



8-16-2012

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Carrol Fry

Northwest Missouri State University, cfry@nwmissouri.edu

Recommended Citation

Fry, Carrol (2012) "Angels in the Metroplex: Hegel, the Apocrypha, and Intertextuality in *Der Himmel über Berlin* (Wings of Desire)," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 15 : Iss. 2 , Article 2.

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Angels in the Metroplex: Hegel, the Apocrypha, and Intertextuality in *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*)

Abstract

Semiologist Julia Kristeva defines intertextuality as the interaction of texts. “Any text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.” Kristeva and other critics who analyze the interweaving of texts assume, as Plottel and Charney put it, that “Every text echoes another text unto infinity, weaving the fabric of culture itself.” Intertextual criticism offers interesting insights into Wim Wenders’ ironic portrayal of the traditional religious perspective on desire as opposed to Hegelian desire in *Der Himmel über Berlin* (American title *Wings of Desire*).

Angels have held a prominent place in the human imagination for at least 3,000 years, from Egyptian, Sumerian, Babylonian, and Persian polytheism and myth to Judaism and through Judaism to Christianity and Islam. They appear early in Genesis, when cherubim armed with flaming swords guard the entrance to Eden as Adam and Eve are dispossessed, and they figure prominently throughout the Old and New Testaments. Then a little over 600 years after the time of Christ, the archangel Gabriel reappears in the history of world religion to visit the Prophet Muhammad and provide a new revelation that would shake the world.

Today, angels are apt to have somewhat humbler roles. Statuettes, posters, and other marginalia crowd the shelves of stores, and publishers do a lively business in books on angelic visitations and rescues. If profit flows from knickknacks and trashy books, a revival of films about angels could hardly be far behind. In the past few years, the film industry has rediscovered an old topic to give us several films with angels as characters, ranging from large-budget mall movies such as *Michael and The Preacher's Wife* to humbler fare like *Prophecy*.

Der Himmel über Berlin, Wim Wenders' 1987 film, titled *Wings of Desire* in its American release, with script by Peter Hanke, adapts the ancient tale of

angels with an ironic interplay of intertextual discourse. The love of angels for human women is an ancient tale often told, and it has excellent dramatic potential. Conflict is the most basic element for all sorts of drama and fiction, and many writers and film makers have recognized the dramatic tension inherent in the desire of an angel for a human Other: a conflict with interest level well beyond boy-meets-girl. But Wenders and Handke bring visual poetry and language to this ancient story and enhance it with a richly textured pattern of intertextual interplay between traditional religious injunctions against desire and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's revision of the topic. Because most readers will recognize the film by its American title, I refer to it as *Wings of Desire*.

Semiologist Julia Kristeva defines intertextuality as the interaction of texts. "Any text builds itself as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."¹ Kristeva and other critics who analyze the interweaving of texts assume, as Plottel and Charney put it, that "Every text echoes another text unto infinity, weaving the fabric of culture itself."² The pattern of texts that echo through *Wings of Desire* create a relationship "that involves not merely a reference to another text but the absorption and transformation" of those texts.³ These intertextual reverberations create an ironic juxtaposition of the traditional religious injunctions against desire and a thoroughly post- modern view on the subject.

Desire, whether the word is stated or implied, has long been a topic of religious, philosophical, and literary discourse. Plato believed that desire corrupts the soul. In *Phaedrus*, for instance, he notes that those souls moved from within remain disembodied and immortal, beyond the coil of the flesh but in communion with other souls. Those souls who desire that which is without—an Other—become human and acquire a body. He recognizes the necessity of begetting children and that, “There is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation conception and generation are an immortal principle.”⁴ But to Plato, desire is a longing for beauty, and in *The Republic and Laws*, he specifies that sex should be limited to procreation only and regulated as such by the community.

