

The Figure of Melusine in Fontane's Texts: Images, Digressions, and Lacunae

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The literary figure of Melusine is a variant on the mythological water-nymph and marks the specifically medieval moment in the long history of the Sirens myth. It makes frequent appearances in romantic works such as Fouqué's "Undine," Tieck's "Melusine," and Bretano's "Sirenen." Such Melusine figures present an image of feminine seduction, and, at the same time, work to contain and defend against the threat inherent in such seductiveness. The Melusines that appear in Fontane's texts—"a prose which literary studies has canonized as realistic," as Silvia Bovenschen recalls (360)—must be read as part of this history of citations and refigurations, a history that then revives and flourishes in diluted form around the turn of the century with the trivial myth of the *femme fatale*. The new context for Fontane's Melusine is the social construction of the feminine in the context of the conflict over the equality and/or the difference of the sexes, and the currency of certain clichéd versions of this construction: of the "scientific emancipation of woman" (Dohm), "the professional work of the woman" (Dohm, Morgenstern), "physical activities for ladies," the *femme fatale* and *femme fragile*, the argument for the woman's natural vocation as a mother (Morgenstern) and "hysteria or maternal sickness."¹ In this essay, I will examine the function that the Melusine figure—as the recasting and rewriting of a myth—assumes in realist texts and, specifically, in the texts of Fontane.

Figures such as the Sirens, water nymphs, and Melusines often are treated as a *topos* or conventional image.² As such, they have become a popular theme in the analysis of images of women in women's studies. Images of women, however, even though they have an apparently stable existence as *topoi*, are dependent on the environment and the processes in which they are initially produced. At issue here is not only

a representation of actual women but also the image that the woman as such is constituted. “Woman” is an image intended for someone else, for the gaze of the man.³ The opposition of the sexes produces the image of the woman—and secures itself and the place of the man in this image. The *imago* of woman supplies image, concept, and form for that which is separated from the male self as its other. This division and the re-essentialization of the difference are then fixed in the image. The image protects against the excluded other and no less against the division itself. Because Sirens, water-nymphs, and Melusines are produced as part of the construction of femininity as the other,⁴ these images have a phallic function, as tempting and threatening as they nonetheless may be. The representation of the other, identifying femininity and nature, situates the other precisely where the male self is not and thus triumphs over it. This process is not immediately visible in the image, but it can be read.

The readability of the construction (of the *imago* of the woman) has particular consequences for the Melusine motif, for this motif represents the epitome of mythical femininity or feminine nature, as an essence, that remains forever the same. The gender politics of the nineteenth century fused femininity and nature.⁵ The characteristic identification of woman with (her) nature is cited in Fontane’s Melusine texts, such as *Der Stechlin* and various fragmentary texts with protagonists named Melusine or described as (“modern”) Melusines, and is called the *elemental*.⁶ This notion is characterized by demonic powers in the natural feminine element—the topos of woman as a natural creature, of which the undines, nixes, and so on are expressions. In this feminine element, nature, death, and eros converge: hence its manifestations function ambiguously, at once images of desire and images of fear and aversion⁷: anguish, or the construction of feminine nature as that which causes anguish, is part of a defensive strategy intended to secure masculine identity.⁸ It remains to be read how the text of Fontane positions itself in relation to the “[M]elusinean content”⁹ that they cite. The first of the Melusine fragments, “Melusine. An der Kieler-Bucht. I bändiger Roman,” is dated ca. 1877 and transposes Melusine into sporting form in a decidedly modern scenario: “Das Mädchen ist eine Art *Wassernixe*, das Wasser ist *ihr Element: baden, schwimmen, fahren, segeln, Schlittschuh laufen*” (1.7.253; emphasis in original).¹⁰ And her death is glossed as “Elementar. *Wenigstens scheinbar*”: “*elementar* geht sie unter. Sie *verschwindet; man weiß nicht wie; nur sagen- und legendenhaft* klingt es.” “*Es heißt: das Element nahm sie zurück*” (emphasis

in original). The death of Melusine is glossed as a “homecoming” to the “element” from which she comes and to which she belongs. Fontane’s 1882 novel-sketch *Oceane von Parceval* features scenes of modern “Badenlebens” (1.7.437) in which the heroine, Oceane, meets her end in the waters of Ostseebad Heringsdorf presents a comparable case. The “elemental” itself is a citation and is presented as such. It is in their textual strategies that Fontane’s Melusine sketches run counter to the essentializing implications of elemental or demonic femininity.

In what follows, the tension between motif and textual structure will be considered in three different forms.

I. IMAGES OF SEPARATION

Oceane von Parceval is an unfinished novella, preceded by a brief introductory outline of the text. The style is elliptical and conversational. The protagonist, Oceane, is characterized in the men’s conversation by phrases such as “halb und halb” and “trennende Kluft” and thus is seen as doubled and divided. “Half [. . .]” and “half [. . .]” refers to the “complicated lineage of Oceane: “halb Französin, halb Engländerin” (1.7.428), “in Dänemark geboren und in Deutschland leben sie. Das gibt drei Sprachen. Und in Italien waren sie natürlich auch. Wer wäre nicht da gewesen? etc. etc.” The insinuation lies in the insistence of the word “half” and of the “ja. nein.” The “half and half” also indicates the dubiousness of that “amphibian” condition by which the companion of the young man, who falls in love with Oceane, characterizes her. This character, who is not particularly well disposed toward Oceane, develops his idea in reference to the example of the crocodile (in fact a reptile), which is supposed to be happy: “wenn die Sonne scheint, da lacht’s.”¹¹ The amphibian, however, signifies an ambiguity that is lost with the crocodile: it signifies a duality that also is a separation, as in the bicorporeality of grotesque bodies or hybrids. Hybrid forms in the tradition of sirens, mermaids, and Melusines, “half woman and half fish-body” (or snake or dragon) represent emblematically the heterogenous composition of the grotesque body, its nonwholeness. What appears here as an insufficiency is signified through the excess of the grotesque.

In the introductory outline of *Oceane von Parceval*, Melusine is characterized by an insufficiency. “Es fehlt mir etwas [. . .]” writes Oceane (1.7.441), confirming what the narrator says about her (this would be the soullessness of elementary spirits in Paracelsus).¹² The longing—“nur [die] Sehnsucht nach dem Gefühl” “statt des Gefühls” [that she is lacking] “macht sie reizend und tragisch.” “Oceane von Parceval ist eine

solche moderne Melusine [, die] sich einreihen möchte ins Schön-Menschliche und doch nicht kann.”¹³ With these formulations, we encounter a series of commonplaces that Fontane sums up as the “Tendenz”¹⁴ for the planned novella: “modern und romantisch” (1.7.427). Melusine is considered in terms of a non-immediacy: she is doubled within her self, self-reflective by nature: “Melusinen, die nicht wissen, daß sie’s sind, sind keine; sie [Fontane’s double emphasis] weiß es, und die Erkenntnis tötet sie.” Her death is the realization of her knowledge, “daß ihr Leben nur ein Schein-Leben, aber kein wirkliches Leben [sei].”

This doubling is a figure of division, of the “dividing rift,” “trennende Kluft” (1.7.437), in Oceane’s own words. The rift figure is positioned against an antithetical figure. Oceane, we are told, was baptized after her father completed the building of a bridge. Her father is said to have been “a master,” “ein großes Licht in der Wissenschaft, in der Wasserbaukunde” (1.7.428).

sie heißt nicht umsonst Oceane.
 Ich bekenne, ein sonderbarer Name.
 Nomen et omen. Und die Leute knüpfen auch eine Geschichte daran.
 Und die wäre?

