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“Waldeinsamkeit” in Ludwig Tieck’s Novellas *Der blonde Eckbert* and *Waldeinsamkeit* as well as in Adalbert Stifter’s *Der Hochwald*

The neologism ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ describes a subset of loneliness which is specific for German Romanticism. The introductory part of this essay investigates the circumstances under which this new concept emerged. The detachment of loneliness from specific locations outside society and its transformation into a mindset (also) within society, which occurs in the course of the 18th century, results in this new subset which again links loneliness to the place where it occurs. The forest is no accidental location, for the German word ‘Wald’ is charged with strong cultural and ideological notions. Then, it will be analysed how ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ is established for the first time and later – after it had been used prolifically in both Romantic prose and poetry – revoked in two novellas by Ludwig Tieck, *Der blonde Eckbert* (1796/97) and *Waldeinsamkeit* (1841). In the last part, it will be discussed how Adalbert Stifter adapted and used ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ in *Der Hochwald* (1842/44).

Keywords: ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ – loneliness – forest – German Romanticism – Ludwig Tieck – Adalbert Stifter

Any attempt to translate the German compound noun “Waldeinsamkeit” into English proves to be unsatisfactory, for it is a combination of two concepts which both are rich as well as ambiguous in themselves. Its first component, “Wald” (literally translated ‘forest’ or ‘wood’), is charged with ideological emotions, as it not only signifies a certain type of landscape, but also forms part of the self-definition of German culture. The second component, “Einsamkeit” (which can be rendered with ‘loneliness’ or ‘solitude’), may – according to Johann

Christoph Adelung's influential dictionary *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart* – firstly denote the condition in which a person finds him- or herself. A state of solitude can be perceived as positive or negative, as becomes clear from the examples which are used in this context. Secondly, "Einsamkeit" may indicate a place, a 'lonely place' where one experiences this condition of solitude.¹ Adelung's entry concerning the adjective 'einsam' is more extensive and also reflects upon the rapid development of the term during the 1770s and 1780s.² With reference to the 'modern' poets, the focus is shifted from simply *being* lonely to *feeling* lonely. This feeling can be intensified or even cultivated by literature. Thus, it becomes possible to feel loneliness even in populated places such as a city, particularly at night, in absence of noises.³ Adelung's entries took into account the crucial work of Johann Georg Zimmermann, the renowned physician and author who discussed various aspects of loneliness in several works, *Betrachtungen über die Einsamkeit* (1756), *Von der Einsamkeit* (1773) and particularly *Über die Einsamkeit* (1784/85). Zimmermann responded to the deep distrust of solitude which had characterized the Enlightenment's understanding of this concept. Solitude had been regarded as being 'antisocial' and leading to pathologies of the mind, such as melancholy. In his own works, Zimmermann, tries to partially rehabilitate the concept, e.g. by identifying situations in which "Einsamkeit" may assume a positive connotation. It is important to stress how, towards the end of the 18th century, loneliness is relocated

¹ Cf. Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart. Band 1*, 1734. („Die Einsamkeit, plur. die -en. 1) Der Zustand, da ein Ding oder eine Person einsam ist, in allen Bedeutungen dieses Wortes; ohne Plural. Die Einsamkeit lieben. Sein Leben in der Einsamkeit zubringen. Der Einsamkeit überdrüssig seyn. 2) Ein Ort, wo man einsam ist, ein einsamer Ort. Sich in die Einsamkeit begeben. Hier in dieser fürchterlichen Einsamkeit will ich mein trauriges Leben verweinen. In welcher Bedeutung im Falle der Noth auch der Plural gebraucht werden könnte.“)

² Cf. Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart. Band 1*, 1733f. For a further analysis of this passage cf., for instance, Wittler, "Einsamkeit. Ein literarisches Gefühl im 18. Jahrhundert", 203f.

³ "Von der Zeit, eine Abwesenheit des Geräusches der menschlichen Gesellschaft zu bezeichnen." (Adelung, *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart. Band 1*, 1733).

from the 'heterotopia' of remote places (e.g. deserts, hermitages), where it had formerly resided, into the very centre of society.⁴

