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«Damals im Kino ...»

Re-reading Peter Handke's Cinephilia

Dem war einmal vor allen Dingen dem Herzen am nächsten ein Ding, das ‹Kino› hieß.

– Peter Handke, Rede, *Viennale*, 1992

From his earliest literary and critical responses to cinema in the early 1960s to the publication of his novel *Der Bildverlust oder Durch die Sierra de Gredos* in 2002, Peter Handke's career traces the origins and intensification of what, in the face of the *Bilderflut* of the digital era, has become a radical break in the intergenerational transmission of cinephilia. Handke's reflections on his experience of cinematic images unfold in the field of tension that exists between the redemptive and self-transformative power of moving images experienced as singularities on the one hand, and on the other, the progressive, industrially organised destruction of the potential for such experiences through the mass dissemination of analogue and digital televisual images. In addition to Handke's own expressive writings and discursive statements concerning the value and necessity of cinemas and cinematic images as sites of potentially transformative events, among other sources, this essay draws on Christian Keathley's extensive study of the history and practices of cinephilia,¹ on Francesco Casetti's essay «Back to the Motherland: the film theatre in the postmodern age»,² and Bernard Stiegler's recent philosophical reflections on memory and cultural transmission in analogue and digital technoculture in the third volume of *Technics and Time* and in the first two volumes of *Disbelief and Discredit*.³

In the discussion of Handke's approach to cinematic images which follows, I define cinephilia as a manifestation of the subjective and collective desire for sensuous experience and knowledge of the self, including, as Keathley expresses it, the «sensuous experience of materiality in time».⁴ *Cinephiliac moments*⁵ experienced

1 Christian Keathley: *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2006.

2 Francesco Casetti: Back to the Motherland: the film theatre in the postmodern age. In: *Screen*, 2011, Vol. 52(1), pp. 1–12.

3 Bernard Stiegler: *Technics and Time 3: Cinematic Time and the Question of Malaise*. Stanford 2011.
- *The Decadence of Industrial Democracies: Disbelief and Discredit, Volume 1*. Cambridge, UK/Malden, MA, 2011.

- *Uncontrollable Societies of Disaffected Individuals: Disbelief and Discredit, Volume 2*. Cambridge, UK/Malden, MA, 2013.

4 Keathley, p. 53.

5 Keathley's analysis of the cinephiliac moment in terms of an eruptive figurative moment of subjective revelation draws on the thinking of Noel King, Paul Willemen, Roger Cardinal and Roland

by the spectator share some of the characteristic features of connoisseurship and fetishism but are also intimately connected to the quest for understanding of the self and others. Although they are inward and private, cinephilic moments arise as responses to films screened as public events within a social order. As experiences of perception and affect while attending the cinema, such moments are inward and private but their conceptual framing and their later recollection in verbal or written narrative accounts are both grounded in public discourse about cinema. Over the approximate half-century of cinephilia's history, we can observe the fluctuations of what Vilém Flusser terms the *text-image-dialectic* (Text-Bild-Dialektik),⁶ such that in any one period there may be a greater or lesser emphasis on the discursive analysis of images, but cinephilic moments in subjective experience are never entirely free of one or more forms of discourse about cinema.

Handke's early published registrations of cinephilia occur in the final decade of classical cinephilia in the immediate context of his engagement with the critical practices of the French *nouveau roman* and the French cinematic *nouvelle vague* as he follows and comments on the work of Robbe-Grillet, Godard, Straub and Huillet, and responds to the promotion of American auteurs by contributors to the *Cahiers du cinéma*. He is particularly struck by the films of John Ford. In the mid-1970s, he supports Godard in his break with Truffaut after the latter released what Handke regarded as a merely commercial product, L'HISTOIRE DE ADELE H. (1975). As a participant in Graz's avant-garde circle, the so-called 'Grazer Gruppe', the young Handke embodied a new sensibility: his concern was predominantly with the detection, analysis and exposure of the habitual gestures and conventions of established literary and film genres in the context of the explosion of televisual images into the living room. This critique of filmic and literary forms and techniques is accompanied by his own creation of new approaches to the language of narrative, drama and practical experiments in cinematic style.

