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“Den Nicht-Ort gibt es nicht”: Handke and the Spirit of Place in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*

I

While on a journey in Spain in March 1989 recorded in *Gestern Unterwegs* (2007), a collection of his notes from journeys across the world from November 1987 to July 1990, Handke comes across a sign “La utopia non existe”, which he translates as “Den Nicht-Ort gibt es nicht” (G 375). This sign, and his translation of it, is significant for an understanding of the poetics of place in Handke’s work. As several critics have pointed out, the concern with place and the development of a poetics of place has been a dominant feature of Handke’s work, particularly since *Langsame Heimkehr*, confirmation of which is the recent publication of the fourth of his *Versuche*, *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*, in October 2012.¹ The sentence “Den Nicht-Ort gibt es nicht”, found in a particular place in Spain and recorded in *Gestern Unterwegs*, recurs in *Versuch über die Müdigkeit*, one of several works for which the descriptions of places in *Gestern Unterwegs* serve as raw material.² There we read: “Den Nicht-Ort gibt es nicht. Bedenk das einmal, und die Weltgeschichte fängt sich zu drehen an” (VJ 57). If the search for utopia has been the search for an ideal a ‘u-topos’ outside the world in which everything lacking in this world is present, then, the sign appears to be saying, such a search is futile.³ Handke, in his appropriation of this sentence, appears to be saying that in his search for place what motivates him is not this kind of utopia, but the search for a real place which is anchored in a heightened perception of reality implicit in the state of tiredness: “Meine utopische Müdigkeit ... ergab jedenfalls einen Ort, zumindest den einen” (VJ 57).⁴ Tiredness in this *Versuch* is a way of overcoming resistance to the qualities of place, of noticing the qualities of real places, an awareness which has always in his life “produced at least one place”, in which he felt “Viel mehr Ortssinn ... als sonst. Es war, als hätte ich, obwohl kaum erst da, den Ortsgeruch angenommen in meiner Müdigkeit, sei da alteingesessen” (VJ 57/58).

The thought “Den Nicht-Ort gibt es nicht”, then, it will be argued in this essay, can be interpreted in the sense of

there is no “non-place” which has no potential poetic qualities: *any* place, no matter how insignificant, no matter how obscure, no matter how much an “inauthentic” “non-place”, can be poetic.⁵ Consequently, it can be argued that Handke’s search for place is for the poetic qualities or “spirit” of place as such, the *genius loci*, including those places and their qualities which most of the time we ignore, a search which culminates in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*. In fact, Handke’s attitude to place can thus be seen as anti-utopian, in that ‘Die klassische Utopie als Nichtort mag Handke zufolge den Blick auf die Gegenwart verstellt haben; der Ort als Entfaltungsraum der vorläufigen Nicht-Existenzen eröffnet den Blick auf die Formen einer noch nicht entdeckten Welt’ (Luckscheiter 57). The ‘Niemandsbucht’ of the Paris suburbs in the work of that title can be seen as a summation of this *anti-utopianism*, as it centres on just such a ‘non-place’, the suburb, which has traditionally been seen as lacking the ideal qualities which have been associated with the metropolis or the country.⁶ Any place can have poetic potential for Handke, provided that it is ‘ganz konkret vorgestellt’ and has ‘gleichzeitig weder ‘Lokales’ noch ‘Typisches’ an sich’ (Gruber 336).

Versuch über den Stillen Ort, I will argue, is a key work in Handke’s oeuvre as it connects this understanding of place to two other important concepts in his poetics, that of presence, and, related to this, the autonomy of the writer. Both the “Stiller Ort” or “stiller Ort” (both spellings and the related phenomena are present in the text of the *Versuch*, although the former forms the title) are characterized by an experience of presence of the *genius loci*, or spirit of place, brought about by heightened aesthetic sensations, particularly sight and sound, which some Handke critics have called epiphany, specifically ‘die Epiphanie des Ortes’ (Tabah 19): a sudden experience of presence where a place is taken out of insignificance and becomes ‘Symbol der Welt überhaupt’ in which “Zusammenhang, Einheit und Ganzheit als das immanente ‘Gesetz’ der Welt offenbart’ (Tabah 24). *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* gives us a detailed phenomenological and poetic description of the epiphany of place.

Secondly, the *Versuch* can be seen as a reply to Handke’s critics, who have accused him of a flight from reality in search of autonomy from the world in a poetic idyll. While the places recounted in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* are often places of “refuge” from the world, they are

always connected to it, and having found inspiration in these places through the encounter with their *genius loci*, this brings about a return of the writer to the world, but a return inspired with an awareness of the poetic qualities of all places in the world. This latter feeling I will term the "ecumenical idea" of place in Handke's work. In the following section I will describe the nature of *genius loci* as an idea, drawing on perspectives from the philosophy and phenomenology of place, in particular Bachelard's concept of "intimate immensity", before applying these ideas in detail to a reading of *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* in the third section of the essay.

II

Edward Casey, in what is probably the most comprehensive examination of the history of the Western philosophy of place, describes this history as a transition from where place is seen as something which is of secondary importance to geometrical space, to one where *implacement* is seen as an essential and irreducible feature of the world. Aristotle was the first philosopher to realise this essential implacement of the human being, that the world is "never without those determinate *topoi* whose limits circumscribe particular things within their immediate environments" (Casey 56). In subsequent centuries, however, particularly Descartes, Leibniz, Newton, and Kant moved away from this realization towards establishing the primacy of geometrical *space* as a category of perception. The way *back* to place, according to Casey, came only in the twentieth century with the advent of phenomenology, and the work of Husserl, Heidegger, and Bachelard in particular.

In the twentieth century this "return to place" was also a reflexion of the processes of globalization: as terrestrial globalization progressed, a feeling of "placelessness" ensued as the world and places previously unfamiliar became familiar. In a reaction to this "cultural devaluation of place" (Caviola 41), writers in the modern era then increasingly sought out *authentic* places, defined as places with an "irreducible absoluteness" (Caviola 42). At the same time, however, it was realised that the authenticity or inauthenticity of place rests entirely on the "*attitude* a person or community takes towards it" (Caviola 42). Theorists of place have, in reaction to the above trends, increasingly polarized place into *authentic* place, characterised by strong feelings of identity, or what Marc Augé calls "anthropological place",

and what Relph calls placenessness or *inauthentic* place, or as Augé puts it, "non-place".

