

# Coming to life

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IN **LUMIÈRES 2018/1 N° 31**, PAGES 169 TO 182

PUBLISHER **PRESSES UNIVERSITAIRES DE BORDEAUX**

ISSN 1762-4630

ISBN 9791030003420

DOI 10.3917/lumi.031.0169

Uploaded: 01/02/2023

Article available online at

<https://shs.cairn.info/revue-lumieres-2018-1-page-169?lang=en>



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## COMING TO LIFE

### Humans and Marbles in Eichendorff's *Marmorbild*

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**RÉSUMÉ.** Depuis le XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, les statues ne sont plus uniquement considérées comme des objets artistiques mais aussi comme des objets anthropologiques qui tissent un lien entre le passé et le présent. La statue conserve alors cette signification dans le romantisme allemand du début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, mais sa valeur anthropologique a changé : à cet effet, nous proposons une lecture d'un texte qui nous paraît exemplaire de cette évolution, *Das Marmorbild* (1818) d'Eichendorff. De fait, la statue de marbre n'y donne plus lieu à un usage idéalisé de l'Antiquité ; au contraire, la rencontre entre l'humain et la statue est devenue violente et traumatisante. Dans le récit d'Eichendorff, on assiste à la fois à la persistance du mythe de Pygmalion d'une statue animée et au fantasme d'un réveil de l'Antiquité. Cependant, les statues se mettent à incarner autant le désir que la peur. Tout au long du récit, la statue se situe des deux côtés de la frontière entre la vie et la mort. Le lien entretenu avec le passé n'est plus celui donnant accès à une Antiquité idéale rêvée mais celui d'une plongée dans un monde personnel, onirique et terrifiant.

**MOTS-CLÉS.** Statues, marbre, Eichendorff, pétrification, inquiétante étrangeté, littérature allemande, Romantisme.

**ABSTRACT.** *Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century marble statues have been recognized as anthropological objects that establish a relation between the present viewer and the historical past. While they maintain this significance in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century German Romanticism, their anthropological significance changes. In an exemplary reading of Eichendorff's *Das Marmorbild* (1818), we demonstrate that the marble statue no longer allows for an idealized recourse to antiquity; on the contrary, encounters between humans and statues are existentially traumatizing. In Eichendorff's novella, both the Pygmalion fantasy of a beloved statue coming to life and the classicist fantasy of a revival of antiquity are addressed, yet the statues embody fear as much as they do desire. Throughout the novella, the statue appears on both sides of the division between life and death; the past that it renders accessible is not an idealized antiquity, but a dreamlike and terrifying individual past.*

**KEYWORDS.** *Statues, marble, Eichendorff, petrification, uncanny, German studies, Romanticism.*

The perception of statues undergoes a fundamental change in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Aurélie Gaillard identifies four major elements of this change: (1) Within the hierarchy of the arts, statues are valorized as artworks equal to paintings, (2) statues are strongly linked to the expression and production of emotion, (3) the Pygmalion myth rises dramatically in public attention and popularity, and (4) there is a beginning fascination for automata and animation. For Étienne-Maurice Falconet, it is “la

nature vivante, animée, passionnée” that is expressed in the statue. In his *Encyclopédie* entry, he argues for a complementarity of sculpture and painting; the statue, through its tangible and solid material, imitates nature differently<sup>1</sup>. For Johann Joachim Winckelmann, antique marble statues represent an ideal state of human nature that must be revitalized as a role model for aesthetic production<sup>2</sup>. Statues are no longer seen as merely artistic but recognized as anthropological objects; in Gaillard’s words, thinking the statue equals thinking the world<sup>3</sup>.

We would like to argue that the statue maintains this significance in early 19<sup>th</sup> century German romanticism: it remains a way of “thinking the world”; the world itself, however, seems to have changed