Handke addresses the desire for what is lost, buried or subjugated by state and commercial apparatuses, as longing (Sehnsucht). The longing for cinematic images that through momentary forgetting release the subject from the banality of the commodified world, or that cut through the suffering of alienation to open the world again to the subject, is a constant theme in his work. In his early years as a student and emerging author, Handke became a passionate *Kinogeher*, much more so in fact than Binx Bolling, the protagonist of the *The Moviegoer* (1961) by the southern American novelist Walker Percy, which Handke early on discovered for himself and later translated into German for Suhrkamp (1980). Like his protagonist Bloch in his own early novel (and soon also Wenders' film), *Die Angst des Tormanns*

Barthes, among others, on the cinephile spectator's tendency to dwell recurrently on particular elements of moving or static images. See Keathley pp. 30–36.

⁶ Vilém Flusser: *Kommunikologie weiter denken: Die Bochumer Vorlesungen*. Frankfurt am Main, pp. 106–107.

beim *Elfmeter* (1970), Handke found both refuge and release in his regular afternoon visits to the cinema. In 1976, Handke observed of himself: «Er geht ins Kino, um sich den Stumpfsinn aus dem Gesicht zu treiben».⁷

As Keathley has noted, in the 1960s being for film and against television was the distinguishing mark of the cinephile.⁸ Later, in the context of the Balkan wars of the 1990s, Handke would apply similar techniques of unmasking to the habitual gestures in the construction of language and images in his savage critique of French and German newspaper and television journalistic commentaries on the course of the war and its politics. The storm of controversy unleashed by his statements and publications during and after the Balkan conflict was such that his earlier and later contributions to the debate about the role of images in the new visual regime and on their construction have since unfortunately tended to be marginalised or simply overlooked in much journalistic and academic discussion of his more recent work.

Handke's most explicit early critique of televisual images may also be read as a carefully orchestrated defence of the need for cinephile *jouissance* which he was convinced was now threatened with extinction. Early in 1970, he wrote the script for a television film DIE CHRONIK DER LAUFENDEN EREIGNISSE, a title he borrowed from a Soviet underground newspaper.⁹ By October of that year, he found himself under contract with WDR as the film's director. DIE CHRONIK DER LAUFENDEN EREIGNISSE was broadcast on 10 May 1971.¹⁰ For its full appreciation the film depended on an audience of cinephile and politically astute viewers. Handke based DIE CHRONIK on an ironic deconstruction of the TV detective film, loosely drawing on some of the plot and character details of Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Glass Key* (1930). His intention to construct the film as political allegory of life in 1969 in the increasingly technocratic society of the Federal Republic is relevant here in as far as the onset of the *Bilderflut* and the decline of small film theatres occurred in the context of generational disappointment, namely, the political and economic retreat from the hoped for social reforms of the late 1960s. The film's narrative and images refuse to cater for habitual television viewing expectations. Handke's sequencing of text and images disrupts the logical causality of the TV detective genre through a deliberate displacement, exaggeration and mismatching of dialogue and image. By breaking text and dialogue out of their usual context, he prompts his viewers to become aware of their own conventional viewing habits instead of lapsing into their accustomed passivity. Fans of film noir and detective fiction could readily enjoy

7 Peter Handke: *Das Gewicht der Welt. Ein Journal (November 1975 – März 1977)*. Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 192 (Taschenbuchausgabe).

8 Keathley, pp. 19f.

9 Lothar Struck provides a concise account of the aims and the production history of Handke's first film project. See: Lothar Struck: *Der Geruch der Filme: Peter Handke und das Kino*. Meißen 2013. p. 34–40.