This polarization can to some extent be seen as a direct reaction to Heidegger's phenomenology of place. If in the early *Sein und Zeit* Dasein's "existential spatiality," had just been seen as one of the essential properties of "being in the world" (Casey 246), by the time we reach Heidegger's later works, in particular the essay "Bauen Wohnen Denken" (1951), we reach a new understanding of place which sees it as essentially related to the metaphysical act of dwelling in a location associated with home and tradition, a trend which some, in light of the political problems surrounding his work, have seen as problematic.⁷ Relph, in his Heidegger-inspired *Place and Placenessness* (1976), for instance, states that "There is a widespread and familiar sentiment that the localism and variety of places and landscapes that characterised preindustrial societies ... are being diminished and perhaps eradicated" (Relph 79). While he cautions that "inauthenticity" of place "is characteristic of normal and everyday life" nevertheless, it is, he argues, "difficult ... not to judge inauthenticity negatively" (Relph 80). In fact Relph's influential book caused architects and planners, who had been accused of producing just such inauthentic "placeless" environments in Modernist buildings and cities, to seek anew to create "authentic" places.

This turn towards "authentic" places as a counter-reaction to the perceived prevalence of placelessness or "non-places" in the globalized world led to a renewed interest in the ancient concept of *genius loci* or spirit of place. *Genius loci* is a Roman concept, but has an antecedent in the Greek belief that certain places were inhabited by a *daimon* or spirit. From such places, the Greeks believed, emanated a "nicht näher-bestimmbar, unpersönliche Kraft" (Kozljanič 101). Both the Greek concept of "Ortsdaimon" and the Roman concept of 'genius loci' characterize places with a "numinose Atmosphäre, eine gewisse-göttliche Stimmung" (Kozljanič 104). The numinous atmosphere of such places induces a mood, or more precisely a change of mood in the person experiencing them, and the resulting state can be contemplative, pleasant or disturbing in some cases. Both natural places (e.g. landscapes) and artificial places (e.g. houses) can possess such an atmosphere. The nature of the experience of the *genius loci* can be defined as "das stimmungsmäßige Erleben eines numinosen Orts" and a place in which such an

experience takes place as “ein eng umgrenzter numinoser Bezirk” (Kozljanič 106). Important in this definition for Handke’s poetics of place in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* in particular is the experience of the *genius loci* as a process of attunement: the spirit of the place in some sense forces us to abandon our preconceptions about the place and notice qualities of it which were not previously apparent. Secondly, the phenomenological nature of the experience of the numinous atmosphere contains both subjective and objective elements: it is not just a “projection” of subjective feelings on to a place, nor is it just the objective characteristics of the place – to be fully present in the place the feelings of the person experiencing it have to be attuned to the spirit of the place.⁸

Although we no longer share the mythical beliefs of the Greeks and Romans, writers in the latter half of the twentieth century have returned to the concept as a counter-balance to the perceived inauthenticity of place in the globalized world described above. The Norwegian architect Christian Norberg-Schulz, for instance, in his influential study *Genius loci: towards a phenomenology of architecture*, states that the concept “has remained a living reality, although it may not have been expressively named as such” (Norberg-Schulz 18), and emphasizes the importance of artists and writers in communicating this spirit of local character beyond the trivialities of guide books and “travel literature”.

Where does Handke’s work fit into the above account of the history of place? In his earlier work, as a self-confessed “flâneur” Handke seemed very much to be almost attracted by the “inauthenticity” of places, cities, and indeed whole countries in the late twentieth century.⁹ A “turn” in Handke’s attitude to place can, however, be seen after *Langsame Heimkehr*: “Aus dem frühen Sprach- und Ich-Kundler ist ... ein Ich- und Erdkundler geworden” (Rohde 12). From an interest in places in the earlier work in which places were largely seen in terms of reflections of subjective states, the later works form part of a wider interest in “internationale Orte” among other Austrian writers such as Bernhard, Roth and Ransmayr which can be seen as part of a “Neue Objektivität” (Alker 9). The concern with places for these writers, however, is always a consequence of a “literarische Auseinandersetzung mit der eigenen Herkunft” (Alker 3).

The closeness of Handke’s poetics of place in these later works to phenomenology has been remarked upon by

various critics. The phenomenologists most often cited in connection with his works have been Husserl and Heidegger. Kolleritsch, for instance, is unequivocal that "Peter Handke Teile des Heideggerschen Werks kennt und daß er Zitate aus dem Heideggerschen Werk in seinen Büchern gibt" (Kolleritsch 111). Huber, similarly, argues that there is a direct influence of Heideggerian concepts in works such as *Langsame Heimkehr* and *Die Geschichte des Bleistifts* which are concerned with 'das Sichzeigen des Verborgenen' (Huber 180), showing clear influence of a Heideggerian understanding. Although there undoubtedly is an element of language close to the Heideggerian understanding of place in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*, I will argue that to understand the phenomenological nature of place in the work we can beneficially turn to another phenomenologist, Gaston Bachelard, and his *Poetics of Space*.

In an intimate place, such as the house, Bachelard argues in the chapter of his *Poetics of Space* entitled "House and Universe", we can experience the vastness of that space outside the house as threatening, engendering a feeling of the necessity to escape from it into the confines of the dwelling; on the other hand, the space outside the dwelling can be welcoming, a place to which we might want to escape its confines. The intimate space "inside" and the extensive space "outside" are not, for Bachelard, geometric opposites in Euclidean space, but complementary in the imaginative space of the poet. As Bachelard says, referring to Rilke, "At whatever dialectical pole the dreamer stands, whether in the house or in the universe, the dialectics become dynamic. House and space are not merely two juxtaposed elements of space. In the reign of the imagination, they awaken daydreams in each other" (Bachelard 45). In other words, the feeling of intimacy gained in the intimate place can be extended in the imagination to include the whole world. Similarly, the feelings associated with the "outside" world (for example alienation, loneliness) can be extended inward, to envelop the interior realm. Thus, in the realm of the poetic imagination, the geometric terms "inside" and "outside" disappear in the concept of "intimate immensity".

In the chapter "Intimate Immensity" of *Poetics of Space* Bachelard develops this further, here discussing Baudelaire: "in the work of a great poet like Baudelaire an intimate call of immensity can be heard, even more than an echo from the outside world. In the language of philosophy, we could

say, then, that immensity is a 'category' of the poetic imagination" (Bachelard 148). This poetic category of "intimate immensity" is a phenomenological link between the experience of the presence of a place and the world outside it, or "space".

