

# Transcript: The Double Take

*Animal vegetable mineral: a podcast to think with and about documentary films.  
The double take.*

**ST:** Welcome. In this episode we're discussing two different films on exactly the same topic.

**AL:** I'm Alisa Lebow, Professor of Media Studies at the University of Sussex.

**ST:** And I'm Samuël Topiary based in Oakland, CA, and I lecture at UC Santa Cruz and the California College of the Arts.

**ST:** Today we're going to talk about these two volcano films that came out in 2022: *The Fire of Love*, directed by Sara Dosa, and *The Fire Within* by Werner Herzog.

**AL:** These two films about the exact same people...

*The Fire Within: This film is in memory of Katya and Maurice Krafft.  
Volcanologists from the Alsace Region in France.*

**ST:** ...with some of the exact same footage, literally drawing from the same archive. And my sense, from when we talked before, was that you and I had very different takes or preferences about the two. I loved *Fire of Love*, Sara Dosa's film. And I think you actually preferred Herzog's version *The Fire Within*.

**AL:** Well, I hate to be that person who would prefer Herzog over anything. And, Herzog, to me, is, you know, like an overblown Boy Scout. He's always looking for the next great adventure, and he, you know, whispers into his microphone. He's like the modern day Flaherty, you know, man against nature and the extremes of human possibility. And it's always human possibility, human extreme, that he's absolutely taken with.

**ST:** I would say it's male, male extremes. The male in the nature.

**AL:** Absolutely. So to be the person who says they prefer Herzog's film is almost an impossible position for me to occupy. Um, I think also I watched one after the other. And the first one I watched was the first to come out, which is *The Fire of Love*. And I noticed, you know, what was it? National Geographic sponsoring it. And I noticed the love story, and I noticed the animation:

*Fire of Love: The truth. The fragments. The questions.*

[ 2:48 ]

**AL:** I was like, wow, OK, that's a bit corny for this material. Why are we trying to imagine their love story? I don't really care about their love story. And the footage is sooo compelling. I was already asking myself questions about the film making, right, so that was where I was already inclined. And then I watched Herzog's film, who, basically says, this is not a film about their relationship, this is about their filmmaking. You know, it's more of an essay film than a traditional documentary. He doesn't interview anyone. It's kind of his musings on this material. That's a little bit the annoying part. But, on the other hand, you know, we're looking at the material as material. What were they doing? How did they frame it? How close were they? How is that even possible? How do they develop as, you know, as filmmakers, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So, to me, he was asking all the questions I was already asking of the footage when I watched the first film. Is that a preference? Maybe.

[3:48]

**ST:** So, I was very struck in the Herzog film, which starts with the disaster, with the fact that they're gonna die. And so, his whole, the whole structure of his film is around the fact that the volcano does them in, in this very dramatic way. Whereas, Dosa's film starts in the snow, in a place that's about the elements, the extremity of the elements and the incongruity of the two humans stuck in the snow going to see this fire. And, also I love the aesthetics of the animation. She prioritizes telling the story of their love of the volcano, of volcanology.

*Fire of Love: Katia and Maurice begin to learn the secrets of the planet that few others know.*

[ 5:50 ]

**ST:** I love how much she respects the process of learning, so she uses the animation to bring the way that they learned, which was through books and through illustrations, and then, through their own experiences. Herzog seemed to me to be obsessed with critiquing them as media makers, and specifically, he was very focused on Maurice, as a filmmaker. I really felt like Herzog was kind of staging a competition with Maurice Krafft as filmmaker. He belittles them like they're eating bread in the picnic... Whereas, I think, Sarah Dosa is really interested in them as a couple and the way that they compliment each other. That they're different; the way they contribute differently to the project. But, then, also that they are in this love triangle with the volcano that is completely indifferent to them. And personally that speaks to me.

[ 5:50 ]

**AL:** Alright, so, if the love triangle is, somehow, kind of a structural model for the Dosa film, Herzog has the same model, but, it is he who is the 3rd, right? Now, of course, this is not what I appreciate about his film. But, it is what he does in, you

know, most of his films, right? I mean, he even says, you know, oh, how I wish I was their companion on these journeys. This is the desire that is imposed on this material.