10 Handke's filmscript was published by Suhrkamp in the same year. Peter Handke: *Die Chronik der laufenden Ereignisse*. Frankfurt am Main 1971.

the director's playful re-assemblage of narrative elements, gestures, film music and key figures while appreciating the allegorical commentary on the depressed state of the nation and Handke's foregrounding of the role of television in supporting the conservative turn in West Germany's political economy. Handke's key point is that televisual images in general fail to deliver and indeed undermine what cinema had, and perhaps still could, deliver: the pleasure and experiential richness of film images viewed in the darkness of film theatres. Instead, by 1969, for Handke televisual images were becoming a form of ideological and ontological oppression:

viel zu viele Bilder und Bilderfolgen, die mich ängstigten und erschreckten-, und weil sie sonst niemandem aufzufallen schienen, war es selbstverständlich, daß ich sie aus dem wie unendlichen Lauf der Bilder, die jedes Gefühl außer einer masochistischen Bilderlust einzuüben drohten, herausnehmen und durch Neubeschreibung gegenläufig machen wollte.¹¹

[...]

Die *Chronik der laufenden Ereignisse* wurde ... auch eine Allegorie von dem mythischen Kampf zwischen Kino- und Fernsehbildern, in dem am Schluß die Kinobilder von den Fernsehbildern verdrängt worden sind.¹²

Lothar Struck has noted that in the course of the following decade up to the early 1980s, 43,000 copies of Handke's filmscript of DIE CHRONIK DER LAUFENDEN ER-EIGNISSE were published by Suhrkamp, indicating the strong interest which the film and Handke's critique of commodified images generated.¹³ It was during this period that the dominance of television and the eclipse of cinephile culture were most acutely felt by his generation.

For Handke, moments of truth in the cinema and elsewhere, emerge from the perception of the subtlest of details of the cinematic image and the setting of the cinema itself. In the words of an early literary associate of Handke, the Graz author Gerhard Roth, for Handke «das Wahre ist das Feine».¹⁴ His accounts of cinephiliac moments are the result of accute observation. They encompass both the registration of on-screen events and the social setting of the cinema, its personnel and its milieux. To cite only a few brief examples from his early novels: In *Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied* (1972), Handke records the protagonist's experience of emotional release on viewing an embrace in John Ford's THE IRON HORSE (1934). As the final golden spike is driven into the track of the Pacific Railroad, a couple separated since childhood is reunited: «als [...] die beiden einander in die Arme fielen, fühlte ich diese Umarmung auch an mir und streckte mich unendlich beruhigt in mir selber aus: so sehr hatte der Körper danach verlangt, dass die beiden wieder

11 Handke 1971, p. 128.

12 Ibid, p. 137.

13 Struck, p. 35.

14 Notes to Interview by S. Ryan with Gerhard Roth. October 1980, Obergreith, Austria. Unpublished.

zusammenkämen.»¹⁵ Later, viewing Ford's YOUNG MR LINCOLN (1939) in St. Louis, he gains temporary release from an exaggerated self-consciousness which usually oppresses him: «In diesen Bildern aus der Vergangenheit, aus den Jugendjahren Abraham Lincolns, träumte ich von meiner Zukunft und träumte in den Gestalten des Films vorweg, denen ich noch begegnen würde».¹⁶ In the opening pages of *Die Angst des Tormanns vorm Elfmeter* (1970), Handke turns to incidental details in the setting of a cinema. His protagonist Bloch's attention is riveted by the perfect naturalness of the Kinokassiererin's response to the wordless gesture with which he placed his money on the box-office turntable. Later, she will become Bloch's unwitting victim. In his Paris journal, Handke notes on leaving a cinema: «Als wir aus dem Kino hinausgingen, saß da in der hintersten Ecke weggelehnt die Platzanweiserin und schlief mit offenem Mund, ein junges, blasses, sehr mageres Mädchen in einem Kostüm, von dem vor Beginn des Films noch eine Annonce bekanntgegeben hatte, aus welcher Boutique es stammte [...].»¹⁷

In a speech made at the opening of the Viennale in 1992, in which he reflects on his cinephile experiences of the 1960s, Handke asks: «Was für ein Ding war mir das Kino einmal?» The answers to this rhetorical question reveal the depths of his cinephilia:

das Kino eröffnete sich dem Zuschauer immer wieder als Ding der Wirklichkeit, der allerweitesten der Wirklichkeiten, und als einziges derartiges Ding, damals, in den sechziger Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts.

[...]