Der Vater baute damals die Brücke. Und den Tag wo die Brücke fertig war, wurde das Kind geboren und sie nannten sie Oceane. Und sie sagten, daß welche von den Meerweibern Gevattern gestanden habe “Glaubst du es?” (1.7.433)

When Oceane then characterizes herself as “nun seh ich die trennende Kluft. Eine Sehnsucht ist da, die Kluft zu überbrücken; ich kann es nicht” (1.7.437) or, the literal opposition of the abyss, which cannot be bridged, to the bridge, the work of her father, it suggests her counterpart in her father, the bridge-builder and “master” of “hydraulic construction.” Contrary to the dictum *Nomen et omen*, which proposes the prefigurative meaning of the name,¹⁵ and which invites us to read a motivating narrative and the secret of an “Elementargeisterartigen” in the name, the name here is a misnomer.¹⁶ Here the bridge, the grounding connection between *nomen* and *omen*, is a paradox: the master-builder constructs not a waterway, but a bridge; with the choice of the name *Oceane*, he invokes the limit of all construction, be it of canals or bridges. The relation here is a dissimilar similarity “grounded” in a double discontinuity between bridge (construction) and water, between connection and division. Bridge and separation collude in the doubly encoded figure of her name.

The division or gap (“Kluft”) that produces the longing after unifica-

tion in the modern Melusine is represented and becomes fixed through images: "alles, was geschieht, wird ihr zum Bild." Such is the formula chosen by the "hero" for Melusine's distance from so-called "real life." Images in this sense are a mere "Schein-Leben," standing in for life. Their power rests in the fact that they are not transparent: they stand in front of life and instead of life. In the opposition between "life" and "everything dead, illusion, comedy," they become images of death.¹⁷ The discourse on images here considers them to be substitutive in a particular manner and thus deceptive: they function as a distorting screen preventing access to that which they claim to refer. As such, they are empty, unfulfilled.

The potential emptiness of the figure is to be found in the myth of the Sirens and the long history of its reception. In late antiquity and Christian exegeses of the myth, in which the Sirens are visualized as fish-women swimming in the ocean,¹⁸ they provided the material for a typologizing opposition of good and bad figurality. In distracting sailors from their journey home, the sirens are an emblem of the deceptive possibilities of figural language, diverting one from the referent and leading to ruin. Accordingly, in patristic allegories, the mast that provides the point of stability from which they can be resisted becomes the *figura* of the cross of Christ, the true referent.¹⁹ In a syncretic contamination of the birdwomen and mermaids of antiquity, of Eve and the tempting snake with the forked tongue,²⁰ the Sirens become a counterfigure to Mary, the Mother of God. Because she overcame the sin of Eve, Mary gave birth to the word of truth. She represents fulfilled figurality, the image whose referentiality is secure and which is thereby able to guarantee the referentiality of images in general. The Sirens, on the other hand, are the image of the empty and deceptive figures of rhetoric²¹: signifiers meaning nothing more than themselves, the illusion of signification, mere surface, promising what they cannot deliver.²²

In the nineteenth century, these illusionary images of the Sirens reappear as the noontime phantoms of the "islands of the Sirens."²³ In Fontane's *Schach von Wuthenow*, the sight of the silent Sirens ("Luftbilder" der "stummen Sirene") is invoked as part of the phantasmagoria of a honeymoon-travel and reinterpreted in terms of a new medium, the *Laterna magica*.²⁴ The honeymoon-travel, a digression that serves as a distraction from the wedding, is itself pure fantasy, a *Fata morgana* (echoing the title of the chapter).

The characterization of Sirens-Mermaids as mere deceptive and distorting images is repeated in the texts of Fontane. They become

readable in the medium of pre- and intertexts, of the images and books to which the texts allude: their medium is citation. It is well known that romantic texts on sirens and mermaids construct their figures out of the heterogenous materials in ancient and Christian traditions. In Fontane, the Melusine of *In der Kieler Bucht* has to read herself out of books and realizes the intertextuality of the Melusine figure realistically: “Alles was künstl. oder lit. damit das Wasser, ihr Element zusammenhängt, entzückt sie, darüber liest sie, davon spricht und schreibt sie hat Bücher und Bilder dieses Inhalts. Sie liebt das Melusinen-Märchen und Mörikes Gedicht von der ‘Windsbraut’” (“Die schlimme Greth und der Königsson” 1829).

In the sketch *Oceane von Parceval*, Fontane alludes, through the figure of a Germanist, to the whole repertory of material and the motives from modern German literature and opera. “The emphasis on the elemental” in “our modern art,” this character finds in Goethe’s “Der Fischer” and: “In Wagner (den ich aus mehr als einen Grund perhorresziere) haben wirs überall z.B. da. Aber wir haben einen Vorläufer [. . .] ‘Mörike’” (1.7.437). The “elemental beings” appear in the citing of commonplaces, in false and distorted citations, and, in the silencing of other pre-texts,²⁵ in conversational digressions. The medium of the “elemental beings” are images that stand “vor dem Leben,” instead of life, citations, which sometime appear with the currency of the “geflügelte Worte,” to recall the title of Büchmann’s treasury of famous German quotations.²⁶ When Melusine von Barby in *Der Stechlin* refers to Böcklin’s painting as “Mir persönlich ist die Böcklinsche Meerfrau mit dem Fischleib lieber. Ich bin freilich Partei,”²⁷ then she plays with the images. This is her flipping of the fishtail.

Against the proliferation of images, the secondary literature has insisted on the referentializing translation of pre- and subtexts and images, precisely that which is avoided in texts such as *Oceane von Parceval* and *Der Stechlin*.²⁸ In refusing to take the citational practice of the text seriously, they seem to have fallen for the seriousness of the content of the citationally constructed “elemental.”

II. THE ARABESQUE OF THE “APART”

The second mode of the tension between motif and structure takes its point of departure from a lexical observation: in a number of Fontane’s texts, the modern Melusine is characterized with the word *apart*. The word means something more here than the mere “deviation” from the

ordinary (which seems to be characteristic of the “Ladies Parceval” [432]).²⁹ The novel *Cécile* applies the word to its protagonist in both of its senses (in German): in the sense of “in ausgefallener, ungewöhnlicher Weise ansprechend, anziehend-schön,” to describe a “beauty of the first rank” of a “Besonderheit, [die] ihrer Schönheit zum Nachteil angerechnet [werden könnte],” “ihr aber entschieden etwas Apartes [gibt], und wenn ihre Beauté wirklich Einbuße dadurch erfahren sollte, [. . .] so doch sicherlich nicht ihr Reiz”; and also in the sense, corresponding to its etymology and its French and English homonyms (*à part*, *apart*), of separated, divided off.³⁰ In *Cécile*, to be apart—that is, separated, off to the side, deviating from the norm—is the characteristic of femininity and its “weakness” or frailty.³¹

In the *Oceane* sketch, the word *apart* competes with the “elemental” when Frau von Parceval undertakes to defuse the “horror” of the latter category:

Der Professor hat eine Neigung uns *gruselig* zu machen. Uns einfach Gespenstergeschichten zu erzählen oder den Raven meines halben Landsmanns Poe zu zitieren mit rapping und tapping oder unter die Tischrücker zu gehn, dazu ist er zu klug und so läßt er’s bei dem Grusel des *Elementaren* bewenden. Und doch muß er mir gestatten, ist denn das alles etwas *Apartes* u. Neues. Es ist ein neues *apartes* Wort aber nicht ein *apartes* Ding; die *Sache* war längst da. Und wie bei so vielem läuft alles nur auf einen Streit um Worte hinaus: *Elementar*. *Elementar* ist alles. Alles an und in uns ist Teil vom Ganzen und dieser Teil will ins Ganze zurück. Ich will nicht Pantheismus damit predigen, keinen Augenblick, ich predige nur einen christlichen Satz damit. (1.7.438)

This passage provides the materials for a theory of the “apart” in the negative relation in which the “elemental” is situated to it and its implicit invocation of the relation of the part and the whole. Frau von Parceval finds the horror of the tale to be dissolved in the comforting subordination of the part under the whole. The “apart,” however, would be that which does not accommodate itself to such a scheme.³² In her hierarchical understanding, the part is thought of on the basis of the whole, into which it passes without remainder, because it already belonged to it. But to read the “part” in the “apart” points to the margin or edge that refuses to be incorporated into the whole. It is a question of an arabesque figuration: the figure of the “à-part,” or of the “a-side.”

The “apart,” in Fontane’s use of the term, refers not (only) to a class of objects—“die *aparte* Frau,”³³ for example—but also organizes the structure of a relation and, with this, a self-reflexive figure. The “à-part” is a gesture of oratory, the aside, as it is known in drama. A character

turns away from the scene to comment on the action to the audience. This device is referred to in rhetoric as *parekbase* or, in Latin, *digressio*, an excursus from the *narratio*.³⁴ It is commonplace in literary criticism to note that Fontane's narration freely abandons itself to digressions. In such asides, the discourse back on itself: it has an arabesque character, inasmuch as it thematizes and reflects the relation of the central occurrences and the margin and, in the process, revalues and displaces these relations. On one hand, the "apart," as a turning away, effects a revaluation in favor of the marginal, the non-whole, the flawed. On the other hand, however, this shift of priorities undermines the hierarchy of center and margin, part and whole, as such. This destabilizing force is seen when femininity comes into play within the operation of this order.

A metaphorical formula of arabesque femininity functions as a topos of gender characteristics and of their polarity in the nineteenth century. This topos is cited in Fontane's *Effi Briest* in the play on the names of the two main characters. In the speech regarding the engagement of Geert and Effi, old Briest says: "Geert [. . .] habe die Bedeutung von einem schlank aufgeschlossenen Stamm, und Effi sei dann also der Efeu, der sich darum zu ranken habe" (1.4.19). "The [floral] formula for the arabesque," as Rudolf Helmstetter comments, is "spelled out with the material of the novel's title and its title-character herself" (199–200). The topos is confirmed in Karin Hausen's investigation of marriage in the nineteenth century, which stands under the title taken from Otilie Wildermuth: "ich wollte [. . .] einen Mann, wie ihn sich ein Mädchen denkt, männlich und fest, eine Ulme für das schwankende Efeu." The significance of the floral metaphor is not limited to the idea that "man and woman are destined for one another in marriage as are the ivy tendril and the strong tree," as Hausen has it. This metaphor gives form to an assumed asymmetry. For only one of the sides, that of the feminine "schwankende Efeu" is dependent for support on the relation,³⁵ while the other, the "starke Baum," is considered as autonomous and needs supplementation at most "for ornament [zur Zierde]."³⁶ It is the supplementary ivy and the metaphorical relation, however, which first sets up the man as master. "Du sollst mein Herr sein [. . .] fest wie der treue Epheu will ich mich an Dich schmiegen."³⁷ The metaphor implies a parasitical relation and the possibility of a dangerous overgrowth of the trunk by the creeping ivy.³⁸ This double accentuation creates the arabesque. The ornamental framework—what Kant calls "Laubwerk zu Einfassungen"³⁹—does not remain at the place assigned to it, that of the subordinated frame and the merely decorative; rather, it disturbs the

order of the central, self-contained whole and the external supplement. In Fontane, this arabesque contamination of the whole by the marginal is thematized and enacted by the structure of the *a-side*, the *à part*.

The “apart character” of the arabesques does *not*, therefore, occupy merely the one, feminine side of the polar opposition of the sexes. Admittedly in Fontane, femininity is determined through the “weakness” of the nervous or the hysterical woman, making use of the references to “Verirrungen” and the “ganzen Zauber des Evatums.”⁴⁰ But this is not the whole picture. To the extent that the arabesque frame reflects and disturbs the order of hierarchical polar opposition, it cannot be localized within such an opposition, as one of its poles, as the feminine rather than the masculine, or, for that matter, as the romantic rather than the realistic.⁴¹ The arabesque is not merely the decorative margin or external ornamental embellishment (“Zierat”) to something enclosed in itself, sufficient to itself, an “innerer Bestand,” in the formulation of Kant. The supposedly merely external element, here the twining adornment of the ivy, as supplement, determines the inner content, the “innere Bestand” as such, and thereby denounces it as a nontotality. The supplement of the ornamental embellishment, of which “the traditional determination is not to draw attention to itself, but rather to disappear,” fails to dissolve into the whole of the content: rather, as Derrida shows in his reading of Kant, it exceeds that which it is only supposed to accompany subordinately (Derrida 97). In just this way, the arabesque flourish (Schnörkel: curlicue or [rhetorical] flourish) of a fishtail⁴²—as the addition and remainder of the “a-part”—comments, disturbs, and exceeds the imaginary totality of the human form.

The arabesque character of the Melusine figure in the cultural world of Fontane is documented by a vignette in the 1880 collection of lyrics, *Lust und Leide im Liede*, edited by Hedwig Dohm and F. Brunold (pseud. August Ferdinand Meyer), featuring a portrait of Fontane (Figure 1).⁴³ The portrait is framed by an arabesque made up of diverse elements: floral, human and animal, natural and artificial, two- and three-dimensional. And as Sirens also are mentioned among the “juxtapositions in the most wonderful mixture,” alongside “animals—masks—foliage—cameos—vases—trophies—little shields,”⁴⁴ so here also a grotesque appears in the entwined plant-imagery: a distortion of fish and bird-creatures that resembles a bat, the talons holding the portrait of Fontane. Grotesques “arbitrarily composed out of the most diverse natural forms: humans with fish- or tendril-bodies, mammals with wings and beaks [. . .] repeat the structural law of the ornament-group

Figure 1. Illustration from *Lust und Leid im Liede. Neuere deutsche Lyrik 4*. Ed. Hedwig and F. Brunold [pseud. August Ferdinand Meyer]. Aufl. Leipzig u. Steglitz: Albrecht, ca. 1884. Reproduced by permission of Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen.



of which they are one part.”⁴⁵ They represent the heterogeneity inherent in arabesque combinations. The grotesque multicorporeality of hybrids is an emblem for the heterogeneity and absence of closure that characterizes the arabesque in general. The fishtail functions both as supplement and as remainder, as that which remains “apart,” contrary to all holism of corporeal beauty.⁴⁶ It stands for the grotesque composite body (or body-image): the tail exceeds the borders of the body and exhibits it as non-whole, non-self-enclosed. Sirens and mermaids with their grotesque bodies are emblems, figures, and ornaments of the dissolution of the “whole image” into excess, into the proliferation of “images” into other and disparate images, ornaments, and flourishes (Schnörkel).