An example of such a link between place and space in "intimate immensity" can already be seen in Handke's earlier work, particularly in *Langsame Heimkehr*. In part 1, "Die Vorzeitformen", the protagonist Sorger moves from a geometrical "objective" conception of space through experiences in the primeval landscape of Alaska to a feeling of identification with a place from which he previously felt alienated. This feeling of "intimate immensity", which combines subjective experience of place with objective space, is evident in the following passage: "Tagsüber durch seine Arbeit in der Regel eins werdend mit sich und der Landschaft, ... "vor Ort" ... erfuhr der auf einem hohen Eisenbett schlafende Sorger nachts immer noch die Entfernung von Europa und "den Vorfahren" "(LH 42). By day, in his increasing understanding of and identification with the "spirit" of the place, the perception of the numinous qualities of the landscape which he inhabits and the mapping of it which is the subject of his work, the "outside" world, and Sorger's former awareness of physical and cultural distance from "home" almost disappears. In sleep, however, the "outside" world re-appears, threatening, and almost replaces the intimate world with which he identifies during the day. In the second part of *Langsame Heimkehr*, "Das Raumverbot", Sorger asks whether such a feeling of "intimate immensity" as he experienced in Alaska is "erfahrbar in dem Alltag eines abgelegenen Dorfes ebenso wie dem einer Weltstadt?" (LH 113).

"Intimate immensity", then, is a phenomenological and poetic concept which connects the experience of the particular and intimate aspects of place, its spirit or *genius loci*, with the cosmos, or as Bachelard puts it "house and universe", combines both the "objective" characteristics of place and the "subjective" experience of it. In the following section I will show how this concept can be used to understand Handke's poetics of place in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*.

III

The search for place, as in many of Handke's works, starts in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* with an "Urbild" of the

presence of place, and, as is often the case, this experience is mediated by literature or film, in this case the novel of the Scottish writer, A.J. Cronin, *The Stars Look Down*, (1935) and a later film based on it (1940), and John Ford's *How Green was my Valley* (1941), set in South Wales. In the film the child of a rich family in a predominantly poor mining area seeks refuge from his social environment in a toilet, in which he "nichts tut, als der Stille dort zu lauschen" (VO 9). This fictional "Urbild" of the quietness of place is then connected by Handke to several real experiences of places, in particular toilets, in his own childhood and youth: the toilet of the dwelling in East Berlin where he and his family spent time after the end of the war; the toilet of his grandfather's farm in rural southern Carinthia; the toilet of his Austrian boarding school which hardly anyone used, and which provided a safe refuge from negative aspects of the institution and his fellow classmates. Although all these experiences are of toilets as a particular sub-species of "stiller Ort", in the phenomenological nature of the experience of them as depicted in the *Versuch*, they can be seen as typifying the broader category of place.

Firstly, all these places suddenly emerge as significant from a background of *ordinariness* or *everydayness*, they are "Nichts als das Übliche" (VO 11), their qualities barely noticeable prior to the experience. Secondly, all these places constitute a refuge, and through the heightened experience of sight, sound and smell there, suddenly become significant. These places, therefore, are in some senses "empty", places in which there is nothing else to do except contemplate: "leer der Ort, nichts als ein Schauen" (VO 16).¹⁰ This immediately connects us to Handke's earlier description, in *Aber ich lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen*, of his predilection for places which he describes as *Zwischenräume*:

"ein Ort wird zum Schauplatz, ohne das man will, daß da an diesem Schauplatz sich etwas ereignet. Man möchte den Ort eigentlich nur offenhalten, daß er ein Schauplatz würde, aber ohne bestimmte Phantasterei von, was man sagt, Story" (Z 29).

Two important features of the phenomenological description of place in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* need to be noted: that the experience of place emerges from emptiness, the very non-significance of the place, and that this experience emerges without the will. What allows the place to emerge

from this background are the experiences of the particular qualities of light, "(es) fällt mir ... etwas Spezielles auf: das Licht" (VO 13), "Licht, das umgab" (VO 14), and of sound, the latter emerging from a background of silence. In the isolated toilet of the boarding school, for instance, it is the sounds of water in the urinals and the broken flush mechanisms in the toilet cubicles which are noticed against the background of silence: "umgeben von dem Rauschen, einerseits von den Pissoirs, andererseits aus ein, zwei der Kabinen, wo die Spülung undicht war" (VO 20). The sounds of the silent place are what Handke notices (and the paradox is that the silent place is not silent), which are encapsulated in the word "Rauschen"; whether they be the "mechanical" sounds of a toilet, as here, or the "natural" sounds of a rural setting, which Handke describes later in the book, or the "urban" sounds of towns and cities, these are what I will call the *sonorous qualities of the phonotope*.

The term *phonotope* is used by Peter Sloterdijk in his Bachelard-inspired *Sphären* trilogy to describe a "microsphere" or "anthropogene Insel" (Sloterdijk III 377), the aural experience of which serves as a kind of "psychoakustische Glocke": "Diese Inseln tönen ständig nach sich selbst, sie bilden *soundscape*s eigentümlichen Charakters, sie sind erfüllt von den Lebensgeräuschen ihrer Mitgleider, von Arbeitslärm, von Klappern der Geräte und Werkzeuge, von jenem Murmeln, daß alle unsere Vorstellungen muß begleiten können" (Sloterdijk III 377). This "psychoacoustic" microsphere surrounding quiet places, which Handke describes in the *Versuch*, even when they appear to be silent, contains, Handke using a musical analogy, a "Grundton" (VO 21), which Handke frequently describes as "rauschen".

A concern with sound and music has been a notable feature of Handke's writing from the earliest works. From *Der Chinese des Schmerzes* onwards, however, this concern with sound is increasingly related to place and landscape, reflected in "the musicalization of the landscape and the world via elements of the natural and the everyday" (Marko 170). The "earth orchestra", as Handke describes it, the symphony of natural and man-made sounds which distinguish places, includes, for instance, the noises of birds, crickets and cicadas, the latter two a characteristic feature of countries particularly beloved of Handke, such as Greece and Japan.¹¹ This concern of Handke with the sounds of place, confirmed in its importance in *Versuch über den*

Stillen Ort, can be seen as "the recovery of the auratic value" of place (Marko 174). Such "auratic retrieval" occurs particularly in those places whose quietness forms a background from which such sounds can be perceived.