[ 6:18 ]

*The Fire Within: The pyoclastic flow comes within about 100 feet of the camera, but Maurice does not flee. He calmly keeps it in frame until he runs out of film. And Katia, who took this picture, doesn't flee either.*

**AL:** I don't think he belittles them in the long run. I think he's in absolute awe. It's a requiem. The music, the, you know, the minutes that go by where we're really just immersed in the footage. Um, you know, Dosa's structure can't afford that because she's in a much more traditional storytelling mode.

[ 7:00 ]

**ST:** Hmm, traditional, I'm not sure about that. Well, she forecasts that they are gonna die. She forecasts their end, but it's not the engine of the film. It's part of the, the way that the story unfolds, but you don't learn that first. You come into this landscape and all the nuances of it, and then you learn that sort of halfway through the film.

**AL:** Well, OK.

**ST:** She's much more interested in the dynamics of the relationship. She uses their own words, their own description of themselves. So, to me it's a much more respectful portrait of these two people and their work.

*Fire of Love: With just enough grant money and a donated car, Katia and Maurice go seek Iceland's volcanoes with their friend, Roland. Katia is a geochemist, Maurice—the geologist. Alone, they could only dream of volcanoes. Together they can reach them. <sound of car stalling>*

[ 8:00 ]

**ST:** I was quite struck by the way that the *Fire of Love* is a very positive film. So, even for a film that's about two people dying, I think *Fire of Love* is a kind of a metaphor about a mortality that corresponds with our relationship with climate change. Which is to say, a kind of human acceptance of the large forces of nature and the world that are way more powerful than we humans. And, a kind of beautiful, poetic acceptance of, and curiosity about, that form of sublime power that nature has over humans. Which strikes me as a kind of a Nat Geo theme.

[ 8:41 ]

**AL:** We'll see, yeah, that might even be part of what bothers me about. Because, there's a romanticism to both of the films. You know, Herzog thinks his grizzly man went too far and he thinks these people went too far, right? But, he is also absolutely

taken with their passion, for these forces. You know, the sublime is Herzog's thing, right? And, so both films really go for that. And to me, I consider this quite separate from climate crisis, right. Volcanoes have shaped the nature of this earth. Period. But, like humans, have interrupted the process of these changes, right, and have catalysed some complete disaster. Very, very different, and, literally, in elemental order. So for me, I can't really have an equivalence that I'm comfortable with, and I'm certainly not about to have some romance with embracing the disasters that we've actually created.

[ 9:40 ]

**ST:** I think, what I mean more is that, meeting the immense power of the force of the earth with such curiosity and acceptance, to me, was what kind of stands as a counterpoint to all the, sort of, like, apocalyptic way that many climate change media talk about human relationship to Earth. I think, that's what I'm talking about. It's an amazing cinematic experience. The animation is so beautiful and her attention to, to celebrating all the work that Katia did, as compared with Maurice, and the way that she really stages a dialogue between the moving image and the still image...

**AL:** Absolutely.

**ST:** ...I was very moved by that. And so much of her film is really surprising and life affirming. And, I just want to say that, yeah, I can see what you're saying about the romanticness being a little bit cheesy, but, I also think it's not self-evident that you would get such a life affirming film in a story about two people who perished.

[ 10:45 ]

**AL:** Isn't it though? I mean, if we think of, you know, there's, of course, tragedy is part of the drama. And, in fact, that's another thing, God, I really hate to be this person, but that's something I appreciated about Herzog, is that he didn't hold off the tragedy until, you know, until you've already fallen in love with these people. Like, he let all of that go. Dosa chose a traditional structure for that, actually. Because, you need to build the characters and develop a relationship with them and understand something more about them before you're prepared to lose them. Whereas, you know, Herzog does the Hitchcock *Psycho* move within the first five minutes, you already know they're dead. OK, moving right along, let's look at the footage. So, you know, I appreciate that... God, I really can't believe I'm making an argument for Herzog's film. I would really like to see a third film. And, then by the time we get to a third and forth and fifth film, it becomes cliché. So, that is another danger of the archive, is that it doesn't take very many iterations before... it's done. That's what I've noticed, right? Haven't I seen this before, is really what people start to say. And they say it very, very quickly. So, the archive has an infinite iterability on one level and a very limited one on another.

[ 12:00 ]

**ST:** Speaking of the archive, this is a great transition to introducing our guest, Toby Ashworth. Toby is a PhD at Cambridge University and his research is focused on geology and documentary.

