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ABSTRACT

Theodor Fontane (1819–1898) was one of Germany’s first freelance authors to make a living by his pen under the conditions of early mass media. A tireless producer of texts in a wide variety of genres, from novels and novellas to newspaper and journal articles, he found success through writings that had popular appeal and yet were of high literary quality. This study reconstructs the material and technological foundation on which Fontane’s multifaceted authorship rests. Examining his unpublished notebooks and other “paper tools,” it provides an explanation for the versatility and the unique aesthetic profile of his production.

The study argues that specific textual practices and media of notation enabled Fontane to interact with the mass-medial marketplace at every moment in the productive process. Rather than “suffering” from mass media, Fontane embraced them with his working methods and even built creative momentum from challenging communicative conditions. The study thus not only suggests a new approach to the textual practices and poetics of a German classic, but it also inquires into the forms of literary innovation that arise when communication with the marketplace enters the creative process.

On the basis of Fontane’s notebooks, desk drawers, folders, and other archival objects, the study identifies the complex medial apparatus underlying Fontane’s text production as the main source of his innovativeness. This apparatus enabled him to work not as a writer filling blank pages, but as a compiler who closely observed the media market, absorbed circulating materials from highbrow and lowbrow registers, recombined them skillfully in his own texts, and sent these texts back into circulation. Breaking the compilatory process into a series of motions, the apparatus made text production at once more mechanical and more flexible. It assisted
Fontane in customizing his output for different places of publication according to a poetics of calculated aesthetic effects. In this study, Fontane ceases to be a mere “realist” who produced other writings on the side. Rather, he emerges as a virtuosic compiler with media-poetic intelligence whose textual practices inflect our understanding of the relationship between poetics, literary communication, and creativity.

**Note to readers:** reproductions of Fontane manuscripts and other archival objects have been removed from the digital version due to copyright concerns.
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A dissertation examining the material underside of creativity necessarily has an extensive material underside itself. I am indebted to the many scholars, colleagues, and friends who have helped me to navigate the overabundance of notes both in Fontane’s paper cosmos and in my own one. Nikolaus Wegmann directed this dissertation in an advising process founded on mutual trust and informed by the right balance of Anspruch and Zuspruch. It makes me particularly grateful that he has shaped my academic education not only since graduate school but—quite literally—since day one: it all started with an admission interview at the Universität Potsdam, almost a decade ago. Gabriele Radecke (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen) supported the dissertation from the very beginning and shared her thoughts with me at every stage. Her philological expertise, enthusiasm, and encouragement have made Fontane’s notebooks all the more accessible to me.

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Petra Spies, Princeton University
Figure 1. Theodor Fontane at his desk ("Schreibtischfoto"). Zander & Labisch, Berlin 1896. Published with the permission of the Theodor-Fontane-Archiv, Potsdam. Archival Signature TFA_AI 96_33853.
INTRODUCTION

Fontane, The Compiler: The Stakes of The Study

»Sie haben Recht – unser Schreibzeug arbeitet mit an unseren Gedanken.«

[Friedrich Nietzsche to Heinrich Köselitz, February, 1882.]

This iconic Fontane photograph (fig. 1, p. ix), taken by a Berlin studio in 1896 for a magazine story on the celebrity’s home, conveys an image of the writer as an original artist. Composed, Fontane sits at his desk, pen in hand, his calm yet attentive gaze fixed on a distant and slightly elevated vantage point that is also the light source of the scene. Apparently, the writer is waiting quietly for inspiration in the privacy of his study. Reproduced frequently, this image endures to this day in Fontane scholarship. It associates his text production with the immaterial realm of ideas, reflection, and the tranquility of deep thought. ¹

A closer look reveals, however, that the photograph is not at all natural, but the result of a careful mise-en-scène: The axial division of the photograph, the accuracy of Fontane’s posture as well as his formal garments—he wore neither a bowtie nor crisp white shirts for writing—and the polished surface of the desk leave no doubt that the shot, a typical product of early photography, is staged through and through (Möller 53, 58). The photograph, then, says more about an imaginary and idealized writing process than about an actual one. It is this contrast between idealized notions of creativity and the media-historical realities of text production with

¹ The photograph first appeared on the cover of the *Berliner Illustrirte* (November 22, 1896) in conjunction with a story about Fontane in the series “Charakterköpfe aus dem modernen Berlin.” It reappeared in the same magazine with an anonymous obituary of Fontane in October, 1898. The photograph was also the subject of the series of postage stamps, “Männer aus der Geschichte Berlins” (Berlin West, 1952–53); the source for a drawing on the title page of the *Simplicissimus* (January 1, 1920); and, for the part of it reproduced on a poster of the *Aufbau-Verlag* in 1998, a collector’s item. See Möller, “Preußisches Panoptikum,” 57–66.
which this study is concerned. Focusing on the material underside of the creative process, the study presented here questions this staged image in its central implications.

The main argument of the study is that Fontane worked not as a writer but as a compiler. Compilers have a different relationship toward text than writers. While it is commonly assumed that writers fill blank pages with “original” thoughts, compilers do not begin text production with a blank page; rather, they vary existing texts, putting together a patchwork from an accumulation of source materials that they excerpt, copy, cut up, paste, elaborate on, and rewrite (Blair, *Too Much To Know*, 62–116). Traces of precisely these physical textual practices can be seen quite clearly in the picture. There is Fontane’s huge desk (more than six feet long and three feet deep), which is equipped with numerous drawers at the front and at the back. The large work surface provides him with plenty of space to juxtapose materials, while the railing on the back ridge of the desk invites the building of paper stacks. For transformational operations, trays on the desk keep various tools handy; one can see two pairs of scissors, a paper knife, pens, crayons, and an inkwell. Utensils for letter-writing and piles of letters and other materials indicate that this is not the quiet study of an artist waiting for inspiration, but rather the workspace of a compiler who is in touch with the media sphere of his time. He is, in fact, in touch with it to the point that he draws his own texts together from the spectrum of highbrow and lowbrow sources that Germany’s first real mass-media market provides.

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2 Fontane’s son Friedrich explicitly points this out: “Worauf ich aber besonders hinweisen möchte das ist, daß auch die nach den Fenstern zugekeherte Front des Tisches zahlreiche [Schub-] Kästen aufweist. Er war also von zwei Seiten aus benutzbar” (“Potsdamer Straße 134c,” 80). Fontane purchased the desk from his friend Wilhelm Lübke in 1861. A replica of the desk resides at the *Stadtmuseum Berlin*, but since its measurements are slightly inaccurate, it is not officially on display. The original desk has been considered lost since the Second World War. See Machner 267.
This study analyzes how Fontane combines such diverse sources, and it reconstructs the arc of his textual practices, from the absorption of an excess of circulating source materials by dint of a proliferating library network, to the storage of these materials in a peculiar filing system, to their creative recombination for his own, market-bound output. Following Fontane into the engine-room of his text production, the study analyzes his unedited notebooks and other “paper tools”—file folders, large paper envelopes, drawers, and boxes—to provide an explanation for his unique compilatory profile.³ To that end, the study asks what enables him to work at once as an author with popular appeal and as an author of complex literature. Differently put, which materials, media, and textual practices make his compilations so adaptable that he is able to produce texts for consumption in mass media and texts that are literarily challenging?

Fontane thus figures as a case that is both singular and yet also representative of a larger cultural problem. The problem for which he stands is literary production under the conditions of early mass media: one of Germany’s first freelance authors living by his pen, he represents the multitude of roles and genres in which authors can and ought to seek publishing opportunities as soon as literature becomes part of the mass-medial marketplace. Like many of his colleagues, Fontane works as a journalist, editor, poet, critic, anthologist, and author of serialized novels and novellas, publishing in all kinds of mass media, in particular, illustrated family magazines (Bildungs- und Familienblätter). His textual output demonstrates how literature and early mass media respond to one another. At the same time, however, his case is singular insofar as his

³ The term “paper tools” is a conscious reference to Peter Becker and William Clark’s coinage of “little tools of knowledge,” denoting all kinds of everyday means of bureaucracy and science, e.g., protocols, diagrams, and questionnaires. Although such tools seem mundane and self-evident, they have a great epistemic impact; they directly influence the ways in which things can be known and represented (Becker and Clark 1). The same holds true to Fontane’s notebooks, folders, and all the other material means assisting his text production. They have been overlooked as mere notes and mere storage containers, yet they, too, have a fundamental epistemic impact on Fontane’s creative process and his poetics.
production never fully conforms to the aesthetic standards set by the demands of the market (Helmstetter 37). His texts both contain and exceed typical nineteenth-century “Leseware.” This is because Fontane acutely observes and reflects the aesthetic standards of the publishing market. He integrates this media-reflective knowledge into his literary output in such a way that it lends the established aesthetic templates a subversive twist. His production thus becomes appealing to different readerships: to those who consume simple plots, reading mainly for entertainment and the fulfillment of standard literary schemata, and to those who notice and appreciate his conscious bending of those schemata. What is singular about Fontane, then, is that he treats the media market not merely as something from which his production “suffers.” Rather, he emphatically includes the medial conditions in his working methods and even derives creative potential from them—Fontane becomes innovative with the mass-medial marketplace. This study shows how he manages to do that. It demonstrates that Fontane’s textual practices can be understood as practices of successful literary communication. At every stage, Fontane’s interaction with the mass-medial marketplace shapes his creative process and gives rise to innovative literary forms. The stakes of this study are therefore threefold: it aims to take a new approach to a canonical German writer-compiler whose creative interaction with the literary marketplace is understudied; to understand textual practices under the conditions of early mass media; and to recover the notion of innovativeness that might arise from the inclusion of literary communication into the productive process.

4 To provide a workable notion of “literary communication,” I basically employ the term for those acts of communication through which literature is produced, distributed, and received in the marketplace. It thus includes different actors (authors, publishers, booksellers, readers, critics); media and institutions (papers, journals, books, libraries, subscription models); and communicative forms. For an effective application of the notion, see Darnton. The workable notion will become increasingly complex in the course of this study.
Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars have noticed that Fontane works as a compiler. Yet this core condition of his productivity—his compilatory recombination of existing source materials in large quantities—has been repressed by Fontane’s critics in favor of the idealized image of the author as genius described above (an image that Fontane himself helped promote). Part of the reason for the discrepancy between his methods and his reputation is an overall bias against compiling. Since the devaluation of rhetorical practices after 1800, compilers are usually under the suspicion of unoriginality: what they produce is not really their own; they are considered plagiarists and mere “Zusammensetzer.” According to the German semantics of the word, compilers treat their sources disrespectfully and create “Stoppelwerk,” i.e., aesthetically unsatisfactory texts produced with lack of judgment and randomness. What is “merely compiled” cannot possibly be an achievement. In his Fontane monograph of 1919, the critic Conrad Wandrey applies precisely these negative topoi to Fontane’s production, disparaging those parts in which the recombination of existing textual sources is undeniable as “kompilatorisch und unoriginell” and “nur aktenmäßig kompendiös” (333–334). There are numerous additional indications of the pervasiveness of the bias against compiling. For example, it has influenced the publication history of Fontane’s best-known work, the Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg. In editions of selected Wanderungen episodes, those episodes in which

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5 Fontane contributes significantly to the faux representation of his working methods since he repeatedly states that his writing is driven by imagination and inspiration, exemplarily expressed in those letters in which he claims that he writes “wie mit dem Psychographen” or according to a “dunklen Drange” (e.g., letter to Schlenther, June 13, 1888; HFA IV.3: 611). Numerous Fontane scholars have followed this line of thinking and reproduced it at times very uncritically, e.g., Hermann Fricke.

6 See the entries “Ausschreiber,” “ausschreiben,” “Stoppler” and “Zusammensetzer” in the DWB 1: 960; 19:354; 32:768.
Fontane incorporates long passages that he has directly copied from foreign sources have particularly frequently been clipped (Bisky 116–117). In fact, there was even a tendency to edit out parts of the *Wanderungen* that were considered not genuinely Fontanean, such as the mottos preceding many episodes. And even now, the rhetoric employed to describe Fontane’s use of sources bespeaks a view that is unsympathetic to compiling. In a study of Fontane’s “Quellennutzung” for the *Wanderungen*, Manfred Horlitz contrasts Fontane’s “eigenschöpferische[r] Gestaltung” with such terms as “ausschlachten” and “wörtlich übernehmen ohne Kennzeichnung” (274, 281).

Another reason for the scholarly devaluation of Fontane’s compilatory working methods lies in the peculiarities of his biography and a teleological approach toward it. Before Fontane begins to produce novels and novellas, he gathers, over four decades, professional experience as a journalist, correspondent, and editor; a period that Fontane scholarship has come to term that of the “frühe” and the “mittlere” Fontane (paradigmatically: Nürnberger, *Der frühe Fontane*). When his compilatory practices are discussed at all, this is usually the context in which they are placed. Common studies thus approach them as mere writing exercises—“Fingerübungen” and “Broterwerb” (Lützen, 197–198)—that Fontane had to do and eventually put behind him as he became the “mature” novelist. The implication is that only the production of a mature author is worthy of serious study. Thomas Mann, in his 1910 essay, “Der alte Fontane,” firmly put this lopsided perspective into place, stating that “[…] die ersten sechs Jahrzehnte seines Lebens waren, beinahe bewußt, nur eine Vorbereitung auf die zwei späten […]]; und sein Leben scheint zu lehren, daß erst Todesreife wahre Lebensreife ist” (274). This teleological characterization

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7 Horlitz claims that the goal of his analysis is not to accuse Fontane. Nonetheless, his terminology is not neutral. Even in the age of digital copy and paste, then, discussions of compilatory practices frequently remain biased, the controversies surrounding Walter Kempowski’s *Echolot* and Helene Hegemann’s *Axolotl Roadkill* being two recent cases in point.
found its most influential re-articulation in Hans-Heinrich Reuter’s monumental Fontane biography of 1968. Its latest iterations can be found in the current Fontane-Handbuch, which clearly delineates his journalistic output from the literary production (804). The Handbuch makes an effort to keep the latter somehow distinct and pure, as if it were produced by other, supposedly “higher” poetic means.

Evaluating Fontane’s notebooks and his other paper tools, this study argues that the teleological view is untenable, for it neglects the continuous importance of compiling to Fontane’s productivity. Moreover, the teleological view does injustice both to the nature of the texts generated by compiling (there are no “literarily-pure” texts in Fontane’s production) and the nature of the market for which these texts were intended. In his working methods, there is no distinction between a young and a mature Fontane; there is only a number of different authorial roles that converge in a set of compilatory textual practices. This set is stable, from his early Wanderungen episodes, to the theater reviews, to the Kriegsbücher, to his last novel, Der Stechlin. Considering the stability of Fontane’s textual practices, the relationship between Fontane-the-journalist and Fontane-the-novelist should be described not in the terms of a distinction, but in the terms of affinity: through his journalistic training, Fontane acquires both the skill set and the professional receptivity that enable him to treat circulating sources as materials and to incorporate them—not just individually, but in the form of entire aesthetic modes and strands of current discourses—into his own production.8 As a journalist, Fontane learns how to “read” the media market, and on the basis of this knowledge, he compiles a

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8 In this way, Fontane has surprisingly much in common with North American authors who also work with popular-literary modes, e.g., Hawthorne, Poe, and Melville, and whose “special sensitivity to outside forces is heightened by unusual biographical factors,” as David Reynolds puts it in Beneath the American Renaissance (6). I am indebted to Daniel Göske for pointing me to Reynolds’ important study.
number of different textual forms and genres. They remain linked, however, in his overall project of becoming successful as a popular author and as an author of canonizable texts.

“Popularity” as the underlying goal of Fontane’s production is a complex and, to some degree, counter-intuitive phenomenon. To understand his textual practices, it is therefore necessary to clarify what “popularity” means in the media market of later nineteenth-century Germany, and how it relates to the overall conditions of communication during this historical period. The notion of “popularity” is at least twofold: it denotes both a carefully-shaped aesthetic ideal that is part of high culture, and it denotes a mass-medial reality. As an aesthetic ideal, popularity is a product of the late Enlightenment and the corresponding programmatic inclusion of “Volkskultur” into high culture (Dainat 46). This process of inclusion is driven by the attempt to enlarge the reading public and to revitalize cultural production. What is counter-intuitive, though, is that the “Volk-“ component in “Volkskultur” has nothing to do with the cultural production of the actual “common” people. Rather, it is an aesthetic norm defined by philologists and intellectuals (e.g., Herder, Goethe, Görres, the Brothers Grimm) who collect and edit archival literary sources. These intellectuals transform their sources according to staged notions of “authenticity,” orality, and naivety, and hence according to their conceptions of what “Volkskultur” should be like. Ultimately, their editorial efforts attempt to make the archival sources aesthetically more effective or “eingängig” (Braungart 9). As a result, they publish collections of folklore—songs, tales, anecdotes, and ballads—that contain plenty of narrative formulas, redundancies, pleonasms, and simple aesthetic schemata, while they also append them with philological apparatuses and commentaries. The philologists and intellectuals give this

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9 The inclusion of “Volkskultur” into high culture is also driven by the attempt to constitute the “Volk” as the basis for the nation. Yet the context of nation-building is outside of the bounds of my study and will therefore not be discussed.
edited version of “folklore” to the readers, thus deciding upon the nature of the supposedly “true” and “authentic” cultural artifacts that the readers, in a top-down process, are to perceive as their own “Volkskultur” (Braungart 22). “Popularity,” in this sense, is an aesthetic program that is controlled by intellectuals. It begins in the late Enlightenment and extends well into the nineteenth century. Its basis is the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow culture in an asymmetrical communicative process.

As a mass-medial reality, “popularity” denotes presence and scope, i.e., being widespread and widely-read. In Fontane’s time period, this notion of popularity hinges on the emerging culture industry and mass media: over the course of the nineteenth century, a row of inventions and improved technologies for the reproduction of texts and images—e.g., lithography, high-speed presses driven by steam engines, and roll-fed rotary presses—makes the volume of printed matter drastically rise. From about 1860 on, there is a market characterized by mass media that are, in communicative reach and impact, comparable to today’s, spanning from fliers with sensational news, to “Bilderbogen,” to an overabundance of regional, national, and international daily papers and illustrated magazines, to books in cheap editions. The mass media open up a reading space that ceases to be exclusively literary and that constitutes, for the first time, a heterogeneous mass readership (Helmstetter 48). In contrast to the artificially-constructed eighteenth-century notion of the “Volk,” this readership really encompasses a wide social spectrum of readers, readers who seek not merely information and edification, but—and above all else—entertainment. The predilections of this audience, in turn, influence the aesthetic

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10 Tatlock states that Germany’s annual production of book titles grew so vastly in the course of the nineteenth century that by 1910, Germany was producing far more than any other leading industrial nation. The number of journals and magazine titles, moreover, multiplied eighteenfold from 1826 to 1927; that is, it more than doubled every twenty-five years (4–7). The Handbuch der Mediengeschichte (ed. Helmut Schanze) provides a brief overview of the industrialization of printing in the nineteenth century (413–417).
standards in the market. Attempting to entertain the new reading masses, publishers industrially reproduce popular-cultural artifacts, increasingly highlighting the schematic, sentimental, and affect-oriented nature of these artifacts. Historically, this is the beginning of popular culture as kitsch and as pulp in the communicative sense, characterized by the “bruchlose Realisierung ästhetisch-kultureller Schemata” and increasingly unambiguous, stereotypical content (Braungart 2, 5, 22). “Popularity” as a mass-medial reality, then, is the result of a bottom-up process reinforcing the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow culture from below.

It is important to note for the understanding of Fontane’s textual practices that both versions of popularity, despite the high/low divide, overlap and interact in the mass-medial marketplace. One area in which they considerably overlap is their respective aesthetic program. Popular culture as a highbrow ideal and popular culture as a mass-medial reality operate with shared aesthetic templates, not withstanding the differences in the degrees to which these templates are fulfilled. The point is that even a Herderian “Volksballade” like “Das Lied vom eifersüchtigen Knaben,” to use Braungart’s example, contains elements of sentimentality—
independent of mass media reproducing the ballad. The example demonstrates that there is a joint aesthetic code between the highbrow and the lowbrow ends of popular culture (16–18). Both versions overlap, moreover, in the most important mass medium for literary production of the time, the aforementioned “Illustrierte Bildungs- und Familienblätter.” Hybrids between newspapers and books, they present content that is mixed, bringing together disparate elements from highbrow and lowbrow popular culture, e.g., news, scientific articles, literary reviews,

11 Whenever terms such as “kitschy,” “trivial,” and “pulpy” are used in this study, they are not employed as value judgments. They are intended, rather, in a strictly communicative sense. In so doing, I follow Braungart’s suggestion that these terms, just like attributions as “suspenseful” or “entertaining,” can be mobilized to describe communicative functions and aesthetic effects in the recipient.
serialized fiction, and clichéd illustrations. With this assorted content, the magazines attempt to address the heterogeneous mass readership despite its inherent stratification, spanning from working-class to erudite readers, and teenagers to adults of both genders (Graf 17). Sociologically, then, the family magazines are the sites where a great many segments of the emerging mass readership converge, across the widening high/low divide. The magazines thus attempt to keep together what the market continues to set further and further apart. Because of their scope, magazines also provide the most lucrative publishing opportunities for authors. Circulating in numbers that easily surpass standard print runs for books, magazines pay much better honoraria. For authors like Fontane—authors who try to make a living by publishing their texts—they are of vital importance in determining a text’s success or failure in the marketplace. Fontane exploits the overlap between both versions of popularity by working with source materials from highbrow and lowbrow popular culture in order to address the wide readership of family magazines. In so doing, he stretches the limits of the possible and the acceptable. He mediates among Percy, Herder, Uhland, and the Schlegels, police reports, gossip, and even yellow pulp of the “Kinder im Backofen” category. Infusing the one extreme with another in his compilations, he exaggerates the process of mixing and renders the kitsch ironic, while supplementing the highbrow references with easily-digestible plots. The resulting skillfully-exaggerated mixture facilitates his strategy of communicating with the multiple readerships of family magazines. With his hybrid compilations, he tries to ensure that his production can become popular and exceptional.