Similar condemnations of desire appear in the great world religions. In the Hindu *Bhavad Gita*, Krishna lectures Arjuna on the subject: “A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean, which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires.”⁵ Similarly, Gautama Buddha condemns desire as the enemy of the soul in the *Four Noble Truths*, described in the Sermon at Benares, especially number two, which specifies the cause of pain in the human condition: “The craving which tends to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely the craving for passion

the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.”⁶ Christ repeatedly enjoins against desire with such statements as, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”⁷

Wings of Desire interacts with the various religious texts on desire from the ancient world but especially with writings on angelology from the Judeo/Christian tradition. The film establishes an ironic reversal of traditional views on the subject and bases that reversal on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, particularly Part A on “Consciousness” and Part B on “Self-Consciousness.” A central thrust of Hegel’s work is his discussion of how humanity moves from mere consciousness to consciousness of self and ascends to spirit, a kind of universal norm of moral behavior. The ascent to self-consciousness is achieved through reason, as he defines it, which is spurred by desire for a union with an Other. Wenders and Handke adapt Hegel’s description of the path to self-consciousness to frame their angelic hero’s path to humanity.

Bertrand Russell does not exaggerate when he writes, “Hegel’s philosophy is very difficult—he is, I should say, the hardest to understand of all the great philosophers.”⁸ The complexity of his writings and thought results in a variety of interpretations of his work. But Alexandre Kojève’s influential commentary on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* in a series of lectures during the 1930s, finally published in 1947 as *Lectures on the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the*

Phenomenology of Spirit, provided much of the impetus for the spread of Hegel's discussion of desire in post-modern criticism, as they were attended by some of the most important luminaries of the movement, reportedly including Lacan and Sartre. Kojève's lectures elucidate Hegel's concept of desire and the union with an Other in the journey to self-consciousness and spirit, a movement Hegel finds to be inextricably linked with the development of history. Wenders' American title should signal the viewer to recognize the issue of desire in the film.

That an angel should be given desire for an Other and that this Other should be a human woman underpins the irony that structures *Wings of Desire*. The story of angels and desire begins 3,000 years ago in Genesis, Chapter Six, with the tale of the Grigori, angels left behind after the fall of man to observe but not interfere:

(1). When men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born unto them, (2). the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair: and they took to wife such of them as they chose . . . (4). The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown.

Because of the Nephilim, the "giants in the earth" and the corruption they represented, God brought destruction by the flood.

The Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch,⁹ one of the apocrypha omitted from the canonical Bible and written about 200 years before Christ, fleshes out the

account of the incident described in Genesis. Enoch, who was “taken” by God because of his holiness, recounts meeting the Grigori, or Watchers. One of the angels in Heaven suggests that Enoch visit those of his brothers on Earth who have “abandoned the high heaven, the holy eternal place, and have defiled themselves with women”¹⁰ in order to make known to them the anger of God. Not only have they taken women to themselves and produced giants as sons but in acts of Promethian generosity have given arts to humanity it is not supposed to have (writing, weaponry, medical cures, and other matters). Enoch accepts the charge and travels to earth, where Azaz’el, a leader of the fallen ones, asks him to petition God for them. When Enoch delivers his petition, God sends him back to Azaz’el to tell him of His undying anger. The Watchers have “defiled yourselves with the daughters of the people, taking wives, acting like children of the earth, and begetting giant sons and with the blood of the flesh That is why (formerly). . . I did not make wives for you, for the dwelling of the spiritual beings of heaven is heaven.”¹¹ Chapter 69 gives us an exhaustive list of fallen angels, and later books describe their punishment.

The story is such a good one that writers, both Jewish and early Christian, picked it up as trope. The author of *The Book of Jubilees*, another text from the apocrypha, apparently written by a Pharisee about 150 years before Christ, returns to the story of the fallen angels, connecting them with lust and failure to observe

the Hebrew Law. The Watchers turn up in other works from the Hebrew apocrypha-- in The Sybylline Oracles, The Testaments of the Twelve Oracles, and the Pseudo Philo--with essentially the same stories, though in the Sybylline Oracles they are mighty men rather than angels. They even appear in the Gnostic Apocryphon of John and in the writings of Mani, the prophet of the Manicheans. Then the writers of Jude (6) and II Peter (2:4) in the New Testament allude to the ancient tale. These Christian writers also use the fall of angels as a trope, as did the Hebrew texts from which they drew, demonstrating the evils of desire and the danger of heresy, sins of which the angels are copiously guilty. Semyaz, Azaz'el and their cohorts in these tellings of the story are truly sinners in the hands of a very angry Old Testament God, bound in iron chains in Sheol or Hell, depending on whether the writer is Hebrew or Christian, for eternity.