Thus, "Einsamkeit" gradually lost its heterotopic character and became a mindset. This constituted the background for the coining of the neologism "Waldeinsamkeit" in 1796. Due to the combination with the word "Wald", "Einsamkeit" is, again, driven out of the walls of the city, and its heterotopic character gets reestablished. As mentioned above, one should take a quick glance at the word, or rather concept, of "Wald", which by itself constitutes a quintessential heterotopia. Since its rediscovery in the middle of the 15th century, Tacitus' treatise *Germania* has served as a crucial text for the self-definition of Germans, as it was systematically propagated by humanists such as Conrad Celtis, who wrote his own addition and commentary to Tacitus, under the title *Germania generalis*.⁵ Specific for 'Germania' are the dense woods, in parts of which the emblematic Battle of the Teutoburg Forest had taken place, when Roman general Publius Quinctilius Varus lost his legions to Germanic chieftain Arminius in the year 9 AD. This victory was, in German historiography after Celtis, increasingly attributed not only to the advantages the wooded territory had offered to the Germanic warriors, but also to a moral superiority of these tribes, based upon their simple lives, uncorrupted by the detrimental influences of civilization. In consequence, the woods were more and more seen as a (specifically German) remedy against this kind of decadence. Thus, virtues which were imagined as specifically German, such as loyalty, were linked to the forest landscape.⁶ This idea was taken up in 18th century German literature by poets such as Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock who, in addition to the forests in general, introduced a specific kind of tree for symbolizing German virtues, the oak, as well as by a group of his followers who named themselves 'Göttinger Hain', literally translated the 'Göttingen Grove'. This group existed between 1772 and 1775.⁷

⁴ Cf. Macho, "Mit sich allein: Einsamkeit als Kulturtechnik", 38f.; Cf. also Wittler "Einsamkeit. Ein literarisches Gefühl im 18. Jahrhundert", 191.

⁵ Cf. Zechner, *Der deutsche Wald*, 17-21. Ideologically, an identity between the ancient tribes described by Tacitus ('Germanen') and modern-day Germans ('Deutsche') was presumed in this context.

⁶ Cf. Münkler, *Die Deutschen und ihre Mythen*, 155f.

⁷ Zechner, *Der deutsche Wald*, 21-24.

Ludwig Tieck, albeit born only in 1773, was still deeply impressed by Klopstock's emotionally sublime poetry, as were many poets far into the 1800s. In Romanticism, the sacred aura connected to forests became even reinforced. This was, to a large degree, the merit of Tieck himself. As a student, he visited the forest landscapes of the Harz, a highland area near Göttingen (1792), as well as the so-called Franconian Switzerland, not far from Erlangen (1793). As a young poet, he wrote , in 1796, a somewhat enigmatic text, with traits of both a fairy tale and novella, which stood out because of its marvellous and sometimes uncanny character.⁸ This text, *Der blonde Eckbert*, contained the word 'Waldeinsamkeit', a neologism which is not mentioned in the first and subsequent editions of Adelung's dictionary, but has acquired a separate lemma in its successor, the new, influential dictionary which was edited by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm since 1854.⁹ In the newly coined term, loneliness has reacquired a strong heterotopic notion, as it is – by means of its clearly defined location – opposed to other spaces, above all to cities. If put in relation to the rapid developments of modern (pre-)urban society, 'Waldeinsamkeit' acquires a timeless, eternal quality and evokes, as it were, a utopia or paradise. This dichotomy is not always made explicit in every single literary text which relevant in this context, but it is certainly always present as a background.

Der blonde Eckbert represents a heterotopic world (in comparison to the reader's), as it takes place mostly in secluded settings, i.e. quite often in or surrounded by forests. A blond knight called Eckbert and his wife Bertha live a solitary life – from the very beginning of the story, its protagonists are marked as outsiders – in the mountainous region of Harz in Northern Germany. One evening, Eckbert urges his wife to tell her mysterious life story to a solitary visitor called Philipp Walther: Not unlike the girl in the fairy tale of *Hänsel and Gretel*, Bertha is of humble origins, runs away from her poor and always quarreling parents

⁸ Tieck published it in a collection of 'Volksmärchen' in 1797 and included it, in revised form, in his later collection 'Phantasmus' from 1812.

⁹ The volume containing 'W' was published in 1922 only and contains several references of the use of 'Waldeinsamkeit' by different authors, also stating that 'Waldeinsamkeit' became the key term ("[S]chlagwort") of Romanticism. Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch. Band 27*, 1108.

