streng angezogene und sehr reduzierte Gestalten.

Monica Fallon: Wir haben im Seminar viel über die Kinder gesprochen. Wenn Sie nicht antworten wollen, weil es vielleicht mit Absicht mehrdeutig ist, dann ist das in Ordnung. Aber können die Kinder die Engel sehen? Wir waren uns nicht sicher.

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Image 2: Wim Wenders (center) in discussion with Sabrina Muckle, Monica Fallon, and Vitus von Hirschberg at the Nanovic Institute for European Studies

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Wim Wenders: Doch, eigentlich wollte ich das so zeigen, dass die Kinder die sehen können. *Kids can see the angels, I figured*. Und das sollte man vor allem ein bisschen am Beginn des Films sehen. Damit haben wir den Film auch angefangen, dass Kinder ja anders reagieren. Und Kinder ja auch so tun, als ob es das Normalste der Welt wäre, dass da ein Engel ist. Auch das war ein Grund, dass die keine Flügel haben, weil dann wäre es halt doch nicht so normal gewesen. Und in meiner Auffassung haben die Engel ja selber auch etwas Kindliches. Engel sind ja auch eine Art Metapher für das Kind, das jeder in sich hat. Also der bessere Mensch, den man in sich hat, ist gleichzeitig für mich auch das Kind, das man in sich hat, weil Kinder auf jeden Fall unschuldig sind. Deswegen wollte ich, dass auch die Kinder die Engel sehen können und dass das für die Kinder noch ganz normal ist und dass nur die Erwachsenen verlernt haben, das zu sehen.

Sabrina Muckle: Ich habe eine weitere Frage. Es war mir ein bisschen unklar, ob die amerikanische Figur, Peter Falk, wirklich ein Engel war. Mir ist unklar, ob er wirklich ein Engel sein konnte, weil er ja eine Oma hat, oder?

Wim Wenders: Also, da gibt es viele Unklarheiten. Erstens hat er eine Großmutter, aber die Großmutter hat er auch nicht von Anfang an gehabt. Als wir gedreht haben, habe ich mir da noch keine Gedanken darüber gemacht, über seine Gedanken-Stimme. Die innere Stimme, die haben wir erst später aufgenommen. Und Peter Falk hat selber eine ganze Menge improvisiert für diese innere Stimme. Dabei hat er viel von seiner Großmutter erzählt. Und da habe ich ihm am Schluss gesagt: »Peter, an angel doesn't have a grandma.« Aber er kam auf die schönsten Sachen. Und dann habe ich mir gedacht, ich lass es

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trotzdem drin. Erstens, damit Leute sich das fragen, damit Leute überlegen: »Moment, kann doch gar nicht sein.« Das fand ich interessant. Und dann ist natürlich auch der Umstand, dass seine Großmutter auch Jewish ist. Aber gut, in der jüdischen Religion gibt's ja auch viele, genauso viele Engel wie in der christlichen. Also von daher war es kein Problem. Aber als ehemaliger Engel ist er natürlich schon eine recht außergewöhnliche Figur, da darf er sich schon viel erlauben.

Vitus von Hirschberg: Ich habe eine weitere Frage. Und zwar haben wir in der Szene in der Bibliothek den Geschichtenerzähler Homer, der wahrscheinlich über dem Buch sitzt mit den Fotos von ehemaligen Juden im KZ.

Wim Wenders: Das Buch handelt zum Teil davon. Das Buch heißt *Menschen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* und da hat er ein paar Seiten aufgeschlagen, wo auch jüdische Menschen porträtiert werden. Das Buch stammt aus den 1920er-Jahren, das war also noch vor der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus.

Vitus von Hirschberg: Wir sehen später im Film noch eine Frau, die eine Jüdin spielt, deshalb hatte ich das so angenommen. Meine eigentliche Frage ist aber: In der Szene, in der der Protagonist einmal den Monolog hält, in dem die Dokumentation über ein zerstörtes Deutschland nach dem Krieg eingeblendet ist, wo Leichen auf der Straße liegen, ist die ganze Zeit Cassiel bei ihm, der Engel. Er sitzt nah bei ihm. Was ist die genaue Funktion eines Engels in diesem Bezug, wenn sich eine Person an Leid erinnert, an eine Vergangenheit, eine dunkle Zeit in Deutschland? Inwieweit hilft ihm der Engel da?