1. In his article SCULPTURE in the *Encyclopédie*, Falconet describes his vision of what statues represent: “On définit la Sculpture un art qui par le moyen du dessein et de la matière solide, imite avec le ciseau les objets palpables de la nature”. Except for the instrument of the “ciseau” (chisel), his formula refers to Roger de Piles’ definition of painting and sculpture in his *Cours de peinture par principes* (1708).
2. Exemplary for the idealization of antique Greek works of art we are referring to an extract from Winckelmann’s *Gedanken über die Nachahmung*: “It is not only Nature which the votaries of the Greeks find in their works, but still more, something superior to nature; ideal beauties, brain-born images”. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Reflections on the painting and sculpture of the Greeks: with instructions for the connoisseur, and an essay on grace in works of art*. Translated from the German original of Abbé Winckelmann, Librarian of the Vatican, F. R. S. &c. &c. by Henry Fusseli, London, 1767, p. 4. (“Die Kenner und Nachahmer der Griechischen Werke finden in ihren Meister-Stücken nicht allein die schönste Natur, sondern noch mehr als Natur; das ist, gewisse Idealschönheiten derselben, die [...] von Bildern bloß im Verstande entworfen, gemacht sind”, J. J. Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* [1755], in H. Pfothenhauer, M. Bernauer and N. Miller, *Frühklassizismus. Position und Opposition*, Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, « Bibliothek der Kunstliteratur », vol. 2, 1995, p. 11-50, p. 20. For a general overview to Winckelmann’s reflection on antique marbles between literature and aesthetics cf. Helmut Pfothenhauer, *Um 1800. Konfigurationen der Literatur, Kunstliteratur und Ästhetik*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, « Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte », vol. 59, 1991.
3. This is our summary of a series of studies by Aurélia Gaillard. Cf. “Les statues parlent aussi : Pygmalion et la fabrique amoureuse au tournant de l’âge Classique”, *Littératures Classiques*, 69 (2009), “Les discours artistiques de l’amour à l’âge Classique”, p. 89-108; “Comme un rêve de pierre: la sculpture des Lumières et le rêve de matière”, in R. Dekoninck, A. Guideroni-Bruslé, N. Kremer (ed.), *Aux limites de l’imitation – L’Ut pictura poesis à l’épreuve de la matière (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Amsterdam/New York, Rodopi, 2009, p.169-83; “L’ineptie de la statue : entre philosophie et roman”, *Littérales* 34-35 (2004), “Sortise et ineptie de la Renaissance aux Lumières”, p. 199-215; “Montrer les corps, animer les statues: à propos de quelques questions sur la peinture et la sculpture à l’époque des Lumières”, in C. J. Grapa, N. Jacques-Lefèvre, Y. Séité (ed.), *Le travail des Lumières. Pour Georges Benrekassa*, Paris, H. Champion, 2002, p. 77-92 and *Le corps des statues. Le vivant et son simulacre à l’âge classique (de Descartes à Diderot)*, Paris, H. Champion, « Les dix-huitèmes siècles », 2003.

between the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century in a way that alters the statues' function<sup>4</sup>. In an exemplary reading of Eichendorff's *Das Marmorbild*<sup>5</sup>, we would like to direct attention to a second shift in the history of literary representations of statues. After 1800, the statue turns from an ideal and enduring representation of human nature, as in Winckelmann, to an uncanny representation of its fragility<sup>6</sup>. While 18<sup>th</sup>-century aesthetics achieves a consolidation of emotional responses to and artistic appraisal of the statue, leaving only the balance between its erotic and its idealized properties unstable<sup>7</sup>, Eichendorff's account radically revokes this consolidation. In *Das Marmorbild*, he draws on Pygmalion not as a mythical pretext for artistic experimentation<sup>8</sup>, but as a paradigm for the failure to reconcile artistic production and reality.

To distinguish very roughly: If in 18<sup>th</sup> century aesthetic theory the statue embodies humanistic hopes, in 19<sup>th</sup>-century conceptions it simultaneously embodies desires and fears. In *Das Marmorbild*, the statue functions as the hinge between the present reality and a dreamlike

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4. By situating this shift around 1800, we naturally inscribe it into the traditions of "shifts around 1800" that authors as disparate as Koselleck, Foucault, and Luhmann have unanimously declared. We will ignore the great historical lines and reconstruct the specific changes that apply to the statue in Eichendorff's romanticist account. For the large picture, cf. Reinhart Koselleck, "Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert als Beginn der Neuzeit", in R. Herzog (ed.), *Epochenschwelle und Epochenbewußtsein*, München, Wilhelm Fink, « Poetik und Hermeneutik », vol. 12, 1987, p. 269-82.
  5. We use the following edition: Joseph von Eichendorff, "Das Marmorbild", in *Werke*, vol. 2., W. Frühwald, B. Schillbach, H. Schulz (ed.), Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985, p. 383-428. Quotes within the text. For the English translation we use the following edition: J. v. Eichendorff, "The Marble Statue", in F. G. Ryder, R. M. Browning, *German Literary Fairy Tales*, translated by F. G. Ryder, New York: Continuum 1983, p. 133-171. Quotes of the English translation within the footnotes.
  6. In German Romanticism, this function becomes increasingly delegated to automata, most prominently in the works of Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann. In comparison to their interest in progressive technology, the statue is a rather archaic way of confronting human form with an unreliable other. In Eichendorff's medieval setting, the phantastic mostly appears in the guise of the magical, which makes the statue a coherent choice.
  7. René Démoris describes an anonymous *histoire comique* in which two musketeers fall in love with a Venus statue in the Courtyard of Versailles. See R. Démoris, "Peinture et belles antiques dans la première moitié du siècle. Les statues vivent aussi", *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 27 (1995), p. 129-42.
  8. Diderot highlights the Pygmalion aspect in Falconet's own work. In his description of Falconet's statue *Pygmalion au pied de sa statue qui s'anime*, Falconet becomes Pygmalion: "O Falconet, comment as-tu fait pour mettre dans un morceau de pierre blanche la surprise, la joie et l'amour fondus ensemble. Emule des dieux, s'ils ont animé la statue, tu en as renouvelé le miracle en animant le statuaire", Denis Diderot, *Salon de 1763 in Essais sur la peinture*, Paris, Hermann, 1984, p. 250.