and arrives at the hut of an old woman, which lies in the middle of the forest. This woman accommodates Bertha, whereupon the girl takes care of household chores such as spinning and providing for the old woman's two animals, a little dog and a peculiar bird during the latter's absence, a peculiar bird indeed, as it can sing a song and lays eggs with pearls and precious stones. When she is not busy, she reads books and indulges in her fantasies of handsome knights. One day, Bertha betrays her mistress and runs away, taking with her some gems as well as the bird and leaving the little dog to its fate, most certainly starvation. When she returns to her parents' home, she finds that these have died; fearing the possible revenge of the old woman and longing for a clean cut with the past, she strangles and thus also kills the bird and eventually marries Eckbert, a knight whom she has encountered in the meantime. As Bertha's story has come to its end, Philipp Walther mentions the name of the little dog, Strohmian, a detail which Bertha had omitted since she could not remember this name. For the moment, the source of this privileged knowledge remains a mystery, but a tense atmosphere ensues and Eckbert regrets this revelation of the past. Indeed, Bertha herself falls ill, while Eckbert kills Philipp Walther during a hunting trip. When he returns home, he learns that his wife has died. Somewhat later, Eckbert befriends a young knight named Hugo. Again, he opens his heart, and again, he comes to regret it. In the end, Eckbert roams the world in a state of permanently feeling persecuted. He encounters the old woman from Bertha's story, who reveals to him that both Philipp Walther and Hugo had been manifestations of herself, and that Bertha was his long-lost half-sister. Bertha could have lived happily ever after, has she only passed the test and remained a faithful person. At this point, Eckbert collapses and dies in a state of crazy agony: a lonely death in the forest.¹⁰

This short yet enigmatic story has inspired a plethora of interpretations, for instance to which genre (fairy tale or novella) it belongs, what the role of the fantastic as well as the subconscious is, or what its surprise ending could mean.¹¹ In the following, the focus

¹⁰ Cf. Tieck, "Der blonde Eckbert".

¹¹ Beck, for instance, points out the confusing rather than enlightening effect of these interpretations which even partially contradict one another. Cf. Beck, *Geselliges Erzählen*, 246f. For one straightforward interpretation focusing upon the

shall be exclusively upon the characteristics of ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ in *Der blonde Eckbert*. What makes this gruesome and, in a manifold sense, ‘fatal’ story still so attractive are the often quite idyllic descriptions of the forests where it takes place. These locations acquire a value of their own, even though the loneliness of the forest does not come without the dark undercurrents of repressed memories, deception, crime, and the demonic. The story begins with a short description of the space where Eckbert’s castle is located, somewhere in the Harz:¹² The Harz is a mountainous region in the north of Germany, as the name itself is derived from the medieval word ‘Hart’ which means ‘mountain forest’. Its dense woods, and mountains, have attracted countless curious visitors since the 18th century, among them Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1777, 1783, 1784), who found inspiration for his poem *Harzreise im Winter* there. Moreover, the ‘Walpurgisnacht scene’ in *Faust I* takes place on the Brocken, the Harz’ highest mountain. Later, in 1824, Heinrich Heine visited the place, and his literary account *Die Harzreise* was one of his first successes. As mentioned above, Tieck himself had been deeply impressed by the region during his stay in July 1792.¹³ Thus, the Harz, beyond being an impressive forest landscape, is implanted into collective German memory as an emblem of the German forest. In the beginning of *Der blonde Eckbert*, the character of the first setting –as a location immersed in nature – is underlined by the fact that Philipp Walter, the visitor, collects herbs and stones in the surroundings of the castle.¹⁴ As far as the Bertha’s story is concerned, the woods become even more emphasized.¹⁵ She tells her story in a room, next to a fireplace, in an atmosphere where the trees outside in an almost anthropomorphic fashion shiver from wet cold, and the dark

marvellous, uncanny, sometimes even gruesome aspects of *Der blonde Eckbert*, cf. Freund, *Literarische Phantastik*, 16-26.

¹² Tieck, “Der blonde Eckbert”, 126.

¹³ Paulin, *Ludwig Tieck*, 19.

¹⁴ Tieck, “Der blonde Eckbert”, 126. This activity may seem strange at first glance, but can be tied to the fact that Philipp Walter is going to be revealed as an incarnation of the mysterious old woman in the end of the story. Philipp Walter’s motivation may be that of a somewhat scholarly collector, but these (medicinal?) herbs and (miraculous?) stones bestow a somewhat arcane quality upon these woods.

¹⁵ Cf. Beck, *Geselliges Erzählen*, 255-61.