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12 In his pioneering (and now dated) study, Schenda has identified “Kinder im Backofen” as one of the most typical topos of nineteenth-century lowbrow popular literature (383). Fontane’s notes contain popular-cultural references on a similarly-lowbrow level, e.g., “Von einem Unhold, der ein Mädchen zu Tode tanzte” (qtd. in Horlitz, Vermißte Bestände, 46). For details on the repertoire of popular-cultural topos in Fontane’s production, see Chapter Three of this study.
His great popularity project requires of Fontane to be attuned to developments in the media market, to take note of the sociological composition of his readerships, and to know the aesthetic repertoire of popular culture (in both versions) at all times. He constantly has to sort material that can be successfully transformed in his own production from that which strays too far from standards of acceptability. The popularity project also requires of him to generate texts ceaselessly in order to stay present in the market. The technological basis on which Fontane attempts to achieve all of these objectives is the set of his paper tools. With their help, Fontane turns text production into a machinery through which he can compile texts with great mecanicity. At the same time, the paper tools also enable him to exceed the merely-mechanical and to engage in modes of text production that are virtuosic. The floating between mecanicity and virtuosity, characteristic of Fontane’s working methods under the conditions of mass media, will continue to become visible in this study.

On Method: Analyzing Fontane’s Paper Tools

Fontane’s paper tools provide the material interface between his compilatory creativity and his strategies of literary communication. Despite their pivotal function in and for his working methods, they have not yet received adequate scholarly attention. The gap in the scholarship is twofold. On the side of literary communication, much research has been done on the external factors of the media market and their impact on Fontane’s publishing situation. There are excellent overviews of Fontane’s relationships to different publishers, places of publication, and literary societies (see Berbig’s Fontane im literarischen Leben and his extremely detailed
Theodor Fontane Chronik). With unparalleled and polemic clarity, moreover, Helmstetter has analyzed Fontane’s attempts to become both popular and more than popular, and has been able to show in a number of readings how Fontane’s popularity project determines the nature of his literary texts. Studies like Helmstetter’s, however, have a blind spot when it comes to the impact of the media-historical publishing conditions on Fontane’s creative process. Helmstetter pays no attention to the paper tools, poetic media, and textual practices organizing Fontane’s market-bound productivity; he even claims that researching his working methods is unnecessary since they can be fully deduced from Fontane’s self-descriptions in letters (83–84). Focused on “textimmanente Poetik” and “Öffentlichkeitsgeschichte,” his analysis leaves no room for that which actually constitutes the link between them.  

On the side of the notebooks and other paper tools—i.e., that of archival research—the gap is even greater. Until recently, these archival objects have neither aroused much scholarly interest, nor have they ever been edited, and only very small samples have been published. For a fully-canonized author, such neglect is curious. In part, it can be attributed to the archival situation in the divided Germany. Residing in the former East of Germany, Fontane’s sixty-seven extant notebooks were not freely-accessible to scholars until the reunification. Even after the reunification, archival research remains challenging because Fontane’s Nachlass is scattered

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13 In a similar vein, a more recent volume on interactions between nineteenth-century literary writing and the marketplace devotes very little space to textual practices (Kunstautonomie und literarischer Markt, eds. Detering and Eversberg). Only one of the ten contributions touches upon actual writing procedures (Denkler, “Raabe schreibt Jensen um”).

14 Theodor Fontane’s son Friedrich offered sixty-seven notebooks and other archival materials for sale at an auction in 1933. The Preußische Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (East Berlin) purchased the notebooks and gave them to the Theodor-Fontane-Archiv, Potsdam, as a permanent loan in 1965. They roughly cover a time span from 1860 well into the 1880s and relate to all kinds of Fontane productions, including Wanderungen episodes; newspaper articles; theater, art, and book reviews; war reports; poems; novellas; and the novel Vor dem Sturm. Fontane also used them for everyday life and travels. Radecke, “Fontanes Notizbücher,” 214–215. The notebooks are in octavo format, bound with thread stitching, and contain between 50 and 70 leaves each.
across sixty public institutions (Horlitz, *Vermisste Bestande*, 11), not all of which have inventoried their holdings. In part, moreover, the neglect of his notebooks and other documents of the productive process can be attributed to Fontane’s status in the field of German literary studies. Since he never laid out an explicit poetics or a theory of writing, he is not considered an intellectual author (Radecke, “Fontanes Notizbuercher,” 211). Scholars have therefore never attempted to read his notebooks as “brainscapes” in the same way that they have read the notebooks of Lichtenberg, Goethe, Kafka, Mann, or Musil. Commonly, Fontane’s notebooks have merely been evaluated for commentaries to the standard editions of his work, and in particular, the *Große Brandenburger Ausgabe*. But in the commentaries, the notes just figure as spadework on the way to the seemingly-superior aesthetic form of the finished text.15

The philological situation is slowly changing, mostly because of the studies by Walter Hettche and Gabriele Radecke, who have made a case for the inclusion of more manuscript materials—and especially the notebooks—into Fontane scholarship. Their approaches, however, are informed by genetic criticism and are hence focused on inner-textual developments in manuscripts belonging to particular Fontane projects. Their analyses concentrate on individual instances, but not on Fontane’s use of the notebooks and other paper tools as a textual practice in its own right. Indicative in this regard is Hettche and Radecke’s assumption of randomness in Fontane’s use of the notebooks. Both scholars highlight the spontaneity and “Zufälligkeit” with which Fontane frequently seems to have made his entries (Hettche, “Handschriften zu *Vor dem Sturm*,” 195; Radecke, “Fontanes Notizbuercher,” 214–216). Detailed analysis proves them right—

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15 An exception is the Fontane philology of the 1910s to circa 1940. During this time period, there was a noticeable interest in Fontane’s manuscripts, including his notebooks. Good examples are the studies by Fürstenau and Rost, yet they are largely forgotten today. For a succinct overview of the existing research on Fontane’s manuscripts, see Radecke, *Vom Schreiben zum Erzählen*, 17–30.
but only in part. Another and more important part of Fontane’s note-taking consists of the development of notational orders and epistemic structures that run through the notebooks and link them to the other paper tools. Yet these complex notational orders can only come into view if the analysis does not constrain itself to individual entries.

The ambition of this study is to fill the twofold gap that the existing scholarship has left open. Combining the methodological repertoires of media studies, literary studies, and philology, with the historical background of “Öffentlichkeitsgeschichte,” it analyzes Fontane’s paper tools not on the level of individual entries, but on the level of recurring notational procedures and forms. The goal is to assess their implications for Fontane’s compilatory enterprise. The study therefore situates them in a dynamic workspace to investigate interactions between the paper tools and the creative process. This interaction-oriented approach takes the paper tools seriously as agents mediating between Fontane’s text production and the literary marketplace. They become readable as media with which the compiler engages in literary communication as the driving force of his creative process: Fontane uses them at once to store material, account for previous compilations, keep track of honoraria, calculate the lengths and aesthetic mixtures of future productions, and prepare for the strategic initiation of reviews. The complexity of his paper tools, then, lies not so much in their content, but in their form. Bringing multiple functions together, the paper tools document Fontane’s tacit knowledge of the media sphere and the innovativeness that he derives from it for his own production.
Selection of Sources and Structure of the Study

According to a dictum by Wolfgang Ernst, studies based on archival work are prone to becoming archives themselves (130). This is all too true in the case of a study that follows an extremely prolific compiler into the shifting, bottomless repository of material snippets from which he draws his texts together. The problem, then, is how an accumulation of materials can first be turned into a series of arguments, and how these arguments can then be added up to a coherent and communicable story—the story of Fontane’s compilatory enterprise. Due to the overabundance in the archives, it is clear that the study presented here could not possibly venture for “complete” analysis of Fontane’s material basis. At the same time, confinement of the inquiry to individual instances would not have provided enough abstraction to make notational procedures and epistemic forms visible. Proposing an alternative both to completion and to the singular instance, the study derives its narrative from the arc of Fontane’s textual practices themselves. It focuses on four moments in the productive process at which paradigmatic textual practices come together with central loci of Fontane’s creativity. This results in a trajectory of poetic techniques that span his productive process—from the absorption of source materials to the textual output—and that thus describe the full series of acts of literary communication in which Fontane engages.

The first half of the study concentrates on the input end of Fontane’s productive process. Chapter One, “Filling the Archives,” analyzes his techniques of accumulating material in and through his lifelong work-in-progress, the Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg. While the Wanderungen take shape as a series of episodes, Fontane presents them to the reader as a “collection.” The chapter argues that through this aesthetic framework, Fontane establishes a
principle of limitless inclusion at the heart of his most important project. This enables him to identify and absorb increasing quantities of material. To accommodate the ceaseless influx of sources thus initiated, Fontane employs a multi-part filing system of notebooks, file folders, and boxes. The chapter describes the flexible inner architecture with which the filing system responds to the pressure that the constantly-incoming material exerts. The filing system also prepares the material for versatile use in his further production. The Second Chapter, “Meine sprungweise Methode,” shows how the epistemic principle of the collection yields actual, tangible stacks of material. The textual practice and the creative site coming together in this chapter are reading and the network: Fontane manages a proliferating postal library network through which he receives all kinds of textual matter on a variety of topics and from very different stylistic registers. Presenting Fontane as an omnivorous and “brutal” reader, the chapter shows how Fontane’s central reading technique breaks his sources down into discrete passages that he then has at his disposal. The postal library network and Fontane’s peculiar reading technique thus regulate his poetic relationship to his sources and put into practice a radicalized model of intertextuality that is foundational to his compiling.

In the second half, the study shifts perspective to address the output end of the productive process. Chapter Three, “In the Engine-Room of Text Production for a Multiple Readership,” analyzes Fontane’s techniques of note-taking. It demonstrates how specific forms of notation—above all, the list—turn his filing system into the fluid contact zone between his own production and the literary marketplace. Treating the marketplace as perhaps the most important site of Fontane’s creativity, the chapter examines the methods of notation by which Fontane is able to make his own textual output extremely adaptable. Through recombination of materials from the highbrow and lowbrow versions of popular culture, he begins production on the basis of a
highly-convertible stock of textual building blocks with which he can address simple and erudite readers alike. The building blocks, moreover, can be mobilized for contributions in a number of different genres and places of publication so that Fontane can easily respond to the demands of the market. Finally, Chapter Four (“Compiling as Literary Communication”) analyzes the compilatory process, showing the previously reconstructed components and techniques in interaction: it demonstrates how Fontane stitches the prepared text portions together and how he smoothes the resulting textual patchwork through revision. The creative locus of this process of compiling and revising is the “Selbstgespräch.” Reading his own compilations-in-the-making from a removed perspective, Fontane comments on his productions and instructs himself in how to rework them. The goal is to manipulate and maximize desired literary and aesthetic effects. The maximization of effects continues even after publication: attempting to influence his reviewers, Fontane takes control of the ways in which his compilations are going to be received. The last step in his productive process thus completes the series of literary communications that the absorption of sources initiated.

In the analysis of these textual practices and creative sites, all of Fontane’s sixty-seven extant notebooks and a large number of paper sleeves as well as other materials from his Nachlass have been considered, many of them for the first time. In addition, previous inquiries into Fontane’s manuscripts have been evaluated to broaden the archival basis and incorporate the finds of existing scholarship (e.g., Petersen, Fürstenau, Hettche, Radecke). The central examples for this study belong to notebooks from the groups “A” and “E,” which can, grosso modo, be linked to the Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg, a number of novella projects, and the novel Vor dem Sturm. These notebooks document the most significant interactions between notational forms and market-bound content, logistics and compilatory innovation. Whenever the
topography of a notebook page has the status of an argument, the study provides the page in diplomatic transcription and, in particularly salient cases, as a facsimile. When the topography of the page is less important, the study takes the liberty of providing simply the text.

Presenting spatial orders, graphic features, and notebook content in interaction, the study makes the material and epistemic infrastructure of Fontane’s compilatory enterprise visible. His paper tools thus cease to be “mere” notes or “mere” storage containers and turn into media with agency: they document Fontane’s literary communication in all its dimensions as the basis of his creative process. At stake in this study is therefore not only a new approach to Theodor Fontane, but also a new understanding of creativity.
The *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* (1856–1892)\(^\text{16}\) are Fontane’s most comprehensive project and in several respects foundational to his existence as an author. They establish and secure his presence on the literary market from his lifetime up to the present day; he was and is—not always to his liking—commonly referred to as the “märkische Wanderer” whose biggest achievement is to have endowed the Mark Brandenburg region with a poetic description, local-historical identity, and popular-literary profile. The project, moreover, is a “steady seller”: the four volumes of *Wanderungen* episodes that Fontane publishes enjoy not a huge but an ongoing success, and the honorarium he receives for the publication of the episodes in family magazines and literary journals as well as for the book volumes proves the biggest item

\(^{16}\) The time frame I have chosen spans from the first-known notes on the project to the publication of episodic *Wanderungen* texts in journals and magazines from 1859 to 1892. During this time period, Fontane also publishes selected *Wanderungen* episodes in a four-volume book set (1862–1882), individual volumes of which continue to appear in revised editions. Bisky (121–132), Wruck (“Erfolgsautor”), and the *Fontane-Handbuch* (818–819) provide good overviews of the complicated publication history.
in his family’s budget (Wruck, “Erfolgsautor,” 377). Without the Wanderungen project, Fontane would not have been able to stabilize “seine materielle Lage auf beachtlichem Niveau” (ibid.). The Wanderungen yield not only a reliable income, but also a wealth of materials on which Fontane continues to draw throughout his life (Fontane-Handbuch, 820). Among these are landscape descriptions, historical anecdotes, military history, family genealogies, individual portraits of people, and inventories of local palaces. Particularly yet not excessively for his novellas and novels, the material he produces through research for the Wanderungen provides the basis for his textual output and, more concretely, his working methods as a compiler.

This chapter analyzes the history of the Wanderungen project in order to answer the question of what makes it such a productive element of Fontane’s paper cosmos. The chapter seeks to reveal how and why the Wanderungen continue to provide vast amounts of material (in Fontane’s characterization, “Stoff”) crucial to Fontane’s compilation enterprise for almost four decades. It argues that the Wanderungen instantiate a particularly advantageous interaction between software and hardware—more precisely, a powerful aesthetic framework and a material filing system made of different media of notation and storage—that allows for the quick identification and absorption of material that then becomes available to further processing. The chapter thus describes the Wanderungen as a complex medial apparatus residing at the heart of Fontane’s working methods, where it generates the abundance of input that is necessary for his ceaseless and versatile textual output.

17 Over the course of eight years, Fontane also receives an annual scholarship of 300 Taler from the Prussian Ministerium für die geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medizinalangelegenheiten for the continuation of the Wanderungen (Wruck, “Erfolgsautor,” 388; Karge 274–278). The contemporary success of the Wanderungen, though vital to Fontane, is still small compared to the production of authors like Gustav Freytag; while the Wanderungen volumes appear in three to six editions over the course of Fontane’s life, volumes of Freytag’s Bilder der deutschen Vergangenheit are already in the twentieth edition in the 1890s (Wruck, 376–380).

18 Hahn offers the first full analysis of the role of the Wanderungen for Fontane’s writerly output.
The *Wanderungen* project takes shape both as individual episodes that appear scattered across several journals and as the re-publication of these episodes in book form. The chapter exploits the tension between these two modes of publication, reading the *Wanderungen* as an ongoing compositional process that moves between the making of individual episodes and the structuring of the finished “work.” It analyzes the key aesthetic concept and the physical tools of text production that mediate between the two extremes. The chapter thus argues that it is the interaction between the aesthetic medium of the collection and Fontane’s material filing system (notebooks, desk drawers, cardboard boxes, and paper envelopes) through which he manages to shuttle repeatedly between open process and finished work. While the inclusive logic of the collection helps identify, absorb, and organize material as belonging to the project, the filing system enables Fontane not only to arrange it into publishable episodes, but also to feed the published episodes back into the filing system, where they acquire the status of “material” again and can be mobilized for different projects. The chapter thus sketches the basic lines of a circulation pattern in Fontane’s authorship, showing how he fills his archives quickly with material that can function both as “Stoff” and as “text” for his production. Reading the *Wanderungen* in this way, the chapter provides the first comprehensive description of Fontane’s filing system, assesses its poetic potential, and identifies two very different kinds of productivity that the filing system enables and that are characteristic of Fontane’s working methods beyond the *Wanderungen*: the mechanicity of a production that is systematized and broken down into medially-instantiated steps, and the virtuosity of a production that operates with a fundamentally unstable notion of “material” and “text.”
1. From Projects of Popularization to the *Wanderungen*: Poetics of the Collection

What resides in neat book form as Fontane’s *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg* on the shelves today begins neither as an undertaking with clear-cut dimensions, nor as an original and decisively “Fontanean” work. Rather, the *Wanderungen* begin as part of a trend of popularizing local-historical materials for future poetic production. One can infer this from the earliest extant notes—jotted down in Fontane’s diary on August 19, 1856, three years before the appearance of the first actual *Wanderungen*—with which he sketches the outline of the following book project:


The project, as the diary entry indicates, has the goal of creating a repository of epic material on the deeds and adventures of local historical figures with which other writers pursuing the project of “poetic production for the fatherland” can work further. This key contextual information is usually ignored in common studies of the *Wanderungen*. Fontane drafts neither a historical documentation (Erler, GBA W1: 571), nor does he gather together material as such; rather, his planned project creates an optic through which material can be identified in the first place. Providing a matrix of alphabetical categories to be filled, it is intended as a vehicle operating between archive and book—expressed in the tension between Fontane’s choice of verbs

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“sammeln” and “schreiben”—through which epic material and its editor can be brought into
circulation. A second diary entry articulating a large-scale project of popularization corroborates
this reading. Yet again, Fontane drafts a matrix for organization and storage of material on
figures from local folk tales, “z. B. also: Der falsche Waldemar, […] Die alten adligen
Geschlechter und ihre Sagen, […] Kohlhaas,” which he intends to publish under the title
“Brandenburgische Geschichten” (GBA T1: 251). This time, the goal of providing material for
popularization is even more pronounced; in enumerating a row of figures and topics, Fontane
plots a structure similar to that of a commonplace book, facilitating the mobilization and
variation of the content that is stored under headings of general relevance for the production of
new text.20 The two early articulations of a project of popularization out of which the
Wanderungen grow, then, indicate that Fontane’s endeavor is from its very beginning an attempt
to fill a repository with material, edit the material for accessibility and poetic use, and
disseminate it together with his name (“gesammelt und herausgegeben von Th. Fontane”).

In a review of a recent volume on local cultural history by Anton von Etzel, Fontane
again sets the stage for the beginning of the Wanderungen proper by indicating that the project of
popularization can only be realized through mass-medial circulation. Fontane employs the
review strategically in the Preußische Kreuz-Zeitung in order to describe a desideratum that his
first Wanderungen essays, published only a few weeks later in the very same paper as individual
feuilleton articles, will then fulfill. What is needed for the Mark Brandenburg Region, he writes
in the review, are more books like Etzel’s—books that carry out the “Ausmünzung” and

20 A commonplace book is a book in which excerpts, citations, and proverbs are gathered
together from various sources and stored under topics of general relevance (loci communes).
Proliferating in the context of rhetorical training in the early-modern period, they still obtain a
crucial role as poetic tools in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. See Moss; Cahn;
Blair, “Note Taking as Art of Transmission” and Too Much to Know.
“Popularisierung unserer Geschichte” (qtd. in Fürstenau 43). If one reads this review as a programmatic statement on his own project, the striking choice of words indicates that he sees his project happening in and through a process of mass-medial communication. For “Ausmünzung,” to unpack Fontane’s metaphor, describes the action of turning metal into coins and hence into an immediately identifiable, exchangeable, and communicable form. As a piece of metal of definite weight and value, a coin is what it says it is, being at once signifier and signified. This is its communicative performance; yet its authority as an undivided sign depends entirely on its circulation, its being shared by many or, in Fontane’s terminology, its “Popularisierung.” Read back into the Wanderungen project, Fontane’s metaphor specifies what is supposed to happen to any material drawn into the project: it is supposed to be transformed, with the help of storytelling, from a mere history of events into immediately identifiable forms and figures (“Gestalten”), a process that in turn depends on mass-medial dissemination.

Consequently, Fontane seeks to initiate the mass-medial circulation of his own project by dispatching sets of articles in different newspapers. The goal is to remain current in the speedily-changing market, and to keep the process of “Popularisierung” going until he can bundle up these and other newspaper essays into the book he has in mind. 21 This path to publishing, however, has an inbuilt risk that Fontane himself expresses as “verzetteln.” 22 With his medially apt word choice, Fontane suggests why launching his texts individually into the stream of literary

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21 Fontane spells out his strategy in another letter to his wife (no. 289, September 20, 1859) written after the publication of his feuilleton article set “In den Spreewald”: “[…] ich muß solche Aufsätze als Visitenkarten ansehn, die ich bei den Redaktionen abgebe. Wenn man auch nicht an Ansehn wächst, so bleibt man wenigstens im Gedächtniß der Leute und hält sich die Möglichkeit eines angemessenen Placements offen. Außerdem weißt Du daß alle diese Dinge Vorstudien für meine große Arbeit sind.” (GBA E2: 175–176)

22 Fontane uses the word in two descriptions of his project: in a letter to Henriette von Merckel from September 12, 1859 (qtd. in GBA W1: 571), and in a letter to Wilhelm Hertz from February 22, 1861. Fontane, Briefe an Hertz, 27.
communication is dangerous: a project split into different parts not only runs the risk of becoming too scattered, but of getting altogether lost in movement, as the German word conveys (DWB 25: Sp. 2565–2572). There is also a risk that the transformation into book form ceases to be possible at all, since the production of more essays continues in various directions. Fontane must contend with the challenge of framing a project of an unknown size and, more properly, of framing it in such a way that it can be sold as a materially finished book without bringing its topic to a close.

With two major interventions, Fontane and his publisher Wilhelm Hertz respond directly to the problem of conceptual openness and the inherent textual instability, preparing for a book project that, in terms of its material, remains extremely inclusive without becoming entirely arbitrary. First, the project is named *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*. The title refers to the nineteenth-century genre of “Wanderliteratur,” which, despite its label, is not so much a genre of simple travel narratives but a paradigm for cultural, sociological, and ethnographic research in all kinds of areas (Cusack 1–12). With the carefully-chosen title, Fontane and Hertz thus connect the project to a current umbrella term covering a wide range of possible topics.