Jedes Kino verkörperte einen Ort, und einen wie herzhaften!, inmitten der Ortlosigkeit, oder der Verschlossenheit, oder Unzugänglichkeit, die einem, jedenfalls seinerzeit, aus den Straßen, Passagen und Kirchen ins Gesicht sprangen.

[...]

In einem stinknormalen, noch nicht spezialisierten Kino sah ich 1962 oder 1963 Michelangelo Antonionis *La Notte*, *Die Nacht*. Nach dem Film stand ich im Zentrum von Graz an einer nächtlichen Straßenbahnhaltestelle und erlebte die steirische Stadt in eine Weltstadt verwandelt, monumental und zugleich duftig. [...] Damals mit *La Notte* erfuhr ich zum ersten Mal, weit über alle die Selbstgefühle hinaus, so etwas wie ein Weltgefühl.¹⁸

A further characteristic of cinephilia evinced by Keathley is its flourishing under conditions which rendered its object, film, scarce or even rare. Handke affirms this rarity when he recalls in this opening address the small film theatres which enabled

15 Handke 1971, p. 100.

16 Peter Handke: *Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied*. Frankfurt am Main 1972, p. 135.

17 Handke 1977, p. 58.

18 Peter Handke: *Mündliches und Schriftliches, Zu Büchern, Bildern und Filmen*. Frankfurt am Main 2002, p. 12–14.

cinema to be experienced as «eine Einzigartigkeit, eine einzigartige Herrlichkeit. Ja, das Kino, der Film war, zumindest für mich, indem er mir einen anderen, einen zweiten, einen dritten, einen zusätzlichen Atem einhauchte, eine Seelenspeise.»¹⁹

By 1992, for Handke *Kino*, the originary cinema of European cinephiles, is already a thing of the past. He looks back on it as a culture that blossomed for four or perhaps five decades from the 1920s to the early 1970s, a culture that found its remaining supporters largely in his generation.²⁰ After the era of *Kino* comes the technological and inter-generational divide: it is in examining the nature of this divide and the associated rupture with cinephile culture that the work of Bernard Stiegler on the libidinal economy of human attention within contemporary technoculture becomes relevant to the discussion of cinephilia.

Stiegler contends that since the 1970s cinema has been in the process of «becoming television»: as a system for the global production and diffusion of images, television also risks exhausting humanity's desire for stories.²¹ The formerly distinctive characteristics and techniques that were specific to the development of cinema have become key elements in the production practices of what he has identified as the programming industries. As a consequence of the evolution out of last century's culture industry of the digital programming industries, individual and collective memory, and together with them significant areas of our imagination, are becoming externalized on a hyper-industrial scale. How does Stiegler then connect digital technologies and the mass diffusion of images with our personal and social existence? What might his thinking on this topic add to the discussion of cinephilia?

In order to demonstrate the relation between technics, human individuals and the social order, Stiegler has adopted and modified from the work of the French philosopher of technology Gilbert Simondon, the key concept of *individuation*. Individuation is the process whereby both technical and human beings evolve and emerge from their conditions of possibility through what Simondon characterized in the 1950s as their *associated milieux*. Stiegler then introduces his own concept of *transindividuation* to describe the psychic emergence of individual human beings as singularities into a state of mature social being in which the *I* is balanced by a «we», in the process becoming a responsible member of human society, who is able to take care of the self and of others. The associated milieux operative in the formation of social being in contemporary digital societies are clearly such that the multiple types of external retention of consciousness, the digital aids to

19 Ibid., p. 13.

20 Ibid.

21 Stiegler 2011(*Technics*), p. 9. Stiegler justifies his concern over this process: «If cinematic narratives' influence on the public results at its most fundamental level from a desire for the most ancient stories [...] it is all the more necessary that we analyze-and in detail- the *uniqueness* of the techniques that appeared specifically with cinema, techniques that more than any others in history have organized the programming industries' production practices, and we must do this in order to account for the incomparable efficacy of the «animated sound image», to understand the extraordinary belief-effect it produces in the spectator.»

memory or *hypomnemata* made available to us by the Internet and associated technologies, play a significant but not unproblematic role in the psycho-social process of transindividuation.²² The developmental passage of transindividuation is a human potential that in the decaying or dissociated milieux, which are emerging in many societies under the conditions of the pervasive globalization of capital, is not fully realized and in some severely damaged social environments not even possible. Viewed broadly, Stiegler has produced a necessary revision of Kant's concept of the emergence of the individual into a state of maturity by taking into account the co-evolution of technical objects. In the course of his analysis, Stiegler points to evidence that supports the view that for many born after the arrival of video, the passage through transindividuation to maturity is obstructed.