[ 12:21 ]

**ST:** Toby, welcome to Animal-Vegetable-Mineral.

**TA:** It was interesting to hear that you and Alisa had quite different views about the two films. I'm not sure I've settled on which of the films I prefer, yet. It's an interesting phenomenon, I think, the two films, coming together.

**ST:** Yes. And, I've been interested in how, in your research, you've talked about the relationship of the volcanic to the concept of archive, with these cycles of dormancy and eruption. And, you liken these two films, which are emerging at nearly the same time, to be like this sudden eruption of the Krafft archive. And, in fact, some of what you focus on are other periods when this archive was previously active, and then, the period of dormancy which took hold up until this new moment, in 2022 of eruption.

[ 13:12 ]

**TA:** So, I don't want to force the metaphor, the comparison, too much. But, I've been interested in thinking about how the archival functions in a way that is similar to the volcanic. This manifestation of forces within the earth that we are generally not party to. You know, the constant movement of melted rock under the surface. And, sudden eruptions is this kind of sudden manifestation of those forces in a way that we can never normally perceive—these timescales. I think that that is part of the interest in volcanoes which is emerging is, is how they can tell us something about geological timescales, as we become increasingly aware of our position within. And so, thinking about how volcanism is characterized by return, as this feeling of a repetition of the past. And I thought this was a really interesting way to think about the archival, and particularly, in terms of film. It feels like there are these two films that have kind of appeared from nowhere—these new uses of this archival footage. But, in fact, they're not the first films at all. I mean, the one that, most particularly, I think, deserves to be thought about in relation to these films is a film from 1995, by a French director called Maryse Bergonzat, which is called *Maurice et Katia Krafft: Au Rythme de la Terre*; roughly translated, *Maurice and Katia Krafft: At The Rhythm of the Earth*. It's not really available easily. You can find it on the Internet Archive in fragments. You can watch the whole thing, but you've got to, sort of, click around to to get it in the right order. It's it's an interesting watch, having seen *Fire of Love* and *The Fire Within* first, because many of the reflections, particularly that are made in

Dosa's film, are already made in that film. So, you you do get the feeling of having watched this film before. And, I wonder what the relationship of remembering these documentaries is because this 1995 film won quite a few awards at European Film Festivals. And yet, it seems to have kind of faded from view and been forgotten, like volcanic latency.

[ 15:05 ]

**TA:** Dosa's film has an originality, which, I think is, from the beginning, it's acknowledging how how invested it is within an archivalness. You know, it begins with these credits saying, like, taken from the deep archives of the Kraffts. It's casting volcanoes as cast members. It's borrowing this visual language of, like, The New Wave, but, also these kind of hero worship movies. So, I think it has its own interest and originality, but I don't think that it's the approach to them as a couple, I don't think is that original. Because, Bergonzat's film starts by addressing the fact that Maurice and Katia are sort of doing this endeavour together. But it doesn't romanticize it in the same way that Dosa's film does. Maybe Dosa's film slightly pushes too far into idealising their relationship, and you know, she reconstructs their possible meeting and we see, like, the coffee cup and all these different things.

*Fire of Love: Maurice would return to Stromboli at age 19, feeling at once ecstasy and loneliness. Katia understands this loneliness. It is also hers.*

[ 16:12 ]

**TA:** We get the impression of imperfection in the relationship, of conflict, slightly, of kind of, Katia being too reticent, Maurice being too daring, and the way that their relationship is already a negotiation between, kind of, difficult questions. What's interesting about it, is that Dosa's film tells you about death, kind of after a little bit of engagement with them. Herzog begins with death. And, this film, you don't know they're going to die until we've cycled through all the dates and we get to 1991. It's quite sensitive in the way it approaches the death because it totally refuses to dramatize it. So, we begin with the same phone call that you hear in Herzog's film saying, "We've heard about disruption in Japan, Unzen. It sounds really interesting..." and, it doesn't dwell, really. It's like, they got permission, from the Japanese authorities to set up their post, it shows the pyroclastic flow, it shows that shot of the person running away from the camera, and then it says, "And they died." And so, it's kind of shockingly undramatic, of something which is obviously quite dramatic. And then it says, "two weeks later there was an eruption in Pinatubo, in the Philippines. 300 people died, but 300,000 people were evacuated because of having watched a film. And that was the film of Maurice Krafft." And then the final line, this is just kind of on black screen text. and the final line is "No one filmed the Pinatubo eruption." And I love that. I think that's such a wonderful way to to end it. But, otherwise it has some quite interesting reflections that maybe just didn't make it into

these two more recent films. Like the fact that Maurice was himself a collector of archival footage of volcanoes. The voice-over speculates— it's got this kind of quite classical French male voice over throughout that is neither as dramatic as Herzog, nor as breathy as Miranda July—but it speculates that the images that he was making himself were actually just appendices to his kind of unfinished collection that he had. He didn't really have this desire to become a great filmmaker like Herzog speculates. In fact, he was part of this legacy of filmmakers.