Second, Fontane employs the medium of the collection in which his heterogeneous episodes can take on form. In the preface to the volume he and Hertz are putting together in 1861, he presents the feuilleton essays as the results of his work as collector. This is not a casual reference meant to assist readers in relating to the project; rather, this is a clear strategic decision. Fontane has tinkered with the draft of his preface for more than a month (*Briefe an Hertz*, 49–50) and crafted connections to the discourse of collecting. These are at once so nuanced and consequential in their diction that the closing section from his preface shall be quoted in full:

[…] Ich bin die Heimath durchzogen und habe sie reicher gefunden, als ich zu hoffen gewagt hatte. Jeder Fußbreit Erde belebte sich und gab Gestalten heraus, und wenn meine
Es ist ein Buntes, Mannigfaches, das ich zusammengestellt habe: Landschaftliches und Historisches, Sitten= und Charakterschilderung, – und verschieden wie die Dinge, so verschieden ist auch die Behandlung, die sie gefunden. Aber wie abweichend in Form und Inhalt die einzelnen Kapitel von einander sein mögen, darin sind sie sich gleich, daß sie aus Liebe und Anhänglichkeit an die Heimath geboren wurden. Möchten sie auch in Andern jene Empfindungen wecken, von denen ich am eignen Herzen erfahren habe, daß sie ein Glück, ein Trost und die Quelle echtster Freuden sind.
Th. F.  

The preface is replete with references through which Fontane both connects and disconnects his own project carefully to and from the contemporary discourse of collecting, and more precisely, the collecting of folklore. Like countless other nineteenth-century collecting projects, the preface speaks of a slumbering “wealth” to be found and awakened everywhere (Crane 4–18). The text, moreover, likens its material basis to a cornfield in which the collector has plucked individual ears as opposed to employing the neutralizing force of a sickle. This echoes verbatim the preface to the Kinder- und Hausmärchen (1812 / 15) by the Grimm Brothers: there, too, collecting material is compared to picking up individual ears (“Ähren”) by hand, not with a sickle, stylizing an approach to the collectible objects that emphasizes appreciation for their individuality over generating a great harvest quickly. The Kinder- und Hausmärchen are more contemporary with Fontane’s project than it may seem; between 1825 and 1858, they appear in ten different small and affordable editions. Given this belated publishing success, one can assume that Fontane’s preface consciously intends to establish the similarity to the Grimms’ project.

23 Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg. Berlin: Hertz, 1862, preface, VIII. Henceforth cited as W1. – From the fourth edition on, “Heimath” in the first line of the quotation is replaced by “die Mark.”
Fontane further strengthens the ties to collecting by mimicking the idealized imaginative gaze with which collectors look at ruins and, through their imaginative faculties (and of course their philological research), bring the history contained in these ruins to life. In a passage of the preface not quoted above, Fontane presents Rheinsberg Palace as a trigger of living images of the past, just as Achim von Arnim employs a folksong about the living ruins of a palace in the second postscript to *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (889). In Fontane’s case, though, Rheinsberg Palace is superimposed with another image, that of the Scottish Lochleven Castle, which makes the *Wanderungen* supposedly originate at the very source where the German discourse of collecting folktales and the debates of the Homeric Question start around 1800. At the same time, the double image of Lochleven Castle / Rheinsberg also serves as a means of distanciation with which the preface blocks out an exclusively Romantic reading of the *Wanderungen* project, ensuring that the project will be read on its own terms.

Lastly, Fontane mobilizes in the preface a central aesthetic and philosophical concept to distinguish collections from mere accumulations of material: the concept of “Mannigfaltigkeit.” Distinguishing individuality within a supposedly coherent variety, the concept suggests that no two elements in a collection are alike, and that the combined collected items provide a picture that is nevertheless complete because it is characteristic of the represented entity—regardless of the empirical or numerical degree of completion.24 Fontane draws twice on precisely this concept

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24 One of the best demonstrations of the concept of “manifoldness” is Goethe’s famous review of *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, in which he renders the concept performative. Praising the content of the collection for being characteristic in manifold ways, he proves this through furnishing each of the 200 songs it contains with a few descriptive adjectives. Employing a huge recombinant repertoire of descriptors without repeating any one combination, Goethe’s review playfully provides empirical proof of the ease with which the concept of manifoldness is able to exhaust the resources of empirical models of completion. Goethe, “A. v. Arnim; C. Brentano, Des Knaben Wunderhorn.”
in the preface, describing both the content of his collection and its poetic treatment as “something colorful, something manifold.”

Forging these very strong ties to the discourse of collecting in the preface, Fontane employs the collection as a retroactive beginning with which he bundles up the heterogeneous episodes that have appeared in different papers and makes them fit in book form. As such, they enter the literary market under the title *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, just in time for Christmas sales in mid-November, 1861. In the years to come, as the one book gradually grows into four volumes, Fontane continues to insist on the collection as a framing device: he confirms the ties to collecting in the epilogue to the fourth and final volume (*Spreeland. Beskow=Storkow und Barnim=Teltow*. Berlin 1881). The very first preface and the very last epilogue thus define the expandable space within which the *Wanderungen* essays are presented as belonging together, to a single work. Fontane even goes so far as to quote himself explicitly, repeating in the final epilog’s closing lines his wish—first expressed in the preface to the initial volume—that reading the *Wanderungen* may grant the reader at least a fraction of the joy that collecting (“Einsammeln”) the material has granted him (W4, 459). In this way, he literally finishes the frame he has built around the many individual texts in the first volume. Indeed, the other volumes and editions he publishes in between, from the initial volume to the completion of the four-volume set, are also anchored in this carefully-chosen frame, as a study of their prefaces, tables of contents, and epilogs reveals. Time and again, Fontane refers to the smaller or bigger changes that his project has undergone in the respective volumes and editions, yet also makes efforts to connect them back to the initially established framework.

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25 The volume is predated to 1862, according to contemporary publishing customs.
26 The original volumes and editions I have evaluated for this study are: *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*. Berlin 1861 (= the initial volume, from the second edition on called “Erster
From a publishing perspective, mobilizing the concept of the collection to bind, literally and figuratively, the episodes and volumes together is a very pragmatic choice. It allows for flexibility within a clearly bounded structure so that Fontane is able to continue publishing individual episodes in the papers and gather them together in volumes that he modifies from edition to edition, gradually defining geographical foci for individual volumes and redistributing episodes accordingly. He thus eventually achieves a well-balanced four-volume set in which each volume has its own concentration and profile. Yet the decision to employ the notion of the collection has implications for the development of the project that far exceed pragmatics; it is, in fact, the historical switching point at which the Wanderungen turn into a truly productive tool and begin to identify and absorb massive quantities of material. The collection thus is ultimately more than a concept: Fontane employs the full potential of the collection as a medium that does aesthetic and epistemic work for him and facilitates producing more and more “Stoff.”

How the collection does this in and for Fontane’s project can only be grasped by analyzing the mediality of collections. Collections come into being through the positing of a frame of reference. This frame of reference—defined by the collector’s passion (“Cookbooks from Victorian Britain”), professional interests (“Wildlife in Indonesia”), and so forth—provides the context in which an amazing transformation takes place: that of the transformation of a mere object into a collectible. This transformation is not at all natural, for there are no objective


27 In what follows, I am building on Crane, Sommer, and Wegmann (Bücherlabyrinthe), all of whom provide foundational insights into the mediality of collections.
criteria in the modern world of collecting to determine what is worthy of keeping and what is not; modern collecting knows no limits. The frame of reference is needed, then, in order to introduce distinctions and to separate from the sheer overabundance of available material that which belongs in the frame. For without this context, that which is brought together cannot be discerned from the overabundance of material with which the world is cluttered.

Once a frame of reference has been posited, the first selection criteria are formulated, and the process of collecting sets in motion a recursive operation that identifies and absorbs more materials as objects belonging in the collection. Since the absorbed objects are brought together within the same frame of reference, new connections among them become increasingly likely. The new connections, in turn, influence the shared context, fine-tuning it to absorb more material, which again modifies the context. The recursive collecting operation slowly maps a web of distinctions onto the world, organizing it into a system of references that becomes increasingly self-supporting. Over time, the collection establishes its own world, with its own in-built system of making distinctions and producing meaning; its great pretense is to provide direct access to the world that the collectibles on display represent. Fontane turns the temporal logic of this recursive procedure on its head: diverse material, only loosely related in his overall goal of popularization, is there already when he puts the first volume together. This material has not come into being through collecting, but rather through the process of producing and accumulating it for different publishing contexts and frames of reference. Reproducing the collection’s function in the preface to his first book volume, however, he reduces these several frames of reference into one. He bundles up the available articles and describes them in terms of a single collection, lending them cohesion and suggesting that they be read as connected to one another. The one frame of reference that unifies them, according to the preface, is “Liebe und
Anhänglichkeit an die Heimat.” Within this frame, the mass of material ceases to be a mere multiplicity but turns into a manifold representation of the main topic.

The collection as medium does the aesthetic work of rendering the heterogeneity of the presented texts, in terms of their content and their form, a positive feature of the project while imbuing the individual parts of the content with meaning. Upon first encountering the collection, the reader is told to look for connectivity and take in each of the episodes as the representation of another facet of the overall theme of “Liebe und Anhänglichkeit an die Heimath.” This operation distinguishes the content in both senses of the word: by singularizing it and marking it as special within the ordinary. What is rarefied in this manner can be charged with meaning, best expressed in the opposition between an unknown exciting world and the supposedly lifeless world of books that Fontane’s prefaces to individual Wanderungen volumes establish time and again:


Aesthetically, the collection models the reader’s access to the content and directs him or her to look for the experience of intensity that the text promises to replicate.

One could justly object at this point that “Liebe und Anhänglichkeit an die Heimath” is far too elusive a concept to be a frame of reference. This, however, describes exactly the epistemic work that the collection as medium does for Fontane’s project. “Liebe und Anhänglichkeit an die Heimath” is indeed impossible to define using objective criteria; it is a so-called second-order distinction (sekundäre Unterscheidung), that is, one distinction without a clear-cut opposite and without reference to a concrete (Wegmann, Bücherlabyrinthe, 176ff.; Goudsmit). As a consequence, the term can be mobilized anywhere and anytime—completely
independent of the nature of the phenomenon to which it is applied—and still generate attention. This is all the term does, and to understand this as banal misses the vast thematic inclusion that this enables. Without objective criteria, literally everything can be fed into the collection’s reference system, where it signifies according to the criteria that the collection itself defines—not according to an outside instance. With this term as framing device, it becomes easier to add more to the existing collection. The term is a means, one could say, for building a box that can grow in size while continuing to generate more content and establishing its significance. In the preface to the second edition of the first volume, the logic of the second-order distinction figures as the formulation, “Man muß nur zu finden verstehen,” which expresses succinctly the absence of objective criteria. In fact, seemingly objective criteria—criteria based on comparison—are even openly revoked. Describing the ideal traveler of the Mark Brandenburg, Fontane writes, “Er muß den guten Willen haben, das Gute gut zu finden, anstatt es durch krittliche Vergleiche tot zu machen” (V). The preface, moreover, communicates a complete reversal from the first edition; here, the Mark Brandenburg region is not characterized by slumbering wealth, but by scarcity. “Knowing how to find,” however, functions everywhere, in abundant environments as well as in meager ones. Even in scarcity, material can be found matching the criterion “Liebe und Anhänglichkeit an die Heimath.”

With the publication of the first Wanderungen book volume in the fall of 1861, the medium of the collection is set to operation, and from then on, it continues to produce more and more “Stoff.” The second-order distinction at the heart of Fontane’s project not only identifies ever more material as relevant, but its inclusive logic also invites others—Fontane’s readers—to
add their own contributions. Any given object or person belonging to Fontane and the readers’ “Heimath,” a term not even defining a particular geographical area, can now be drawn in, and Fontane needs to find a way of managing this limitless material while it is growing. He needs, to put this in Fontane’s own terms, a means to accommodate the “Nachtrage-Stoff” that begins to accumulate not only rapidly but, as a couple of reflexive and intransitive verb constructions in his correspondence express, also quasi-autonomously. The handling of the “Nachtrage-Stoff” is made especially difficult because of a problem inherent in any storage system: an ongoing influx of material exerts constant pressure on the pre-established categories set up to sort and code it for later retrieval. The trick then is to find a storage system that is able to transform its categories on the fly, as it grows, without bending them so much that they become unusable or obsolete.

Fontane’s response to the mediality of the collection and its inherent problem, as the following section shall detail, is a peculiar filing system (Materialablage) with a soft inner architecture.

2. Accumulating “Nachtrage-Stoff:” Open Storage

The filing system with which Fontane accommodates the ceaseless influx of “Nachtrage-Stoff” is made of several interacting components that help simultaneously to realize different

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28 It is, of course, not merely due to the logic of the collection that others begin sending Fontane materials; rather, it is the way in which Fontane exploits this logic, actively requesting information and materials from the people with whom he interacts during his research. See Berbig, “Das Ganze als Ganzes,” 80–82. Chapter Two of this study provides a detailed account of Fontane’s research strategies, including the interactions with his informants.

29 The verbs are “sich mehren” (to increase) and “anschießen” (to cling to the border, to shoot into crystals). Fontane employs the latter like a reflexive verb, attributing agency to the material, not to the one managing it, thus emphasizing the autonomous sprouting of the material. Fontane, Briefe an Hertz, 64.
kinds of order and modes of access to the stored content. They thus provide a multi-part storage
device to accommodate constant growth. These components include copies of Wanderungen
volumes interleaved with blank pages, notebooks, and various receptacles such as paper sleeves,
file folders, drawers, cardboard boxes, and pigeonholes. While any one of the components would
be insufficient for the quick growth of Fontane’s stock of material, together they amount to a
functionally dysfunctional ‘system’ (Materialablage) with which Fontane is able to store large
amounts of heterogeneous textual and visual materials as “Stoff.”

As storage media, the components in Fontane’s filing system are not neutral, though. They act on the stored content in different ways, and how exactly they act on it makes a real
difference in Fontane’s paper cosmos. Close analysis reveals that he often employs storage
media that, due to the specific kind of order (or, in fact, disorder) that they impose on the
material, decrease the degree of cohesion among individual elements. This prepares the material
for flexible use in the constantly-changing Wanderungen project and beyond. Storage media that
presuppose a high degree of cohesion, by contrast, are far less prominent in his system. Their
relative scarcity suggests that it is important to his working methods and productivity to archive
material in a way that facilitates later versatile uses. Fontane’s storage media enable him to make
use of the enormous quantities of material that the collection—set to operation by the
Wanderungen—generates. He can then mobilize this material for his production at large.

Comparison between the least important and one of the most important storage media—the
interleaved Wanderungen copies and the notebooks—brings this out very clearly. The

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30 The term “system” is problematic: on the one hand, it captures the connectedness of the
components that constitute Fontane’s storage device; on the other hand, it implies an orderliness
and method that is only partly discernible in Fontane’s usage of the components. That I
nonetheless continue to speak of a “system” is due to the lack of a good alternative. The German
concept I am attempting to express is “Materialablage,” which does not carry such strong
overtones of systematicity.
ordering system imposed by the interleaved *Wanderungen* copies, which Fontane begins requesting from Hertz four weeks after the publication of the first volume, resembles in its logic a coral reef: with the help of the interleaved pages, Fontane has to put in the new material where it thematically or structurally belongs, gradually pushing the dimensions of each chapter outward. The interleaved book copies thus make the act of “nachtragen” literally possible: they allow for supplementing and replenishing the existing material and for putting the new finds, generated by the additive logic of the second-order distinction, into the project at a later date. Faced with the two bulky annotated volumes that are held at the Theodor-Fontane-Archiv, however, one realizes quickly that this method is only useful for very specific pieces of information. The entries Fontane has actually made on the inserted pages, numbering fewer than fifty in all, consist of brief remarks to correct factual errors in the text, precise references to sources about some particular topics with which his *Wanderungen* episodes are concerned, and very few newspaper clippings, minimally glossed, that are affixed to some of the added pages. The fact that the majority of the interleaved pages are blank indicates that this storage medium is an altogether bad fit for Fontane—it is not capable of keeping up with the frequent changes that the project undergoes, and it does not allow for a mode of storage that disconnects the material from its thematic context.

The notebooks provide the counter-model to these interleaved book copies, for they break up the order of the *Wanderungen* volumes, making room for methods of notation that are a lot less bound to specific moments in the existing textual fabric than the act of “nachtragen.” The

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31 The existence of three of these interleaved volumes is certain: from his correspondence with Wilhelm Hertz, it is clear that he requested and received an interleaved copy of the initial *Wanderungen* volume from 1861 that has not survived; moreover, the Theodor-Fontane-Archiv holds interleaved copies of the original edition of the second volume (archival signature Q11) and of the second edition of the initial volume (archival signature Q10).
frequency with which Fontane uses the notebooks for the *Wanderungen* and other projects—sixty-seven of them have survived—suggests that they provide an altogether better solution. They enhance the maneuverability of the stored material by introducing two main systems of order: an order by location and an order by year. These may also occur in combination (e.g., notebook A 15: “Havelland. / Meist 1869”). Within these larger ordering systems, Fontane often stores his material according to the places, sites, and people to which the individual entries refer, and he uses the names of places (or people or sites) as headings. This results in an organizational appearance reminiscent of a commonplace book, as a page from notebook A1 illustrates (fig. 2):

Image removed from digital version due to copyright concerns.

Figure 2. Double-page from notebook A1. Gathering pieces of information under the headings of place names, page 52r resembles a page in a commonplace book (transcription below). Published with the permission of the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*.

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32 There are, however, also some notebooks with thematic labels such as “Arbeits=Notizen” (A12).
The notebook, which Fontane labeled, “1864. / Sommerreise durchs Ruppinsche” (followed by a list of villages), was most likely used for research for the second edition of the first Wanderungen volume. Like a commonplace book, the transcribed notebook page 52r gathers pieces of information from different sources and allocates the information to topics, figuring here as names of villages. Such topoi-based notational systems facilitate the processing and reworking of material (Moss 186–214). As page 52 illustrates, the individual entries are not interconnected and are thus suited for easy access and quick retrieval. Access and retrieval are further facilitated by the underlined topic headings, which help in identifying entries and making them searchable. Similarly, the entry on 51v—the list about old castles in Ruppin County—is an attempt to condense under a shared thematic heading information that is scattered across different places, thus making it available as a bundle for inquiries concerned with this topic.
To be sure, the analogy with the commonplace book ends at the point where Fontane’s notebooks turn into logs not of past but of future research. In addition to information about significant aspects of each village (e.g., the reference to the “Knochen” in Wildberg), page 52r also contains a list of people to be contacted. This notebook is both a storage container and a plan for future action. It is thus in an intermediary position in the process of generating material, somewhere between that which is already there and that which is still to be produced. Many of the notebooks from the Wanderungen context have this intermediary function. In this way, Fontane does not use the notebooks according to a rigorous method, or at least a straightforward method is not discernible. As a result, the degree of cohesion among different entries is further decreased. At times, entries for individual topics break off and are then followed by several blank pages; but later, the same topic, bearing the same heading, shows up again on another page or even in an altogether different notebook. Topics, it seems, are often not filled up but begun anew in the notebooks, very often in expandable list form. In this sense, the notebooks grant Fontane much more flexibility in notation and storage than the interleaved book copies with the “Nachträße” in coral-reef style possibly could.

Various receptacles in Fontane’s filing system serve first and foremost as extensions of the notebooks, turning the two-dimensional, script-based order of the notebook pages into the three-dimensional order of real (not just figurative) containers. These allow for large amounts of

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33 For example, the notebooks A2, 3r, 22r, 77r; A3, 56v, 66r; A4 65v; A5, 66r–69v, 115v; A7 passim, A12 1–2r; and A 17, 51r. A17 quite literally coordinates Fontane’s future research in that it contains notes on train connections to the places he intends to visit. In a similar vein, several other Wanderungen notebooks contain addresses, dates, and times for Fontane’s meetings with informants. On Fontane’s research strategies, see Chapter Two of this study.

34 The prime example is the disconnected series of notes on the town of Freienwalde scattered across the notebooks A5, A7, and A9.

35 Fontane’s use of the notebook space, the different notational techniques, and their implications for his production shall be discussed in detail in the Third Chapter of this study.
differently-sized materials to be stored together and yet remain unbound. With a bit of gumshoe work, one can gather together evidence across different time periods and sources indicating that Fontane’s filing system consists of a row of idiosyncratic containers and designated storage spaces, including paper sleeves; file folders; desk drawers; a shelf fitted with a deep bottom, more drawers, and pigeonholes; a chest (Vertikow); a ledge near his desk holding bundles of manuscripts; an array of “extra angefertigte[n] Pappkästen” residing on the tall shelf; and at least one small wooden box for storing “Stoff.” Photographs and drawings of Fontane’s last study, at which he works from 1872 to his death and produces the majority of the texts for which he is now known, attest that his working environment is thoroughly suffused with these containers and receptacles.

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36 My reconstruction of Fontane’s working environment is based on the following sources: Beta; Friedrich Fontane, “Potsdamer Straße 134c;” Klünner, “Wohnstätten;” Machner; Meyer and Ernst, 112; Möller; Schacht. I am very grateful to Wolfgang Rasch for pointing me to the catalog produced by Hellmut Meyer and Ernst for the pivotal Fontane auction from 1933. Although the precise dating of some of the containers and receptacles is not certain, one can assume that he relies on a number of them throughout his compulsory life: from 1857 on, he makes reference to “Kasten” in his letters (e.g., letter to Wilhelm and Henriette Merckel, January 3, 1857; Briefe Theodor Fontanes 1:162); in 1861, he buys the desk with the unusually high number of drawers from his friend Wilhelm Lübke, a prolific art historian who also employs compilatory working methods (Rohling, Lersch), and continues to use this very desk to his death, even lugging it up to his last apartment. The paper sleeves certainly span a time period from 1868 to 1897. How many additional and potentially older sleeves there are cannot be determined because of the archival situation: the outdated Bestandsverzeichnis from 1962 of the Theodor-Fontane-Archiv contains at least one reference to a sleeve from the Wanderungen context (signature Kf [4], Bestandsverzeichnis 1.1: 104), yet since the Theodor-Fontane-Archiv operates without an up-to-date inventory, the exact number of additional paper sleeves remains unclear. Analysis of a list of lost archival objects—Horlitz’s Vermißte Bestände des Theodor-Fontane-Archivs—corroborates the conclusion, though, that the paper sleeves are absolutely central to Fontane’s working methods, across all kinds of projects and textual genres.