In *Wings of Desire*, Wenders and Handke focus their story on two angels, Daniel and Cassiel (played by Bruno Ganz and Otto Sander), both clearly Grigori, Watchers in the tradition of both Enoch and other ancient texts, though unfallen. We see many other Watchers throughout the film. In addition to observing and recording, part of their function seems to be to encourage humans or help them feel better. As they move through the world, they hear the thoughts of the people around them. In libraries, we see many of them standing near those studying, perhaps to serve as a sort of muse, and at other times we see the two

central Watchers put hands on people in despair to relieve them. The film at this point is in black and white, reflecting the angels' point of view. From the Hegelian perspective, they are at the stage of consciousness, and Daniel longs for self-consciousness, which in this film means to become human.

In an early scene, we see Daniel and Cassiel carry on a conversation. Cassiel is a true Watcher, recording things he sees in his memorandum book and expressing no particular feeling for what he records. Daniel, however, has begun to feel desire. He says,

It's great to live only by the spirit, to testify day by day. But sometimes I get fed up with my spiritual existence. Instead of forever hovering around, I'd like to feel there's some weight to me to end my eternity and bind me to earth. At each step, each gust of wind, I'd like to be able to say, "now," and "now," and "now," and no longer say "since always," and "forever."

Clearly, Daniel longs for temporal and sensory involvement. In a series of biblical allusions to past experiences of angels, he muses,

Whenever we did participate, it was only a pretense. Wrestling with one of them, we allowed a hip to be dislocated in pretense only. We pretended to catch a fish. We pretended to be seated at the tables and to drink and eat, and we were served roast lamb and wine in the tents out there in the desert.¹²

Though Daniel's desire is aborning, he has not found an Other to serve as the focus of it, in the Hegelian sense. Daniel's words reflect Hegel's analysis of the birth of self-consciousness, which equates with full humanity in *Wings of*

Desire. He has begun to feel desire for sensuous things, and as Hegel writes, “self-consciousness is desire in general.”¹³

Cassiel, on the other hand, expresses the correct sentiment for a Watcher. After Damiel tells of his desire “to be a savage. Or at least to be able to take off your shoes under the table and to be able to stretch your toes barefoot,” Cassiel responds,

To be alone. To let things happen. To remain serious. We can only be as savage as we can remain serious. To do no more than observe, collect, testify, preserve. To remain a spirit. Keep your distance. Keep your word.

Damiel’s desire finds focus on an Other when he visits a travelling circus, where Marion, a lovely acrobat (played by Solveig Dommartin), performs her trapeze act, replete with angelic looking wings. The performers are told that the day’s performance will be the last, as the management is out of cash. Then when Damiel follows Marion to her trailer, he looks about and picks up what seems to be the spiritual essence of a stone. He looks longingly at Marian, and listens to her lengthy internal monologue on her feelings about life and her need to be desired by men as she first lies on her bed and then sits up to remove her robe. “I only need to be ready,” she thinks, “and the world’s men will look at me. [Damiel reaches out to touch her]. Longing. Longing for a wave that will stir in me. That’s what makes me clumsy, the absence of pleasure. Desire to love! Desire to love!” It is surely no accident that Marion’s monologue stresses the word “desire,” for

that is exactly what she inspires in the Watcher. As she undresses, the screen, black and white to this point since it reflects Damiel's point of view, floods with color, symbolizing the birth of Damiel's desire.