We can speak of the development of a "Kunst des Hörens" (Özelt 39) as a motivating force in Handke's later works, through the differentiation of "Klangräume" (which Sloterdijk refers to as the phonotope): "Die Hörwelt bleibt aufgrund ihrer Fragilität eine ästhetische Herausforderung, die sein (Handkes) Werk weiterhin bestimmt" (Özelt 39).¹² Handke's aim in this is to make us aware not only 'daß Differenzierungsgeschehen unsere Wahrnehmungen bestimmen, sondern auch darauf, daß unterschiedliche sinnliche Differenzierungsgeschehen sie ja eigens strukturieren' (Özelt 41). The world is structured into places, which are differentiated and characterized not just by their visual characteristics, but by the aural properties of the "existentiell ausdruckshafte[n] Ort".

The common feature of the "quiet places" from his youth Handke describes in the early part of the *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* is that they fulfill an existential necessity: they are "der Ort für eine ganz verschiedene Not" (VO 20), Handke here making a humorous play on the word "Notdurft", places of refuge, an "Asylort". The necessity to escape *to* a place *from* the world is constitutive of another prominent element in Handke's poetics of place: the idea of a 'counter-place' (or what Stefan Alker calls "Gegenort"). The significance of the place to which one escapes is that it constitutes a counter-place another place and its inhabitants from which there is a need to escape: part of its significance is that it is *not* somewhere else. The most significant aspect of place as a "counter-place" for Handke is, of course, his dis-identification with his "Heimat" Austria and his correspondingly strong identification with other places, including those he has made his subsequent "Wahl-Heimat".

The experience of the presence of the place through the sensation of light and the aural qualities of the phonotope in Handke's early life engenders a first experience of autonomy of the self: "Erstmals war *ich* es, war es meine Person, um die es ging an dem Stillen Ort" (VO 20). Autonomy here should be understood in a dual sense: as autonomy *from* (those places and persons from which he has sought to escape) and in a positive sense, a discovery of the self, particularly in the act of writing. The act of remembering the "Stillen Orte"/ "stillen Orte" from the past and attempting to

capture their presence in writing is the subject of Handke's reflection in the rest of *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*. It is the very non-fulfilment of this continual search to capture or re-capture the presence of the quiet place in writing, however, that motivates his continuing search.

In *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* he recounts the very first such journey undertaken in his youth, from his home village to the small town of Spittal an der Drau in Western Carinthia. Here he spends the night in the station toilet. Stations, whether of the train or bus variety, are important for Handke, constituting "Orte des Übergangs" (Weymann 197), points of departure and arrival and thus of the transitory, connecting the *here* of this place with the *there* of the rest of the world. Stations which are isolated or unfrequented by many travellers, as here in Spittal an der Drau, seem to be particularly attractive for him. Here, as in the earlier "Stillen Orte"/"stillen Orte", he finds "eine gewisse Geborgenheit oder Aufgehobenheit", to such an extent that he decides to spend the night sleeping on the floor of the toilet.

Once again, the sounds of the phonotope, here wider in expanse as the station is in a rural area, define the place: "die Geräusche der Außenwelt ... das ferne Rufen der Eulen in den Flußauen Sogar das sommerliche Grillenzirkonzert in den Eisenbahngärten" (VO 37). The imaginative connection to distant places (to which, at this time, he had not yet travelled) is provided by the express trains which go through this small station (Spittal an der Drau lies on a main railway line connecting Austria, Germany and, further north, with south-eastern Europe): "nach Athen, Belgrad, Sofia, Bukarest, nach München, Köln, Kopenhagen, Ostende" (VO 33). This list of places contains many of those which feature prominently on his later journeys and in his later works.

This place, or rather "non-place", unlikely though it may seem, can, then, become one of identity, what Marc Augé calls "anthropological place": "Das war jetzt mein Ort" (VO 36). Such places of identity bring about a transformation in the individual, "eine Verwandlung, die nicht gedacht war, sondern wie von selber geschah" (VO 39). Such "transformational" experiences, which occur in some unlikely and unpredictable places, are an important feature of Handke's literary works. To this extent, then, the *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* tells us, Handke's own experience of place forms a kind of "raw material" for similar experiences

for his characters. His experience in Spittal an der Drau, for instance, he says, forms the raw material for that of his character Filip Kobal in *Die Wiederholung*. In that work, however, the toilet of Spittal an der Drau is transformed into "eine Nische in dem werweißwieviele Meilen langen Eisenbahntunnel von Rosenach, Kärnten, nach Jesenice, Jugoslawien" in which Kobal spends his first night on his "epische, jahreszeitlange Wanderung durch das Land Slowenien" (VO 41).

The experience of the first distant "Stillen Ort"/ "stillen Ort", then, motivates the journey, in the case of Kobal and in the case of Handke, and "andere Örtlichkeiten, Bauten, Stätten" (VO 42) take its place. Increasingly, however, it is not the place itself, but the recall of past places, the imagination of place which becomes more vivid than places themselves: "die bloße Vorstellung eines der stillen Orte (stand)...für den Ort selber ..., ja die Erinnerung an ihn in der Raum- und Zeitferne ihn sogar ungleich wirksamer in Erscheinung treten ließ, als das damals dort der Fall gewesen war" (VO 43/44). We note in this passage how Handke has moved from the specificity of the "Stillen Orte" to the more general "stillen Orte".

In the remainder of the *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* Handke describes the quiet place as idea, its significance in his writing, and the places in the world in which he has found them. Most significant in this search for places was an experience in Japan of a toilet in a temple in the ancient capital of Nara. Significantly, awareness of this place is also mediated for Handke by literature, in particular on this journey to Japan he had read "wieder einmal Tanizaki's "Lob des Schattens"" (VO 64).