37 The photographs and drawings are these: the photographs taken by the Berlin studio “Zander und Labisch” in 1896 (Theodor Fontane-Archiv, file no. TFA_AI 96_33853; see p. ix), a wood engraving by Georg Dreher showing Fontane at his desk; a floor plan of Fontane’s study drawn by his son Friedrich; and a portrayal of Fontane’s by Hanns Fechner from 1893 known as the “Wolkenschaubild.” All of these images are printed in Möller and in Klünner, “Fontane im Bildnis.”
Their impact on the material and on Fontane’s production is fundamental. Using the example of the box, Anke te Heesen has shown that containers establish a special relationship shaped by both functionality and heightened significance between the material and its user. This phenomenological description fully applies in Fontane’s case. As simple forms of material management, containers protect the material, isolate it, and keep it available (te Heesen, *Weltkasten*, 157–161). At the same time, they imbue that which they enclose with meaning; what is put into a box belongs to someone, to a particular context or function, and is usually intended for something. This surplus of meaning can be exploited productively; the user can take the items that have become meaningful out of their containers and generate, by combining them with other items, new meaning (162). The basic act of putting things into boxes and taking them out can be a generative step in a productive process, paradigmatic examples being the type case (*Setzkasten*) or the card catalog (*Zettelkasten*).

In Fontane’s filing system, drawers and pigeonholes make it particularly easy to deposit items and take them out again for reshuffling. As receptacles that either have no lids and simply slide out or are open at the front anyway, they invite frequent inspection and rearrangement. Their design and application serve to decrease cohesion among individual items while actually increasing flexibility in handling them. Fontane’s peculiar paper sleeves function along similar lines yet require some more manual effort, while also enabling more complex movements of material. To file items in these sleeves, Fontane folds large newspaper sheets around stacks of notes, manuscript pages, letters, galleys of *Wanderungen* episodes, newspaper clippings, or historical documents, making a package that he then closes with a few drops of glue or sealing wax. The packages—in Fontane’s terminology: “Convolute” or “Pa[c]kete”—provide enough surface to affix labels that hold the packages together across the seams and keep track of
status of the material inside (fig. 3). Moreover, they enable Fontane to record changes in the order of the content and therefore make it possible for him to make temporary arrangements that can be developed further or reverted. How frequently this happens is documented in the revision of labels,\(^{38}\) insertion of remarks with a different pencil,\(^{39}\) or addition of a second label that realizes a complete shift in the order of the material (e.g., from a \textit{topos}-based order to an order following projected book volumes).\(^{40}\)

Figure 3. Example of a paper sleeve from the \textit{Wanderungen} context. The newspaper sheet is taken from “Freie Stunden”, the free Sunday supplement to the Berlin paper \textit{Tribüne} (March 2, 1882). © \textit{Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin}. Archival file no. V 67_863_B,Hoppenrade.

\(^{38}\) E.g., a label on a paper sleeve reading “Pichelsdorf / Groß Glinike.” \textit{Stadtmuseum Berlin}, archival file no. 48_522 R_B,Pichelsdorf.

\(^{39}\) E.g., the paper sleeve labeled with “Marquardt.” \textit{Stadtmuseum Berlin}, archival file no. V 67_869_B,Marquardt.

\(^{40}\) E.g., the two labels on a paper sleeve, of which the first one reads, “Band III.” and the added second one as, “Havelland. […].” The final line of the second label is no longer readable because of a third label that Fontane’s wife added after his death. \textit{Stadtmuseum Berlin}, archival file no. V 67_869_B,Havelland.
That Fontane employs sealing wax or glue to close the sleeves may appear contradictory at first sight, and yet it is not if one considers that sealing wax is an ordinary item in his mid-nineteenth century context. So are both the glue—“Mehlpapp” homemade from flour and water and hence very cheap—and the old newspaper sheets that Fontane uses. The labels, too, are as simple as such things can be in their most basic form (a piece of paper). The act of sealing is therefore not a striving for final formal closure but a rather pragmatic attempt to make temporary distinctions and to keep bundles of material together.

There are strong indications that these receptacles and containers belong to a firmly-established routine in Fontane’s filing system, even a habitual practice, and hence permeate his working methods deeply. The sheer quantity of receptacles suggests this, as does Fontane’s reflection of his own work process, as reported by his acquaintance Ottomar Beta. Fontane himself glues together the cardboard boxes that he uses, calling it a “mechanische Beschäftigung” that has become “zweite[n] Natur” to him during his apprenticeship as an apothecary (Beta 38). Indeed, in Fontane’s day, pharmacies still rely on paper tools such as cardboard boxes and envelopes (in which the ingredients and also the instruments of pharmaceutical practice are kept) and train their apprentices to make these paper tools.\(^{41}\) It is therefore very plausible that Fontane’s initial vocational training at a pre-industrialization pharmacy provides him with the important mechanical and administrative skills needed to manage his material and create with it an *Apotheke* in the old sense of the word (“storehouse”) for his text production. The distinct formatting of a share of folio sheets from Fontane’s *Nachlass*, moreover, corroborates the conclusion that much more of his material is stored in

\(^{41}\) E-mail conversation with Elisabeth Huwer, Director of the *Deutsches Apotheken-Museum* Heidelberg, (June 15, 2011). I am indebted to Elisabeth Huwer for sharing her expertise and reference materials on this topic with me.
receptacles than has hitherto been acknowledged, as an accessible example demonstrates. Putting
down some notes on a “Figur in einer Berliner Novelle,” Fontane creates a folio sheet that
resembles a large-format card in a very basic card catalog: the loose sheet bears a circled heading
in the upper left corner and hence in a quickly identifiable spot and then presents a limited
portion of material to be retrieved and processed as a unit (fig. 4, see next page). Toward the
bottom of the page, Fontane’s efforts to keep the portion of material comprehensible become
visible, since he squeezes in the last lines so as to avoid having to use a second sheet (the flipside
contains a maculated draft from another project).

From the catalog of the 1933 Fontane auction and other sources still awaiting full
evaluation, one learns that Fontane fills hundreds of loose folio sheets with basic ideas for
novels, novellas, characters, drafts of Wanderungen episodes, excerpts from source materials,
and lists of details to furnish his text production. Together these amount to a substantial set of
components from which new text can be pieced together.\(^\text{42}\) When writing to informants,
moreover, Fontane at times explicitly requests that they provide their material on “Zettel” (HFA
IV. 2: 425; Briefe an von Rohr, 45–46). While there is no evidence that he stores the “Zettel,”
folio sheets, and other loose materials systematically with the help of his receptacles, he
nevertheless routinely manages inflowing material with means that function similarly to
Zettelkästen and thus facilitate the compilatory use of the stored items.

\(^{42}\) E.g., the Bestandsverzeichnis of the Theodor Fontane-Archiv, Horlitz’s documentation of
Vermißte Bestände des Theodor Fontane-Archivs, and designated sections and appendices to
different Fontane editions containing information or prints of his Nachlass, such as HFA I.7.
Frequently, however, the editions only reproduce the mere text, without providing information
on the layout of Fontane’s materials.
Figure 4. Folio sheet from Fontane’s Nachlass, roughly resembling in its layout a card from a simple card catalog. Published with the permission of the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach. Accession Number 59.1196; Microfiche No. 005053, Fiche 14.

In this fundamental position at the center of Fontane’s filing system, the receptacles and other paper tools enable two very different kinds of working methods for the compilation of
Wanderungen episodes and other projects: they promote text production that is at once mechanical and yet fluid. On the mechanical side, through his filing system, Fontane realizes a mode of text production that is broken down into a clearly-defined course of action. This process enables him to make the transition from the gathering of “Stoff” to the disposition of text in a series of quasi-automated steps. An account by Friedrich Fontane of his father’s work routine in the context of the project Geschichte und Geschichten aus Mark Brandenburg documents this:


While Friedrich Fontane admires his father’s “Sammeleifer,” the truly striking feature of this mode of text production lies elsewhere, namely, in Fontane’s ability to follow a definable routine (“Gesichtet, geprüft, ausgewählt, gegliedert, [...]”) to shape his accumulated material into the organized disposition of text.

Across Fontane’s letter exchanges, one finds different templates and routines with which he structures precisely this transition, turning it into a repeatable operation and making the resulting text eminently calculable. Put another way, the transition from “Stoff” to text, which Friedrich’s account describes, exists in different versions in Theodor Fontane’s production, yet all of these different versions converge in their formulaic nature: they are programs through which Fontane reliably generates text. Two examples shall suffice to flesh out the picture that Friedrich’s account provides. As Theodor Fontane works on the revised edition of the first Wanderungen volume, he wants to include an episode on the noble local von Rohr family, and he
writes to his friend and informant Mathilde von Rohr to lay out his plan and obtain the necessary materials so that he can “ein Kapitel arrangiren”:


Explicitly speaking of a “Rezept,” Fontane highlights the mechanical nature of the transition from “Stoff” to text. For this transition, moreover, the individual qualities of the material are not critical, what is critical is that he obtains some version of the basic ingredients needed to arrange his episode, as the arbitrariness in his formulations—“Irgend eines Rohrs [...] Irgend eine Curiosität”—indicates.

In another letter, this time to his friend Georg Friedlaender, Fontane does not speak of a “Rezept,” but spells out and even itemizes the steps that he advises his friend to take for the efficient production of a lecture in the context of theater history: “Ich proponire, weil ich es in gleicher Situation immer so gemacht habe, a. Einleitung / b. Disposition. Skelett. / c. Behängung dieses Skeletts mit Conversationslexikonmaterial und / d. Ornamentierung dieses Behangmaterials mit Anekdoten aus dem Leben berühmter Künstler und Künstlerinnen” (HFA IV.3: 514). His concluding remark, “Das ‘Anputzen der Façade’ macht sich nachher leicht,” indicates that this program of text production gradually leads from basic work to refinement, ultimately making both processes manageable.

The other mode of text production that this filing system instantiates is of a completely different kind. Characterized not merely by controlled routines but also by spontaneity and
fluidity, it even reverses the routines and breaks up formerly-made arrangements. For whatever Fontane deposits in sleeves, drawers, pigeonholes, and the like remains unfixed, on the verge of being reshuffled and remixed with different materials. A side-glance at the famous example of Goethe brings to light what this means to the process of text production. The latter, too, as we know thanks to Ernst Robert Curtius, employed specific paper tools to store and manage his materials in complex acts of self-administration. Despite all of their idiosyncrasies, the parallels between the methods that Goethe and Fontane employed are striking. Goethe kept his working materials, drafts, and source texts in stacks or bundles, which he then grouped, schematized, and put into large paper envelopes that he labeled. He even stored the Faust manuscript pages in this manner. He called these envelopes “Akten.” As an important part of his productive process, Goethe frequently re-opened the envelopes and re-grouped the materials to write out new labels and schemata. In a letter to Schiller, written on a journey to Switzerland and dated August 22, 1797, he describes the advantages of this method with regard to travel narratives, which, as he puts it, are frequently hampered by one-sidedness in perspective and judgment. Yet his “Akten” solve this problem in an exemplary fashion. Keeping together all sorts of papers that he has come across on his journey (newspapers, extracts of sermons, theater programs, etc.), he uses the files to counterbalance the difficulty of description and leaves open the possibility of looking at everything anew, from a different angle, in a surprising combination with other materials. The result is a “große Masse” of materials that become “interessant genug” to continue writing (qtd. in Curtius 164). The paper sleeves thus not only yield the production of more text, but also diversify the content and keep it fluid.

In Fontane’s case, the paper sleeves help him realize fluidity at the level of form, enabling him to move units of text around freely and continue production with a high degree of
configurational flexibility. He can thus overturn previously-made arrangements, modify the structure of the “work” to which the part in the making is supposed to belong, and continue production nonetheless, even though the “work” continues to change. Again, the example of the *Wanderungen* brings this out clearly. Fontane, under pressure because of a hard deadline set by his publisher, has to deliver the manuscript for the second edition of the first *Wanderungen* volume to the printers; yet his manuscript is not at all definite. Due to the configurational flexibility in his filing system, however, he is able to send out batches of text from one end of the project while he continues to compile more on the other end, writing to Hertz: “Ich scicke morgen den Aufsatz ‘Ruppiiner Schweiz’. Fehlt es nun aber morgen schon an M[anu]. S[cript]., so kann Bernstein [= the printer] den Aufsatz ‘Dörfer und Flecken’ erst drucken und mit diesem Aufsatz (die ‘R. Schweiz’) abschließen” (qtd. in GBA W6: 602).

Yet even after publication, texts achieve no “finished” state in Fontane’s filing system. Rather, the sold and printed portions return to drawers and paper sleeves, as a large label on a sleeve for Fontane’s autobiographical project *Von Zwanzig bis Dreißig* indicates (archival file no. V 67_864_B, Leipzig). On the label, Fontane not only records the whereabouts of the sleeve’s content—in this case, five chapters of his autobiographical writings that are temporarily with a potential publisher—but also prompts himself explicitly to return the content after publication (“in Abschrift wieder hier einlegen”). The receptacles in his filing system, one can conclude, thus function like ports from which Fontane sends portions of his compilations into the open and to which the text portions, enriched with additional materials or not, can return. The peculiar filing system thus channels the productivity of Fontane’s compiling in such a way that it can change direction without ever ceasing.
To conclude, Fontane’s paper tools in interaction form a gathering device designed for growth that stores items with varying degrees of cohesion, spanning from very cohesive (as in the case of the interleaved *Wanderungen* copies) to very loose (as in the drawers, paper sleeves, and other receptacles). It keeps heterogeneous materials—“Stoff”—and portions of text together in a state of impermanence. The medium of the collection and the filing system as its physical pendant thus realize a specific circulation pattern in Fontane’s text production and, more broadly speaking, his authorship: Fontane identifies and absorbs material, arranges it—at times extremely mechanically—into temporary configurations of text, sends it out for publication, but then also channels it back into the filing system. This process results in text production that not only accommodates more and more material while turning this material into text, but also continues to sustain itself by moving freely across the “Stoff” / text distinction. Fontane’s filing system realizes text production in which the text is a fabric without borders that can expand from any given point. His modes of production, instantiated by this filing system, call for viewing his “works” as reconfigurations of one and the same developing fabric in which “Stoff” and published text are samples for a constantly-changing patchwork.

3. Between Mechanicity and Virtuosity: Producing Forms in the Maelstrom

The two extremely different modes of text production that the filing system enables can be described as floating between mechanicity and virtuosity. On the one hand, text production does not depend on Fontane’s individual talents as an author; to some degree, everybody can be a Fontane, and Fontane does in fact have helpers who contribute to the production of
Wanderungen episodes on his instruction. He repeatedly sends out family members and friends
to describe localities on his behalf and to obtain “personal” impressions of particular places, thus
making up for the problem that he cannot possibly personally acquire material on all the topics
that he treats in the Wanderungen. A good example of Fontane’s enlistment of contributors can
be found in a letter to his sister Lise, in which he gives her precise directions about the
information she is to gather on the village of Köpernitz so that he can directly integrate her
findings into the Wanderungen:

In Köpernitz selbst kuckst Du Dir das Terrain scharf an: die Terrain-beschaffenheit, Wald, Wasser, das Dorf, vor allem die Lage des herrschaftlichen Hauses, dessen Aussehen, wie viel Etagen, wie viel Fenster-Front und wo möglich noch irgend etwas Markantes, ein Grabmal, Springbrunnen, Storchennest, Rampe oder sonst dergleichen. Zehn bis zwölf Zeilen sind genug, aber es muß ein anschauliches Bild geben. Knesebeck in Loewenbruch hat mir vor 6 Monaten auf diese Weise auch ein Dorf (Salow) beschrieben. Thu Dein Bestes. (HFA IV.2: 43; also qtd. in Fürstenau 51–52)

In addition to the direct enlistment of contributors, Fontane makes frequent use of questionnaires
in his research. He prepares forms for others to fill in, indicating that his text production can, on
this level, operate with automatization and standardization.43 This practice has an impact on the
quality of the generated text. Large parts of the Wanderungen are indeed very repetitive in terms
of content, structure, and design, following the same contrastive pattern that Bisky has described
as an “Einerseits-andererseits-Struktur” (114), and employing the same textual devices, e.g.,
introductory mottos taken from folksongs or poems. Fontane conceals these structural repetitions
strategically when he explicitly emphasizes the supposed individuality of each Wanderungen

43 Fürstenau describes some of these forms and their layout, specifying the questionnaire-like
letters that Fontane writes as follows: “Oft sind die Fragen, die sich durch knappe Fassung,
Klarheit und Genauigkeit auszeichnen, numeriert und nehmen nur die Hälfte des Bogens ein, die
andere für die Antworten freilassend” (70). For an example of a questionnaire, see notebook A8,
6r (example qtd. in Fürstenau). One of Fontane’s best-known helpers is Alexander Gentz, who
completes parts of Fontane’s manuscript for the project Dörfer und Flecken im Ruppinschen,
which is in the style of a table with a field for every village (Fürstenau 60).
episode, stating in a letter to Wilhelm Hertz that in his project, “Unsummen von Individuen” appear, and that he also conceives of every village as an individual (“Auch jedes Dorf faß’ ich dabei als ein Individuum.” Briefe an Hertz, 160).

At the same time, the filing system facilitates working with the generated masses of material in a manner that exceeds the merely mechanical and paves the way into the realm of the virtuosic. Virtuoso performers go beyond existing artistic means insofar as they, rather than only executing these means to perfection, generate new aesthetic forms out of them. The same holds true for experimental and otherwise productive environments in which the performer runs an apparatus, as Hans-Jörg Rheinberger has shown (“Experimentelle Virtuosität”): virtuosos handle their instruments in such a way that they can do more with them than originally intended; they possess an unusual degree of “operative Aufmerksamkeit” (23) and thus remain extremely attentive to the potential that the apparatus may develop beyond the intended purpose. Fontane’s filing system enables him to exploit his virtuosic “operative attentiveness” through the ease with which the accumulated heterogeneous components of text can be distributed. Through this ease, Fontane is able to generate new aesthetic forms out of the components that he has at his disposal. Rather than merely forging contrasts and similar aesthetic features for the realization of individual Wanderungen episodes, he approaches the relationship between aesthetic form and discrete contents from a more comprehensive perspective, thinking about the generated masses of material and the forms into which they can be cast wholesale. The language with which he describes his own working methods reflects this perspective; he employs words indicative of his sensitivity to the finely-balanced relationship between form and content, calling his work “Verteilungs-Arbeit” and using descriptive phrases such as “jedem einzelnem [Dorf in den
The filing system, then, helps Fontane exceed the calculated production of individual Wanderungen episodes in order to endow the entire project with an aesthetic profile: that of a textual territory shaped by peaks and valleys, contrasts, punch lines, and moments of peripeteia. The ease of distributing the textual components enables him to observe and continuously modify the relationship between motivated form and amorphous content, and to draw on his archives wholesale to arrange what his kindred author-compiler Walter Kempowski terms a “mass movement” in which the individual episodes are “carefully related to one another” (qtd. in Krajewski 144). In the case of the Wanderungen, this choreographed “mass movement” is one of the larger forms that Fontane’s virtuosity produces. It is especially apparent in the development of the episodes around Fontane’s hometown Neuruppin. From edition to edition, Fontane not only modifies the six Neuruppin episodes with which he starts the initial Wanderungen volume, but he also produces and inserts more of them, expanding the set into a textual web with thirteen interrelated “essay knots” in the Wohlfeile Ausgabe. Together, these episodes produce aesthetic effects, such as the realization of entertaining surprises between neighboring episodes, that no individual text alone can achieve. Fontane’s virtuosic sensitivity when endowing massive

44 In the case of the Neuruppin complex, Fontane’s arrangement of the gradually-produced essays is particularly effective: preparing the second edition, he adds—among other things—two episodes, one of them on the town of Ruppin before the Thirty Years’ War, and the other one on the sixteenth-century Ruppin intellectual Andreas Fromm (GBA W1: 630–633). Fontane places the two episodes such that an amusing incongruity arises: while the first episode praises the time before the Thirty Years’ War as Ruppin’s cultural prime and the era in which it was on par with German university cities, the second treats Fromm as the “höchstwahrscheinlich […] gelehrestest Mann, den die Ruppiner Lande hervorgebracht haben” (GBA W1: 68), yet this very Andreas Fromm leads a turbulent life, at once a father of five and a catholic clergyman. The seriousness of Fontane’s description of Ruppin as a scholarly town, then, is undercut by the unorthodox biography of its most scholarly inhabitant.
quantities of content with narratively- or aesthetically-motivated forms is what sets him apart from mere hack compilers.

Yet despite his virtuosity, Fontane eventually has to resort to drastic measures in order to realize the one large form—the *Wanderungen* as work—in the maelstrom of circulating components of “Stoff” and text. This realization provides a final proof of the vast productivity of the medial apparatus driving the project. For the machinery set into motion through the interaction of the medium of the collection and the filing system can potentially run indefinitely; as in every collection, there is only provisional completion because every successive detail generates renewed demands of comprehensiveness and leads to further segmentation (R. Meyer, “Vollständigkeit,” 7).\(^45\) Even as Fontane’s publisher, after years of bargaining, consents to a four-volume design and defines the outer limits of the project, it continues to expand internally, increasing the degree of detail.\(^46\) What aggravates the problem of completion is that in Fontane’s case, the object of his description—his and the readers’ “Heimath”—continues to change and thus requires constant updates. Fontane’s drastic strategy for bringing the project to a close is to cap the flow of incoming material and decouple it from the circulation of “Stoff” and text: accordingly, in the preface to the second edition of the third *Wanderungen* volume (*Havelland. Die Landschaft um Spandau, Potsdam, Brandenburg*. Berlin 1880), he informs the reader that he will no longer update the content because of his concern that “alles Umarbeiten und Hinzufügen in der Regel nur Schwerfälligkeiten schafft […]”, and that he has therefore decided to leave most of the content “wie sich’s etwa ums Jahr [18]70 dem Auge präsentirte,” asking the reader kindly

\(^{45}\) I am indebted to Nikolaus Wegmann for pointing me to Richard Meyer’s reflection of the problem of completion.

\(^{46}\) This part of Fontane and Hertz’s ongoing negotiations begins in December 1872, as they plot the third edition of the first volume. By this time, three *Wanderungen* volumes have appeared, the first two in second editions, but Fontane still does not know what the final number of volumes is going to be. The situation is, in his words, a “grausames Spiel.”
to keep this in mind when encountering passages that are no longer current (V–VI). In the preface to the fourth and final volume, he re-emphasizes the project’s boundedness to a specific historical moment and adds that in the event of a new edition, he intends to endow each episode with its “besondere Jahresszahl” (V–VI).