Under the conditions provided by digital and even analogue *hypomnemata*, individual memory can now be seen to be both inside and outside the subject. As a *«me»* I am constituted in considerable measure outside myself through my exposure to and engagement with such digital technical objects as net communities or social media. The empirical evidence of this externalization over the last three decades is now abundant and has led Stiegler to argue against Kant that the schemas of imagination are not transcendental but are instead externally and historically conditioned.²³ The growing dependence of contemporary psychic individuation on externalized digital and highly programmable types of associated milieux is therefore a matter of real concern. This concern centers on the radical alteration in these digital milieux of long established behavioral patterns operative in the formation of individual and social being and on shifts like those that we are now registering with some alarm in the relation between technical rationality, on the one hand, and on the other, that form of social rationality we know and value as justice and human rights.²⁴

To better understand the function of digital technical objects in the process of individuation, Stiegler returns to Husserl's phenomenological studies of primary and secondary retentions and their function in perception and memory. He finds that something significant has been overlooked. Husserl did not explore tertiary or externalized forms of memory beyond early gramophone recordings and tended to downplay their role in the formation of consciousness and therefore in cultural reproduction. Stiegler argues that these tertiary retentions have since become the vital supplement of our consciousness in the way that they are fed back to us from the cultural environment to reshape the perceptual set of the brain's secondary retentions. In a sense, Handke was already aware of this feedback loop, when in 1972 he concluded: «Ein Filmbild ist kein unschuldiges *Bild* mehr, es ist, durch die

22 Following Plato in *Phaedrus*, Stiegler identifies these prostheses as *hypomnemata*, (alphabetical) techniques of memory that form the essential elements of contemporary *mnenotechnics*, i.e., technical objects, which function as external aids to memory and cultural transmission.

23 See Patrick Crogan: Bernard Stiegler: Philosophy, Technics, and Activism. In: *Cultural Politics*, 6(2) 2010, pp. 133–156.

24 Stiegler 2013, p. 20.

Geschichte aller Filmbilder vor diesem Bild, eine *Einstellung geworden*.²⁵ Digital devices are now highly active in the shaping of perception, in education, in the formation of social being and, as we can readily observe, in the experience of cinema.

Stiegler argues that the digital economy services the global promotion of a global economy through an aesthetics of consumption. The corresponding loss of knowledge as *savoir-faire* (knowing how to do) and *savoir-vivre* (knowing how to live) is the key driver of what in practice amounts to the proletarianization of the consumer, including consumers of mass-produced televisual images. The digital programme industries work to turn consciousness itself into a marketable commodity through the control and harnessing of attention. An associated milieu like that of digital technoculture rapidly becomes a dissociated milieu and loses its capacity to foster the transindividuation of the «I» to a state of mature and responsible social being. Instead, through their advocacy of narcissistic care-less-ness, the programme industries succeed in substituting addictive forms of consumer behaviour for mature, considered, and care-full decision making. The process of branding actively seeks to promote and intensify these toxic behaviours. Crucially for the possibility or otherwise of a cinephile culture, according to Stiegler drives (*Trieben*) take the place of desire (*Wünsche, Sehnsucht*). Some human wishes or desires may be attained, while drives are defined as compulsive and can never be satisfied. The subject and consciousness itself are degraded and nullified through submission to the objects of addiction. As the consumer is sold progressively to the product, his or her existence is absorbed into a state of subsistence. The disruption of the libidinal economy represented by the reduction of the life-world to an endless virtual shopping mall, marketing goods and services produced by a global labour-force of low-wage workers, operates principally through the daily promotion of consumer anxiety which seeks vainly in the objects of addiction but can never find compensation for genuine human desires. The result, conclude Stiegler and his co-researchers in *Ars Industrialis*, a public sphere association for the critical investigation of digital technoculture founded by Stiegler in Paris in 2005, is the creation of the *addictogenic society*.