past. Both are entangled on the level of personage, on the level of plot and on the level of metaphor. Eichendorff, in a variation of narrative and lyrical elements, develops a poetics of the statue not as a reflective counterpart to humanity, but as a permeable stage: Statues turn into people, and people turn into statues. Eichendorff does not champion medieval Christianity over pagan Antiquity<sup>9</sup>, but ahistorically and generally problematizes the function of the work of art, and specifically of sculpture, as a projection surface. *Das Marmorbild* stages the statue ambivalently between artistic representation and magical petrification. It draws heavily on an earlier Eichendorff novella, *Die Zauberei im Herbste* (1809)<sup>10</sup>. Both novellas share three major narrative components: (1) the connection of amorous desire and the threat of decay, (2) the bewitching beauty of mysterious gardens, and (3) the petrification of an eroticized female figure<sup>11</sup>. In both novellas, the relationship between spectator and statue is highly personal: The statues represent and conjure traumatic personal memories. Far from the reproachful perfection of classicist accounts, the statue is conceptualized as a threatening return of the repressed.

The representation of the Venus statue in *Das Marmorbild* (1818) bears little reference to Winckelmann's idealized view of antiquity. On the contrary, in Eichendorff's novella, the white appearance of the Venus figure becomes ghostly. Eichendorff introduces an erotic connection to antiquity<sup>12</sup> which then transmutes into horror and ultimately finds its determination in the transformation of the female body into a dead

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9. Cf. Brad Prager, *Aesthetic Vision and German Romanticism. Writing Images*, New York, Camden House, 2007, p. 209: "In this regard, the tale is far more subtle and complex when it is not taken to be about the undermining of the sensuality of the antique arts in the name of Christianity but rather as a text about looking in general". In regard to the image of antiquity and mythology in Eichendorff see Winfried Woesler, "Eichendorff und die antike Mythologie", in M. Kessler, H. Koopmann (ed.), *Eichendorffs Modernität*, Tübingen, Stauffenburg, 1989, p. 203-21.
  10. Wilhelm Kosch, the first editor of Eichendorff's fairy tales, refers to *Zauberei im Herbste* as the *Urbild* ("archetype") of *Das Marmorbild*. Cf. Otto Eberhardt, *Figuræ. Rollen und Namen der Personen in Eichendorffs Erzählwerk. Untersuchungen zum poetischen Verfahren Eichendorffs IV*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2011, p. 179.
  11. On petrifications of the female body cf. Christian Begemann, "Der Steinerne Leib der Frau. Ein Phantasma in der europäischen Literatur des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts", *Aurora*, 59 (1999), p. 135-59.
  12. Regarding sexual desire and the function of myth cf. Lothar Pikulik, "Die Mythisierung des Geschlechtstriebes in Eichendorffs 'Marmorbild'", in H. Koppmann (ed.), *Mythos und Mythologie in der Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 1979, p. 159-72.

statue<sup>13</sup>. Although *Das Marmorbild* takes place in an Italian landscape around the city of Lucca, the scenery lacks classicist *topoi*. The novella is centered around transformations between flesh and stone, sexual desire and uncanny fear. The statue simultaneously represents two stereotypes of “Italy”: the world of the day, filled with eternal song and springtime, and the world of the night, filled with unknown terrors of the past.

Besides the lone traveler Florio, there are four main characters in *Das Marmorbild*: his two competing father figures, Fortunato, a minnesinger, and Donati, a knight; Bianka, a young woman with the attributes of innocence and cheerfulness; and Venus, an ambiguous character with both human and statuesque qualities, onto whom both erotic lust and fear are projected. At first sight, the narrative function of the Venus statue appears almost polemical in its anti-Classicism: The marble statue, far from “Stille Einfalt und edle Größe”<sup>14</sup>, does not allow for an idealized recourse to Greek antiquity; on the contrary, the only contact to the past that it allows for is violent and traumatizing. The white perfection of the classic marble, roughly half a century after Winckelmann's *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, has become ghostly. However, the novella reveals a much more complicated relation between desire and fear, organic and inorganic, human and marble, idealized past and (likewise idealized) present: The oppositions of Eichendorff's novella are deliberately designed to betray a continuity between each of its poles.