night peeks through the window.¹⁶ Bertha herself gives to understand that her birthplace is not far from a forest. The way from there to the paradise of 'Waldeinsamkeit' – Bertha's path leads through several different and increasingly more threatening forest landscapes – is meticulously staged,¹⁷ which reinforces the heterotopic character of her final destination. When Bertha runs away from home, she crosses some fields and then reaches the woodland, a spatial movement characterized by the different phenomenological and emotional qualities which the landscape takes on, and which, moreover, have a strong effect upon the psychological state of Bertha. The first forest, on the plains, is indistinct and in this sense 'neutral'; after having crossed it, however, she is confronted with the quite dreadful woods of the mountains, which are characterized by fog, loneliness, and a steep path through rocks. The next mountain woods appear even more dreadful, the rocks turn into heaps of stone piled one upon another. Bertha is all alone, surrounded by the wilderness, she starts weeping, she tries to sleep, but is kept awake by strange noises. The next day continues in this way, now the landscape is entirely bare. In the evening, she can distinguish the sound of water, the landscape assumes a more friendly character, the wilderness recedes, and Bertha feels much better, as if she had left 'hell' and entered 'paradise'. Close to a waterfall, she encounters an old woman who takes her with herself. On the way to the old woman's hut, the landscape becomes more and more pleasant. The wilderness recedes even further, there is a meadow and a forest, and in the end of this last forest, the motive of "paradise" is taken up again in a romantic synaesthesia: At sunset, everything merges into red and gold; trees and fields are covered with the reddish light of the setting sun, Bertha can hear the murmuring of the brooks and the whispering of the trees in this cheerful silence: a "paradise unlocked."¹⁸ Characteristic of the old woman's hut, where Bertha will spend the next years, are the birch trees standing next to it.¹⁹ So why would Bertha eventually

¹⁶ Tieck, "Der blonde Eckbert", 127.

¹⁷ Cf. Hammes, "Waldeinsamkeit", 21-25, as well as Beck, *Geselliges Erzählen*, 262-76.

¹⁸ Tieck, "Der blonde Eckbert", 129-132. Cf. "Mir war es, als wenn ich aus der Hölle in ein Paradies getreten wäre" (131), as well as: "aufgeschlossenes Paradies" (132).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 132f.

flee from this paradise? The text hints towards something which is comparable to ‘original sin’ for an explanation: Her coming-of-age, that is the detriment influence of time, leads to the awakening of her sexuality, as well as to vanity and greed, for the precious eggs laid by the bird may be likened to the Forbidden Fruit from the bible. This is reinforced by an excess of imagination, which is partly caused by Bertha’s reading during periods of loneliness.²⁰ When she leaves this ‘locus amoenus’ behind, she again has to cross the forest landscape; her movements, however, are depicted in a much less detailed and dramatic way.²¹ After Bertha’s story has ended, the forest motive returns on the narrative level of the frame story. The rough, wintry forest landscape around Eckbert’s castle corresponds to the horribleness of his crime, the murder of Philipp Walter with a crossbow, out in the wilderness.²² After Eckbert has fled from human society, the very end of the story takes place in the forest again, presumably in the same forest which is close to the old woman’s hut, as there are a waterfall and birch trees in the vicinity: these are whispering, a dog (Strohman?) is barking, and a song is heard, at this point for the third and last time in the novella.²³

This prominent song contains the emblematic word ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ and serves as an atmospheric – that is both idyllic and dark – reflection upon the different plot stages of the novella.²⁴ In the first instance, ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ is connoted with a vision of timeless and eternal

²⁰ “Ich hatte auch von Liebe etwas gelesen, und spielte nun in meiner Phantasie seltsame Geschichten mit mir selber. Ich dachte mir den schönsten Ritter von der Welt, ich schmückte ihn mit allen Vortrefflichkeiten aus, ohne eigentlich zu wissen, wie er nun nach allen meinen Bemühungen aussah“ (Ibid., 135). “Ich war jetzt vierzehn Jahre alt, und es ist ein Unglück für den Menschen, daß er seinen Verstand nur darum bekömmet, um die Unschuld seiner Seele zu verlieren. Ich begriff nämlich wohl, daß es nur auf mich ankomme, in der Abwesenheit der Alten den Vogel und die Kleinodien zu nehmen, und damit die Welt, von der ich gelesen hatte, aufzusuchen. Zugleich war es mir dann vielleicht möglich, den überaus schönen Ritter anzutreffen, der mir immer noch im Gedächtnisse lag“ (Ibid., 136). Cf. also Beck, *Geselliges Erzählen*, 249.

²¹ Tieck, “Der blonde Eckbert”, 137f.

²² Ibid., 142.

²³ Ibid., 144f.

²⁴ Ibid., 132, 139 and 145. Cf. Reents, *Stimmungsästhetik*, 192f.

pleasure, corresponding to the paradise-like setting of the old woman's home, where it is sung by the marvelous bird. There, in this first version, 'Waldeinsamkeit' is a delight which is present today, tomorrow, and in all eternity; this joyful character is reiterated and underlined by the positive exclamation 'O' in the last two verses.²⁵ The second version is sung after Bertha's 'fall', after she has committed the 'original sin' of leaving this paradise. Here, 'Waldeinsamkeit' is located in a lost and distant past. Time has replaced timeless eternity, the atmosphere is characterized by loss and regret: as it is reiterated in the last two verses, 'Waldeinsamkeit' used to be the lyrical subject's only pleasure, and this feeling of loss is embodied by the regretful exclamation 'Ach'.²⁶ The third version, in a specifically Romantic trias, reestablishes 'Waldeinsamkeit' and thus celebrates the return to a paradise where there is neither harm nor envy.²⁷ In the set of poems here in *Der blonde Eckbert*, the presence of 'Waldeinsamkeit' is tied to the absence of time. Only in poetry, 'Waldeinsamkeit' can be obtained again; in the plot of the tale, it remains a distant, inaccessible past. Thus, in prose, this is a concept which is constantly undermined and threatened by time, by original sin, a paradise, so to speak, without diachronic stability, without eternity.