**ST:** Hmmm. Fascinating.

[ 18:06 ]

**ST:** One thing I loved in your paper is your idea about film being an ally of volcanology. Can you talk to us about how you think of film as an ally of volcanology?

**TA:** I think I say it's always been an ally because it's, it's such a spectacular manifestation of the earth. You can't get away from its visuality. And, there's a long history, particularly in France, of volcanologist filmmakers. And a particular one who comes to mind is a man called Harun Tazieff, who was sort of the generation before Maurice and Katia. And they actually knew each other. They worked together briefly and there's kind of different accounts. There's an account from Maurice's brother saying that this man Harun was too egocentric and only saw Maurice and Katia as people to carry his bags. And so, they didn't get on and they ended up not working together. And then other accounts suggest that they did work together, briefly. I think Maurice's brother says Tazieff wanted all the light on him. Which, I guess, is interesting to think about, now that all the light is on Maurice and Katia. Tazieff is like a real character, and there's a lot of odd things that, the more you look into Tazieff, things emerge. So, the kind of odd helmets that the Kraffts wear, for example, which I don't really have a scientific value, as far as I can tell, originate with Tazieff. Tazieff was the public Volcano filmmaker way before the Kraffts were. He was responsible for bringing very similar amazing footage. He was a pioneer of early feature length documentary in the late '50s. And, it feels like, someone like Harun Tazieff, for example, his footage is, for various reasons, has been consigned to a form of extinction. Whereas, with the Kraffts, we're in a really active volcano.

*The Fire Within: Out of 29,000 inhabitants, over 20,000 of them perished.*

[ 19:51 ]

**TA:** There's an interesting history there about recording volcanoes in preparation for their eruption. And, that's something that comes through in both Herzog's and Dosa's films, which is this duty. Dosa's and Hertzog's films concentrate on the eruption in Colombia where thousands of people died because of lack of warnings from the government. And so, that interplay across generations of volcano filmmakers is really

interesting. I think, only Herzog really engages with the idea that the Kraffts might have been responsible for the deaths of the people who died with them in Japan—their own foolhardiness resulted in journalists dying. And Herzog really dwells on that. He kind of inspects the image and he says, you know, “they have no idea of what is to come. They're playing with dogs, they're having snacks, they're laughing, and soon they'll be dead.”

*The Fire Within: Minutes away from the catastrophe, Mount Unzen has released a massive pyroclastic flow. We have the radio contact of our Japanese cameraman with his face. They order him to evacuate at once. He's afraid, but still takes a time to wipe his lens. Only now he flees, and while he flees, he still keeps filming... In the only moments later, the end. Mount Unzen explodes. A gigantic pyroclastic flow comes rushing down. No one in its path will survive.*

[ 22:11 ]

**TA:** He plays with the fact that in everything to do with volcanoes, there's an interplay of chance, in that we can't control when the volcano is going to erupt. But also, there's a responsibility of making correct decisions in terms of safety, which the Kraffts, kind of famously, are unconcerned about their own safety.

**ST:** Hmm. Yeah, right.

**TA:** And then, also thinking about the structure of a film as this, this site in which things can emerge. You can have a really tightly edited film, but you can have single shots that that feel like they're erupting from them and kind of throwing this editing aside. So, I was thinking about this particular shot, which both Dosa and Herzog attend to quite closely, which is this shot of, of Katia standing in front of this, kind of, impossibly huge upwards flow of lava. I think it's in Iceland. And the shot, really... there's so many things about it which make it feel impossible. And Dosa surrounds it with sound of, of, kind of just this deep rumble. Although, it's silent like all of the footage. But, the shot feels impossible and it feels like Katia is about to die. It feels like we're at the closest we've been to seeing this kind of complete collapse of, of this incommensurate difference between these two entities. And in Dosa's film everything falls away in this shot. There's no twee-ness in that moment. It comes between two musical sections, where the first section is this, this French song by the singer Dalidawhich is about, kind of, being made to love something; your eyes being made to contemplate the spectacle of the lover.