*Das Marmorbild* features a large number of oppositions that seem to make an anticlassicist case. Venus exists as a statue of melancholy and morbid beauty that only occasionally comes to life; Bianka represents the stereotype of innocent and lively girlhood. Both appear as highly schematized options for male desire and are described almost entirely in terms of their effects on the male protagonist. The same applies to the singer and the knight: Donati is characterized by gloom and wild mood swings – “und sein erster Blick war so fremd, stier und wild, daß sich Florio ordentlich vor ihm entsetzte”<sup>15</sup> (402); Fortunato, on the other hand, by conviviality, empathy, and decidedly prosocial behavior – “sein frisches Wesen, ja selbst

13. Cf. Elisabeth Bronfen, *Nur über ihre Leiche. Tod, Weiblichkeit und Ästhetik*, München, Kunstmann, 1994.

14. “Noble simplicity and sedate grandeur”, J. J. Winckelmann, *Reflections on the painting and sculpture of the Greeks: with instructions for the connoisseur, and an essay on grace in works of art*, éd. citée, p. 30.

15. “His first glance was so strange and glazed and wild that Florio was horrified” (149).

seine fröhliche Stimme [waren] so überaus anmutig, daß er gar nicht von demselben wegsehen konnte”<sup>16</sup> (385). This dualism of characters is reflected in several simpler oppositions: the Venus figure appears at night, Bianka during the day, Donati is linked to moonlight and dark water, Fortunato to morning sun and springtime trees. The guiding dualism appears as static: One side of it is marked by the nouns “flowers”, “spring”, “scent”, “wreath”, and “play” (*Blumen, Frühling, Duft, Blumenkranz, Spiel*) and the adjectives “young”, “joyful”, “friendly”, “bold”, “cheerful”, “lovely”, “delicate”, “innocent”, “colourful”, “charming”, “pious”, and “clear” (*jung, fröhlich, freundlich, frisch, keck, lustig, unschuldig, lieblich, zierlich, unschuldig, bunt, anmutig, fromm, klar*). Its opposite is formed by the nouns “longing”, “tears”, “homesickness”, “moonlight”, and “melancholy” (*Sehnen, Tränen, Heimweh, Mondschein, Melancholie*) and by the adjectives “pale”, “contemplative”, “silent”, “lonesome”, “mute”, “sunken”, “mad”, “bleak”, “dark”, “frightened”, “nightmarish”, “monstrous”, “dreamy” (*bleich/blaß, sinnend, still, einsam, stumm, versunken, irre, wüst, dunkel, ängstlich, schauerlich, ungestalt, träumerisch*).

Theodor W. Adorno’s decision to place his essay on Eichendorff next to “Heine the Wound” in his *Notes to Literature*<sup>17</sup> seems entirely justified by this setup – Eichendorff’s descriptions are so pointedly and unironically dualistic that both sides emerge as clichés close to their own parody. Adorno attempts to save Eichendorff from reactionary readings as a poet of “homeland” (*Heimat*) by instead declaring him a poet of “homesickness” (*Heimweh*). In the novella, all five characters share the desire to return to a former stage or place, including the mythical Venus figure – they are all ‘longing homewards’. There are further elements that complicate the seemingly simple dualism, both on the level of motifs and on the level of plot; it is specifically the element of the statue that appears on both sides of the division between life and death<sup>18</sup>. Humans in Eichendorff’s novella are almost universally described as

16. “Florio was so completely charmed by [...] his proud and open manner, yes, even his happy voice, that he could not take his eyes off him” (133).

17. See Theodor W. Adorno, “In memory of Eichendorff” and “Heine the Wound” in *Notes to Literature*, vol. 1, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 55–79 and p. 80–85.

18. Regarding the fluctuation of the Venus statue between death and life, A. Gaillard writes: “Car toute statue, par postulat, par essence, est toujours objet de mort, cadavre de pierre et prodige de vie, statue mouvante et galopante, douée de vue et de parole, comme l’atteste l’antique mythe des statues dédaliques” in *Le corps des statues. Le vivant et son simulacre à l’âge classique (de Descartes à Diderot)*, Paris, éd. citée, p. 15.

images. When Bianka is first introduced, she appears as “recht wie ein fröhliches Bild des Frühlings”<sup>19</sup>(387). Humans are treated as pictures on several occasions: In his first song, Fortunato addresses a young man as “an image of youth”<sup>20</sup>. In that same song, men and women figure as ornaments:

Und Ritter und Frauen  
Im Grünen Revier  
Durchschwärmen die Auen  
Wie Blumen zur Zier<sup>21</sup> (391).