Considering that Fontane has done nothing but “Umarbeiten” and “Hinzufügen” in the two decades preceding these volumes, his drastic intervention has nothing to do with the “ponderousness” of the project; rather, it is due to the impossibility of bringing the project to a close otherwise. By means of this final cut, Fontane’s text production—his practice of shuttling between open process and aesthetic work—eventually arrives on the side of the finished work. Yet the four-volume set and its reprint in the Wohlfeile Ausgabe only represent a successfully-decoupled part of the project; they do not indicate that the text-generating apparatus itself ceases operating. From 1881 to 1888, Fontane produces episodes for the thematically-connected volume Fünf Schlösser. Altes und Neues aus Mark Brandenburg, begins projecting a “vierbändiges Parallelwerk” out of the accumulated material supposed to supplement the Wanderungen in 1883, and, right after Fünf Schlösser has appeared as a book in 1888, starts working on another planned volume with the title Das Ländchen Friesack und die Bredows. Just three days before his death, he asks one of his informants about material for this volume (“Ich denke mir, vor Ihrem Auge liegt das alles ausgebreitet wie in einem Warenlager […] – nichts fehlt.” HFA IV.4: 755). The project, of which the Wanderungen are one very successful articulation, and its underlying text-generating apparatus, never again come to a standstill.

In the end, then, the Wanderungen are not only steady sellers but also, above all else, a productive tool that generates literally thousands of pages of textual material available as “Stoff” for other compilations. The medium of the collection and the filing system constitute the
apparatus that operates at the heart of Fontane’s working methods, where it contributes vitally to his prolificacy as well as his versatility (as Chapter Three will show in detail). Differently put, the paper tools with which he fills his archives are also those with which he manages to produce an array of compilations, thus providing the means for a constant, massive reorganization of “Stoff” and text that Fontane carries out with the skills of a virtuoso. Part and parcel of this virtuosity is his rigorously practical attitude toward his own productions, which he envisages not in the heavy terms of the “work,” but in the fluid categories of the project. Fontane employs this practical stance thoroughly even toward his supposed magnum opus, as a final glance at a notebook page (E3, 46v) reveals. On this page, the Wanderungen are merely a shell, a framework for the realization of a project of literary criticism:

Transcription removed from digital version due to copyright concerns.

In this entry, to be found in a row with other project sketches toward the end of the notebook, the Wanderungen are casually mobilized as a genre, perhaps even as the metonymy of a procedure,
for the realization of forms of literary criticism. The entry bespeaks Fontane’s ability to shift gears completely: at one moment, wading through details in the production process of the *Wanderungen*, at another taking a very removed stance to re-function the project. It is in this virtuosic ability to enact and maintain a radically flexible stance toward textual materials in excess—regardless of their source, function, and his investment in them—that an important part of Fontane’s originality as a compiler lies.

But what enables Fontane to set in motion the masses of material that his filing system holds? The medium of the collection and the *Wanderungen* project have provided an abstract description of the underlying procedures; the following chapter will analyze how these procedures yield tangible material flowing in from a quickly-proliferating network of sources.
For Fontane, the most important interaction with any material occurs through reading. Fully immersed in the publishing sphere of later nineteenth-century Germany, he is a reader of everything—national and international journals, books, newspapers, flyers, historical documents, personal letters, and even images, art exhibitions, maps, and entire landscapes. Reading is his...
principal mode of access not just to textual sources, but also to the world at large. It is the practice through which the inclusive logic of collecting (see Chapter One) generates enormous quantities of material with which the compiler can work.

The remnants of Fontane’s personal library or “Handbibliothek” seem to contradict the picture of the avidly-reading omnivore, though. At the end of his life, one large and one small bookcase plus two open shelves suffice to store the modest few hundred volumes that Fontane owns, a fraction of which can be found on display at the Theodor-Fontane-Archiv in Potsdam, Germany (Rasch, 103–104). Yet, as this chapter argues, Fontane’s actual library is of a completely different kind: not bound to one physical place but virtual, not constrained to defined subject areas but constantly expanding, not stocked with a countable number of items but with varying sources. It is not a library, but a postal library network that Fontane manages, and that provides him with a ceaseless influx of sources.

This chapter will reconstruct Fontane’s library network—its infrastructure, growth, and epistemic impact—and analyze the techniques with which he accesses and traverses the abundance of materials that the quickly-proliferating network yields. The goal of the reconstruction is to understand the role that reading plays, both within the medial apparatus through which Fontane fills his archives and for his productive process as a whole. The chapter argues that the network-structure of the library and Fontane’s interaction with it have central epistemic and poetological consequences for his compiling: while the network makes available all kinds of sources from a comprehensive spectrum, Fontane applies a virtuosic reading technique—his “sprungweise Methode”—through which these sources break down into discrete passages. Every text can thus decompose into bits and pieces that become available to radically-

exhibitions (HFA III.1: 417–423; 424–528). Moreover, his diary entries contain numerous examples of his “readings” of images and landscapes (GBA T1:27; T2: 29, 69).
associative recombination. The library network and Fontane’s main reading technique thus assist him not only in accumulating an excess of textual passages for his compiling, but in deriving creativity from this excess.

Inquiries in reading processes, whether past or present, face a number of methodological problems. Reading as an inner action remains inaccessible to observation. Because one can read all kinds of things on all kinds of levels, there also is no “pertinence of objects” in the field of reading (Barthes, “On Reading,” 34), a circumstance that further increases the difficulty of analytic description. Texts, moreover, do not interpret themselves. The way in which a textually-coded message is actually received is beyond control. This lack of control makes analysis of that which happens in the reading process all the more difficult (Stanitzek 254). According to Heinz Schlaffer, finally, there is also a disciplinary bias. When inquiring into reading processes, literary scholars tend to nourish a chimerical model both of “proper” reading—reading that proceeds in an orderly fashion from page to page—and of “integral” texts. They forget, Schlaffer argues, that reading always includes skipping ahead, skimming, digressing, and breaking off; and they operate with a notion of the text (the text as “whole,” “definite,” and “simply there”) that has actually long been discredited in literary studies (1–4). As a consequence, literary studies have difficulties developing a methodology that does justice to the realities of reading and to the complexities of the text.

Rather than trying to solve these methodological problems, this chapter seeks to acknowledge them and to integrate them into the approach. Unlike previous studies, it therefore does not focus on that which happens inside Fontane-the-reader; nor does it try to model how Fontane reads specific texts; nor does it concentrate on the question of the literary influence that
individual authors might have had on Fontane. The chapter focuses instead on that which happens through and in the library network as a whole. Drawing together the logistic traces that the network has left in Fontane’s diaries, letter exchanges, and notebooks, the chapter tells the history of Fontane-the-reader as the media history of the library network and his use of it.

Through this media-historical perspective, reading ceases to be an ephemeral concept and turns into a describable cultural practice that has implications for Fontane’s other textual practices and his productive process as a whole. Implicit in this approach is that the question of how Fontane reads is far more important than the question of what he reads.

1. Amassing Addresses: Managing a Postal Library Network

Fontane’s library is first and foremost a postal library: it consists of a network of addresses of individuals as well as text-producing institutions with access to a broad range of sources. Wherever he happens to be, Fontane makes use of what he calls his “Bibliotheks-Konnexionen” (Fontane–Heyse 114; Fontane–Lepel 111) and sends off letters with requests to

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49 See, for example, Aust (“Lektürewerk”) and Wruck (“Bildungsmisere”). It is characteristic of such studies to emphasize classical authors and their contributions to Fontane’s “development” while downplaying his readings of popular-literary sources, newspapers, and magazines. With the exceptions of Rasch (“Zeitungstiger”) and Berbig (Fontane im literarischen Leben), on whose contributions I am drawing, scholars have not acknowledged the circumstance that Fontane’s reading happens in a network-structure and amidst an excess of materials.

50 In so doing, my study builds on Friedrich Kittler’s fundamental assumption that reading is a process determined by technologies, institutions, and ingrained physical practices. Consequently, Kittler argues, reading ought to be described through the historical reconstruction of these technical and practical parameters. For a compact account of Kittler’s program, see David E. Wellbery’s foreword and Kittler’s own afterword to the second printing of Discourse Networks 1800/1900 (vii-xxxiii and 369–374).
people he knows, asking them for bibliographical references, literature, or historical documents relevant to the project(s) on which he is currently working. As a result, a stream of material flows into Fontane’s work space, passes through his hands without ever really coming to a standstill, and flows out again, back to the loaner, whenever the loan period is up or Fontane is done with it.51

Fontane makes real efforts to track the movements of this library network with the help of his diaries, letter exchanges and—to a lesser extent—his notebooks. Switching back and forth among these different notational forms and making them interact, he performs quotidian routines with which he accounts for his usage of the postal library. He keeps a record of letters written and letters received as well as texts or other sources he has encountered, expressing the similarity between his notational practices and practices of bookkeeping through coinages such as “tagebuchen” (GBA G2: 364) or through references to the “Kerbstock” (Fontane–Heyse 85, 99) with which he tries to retain an overview of his epistolary conversations.52 Employed in part as logbooks, the diaries, letter exchanges, and notebooks therefore provide a vast empirical basis from which the overall schema of Fontane’s interaction with his postal library can be abstracted.

The schema that best describes his library use, to borrow a coinage from Manfred Sommer, is that of “gathering like an octopus” (210): Fontane is the moving center from which long, sucker-bearing arms reach out in many directions at once. Over time, these many grasping arms continue to grow in size and number so that Fontane is able to expand his inquiries across a territory whose physical and thematic boundaries are pushed out further and further.

51 Rasch argues convincingly that from the very beginning, “ausleihen” determines Fontane’s relationship with his reading materials, the early sources of such borrowing being reader circles, lending libraries, and the personal libraries of his wealthier friends (“Zeitungstiger,” 107).
52 There are numerous examples of the interaction between the three notational forms; e.g., letters and notebooks morphing into diary-format (GBA E3: 424–426; notebook D2, 10v–43v) and references in the diaries to notebooks and letters (GBA T2: 55).
Two factors are decisive for the quick growth of Fontane’s library and its efficient exploitation. First, the geographical expansion of the Prussian postal system gradually projects the infrastructure upon which the library depends over Northern Germany, Europe, and, with the foundation of the *Weltpostverein* in 1874, the globe as a whole (Moser; Sagarra). Second, Fontane constantly generates additional metadata relevant to his research—data about what can be found where—that help him in expanding the thematic scope and depth of his inquiries.

One form of such metadata consists of “complex addresses” (Stichweh 27), which Fontane generates methodically. Noting down the names of the people with whom he has conversed either in spoken or written form, he tags them with additional pieces of information such as the social status, professional profile, or area of expertise; furthermore, he adds information about the context in which and intermediaries through whom he has met his new acquaintances and whom else they in turn know. He creates a link between the name and a clearly-identifiable location where more information can be found. The information attributed to the address can come in a number of different forms; for example, it can be a historical source, expert knowledge about a specific topic, or the representation of a particular social type. The resulting sets of data typically read as follows:


As this example shows, each acquaintance or new contact is tagged with a keyword, while the entry itself, through its block-format, remains individually selectable. In the creation and accumulation of his personal stock of addresses, this kind of social and thematic tagging is so vital to Fontane that he mines sources like actual address directories, guest lists of towns he
visits, bibliographical dictionaries such as the *Moniteur des Dates*, and the Who’s Whos of the Prussian nobility to be able to connect the names to specific content. For only if this link is present can the address be used to identify, select, and mobilize content.

Compendious textual genres serve as another form of metadata in Fontane’s library network and increase both its scope and its efficiency while keeping the contents up-to-date. Among these genres, newspaper reports and journal articles are by far the most important, as they make Fontane aware of new topics and point him to sources for further research while sparing him the time commitment of detailed study. His diaries, letters, and notebooks show that he routinely evaluates the newly-available wealth of regional, national, and international newspapers as well as journals. He takes brief notes on articles or cuts and pastes their decisive parts into his filing system so that he can follow up on them later. Since Fontane usually reads several different papers each day—documented in notes such as “Zeitungen,” “Gelesen. (Wochenblätter),” or “Deutsche Blätter gelesen” (GBA T1: 164, 190)—he encounters topics from a thematic spectrum that is much richer than that which any one paper alone can provide. Essentially, his plural newspaper readings make the growing library network just as thematically all-inclusive as the differentiated press system on which it draws. Fontane complements his reading of newspapers with the frequent consultation of *Conversationslexika*, which he appreciates as sources because they provide easily-digestible structuring of all kinds of topics

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53 One of Fontane’s letters to Georg Friedlaender demonstrates that he purposefully reads the guest list of the summer resort at which he is staying (letter no. 63, *Fontane–Friedlaender*, 53). Moreover, Fontane asks his wife Emilie to help him with the strategic evaluation of the addresses: “[...] heute näherte sich mir ein anderer Tischnachbar, der schon seit Wochen mit seiner Familie hier lebt. Ich fragte hinterher nach seinem Namen; der Oberkellner sagte mir, es sei ein Herr v. Kirchbach aus Berlin, eine Gerichtsperson. Bitte, sieh nach im Wohnungsanzeiger” (GBA E3: 80). His personal library contains the five-volume *Neues preussisches Adels-Lexicon oder genealogische und diplomatische Nachrichten […]* and the *Hand- und Adreßbuch für die Gesellschaft von Berlin*. Qtd. in Rasch 140–142.
and thus help him integrate varied information into his own production (Fontane–Friedlaender, 65–66). Other compendious genres ensure that Fontane’s library stays in sync with the contemporary cultural scene and popular scientific debates. Among these genres are book reviews, reviews of theatrical productions and art exhibitions, bulletins of regional historical societies, and also weekly meetings of cultural and literary clubs featuring academic guest speakers from a broad range of disciplines (Berbig, Fontane im literarischen Leben, 410–464).

The library network thus constitutes what Fontane’s contemporary Heinrich Heine, in a similar context, calls a true “Weltarchiv” (230), registering sources relevant for writing projects on both current and historical topics.

Due to the small physical size of his volume of metadata, Fontane is able to take his library with him and actualize its huge potential from nearly anywhere he travels. All he needs to do is translate the metadata into directions for research and employ two addresses, one from which he sends off his requests and one to which he sends them, fulfilling the minimal requirements of postal communication. The key to the great impact of this basic research method is Fontane’s exploitation of the address as a technology: by treating the address in an abstract manner made possible by the Prussian postal system, he takes advantage of the technologically new separation between the address and the flesh-and-bones addressee on which all modern postal systems are built (Siegert 102–113). The instructions that he gives to Paul Heyse for postal research on Heyse’s current project are indicative in this regard, shedding light on Fontane’s own skills at exploiting addresses. Heyse has asked him for literature about tales, sayings, customs, and everyday life in historic Pomerania and Lusatia, with which he intends to flesh out his drama Hans Lange. Fontane responds with the following detailed strategy:

Ich selbst habe nichts von der Art […], aber ich werde mich zunächst mit Otto Roquette, dann mit einem Herrn v. Behr in der Nähe von Greifswald in Verbindung setzen, und was
der eine nicht schaffen kann, wird der andre tun. [Otto Roquette] selbst, glaub ich, denkt nicht hoch von Wenden- und Pommernsund und ist schwerlich in diesen Dingen bewandert, er ist aber mit der ganzen hiesigen Friedländerei in der verwogensten Bedeutung des Worts nah befreundet und kann von den Friedländern, die, wie die Schwerins und Winterfeldts in der Armee, traditionell und massenhaft in Bibliothek und Archiv dienen, alles erhalten, was er will. Schriebest Du nun selbst noch zu diesem Behufe an Otto Wald [= Otto Roquette], so bin ich überzeugt, daß Du alles erhalten würdest, was Dir nur irgendwie dienen kann.


Showing the functioning of Fontane’s “Bibliotheks-Konnexionen,” the passage details several different ways in which Fontane makes addresses work for him. First of all, it shows the benefits of addressing more than one person at a time so that the sources can complement one another. What is more, Fontane’s research strategy employs the principle of “snowballing,” that is, getting in touch with people who, from their position, can make further contacts, allowing the search to grow rapidly in scope and intensity. The most important feature of Fontane’s postal research, however, is that he uses his own social capital to initiate his request, and then to make it pass through several other addresses. The request is thereby loaded with the accumulated social capital associated with those additional addresses until it becomes sufficiently weighty to break through the barriers between Fontane and the desired material. In the passage cited above, the long arm of octopus Fontane thus reaches, via Otto Roquette and the Friedländer family, into not just one, but several libraries and archives, among them the Königliche Bibliothek, the
Regarding both his own addresses and those of others, Fontane puts into practice the new media standard, set by the Prussian postal system and its abstract definition of addresses. When he travels, he usually uses an institutional or a friend’s address under which he is able to receive mail while he is away from home. From his commentaries, moreover, it is clear that Fontane conceives of addresses as coming to the addressee rather than as the addressee having a certain address. In November 1870, after several relocations as a prisoner of war in France, Fontane reports to his wife that he has finally received a letter from two friends in England, the stamp indicating that the letter is four weeks old. He concludes: “Der Brief ist also 4 Wochen lang in Frankreich umhergefahren und hat mich ersichtlich in allen Winkeln gesucht” (GBA E2: 553).

Curiously enough, sometimes only the address arrives at the addressee, as a letter to Georg Friedlaender indicates:

Eben suche ich nach dem Couvert: Herr A. G. R. Dr. Friedländer / Schmiedeberg / (Im Riesengebirge) / und kann es nicht finden. Es wird also wohl ohne Brief an Sie abgegangen sein. Das kommt von dem Fabrikmäßigen, wodurch man sich in strammen Briefschreibetagen die Außenarbeit erleichtern möchte. Ich schreibe jetzt nämlich erst die Couverts und klebe auch Marken auf, damit man die Briefe nur noch hineinzuschieben braucht. Entschuldigen Sie dies Versehen. Ich schreibe nun morgen. (Briefe an Friedlaender 291)

The mass-production of letters aside, the telling point is this: Fontane separates addressing and writing letters into two physically distinct procedures. A better illustration of the address’s abstraction from the addressee is hardly imaginable.

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54 The Königliche Bibliothek, the Preußische Geheime Staatsarchiv, and the library of the Preußische Kriegsakademie are institutions to which the Friedlaenders’ connections can be established with certainty; presumably, these represent only a part of their connections. See E. Friedlaender 778–780. “Schaefer” refers to Arnold Dietrich Schaefer, Professor of Ancient History at Greifswald and, from 1865, Bonn. According to the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, he was an expert on Prussia and well-connected to his colleagues. See Asbach 521–524.
By way of addresses with a high potential for snowballing, Fontane’s “Bibliotheks-Konnexionen” not only branch out forwards, but also sideways and backwards, providing or intensifying the links to people with whom Fontane has mutual acquaintances. These links, in turn, reduce the risk of getting stuck, for if the way to a source is blocked—e.g., through strong resistance on the part of the owner of an archive—Fontane is able to circumvent the barrier through cross- and return-passes. Moreover, the diminished importance of hierarchies in the network makes it possible for Fontane to expand the range of his contacts not just above but also below his own social rank. He is thus able to—and in fact does—correspond with people from a wide social spectrum, including professors, ministers, industrial executives, dukes and countesses, nuns, middle school teachers, preachers, police officers, innkeepers, second-rate actors, and mistresses, who provide him, in their responses, with a multiplicity of individualized materials.

Arguably, the most important knot is Fontane’s long-term friend Bernhard von Lepel. Lepel, a member of the Northern-German nobility and owner of a well-stocked library from which Fontane borrows numerous sources, introduces him to Mathilde von Rohr and the Countess of Schwerin, both of whom become very important to him for many projects, insofar as they provide him with plenty of material and contacts to other members of the nobility. Through Lepel, Fontane is also accepted into the literary society *Tunnel über der Spree* in 1844, a membership that results in a wealth of additional contacts to key figures from politics and culture, among whom are some of the most important for the beginning of his career as a writer. See Fürstenau 64 and Berbig, *Fontane im literarischen Leben*, 418.

In a letter to his wife, Fontane provides a telling example for the mixture of contacts that he has made during a brief research trip: “Um den Berolinismus zu gebrauchen: ‘man hat mir den Kopf verkeilt.’ Amtmann Buchholtz in Cossenblatt, Pastor Stappenbeck ebendaselbst, dessen Frau und Schwägerin, heute nun ein gewisser Beeskower Crösus Namens Ribbeck […] und nun endlich der Kammerdiener des Herrn v. Massow Namens Lavas, haben mir so viel erzählt, Kluges und Dummes, Interessantes und Langweiliges daß mir der Kopf schwirrt” (GBA E2: 183).
2. Epistemology of the Library Network

In its rapid proliferation, the library network functions without internal principles of organization. It is a virtual library without fixed classification systems, operating merely according to an additive logic and fluctuating selection criteria in its inclusion of heterogeneous sources. Epistemologically, the unsteady selection criteria and the implicit impossibility of classification are the library’s greatest assets, for they enable potentially limitless growth and thereby enhance the likelihood of surprises or newness in the content (newness both in the sense of being unpublished and in the sense of unexpected combinations). Had Fontane plotted out a master-plan, a table of contents for his library, he would have predetermined the points at which material could be added; he would have brought the expansion of the library into an orderly, fixed, and limited sequence. Yet without this systematization, Fontane’s library can grow like the Luhmannian card catalog: anything can be added anywhere, and nothing is per se excluded.

A localized example of this additive logic and its consequences can be found on two double-pages from notebook E2, on which Fontane lists sources he intends to consult for his first novel Vor dem Sturm. Roman aus dem Winter 1812 auf 13 (GBA VdS 1–2). The set of entries provides a window into the library network’s modus operandi, demonstrating that the inclusive logic leads to the juxtaposition of very diverse items and sources. This juxtaposition is so radical that it even overwrites generic distinctions and distinctions of attributed literary value in the material (fig. 5 and 6):

57 This is modeled closely on Niklas Luhmann’s 1981 essay “Kommunikation mit Zettelkästen. Ein Erfahrungsbericht.” The image of the table of contents is also taken from Luhmann’s essay.
Figure 5. Pages 51v and 52r from Theodor Fontane’s Notebook E2 (transcription below). Published with the permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

Image removed from digital version due to copyright concerns.