Wenders ends the sequence with a visual trope, demonstrating Damiel's desire for life and for Marion. We hear her think, pondering the nature of her internal life, "Inside closed eyes. Even the stones come alive," and Damiel looks meaningfully at the essence of the stone that he has picked up that, like him, is spirit rather than material essence, perhaps an allusion to Platonic idealism. The shot demonstrates his desire for life, not the immaterial essence. The parallel to Hebrew myth seems clear. Marion has become for Damiel one of the daughters of men.

Echoes from a passage in *The Testament of the Twelve Prophets* provide a delicious irony and an example of intertextual discourse.. After beginning in chapter five with the assertion that "women are evil," the writer goes on to state that they use desire to conquer and mislead men and "thus they charmed the Watchers, who were before the Flood. As they continued looking at the women, they were filled with desire for them and perpetrated the act in their minds."

The ironic parallel continues when the writer asserts that the Watchers were "transformed into human males" by their desire.¹⁴ So it goes with Damiel ,

though the perspective on desire is Hegelian rather than Hebrew. Wenders reminds us of the parallel text and the fate of the Watchers as ironic juxtaposition with music by a rock group on Marion's record player; a vocalist wails about the flood, ending with a line at the cut, "And Moses said to Noah," reminding us of the gigantic sons of the Grigori who brought about the flood.

The scene in which Daniel picks up the essence of a stone in the trailer seems an allusion to Hegel's description of nature, consciousness, and self-consciousness. It shows us that Daniel, like the stone he contemplates, cannot achieve self-consciousness in his angelic state or become part of the universal spirit and the flow of history. But in feeling desire, this essential ingredient in achieving a fully human existence, he moves toward it in his attraction to an Other. As Hegel puts it, "Self-consciousness is thus certain of itself only by superseding this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as an independent life; self-consciousness is Desire."¹⁵ Kojève sums up this concept : "human existence is possible only with an animal existence as its basis: a stone or a plant (having no Desire) never attains Self-Consciousness and consequently philosophy" ¹⁶

Daniel experiences desire that leads him to transcend consciousness as the first step to self-consciousness and humanity. He is at the stage of consciousness at the beginning of the film. Of consciousness, Hegel writes, "The knowledge or

knowing which is at the start or immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply is.”¹⁷ Kojève describes this concept: “one must start from something other than contemplative knowledge of Being, other than its passive revelation, which leaves Being as it is in itself, independent of the knowledge that reveals it,”¹⁸ and only desire leads to self-consciousness. In Marion’s trailer, then, Daniel’s desire for an Other has stirred, and self-consciousness begins to emerge.

Human conflict is an essential part of Hegel’s view of the development from consciousness to self-consciousness to spirit as the moving force of history, and history is a subtext in *Wings of Desire*. In discussing the difference between inorganic and simple organic life and human life, Hegel states the latter has no history. Only spirit, the final development of consciousness and self-consciousness, has a history. Individual life is part of universal life and individuals add up to the universal, though they are Other to one another. “Spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence.”¹⁹ Hyppolite sums up Hegel’s position: “the individual child of his time possesses within himself the whole substance of the spirit of that time.”²⁰ But for Hegel, this universal spirit that creates the flow of history is rooted in human conflict.

In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes what he calls a lord/bondsman relationship, sometimes translated as master/slave. An element of the journey to self-consciousness is the desire of one to enslave another. He writes, “the lord is the consciousness that exists for itself which is mediated with itself through another consciousness, i. e. through a consciousness whose nature it is to be bound up with, an existence that is independent.”²¹ Self-consciousness comes from the desire that leads to the lord/bondsman conflict.

Hegel’s lord/bondsman relationship seems connected to his views on war, a recurring theme in *Wings of Desire*, especially the horrors of World War II; and it parallels the angels’ comments about human history. Throughout the film, Wenders interweaves the monologue of an aged man, given the name Homer in the credits, who calls himself the designated story teller for mankind. “Name me muse,” he says, “who, abandoned by my listeners, lost my voice. Now from being the angel of storytelling, he became an organ grinder.” In other dialogue, he seems to be a philosopher. He wanders through modern-day Berlin, contemplating the cruelties of war and remembering scenes from World War II. “No one has succeeded in singing an epic of peace,” he muses. Homer’s exact nature remains obscure throughout the film, but like the Watchers, he is an observer, a recorder, the essence of the story teller who is essential to humankind.