In Fortunato's song, flowers are colorful decoration. Similarly, the population of Lucca is generally referred to as a moving ornament to the plot. The song contains the *topos* of the silent guest, who is likewise addressed as a picture: “Den Stillsten der Gäste – woher, einsam Bild?”<sup>22</sup> (391). Long before the element of the statue is even introduced, the novella induces a (metaphorical) transgression between humans and their images. In analogy to the image of Venus, the “schönes Venusbild” (398), Bianka, in the novella's last passage, is elevated to a noble, angelic image, an “Engelsbild” (428). The *telos* of the novella is not overcoming the inessentiality of the image and becoming human, but the augmentation from human to angelic image. Between the images, personal identities are rendered insecure: Eichendorff employs the romanticist tools of masquerade and the *Doppelgänger* motif to confuse the identities of Bianka and Venus, both of whom appear dressed as a “Greek” at a party. Another distinction is increasingly blurred: The novella's central double allegory is that of flowers and stars, with flowers representing life, youth, health – and stars representing death and the desire for death. In the course of the plot, several combinations of the two images emerge: wreaths can be made of poppies instead of roses and hence point to the semantic field of sleep, dream, and death; when Venus is dressed in *Blütenschnee* – a snow of blossoms – the organic and the crystal form are combined, and her appearance is alternatively marked by stars or artificial flowers. It is, once again, Fortunato's first

19. “A happy image of spring” (135).

20. “In garlands of roses, / O image of youth” (137).

21. “Knights, ladies-in-waiting / Stroll everywhere on / The green fields, creating / A flowershow lawn” (138).

22. Unfortunately, the connotation of “Bild” (image) is lost in the English translation: “In midst of the party, / One silent apart – / How soothing to see him! / Your home, lonely heart?” (139).

song, an early coda of the novella's imagery and conflicts, that conceptualizes the relation between the two images:

Und was hier versunken  
 Als Blumen im Spiel,  
 Siehst oben du funkeln  
 Als Sterne nun kühl<sup>23</sup> (392).

The relation between flowers and stars as two expressions of beauty is that of a temporal succession. Stars are transformed flowers; the transformation they have undergone is that from organic living matter to anorganic dead matter. This becomes apparent in the singer's own death wish, which is personified by Donati's subsequent arrival: "Was will ich noch hoffen? / hinauf, ach, hinauf!"<sup>24</sup> (392). This transformation is mirrored in the performance of Fortunato's song itself. About halfway through, it is interrupted by a change of melody and tone ("Hier änderte er plötzlich Weise und Ton und fuhr fort"<sup>25</sup>, 391). The song transforms from cheerfulness to gloom within an instant. It is characteristic of Eichendorff's poetics of transformation that this incident occurs within one and the same song, performed by one and the same singer. The oppositions outlined above – the construction of which takes up most of the descriptive and narrative sections of the story – are so fragile as to be perpetually on the brink of collapse. This collapse is induced by two instances of artistic production in the story: by song and by the appearance of a statue. There are several ways in which songs can switch from one "mode" or "tone" to another. Songs reveal or conceal a truth, but in both cases mark a transition. In Fortunato's song, the minnesinger didactically reveals the double nature of man. When Florio takes a nightly stroll and sings to himself, he expresses the wish to preserve the day:

Die Freude kann nicht gleich verklingen,  
 Und von des Tages Glanz und Lust  
 Ist so auch mir ein heimlich Singen  
 Geblieben in der tiefsten Brust<sup>26</sup> (396).

23. "What here were once flowers / Of joy, when they die, / You'll see up there sparkling: / Cool stars in the sky" (139).

24. "What more can I hope for? / Up, up, and be free!" (139). "Hinauf" in the German original seems to denote dissolution rather than freedom.

25. "Here he suddenly changed mode and melody, and continued" (138).

26. "Still, there's no sudden end to pleasure. / The shining joys of day depart / But leave behind a deeper treasure, / A secret singing, in my heart" (143).

Florio's song serves as a charm to preserve the day against the night. At the same time, he includes and admits the night into his song and poetically reenacts the transition. Inversely, Bianka's first and only song marks an attempt to keep a nocturnal secret (namely that she is in love):

Plaudert nicht so laut, ihr Quellen!  
Wissen darf es nicht der Morgen!  
In der Mondnacht linde Wellen,  
Senk' ich stille Glück und Sorgen<sup>27</sup> (409).