This ornamental vignette does not show, as Roebing would like to believe, that “Fontane was already in his own time understood as a Melusine-poet.” In the collection in question, the vignette provides the arabesque frame to Fontane’s poem “Ermannung”⁴⁷ (Figure 2). But, then, is the arabesque, which, following convention, provides the frame for the portrait of the author, an illustrative interpretation of the text that

Figure 2. NEED CAPTION.



it accompanies? If there is an interaction of text and arabesque paratext, the relation is anything but illustrative. In the text “Schau hin auf eines Weibes Züge / Das lächelnd auf den Säugling blickt, / Und fühl’s: es ist nicht Alles Lüge, / Was uns das Leben bringt und schickt,” the poem sets up the face of the woman as mother, who has to make the man into a real, whole man (the actual operation of “Ermannung”), and, indeed, a fulfilled, redeeming image. The title “Ermannung” is difficult to translate into English: the closest equivalent is “taking heart,” but it is specifically applied to men, in that “to take heart” is equivalent to being a man. If this process is dependent upon the image, then the proper and the given remains traversed by an other.⁴⁸ But the combination of text and image cannot be understood simply as the confrontation of two images. The Siren-Melusine as expressed here is not an image—and therefore not a counter-image—but rather an arabesque.⁴⁹ The Melusinean hybrid, “a-part” in the twining of the (marginal) ornament, mobilizes the ornamental conventions of the arabesque, as a conventional framing that is not required to have a precise referent; in other words, it is permitted, therefore, to mean

nothing.⁵⁰ Arabesque Siren-Melusines cannot be obliged to represent a “melusinean content.”⁵¹ They can just as well have no content: any arabesque can be mere ornament, although, at the same time it also will produce meaning. The ornament is always something more and something other than decoration. It is the structuring principle of that which it supposedly merely twines itself around and frames.⁵² Because an ornament produces meaning (and can equally well not produce meaning), it remains always contingent and, as such, in conflict with the central content. Arabesques negotiate the contesting claims of different modes of representation and of reading: the claims of the central theme and the marginal detail, the supposed mere ornament twined around the main figure, the referential illusion and the dissolving of this illusion into the ornamental chain.⁵³ The marginal language game of the “*a-part*” disturbs the logic of theme and accessory material and, with this, the possibility of a closed reading of an integral content.⁵⁴

Let us now turn to the textuality of Fontane’s Melusine fragment. To read the longing (“*Sehnsucht*”) of Oceane von Parceval as the *content* of the modern Melusine, one also has to take account of the location of these sentences “before” the text, i.e. in the introductory outline “before” it starts, before the first chapter begins. Their marginal location is indicative of the text’s nonclosure. Appearing before the body of the text, this addition reveals the text to be a sketch that remained a part of the materials that did not enter into Fontane’s “*oeuvre*.” These materials are “remainders.” That which Fontane had gathered as “treasures” or resources for future publications could become sources of invention only by means of their excessiveness (“*Extra-Summe*”). It is this “extra sum” that will always remain before and after the accomplished work.

Is, then, Oceane von Parceval, having been born by excess, really a Melusine of the sea, as her name states? Does the name *Oceane* indicate an origin, which, according to the dictum *nomen et omen*, also presages the eventual return to the natal element, as is suggested in conversations in the text? And *is* someone who is named Melusine actually a Melusine? Is Melusine a proper name or a generic term? Instead of securing the motive behind the name, the functioning of the name itself is thematized, especially in the many digressions in *Der Stechlin*. On one hand, the bond of Melusine to her name is explicitly stated: “Wer Melusine heißt, sollte wissen, was Namen bedeuten.” On the other hand, the text also notes: “Namen, wie sie wissen, ist Schall und Rauch, siehe Goethe, und sie werden sich doch nicht in Widerspruch mit dem bringen wollen.”⁵⁵ Through the indecision, the name signifies precisely

whether it means Oceane is “nicht umsonst” (not for nothing) called Oceane or Melusine, or whether, on the other hand, names are meaningless and as such, mere ornament, an addition to the content.⁵⁶ In the name Melusine, one encounters an oscillation between modes of reading in which the questions of seriousness and play, motivation and contingency, referential illusion, intralinguistic artistic intertextuality and disillusion in metatextual reflection remain unresolved. This also means not resolved in favor of the ludic character of names. As a character of *Der Stechlin* says: “Versteht sich, Melusine ist mehr,” and this “more” is sustained by just this indecision.

III. FLAWS, RESTITUTION, AND WITHDRAWAL OF THE IMAGE

“Versteht sich, Melusine ist mehr. Alles, was aus dem Wasser kommt, ist mehr.” This links not only those named Melusine with Venus. “‘Venus kam aus dem Wasser, ebenso Hero [. . .] Nein, nein, entschuldigen Sie, es war Leander.’ ‘Egal. Lassen Sie’s, wie’s ist. Solche verwechselte Schillerstelle tut einem immer wohl.’”⁵⁷ But also in the fragments of the garbled Schiller citation, a disorder of the feminine *imagines* is to be read among Melusine, priestess, and the sea as a malicious “realm of lies,” as well as the menace of death, when the deceptive Hellespont is revealed as the latent subtext of the Stechlin lake. This explains the reply, “Lassen Sie’s wie’s ist,” which also confirms the citational (dis)organization of such effects. The “more” ascribed to Melusine—instead of being gained through the addition of a fishtail—is organized through citational “additions,” present in the text as something that is left over.

The “more” will prove to be the excess of a flaw in the typology of femininity that *Der Stechlin* initiates with the much-discussed question: “which one will it be?”—that is, which of the sisters, Melusine or Armgard, will Woldemar Stechlin marry?⁵⁸ In an aside that interprets an emblem on a family cup on the coffee table of the caretaker and his wife, the text states:

wird er [der abgebildete Amor] den Pfeil fliegen lassen oder nicht, und wenn er den Pfeil fliegen läßt, ist es die Priesterin, die hier neben dem Lorbeer steht, oder ist es eine andre? [. . .] “wer ist die Priesterin? Ist die Comtesse die Priesterin, oder ist die Gräfin die Priesterin? Ich glaube, wer schon verheiratet war, kann wohl eigentlich nicht Priesterin sein.”

“Ach,” sagte Imme [. . .] “sein kann alles. *Über so was wächst Gras.* Ich glaube, es is die Gräfin.”

Robinson nickte. “Glaub’ ich auch. *And what’s the reason, dear Mrs. Imme?* Weil Witib vor Jungfrau geht. Ich weiß wohl, es ist immer viel

die Rede von *virginity*, aber *widow* ist *mehr als virgin*." (*Der Stechlin* 169)

"Über so was wächst Gras" is a version of the restitution of intactness, a theme that *Der Stechlin* pursues through a series of marginal conversation, digressions, and grotesque stories. The apparently superfluous conversations of minor characters on the daughter of the King of Siam, who bathes in blood after having been kidnapped and raped, is supposed to demonstrate that "for the oriental mind, blood restores innocence as such": in this case, and overriding the objection that "it doesn't work. Touched is touched," this assertion will be confirmed ("beinahe *großartig*").⁵⁹ The restitution of purity is digressively related to other conversational excursions on the cleansing of cosmetic flaws⁶⁰ and on the problematic virginity of Mary, alluded to in the "*Motiv der virgo reparata*."⁶¹ What is at stake in the restoration of purity is the image of the woman that would be a deceiving screen and veil of beauty,⁶² an *imago* for and in place of the theft, the lack, and the flaw of femininity. The feminine image is the screen and the veil before the threat of non-wholeness, the lack ascribed to femininity, the horror of an abyss. The *restitutio in integrum*, as a restoration of the *imago* of the woman, is the restitution of the man. For the image of the woman functions as a fetish—a screen for original difference. Fontane's poem "Ermannung" presents the countenance of the mother in this function, and the title added to the poem names its effect: to make men into whole men.⁶³ We are dealing here with a restitution that takes place by means of a shift: the "making-into-man" that is negotiated as a restitution (of integrity) of the woman. The trope for this restitution is the veil of beauty in its ambivalence. But, if the *imago* of the woman functions as fetish and can only be a fetish, then the opposition of the good, whole image and of the deceptive image, as expressed in the typology of the mother of God in relation to Eve and the Sirens, has to fall apart.