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Figure 6. Pages 52v and 53r from Theodor Fontane’s Notebook E2 (transcription below). Published with the permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

Transcription removed from digital version due to copyright concerns.
Under the shared heading “Books,” the list on pages 52r–53r accumulates an unclassifiable variety of sources and genres; it mixes metonymies standing for the writings of certain authors (“Marwitz,” “Voltaire”) with specific references (“Jahn’s Volksthum,” “Die Reden Fichtes”) and then again specific references with entire textual genres (“Zeitungen 1812/13”), including calendars, statistical sources such as army lists and billets, local tales, biographies, and poems. Even an open question (“Welche französischen Regimenter in Küstrin etc.”) and a topic (“Wendische Alterthümer”) figure as “books” and obtain the same status as, for example, the Danish Folktales by Wilhelm Grimm. The list of names on the neighboring page 51v further increases the variety of the enumerated sources by adding individuals with diverse areas of expertise. To cite but two examples, “Oberlehrer [Friedrich Wilhelm] Holtze,” a teacher at the military academy at Potsdam, is knowledgeable about local and military history, whereas the professor [Friedrich] Eggers provides art-historical authority (Fontane-Lexikon 114–115, 217). Finally, the newspaper clippings on 52v add an element of pulp to the generic spectrum of the accumulated material. Describing in graphic detail superstitions that, to quote from the smaller of the two clippings, are “still common practice in Brandenburg”—such as the “torturing of piglets” in order to “foretell the future from their squeaks”—the clippings stands in stark contrast to highbrow references like Voltaire or Fichte on the list of “books.” The inclusiveness of the library, however, equalizes all of the sources under the same heading and prepares them for unconstrained recombination in further processing efforts. This breadth radicalizes the notion of textuality with which the library (and its user) operate. By default, texts can not only be found together with other texts, but are also fundamentally connectable and intermixable.

The modes of notation with which Fontane manages his library ensure that restrictive classifications will never arise. He either employs his notebooks to put down sources in the
format of open lists (as in the example above), or he attaches keywords and logistic references to
the running chronology of his daily life and social calendar in his diaries. Both formats do very
little to sort the content, but at the same time, they are extremely easy to expand and open to
additions; even the newspaper sheet in which book deliveries are wrapped, the
“Einwickelbogen,” can become an item in this library.⁵⁸ Due to the lack of organizing principles,
then, Fontane’s library is capable of limitless growth and is systematically open to chance finds.

These open modes of notation stabilize the long-term value of the library as a means of
continuous production on Fontane’s part. Accordingly, Fontane describes the epistemological
merit of his expansive network and the masses of material it generates in the terms of a model of
creativity. Telling his friend Georg Friedlaender about a recent visitor, he writes:

Ich amüsirte mich sehr und empfand wieder, daß es nicht wohlgethan ist sich in seinem
Verkehr auf 3 Menschen zu beschränken. Man lernt sich bald gegenseitig auswendig, was
das Interesse mindert und den Einzelnen rasch entwerthet. (Briefe an Friedlaender, 216)

In his reference to “knowing by heart” (“auswendig lernen”), Fontane likens the effects of a
small set of sources to the imitatio-based model of education practiced at grammar schools.
Rather than prizing the production of something new, that model calls for repetition of the same
content, over and over again. Conversely, Fontane’s comparison expresses that precisely the
mass of material guarantees the pertinence of single elements, thus providing alternatives to
sheer imitatio. The price that the library user has to pay for the break from imitatio, however, is
overload-induced incalculability.⁵⁹

The exceeding of the load limit, the moment of incalculability, is the point at which
Fontane’s library emerges in its full form. The precise moment is hard to locate on the historical

⁵⁸ In Fontane’s Die Poggenpuhls, newspaper sheets used for wrapping are privileged places for chance finds (GBA Pog: 50). See Strowick 173.
⁵⁹ The incalculability becomes particularly apparent whenever Fontane loses track of his sources, as happens quite frequently. For an example, see GBA E2: 419.
timeline. More fruitful than historical pinpointing is the epistemological argument that as soon as Fontane’s library has reached its full form, it begins to surprise him, that is, it begins to produce unsolicited material on top of the material Fontane has requested, simply because the open structure and the potential for recomposition within the virtual library go beyond Fontane’s knowledge of the content. This dynamic of incalculability is expanded onto Fontane’s own compilatory output, for he is at once a user and a knot in the library network, feeding his compilations, knowledge, and the materials he has already accumulated into the circulation of the network whenever he serves as an address and a resource for the requests of others. The result is that he can be surprised by a text that he himself has put together, a turn of events that triggers a communicative engagement with himself that ultimately increases his productivity.

Fontane’s letter exchange with Bernhard von Lepel provides the best examples to study this impact of the network. Fontane and Lepel employ one another to externalize a part of their memory and create an alter ego in the friend: by way of archiving one another’s letters, sending literary texts-in-the-making back and forth to comment on them, and gathering “Stoff” that they deem of interest for the other, Fontane and Lepel become each other’s “Zweitgedächtnis.” The trick is that with this secondary memory, the two writers are able to channel communication with themselves through an external agent (as Fontane expresses succinctly in the line, “Mein lieber Lepel, das Alles schreib ich mehr mir als Dir,” 308). The potential of the second memory is that it both responds to requests and initiates them, engaging the first memory in a dialog with itself. Since the two versions of the same memory, both residing in human agents, operate with non-

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60 Again, I am employing the Luhmannian model here. Whereas Fontane and Lepel discuss their attempts at mutual archiving specifically in letters nos. 170 and 171, the exchange of comments on each author’s current projects can be observed in almost every letter. Exemplary letters documenting Fontane and Lepel’s efforts to set “Stoff” aside for each other are letters nos. 117, 262, and 274.
identical schemata of generating information, they produce disagreement about the content.\footnote{Lepel goes so far as to insist on disagreement as the driving force behind his communication with Fontane: “Alter Freund, wenn Du doch die langweilige Angewohnheit ablegen könntest, mir, in rücksichtsloser Vergeudung von Feder, Papier, Dinte und ein anständiges Quantum Geist, solche Dinge zu demonstrieren, in welchen ich vollkommen mit Dir einverstanden bin!” (357-358)} Furthermore, the second memory is as humanly-imperfect as the first and is thus full of glitches, a circumstance that enhances dysfunctionality and contingency in the communicative exchange. Fontane, for example, reports to Lepel that “eine Menge Stoff, für Dich bei Seite gelegt, ist mir wie entschwunden” (157). The disagreement, dysfunctionality, and contingency, however, increase the likelihood of new impulses in the communication between the \textit{Erst-} and the \textit{Zweitgedächtnis}, so that ultimately, the \textit{Erstgedächtnis} can be surprised by its own content. The best example of this is Fontane’s letter to Lepel in which he thanks his friend for sifting through a stack of his (Fontane’s) old poems, which Lepel has archived:


The receipt of unsolicited materials in Fontane’s letter exchange with Lepel demonstrates what it means that Fontane makes himself become subject to his library’s \textit{Eigenleben}: it means that Fontane is not only able to engage in the unlikely act of speaking to himself in the plural, with a second voice, but that he is also able to get more out of his library than he has originally put in (the surplus being the \textit{unexpected} receipt of material).\footnote{In quite a different function, a similar practice of self-communication is part of Fontane’s strategy of revising his compilations. See Chapter Four for details.} It means, moreover, that he pluralizes the points of reference at which he can address his own productions, and thus creates occasions to produce even more. Beyond the actual generation of material, then, the library acts as a catalyst for Fontane’s literary output.
The medial features of Fontane’s library, and his interaction with it, lead to irregular actualizations of the material; the virtual library becomes real in tangible stacks of texts whose rules of cohesion change continuously. The library’s outpourings are scattered “massenweise” (Fontane–Heyse 113) around Fontane, generating through their accumulative impact shifting fields of momentary intensity and concentration. After the loan period is over, these temporary fields of intensity cease when Fontane sends the material back into the virtuality of his library network; yet others emerge as soon as he receives new deliveries. Fontane’s postal library is thus double-faced, combining a virtual, shifting inner architecture and a potentially limitless scope with the tangibility of the actualized content. The micro-logistics in Fontane’s work sphere reflect this, insofar as Fontane employs mnemonic techniques when he intends to access individual items from these piles. Rather than trying to be logical about the location of material in his office, he recalls striking physical features of the desired item or the place where he has put it. These mnemonic descriptions are very detailed; for example, during his stay at the summer resort Rüdersdorf, he asks his wife to bring the following items along on her next visit:

*Handtmanns* märkische Sagen (liegt, glaub ich, auf dem Fensterbrett)
*Haases* Sagen der Grafschaft Ruppin (stehen in meinem Bücherschrank da, wo alle großen und kleinen märk. Bücher in einer Reihe stehn, in der Hälfte nach rechts hin neben andern märk. Sagenbüchern)
Mein *Manuskript* oder doch die vorläuf. Notizen zu meinem Plau-Aufsatz (liegt auf dem zugeklappten Spieltisch neben dem Bücherschank. (GBA E3: 492)

These and other mnemonic descriptions underline that Fontane, in his peculiar library network, is quite literally in touch with a constantly-moving abundance of material. It is this direct touch that conditions his practices of reading.
3. Poetics of Brutal Reading

As a reader, Fontane counters the massive, even incalculable quantities of varied material that his library network produces with a particular technique of reading that scholars of the history of reading call “brutal reading” (Stanitzek 250, 253–254). Driven solely by affect and unconcerned with impropriety, brutal readers ruthlessly break up the texts they encounter into passages that catch their interest while ignoring everything else in between (254). Fontane not only is a paradigmatic case of such a brutal reader, but brutal reading is also the technique that enables him to become creative with the excess of material that his library network generates. Fontane’s most important readerly skill turns reading from a predominantly receptive act into a vastly productive one, encouraging a recombinant poetics that becomes ever-more inventive as he comes to have more material at his disposal.

The prerequisite of brutal reading is a stance toward the text that is at once emphatic and conjectural, for it is a reading that at one moment engrosses itself in the text completely only to let go of it at the next, shuttling between full immersion and taking liberties with the text. Fontane realizes this stance to the fullest through a repertoire of virtuosic reading skills, manipulating *ad libitum* each of the technical parameters of reading, i.e., speed, attentiveness, intensity, duration, and mode of access. In Fontane’s repertoire, essentially every parameter—reading rapidly or slowly, with focused or hovering attentiveness, high or low intensity, selectively on the hunt for something specific or just on the off-chance, from beginning to end or in sections—can occur in combination with every other one. The numerous self-descriptions of his acts of reading reflect the depth of this repertoire, ranging from “durchstöbern,” “durchblättern,” “schmökern,” and “überfliegen” via “durchsehen,” “von a bis z durchlesen,”
“wissenschaftlich durchstudieren,” “extrahieren,” and “zerlesen” to “sich vertiefen,” “den Text langsam trinkend zu sich nehmen,” “sich den Text vorlesen lassen,” “über den Text herfallen,” and “sich wie blind und toll darauf stürzen.”

Fontane’s more detailed descriptions of his reading experiences indicate that many of these virtuosic skills are designed to vivify the texts and enhance their effectiveness (Wirkung) almost independent of inner-textual factors or generic dispositions. These objectives are apparent in the many instances in which Fontane—regardless of whether the subject of his reading is a set of poems, a book review, or an historical document—reads with all senses, translating his reading experiences into bodily movements and strong affective reactions including tears of joy, fever, dizziness, and surges of emotion. The usage of dietetic metaphors and frequent utterances of drastic value judgments provide additional evidence of Fontane’s attempts to vivify texts. The virtuosity of the reader Fontane, then, is a response to the challenges that the stacks of varied materials pose; the employed means of vivification ensure that he continues to make distinctions as he reads and does not become indifferent, regardless of the kinds of text in front of him.


64 The category is extremely prominent in Fontane’s reading notes; in fact, notes exceeding mere logistics very frequently contain a statement regarding the text’s effectiveness. For examples, see GBA E3, 250–251 and GBA T2: 80.

65 E.g., GBA E3: 17; GBA E3: 233; GBA E2: 397; GBA E2: 359; GBA T1: 13; GBA T2: 233–234.
In these intensified conditions, Fontane is able to act as a brutal reader and perform the practice of reading—he himself does not call it brutal but “meine sprungweise Methode” or “method proceeding in leaps and bounds” (HA IV, 4: 616)—to which he attributes strong poetic implications. In fact, as a highly instructive metaphorical comparison in his personal reading notes indicates, Fontane views the brutal reading of passages as an apparatus of creativity. Commenting on the letter exchange between Goethe and Schiller and Schopenhauer’s *Parerga and Paralipomena*, he states:


Note that Fontane’s comment is not concerned with the content of the writings of Schiller, Goethe, and Schopenhauer. Rather, it focuses on their writing styles, or modes of writing (“Schreibweisen”), observing them as the actual sources of the texts’ energy. What distinguishes the two modes is that the letter exchange between Schiller and Goethe is an unfolding yet thematically-cohesive dialog, whereas Schopenhauer’s text is aphoristic; as the title says, it contains “vereinzelte Gedanken” (emphasis added) and thus ought to be read *qua* genre in an ongoing reading of passages. It is precisely this reading of passages, a reading for which there is no context and that proceeds in leaps, to which Fontane attributes the stronger electrifying qualities: whereas Schiller and Goethe’s mode of writing fosters reading that, like a “voltaic pile,” produces a continuous current, the reading of passages figures as a running electrostatic generator in Fontane’s description, a machine that generates short-lived but heavy discharges of
energy at high voltages. This special mode of reading, according to Fontane, sets free the spark that then jumps over to the reader.

The point here is that Fontane underpins the age-old semantics of creativity, the leaping spark, with a technical machine, an apparatus that, if one starts it, performs a repeatable task. If this image is to be taken seriously as a self-description of Fontane’s “method proceeding in leaps and bounds,” its poetological function becomes clear: through his brutal reading technique, Fontane is able to set the “electrostatic generator” (“Elektrisiermaschine”) into motion and generate the electrifying digressive energy in texts that are as such neither aphoristic nor electrifying. Applying his whole virtuosic repertoire, he jumps back and forth in his texts, rips passages out of their contexts, brings them into contact with one another, and makes them “spark.”

In their continuation, Fontane’s notes on Goethe and Schiller provide an example of how the “electrostatic generator” works. Right after Fontane has mentioned it, the machine gets going with a leap from Schopenhauer to Jean Paul’s *Grönländische Prozesse* and another of his volumes, in which “zufällig dieselben Materien behandelt werden wie in den Parergas.” After Fontane has briefly mocked Jean Paul’s style, he concludes: “[v]erglichen hiermit ist Schopenhauer allerdings ein Halbgott. Die Selbständigkeit, Klarheit und Knappheit seiner Schreibweise übt einen großen Reiz, den man erst voll empfindet, wenn man anderes daneben liest” (NFA XXI.2: 101; emphasis added). Fontane commentators remarked with some irritation that this insertion on Jean Paul and Schopenhauer “wirkt inhaltlich wie formal als Fremdkörper” in Fontane’s reading notes and “verliert den eigentlichen Gegenstand der Aufzeichnungen vorübergehend aus dem Auge” (NFA XXI.2: 802). What the commentators have observed and

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66 This term is taken from Barthes, “Writing Reading,” 30.
yet failed to explain, however, is exactly the point of Fontane’s most important reading technique. Through the intensifying “Stellenlektüre,” Fontane takes the liberty to leave the subject of the text behind, thus opening up his reading to a multiplicity of associative and otherwise productive forms.

Fontane’s diaries and separate reading notes document both the frequency and the artistry with which he employs this mode of reading; time and again, he reads in a text rather than reading the text as a whole, a typical diary entry being “In Storm und Heines Romanzero gelesen” or “In Gneist’s Buch gelesen.”67 (Note that the diary entry, like many others, does not at all specify which of Theodor Storm’s writings he actually read.) Proceeding in irregular stretches, the brutal reader Fontane leaps from text to text and book to book, unconstrained in his combinations of authors and genres. In this fashion, he shuttles repeatedly between Scott’s Waverley and Tales of a Grandfather (Briefe an Hertz 135–136), reads “Turgenjew und Lessing abwechselnd” (GBA E3: 247–248), or switches “halbstündig wechselnd” between the essays of two historians (qtd. in Sternfeld 165).

The brutal reader Fontane makes many more appearances in marginalia. His copy of The Pictorial Book of Ballads is particularly telling in this regard. Whereas the table of contents documents through heavy markings in red crayon and black ink that Fontane has engaged with the volume in at least two distinct rounds, it soon becomes clear that he has highlighted “schöne Stellen” and in fact even used the opening pages (v–iv) to keep a joint record of attractive ballads and passages from this volume as well as ballads from a volume edited by Thomas Percy. Below the table of contents, in which Fontane checks off those ballads that are also printed in the first

67 GBA T1: 82, 237. In the diary entries for the year 1856 alone, this technique occurs explicitly on January 22, February 10, July 19 and 28, August 7 and 18, October 28, and November 27. This list does not include the countless instances in which his formulations strongly suggest reading in passages but are not explicit enough to be treated as real evidence.
part of Percy’s collection, he inserts an itemized handwritten list titled “Der erste Theil Dr Percy’s enthält noch von Schönem: […]” to enumerate five additional ballads from the Percy volume. The reference “von Schönem,” in its combination of a partitive with a general adjectival noun, is specific, yet only on personal level; it is also subjective and deliberate. It thus provides an exact description of the motives and the deeds of the brutal reader. Reading solely for that which catches his interest (whatever his interest may be), the brutal reader is unscrupulous enough to rip passages out of their context and, in this case, combine “Stellen” from two different books in a self-designed best-of.

Two technological devices assist the brutal reader in the performance of this mode of reading, underlining its importance in Fontane’s productive process and helping him to make passages “spark.” The one device, a ball-in-a-cup or “Fangeball,” resides on Fontane’s desk and proves useful when Fontane reads continuously for hours, as it addresses some of the skills essential to brutal reading: rhythmical movement and momentary concentration to catch the ball (viz. a passage) at the right moment. The other device is a particular bookbinding that facilitates thumbing through and jumping around between a large number of pages at high speed. Every now and then, Fontane requests that one of his Berlin bookbinders bundle up the piles of newspaper copies, magazines, and loose sheets scattered all over his home so that they are brought together between strong covers (Rasch, “Zeitungstiger,” 114). These bindings, however, are cheap, with the bound pages being trimmed rather roughly by the book binder, so that one can assume that they are meant to increase not the durability but the usability of the material.

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68 See Fontane’s annotated personal copy of Moore, ed. *The Pictorial Book of Ballads.* *Theodor-Fontane-Archiv,* Archival Signature Q56.
69 GBA T1: 201. There is also anecdotal evidence of Fontane’s usage of the ball-in-a-cup, as told by the lawyer of the Fontane family, Paul Meyer (“Theodor Fontanes Fangeball”).
They transform the loose sheets into a book-like medium and hence into a medium that the brutal reader can access more easily.\textsuperscript{70}

Fontane’s central reading method has forceful poetic implications that exceed the effect he himself describes as the “leaping spark.” Rather, his method actualizes an old rhetorical technique of invention, also based on daring leaps from passage to passage. This becomes explicit in a letter in which Fontane, describing that which he finds “hochpoetisch” about reading newspapers, rapidly strings together keyword-like references gathered on a fast-paced run through several different editions of the \textit{Vossische Zeitung}:


No higher order justifies the thematic leaps reaching from the German Emperor via current theological-political discussions to a conference on medicine, to steamboats on Lake Victoria. Rapid and unregulated as it is, the string of references represents a \textit{percurso}, an accumulation of “Summen ohne Details” (Lausberg 135), or headlines without a main body. Each sum, according to traditional rhetoric, would deserve further elaboration and yet is just enumerated in a list and separated abruptly from the others by commas (“…Bacillus-Koch, Gößler, 2000 fremde Ärzte,…”). In this manner, the rhetorician or compiler can traverse a wide thematic territory with high velocity.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70}Eckhard Schumacher explains why books are exceptionally prone to browsing and assesses the potential of browsing to function as a productive technique in his \textit{Aufschlagesysteme 1800/2000}.

\textsuperscript{71}My observations draw on Wegmann and Bickenbach’s analysis of \textit{percurso} in Herder’s \textit{Reisejournal}: “Herders Reisejournal. Ein Datenbankreport,” in particular 406–412.
Fontane’s “Summen”  are *topoi* of contemporary newspaper discourse, each of them marking the location of arguments in current debates and conversations. The entire procedure thus turns out to be a high-speed version of a classical technique of *inventio*: whereas the *topoi*, as always in rhetoric functioning as a means of finding formulations, assist the writer in producing text, their rapid and unregulated enumeration in the *percurusio* enables the writer to leave behind the standard ways of connecting them (Kienpointner). Deviation from standard use, the forging of new connections, is indeed “hochpoetisch”; yet it does not come out of the blue, but out of Fontane’s special reading method, “proceeding in leaps and bounds.”

In his response to a survey on “Die Technik des künstlerischen Schaffens,” sent out to contemporary writers by the magazine *Der Zuschauer*, Fontane makes the reconstructed link between the brutal reading of passages and rhetorical techniques of invention definite. The magazine’s editor, Constantin Brunner, intends to put together a “praktisches Hülfsbuch” that will inform readers about the “Vorgang im dichterischen Mechanismus” and the most important techniques of successful authors (Brunner 34). While not every respondent agrees with the idea that there are techniques of artistic production—Hermann Bahr, for example, speaks solely of “Liebe,” “Kunst” and “das Unerforschliche” in his response—Fontane’s answer is his technique. Again, he employs a *percurusio* to emphasize the method underlying his creativity:

> Ich gehe im Thiergarten spazieren und denke an Bismarck oder an eine Berliner Schrippe oder an einen Spritzfleck auf meinem Stiefel und da fällt mir was ein, was ich ebenso gut auf den Kaiser von China wie auf die Lucca oder den Eckensteher Nante Strump beziehen kann. Kommt es mir aus einem traumhaften Zustande heraus zum Bewußtsein, daß das, was mir einfiel, einen passablen Anspruch darauf haben dürfte, der Welt mitgeteilt zu werden, so beginne ich mich mit der Form dafür zu beschäftigen, die heute so ist und morgen so. In der Regel wird überhaupt nichts draus; es verthut sich, es

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72 On the rhetorical technique of *inventio*, see Kienpointner. For a detailed historicization and analysis of associative recombination as a poetic mode, see Kilcher’s fundamental study, *Mathesis und poiesis* (in particular, pages 383–415).
Verfliegt wieder. Geht der Beschäftigungsprozeß aber weiter, so ist schließlich was da. C’est tout. (*Der Zuschauer* 1.10: 305)

Though he does not reflect on an act of reading here, the principle is the same as in the account of the “Hochpoetische,” for again, Fontane describes the beginning of his artistic production as being driven by associative connections—as the phrase “da fällt mir was ein” suggests—that are based on free and ongoing recombination. The process is open; the connections are random and ephemeral, shifting and changing so that, more often than not, they do not lead to anything. Yet if the process continues, “etwas” comes up eventually. Fontane’s interaction with his library network makes the moment of “something coming up” more likely; it enables precisely this kind of radically-associative recombinant poetics, transforming reading into a site for technically-enhanced creativity.