*Fire of Love: Je ne savais, pourquoi je vivais..*

[ 23:50 ]

**TA:** It's, it's kind of a long sequence of imagery. And, then we go to these shots that Herzog also concentrates on, from Iceland, where we see lava falling into the sea.

And it's like, land is forming in front of our eyes. It's amazing. And, there's underwater footage. When we go underwater, it starts to sound as if the music is underwater, which I think is a really funny detail. But then, the music fades away, and then we get this shot of, like, power, of incommensurability, of danger. I mean, it is the most dangerous situation that we see.

[ 24:20 ]

**TA:** And, then it's followed by, when we see Katia finally walking up hill, towards us, we realize that the focal length has made it seem closer than it actually is. And in fact, she's quite far from this erupting crater. But, it feels like an eruption to me, of the reality of the dangers that they were facing, and also, of the scale that is so huge. And, I think it's, it's wonderful in its eruption. And then in Herzog's film, he suggests that there's an unmade film about creation in the making, using the same shots of lava falling into the sea. When we're witnessing new land being created, he's thinking about this latent film that needs to be allowed to erupt. So, there's two parallel processes that are part of the same volcanic metaphor there.

**ST:** Oh, I love that. Yeah. And thinking about the volcanic temporalities, I wonder if it's a red or a grey type.

**TA:** It's interesting to think about this relationship to history of ways the past can emerge in a way that's kind of, anodyne, interesting, beautiful, and can form something new, like, you know, something lying on top of the old. Or, this kind of explosive surprise—extremely destructive, extremely violent, processes of historical return, where there's an effacement of everything of the status quo; there's an effacement of how things used to be.

[ 25:46 ]

**ST:** You know, Alisa, one thing that you and I both had an issue with was the use of Miranda July as the narrator in Sara Dosa's film.

*Fire of Love: In a cold world, although watches started to freeze. The sun came and went between blizzards and gusts, which erased all bearings. In this world lived a fire and in this fire, two lovers found a home.*

**ST:** I get why Dosa would have cast her as the voice, but her particular version of twee I found to be a little bit, um, overdetermined.

**AL:** Well, why did you choose her? I think it was such a poor choice, that I don't get it. Like, it doesn't make sense to me. She, it's as if, every time Miranda July speaks, you know Miranda July is speaking. It takes you out of that film. I mean, not that you don't know Herzog is speaking; of course you do. But, she doesn't have... Like, he declares his love for them, basically; he declares his relationship to this. And, you understand, whether or not, you know, it's a little bit too much of his desire is another

question. But, here July is, she's a hired hand. It doesn't fit; doesn't make sense to me.

**ST:** Hmmm. To me, the casting of Miranda July, as a concept makes sense. Because I think she has a kind of persona—this persona of wonder and of magical fascination with the world and with the environment. But, I, I agree. I think that it's, it's conceptual, more than it is a felt relationship to the material.

[ 27:27 ]

**TA:** I actually came into this not knowing anything about Miranda July. I don't think she's as famous in the UK, maybe. So, I didn't know who she was until after I'd watched the film. I didn't actually know if that was Sarah Dosa talking or not, for example. And then, having read a bit more about Miranda July, I've read in interviews with Dosa, they actually wrote quite a long description of who they wanted the narrator to be. And, so they were sort of thinking about the narrator as this kind of timeless character. They wanted that the narrator to have what Dosa called the deadpan curiosity, where we can hear a curiosity in the narrator, but they're not declarative in a way that maybe Herzog is. There's a speculation to their curiosity. But, specifically that they didn't want the voice-over to cause questions in the viewer about the voice-over. And then Miranda July came along. And Dosa describes how she sort of brought so much beyond what, what they thought about that. Like, no one else could have possibly done it. I don't think I felt the same kind of immediate dislike of it's twee-ness, because I don't, I don't really find it that twee. But, maybe I'm just not that bothered by twee-ness. I'm not sure. I mean, as a British viewer, it was deeply Californian to me, which is an interesting way to approach images which have previously been mediated by very European approaches. I mean, Dosa's film, she does include these actors reading Maurice and Katia in French. So, she's interested in the Frenchness. I think there is something quite French about Maurice and Katia and their position within a media landscape as this kind of public scientist intellectual communicator, which I think France has a quite long history of. So, July's voice-over for me, it's not so invasive.