The attraction of the poem, and of the very word itself, remains. From here on, 'Waldeinsamkeit' gets used quite frequently in Romanticism, particularly in poetry, representing a pleasant kind of darkness, an amalgamation of beauty, danger, and death. Not by accident, Joseph von Eichendorff, together with Tieck the most prominent author of 'Waldeinsamkeit' in German Romanticism, locates his poetic version of the story of Loreley not on a rock towering over the river Rhine, but in the loneliness of a dark forest; thus, in the poem *Waldgespräch*, he merges two significant German 'myths', the forest and the Rhine river valley Romanticism embodied in the figure of Loreley. Of course,

²⁵ "Waldeinsamkeit/ Die mich erfreut,/ so morgen wie heut/ In ewger Zeit,/ O wie mich freut/ Waldeinsamkeit" (Tieck, "Der blonde Eckbert", 132.).

²⁶ "Waldeinsamkeit/ Wie liegst du weit!/ O dich gereut/ Einst mit der Zeit. -/ Ach einzge Freud/ Waldeinsamkeit!" (Ibid., 139.).

²⁷ "Waldeinsamkeit,/ Mich wieder freut,/ Mir geschieht kein Leid,/ Hier wohnt kein Neid,/ Von neuem mich freut/ Waldeinsamkeit" (Ibid., 145.).

there is a plethora of other poems which take place in the loneliness of the forests: *Waldeinsamkeit*, *In der Fremde*, *Abschied vom Walde*, etc. In prose, in this context one has to mention Tieck's own novel *Franz Sternbalds Wanderungen* as well as nearly all of Eichendorff's novellas.

In 1841, Ludwig Tieck himself wrote a novella with the very title of *Waldeinsamkeit*.²⁸ In this text, he reflected upon the ubiquitous proliferation of the term in an almost ironical manner. In the beginning of the tale, which one might call its exposition, he relates how an elderly gentleman, Baron von Wangen, celebrates his birthday. At some point, a newspaper is brought in, which contains a real-estate advertisement explicitly praising the pleasant 'Waldeinsamkeit' around the property which is on sale. This is, in essence, a symbol for how times have changed: Even a trivial text like a newspaper announcement is enhanced by the term in question.²⁹ Thus, a conversation develops. To the younger guests, using the expression in this context seems quite normal, whereas Baron von Wangen still recalls the situation when the neologism was coined (and when it was still poetry). Wangen explicitly reminds his guests of *Der blonde Eckbert* written by their mutual 'friend'. A young, melancholic man, also a guest at the party, starts reciting the poem 'Waldeinsamkeit', and Wangen relates how in the summer of 1796, the tale had been read by its author in front of a small audience. According to Wangen's account reflecting Tieck's real-life experience, none other but Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder (Tieck's friend and fellow author who had died prematurely in 1798) had criticized, on this occasion, the term 'Waldeinsamkeit' as being grammatically incorrect.³⁰ After that, all of Wangen's guests leave with the exception of the young melancholic man who now turns out

²⁸ Cf. Tieck, "Waldeinsamkeit". For an account of this tale as well as a short glance upon some interpretations, cf. Wesollek, *Ludwig Tieck oder Der Weltumsegler seines Innern*, 219-27.

²⁹ Cf. Hillenbrand, "Realistische Romantik in Tiecks letzter Novelle *Waldeinsamkeit*", 34. For the development of the usage of the term cf. also Nienhaus, "Waldeinsamkeit".

³⁰ Tieck, "Waldeinsamkeit", 857-859. A parallel situation is evoked a little bit later in the text, going back to about 1800, when August Wilhelm Schlegel had called Tieck's 'Waldeinsamkeit'-poem the very essence of the latter's poetry. (Cf. *ibid.*, 864f.)