The Melusine of *Der Stechlin* is no wife⁶⁴ and will not become the mother that gives confirmation of integrity to the masculine gaze. Marriage and motherhood in the text are located in a constellation of digressive, clichéd stories on disparate topics: genealogy that is secured and renounced (169f); misogyny, in the form of a princely taste for "dead virgins, especially brides"⁶⁵; the princess's uninterrupted blessing with children ("ohne Brache," without fallow years), which recalls Queen Luise as a model for bourgeois German mothers and Prussian substitute for the Mother of God (88); honeymoons, among others in the privileged family life of the bees, who "understand the state so well"

(“sich auf das Staatliche so gut versteht”) and invoke a tradition of the Amazonians (69–71)⁶⁶; and much more. Whereas Fontane’s *Schach von Wuthenow* produced the Fata Morgana of a silent siren as phantasmagoria of a never-undertaken honeymoon trip,⁶⁷ in the digressive conversations of *Der Stechlin* two images can be identified with a typological system: a painting and a “black image.” The painting is Raphael’s *Sistine Madonna*, the ideal image of the pure mother, and the reason why Woldemar and Armgard’s honeymoon-trip is interrupted in Dresden. This quotes a commonplace in the depiction of bourgeois marriage. Fontane’s specific version transcends this commonplace by damaging it: the interruption is amplified by Melusine von Barby’s statement that Dresden is the “false” destination. Paradoxically, the damaging of the commonplace makes it a true emblem of bourgeois marriage. (The painting is one of the many screens and veils for honeymoon nights and marital beds to be found in Fontane.)⁶⁸ But this painting also has its precise counterpart in the text of the “image” that the divorced Melusine gives of her honeymoon trip—the black image of the railway tunnel:

“Ich verheiratete mich, wie Sie wissen, in Florenz und fuhr an demselben Abende noch bis Venedig. Venedig ist in einem Punkte ganz wie Dresden: nämlich erste Station bei Vermählungen. Auch Ghiberti—ich sage immer noch lieber ‘Ghiberti’ als ‘mein Mann’; ‘Mein Mann’ ist überhaupt ein *furchtbares* Wort—auch Ghiberti also hatte sich für Venedig entschieden. Und so hatten wir denn den großen Apennintunnel zu passieren.”/ “Weiß, weiß. Endlos,” bemerkt die Baronin Berchtesgaden. Und Melusine erwidert: “Ja, endlos. Ach, liebe Baronin, wäre doch da wer *mit* uns gewesen [. . .]. Wir waren aber allein. Und als ich aus dem Tunnel heraus war, wußt ich, welchem Elend ich entgegenlebte.” (*Stechlin* 350)

The tunnel is a metaphor, an image for something not narrated, for and as silence itself. It is the imageless image for the unspeakability of that which took place—or did *not* take place: “black, black” instead of the inscrutable: “Weiß, weiß, endlos.” The experience that the tunnel covers over and performs is the absence of pleasure, of pleasure that, in the intimacy of bourgeois marriage, no longer belongs to the order of signs proper to an *ars amandi*, but is rather a test to be passed.⁶⁹ Bourgeois marriage leaves brides with their anticipations (“Ahnungen”) and leaves wives with their disappointments which, in dissolving their illusions, returns them to the “solid core” (“[den] soliden Kern”) of marriage.⁷⁰ But Melusine is not the type for such renunciations, no more so, in fact, than she was for the bright illusions in the first place.

This Melusine does not bring death to men,⁷¹ nor does she fall prey to

the fatal realization of the insufficiency ascribed to her, the threat that she traditionally represents to men and that, with her death, would have been successfully thwarted. The other menace, the one that she does represent, is the refusal of the menace; in this way, she deconstructs the traditional myths and narratives that stage the woman as an image of impossible longing and death, as well as the consolidation of masculine identity (“Ermannung”) achieved through this staging. In the end, then, the cited Melusine narrative is withdrawn: both the fatal menace, which her hollow promise will show itself to be, as well as what, in fact, lies behind it—namely, the masculinizing defense against the threat, which traditionally resulted in the death of the woman, is negated. This Melusine leaves men to be the non-whole men that they, in fact, are.⁷² In *Der Stechlin*, the men have not even become the sovereigns of “hydraulic construction” (“Wasserbaukunde”) or bridge building as the deceased father of Oceane had been. Men such as the young and the old Stechlin can manage no longer even to create the blind illusion that structures the Melusine plot and that is still recalled in the typology of Melusine and Armgrad: the illusion that femininity can be fixed in a consistent image—as an *imago* in which men would like to see themselves mirrored as whole men, the illusion of being the one that the loving woman desires and, hence, the one, the whole man and not merely the husband. The ideals represented by the images of feminine beauty, the screening veil that was supposed to have secured men in their wholeness, turn out to be empty. The tunnel is the allegory for this: not the tunnel as the black and swallowing feminine abyss, but rather as the blackened image, the withdrawal of the deceptive and tempting images (which screen out ominous absence). The image that Melusine introduces is allegory: it dissociates the phantasmatic closure of the image or of the representation as such. It indicates—showing (that it represents) nothing—that it does not embody what it means.

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NOTES

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1. On the arguments and clichés, see Dohm, *Die wissenschaftliche Emanzipation der Frau* 10ff; Morgenstern 1, 4, 8; Schmidt 437–41; Kloss 118; on the psycho-pathologization of the woman, see Richard von Krafft-Ebing,

Psychopathia sexualis. Eine klinisch-forensische Studie. Stuttgart: Enke, 1886; for an overview, see Mende.

2. Schäfer 69; in another version, as *motivus*, in Paulsen.

3. See Sykora 89.

4. On this, see Stuby and Roebing, “Nixe” and *Sehnsucht und Sirene*, among others.

5. The “Implantation des ‘Natürlichen’ in den weiblichen Körper” (Sykora 90ff) established the social difference of the genders as a biologically grounded polarity: (Hausen, “Polarisierung”); the woman represents nature and the naturalness of the order of the genders itself.

6. See Hohendahl 394ff; Ohl 289ff; Roebing, “Nixe” 167ff; differentiating: Schäfer 74f, 84.

7. For this analysis, see Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 124. Included among the negative images are “Undinen in ihrer Mischung von Frauenleib und Fischkörper, die die Männer betören und in die Tiefe ziehen,” [als “Spielart” jenes] “männerverschlingenden Naturwesens Frau, das am Ende des Jahrhunderts die Phantasie beherrscht.” The “dämonisch-[E]lementar[e]” is “zwiespältig, verdächtig, gefährlich, aber auch lockend und interessant” (Hohendahl 401). Roebing speaks of the “Angst-Lust vermittelnden Bedrohlichkeit ihrer [der Nixen usw.] Erscheinung” (“Nixe” 147ff).