Bianka admits the day into her song by evoking it; and she betrays her secret by singing it and being heard. Fortunato's second song (412) is a cheerful daytime parody of Florio's nocturnal one; similarly, the motif of a farmer going to work poetically marks the transition from a night of terror to the clarity of the morning ("vergangen ist die finstre Nacht", 421). Fortunato's last song, a second coda, recounts the tale of Venus and her temple, and once again pedagogically addressing Florio, declares an end to the night: "Erhebt die Seele ringend / sich in die Morgenluft"<sup>28</sup> (425). Every song in the novella assumes a threshold function: Either the course of events is altered or something previously unknown is revealed. But at the same time, each of the songs introduces a dynamic into the initially static relationship between day and night.

Eichendorff's conception of the marble statue can be read within the same framework of a poetics of sudden transformation with the help of an artwork. Florio's first encounter with the *Marmorbild*, a statue of Venus, occurs during his nightly promenade. He arrives at a small lake lined with trees and moonlight shines on the marble bust, which seems to have just appeared out of the water. Rustling wind accompanies the scenery, which is depicted as follows:

Florio stand wie eingewurzelt im Schauen, denn ihm kam jenes Bild wie eine lange gesuchte, nun plötzlich erkannte Geliebte vor, wie eine Wunderblume, aus der Frühlingsdämmerung und träumerischen Stille seiner frühesten Jugend heraufgewachsen. Je länger er hinsah, je mehr schien es ihm, als schlüge es die seelenvollen Augen langsam auf, als wollten sich die Lippen bewegen zum Gruße, als blühe Leben wie ein lieblicher Gesang erwärmend durch die schönen Glieder herauf<sup>29</sup> (397).

27. "Quiet, fountains, still your chatter, / Do not tell it to the morning! / In the moonlit gentle water / I shall drown my joys and yearning" (154).

28. "Into the winds of morning / His spirit struggles free" (168).

29. "Florio stood and gazed as if he had taken root there. The statue seemed to him like a long-sought lover, suddenly found and recognized, like a magic flower sprung from the dawning light of spring and from the dreamlike stillness of his earliest youth. The longer he

This scene epitomizes the imagery of German Romanticism. The appearance of the terms love, dream, flower, spring, dawn, youth, soul, song, and beauty already signals as much; the motives of sudden recognition, of a return of something lost and homely, and the economy of looks contribute to the impression of dense romanticism. The statue is described as being mirrored in water<sup>30</sup>; and by staring at her in a paralyzed manner, Florio himself mirrors her lifelessness while Venus herself is coming to life. This scene is finally shattered by a transition to the horrible:

Der Mond sah seltsam zwischen den Wolken hervor, ein stärkerer Wind kräuselte den Weiher in trübe Wellen, das Venusbild, so fürchterlich weiß und regungslos, sah ihn fast schreckhaft mit den steinernen Augenhöhlen aus der grenzenlosen Stille an. Ein nie gefühltes Grausen überfiel da den Jüngling<sup>31</sup> (397).

The moonlight, the clouds, the wind, and the pond are still in place, but something has changed within the economy of looks: Venus has ceased to appear lively, but continues to return Florio's gaze, from dead marble and infinite stillness. What is terrifying to Florio about this encounter is not the first transformation of Venus – from marble to life – but her return to a lifeless statue. This scene marks a drastic estrangement from Winckelmann's and Goethe's appreciation of classical statues: it is the very liveliness and lifelike nature praised by Winckelmann, in connection with the similarly praised whiteness and perfection of the statue, that constitutes its terror. Whiteness has changed from a representation of innocence to one of death<sup>32</sup>, and the sexually attractive quality of the statue has become a

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stared, the more it seemed to him as if those soulful eyes were slowly opening, as if the lips were about to move in greeting, as if life were surging up with vital warmth through those beautiful limbs, like a lovely song" (144).

30. The combination of female marble and the mirroring pond is reminiscent of Clemens Brentano's *Godwi oder das Steinerner Herz der Mutter – ein verwilderter Roman*, published in 1801. However, in Brentano's work it is a history of personal loss and family drama that accounts for the non-classical and highly traumatic effect that the statue has on the novel's protagonist. Eichendorff's break with Weimar aesthetics seems more radical: it is the statue of Venus herself that becomes uncanny.
31. "The moon looked out mysteriously between the clouds; a fairly strong wind ruffled the pond into turbid waves; the statue of Venus, fearfully white and motionless, stared at him from the marble sockets of its eyes, out of the infinite stillness, almost like a phantom. A sense of horror such as he had never before felt took possession of the young man" (144).
32. We would like to draw attention to Winckelmann's formula of a beautiful body becoming even more beautiful the whiter it is, "auch ein schöner Körper [werde] desto schöner [...], je weißer er ist". J. J. Winckelmann: "Appollo-Beschreibung", in H. Pfothenhauer, M. Bernauer, N. Miller (ed.), *Frühklassizismus. Position und Opposition*, éd. citée, p. 174-90, p. 174.