There are a couple of notebook entries that document the creative power and application of this technique in Fontane’s actual production. In particular when he drafts dialogs that are to take place between fictional interlocutors, Fontane notes down cascades of *topoi* from a wide thematic territory. At times, these *topoi* are thematically so distant from one another, and yet follow each other so immediately, that one cannot but identify the *percursio* as the underlying technique, as in the this example from his notes for “Dialoge” in *Vor dem Sturm* (fig. 7):
Figure 7. Notebook E2, pages 48v–49r (transcription below). The double-page shows a cascade of keywords for “Dialoge.” The notational correlate of “brutal reading,” the entry is indicative of the creative power of Fontane’s most important reading technique. Published with the permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.
Running from Napoleon via reflections on beauty and handsomeness, to the Mark Brandenburg as a vegetable state, to Schlegel’s remarks on style, to the historical period of the Russian occupation, Fontane’s cascade is indicative of the huge scope that the *percursio* is able to cover. The orderly yet cursively-angled handwriting, paired with large amounts of space between punctuation marks and words, suggests that Fontane has written this entry not exactly in haste, yet certainly rather quickly and at one sitting (the wide spaces between punctuation marks and words are one of his characteristics of fluent writing). The speed of the *percursio*, it seems, carries him across the thematic gaps between topics. It would be tempting to see this entry as the precursor to the typically-Fontanean hallmark of “Plauderkunst”—the seemingly-natural and free-flowing dialog development for which his literary production is famous. But this entry does not represent a real set of dialogs yet; it is no more and no less than a chain of topoi. The decisive
point, however, is that from the perspective of rhetorical technique, this is the highly-stimulating basis on which additional creative procedures and literary effects become possible. Fontane indeed returns to the entry, adding more *topoi* and remarks in pencil, and begins re-engaging with the accumulation of distant keywords that he, through the technique of the *percursiou*, has at his fingertips. The entry thus documents the creative potential of his principal reading method.

In the final analysis, Fontane’s “sprungweise Methode” turns reading from an act of productive reception into an act of receptive production. The brutal reader Fontane displays a special relationship toward written matter, shaped by the fundamental assumption that the corpus of literature can “at any given point decompose into single *membra disjecta*, which can then be reassembled in a new order.”73 This process, however, is exactly the essence of compiling as a productive technique, established and technologically refined in the early-modern era. For compilers, texts are never finished or complete, but are always available to rearrangement and recombination (Blair, *Too Much to Know*, passim). On the technological basis of his library network, Fontane carries over this tradition into the nineteenth century, accumulating in his notebooks and other storage devices *membra disjecta* from a range of sources—literally spanning from the classics to the tabloids—that only the first mass-medial market, with its historically-unprecedented speed and scope, can provide.

The case of Fontane-the-reader thus at once exemplifies and exceeds several characteristics of the new mass-medial market and its related textual practices—characteristics, to be sure, for which most of his fellow writers have nothing but contempt. Whereas Wilhelm Raabe, to cite but one example, disdains family magazines as places in which his novels have to “prostitute” themselves, Fontane consciously includes these magazines, journals, and papers in

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73 This is how Élisabeth Décultot, using the example of Winckelmann, describes the relationship of compilers toward text. See *Untersuchungen zu Winckelmanns Exzerptheften*, 25.
his library.\textsuperscript{74} He even makes the inclusion programmatic, as we have seen, treating the resulting heterogeneity of sources not as a threat or a nuisance on the way to high literature, but as the basis for a creative procedure driven by ever-further associative leaps. Moreover, Fontane exemplifies some of the reading habits that Raabe, Hebbel, and others associate strongly with the new mass readership and find harmful on all counts (Sammons, “Raabe and his Public,” 41–46; Tatlock 8–10): Fontane, too, reads ruthlessly for effect (\textit{Wirkung}); he browses; he is unconcerned with impropriety; and he is restless. Yet at the same time, he exceeds the habits of average readers decisively, in that he is able to vary the tempi of his reading, applying an entire virtuosic repertoire of readerly skills. (This is the reading-based counterpart to the compilatory virtuosity with which Fontane arranges \textit{Wanderungen} episodes; see Chapter One.) This virtuosic ability to change his reading methods and engage with all kinds of materials on very different levels of complexity is fundamental to the versatility of his own textual output. It is on the basis of this virtuosity that he can draw together sources encompassing a truly unusual scope of different registers, forms, and topics.

The story of Fontane-the-reader completes the reconstruction of the medial apparatus and the textual practices through which the compiler fills his archives. In the present and the previous chapter, it has become clear how the individual components of this apparatus—the mediality of the collection, the soft inner architecture of the filing system, the network-structure of the postal library, and the technique of “brutal reading”—interact with one another. The results of this interaction exceed the mere accumulation of materials in excess. Rather, the interaction of these components enables Fontane to realize intertextual recombination as the core activity of

\textsuperscript{74} On Raabe’s uneasy relationship with the reading public, see Sammons, “Raabe and his Public,” 36–48. This is not to say that Fontane never complains about the contemporary readership and the demands of the market; the point is that, despite occasional complaints, he makes every effort to \textit{participate} in it nonetheless.
compiling and to radicalize this practice under the conditions of early mass media. Through his material-generating apparatus, Fontane can work with the entire spectrum of circulating medial sources and treat them—across the boundaries of genres, works, and medial forms—as parts of one endlessly-modifiable text that is open to compilatory recombination. That his material is in excess does not hinder, but rather increases his creative output: the medial apparatus with which Fontane fills his archives has a built-in means to foster creativity. The notational techniques with which Fontane preserves and further develops his compilatory creativity will be the topic of the following chapter.
Output | Chapter 3

In the Engine Room of Text Production for a Multiple Readership: Fontane’s Notebooks

»Stoff, Stoff, Liebe, Liebe, Tunnel und Schnellzugzusammenstoß,
das ist immer noch das Ideal.«

[Letter to Ernst Heilbronn, November 15, 1896]

The focus of this study so far has been primarily on the input end of Fontane’s working methods—or, to be more precise, on the generation of material through the Wanderungen project and the virtual library network. In the previous chapters, it has become apparent how Fontane sets masses of material to motion, breaks them down for unconstrained use in his paper cosmos by means of his varied reading techniques, and makes them available to processing that is at once mechanical and fluid. Reconstructing the arc of Fontane’s textual practices further, his sixty-seven extant notebooks provide a unique body of evidence for examining the procedures between the input end and the output end of the complex medial apparatus underlying his text production. Because they document the transition between reading and writing, they invite analysis of the processes through which Fontane notes down and transforms material, preparing it for the compilation of various texts. The goal of this chapter is to analyze this transformation and assess its implications for Fontane’s compilatory working methods.

The notebooks make the transition from input to output accessible to analysis through their privileged place and their multiple functionality within Fontane’s working methods: they are not only part of Fontane’s filing system (as reconstructed in Chapter One), in which they serve as portable containers and administrative tools for the storage of material, but they also
function as writing surfaces for the projection of ideas, plans, sketches, and formulated drafts. In the notebook entries, two different kinds of logistics visibly interact, namely, the procedural logistics of reading, doing research, and storing “Stoff,” and the creative logistics of drawing on this “Stoff,” working with it, beginning the compilatory process. The notebooks, then, not only operate within Fontane’s filing system, but they also replicate its logic on a smaller scale. They project a dynamic space of notation in which the various entries interact like the containers and elements of the filing system at large. Offering localized examples of the functioning of the filing system, they open it up to an analytical re-description that focuses on the output end of the creative process, from the storage and administration of materials to their preparation for dispositions and drafts.

Providing a detailed picture of both the dynamic notational space and the content that is processed in this space, the notebooks show that the transition from input to output does not happen in isolation from the literary market and its communicative conditions, but in close interaction with it. The literary market of later nineteenth-century Germany can be characterized, largely, by conflicting temporalities (periodicity, serialization, ephemerality of day-to-day publishing), generic differentiation, and the emergence of a heterogeneous mass readership. Fontane’s most important places of publication, Bildungs- and Familienblätter, still attempt to address a large section of this readership—from the upper working classes to the upper bourgeoisie—with content that in some way appeals to everyone (Graf 17, Helmstetter 34ff.).

This chapter argues that Fontane’s techniques and media of notation are designed to meet precisely these communicative conditions. The dynamic notational space facilitates uneven project development, making it possible for Fontane to respond to the irregular temporalities and

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75 My observation of entries interacting in a dynamic space of notation draws on Rüdiger Campe’s theorization of notation in “Vorgreifen,” 61–67.
publishing opportunities of the market. The first section of the chapter reconstruct this notational space and shows how it enables Fontane to multiply his options for using the same materials for different genres, speed up production if a publishing opportunity arises, convert existing materials to be able to deliver for publication, and reprioritize projects if he has to wait for a publishing opportunity. The second section focuses on the main forms of notation that emerge in the dynamic space and that allow Fontane to keep his materials convertible for a long time, thus remaining responsive to the forces of the market.

Shifting to the subject matter of the notes, the analysis specifies in the third and final section how Fontane manages to address the heterogeneous readership through particular content to be mobilized for faction and fiction projects alike. It becomes clear that Fontane frequently notes down “multiple-status objects,” these are, objects thick with popular-cultural significance from different registers and contexts. These allow him to cut across distinctions between lowbrow and highbrow culture and provide cultural references to which a spectrum of different readers can relate. In tracing Fontane’s working with these objects, this section identifies some of the literary strategies through which Fontane refines his materials for the compilation of literary texts that appeal both to readers of easy plots and those seeking more erudite pleasures. At stake in this chapter, then, is not only the transition from input to output on the arc of Fontane’s working methods, but also the fundamental understanding of how the material underside of Fontane’s creative process interacts with key components of the literary market.
1. Creating More Options: A Filing System for the Conditions of the Market

Chapter One has revealed that Fontane’s multi-part filing system is uniquely designed to accommodate a constant influx of new material. It responds to the pressure that the material exerts on the ordering categories with flexible compartmentalization, inherent fluidity between different receptacles and spaces, and an altogether open architecture. Like the filing system, the notebooks project a dynamic space in which entries follow various coexisting orders of notation. 

Image removed from digital version due to copyright concerns.

Figure 8. Labels on the front cover of notebook A11. Published with the permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

The labels (fig. 8) Fontane pastes on many of the notebooks illustrate the open and dynamic nature of his note-taking through frequent revisions, superimpositions, and different provisional attempts at codification. The notebooks, then, provide concentrated sets of examples for studying
the impact that the dynamic notational space has on Fontane’s techniques of note-taking and, in more general terms, on his practices of working with stored materials in order to produce text for the literary market.

The main impact of the dynamic notational space, as the notebooks document extensively, is the multiplication of options for how to use the stored materials versatilely, and turn them into different kinds of writing. In the notebooks, the multiplication of options happens through two different ways in which entries are put into a meaningful relationship with one another and begin to interact. One way of making notebook entries interact involves the use of linking references—or, in Campe’s terminology, “Vor- und Rückgriffe”—that suggest connections between entries across the pages of one or even several notebooks, e.g., “Siehe 4 Seiten vorher” (A7, 58v) or “Siehe das dicke [Notiz-]Buch” (A18, 53r). In Fontane’s case, these references often connect different types of entries; specifically, they connect discrete units of freestanding data (military-historical facts, the inventory of a Brandenburgian palace) to more or less formulated suggestions for how these data could be used, how they could be turned into texts. In fact, his notebooks contain both sections in database-style and portions of coherent narrative, providing exemplary suggestions for wrapping narrative around the otherwise non-narrative, non-sequential data (Manovich 40). Yet the specific exploitation of the notational space, which merely suggests a link between the different kinds of entries without making this suggestion binding, ensures that Fontane does not have to decide in favor of either side of the binary. Through the linking references, his notebooks realize an alternative operating between a

76 Further examples can be found in A1, 51v; A5, 5r, 67r, 109r, 114v; A7, 24r, 78r. The few inquiries into Fontane’s notebooks that have been made thus far do not emphasize the relationship between different entries; rather, they focus on Fonane’s practice of placing his entries seemingly at random in the notebooks (e.g. Hetteche, “Handschriften zu Vor dem Sturm,” 195). Frequently, however, he connects these entries later and establishes meaningful relationships between them that counteract the initial randomness.
stock of retrievable, context-free elements and sections of running text. They thus allow the writer to use the data in the suggested way and work with lightly profiled, preconfigured portions of text, or to use the data in a completely different way. Ultimately, this practice of notation leads to the building of what rhetoricians call copia, that is, the “capacity for elaboration and variation” (Guillory 123) of the given material, lending it manifold forms. This enables the rhetorician (analogously: the compiler) to respond, using the same material, to very different tasks and communicative situations; it increases the compiler’s options.

Notebook D1 provides an easily accessible example of these linking references between narratively-motivated building blocks and discrete entries in database style. Through a simple spatial arrangement and an anticipatory gesture, the notebook makes material from the same context available to different genres of writing. Exemplary of numerous other notebooks, D1 has two interacting parts, with an empty double page separating them. In the first part, Fontane notes down impressions from his trip through the war zones of the Second Schleswig War in chronological, diary-like entries conducive to travel narratives, whereas in the second part, he switches to a different order of notation to jot down thematic and topic-based entries related to the war. The following anticipatory remark from the chronological section at once separates and connects both parts of the notebook. Visiting the South-Danish town of Broacker, Fontane notes down: “Der Kirchhof interessant durch seine Gräber und seine Inschriften (S.[iehe] d. Blätter am Schluß ).” (D1, 59r) Following Fontane’s reference, the reader indeed encounters an entry entitled “Broacker Kirchhof” that without further commentary lists epitaphs of soldiers who have recently died in the battle of Dybboøl (Düppeler Schanzen), followed by another such lists of epitaphs from another town on Fontane’s route (69v to 73v). The example thus shows how Fontane’s deployment of the notebooks results in a notational apparatus that prepares the
material for multiple potential uses: while the epitaphs, an important source in Fontane’s production, can of course be retrieved as part of the travel narrative, they can also be mobilized and decontextualized for integration into other kinds of writings such as Wanderungen episodes, poems, novels, and novellas. The conscious deployment of this spatial arrangement thus enables Fontane to store one narratively-motivated version of the material while pluralizing its points of reference, that is, its possible connections to other projects. Numerous variations of such spatial arrangements and linking gestures can be found across the notebooks, many of them indicating transitions between different orders of notation.77

The other way to pluralize options for the use of the materials relies on a particular double-script or hot juxtaposition of entries. A “hot juxtaposition” is an arrangement in which materials are not randomly put next to one another, but are willfully brought into a direct relationship to build a topology with an epistemic surplus (Hoffmann, “Umgebungen,” 101). In Fontane’s notebooks, such arrangements can frequently be found, e.g., in notebook A18, in which entries documenting different layers or gradations of the same project are put on facing notebook pages, realizing a topological relationship between parts and wholes. The verso pages present the list-like outline of an essay on the Brandenburgian village of Wust, while the recto pages gather together much more detailed entries on the history of Wust and its surrounding landscape (23v to 26r; fig. 9). Through this hot juxtaposition, Fontane can at a glance jump back and forth between overview and specifics and manipulate the functioning of the specifics in relation to the plan for the whole (or vice versa). The accumulated materials can thus be easily

77 For a few such examples from Kasten A, see A1, 51v; A5, 5r, 67r, 109r, 114v; A7, 24r, 78r. Sometimes, the two kinds of entries are not separated by empty space, but by an entry belonging to a third order of notation, as in notebook D3. In this notebook, a hand-drawn map organizes the relationship between narrative and data, loosely binding together the notebook sections, which contain a travel account, military-historical facts, and anecdotes, all referring to the region that the map represents.
navigated and, upon re-reading the notes, be put into changing relations with one another. These processes also contribute to Fontane’s versatility in lending the same material different forms.\textsuperscript{78} Having room for hot juxtapositions is so important to Fontane that he leaves notebook pages intentionally blank and, beyond the notebooks, strategically introduces empty space into his filing system by pasting small newspaper clippings in the center of large folio sheets (file folder Kf [2], Theodor Fontane-Archiv).

Extrapolating from the examples of the notebooks, it becomes clear that Fontane’s filing system, which projects the same kind of dynamic space on a larger scale, is in many ways an effective fit for the conditions of the literary market. The materials, stored together with suggestions for use in different states of refinement, amount to a convertible stock with which one can quickly produce texts for the many different genres that are firmly established in the literary market of later nineteenth-century Germany. The different genres are reflected in the range of columns that family magazines regularly feature, namely, “Romane, Erzählungen und Skizzen,” “Reisen und Schilderungen von Land und Leuten,” “Wissenschaftliche und gemeinnützige Aufsätze,” “Historisches, Charakteristiken und Biographien,” “Feuilleton,” and “Gedichte.”\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{78} Another salient example of this practice can be found in notebook E1. The first nine sheets provide on facing pages both a rough description of the first chapter of the novella project Schach von Wuthenow (rectos) and a formulated draft of the beginning of the chapter (versos).\textsuperscript{79} These columns are taken from the Illustrirter Hausfreund from 1872 (qtd. in Graf 17). As Graf has shown, the overall division of family journals into these columns was surprisingly stable over the course of the later nineteenth-century, slight differences from journal to journal notwithstanding.
With a filing system like Fontane’s, which allows for taking a portion of material to make it into a contribution either to “Reisen und Schilderungen” or “Historisches,” to name two possible examples, the compiler is in the advantageous position of being able to respond to demand. This significantly increases the chances of earning a living by one’s pen.

The convertible stock is also an effective response to the plural modes of time of the literary market. These modes are complex, considering that there is a multitude of different media with various inherent temporalities, spanning from the quickly-appearing daily papers to the more slowly-appearing books. Newspapers and journals, moreover, frequently come out in many different versions and editions, realizing more publishing rhythms in between, and thus
contribute further to the temporal complexity of the market. Individual family journals, in order to keep up with competing media and to offer varying subscription models to a broad social spectrum of audiences, appear in a confounding number of variants; *Ueber Land und Meer*, for example, comes out in six simultaneous editions in 1884—in four differently-priced variations of a weekly folio edition, in a bi-weekly folio edition, and in a bi-weekly “Salon-Ausgabe” in a smaller format and altogether different layout (Graf 4). Fontane’s convertible stock of materials in the dynamic filing system facilitates, to some degree, adaptation to these different rhythms governing the market. It enables him to let projects grow simultaneously and inorganically, and to supplement a process of working in neatly-defined steps with one of working in broader stages. This flexibility, in turn, makes it possible for Fontane to work with very different tempi. If a publishing slot arises suddenly, he does not have to contend with the pressure of having to generate material. Rather, he is able to draw on prepared portions of text stored in his filing system and convert them, a process that speeds up the production. At the same time, if no publishing slot is available for a particular project, Fontane can push it back and decide to wait or use parts of it for something else. Working in broader stages also enables him to accommodate interruptions—it is not difficult in this filing system to move one project up in favor of another one, and then return to the first later.

There is plenty of evidence in Fontane’s *Nachlass* that he operates his filing system precisely like this. The convertibility and provisionality in which he keeps his stock of materials are reflected in the absence of binding categories for describing his ongoing projects both to himself (in his filing system) and to people from the outside. In communication with people from the outside, such as publishers, colleagues, and friends, he simply uses the same generic descriptors to characterize his production, regardless of its form and content: until 1887, he calls
prose projects indiscriminately “Novellen” or “Novellenschreiberei” (with the exception of Vor dem Sturm), and switches to the just-as-indiscriminate designation “Romane” after 1887 (Windfuhr 337). Internally, too, terms for allocating materials and drafts to pre-established generic categories are rare and, if used at all, tend to bear no clear-cut contours. This is demonstrated by the lists of headings with which Fontane furnishes materials and drafts for fictional and essayistic projects, many of which he never completes (the lists are printed in the auction catalog, item nos. 480–485, pp. 79–81). The lists document that he does not make many preliminary decisions about what a portion of material is eventually supposed to become. Rather, he uses particular fictionalized or descriptive headings with which he characterizes the nature and content of materials and drafts, e.g., “Ein Blick von der Alsen Brücke” or “Susanna von Sandraschek”. While these titles tell Fontane what his material is about or to which generic tradition it might be connected, the absence of binding categories leaves it undecided whether “Ein Blick von der Alsen Brücke” is to become a contribution to the feuilleton section of a family magazine or a setting for a fictional project, both of which are plausible options. The nature of his filing system thus facilitates responding to a situation in which the writer-compiler simply cannot know in advance which publishing opportunities might arise on any given day.

A closer look at the lists of headings in the auction catalog suggests, moreover, that Fontane’s filing system actually enables him to exercise a high degree of writerly versatility, producing portions of material for a great many different projects. Reading through the titles of materials auctioned off in the 450-sheet package designated “Novellenentwürfe I”—the first of

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In the Fontane-Handbuch, Grawe interprets the switch from one term to the other as a sign of a new self-understanding as a “Romancier” on Fontane’s part (470–471); Hugo Aust makes the more pragmatic suggestion that “Novelle ist für Fontane Warenbezeichnung, die er im Aushandeln mit Verlegern verwendet; oft scheint hier nur die geschätzte Bogenzahl den Wechsel zwischen Novellen- und Romanbezeichnung zu verursachen” (457).

Many, but not all of these materials and drafts are reprinted in HFA I.7: 217–580.
several similar packages—one obtains a good impression of the scope that Fontane’s production entails, cutting across lowbrow and highbrow registers and a variety of genres:


Given that the flipsides of many of these folio sheets are filled with “Kritiken,” “Urschrift von ‘Vor dem Sturm’, Militaria [und] Reisebeschreibungen” (ibid.), the versatility of Fontane’s production can justly be attributed to the virtuosic side of his textual practices.