**ST:** Hmmm. She stands in as this, kind of, like, star for a film by a filmmaker who doesn't have a very well known track record. As opposed to Herzog, who's a completely well-known character. And, I found it actually quite interesting, the parallel. Both films are using this very strong, over-determined voice and I would have preferred less of the voice in both films.

[ 29:31 ]

**AL:** I have to agree. That's what I'm saying. I'd like to watch both of the films without the voice-over. Although Herzog's musical choices, although classic Herzog, there's nothing new under the sun of this 80 year old filmmaker; fair enough. He's got his

style. But, the music was powerful and well considered in relation to the material. So, I would really like to just take out the voice. Now, I say all that after having watched two films with a lot of narration. What would that material look like without it? It takes us back to the archive, right? Back to the material that they're both drawing on. And their footage, I mean, Herzog says, I don't know how many times, "you know, this has never been filmed before. La, la, la, la, la..." Right? But it is extraordinary. It's so powerful. You know, it's such fantastic footage that in the archives infinite possibilities, I'm wondering, what else there is besides a love story, or a requiem, right? I mean, to me, I would love to see the footage stand on its own. Or see somebody do something with it that isn't trying to squeeze it into a certain type of narrative, because it is just, breathtakingly powerful. It's so much bigger than we are. It's so, you cannot deny the power of these visuals.

[ 30:56 ]

**AL:** So, there's also this very strange behind the scenes competition, which, interestingly Herzog seems to have lost. Which, that is totally unexpected. Such a seasoned filmmaker would step in to a territory when he knows a film is already being made. That's a weird move, an, you know, the documentary circles, at least at a certain level, certainly the level Herzog is operating on, are small. And he would know who was pitching. He would know what projects were around, people would tell him. I have zero doubt, that he knew about this film, and that he was going to make, you know, the film he thought needed to be made. So I think there is something very strange going on in relation to these two.

[ 31:46 ]

**ST:** My understanding was that this film was like the surprise hit at Sundance and that Nat Geo paid the most for any documentary ever for it. And then Herzog's film is on like History Channel Plus, or something. Right? So, you know, the sort of back story of it I think is quite interesting—that a second time female filmmaker from the Bay Area would make such a big hit. And, you know, that's also like a Sundance thing, right? That somebody plucks out the little known person and makes a giant buy, and they make a career. So, I wonder if there wasn't the specter of Herzog's film to come, but, did it spur on the big buy, and the big move to elevate this film?

[ 32:35 ]

**AL:** That would be unusual. So, I guess I have a question, also, in terms of these films. Are they competing, which is the logical way of thinking about it, in a way. But, are they also complementary, possibly? Or, is one in the shadow of the other? I'm trying to understand how to see them in a relation that's not just, let's say, a commercial competition or some macho guy's unnecessary attempt at his own, you know, to demonstrate his own mastery against this, you know, sophomore

filmmaker? What none of that is very attractive or very nice. But like, here they are. They live in the world, both of them. Literally, simultaneously released within months of one another, a lot of the same material. Who's in whose shadow, if at all? How do we see them? How do we think about teaching them for example?

[ 33:27 ]

**ST:** That's a great question. And, I think because I saw the Herzog film quite a few months after I had seen the Dosa film, I did have those moments of, like, oh, I've seen this footage before. And then I had also had those moments of, oh, that's a new... I haven't seen that one. So, there's an interesting relationship that gets set up when you've, like, already seen footage that then gets replayed, but in a different context in the second film. I wonder what it would be like if you saw the Herzog film first and then saw the Dosa film. What do you think about that, Toby?

[ 33:56 ]

**TA:** I have been frustrated by the discussion off the two films. If you google *Fire of Love*, *Fire Within* for example, you get quite a lot of these YouTube essay films. But, there's one particular which I find the title really frustrating, which is, "what happens when two directors make the same film, but one of them is Werner Herzog." It starts from this baseline assumption that, like, it's going to be better because of, because of who that is. And, I think this is, like, deeply gendered this, you know, something about like this authoritative German male voice versus Miranda July. But, I think she brings out more interesting comments about the film, really. I guess, the thing about Miranda July is, well, is that we can feel wonder, and awe in her voice-over. Whereas I think, Herzog, he kind of exports wonder. He, he, I don't know that he lets himself feel it, or he doesn't let himself be heard to feel it. But, he makes you feel it. He's telling you to feel it. Whereas, I think with watching Dosa's film, we share the wonder and I think that's more joyful.