The Japanese novelist Tanizaki, in *In Praise of Shadows* (1933), praises elements of Japanese architecture, in particular the darkness and natural light of the traditional Japanese room, as a counter-balance to the artificial lighting and lack of mystery of the Western-style architecture then beginning to dominate Japan. He praises in particular rooms in temples, particularly toilets, for their ability to bring about a feeling of timelessness: "Have you yourselves sensed a difference in the light that suffuses such a room, a rare tranquillity not found in ordinary light? Have you never felt a sort of fear in the face of the ageless, a fear that in that room you might lose consciousness of the passage of time?" (Tanizaki 35). This feeling of tranquillity, of presence, is precisely what Handke finds in his visit to the temple toilet

in Nara. It is only through this experience of the "Stillen Ort" (here with capitals) that he feels that he has truly arrived in, and feels at home in Japan: "Erst an jenem Morgen, beim Betreten der Tempeltiolette in Nara wurde Japan mir heimisch" (VO 66). In almost Heideggerian terms, Handke describes the experience as "nach all den Wochen des Umherirrens zurück in das Dasein, die Hiesigkeit" (VO 67).

The toilet, therefore, its atmosphere, light, and sound, its "spirit", give him for the first time a feeling of being *here*, in Japan. This gives us further evidence of how the Bachelardian concept of "intimate immensity" contributes to an understanding of Handke's poetics of place. Of course, understood in geographical terms, Handke has actually been in Japan for some weeks, but up to this point, he has not *felt* as if he were there, but perhaps elsewhere; now, suddenly, he feels that he is here (the similarity to Sorger's experience described earlier is apparent). This experience of being in Japan is mediated by his reading and awareness of Tanizaki, and perhaps this "colours" his experience of the toilet in Nara, but nevertheless the experience "belongs" to the place, and not just to Handke's imagination; in some sense, the "spirit" he refers to is *in* the place.

Handke expressly uses the metaphor of "spirit" to describe this aspect of place: "Der Ort hat mich begeistert ... ein "Geist", welcher ... für Ruhe sorgte ... ein Geist der Unruhe, der Unbändigkeit ... der Unverwundbarkeit" (VO 68). This invocation of a "spirit" of place, a numinous atmosphere which brings about an "attunement" of the person experiencing it, connects us to the ancient concept of *genius loci*—a "spirit gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence" (Norberg-Schulz 18). This is the complete opposite of tourism and "travel literature" which have sought to convey the characteristics of places, but largely in order to make them *consumable*, through opening them up to the "tourist gaze".¹³

The question of Handke's motivation for seeking out of such places, and his relationship to them, as discussed in the second half of the *Versuch*, can be described as a dialectic: of flight to, or seeking refuge in, places which are in some sense an escape from the world on the one hand, but then, on the other hand and, equally importantly, represent a return to the world, fortified by an understanding of and identification with those places. Handke explicitly addresses this point in an apparently ironic

rejoinder to those who have criticised his later work of showing a kind of mystical *Weltfremdheit*:

War mein Aufsuchen der Stillen Orte, im Lauf des Lebens gleichsam weltweit, immer wieder auch ohne spezielle Notwendigkeit, vielleicht ein Ausdruck, wenn nicht von Gesellschaftsflucht, so doch von Gesellschaftswiderwillen, von Geselligkeitsüberdruß? ... ein asozialer – ein antisozialer Akt? Ja, das war, und ist, zeitweise unabstreitbar der Fall. (VO 75)

Handke's "confession" that his search for the spirit of a place has been motivated by flight from the world, from society, seems on the surface to be a continuation of the defiance of a writer who, in 1966, in *Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms*, said unequivocally: "Es interessiert mich als Autor übrigens gar nicht, die Wirklichkeit zu zeigen oder zu bewältigen, sondern es geht mir darum, *meine* Wirklichkeit zu zeigen" (E 25). This "antisocial" act of withdrawal is, however, only one part of the dialectic of autonomy that motivates Handke's writing. In each case, having found the "stillen Ort" which corresponds with his existential need, and having attuned himself to its spirit, "es zog mich ... nach einer gewissen Zeit ... von den jeweiligen Stillen Ort, und dank und kraft seiner, zu den anderen, zu meinen Leuten, ... zu dem Lärmen, dem Krach, gebe Gott, unendlichen Getöse der Räume zurück" (VO 77). We note the importance of the distinction between *Ort* and *Raum* here. For Handke, *place* always has existential and ontological priority over *space*. Place, and in particular finding and describing the *genius loci*, is a way of countering the abstractions of geometrical space in the globalized world; having encountered the *genius loci* he can then re-enter the world armed with this spirit. There is no conflict, in other words, between withdrawal into the "subjective" space of the "Stiller Ort" and the "objective" reality outside it.

Handke explains this by reference to the metaphor of the poet as "Raumvermesser" (and thus returning us to the profession of Sorger in *Langsame Heimkehr*): "im Dienste einer Allgemeinheit, ... indem ich mich, kaum die Tür zum Stillen Ort hinter mir verschlossen, in einem Raumvermesser verwandte. In fast allen Toiletten entdeckte ich auf der Stelle ein System von Formen, und zwar von geometrischen, ein System, für das ich draußen vor der Tür keine Augen gehabt hatte" (VO 81). The interior of the toilet, in other words, is a *cosmos in miniature*, but one which needs

to be noticed, to be "measured" and appreciated in its "intimate immensity". Handke's emphasis that his role as "Raumvermesser der Stillen Orte" is undertaken "im Dienste der Allgemeinheit" is thus an answer to his self-accusation that this is an "asozial" act, undertaken to escape society. His role as "Geometer der Stillen Orte" (VO 83) represents a service to humanity at large, by in some sense documenting and bringing the attention of the wider world to such places.

IV

The transformative nature of the solitary experience of the enclosed space in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* brings to mind Bachelard's description of resonance in the imagination of the enclosed space of the "hermit's hut" particularly associated in literature with, for instance, Thoreau's hut in *Walden*, or the 13th-century Japanese Buddhist monk Chōmei's "Ten Foot Square Hut" in *Hōjōki*. In both these cases, the writer/contemplative sought to retreat from the vicissitudes of the world into the small, isolated, enclosed space of the hut; but in this solitude, he feels in some sense more connected to, and in harmony with, the world from which he had sought to escape, than when he was "in" it. In the writer's imagination "The hut immediately becomes centralized solitude. ... And there radiates about this centralized solitude a universe of meditation and prayer, a universe outside the universe" (Bachelard 32).