In a film indebted to Hegelian philosophy on desire, Homer's comments seem a revision of Hegel's commentary on the ultimately positive effect of war and the heroic figures who lead their countries into them. Wars and the suffering they bring, he writes in *Philosophy of History*, are regrettable but necessary in advancing human history. Bertrand Russell describes Hegel's concept: "He thinks it is a good thing that there should be wars from time to time . . . War is the condition in which we take seriously the vanity of temporal goods and things." Russell quotes Hegel: "War has the higher significance that through it the moral health of people is preserved in their indifference toward the stability of finite determination."²² Kojève explains that in Hegel's writings, desire must have recognition, and the action that comes from this desire actualizes a "human, non-biological I"—self-consciousness. Multiplicity of desires results, and from that comes a "life and death fight"²³ because desire directed to desire is fully humanizing; therefore, human self-consciousness is only possible in those places that have experienced wars, involving self-consciousness demanding prestige and mastery.

The Story Teller's and the angels' ruminations on history and war seem an ironic commentary on Hegel's discussion of the sufferings brought on by great heroes. Unlike the Watchers, Homer sings his stories for humans, while the Watchers should observe only; but his memories focus specifically on war. He

says, “My heroes are no longer the warrior and kings,” as the scene cuts to shots of bombed out Berlin and rows of corpses, “but the things of peace, and equally good.” Homer’s views offer a reversal of Hegel’s belief that great men--Julius Caesar, Alexander, Napoleon--contribute to the working of the World Spirit, which is apparently the same concept as the universal described in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In *Philosophy of History*, Hegel states that great men achieve change from an “unconscious impulse” to achieve a goal for which the time was ripe. “Such are all great historical men—whose large historical aims which are the will of the World-Spirit. They may be called Heroes, inasmuch as they have derived their purposes and their vocation, not from the calm, regular course of things, sanctioned by the existing order; but from a concealed fount . . . from that inner Spirit, still hidden beneath the surface, which, impinging on the outer world as on a shell, bursts it in pieces” like a seed.²⁴

For Hegel, the hero is an important means of advancing civilization, though the wars they fight create suffering in their time. “They are great men, because they willed and accomplished something great; not a mere fancy, a mere intention, but that which met the case and fell in with the needs of the age.”²⁵ Homer’s comments and the imagery that accompany them suggest that if Nazi Germany provided a hero, the incredible suffering that resulted was hardly an advancement of the World Spirit. Homer rejects Hegel’s perspective from

Philosophy of History on the positive contribution of war and the great leaders who begin them.

In sequences that link to the discussion of war, Homer's memories of World War II provide a connection to Peter Falk, playing himself, who is in Berlin to make a film, apparently about the holocaust. In the film, Falk is a former Watcher who has become human; and in a scene outside a coffee stand, he senses Daniel nearby, and says, "I can't see you, but I can feel you," and goes on to speak of the joys of sensation. This one-way conversation provides the final straw for Daniel in deciding to alter his state.²⁶ He and Cassiel speak of the origins of things, which they saw as Watchers: glaciers melting, the primeval rivers' beginnings, the first biped, the beginnings of speech. Their dialogues reflect Hegel's notion of the movement from consciousness to self-consciousness that results from desire, and desire can lead to violence and war.

Moreover, the angels remember the beginnings of war in the flight of one man from a group. Hegel, Kojève notes, finds the fight between Others with multiplicity of desire and the wars that result to be the beginnings of the historical process. As Kojève describes the concept: ". . . human, historical self-consciousness existence is only possible where there are, or—at least—where there have been, bloody fights" (41). In a complex chain of reasoning, Hegel connects the master/slave relationship that begins with desire for an Other and the

resulting fight to the development of bourgeois society—hence making desire the essential element in the birth and progress of history. *Wings of Desire* celebrates the desire that leads to Daniel's self-consciousness and humanity but deplors the suffering that desire has created in the wars it inspires.