to be the main character of the tale *Waldeinsamkeit*.³¹ It is Baron von Wangen's nephew, a young enthusiast named Ferdinand von Linden (the linden tree itself, of course, has a long history in literature, as being the tree signifying love and emotion). Ferdinand feels like an outsider with regard to the superficial society surrounding him (a superficiality, which indeed reveals itself by a series of increasingly repelling parties), and he desperately longs for 'Waldeinsamkeit', something which deeply annoys his rich, young and urban fiancée Sidonie. Repeatedly in the tale, Ferdinand is characterized as a melancholic enthusiast, by means of expressions like reverie, daydreaming, poetic mood, poetic dreamer, and he is even addressed as "my Werther."³² Rumours arise that Ferdinand is about to embark on a journey, even though he himself has no plans to do so. Suddenly, though, and in a seemingly magic manner (the last thing he remembers is having attended a party in town), he finds himself in an isolated house in the forest, where for some reason he is kept prisoner by an old, witch-like woman, one of the many parallels and intertextual allusions to the earlier *Der blonde Eckbert*. A major difference, however, consists in the fact that the description of the way in which the heterotopic place is reached does not make part of the text *Waldeinsamkeit*. Rather, it is part of the mystery which will be revealed only in the end. Ferdinand becomes exposed to a situation of 'Waldeinsamkeit', which he had always longed for, but he soon feels only boredom during his isolation in the forest hut. When he looks through the house, he finds, like Bertha in the earlier story, some books (mostly travel accounts) as well as a mysterious manuscript. Apparently, it is the story of a 'madman' who had been kept a prisoner here before Ferdinand. As it were, this is a parallel case to his own, serving to show to him the pathological dangers of his mindset, similarly to the madman account contained in Goethe's *Werther*. It is loneliness which gives him time to read and to reflect, but eventually, he exclaims: 'damn you, Waldeinsamkeit.'³³ Finally, after getting his guardian drunk, he manages to escape, again like Bertha in the earlier story, and after some

³¹ Cf. Brüggemann, "Entzauberte Frühe?"

³² Tieck, "Waldeinsamkeit", 860-864.

³³ "O du verdammte, nichtswürdige Waldeinsamkeit!" Ibid., 909.

detours involving the pathological Doppelgänger and his mysterious, in a way E.T.A. Hoffmannesque writings, there is a happy end. Ferdinand finds his way back to society and manages to marry his fiancée. From the denouement of the plot, it becomes clear that the ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ episode in the homonymous novella had no magical quality, as it had been the case in *Der blonde Eckbert*; rather, its background was simply a very worldly intrigue by a false friend and rival, who had intended to marry Ferdinand’s fiancée himself, playing upon the latter’s obsession with ‘Waldeinsamkeit’. Thus, one can understand the later novella as a “Schwärmerkur” – a cure from excessive enthusiasm – in the spirit of the 18th century. This ‘cure’ comprises a test of ridicule, as it had been suggested by Shaftesbury. There are many humorous scenes in *Waldeinsamkeit*, such as the scene with the drunk ‘witch’. Towards the end of the text, Ferdinand himself, confronted with his situation, is able to draw the appropriate conclusion: It is ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ that has put me into this state, he answers annoyed, yet laughing.³⁴ This laughter about himself is the sign for his ‘cure’, for his return into society. Essentially, the ending of the text underlines the necessity of a balance of all human faculties and values: of sense and sensibility, of body and mind, of nature and culture, of individuality and society.³⁵ With this text, Tieck has denounced the concept in question, or at least the way the Romantic reception has made use of it, as being a merely scenic and potentially deceiving backdrop: ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ now appears to be dead and buried by its own creator.

Yet, one important author continued to make widespread use of ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ in his prose, albeit from a different angle: Adalbert Stifter, who wrote at the transition from late Romanticism to (proto-) Realism.³⁶ He used the word ‘Waldeinsamkeit’, for instance in his collection *Feldblumen*, but more importantly, his novels and novellas are often set in lonely forests (and other forms of lonely landscapes).

³⁴ “Die Waldeinsamkeit, antwortete Linden erbittert und dennoch lachend, hat mich so zu Grunde gerichtet.” Ibid., 930.

³⁵ Cf. Hillenbrand, “Realistische Romantik in Tiecks letzter Novelle *Waldeinsamkeit*”, 72.

³⁶ Indeed, Stifter was an admirer of Tieck. Cf. Stamm, *Ludwig Tiecks späte Novellen*, 72-76, as well as Lukas, “Der Hochwald”, 26.

In nearly every case, the readers of Stifter's works are confronted with the respective hero's solitary spatial movements (a quick glance upon the titles often suffices, cf. *Der Waldsteig* [1845] or *Der Waldgänger* [1847]), which result in huge, and sublime,³⁷ descriptive spaces in the narrative and, as it were, provoke a kind of loneliness in the readers themselves. These wanderings through the loneliness of forests (as well as other forms of landscapes) are of particular significance in Stifter's educational novel *Der Nachsommer* (1857), where the younger protagonist, at least in the beginning, is even educated by his lonely observation of nature. In the writer's last novel *Witiko* (1865-1867), they are ubiquitous. Stifter's 'Waldeinsamkeit' is always connected to identifiable geographical places in landscapes, which are meticulously described and set in a particular historical time. The author usually is familiar with these landscapes because of his own observations and experiences, for instance the Bohemian Forest (Stifter was born in a village close to this region),³⁸ the Alps, which he sometimes calls 'Blue Mountains', or the plains and valleys of the Austrian Danube.