Similarly here, the geometric forms of the interior space of the toilet, for Handke, come to be connected to the geometric forms of the outside world: "all der noch ganz anders nützlichen, lebensnotwendigen, gemeindlichen und segensreichen kubischen Formen außerhalb dieses *petit coin* ... des Ortes der Ruhe, auf der großen Kugel, welche früher einmal "Erdkreis" geheißen hatte. 'Aei ho theós geometrei'" (VO 82). This latter inscription, which he found on the pediment above the door of an old house (presumably in Greece), he translates as "'Der Gott, beständig geometert er" (= vermißt er die Erde)" (VO 83). We can interpret this to mean that man does not dwell in the world as in an abstract geometrical space, but rather in particular places, which have their own *genius loci*. This does not mean, however, that man *only* dwells in particular places, as Heidegger perhaps thought, thus shutting himself off from the rest of the world; on the contrary, being in place (what Casey calls "implacement") and being in the wider world are

not opposites, but in fact are, phenomenologically, one and the same thing. To cite Norberg-Schulz once again: "Man dwells when he is able to concretize the world in buildings and things. ... This means: man's merits do not count much if he is unable to dwell *poetically*, that is, to dwell in the true sense of the word. ... this is done by means of buildings that gather the properties of the place and bring them close to man" (Norberg-Schulz 19). Handke, of course, is not concerned with building or designing places, but instead is concerned with gathering the properties (spirit) of place, and presenting them poetically. This connection between the individual place, its spirit, and the world as a whole, I will term Handke's ecumenicalism.

The transformative potential of the "Stillen Orte" which Handke seeks and which are the subject of the *Versuch* is not just concentrated in the kinds of isolated, idyllic places that one might traditionally associate with the idea of the *genius loci* in its ancient form, but rather is "ganz unabhängig von besonderer Lage und sonstwelcher äußerer Besonderheit oder Sonderbarkeit" (VO 90). The spirit of place can be found, in other words, just as much in what might be dismissed as "non-places" or an "inauthentic place", "an den sonst unscheinbaren, auch serienmäßig Stillen Orten" (VO 90), of which Handke now gives two examples. The first is a category of place rather than a specific place, namely "Jene katakombhaften Stillen Orte" which one often finds under restaurants or conference centres. "Serienmäßig" they may be, but these toilets "gemahnen mich an die Raumluchten, wie sie zeitlebens, in Abständen, im Traum unterkommen" (VO 89). Such "catacombs" nevertheless have a dream-like resonance, an "intimate immensity", and it is this experience, rather than their specific features or peculiarities —of which there may be none—which stays in his memory: "das Ereignis (ist) mir im Gedächtnis geblieben, ohne eine Einzelheit der Örtlichkeit" (VO 90).

The second example is associated with a location, Cascais on the Atlantic coast of Portugal, a place seemingly insignificant in itself: this is a toilet that is adjacent to a bench in a park, where Handke sits "um Ort und Umgebung auf mich einwirken zu lassen" (VO 91). In this case, what makes the place significant is the "Menschenzug", the procession of men and women going to the toilet over a period of time as he sits there observing, which in his imagination takes on the feature of another procession, that

“beim Kommuniongang des Kirchenvolkes während der heiligen Messe, bis zum Empfang des Leibs des Herrn, und zurück” (VO 91/92). The procession of people in this specific locality takes on a universal dimension and becomes an ecumenical idea that unites the whole of humanity, consisting of “der sehr Alte und der Schulschwänzer, der Krüppel und der Siechen, der Einheimischen und der Fremden, der Witwen und der Hungerleider, der Hausfrauen samt Haarnetz und der Tagediebe samt Haarfett” (VO 92).

This procession of characters progressing towards the “Stillen Ort” in Cascais, Portugal, reminds us of the cast of people who cross the central square which forms the central “character” in Handke’s play *Die Stunde da wir nichts voneinander wußten*. The central square in the play, “ein freier Platz im hellen Licht” (S 6), is not a specific locality, but might bear some similarities to those squares which have preoccupied Handke in his work, for example that which features in the dedication of the play, (*und zum Beispiel den Platz vor dem Centre Commercial du Mail auf dem Plateau von Vélizy*)’ (S 6), is crossed and populated by a series of characters described as, for instance, “Ein Rollschuhläufer” “eine Barfüßige” “eine Schönheit” “Einer in Gangsteraufmachung” etc. The relationship between the place and the characters is that of a specific locality that, however, is transformed into a space where the universal ecumenical aspects of humanity can be seen. To return to the “Menschenzug” in the “Stiller Ort” in Cascais, the place and the people in it are transformed, similarly, into an ecumenical idea – or at least the hope of such, as “die Kommenden die Gehenden grüßten, so oder so, ausdrücklich oder still, allein mit den Augen, ohne Hintergedanken” (VO 92).

Finally, in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*, Handke returns to his central theme of the relationship between the “stiller Ort” (and here he moves to the more general term rather than the sub-species “Stiller Ort”) and the act of writing, in particular the place where the *Versuch* itself was written. In confirmation of his ironic “self-accusation” earlier in the *Versuch*, Handke had withdrawn to a place of refuge, “einer ziemlich menschenleeren Gegend in Frankreich ..., irgendwo zwischen der Île-de-France ... und der Normandie” (VO 96). The place of writing, off the beaten track, reminds us of the similar “stillen Orte” which had been the places where the earlier *Versuche* had been written. *Versuch über die Jukebox*, for instance, begins with the sentence, “In der

Absicht, endlich den Anfang zu einem lang geplanten Versuch über die Jukebox zu machen, kaufte er am Busbahnhof von Burgos eine Fahrkarte nach Soria" (VJ 7). Similarly, the "quiet place" of *Versuch über die Müdigkeit*, Linares, also fulfils the requirements of such "stille Orte".

The places of Handke's Spain, which have formed the basis of these and other works such as *In einer dunklen Nacht ging ich aus meinem stillen Haus* and *Der Bildverlust*, are "Landstriche ..., die weit abseits der Haupttrouten des Massentourismus liegen", which provide him the opportunity "Die eigentliche Welt in der kleinen Welt zu entdecken. ... Die geeigneten Orte dafür sind nun im Zeitalter der Raumüberbrückung jene Orte im Abseits" (Pichler 67). Although "abseits der Haupttrouten des Massentourismus" (Pichler 67), these places are nevertheless not idyllic, but in fact "Antiidylle" (Pichler 68), the description of which is motivated by "Schuldigkeit" (VJ 21), a feeling of indebtedness to the place. Similarly with France, whether in the suburbs of Paris which Handke describes at length in *Mein Jahr in der Niemandsbucht*, or in the area of France which forms the setting of *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*, "dieses Frankreich ... (ist) entnationalisiert; nicht vermeintliche nationale Eigenarten ...spielen eine Rolle, sondern Städtebilder und Landschaften als symbolische Topographien" (Luckscheiter 51).