[ 35:00 ]

**ST:** I had had such a sense of discovery and excitement and enthusiasm about the Dosa film when I first saw it, having no idea that there was a second one. So, for me, the Herzog film was like this interloper, into this territory that I had already had so much love for. So, I couldn't help but feel my hackles were already up.

**AL:** Well, fair enough. I mean, I have my own antipathy that would bring my hackles up, anyway. And so, it was despite myself, as I'm watching it... "Shit, this is a better film," was a moment. Or, this is the film I needed more. And I can still imagine yet another film that I could need more than either of them. But, like if I had to compare them, I wanted to think about their imagemaking. And, you're absolutely right. He sidelines Katia so quickly and she's just the mom. She's just the cautionary, you know, "Oh, don't go so close to the..." you know, like she is not that. And, I only know

this from the Dosa film, right? I know that that character had so much more to contribute and that the two of them could not possibly have come to anywhere near the study or the understanding of volcanoes without the other. I understood this from her film.

*Fire of Love: Katia, a rebel, who was sent to school for unruly girls, convinces her parents to take her to Italy's volcanos.*

[ 36:39 ]

**TA:** I think, you're going to be blown away by the footage, because the footage is essentially, wonderful and, as Herzog says, never been seen before. And, I'm really intrigued by this, kind of, speculation, I've heard, that there's going to be a fiction film about them.

**ST:** But, also how can fiction do better than this footage?

**TA:** Right? Surely they won't, they're not going to computer generate this footage, they have to use the archival. So then, what do they really doing? I mean Dosa's film has already got actors speaking their words. It's already got, like, for me, what is the limit point of how much fiction you can add while claiming to be making a documentary that is rooted fully in historical records. And so, I don't know what this fiction film is going to look like. I'm, I'm intrigued. I don't know that I'll want to watch it.

[ 37:35 ]

**AL:** Neither film shows us the films they made. Because, apparently he was going around, probably raising money, Maurice with the films. What are their films? Let's watch those.

**ST:** Ha ha ha ha. Yah, interesting. I got the feeling that their footage was not for a particular film, but was as part of their research.

**AL:** It was. But they say, in the Dosa film, that part of what he was doing was taking films around that they made, and he's showing them and doing talk around the films. So, I was like, I want to see that. I'd like to see the books. She edited several books of her photographs. So, that's the kind of thing that I'd like to see next, right? I mean, their work without all of this other desire imposed.

[ 38:20 ]

**ST:** Mmm, I mean, that's the great thing about films, too, right? It's that you get introduced to a world that exists beyond the film. And, I think it's amazing that these two films could both, come from and also point to, what else might be out there.

**ST:** Well, I love talking about this with both of you. So, thank you so much.

**TA:** Thank you. It's been great.

**ST:** It's amazing that we can talk about two films that came out in the same year, using the same archival material, about the same people and it's even more amazing to have found someone writing exactly on this subject who knows so much about the who's in the civil archival material? About the scene. And. To have found someone writing exactly on this subject, who knows so much of the history of film and volcanos. So, I'm so glad that we had a chance to talk with Toby.

**AL:** I like what Toby saying about the ways the films erupted at the same time, volcano-like. And he makes the analogy between volcanoes and the archive that. That the archive goes into this period of dormancy and can just explode like this, making two incredible films. You mentioned something about Toby's paper when you're talking to him. What was?

**ST:** So, I was referring to the paper that Toby wrote and presented at Visible Evidence in Udine. He has not published this work yet, but this material will be a chapter in his dissertation on geology and documentary moving images. And, if you're interested in his work, Toby recently published a paper on another volcano film in the journal *Studies in World Cinema* that won an award from BAFTSS and so we will link to that paper and bio in the show notes on our website, which is [reframe.sussex.ac.uk/avm1](http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/avm1).

**AL:** Animal Vegetable Mineral is produced by Samuel Topiary Landberg, myself, Alisa Lebow, and Ritika Kaushik. This episode was edited by Topiary. The sound mix was done by Nick Scortz, and AVM is published by Reframe University of Sussex. Our website URL is [reframe.sussex.ac.uk/avm1](http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/avm1).

**ST:** Thanks so much for listening to this episode of *Animal Vegetable Mineral*. Bye for now.