8. The representation of the woman as natural being (to which feminine sexuality as menace belongs) always contains “openly or latently” traits of “aggressivity and violence” (Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 121, 141), because it is oriented toward the deflection and subordination of that which is thus constructed, and because it makes the woman resemble this construction: a being constituted by a lack, which threatens, and/or satisfies, that has to be subordinated (see also the identification of femininity with illness, Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 127, 138–41).

9. This has been found in “Ellernklipp,” “L’Adultera,” *Cécile*, *Unwiederbringlich*, *Effi Briest*, and *Der Stechlin*, “in denen allen das Wasser als Motiv, Metaphorik und Charakterisierungselement der Personen von ausgezeichneter Bedeutung erscheint” (Roebing, “Nixe” 169). A similar list of images of women as “elementarische elbische Wesen” is to be found in Jolles 294f, 303f (or *Cécile* as hysteric and hysteria as an actualization of the “demonic natural being, woman,” according to Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 127ff, 138ff).

10. Ice skating was seen, with swimming, among other sports, as one suitable for girls (Kloss 369f, 373f); it leads Ebba von Rosenberg to the open sea (Ohl 299, 301).

11. “Es kann also lachen”; this is a citation—distorted from a poem by Lingg, which Fontane had parodied in 1857 in “Verse für George” (*Werke* 1.6.429; see Schäfer 80); it can be consulted in its correct form in Lingg 81.

12. Bovenschen 364, 368; Paracelsus 115–51.

13. This separates the “exzeptionelle Melusine” from the elemental spirits (“als solche uns unsympathisch”) and the water-spirits (“bleibt uns gleichgültig,” 1.7.427); Fontane repeatedly underscores the difference as “was Amphibiales, Beauté mit dem Fischeschwanz” (“Melusine von Cadoudal” 1.7.180; see Schäfer 69–70).

14. In Fontane and in contemporary literary discussion, *Tendenz* is generally a pejorative term, linked to the non-art of Zola (see Degenhardt 215–16; Brüggemann 203, 206).

15. Fontane almost always cites the phrase in this way, instead of following the more current version of Plautus “nomen est omen” (cf. 1.7.741). When Oceane announces her death—“Ich geh nun unter in dem Reich der Kühle, daraus ich geboren war. [. . .] Oceane” (1.7.441)—she realizes the transformation that had taken place at the level of the letter.

16. In another case, the circus rider Oceana Renz was thus named “weil sie 1857 auf einem Dampfer auf dem Meere geboren war”; see explanations for the name Oceane (1.7.740). For the paternal name Parceval, one can refer to Fontane’s *Der deutsche Krieg von 1866* (*Werke* 3.5.117–326), as well as Parzifal and thus Wagner (see Paulsen 232f).

17. Compare Fontane’s sketch to the “7. Kapitel” 1.7.432. Contrary to the judgment of the protagonist: “*kein Leben*. [. . .] deshalb der Verachtungs-Strafe wert,” Oceane claims the right of mere images: “Es müsse doch Naturen geben dürfen, an denen das Leben *bilderhaft* vorüberzieht” (1.7.431–32).

18. von Rachewiltz; Weicker 66; Hederich 2223; Kaiser 115ff; paintings such as that by Herbert James Draper from 1909 show Sirens with the bodies of fishes playing in the waves as they approach Odysseus.

19. See Rahner 469–84, especially 473ff.

20. von Rachewiltz 98–99, fig. 34, 49–52; Menke 552ff, fig. 17.

21. They are interpreted as heretics (von Rachewiltz 73) and as whores, seducing seamen to the “pleasure of song and flattery” (77). In the Middle Ages, their link with the sea and water becomes an “intrinsic element of their story” in which femininity is constructed (drawing on other traditions of aquatic women [89–90]).

22. In Homer, the song of the sirens, “ihr heller Gesang,” spoke of itself; their promise is deceptive, hollow (see Foucault 91–92, 147).

23. See von Rachewiltz 260f; Isolde Kurz; as well as W. Roßmann’s travel letters *Vom Gestade der Cyklopen und Sirenen*, which *Westermann’s illustrierte deutsche Monats-Hefte* advertises (50 [April–Sept 1881]: 528).

24. According to Schach, “mit einer ihm sonst völlig fremden Phantastik,” the trip should take them by the point “wo die bilderreiche Fee wohne, die *stumme Sirene*, die mit dem Zauber ihrer Farbe fast noch verführerischer locke als die singende. Beständig wechselnd seien die Szenen und Gestalten ihrer Laterna magica [. . .] Und mitunter sei’s, als lach’es. Und dann schwieg’es und schwänd’es wieder. Und diese Spiegelung auf der geheimnisvollen Ferne, das sei das Ziel!” (*Schach von Wuthenow Werke* 1.1.672, 669ff).

25. For example, the *Liber de nymphis, sylphis, pygmaeis et salamandris* of Paracelsus on the elemental spirits order to the various elements or Goethe’s “Neue Melusine,” which interprets the elemental water-spirit as pygmy earth-spirits (see Lubkoll). Fontane’s Melusine von Cadoudal continues this as Melusine—octopus (Krake)—dwarf. Fontane’s Dr. Felgentreu further demonstrates the topology of the elementary being with a falsely cited “Punschlied” from Schiller.

26. “Halb zog sie ihn, halb sank sie hin” from Goethe’s “Der Fischer” appears in Büchmann’s *Geflügelten Worten* (1864), from which approximately

two-thirds of all citations and allusions in *Der Stechlin* come; see Helmstetter 224ff; Frühwald; Voss rightly extends the model of citation beyond the conversational: however, she sees that which is cited merely in terms of the authorizing role, of the “literary exemplum, or the model from painting,” the type as setting the rule for the life (on the Countess Melusine of *Der Stechlin*, 265f.)

27. *Der Stechlin* 243 (first published in *Über Land und Meer*, Jg. 40 [Bd. 79] [1897–98] Nr. 1–19 Okt.–Dez. 1897). The “Böcklinsche Meerfrau” (belonging to the Undines as “men-swallowing natural feminine creatures” according to Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 124) makes one think of paintings such as Arnold Böcklin’s *Im Spiel der Wellen* 1883, *Neue Pinakothek München* or *Meeresstille* 1886–67, *Kunstmuseum Bern*. In conversation she is opposed to the Nazarene tuba-player on the cardboard boxes of Peter Cornelius (cf. Schuster 28, 81f, 84) and alludes to the “Via-Mala-Bild” (*Der Stechlin* 37. ch. = Böcklin’s *Drachenschlucht* 1870) and as another counterpart to the Madonna images of Raphael (in *Oceane von Parceval* and *Der Stechlin*, ch. 35 and 22).

28. See Hohendahl 394–95; Roebling, “Nixe” 179.

29. “Es sind interessante Damen oder man kann sie wenigstens dafür gelten lassen; belesen und wissen alles. Eigentlich glaub ich wissen sie nichts [. . .]. Sie wissen immer was in der Zeitung steht und sind klug genug nur aparte Zeitungen zu lesen” (428f). And after the question: “Ist das gesucht, geziert?” “Ich glaube nein oder doch nur halb. All das macht sich bei ihnen ganz natürlich, sie [. . .] waren [. . .] klug genug sich ein System daraus zu machen. [. . .] Es sind eigne Menschen.’ ‘Aber doch im Guten?’ ‘Was heißt im Guten? Ja, nein” (430).