Cassiel asks Daniel, "You really want . . .,"-- leaving the question unfinished; and Daniel responds, "Yes . . . I've been outside long enough . . . out of the world long enough." Later, he says, in lines reflecting Hegel's description of self-consciousness being the moving force of history, "I'll enter into the history of the world, even if only to hold an apple in my hand" (a pun on the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge) and continues with the variety of sensory pleasures he anticipates, still carrying the stone in his hand that serves as a trope of angelic lack of sensation. "I'll take her in my arms," he says, and dies as an angel into birth as a human, as the screen goes to color to signal his humanity. From a Hegelian perspective he has gone from consciousness to self-consciousness and has entered into the flow of history.

The final dialogue between Daniel and Marion when they eventually find each other in a club again brings together multiple texts interwoven into *Wings of Desire*, Hegel and angelology from the Bible and apocrypha. Daniel had come to Marion in a dream the preceding night, and she seems to know him and to be searching for him. They finally meet in a club bar with a rock concert playing

next door --Nick and the Bad Seed, apparently the same group from the recording in Marion's trailer, singing "From Her to Eternity". She knows him from her dream. "It's time to get serious," she says, and goes into a lengthy monologue on chance. "We two are more just two . . . You need me. You will need me. There is no greater story than ours, a man and a woman. There will be giants."

The reference to "giants" is a sly allusion to Genesis and the apocrypha, of course, and the giants that resulted from the union of angels and earth women. And it connects to the music from the record in Marion's trailer with its allusion to the Flood. But these two Others have come together through a desire that fits the Hegelian construct in a more general way. Hegel says little about sexual desire. But his discussion of the creation of humanity fits Damiel's metamorphosis. Beasts feel desire for a biological Other, as they do for food and breeding. But desire that leads to self-consciousness, or humanity in the context of the film, must be directed toward another desire. "Desire," Hegel writes, "and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other."²⁷ As Kojève describes this concept: "Desire is human—or, more correctly 'humanizing,' 'anthropogenetic'—only provided that it is directed toward another Desire and an other Desire. To be human, man must act not for the sake of subjugating a thing but for the sake of subjugating another Desire (for the thing)."²⁸

Hegel's concept is complex, and Kojève's reading of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, links the development of the master/slave relationship to the march of history and civilization, not romantic relationships between angels and humans. Yet clearly, it is the birth of desire in Daniel that leads to his self-consciousness and humanity. And the film shows a meeting of desires, with the word desire figuring prominently in the scene in Marian's trailer and in the meeting in the bar after Daniel's fall from angelic state. Desire is Daniel's motivating factor, and the general approach fits Hegel's construct. But the final scene of the film shows us Daniel holding a rope as Marion works out in her acrobatic routine, twisting and moving the rope for her: if not a master/slave relationship, the scene certainly portrays a master/servant situation. Remembering the previous night, he ponders in internal monologue, "I was in her and she was around me. She took me home, and I found my home." They created "an immortal common image" in their union, their consumption of each other. Then Wenders returns to the apocrypha's theme of angelic/human couplings, with Daniel pondering, "only the amazement of man and woman has made a human of me," and in a final shot, we see him writing, "I now know what no angel knows." He has achieved self-consciousness.

Wenders directed *In Weiter Ferne so Nah* (1993), American title *Faraway, So Close* (1993) as a sequel to *Wings of Desire*, but the ironies and plays on other texts are lost in the film, and these elements are replaced by a rather

commonplace religious message. A different team produced the script for *So Far Away, So Near*. Wenders is listed in the script credits for both films, but Peter Handke, credited in *Wings of Desire* as co-author, is replaced in the sequel by Ulrich Zieger and Richard Reitinger. Apparently the new script-writing team had a quite different take on the material. *City of Angels*, a Hollywood version of *Wings of Desire*, sacrifices the literary qualities of the Wenders and Handke film and turns it into a weepy, mall- style date movie.