This region to which Handke "retreats" to write *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* corresponds to the qualities of the often sought after "Zwischenraum", is sparsely populated, "Menschen sind mir in den paar Wochen kaum begegnet" (VO 98), and is a phonotope with distinctive sonorous qualities:

Die Eulen, ...wie als Antwort auf das Krähen der ersten Hähne, ein Zwei- oder gar kein Dreitonrufen wurde, als ein Antiphon, ein Gegenrufen zu den Hähnen, wobei die Eulen nicht selten das letzte Wort bekamen. Dazu dann das Hennengackern, das Rindermuhen, das Eselstöhnen oder – stummsein, das Fasanengieksen, das Rabenbrüllen oder – schweigen, und als der Grundton das Wildtauben rufen, welches das der Kuckkucke vorwegnahm wie auch das Falkengellen in Vorfrühling, Heilloses Durcheinander? Heilsames, für lange Momente. (VO 101)

What appears to be a cacophony of sounds, when perceived as part of the sonorous qualities of the place, becomes "heilsam", enables the hearer to distinguish the qualities of

this place from its surroundings. Being in this place, as with his other "Stillen Orte"/"stillen Orte", gives Handke a feeling of presence, but not only this, an ecumenical feeling, of being "im Mittelpunkt des Erdkreises" (VO 104) and thus connected to all other places, despite, and indeed because of this place's being "im Abseits".

V

In the closing pages of the *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* Handke gives a further example of how a place, at first unnoticed or indistinguishable from its surroundings, emerges as significant, as a place with a *genius loci*. Walking through the woods, he looks for a place marked on the map, a small cemetery—"Cimetière à Têtu"; initially unable to find it, he stumbles upon it by chance and suddenly it emerges: "Da ist er, der Friedhof – nichts als zwei Steinstelen, die dritte ein Pyramidenstumpf, umgestürzt, umschlungen die Stätte, und so fast unsichtbar" (VO 105/106). Having found the place, which appeared to be almost invisible, forgotten in the passage of time, it appears to Handke that it is significant, having found that one of the headstones in it is "ein Doppeldenkmal für ein Ehepaar, gestorben in der mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts" (VO 106), from which the place gets its name "Têtu". The place, its name, its history, are poeticized, the name transformed in Handke's imagination into "têtu" = eigensinnig, "Friedhof für (einen) Eigensinnigen" (VO 106).

The importance of place names in Handke's poetics can be seen as a "mythosanaloge[s] Ritual der poetischen Grunderneuerung der Welt durch eine Tabula rasa" (Gottwald 142). The naming of places symbolizes the attribution of significance as in a mythic ritual, but, one which is "keine echten mythischen, weil ihre subjektstabilisierenden Bedeutsamkeiten äußerst fragil und permanent von plötzlichen Zerfall bedroht sind" (Gottwald 141). I do not interpret Gottwald's point as a criticism of Handke, but rather as a defence of Handke's poetics of place against the accusation that, in some sense, he is attempting a "re-mythologization of the world". What Handke is doing here is neither local history nor cartography—although both those elements contribute to the understanding of the significance of place—but rather, he is discovering the poetic qualities of the place, which reside in its "spirit" or *genius loci*, and, in response to a feeling of "indebtedness" to a place almost

forgotten, adding to these qualities by the use of imagination.

The nature of the emergence of the historical place and its spirit from surroundings in which it is forgotten or imperceptible, as depicted here, relates to general features of Handke's poetics of place. A key text in this respect, is "Die Reise nach Kolonos", in which Handke, at the time of his translation of Sophocles' play *Oedipus at Kolonos* (2003), travels to Athens to try to "find" the place in which the play is set. On the maps of Athens which he buys before going there "war ... kein "Kolonos" eingezeichnet" (K 21). Upon arrival, he finds a map of Athens in which the place name appears, which now is located in "eine Art Zwischenzone" in metropolitan Athens. Going to the area shown on the map, he finds it "unscheinbar", a "non-place" consisting only of a "Gemüse- und Fruchtgeschäft, ... Schusterwerkstatt, ... Garage, ... Bäckerei, ... Fischhandlung" (K 23). In fact, no-one in the place seems able to tell him anything about Kolonos, let alone about Sophocles or the play. But, finally, almost imperceptibly under the suburban pavements, he becomes aware of "eine Art Erhebung" and is then able to relate this undulation to the description of the hills which Sophocles gives as a feature of Kolonos in the play: "Irgendwo stand da "Hügel" (*lofos*) des Verschwundenen Kolonos" (K 27). He searches for the river Kifissos, also mentioned in the play, but cannot find it. Later, in a taxi out of the area, the taxi driver points to a stream: "Kifissos!", "abgedrängt und engeengt zwischen mächtigen Schnellstraßen" (K 31). This stream, now nothing more than a sewer, this hill, scarcely noticeable under the suburban pavement, nevertheless connect him to the *genius loci*. We can see this as an example of "eine genuin ortskundende Entzifferung des Raums der Ökumene" (Honold 328), "das eigensinnige Beharren darauf, in der städtischen Bebauung Hügel und Flussläufe vorzufinden und als landschaftliche Orientierungsmarken aufzunehmen" (Honold 329).

Both the Kolonos text, and Handke's discovery of the "Têtu" graveyard in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* are examples of where the locality, discovered in its specificity, comes to represent the universal (in the case of Kolonos mediated by the universality of Sophocles' play), the character of such places relates not just to those places of universal significance that are recognized as such (e.g. by tourists) but, in particular, those which are not (one can hardly imagine tourists being drawn to this 'non-place' in

Athens). The pre-requisite of this ecumenical idea is that places are "lesbar gemacht werden" (Honold 334), through the interpretation of signs and the use of -poetic imagination.

Handke ends the *Versuch* with a return to the central theme of his work, the process of writing, its relationship to autonomy, and the relationship of this to place. Meditating on the experience just described, of a significant place emerging from insignificance, of poetic qualities emerging from silence, he describes "der vordringliche und mächtigste Anlaß" of the work of the writer as "jene Übergänge, die unvermittelten, von Stummheit, Geschlagensein mit Stummheit, zur Wiederkehr der Sprache und des Sprechens" (VO 107). The "Übergänge" referred to here are not just those from silence to writing, but from one place to another, from non-place to place; and that place only emerges "im Moment des Schließens und Absperrens der bewußten Tür, allein mit dem Ort und seiner Geometrie, weg von den anderen" (VO 107). Only with autonomy from others, through withdrawal to the "stillen Ort" does writing begin, but this withdrawal is always accompanied by a desire to return to the world, to "Das Grölen, Gellen, Toben und Kreischen draußen: verwandelt in Volksgemurmel und Weltgeräusch" (VO 109).