Where Handke and Stiegler would agree is that the awareness that allowed the spectator in the age of classical cinephilia to distinguish between perception and imagination, in the way that Handke exemplifies cinephiliac moments in his early writings, has since been subjected to an image bombardment that for the vast majority of spectators has resulted in a form of perceptual and emotional paralysis. What we might call cinephiliac knowledge has become a subjugated knowledge. The programming industries work ceaselessly in our hyperindustrial societies to capture attention through the promulgation of commodified audiovisual images – digital temporal objects. What Stiegler, after Freud, Herbert Marcuse and Lyotard, calls the libidinal economy, is being destabilized as a direct consequence of the radical desublimation of desire. Here we need only think of the emptying out of desire that occurs

25 Peter Handke: *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*. Frankfurt am Main 1972, p. 69.

when attention is subjected to the endless hyper-solicitation of the digital entertainment and leisure industries. The individual's libidinal economy consists of competing behavioural tendencies. Under the current dominance of the North American programme industries, which seek to invent and programme the future, the libidinal economy is subjected to both «a politics of adoption and a technical politics».²⁶

There is a parallel between the phenomenon of the cinephiliac moment and Stiegler's extension of Husserl's work on retention through the process of tertiary retention as a cumulative feed-back loop that runs from the previous to the next experience of viewing, listening, reading. The cinephiliac moment as defined by Keathley both acknowledges the presence of a conventional and even normative film syntax, and simultaneously registers a gap or back-door in the code that opens a channel to an unexpected fusion of perception and imagination. Cinephilia is predicated on acts of perception and memory that become available to spectators engaged in the psychosocial process of individuation. Cinephilia is not only a form of aesthetic play occurring in the cinema at the intersection of the present and the past of the spectator, it is also open to the future of the viewing subject as a social being, who can share with others the experience of cinephiliac moments directly after the film, or days, weeks, even years after the event.

But where does the cinephiliac moment reside in consciousness? Again, Stiegler is helpful: «A film, like a melody, is essentially a flux: it consists of its unity in and as flow. The temporal object, as flux coincides with the stream of consciousness of which it is the object: the spectator's.»²⁷ In the absence of sustained attention and access to memory (nurtured in the case of film by the intimate darkness of the film theatre), the experience of this flow is broken, fragmented. Like Handke, Stiegler posits the need to develop a politics of memory that will counter the industrial destruction by the programming industries of memory and along with it, the destruction of each person's unique relationship to past experience on which cinephilia and individuation depend.

At the level of praxis, how might such a politics of memory come about? Among Handke's most cherished recollections of his cinephile experiences are the *Heimwege*, the homeward journeys after a visit to the cinema, which he is convinced films of the era of classical cinephilia made possible: «Was für große Heimwege habe ich nach diesem und jenem Film erlebt, was für wunderbare Heimwege».²⁸ It is also in the context of a homeward trajectory that Francesco Casetti has recently examined the possibility of a return in social practice to the Motherland of the film theatre. Casetti builds his idea of the possibility of a return to something resembling cinephilia in a post-media age on an analysis of Atom Egoyan's three-minute film ARTAUD DOUBLE BILL (2007). Egoyan's film contrasts and compares the contempo-