Der Hochwald, Stifter's emblematic text within this topic, was published exactly one year after Tieck's novella *Waldeinsamkeit*, in 1842, and, in a slightly revised version, again in 1844.³⁹ Here, Stifter uses 'Waldeinsamkeit' almost as an experimental setup. Not only is the overall title *Der Hochwald*, but every single name of its seven subsections starts with the word 'Wald'.⁴⁰ Essentially, the text begins with the first of the several itineraries towards heterotopia which are outlined in the text. In this first instance, a panorama from above is described, showing to the reader the vastness of the landscape, in this case the region where Bohemia, Austria and Bavaria border on each other. The 'camera', so to speak, then 'zooms' to a specific solitary forest region which is compared to a remote sea bay. Then, the text takes on the perspective of a wanderer on the surface of the land. This lonely wanderer sets off from the Bohemian city of Krumau, which lies at the banks of the

³⁷ Cf. Häge, *Dimensionen des Erhabenen bei Adalbert Stifter*, 139-51.

³⁸ Cf. Matz, *Adalbert Stifter oder Diese fürchterliche Wendung der Dinge*, 135f.

³⁹ Stifter, "Der Hochwald".

⁴⁰ Waldburg, Waldwanderung, Waldhaus, Waldsee, Waldwiese, Waldfels, and Waldruine.

river Moldau. He then follows the Moldau upwards, through hills, a plain and some villages, until it becomes “more youthful and closer to its origin.”⁴¹ Then, the wanderer reaches the actual mountains of the Bohemian Forest, follows a brook up through a dense forest, crosses clearings which are characterized by, as the author puts it, “dark black soil, the death bed of a thousand year old vegetation, with round granite rocks that seem like pale skulls, and with the white skeletons of fallen trees. No trace of human life, virginal silence.”⁴² The path to loneliness, passing this death zone (not unlike Bertha’s way in *Der blonde Eckbert*, after she had first fled from home), takes on the form of a quest for the origin, a pre-societal, as it were innocent original state, thus transcending the threshold between history and myth. But ‘we’ (as the text puts it) are not there yet, ‘we’ have to climb even higher, until ‘we’ reach a black lake. Now, the perspective of the narration switches from the first person plural ‘we’ to the one of a first person singular, solitary ‘I’: A feeling of the deepest loneliness overcame me, invincibly, every time I ascended, eagerly, to this fairy-tale-like lake.⁴³ The ‘Waldeinsamkeit’ which Stifter presents here displays the same mechanism of dangerous, potentially lethal attraction, as does its Romantic model, but it is not only the heterotopia of an idyllic and/or magical rural counter-world to urban society; rather, it is much more essential, in a much more decisive way pointing to paradise itself. The only way to regain this lost paradise appears to be through hermetic seclusion, isolation, loneliness. The continuation of *Der Hochwald* will show if this is possible in a permanent manner, or, for that matter, possible at all.

The ruins of a castle constitute the second geographical focus point of the story (which, in essence, can be read as an aetiology of how

⁴¹ “[H]ier sind [die Wasser der Moldau] noch jugendlicher und näher ihrem Ursprunge.“ Stifter, “Der Hochwald“, 212.

⁴² “[E]s ist eine wilde Lagerung zerrissener Gründe, aus nichts bestehend, als tief schwarzer Erde, dem dunklen Todtenbette tausendjähriger Vegetation, worauf viele einzelne Granitkugeln liegen, wie bleiche Schädel [...]. – Ferner liegt noch da und dort das weiße Gerippe eines gestürzten Baumes und angeschwemmte Klötze. [...] Keine Spur von Menschenhand, jungfräuliches Schweigen.” Ibid., 212f.