threatening intrusion upon the real world. This scene contains all elements of what psychoanalysis has, in recourse to Romantic literature, coined “the uncanny”<sup>33</sup>. Both Ernst Jentsch’s definition of the uncanny<sup>34</sup> – as the uncertainty about the liveliness of a given object – and Freud’s first and basic definition as a return of an already vanquished animist belief<sup>35</sup> are present. If we are willing to conduct a psychoanalytic reading, the elements of sexual desire, the return of something repressed, and the accompanying fear thereof are represented in the statue<sup>36</sup>. Familiarity and a connection to adolescence as the twofold basis of uncanny fear can be said to govern the text’s personal relations: Donati greets Florio as an acquaintance from Lucca (which Florio fails to remember), whereas Florio on several occasions seems to ‘recognize’ Venus (“schon einmal in früherer Jugend irgendwo gesehen”<sup>37</sup>, 403), a familiarity that she in turn denies.

After this first encounter, Florio has internalized the night which is still represented by stars:

Denn drinnen zogen die Sterne noch immer fort ihre magischen Kreise, zwischen denen das wunderschöne Marmorbild mit neuer, unwiderstehlicher Gewalt heraufsah<sup>38</sup> (400).

He fails to reintegrate into the real world, but repeatedly affirms his estrangement by positing the daytime world as the opposite of his nocturnal experience (“alles so anders”, “und ganz anders kam ihm alles vor”<sup>39</sup>, 400). In this state, he sneaks into Venus’ mysterious and flourishing garden<sup>40</sup>. Here, Florio encounters a wholly different Venus from

33. Cf. Jan Niklas Howe, “Familiarity and no Pleasure. The Uncanny as an Aesthetic emotion”, *Image and Narrative*, 11/3 (2010), p. 42-63.

34. Cf. Ernst Jentsch, “Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen”, *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift*, 22 (1906), p. 195-205.

35. Cf. Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny” [1919], in *The Standard Edition*, vol. 17, London, Vintage, 2001, p. 217-56. See also the German version, “Das Unheimliche”, in *Psychologische Schriften*, vol. 4, Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer, p. 241-74.

36. We will not follow the obvious psychoanalytic reading: Beyond any doubt, Eichendorff’s novel is a “coming of age” story *avant la lettre*. The first horror is derived from the coincidence of desire and fear of sexual contact. However, in our view, this account is less interesting than the characterization of the artwork as a threshold of transgression between life and death.

37. “He had seen the lady before, somewhere, sometime when he was very young” (149).

38. “For there the stars still described their magic circles, in the midst of which the marvelous marble statue gazed up at him with a new and irresistible power” (146).

39. “How different”, “and completely different everything seemed” (146).

40. Strangely, sneaking is the correct expression. It must be said in favor of a psychoanalytic reading that Florio’s behavior is governed by the advice of his two older male friends as well as by a set of unwritten rules of when to travel where. Several times, Florio literally sneaks

afar, described with markers of both marble (“blasse”, “blendendweiße Achseln”, “Blütenschnee”, “goldenem Bildwerk”<sup>41</sup>, 401) and of organic beauty (“blühende Gestalt”<sup>42</sup>). She sings a song that, like all songs in the novella, combines the melancholia of painful memories and the scents and sounds of spring. Venus has successfully been brought to life from marble, and Florio has witnessed the inversion of Fortunato’s initial metaphorical turning of flowers into stars:

Das schöne Marmorbild war je lebend geworden und von seinem Steine in den Frühling hinunter gestiegen, der stille Weiher plötzlich verwandelt zur unermesslichen Landschaft, die Sterne darin zu Blumen und der ganze Frühling ein Bild der Schönen<sup>43</sup> (404).

The Pygmalion fantasy of a beloved statue coming to life and the fantasy of a revival of classical antiquity are simultaneously fulfilled. When Florio revisits Venus’ garden and castle, it turns out to be “ganz von Marmor”<sup>44</sup> and decorated with “schönen marmornen Götterbilder[n]”<sup>45</sup> (414). The reconciliation of life and marble becomes manifest both in the statues and in the pillars, “wie jugendliche Gedanken hochaufstrebenden Säulen”<sup>46</sup> (414) that are concurrently youthful and antique.