Wim Wenders: Wir sehen den Cassiel ja sehr oft zusammen mit dem alten Mann. Er ist so ein bisschen sein Begleiter und auch sein Schutzengel. Und er legt auch manchmal den Arm um ihn, also er hat ein sehr zärtliches Verhältnis zu ihm und er ist eigentlich so eine Art Tröster. Das ist ja auch eine der uralten Funktionen der Engel: Trost zu spenden. Obwohl sie in meiner Geschichte ja wenig oder gar nicht eingreifen können und auch den Menschen so direkt nichts sagen können, hat man doch immer wieder das Gefühl, dass Menschen was hören. Auch der Damiel, der andere, sitzt ja mal in der U-Bahn und hört den Gedanken von so einem Mann zu, der komplett deprimiert ist. Und dann legt er seinen Arm um ihn und dann ändert der auch seine Gedanken – also irgendwie hat man schon das Gefühl, vielleicht können sie doch noch ein bisschen was Gutes tun. Und Cassiel, den haben wir dem alten Homer zugeteilt, ja. Das ging dann sogar so weit, dass der alte Herr, der Schauspieler heißt Kurt Bois, der ist als Jude 1933 aus Deutschland ausgewandert und hat lange in Hollywood gelebt, hat da auch über hundert Filme gemacht. Wenn ihr zufällig mal Casablanca seht, das ist ja einer der berühmtesten Filme aus der Zeit, in einer der ersten Szenen sieht man den Kurt Bois als Taschendieb. Der hat 100 Filme gemacht, aber immer nur so kleine Rollen, und ist dann auch nach dem Krieg unmittelbar wieder nach

https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839449523-025 - am 13.02.2026, 09:22:34. https://www.inlibra.com/de/agb - Open Access -

Deutschland zurückgekommen. Im Film spielt er als Homer ja so was wie den alten Erzähler. Und auch dadurch, dass er in Berlin aufgewachsen war und selber ja auch so alt war wie das Jahrhundert, als wir den Film gedreht haben. Der hatte ja auch den Potsdamer Platz noch als junger Mann gekannt und war da selbst noch in seinem Auto drüber gefahren. Die Geschichte, die er erzählt, ist wahr. Er ist tatsächlich selbst noch über den Potsdamer Platz gefahren. Diese Besetzung war also auch eine Verbindung zur Geschichte von Berlin und auch zur deutschen Geschichte. Und der hat diese Rolle von Cassiel als seinen Schutzengel, weil er auch ein Komiker ist, so ernst genommen, dass er wenn der Cassiel hinter ihm stand, also der Schauspieler Otto Sander, und ich »Cut« gesagt habe am Ende der Szene, dann hat der sich immer nach hinten fallen lassen. Also ohne zu gucken – Rums – sich nach hinten fallen lassen, sodass ihn der Cassiel auffangen musste. Und der Cassiel, der Schauspieler, war schon schweißgebadet und sagte: »Jedes Mal, wenn du ›Cut‹ sagst, habe ich Angst, dass er wieder hinfällt. Kannst du ihm nicht mal sagen, er soll damit aufhören.« Und da sagte mir der alte Mann: »Na ich mache das ja nur, damit du wirklich auf mich aufpasst. Damit du hier als Engel nicht zu nachlässig bist.« Also jedes Mal, wenn er gestanden hat und er neben ihm stand und ich gesagt habe »Cut«, hat er sich fallen lassen, egal, wo man stand, mitten in der Pampa. Und dann musste Cassiel, der war immer als Nächster bei ihm, ihn immer auffangen. Also er hat den Schutzengel-Begriff sehr konkret gefasst.

Vitus von Hirschberg: Das ist gut.

Sabrina Muckle: Wenn ich fragen dürfte, wie hat Ihre Kindheit in Sterkrade den Film beeinflusst?

Wim Wenders: Nach Sterkrade bin ich erst mit 15 Jahren gekommen. Ich habe die ersten 15 Jahre in Düsseldorf gelebt.

Sabrina Muckle: Oh, wirklich?

Wim Wenders: In Düsseldorf. Ich bin direkt nach dem Krieg geboren. Düsseldorf war zu 90 Prozent zerstört. Es war eine reine Ruinenstadt und ich erinnere mich oft daran. Das hat mich auch sehr geprägt, ich habe gedacht, die ganze Welt sieht so aus, weil woher sollte ich wissen, dass es woanders anders aussieht. Als Kind nimmt man das ja als selbstverständlich wahr. Ruinen überall – also ist wahrscheinlich die ganze Welt so gebaut.

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