The final sentence of *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*, with its affirmation that the search for the "stillen Ort" is not just a withdrawal from the world, but a re-affirmation of and engagement with it, seems designed to counter "die verbreitete Einschätzung Handkes als eines modernen Lebenswelten regressiv feindselig gesonnenen Autors" (Gruber 329). The way in which Handke describes places in the *Versuch*, as argued above, is such that he does not wish to turn them into idylls that are removed from the world and onto which qualities can be projected that are lacking in the rest of the world, as in 'u-topia', but, in their "intimate immensity", to see them as microcosms of the world, and as essentially connected to it. For Handke "Der Ort ist damit kein U-Topos, sondern ... ein Pan-topos, ein All-Ort" (Gruber 342). This does not mean, however, that such places, because they can be anywhere, lose the qualities of specific places, and become a ubiquitous "non-place". On the contrary, it is the specific engagement with poetic qualities of place, the *genius loci*, which, in Handke's vision, binds humanity together in an ecumenical idea, 'das Phantasma

eines Universums aus Frieden und Harmonie durch die genaue Beschreibung real vorhandener Orte' (Tabah 27).

The ancient idea of "Ecumene", Peter Sloterdijk says in his *Sphären* trilogy, stems from the belief that "Menschen allesamt irgendwo zu Hause sein müssen" (Sloterdijk II: 986-7). The *first* ecumenical age was co-existent with the domination of Western forms of ecumenicalism in the age of terrestrial globalization.¹⁴ In the "zweite Ökumene", according to Sloterdijk, the age of global travel and the internet in which we are now, "Die Einheit der Menschheit in ihrer zerstreuter Gattung beruht jetzt darauf, daß sie alle, in ihrer jeweiligen Regionen und Geschichten, zu ... Punkten im homogenen Raum (geworden sind)" (Sloterdijk II 992). It is precisely this reduction of the globe and the human beings in it, to a series of points in a homogeneous global space in the "zweite Ökumene", that Handke's homage to the toilets of the world in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort* is designed to counter.

Endnotes

¹ On the importance of place in Handke's later work in particular, see Carsten Rohde, "Träumen und Gehen" *Peter Handkes geopoetische Prosa seit Langsame Heimkehr*, Bettina Gruber, "All-Ort. Peter Handkes Topographien der Moderne" *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, 48 (2004), 329-347, and Mireille Tabah, "Landschaft als Utopie? Ästhetische Topographien in Peter Handkes Werk seit der Langsamen Heimkehr", in Haslinger, A., Gottwald, H. and Freinschlag, A. (Hrsg.) *'Abenteuerliche, gefährvolle Arbeit'. Erzählen als (Über)Lebenskunst*. Salzburger Handke-Symposium 2002, Salzburg 2006, 19-30.

² The other works are *Mein Jahr in der Niemandsbucht*; *Versuch über die Jukebox*; and *Der Bildverlust*.

³ Jameson, in *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, identifies three generic features of utopian writing, of which the third, the 'utopian enclave' is the most relevant here. The 'utopian enclave', such as More's *Utopia*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, or Campanella's *City of the Sun*, is defined as 'an imaginary enclave within real social space' (15) which is believed to reflect 'the persistent and obsessive search for a simple, a single-shot solution to all our ills' (11).

⁴ Bartmann (1984) sees Handke's 'Raumphantasien' as utopian, not in the sense of Bloch's utopia: 'Handkes Utopien ... haben nichts mit einem Utopiebegriff zu tun, der das Kunstwerk als Vorschein einer künftigen besseren Objektivität deutet' (209), but as an aesthetic utopia of 'suddenness' in the sense of K.H. Bohrer.

⁵ On 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' place see, for instance, E. Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 1976, Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci : towards a phenomenology of architecture*, New York, 1980, and Marc Augé, *Non-Places. Introduction to an anthropology of supermodernity*, 1995.

⁶ See Halsall, R. 'Phenomenology of the Suburb: Peter Handke's *Mein Jahr in der Niemandsbucht*'. in Julian Preece and Osman Durrani (eds.)

Cityscapes and Countryside in Contemporary German Literature, Bern: Peter Lang, 2004, 159-178.

⁷ See Peter Sloterdijk, "Im Dasein liegt eine wesenhafte Tendenz auf Nähe" Hiedegger's Lehre vom existentialen Ort' in *Sphären III. Schäume*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2001, 336-346.

⁸ For a contemporary phenomenological exploration of atmosphere, see Gernot Böhme, *Atmosphäre*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1995.

⁹ See for instance, 'Die offenen Geheimnisse der Technokratie' and 'Die Reise nach La Défense 22.2.1974' in *Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat*, 31-38 and 39-54, or the description of American cities in *Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied*.

¹⁰ Melzer (1985) describes 'Schauen' in Handke's work as a 'Verschmelzung von Sehen und Fühlen' (128) or 'teilnehmendes Bewusstsein' (130).

¹¹ Sparrows, seemingly, are among Handke's favourite members of the 'earth orchestra', as evident from the number of times they occur in, for example, *Gestern Unterwegs*: sparrows are part of the 'earth orchestra which distinguish places on his journeys such as Olympia (p.49), Argos (p.54), (both in Greece), the pyramids of Giza (Egypt) (p. 64) and many more.

¹² Özelt points out that Handke has spoken about the importance of "Weltgeräusche" in his work in an interview with Gero von Boehm: 'Gero von Boehm begegnet Peter Handke' first broadcast on 3 Sat, 26th May 2008.

¹³ Gruber (2004), for instance, correctly observes that Handke 'sorgfältig meidet ... im allgemeinen alles, was die Topographie des klassischen Reiseführers wahrzunehmen vorschreibt ... einen Modus des Sehens, der als paradigmatischer "anti-touristischer Blick" verstanden werden muss' (332).

¹⁴ See Voegelin. E. *Order and History* Vol. 4, *The Ecumenic Age* (1974b), Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1974.

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