30. [Die Eheleute] “nahmen ein Diner à part. Die Dame scheint krank” (*Cécile* 13)

31. Cécile, who is said to be “ganz Weiblichkeit” [. . .] “Und Schwäche. Sprechen Sie’s nur aus” (*Cécile* 155). On the “Krankheit” of the “nervösen Frauen,” see Fontane’s well-known discussion of the “Frau vom Meer” (among many others, Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 139ff, 148; Mende 196ff)

32. Everything “spooky” (spukhaft) (*Cécile*; as well as: “gespenstig,” “grotesk,” “toll”) would be situated in such a hierarchical opposition to reality; at various points, including in *Cécile*, it is deflected and (as another “Extra-tour”)—it is cited—brought into undecideability—“es war schon da” (for the passages from *Cécile*, cf. Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 135ff).

33. This is the only sense in which “das Aparte” in Fontane has been noted; see, for example, Frei 113ff.

34. See Quintilian 4.3.12 and 15–16; Lausberg 187.

35. This is prescriptive rather than descriptive, as Dohm makes clear: “Die Frauen werden zur Abhängigkeit erzogen; ob sich aber in der Noth des Lebens Jemand findet, von dem sie abhängen, darum bekümmert man sich nicht!” “Weist man aber wieder und wieder auf die Ehe als die große Versorgungsanstalt der Frauen hin, so mögen statt meiner—Zahlen antworten [. . .]. Wo es sich um Millionen handelt, hören die Ausnahmen auf. Auf Preußen allein kommen mehr als 1 1/4 Millionen unverheiratheter Frauen” (*Emanzipation* 23, 25). Morgenstern calculated as of 5 June 1882 that 5,477,730 single women lived in Germany (of these, 1,909,530 were widows [2]).

36. For example in “Die Perlenkette” by Adelaide Müller-Portius (1897–98):

“Seine Gattin, sanft und zart, glich der Efeuranke, die sich an den stattlichen Mann, die mächtige Eiche lehnte” (qtd. in Helmstetter 199).

37. This formulates the happy end in the exceptional case of a woman being two years older than the man (*Frauen-Spiegel* 1840, 2: 1–68, qtd. in Hausen, “Ulme” 116). The evergreen “faithful” ivy—which also is a cemetery plant and anything but “schwankend”—is an element of romantic landscape painting, where it figures as a supplement to the bare, foliating trees in winter. Thus, the sick aloe in *Der Stechlin* “[steht. . .] jeden Sommer in einer ihr freilich nicht zukommenden Blüte” of a banal ivy growth, which does have “doch etwas eigentümlich Geheimnisvolles” (13, 81).

38. See Hausen, “Ulme” 85.

39. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, here as in the following §14.

40. Fontane’s letter of 6 Dec. 1894, to Paul and Paula Schlenther, cit. Drude 259; see. Stephan, “Das Natürliche” 118ff, 123–24, 130, 141; Paulsen 155; Frei 101.

41. Roebing, “Nixe” 173, 184–86; Frei 79f, 114f, 130f–32, 139f, among others. Contrary to this, Helmstetter explains the relation of realism and fantasy referring to the concepts of the arabesque and the fantastic (200ff, 209ff, 213–17).

42. The text thereby cites the romantic tradition of the fishtail as “Verunzierung” and arabesque or as “Schnörkel,” cf. Brentano’s *Godwi* (189) or E. T. A. Hoffmann’s *Die Serapionsbrüder* (317).

43. Silvia Bovenschen opens her essay with this image; it is later used by Roebing (“Nixe” 145), referring to an edition by Erfurt (1885).

44. Moritz, “Die Arabesken in Raffaels Logen” 450; see von Graevenitz, *Das Ornament* 81. The Raphaelian pillar-ornamentation in the loggia of the Vatican became a locus classicus of the Grottesque (from “Grotta”), of the romantic arabesque and “confusion” of both (for example, Friedrich Schlegel and Edgar Allan Poe); see Menke 575–609.

45. Thus Lichtwark 78–99; see von Graevenitz, *Das Ornament* 67, 73–74.

46. Grottesque bodies disturb the borders between body and external world, which the “individual body of modernity” as an integral, closed whole has to secure (Bakhtin 357, 359, 363; Lachmann 37–38).

47. *Lust und Leid im Liede*, (2nd ed. ca. 1880) 89; (4th. ed. ca. 1884) 54 (the figures are from this edition, courtesy of Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen); the poem is a variant of the second of the “Sprüche,” composed on Easter Friday 1849 (*Werke* 1.6.315, see 1081), which itself has no title: the second and the third stanzas are identical.

48. “Ermannung”: “Herz, laß das Zweifeln, laß das Klauben, / Vor dem das Beste selbst zerfällt, / Und wahre dir den Rest von Glauben / An Gutes noch in dieser Welt.” seems to conclude: “Und Herze, willst du ganz genesen, / Sei selber wahr! sei selber rein! / Was wir in Welt und Menschen lesen, / Ist nur der eigne Widerschein.” But, contrary to the apparent conclusion that every “image” whose sight fortifies in the sense of Ermannung is a mere reflection of the (masculine) self (the image of the satisfied woman as mother thus being seen as a projection), the “eigne Widerschein” is literally declared to be dependent (a repetition).

49. The relation of the author to the twining grotesque—which in the margin

presents the image of the author (Fontane) and the structural law of this presentation—remains to be read.

50. Sirenen/Nixen-Arabesques are standard ornamentation in times of Fontane's and in the journals, in which Fontane published, such as *Ueber Land und Meer* 1: 374; see also the vignette accompanying F. W. Hackländer, "Tag und Nacht. Der achtzigste Geburtstag des Fürsten Bismarck"; *Deutsche Rundschau* 83 (April–June 1895): 1; see also the vegetable "Flecht-Ornamentik" in Fontane's "Der Wettersee" (1.6.182; Schäfer 73, 84).

51. Roebing discusses this, as well as the "Melusinisches in seinem Werk" ("Nixe" 168–69).

52. On the arabesque structure of the realistic text, see von Graevenitz "Memoria und Realismus"; Helmstetter 123ff, 130ff, 139ff, 160ff, 165ff, and 198ff.

53. See Oesterle 90–93.

54. Fontane's letter of 15 May 1878 to Mathilde von Rohr, cited in *Werke* 1.7.651ff. The contingencies of that which does not enter into the work (see Helmstetter 23–34 and elsewhere) make apparent the nonclosure of that which appears as Fontane's "work." Hence, it is questionable if that which stands before the text, in which the author seems to speak in his own voice, has programmatic value (according to Hohendahl 394f et al., such statements of Fontane seem to make matters clearer).

55. *Der Stechlin* 165 and 103; on one hand: "Melusine? [. . .] das läßt aber tief blicken" (Czako, ch. 10), "die Gräfin ist ganz Melusine und die Comtesse ganz Armgard" (137), "Melusine ist kein Zufall, und ich kann dir bloß sagen, diese Melusine ist eben eine richtige Melusine." On the other hand: "Ach Adelheid, das is ja Unsinn"—and nonetheless: "Es bleibt mit den Namen doch eine eigene Sache" (137). One could read the Stechlin as "an exploration of names," writes Blumenberg (9f).

56. The "Forelle," the restaurant in which the hero and his friend meet, may have this name: "Weil es hier keine gibt" (*Oceane* 434).