What, then, are we to make of Wenders' interweaving of these two quite different texts: the concepts of desire and the Other as they come to us from Hegel and Hebrew myth in *Wings of Desire* and the distinct change in tone in *Faraway, So Close*? In an interview, Wenders defended the more literal approach in the sequel and its lack of irony: "Everybody wants to stay out of things. Today, films are evaluated exclusively by their entertainment value, and it bothered many people that *Faraway, So Close* does indeed have a message, especially if they saw it as a Christian Message."²⁹ Perhaps Wenders felt *Faraway, So Close* was a necessary parallel to the earlier film.

But most viewers will find that the complexity and irony of *Wings of Desire* make it more satisfying . Wenders' poetic directorial style and Handke's writing transform the ancient story of love between angel and human into a work of art that is enriched by the irony implicit in the collision and interaction of texts.

From a cultural perspective, Wenders shows us how far we have come from the angry God of the Hebrew and early Christian tradition. Daniel's existential choice and rejection of authority along with the adaptation of a favorite contemporary critical concept bring a distinctly post-modern flavor to this tale that is absent in the sequel.

Wings of Desire intersects with many other texts. In "Air and Angels," for instance, John Donne uses angelic non physical essence and insubstantiality as a foil for his discussion of physical and spiritual attraction and a satiric commentary on feminine love :

But since my soule, whose child love is,
Takes limmes of flesh, and else could nothing do,
More subtle than the parent is,
Love must not be, but take a body too.

And so it goes in *Wings of Desire*. Donne's portrayal of angels and desire reflects similar irony to that of Wenders and Handke in their tale of angelic purity on the one hand and of desire's relationship to that purity on the other.

¹ Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Tori Moi. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. p. 111.

² Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader*. Ed. Tori Moi. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. p. xv.

³ Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: a Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 66.

⁴ Plato. *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. Vol. 1. New York: Random House, 1937. 1: 251ff.

⁵ Plato. *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. Benjamin Jowett. Vol. 1. New York: Random House, 1937. p. 158.

⁶ *Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha, The: Early Discourses, the Dhammapada, and Later Basic Writings*. Trans. E. A. Burtt. New York: Mentor, 1991. p. 30.

⁷ Mark 8:23.

⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 730.

⁹ We also have a Slavonic (written in the first century a.d.) and Jewish (composed in the fifth or sixth century a.d.) Apocalypse of Enoch.

¹⁰ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p.19.

¹¹ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 21.

¹² Daniel refers to Jacob's dream ("Genesis," 33, 24-29) in which he wrestles with an angel, or perhaps God. The allusion to "tents in the desert" may be to the angels who call upon Lot in "Genesis," Chapter 19, though the Pentateuch abounds with angelic visitations. The reference to fishing might be to "Matthew," 4, 19: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men," but the fish is a pervasive symbol in Christianity.

¹³ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 105.

¹⁴ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 784.

¹⁵ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 109.

¹⁶ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 39.

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- ¹⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 58.
- ¹⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 37.
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- ²⁰ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 39.
- ²¹ Hegel, G. W. F. *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956. p. 115.
- ²² Hegel, G. W. F. *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956. p. 471.
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- ²⁴ Hegel, G. W. F. *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956. p. 30.
- ²⁵ Hegel, G. W. F. *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956. p. 31.
- ²⁶ Later, Falk tries to interest Cassiel in the joys of sensation and offers a hand, but Cassiel ignores the offer. ZXC
- ²⁷ Later, Falk tries to interest Cassiel in the joys of sensation and offers a hand, but Cassiel ignores the offer. ZXC
- ²⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. p. 40.
- ²⁹ "Excerpts from Interviews with Wenders." *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: Image, Narrative, and the Post Modern Condition*. Ed. Roger Cook and Gerdd Gemüden. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997. p. 81.

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