The novella’s climactic scene is highly ambiguous. A thunderstorm arises, Venus is turned back into a statue just as her temple comes to life; Florio’s prayer that his soul may be saved is supported by Fortunato’s distant singing. The terror in this scene is derived from the fluent transitions between living matter and dead marble. While Venus is turned back into marble, “starr mit geschlossenen Augen und ganz weißem Antlitz und Armen”<sup>47</sup>(420), her surroundings suddenly come to life:

Florio hatte indes, im Schreck zurücktaumelnd, eines von den steinernen Bildern, die an der Wand herumstanden, angestoßen. In demselben

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out of his hotel in order not to be noticed by his servants. This contradicts the fairy-tale conception of freedom that Eichendorff constitutes by having his characters ride around and between Italian medieval towns at will.

41. “Pale”, “shoulders [...] in their gleaming whiteness”, “snowy bloom of spring”, “golden designs” (147).
42. “Blossoming figure” (147).
43. “So the beautiful marble statue had become a living thing and had stepped down from its pedestal into the springtime. The quiet pond was suddenly transformed into an immeasurable landscape, its stars into flowers, and all of spring into an image of her beauty” (150).
44. “Made of marble” (160).
45. “Beautiful marble statues of gods” (160).
46. “Columns, surging upward like the thoughts of the youth” (160).
47. “Stiff and motionless [...], her eyes closed, her face and arms completely white” (163).

Augenblicke begann dasselbe sich zu rühren, die Regung teilte sich schnell den andern mit, und bald erhoben sich alle die Bilder mit furchtbarem Schweigen von ihrem Gestelle. Florio zog seinen Degen und warf einen ungewissen Blick auf die Dame. Als er aber bemerkte, daß dieselbe bei den indes immer gewaltiger verschwellenden Tönen des Gesanges im Garten immer bleicher und bleicher wurde, gleich einer versinkenden Abendröte, worin endlich auch die lieblich spielenden Augensterne unterzugehen schienen, da erfaßte ihn ein tödliches Grauen<sup>48</sup> (420).

Eichendorff combines the terrors of the unknown with those of familiar origin. All of the female figures on the temple's mural paintings resemble Venus (418); at the same time, they coincide with Florio's memories of paintings that he recalls from his childhood. When the mythical depictions come to life, it is Florio himself that they resemble: "alle Ritter auf den Wandtapeten sahen auf einmal aus wie er und lachten ihn hämisch an"<sup>49</sup> (420).

Eichendorff resolves this ambiguity in an ostensibly simple ending. Spring, youth, and morning are victorious, the Venus occurrence is explained as a spook in Fortunato's last song, and Florio and Bianka are engaged. Following these leads, the novella seems to proclaim the victory of Christian marriage over paganism and of healthy love over melancholia and the desire for death. Venus' didactic *memento mori* points in that direction: "[...] nehmet die Blumen des Lebens fröhlich wie sie der Augenblick gibt, und forscht nicht nach den Wurzeln im Grunde, denn unten ist es freudlos und still"<sup>50</sup> (411). Yet the novella successfully undermines such a reading on the levels of personage, plot, and symbolism, as we have demonstrated: Florio has a part in both worlds, and so do Fortunato (with his partly joyful, partly melancholic songs), Donati (with his amiable and his terrifying side), Venus (as a symbol of love and life, and as a spectre), and Bianka, who appears not only masqueraded as a "Greek" in the garden party, but explicitly

48. "Stumbling back in his terror, Florio had collided with one of the stone images that lined the wall and at the same moment it began to move. The movement was soon communicated to the others, and before long all the statues were rising in fearful silence from their pedestals. Florio drew his sword and cast an uncertain glance toward the lady. He saw, however, that as the tones of singing rose from the garden, swelling ever more powerfully, she herself was turning paler and paler, like the vanishing glow of evening, and in this glow the stars of her eyes, lovely and twinkling, seemed at last to fade and set. He was seized with deathly horror" (164).

49. "Suddenly all the figures of knights in the wall hangings looked like him and leered sardonically at him" (164).

50. "Take the flowers of life gladly as the moment offers them; don't ask questions about the roots beneath the ground because down there everything is cheerless and still" (156).

melancholic towards the end of the novella. *Das Marmorbild* combines and reconciles opposing images, such as flowers, and stars, and sets up an ambiguous semantic field of recollection, familiarity, and vague memory that renders a dualistic reading of the novella impossible. It is the work of art in its two forms in the novella that complicates the relation between (healthy) present and (dreadful) past: The songs, all of which are designed to create transitions between both spheres, and the statue in its uncanny ambivalence as an object of desire and an object of fear.

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