26 Stiegler 2011 (*Decadence*), p. 9.

27 Stiegler 2011 (*Technics*), p. 12.

28 Handke 2002, p. 17.

rary experience of film spectatorship by two young women, Anna and Nicole, with that Nana, the protagonist of Godard's film *VIVRE SA VIE* (1962), who in that film finds herself in a cinema which is screening Carl Dreyer's *LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC* (1928). Without going in detail here into the complexities of Casetti's analysis of the contrasting viewing situations, it is essential to note that Egoyan's Anna and Nicole initially intended to meet up to view the same film together but end up by mistake in different cinemas. During the screening, Anna communicates her viewing of Nana in Godard's film to Nicole by videoing it on her smart phone and sending it as the film unfolds. Casetti contrasts the on-screen catharsis experienced by Nana watching Artaud in *VIVRE SA VIE* with the much more detached, digitally mediated experience of Anna and Nicole. In relation to Handke's cinephilia, we may read Godard's Nana as a figure embodying the cinephile of the 1960s. As Casetti observes: «For Nana it is a single and well-defined work: it is this film, and not another, to be enjoyed directly and on its own».²⁹ For Egoyan's Anna and Nicole, spectators in the age of portable digital devices and social media, when screen ratios can be manipulated at will and a film can literally be viewed anywhere at all, «the word *film* does not mean the same thing», the film has become a «hypertext» – «a discourse that hosts other discourses, that collaborates with other discourses, and that generates other discourses».³⁰ Caught in this network of social discourses, the singular on-screen images are decentralised and subjected to further dissemination. The film is no longer wholly attended to but is instead drawn into channels of distraction in a state of what Stiegler after Katherine Hayles calls *hyperattention*. Godard's Nana experiences a cathartic moment in the film theatre. Egoyan's Anna and Nicole experience curiosity but at a distance. A cinematic moment is isolated and linked to a social network. In this mode of viewing, Casetti reasons, cinema loses its heterotopic quality and becomes just another instance of the everyday world of mass commodities devoid of the earlier key element of cinema – self-discovery.

Is there a way back to the Motherland of the film theatre that Handke among others so keenly desires? Casetti suggests that there may be:

and yet ... if it is true that we now become film spectators by searching for the cinema in places where it has never before been, it is also true that spectators find themselves on the deepest level exactly where cinema has longest dwelled. [...] Back to the Motherland: partially on a wave of nostalgia, but more importantly in order to offer a lesson learned in the meantime.³¹

As Handke has always maintained, the film theatre provided a physical and psychological site of refuge, «a more solid territory, better defined and protected».³²

29 Casetti 2011, S. 3.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid, p. 8–9.

32 Ibid, p. 10.

The cinema as film theatre allows the screen to return to its proper ratio and to exercise the perceptual dominance that fosters sustained attention and emotional engagement. In particular, the spectator is protected from the unfocused hyperattention of the digital regime that consumes images in a state of «narcissism and indifference»³³ and corrodes both perception and the power of imagination. Implicit in Casetti's analysis is the suggestion that the revival of the small public film theatre and the proliferation of intimate home cinema installations may reopen the possibility of cinephilia and provide a bridge across the intergenerational divide which separates cinephile and post-cinephile experiences of moving images. In *Der Bildverlust oder Durch die Sierra de Gredos*, Handke speaks through the figure of the reporter in Spain to provide an account of what the image as the historical centre of visual pleasure, aesthetic judgement and experience has lost through exposure to the flood of commodified media images. *Bildverlust* is equated with *Weltverlust*: «Es bedeutet der Weltverlust. Es bedeutet, es gibt keine Anschauung mehr». ³⁴ The world of experience, once supported by the image as the «Vokabel der Weltsprache»³⁵ and available to cinephiles through the imaginative engagement of the cinephilic moment, in Handke's reading becomes lost in the flood of images. If we read Handke's use of the term *Anschauung* in its Kantian sense, the loss of the image amounts to the loss of intuition, which renders the subject – here the spectator – blind to the possibility of the cinephile experiences that can open the way to understanding of the self and others. Hence the litany of the reporter in the novel: «Bild gib mir Welt und Weltvergessenheit. Bild, Erkenntlichkeit für das Gelebte und Schubkraft für das zu Lebende». ³⁶ Whether the unspoken psalm of Handkes' spectators to the gods of cinema – «Weitere Filme für weitere Heimwege!»³⁷ – along with Stiegler's advocacy for a politics of memory and Casetti's case for a return to the Motherland of the film theatre will be realized, remains an open question.

33 Ibid, p. 12.

34 Peter Handke: *Der Bildverlust oder Durch die Sierra de Gredos*. Frankfurt am Main 2002, p. 356.

35 Ibid, p. 747.

36 Ibid.

37 Handke 2002, p. 17.