⁴³ “Ein Gefühl der tiefsten Einsamkeit überkam mich jedesmal unbesieglich, so oft und gern ich zu dem mährchenhaften See hinaufstieg.“ Ibid., 213.

that once-thriving castle has become a ruin). The first-person narrator loves going there – alone, of course – and contemplating upon the view of the landscape, inviting the wanderer, i.e. the reader, to do the same. In this second instance, the way towards heterotopia also leads through time: The story within the story unfolds, exactly at this place but some 400 years earlier. Clarissa and Johanna are the two daughters of Heinrich von Wittinghaus, the owner of the – then intact – castle. The girls are discussing the story of a mysterious hunter who lives in the dense mountain forests not far from the castle, when their father enters and reveals to them that they will have to move to an isolated place, in order to be safe from the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War which is raging nearby. Swedish troops are rumoured to soon invade this region, and the castle is in danger of being forcefully conquered. Heinrich von Wittinghaus, however, has made meticulous preparations: He intends to send his daughters to the most secluded and secure place available, that is the black forest lake introduced in the beginning of the tale. In advance, he has built a safe house on the most inaccessible spot there, a small bay which is accessible only by boat, its landside being protected by a steep rock face. He has also established in advance who shall go with them in order to protect and serve them, what they will take with themselves, and how exactly they are supposed to behave in any given situation. These meticulous preparations turn this undertaking into an experiment, with the subject of how seclusion and loneliness may or may not make human survival possible, given that society puts an individual in grave danger.

On a first glance and for a while, the two sisters, together with their entourage, live a happy life surrounded by the 'virginal' beauty of nature. This life is carefully monitored and organized by Gregor, an old friend of their father, who, during this period, represents the paternal influence from afar (and moreover is associated with the mythical hunter). Clarissa and Johanna, however, don't maintain a strict separation from human society, they long for their lost home and repeatedly venture towards an elevation on the other side of the lake, in order to make visual contact with their home, using the help of a 'technical', 'modern' instrument, a telescope. After a while, history violently breaks into the only seemingly timeless paradise. One day, a wild bird – a vulture – falls from the sky, pierced by

a hunter's arrow. It has been shot by a young man, an officer serving in the Swedish army, with whom Clarissa, the older sister, as we learn, had once been in love, and who now tries to approach her again. The killing of the bird stands for a loss of innocence and serves as a prefiguration of the bellicose events to come later in the tale. And matters get even worse: From their favourite viewpoint, the sisters discern with their telescope that the castle has a little cloud over it, and after looking closer, they finally understand that it has been destroyed. They return home and learn how the lover of Clarissa had tried to make a truce deal with Wittinghaus, how their father had, mistakenly, killed him and how, thereupon, the father himself had been killed and the castle destroyed by the Swedes. And thus, they lived unhappily ever after.⁴⁴ All the efforts to regain the paradise lost of 'Waldeinsamkeit', and to maintain it, have been in vain in this text. A complete separation from society and history was impossible to achieve. The only person in the novella who comes close to this is the timeless mythical hunter: He has become one with the forest, as he continues to exist, but nobody exactly knows where and for how long. The sisters, however, were unable to forget their past interpersonal relationships, they cannot exist outside society and history. What is more, Stifter – and this is a step further compared to the creation and renunciation of 'Waldeinsamkeit' by Tieck – demonstrates how 'Waldeinsamkeit' itself is not a timeless heterotopia, but subject to time, as well as to the detrimental influences of society and history: Paradise has been lost forever. Looking back to the very beginning of *Der Hochwald*, one finds that a sense of decline defines even the most remote and seemingly timeless 'Waldeinsamkeit'. As the narrator points out when describing the landscape between Krumau and the mountains, there had once been forests everywhere, which have long disappeared, quite in the same way as the castle has fallen into ruins. The only resort for a – distinctly 'sentimental' – wanderer is the deliberate act of temporarily and purposefully seeking 'Waldeinsamkeit', in order to find contemplation there. In a way, a dark lure is not so much exerted by the 'Waldeinsamkeit' itself, but rather by the very feeling itself which it triggers, and it does so repeatedly and reliably, as is proven by the above-

⁴⁴ For the basic outline of an interpretation, cf. Matz, *Adalbert Stifter oder Diese fürchterliche Wendung der Dinge*, 134f., as well as Lukas, "Der Hochwald", 26-31.

Lindinger: "Waldeinsamkeit" in Ludwig Tieck's Novellas *Der blonde Eckbert* and *Waldeinsamkeit* as well as in Adalbert Stifter's *Der Hochwald*

quoted comments of the lonely wanderer on the feeling by which he is overcome whenever – repeatedly and with pleasure, that is purposefully – he climbs up to the black forest lake.⁴⁵ 'Waldeinsamkeit', it appears, has now reached the same point where 'Einsamkeit' had been some decades before: It is located not, or not exclusively, on the outside (some quiet woods alone themselves do not suffice), but rather within the very person who seeks and feels it, who is open and responsive to 'Waldeinsamkeit'.

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⁴⁵ "Ein Gefühl der tiefsten Einsamkeit überkam mich jedesmal unbesieglich, so oft und gern ich zu dem märchenhaften See hinaufstieg." Stifter, "Der Hochwald", 213.

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