57. In a conversation in chapter 22 of *Der Stechlin*, 253 (other confused Schiller passages in *Oceane* and Schäfer 77, 85). In Schiller's ballad "Hero und Leander," Leander has to swim across the Hellespont to reach his beloved, the priestess Hero: "Dort auf *Sestos* Felsenturme, / Den mit ew'gem Wogensturme / Schäumend schlägt der Hellespont, / Saß die Jungfrau, einsam grauend, / Nach *Abydos* Küste schauend, / Wo der Heißgeliebte wohnt. / Ach, zu dem entfernten Strande / Baut sich keiner Brücke Steg [. . .]. Der hat nie das Glück gekostet, / Der die Frucht des Himmels nicht / Raubend an des Höllenflusses / Schauervollem Rande bricht. [. . .] Und hinab in ihre Schlünde / Reißt ihn die empörte Fluth. // 'Falscher Pontus, deine Stille / war nur des Verrates Hülle, / Einem Spiegel warst du gleich; / Tückisch ruhten deine Wogen, Bist du ihn heraus betrogen / In dein falsches Lügenreich.' [. . .] Sanfter brechen sich die Wellen / [. . .] Und sie schwimmen, ruhig spielend, / Einen Leichnam an den Strand" (*Werke* 2.1.259–66).

58. "Wer wird es?" (*Stechlin* 189)—"die jüngere," "weil sie die jüngere ist." "Auch die ältere, wiewohl schon über dreißig; ist sehr reizend und zum *Überfluß* auch noch Witwe—das heißt eigentlich nicht Witwe, sondern richtig eine gleich nach der Ehe geschiedene Frau" (124). Armgard "und nun gar erst Melusine."

“Natürlich paßt Armgard besser, weil sie jung ist; es ist so mehr das richtige Verhältnis, und überhaupt Armgard ist sozusagen dran. Aber, weiß der Teufel, Melusine [. . .]” (135). “Alles dreht sich immer um sie. [. . .] Und wie steht es überhaupt? Ist es die oder ist es die?” “Mit Damen weiß man ja nie [. . .]” (136). “Diese Gräfin, wie *scharmant*, und die Schwester eben so, trotz dem größere Gegensätze kaum denkbar sind. An der einen alles *Temperament* und *Anmut*, an der andern alles Charakter, oder wenn das zuviel gesagt sein sollte, *Schlichtheit*, *Festigkeit*. Es bleibt mit dem *Namen* doch eine eigene Sache; die Gräfin ist ganz Melusine und die Comtesse ganz Armgard” (137; see 246, 351).

59. *Stechlin* 231f; “Die Geschichte vom *Sühne* = Blut in Siam (sehr interessant)” was part of the “Notizen, die in den verschiedenen Kapiteln untergebracht werden müssen” (Petersen 39).

60. “Daß es stark ist, das ist ja eben der Witz von der Sache. Wenn die Prinzessin bloß einen Leberfleck gehabt hätte, so fände ich es ohne weiteres zu stark” (*Stechlin* 234). Another conversation is devoted to the legal wrangling on the “Wiederherstellung” of beauty, the price of which is subject to extensive negotiations (303).

61. Its dogmatic formulation ex Maria virgine was discussed anew in 1892, “im sogenannten Apostolikumstreit” (*Erläuterungen und Dokumente zum Stechlin* 41).

62. “Also restitution in integrum”: such is the witty summary of the problem received by Schach v. Wuthenow, commenting on her, who (many years ago) was “von den Blattern befallen”: “es sind immer nur Momente, wo die seltene Liebenswürdigkeit ihrer Natur einen Schönheitsschleier über sie wirft und den Zauber ihrer früheren Tage wiederherzustellen scheint” (*Schach v. Wuthenow Werke* 1.1.607; see 634ff). “Schönheitsschleier” is, according to Fontane (to counter Zola), what art has to offer (letter to his wife, 14 June 1883).

63. This is paradigmatic in the nineteenth century: In the gaze of the man, the gaze of the mother upon her child is one of satisfaction, and makes whole. See Freud, “Die Weiblichkeit.”

64. She is separated: not merely not yet married, nor no longer married (that is, widowed); she was married, and that is said to be “hochpikant,” “nur ein halbes Jahr verheiratet, oder vielleicht auch nicht verheiratet” (*Stechlin* 124, see also 146 and elsewhere). See the contemporary discussion: “Die Ehescheidung und das bürgerliche Gesetzbuch,” *Vom Fels zum Meer* (in which Fontane’s *Die Poggenpuhls* appeared) 546–47; “Ein Reich – Ein Recht,” *Die Gartenlaube* (1889): 794–98, here 795f. (Fontane’s “Unterm Birnbaum” was published in *Die Gartenlaube* [Aug.–September 1885: Nr. 33–41] as well as his “Quitt” [1890: Nr. 1–11]).

65. This mysterious preference (linked to misogyny) is a preference for the beautiful (dead) woman: in her, the object of desire is fixed (against chaos), and, hence, desire eternally deferred (*Stechlin* 156, see also 152–53).

66. See Warder.

67. Since Fouqué’s *Undine*, the wedding night functions to give a soul to the water-woman: that is, to make the wild beloved into the wife (see Böschstein; Stephan, “Weiblichkeit, Wasser und Tod”).

68. For such screens, which stand in and distort, see *Effi Briest*, *Matthilde Möhring*, *Graf Petöffy*, among others.

69. See Kittler 67.

70. One must read it in the context of the contemporary discussion on the vocation of the housewife and mother, which is not a commercial employment and contrary to all elective employment (von Fragstein 334).

71. At worst, "die Stechline" die out. She is related to the lake, der Stechlin—which lies so calmly there, but is named "wildes, unruhiges Wasser" (*Erläuterungen und Dokumente* 5)—but has a special locus, a "Stelle" (*Stechlin* 68), "wo's sprudelt und strudelt," "die Stelle, die, wenn's sein muß, mit Java telefoniert," mit "geheimnisvollen" "Beziehungen" (159); er "muß ausstudiert werden wie eine Frau" (see the variants to the end of *Der Stechlin*; n. Petersen, "Fontanes Altersroman" 17f).

72. This hardly would be able to be identified with the womanly "Kühle" that characterizes Hedwig Courths-Mahler's "Schöne Melusine," for example. Hausen provides the fact of the frigidity of the woman as bourgeois wife. "[. . .] eine Ulme für das schwankende Efeu" (98f). Its explanation and what is unexplained in it can be read in Freud. The "we" of men signifies that "wer im Liebesleben wirklich frei und damit auch glücklich werden will, den Respekt vor dem Weibe überwunden [. . .] haben muß." The reversed "ähnliche Nachwirkung ihrer Erziehung" means for the woman: "[die] lange Abhaltung von der Sexualität und das Verweilen der Sinnlichkeit in der Phantasie [lasse sie] oft die Verknüpfung der sinnlichen Betätigung mit dem Verbot nicht mehr auflösen;" "[sie] erweist sich als psychisch impotent, d.h. frigid, wenn ihr solche Betätigung endlich gestattet wird." "Es ist für sie natürlich ebensowenig günstig, wenn ihnen der Mann nicht mit seiner vollen Potenz entgegentritt, wie wenn die anfängliche Überschätzung der Verliebtheit nach der Besitzergreifung von Geringschätzung abgelöst wird" ("Über die allgemeinste Erniedrigung des Liebeslebens" 205-06; the unexplained cf. "Die Weiblichkeit" 562).

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