Finally, there is biographic evidence that Fontane’s work process, characterized on the micro-level by the mechanicity of repeatable steps (see Chapter One), on the macro-level proceeds in broader stages, in which pursuing several projects at the same time is the norm, not the exception. As he works on Vor dem Sturm, for example, he compiles and publishes three massive Kriegsbücher (a feat requiring numerous journeys for research), continues to produce episodes for the Wanderungen, and regularly publishes theater reviews (GBA VdS 2: 393–408). Symptomatically, the definite beginnings of his projects thus become impossible to pinpoint; it is unclear when exactly he begins the production for the novel L’Adultera and the novella Ellernklipp, to cite but two examples (Radecke, Vom Schreiben 51, footnote 160). One of Fontane’s stock phrases to describe his own work process indicates strongly that he realizes the
demarcation of at least two broader stages with the help of the drawers or boxes (“Kasten”) with which his study is equipped. In a number of personal letters and letters to publishers, Fontane uses the phrase “etwas im Kasten haben.” In each of these instances, the “Kasten” designates a receptacle employed to separate from the rest of his convertible stock those projects that are in advanced drafts, bearing defined contours, yet are neither polished nor sold and hence not finished. This particular “Kasten,” then, is the space in which projects await decision; it marks the limit of how much time and effort Fontane will invest in a project without knowing about its success, as one can infer from his letter to Julius Grosser, the editor of the literary magazine _Nord und Süd_, to whom he offers the novella project _Schach von Wuthenow:_


In the event that Fontane does not manage to sell off projects that are “im Kasten,” they either remain there for a long time (e.g., the drafts of _Mathilde Möhring_ and _Stine_; _Fontane-Lexikon_, 76) or they go back into the convertible stock and become integrated into other projects (such as parts of the novel project _Allerlei Glück_, which Fontane never sells successfully and hence never completes). Lastly, working in broader stages and demarcating them by means of the “Kasten” enables Fontane to gain better control over the cost-benefit relationship. While the convertible stock of material facilitates generating sellable drafts quickly, the “Kasten” is like a stop-

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82 Letter from January 31, 1882. Qtd. in Radecke and Hettche, 189. Fontane also uses the phrase in a letter to the Merckel’s from January 3, 1857 (HFA IV.1: 554), in a letter to Hermann Scherenberg from the winter of 1882 (Briefe Theodor Fontanes, ed. Pniower, 83), in a letter to Emilie from October 2, 1888 (GBA E3: 561), and in a letter to Ernst Heilbronn from November 15, 1896 (HFA IV.4: 609).

83 In fact, he continues to use so many materials that he had, at some point, allocated to _Allerlei Glück_ that it becomes altogether impossible for him to realize the project, as he tells his son Friedrich (Petersen 51).
mechanism that introduces a caesura before the much more tedious and time-consuming tasks of finishing and polishing his projects. Only if revenue is reliably in sight do the drafts leave the special “Kasten” to undergo fine-tuning (the procedures of which will be addressed in Chapter Four).

A concluding comparison to other writers’ filing systems underlines what the priorities within Fontane’s system are: the potential for instantaneous productivity, leeway for inorganic project development, and the clear separation of the less time-consuming from the more time-consuming stages of the working process. Unlike Winckelmann, Lichtenberg, or Schopenhauer, Fontane does not carry out highly consistent routines in a rigorous system in order to achieve intellectual objectives; nor does he invest much time in making his material searchable by way of neatly-written alphabetical indices, as does Winckelmann with his Exzerptheften; nor does he keep an all-encompassing Repertorium of his material up-to-date as Schopenhauer does; nor does he establish a stable routine of double-bookkeeping, as Lichtenberg does. Fontane’s filing system is neither designed as an efficient and unfailing means to relieve the user of remembering specifics, nor is it intended as an archive for the ages, and its priority is not intellectual complexity. The priority of Fontane’s filing system is the potential to translate his attentiveness to developments of the media market into intense and localized productivity. This has consequences on the practical and abstract levels. On a practical level, this means that the

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84 Fontane remarks time and again how laborious the process of polishing is, e.g., in the letter to Hellbronn from November 15, 1896, in which he states “daß mir die Lust zum Fertigmachen vergangen ist” (HFA IV.4: 609); qtd. in Fontane-Lexikon, 76.
85 On Winckelmann’s textual practices, see Décultot, 11–33; on Schopenhauer’s note-taking and his keeping of a Repertorium, see Kammer; on Lichtenberg’s double-bookkeeping, see Campe, “Vorgreifen,” and “Gehirnlandschaften.” In Fontane’s case, the notebooks document several attempts at condensing some of his materials systematically into thematic lists, e.g., “Skulpturwerke profanen Inhalts” or “Alte Taufsteine,” yet he does not work on these lists rigorously. Many of them contain few or no entries, testifying above all else to the failing of his efforts at systematization. Notebook A7 contains most of these lists, cf. 31r–33r, 77r–96r.
working process is exhausting because it relies on live memory, that is, on repeated acts of
drawing things together for the moment. Fontane’s numerous complaints about the challenges of
working with a growing mass of only partly-controllable materials attest to the challenges that
this system poses.\(^{86}\) On an abstract level, one has to conclude that Fontane’s working process
begins in a vast pool of possible options, entailing much more openness and contingency than
has hitherto been acknowledged.\(^{87}\) Fundamentally, then, Fontane’s working process is not only
occasionally responsive to the external forces of the literary market, but it also relies on a
notational apparatus that fosters direct interaction with the market.

2. Portioning Text: Recurring Forms of Notation

As the above reconstruction has shown, Fontane’s filing system provides a dynamic
contact zone between his own compilatory output and the literary marketplace, with its
challenging plural temporality, multiplicity of coexisting genres, and unforeseeable publishing
opportunities. The question then arises of which forms of notation keep Fontane’s material in the

\[^{86}\] For examples, see his letters to Emilie from September 16, 1862 and August 10, 1880 (GBA

\[^{87}\] Gabriele Radecke provides the most recent substantial account of Fontane’s working methods
with the sample case of the novel \textit{L’Adultera}. On the basis of a text-genetic inquiry into the
manuscript materials of \textit{L’Adultera}, Radecke reconstructs the steps that Fontane carries out from
the collection of material to the published book, focusing on the processes through which his
drafts turn into fictional texts and gradually develop more and more features of poetic narration.
She concludes that Fontane’s working methods are purposeful (“zielgerichtet”) and oriented
toward the conscious production of a mentally pre-planned work in \textit{all} stages (\textit{Vom Schreiben},
68–69). The above reconstruction of Fontane’s filing system and the reconstruction of his
reading techniques (Chapter Two), however, make a neatly-planned process in all stages
implausible; rather, the compilatory process begins on the basis of a deep and shifting repository
that is impossible to control in full.
right degree of convertibility, right in the sense of striking a balance between structure, which is necessary for the pre-configuration of text sections, and flexibility, which is necessary for drawing these sections together in a mechanical or virtuosic manner. The forms of notation that realize this difficult compromise between rigidness and fluidity are, above all else, enumerations, discrete modular entries, and compact drawings. Operating between text and image, all three forms of notation break up the discursive order of writing and divide the material into individual portions that are visually comprehensible, easily movable, convertible, and expandable. In practice, these forms cannot be separated so strictly; more often than not, they appear mixed (e.g., in a sequence consisting of numbered modular entries that constitute a list, or a drawing with a legend that is in the form of an enumeration). The specifics of their functionality and poetic implications, however, become clearer when analyzed separately.

Enumerations and lists constitute the most pervasive form of notation in Fontane’s notebooks. Their formal features have several poetic implications that are understood best by analyzing what it is that makes lists into special kinds of script. As abstract and reductive forms, lists bring together contents that do not necessarily have shared properties other than their being listed together (Mainberger 19–20). What is on a list or in an enumeration has been dissociated from its original context and can thus easily be re-ordered, moved around, cut out, or expanded. Enumerations and lists therefore lay out new potential combinations and connections among the accumulated items. In fact, these forms of notation even invite continuation and the sprouting of connections, since they display a multitude of items both as an aggregate (that is, at once) and as a number of individual elements. From a rhetorical perspective, perceiving this multitude can have inspiring effects, as the colloquial term “running list” so aptly captures (Mainberger 7). Several moments in Fontane’s notebooks document that his lists are inspiring in this way; for
example, in notebook A5, the brief entries of a running list grow in size as the list keeps going, while Fontane switches from terse keywords to coherent prose (15r–18r). Vertical lists, moreover, lend a graphic dimension to the listed items and put them in proportional relations such as top and bottom; first, second, third; left and right; or layers of indentation (Goody 81). They therefore insert graphic features—or, in Sibylle Krämer’s words, “notational iconicity” (519, 525)—into the script on a notebook page, break up the predominantly discursive order of written text, and assist in organizing content graphically (fig. 10).

The spectrum of different enumerations and lists to be found in Fontane’s notebooks shows the pervasiveness of the form. They appear as stand-alone entries with their own headings (A2, 35v–36r), or as parts of other entries (A10, 25r–29r); their length varies from one (A6, 2r) to seventy items (E2, 29r–40r); they come in vertical and also horizontal orientation, with numbers, letters, or a combination thereof marking individual items (A5, 57r–58v); they have indentations that can be several layers deep (A6, 16r–20r); they grow as legends around drawings that they help explain; and they provide structure for longer entries (A3, 36r–40r). Items on a list can be simple keywords, phrases, complete sentences, or entire paragraphs (A9, 45v–49v). Fontane deploys lists indiscriminately, regardless of whether he composes the proverbial shopping list (A10, 2v–3r), notes down names of plants blossoming in a particular season (E4, 8r–9r), or describes the character traits of a protagonist (E3, 14v).

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88 Hettche analyzes this phenomenon in light of Fontane’s novel project *Vor dem Sturm* and sees in it the basis for Fontane’s literary technique of letting the characters, dialogs, and plots describe “themselves,” without the palpable mediating instance of a narrator (“Handschriften zu Vor dem Sturm,” 201–202).
Figure 10. Notebook E3, pages 36v and 37r. Comparing the coherent notes (on a specific picture in an exhibition) on the left with the notes in list-form (on the project *Vor dem Sturm*) on the right, the graphic features of the list come out very clearly. Published with the permission of the *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*.

There is no indication that lists and enumerations belong to the realm of deskwork, nor can they simply be attributed to fieldwork. Rather, they appear in all kinds of configurations, neatly stylized or hastily written, in ink and in pencil, documenting spontaneity as well as careful revisions.

The strength of the form cannot sufficiently be explained through the dynamic features of Fontane’s working environment alone, although the list—with its proclivity to reorganization—is very suitable to unstable systems of order.\(^89\) Its pervasive presence is due to a fundamental

\(^{89}\) One of the best examples is contained in Fontane’s notebook A5. The complex of notes around the town of “Freienwalde” repeatedly employs lists to lay down preliminary configurations of
influence that Lorraine Daston has called “the template function of reading” (444). Note-taking binds together the practices of observing and reading, Daston writes, and in the key analogy of her contribution, she likens the excerpting of quotations from a running text to the practice of cropping “short, pithy facts from the continuum of experience” (445). From this perspective, Fontane’s enumerations and lists are the writerly correlate of his practices of brutal reading (see Chapter Two): just as he traverses a bulk of newspapers on the hunt for passages to be strung together, he rivets his attention on the most diverse pieces of interior design in a Brandenburgian palace, which he accommodates under a shared heading. Considering the foundational importance of reading in Fontane’s overall work process, it becomes quite clear that reading determines the ways in which and of what he takes note. The notebooks, in other words, extend the textual practices of Fontane-the-reader beyond the desk. One of the most salient examples of the formative powers of Fontane’s textual practices on his perception can be found in Notebook C1, which he uses during a trip through the Rhine Valley in 1865. His description of Cologne turns out to be a real hybrid between deskwork and fieldwork. While his observations are rigorously cast in list-form, with the lists running over multiple bullet points and branching out into two layers of indentation, they are still written diary-style, as a glance at the beginning indicates (fig. 11):

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the accumulated material, yet as Fontane absorbs more and more, the lists continue to shift and change. Cf. 4r, 5v, 28r, 50v, 56v, 81r.
Image removed from digital version due to copyright concerns.

Figure 11. Notebook C1, page 12r (transcription below). This entry contains personal impressions of the city of Cologne in itemized list-form. Published with the permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

Transcription removed from digital version due to copyright concerns.
The subsequent entries on this list, moreover, contain remarks on his personal impressions of certain paintings and show other signs of spontaneity, such as clumsy formulations, erroneous punctuation, or inconsistencies in verb tenses. Regardless of the specific textual sources to which the structure of his Cologne notes can in part be attributed, the point stands that reading practices have left their imprint on Fontane’s techniques of notation, molding his own impressions—even the personal ones—into the highly artificial and elaborate list-form. Determining his notational techniques, Fontane’s readings practices thus contribute to the formal flexibility of the material underside of his text production.

Discrete bounded entries as, the second important form of notation in Fontane’s paper cosmos, also introduce iconicity into the order of script, presenting comprehensible portions of material and thus inviting the recombinant patching-together of text. Yet in contrast to lists, they do not suggest any modifiable preliminary internal order. Rather, they are stand-alone modules, which frequently bear their own headings and are clearly distinguishable from other entries through horizontal or vertical lines, circles, empty space, or changed text direction (fig. 12). Fontane, calling such entries “Elemente” at one point (A12, 146r), reflects these formal features clearly and highlights their propensity to be put together or integrated into a larger project-in-the-making. In addition to personal handwritten entries in this modular form, the notebooks also hold plenty of text portions that Fontane either copies or clips directly from books, letters, catalogs, journals, and papers (e.g., A8, 28r; E6, 2r, 4r–v, 28r, 44r–v). Clippings and handwritten modules basically follow the same logic. By dint of sharp cuts, either realized with a pair of
scissors or through horizontal dividing lines, the modules homogenize the material. For the sharp cuts at once separate modules from one another and enable new connections thus making it possible for the compiler to put modules together like tiles.\textsuperscript{90} On the level of the content, the beginnings and endings of the modules correspond to the sharp cuts. Frequently, they do not establish thematic or logical cohesion, but are confined to content-free adverbs of time with which one can create a rough sequence (“erst,” “dann,” “nun”). Logical connectors or moments of thematic cohesion occur much more rarely and at times even receive separate modules (A5, 4v–5r, 50v, 81r, 80v). Through these homogenizing features, the handwritten modules and

\textsuperscript{90} My observations on horizontal lines in Fontane’s notebooks draw on Malte Kleinwort’s essay “Kafkas Querstrich.”
clippings contribute to the convertibility and instability of the material repository on which Fontane’s production is based.

Finally, notebook drawings provide a mainly visual (as opposed to textual) means of access to the notebook content and facilitate flexible structuring and organization. There are by and large two kinds of drawings, and each facilitates text production in a different way. First, sketches—mostly elevation views and sectional views of buildings and smaller objects (e.g., a chalice in a church or the coat of arms of a noble family)—assist in producing more finished descriptions by way of capturing the most basic and a few characteristic details (fig. 13). As particularly quick modes of notation, sketches temporarily relieve the mind of having to find words for things that are easy to represent visually but hard to verbalize on the spot, since they require specific terminology. Miniature versions of such sketches even appear as logographic elements in the middle of sentences, providing visual clues for verbalization to be carried out at a later time (A6, 27v–29r). Second, numerous diagrams that accompany descriptions of buildings, parks, and landscapes provide orientation. For this purpose, Fontane produces diagrams with floor plans, site plans, and topographical top views (e.g., A13, 3r, 5r, 9r) of places he reads about, visits, or invents. Furnished with (at times very detailed) captions, the diagrams assist in determining the relative position of individual buildings, roads, hills, and other landmarks, regardless of whether the subject of the description is factual (A1, 32r) or fictional (E3, 7v).\footnote{On Fontane’s sketches of fictional localities for the novel project \textit{Vor dem Sturm}, see Hettche, “Handschriften zu \textit{Vor dem Sturm},” 196.} They can thus be seen as pivoting points around which factual and fictional accounts can rotate freely, increasing the flexible yet structured usage of the related material.
To conclude, looking at enumerations and lists, modules, and drawings as the main types of entries that recur throughout Fontane’s notebooks, it has become clear that they keep the material underside of his text production in the desired state of convertibility through their particular formal features. All three notational forms break up the discursive order of script, yet they do so without abandoning organization entirely; rather, the introduction of visual structuring devices—running from iconographic, to logographic, to purely graphic elements—opens up the material to many more methods of recombination, elaboration, and refinement than an exclusively discursive mode of notation could possibly provide.
3. Traveling Up and Down the Spectrum of Popular Culture: The Content of the Notes

At this point in the analysis, it looks like everything is in flux in Fontane’s paper cosmos. The virtual library network sets in motion an enormous heterogeneity of sources (see Chapter Two), and Fontane’s main forms of notation not only preserve, but also actually foster this heterogeneity through the degree of convertibility that they induce in the material. It is only fitting, then, that the content of the notebooks should be just as heterogeneous as the network of sources from which it is derived. This, however, is only true in part: looking more closely at the content, it becomes apparent that while there is great heterogeneity, the majority of the notebook space is taken up by a surprisingly stable set of topics and themes that continually appear in various permutations. It is on these stable topics that the analysis will focus, as they have a key function in Fontane’s productive process.

The materials that continually arise are mostly objectifications of domestic everyday life, quotations belonging to the realm of what Ong has termed “secondary orality,” sensational topics, and a particular cast of characters or literary archetypes. These materials all share a central property: they are thick with cultural significance because they participate in a number of contexts and registers; more precisely, they participate in the full spectrum that is opened up between the two extremes of popular culture as a mass-medial reality (e.g., yellow novels, drastic images, crude humor, etc.) and popular culture as stylization, an aesthetic ideal devised and

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92 Fürstenau, in her pioneering yet largely forgotten account of Fontane’s working methods from 1941, draws in part on the notebooks and other handwritten sources and identifies recurring topics in them (p. 50). Her study argues at times from a perspective that one could describe as media studies avant la lettre and provides valuable insights on Fontane’s strategies of researching and note-taking.

93 Ong has suggested this term to describe a mode of orality that depends for its existence on the written word and print culture (8, 11–13).
controlled by high culture (e.g., Volksballaden or almanacs; see the Introduction to this study).

Due to their multiple statuses, these materials fulfill the important communicative function of connecting Fontane to his wide target audience, that is to say, the readers of family magazines. Inherently heterogeneous, this target audience—more properly, one would have to speak of several audiences—itself participates in the spectrum of popular culture sketched above. Family magazines, from their emergence in the early nineteenth century to the end in the early twentieth century, attempt programmatically to maintain a style and content that is “populär und für jedermann verständlich,” as the founder of the Gartenlaube puts it, so that “die gewöhnlichsten Handwerker, besonders aber die Frauen” enjoy them, while the “Hausväter” are not bored with them, either (qtd. in Graf 17). Contributors therefore have to render their texts such that they appeal to different social and intellectual levels at once, a feat that the contemporary author Oscar Welten tangibly describes as the difficulty to tell one’s [love] stories such that

 [...] Mama [...] die volle Verfänglichkeit des Erzählten auszugeinießen vermag, die siebzehnjährige Tochter, ohne vielleicht noch dieses volle Verständnis zu besitzen, dabei doch schon heftiges Herzklopfen und brennende Wangen bekommt – während der Backfisch und der vierzehnjährige Knabe über das zu grübeln beginnt, was ihm hier verhüllt – und verheißend angedeutete wird” (qtd. in Graf 29).

This very difficulty of having to write for multiple audiences applies to love stories, yet it also applies to the other kinds of texts within the generic diversity of the Familienblätter, and Fontane’s multiple-status materials are the basis on which he resolves this difficulty. His materials can easily go both ways and travel up and down the spectrum of popular culture, which in large parts coincides with the aesthetic, moral, and intellectual standard set by mainstream family magazines.

The notebooks present these materials in different states; one can discover materials that are unedited and hence below the limit of that which would have been acceptable to family
magazines, and materials that Fontane has already transformed in order to match their standard. One can thus not only study the materials themselves in the notebooks but also Fontane’s processes of tailoring and editing them. For these processes, the utmost deliberateness on Fontane’s part can be assumed, considering how precisely he, in a letter to his “Stoff-Lieferant” Georg Friedlaender, maps the existence of truly sensational (lowbrow) materials onto the social geography and the respective cultural norms of the core territories in which he publishes. Not only does Fontane’s letter read like a catalog of lowbrow topoi, showing his connoisseurship of these kinds of sources, but it also uses the notion of the “measure” (“Maß”) to indicate that the presence and the aptness of such materials is a matter of degree:

 [...] ich behaupte [...], daß es, nach der poetisch-novellistischen Seite hin, bevorzugte und nicht-bevorzugte Gegenden giebt. Natürlich hat jede Gegend ihren Mord, ihren großen Bankrutt, ihren Ehebruch mit im Ofen verbranntem Kind, ihr Duell und ihr verrücktes Original, ganz leer an solchem pikanten Stoff ist keine Gegend, aber im Maß sind sie sehr verschieden. In Seestädten, in Gegenden, deren Reichthum und Schönheit viele Personen anlockt, in Grenz- und Schnapsdistrikten, auch in Gegenden, wo großer Reichthum und große Armuth nebeneinander leben, – in solchen Gegenden ist mehr los, als in Mittelgutsgegenden, wo eine solide, fleißige, prosaische Bevölkerung in auskömmlichen Verhältnissen nebeneinander herlebt. Deshalb passirt in den Landkreisen unsern Mark so verhältnismäßig wenig. [...] Ich will noch gar nicht vom Prinzen von Hanau sprechen, auch blos 22 mal Feuer anlegen, oder als Zuchthäusler von seiner Frau im Hochzeitsstaat Abschied nehmen oder solche Bankruttsene wie die Heringsche, die Sie in Ihrem letzten Briefe schildern, das alles ist in meiner heimathlichen Grafschaft Ruppin oder in der Prieignitz oder im Havelland nahezu unmöglich. (Briefe an Friedlaender, 165)

This “Maß” is exactly what Fontane manipulates in his notebooks. Yet the manipulation does not merely consist of editing materials to make them more appropriate; a subtler way of manipulating the “Maß” involves drawing together many of these materials, superimposing them upon one another, to calibrate literary effects that are enjoyable from the perspectives of simple to erudite readers, as the following close analysis reveals.

The thematically and numerically most relevant group of materials with multiple popular-cultural representations consists of objectifications and localities of domestic life and death,
representative of social strata from the Brandenburgian lower-middle classes to the nobility. Precisely such objectifications and localities figure very prominently as topics in family magazines across all kinds of rubrics, in texts and images, so that readers are able to relate to them very easily when encountering them in Fontane’s production. Through the accumulation of these materials, Fontane ensures that his text production employs themes, symbols, settings, and codes with which his target audiences are very familiar. To name the most frequently recurring objects and localities, there are descriptions of local churches, graveyards, tombstones, memorial plates, and family monuments, often including epitaphs and inscriptions on church bells, baptismal fonts, or church registers; palaces, mansions, parks, statues, gardens, ponds, and notable trees; inventories of interiors consisting of bride chambers, bedrooms, libraries and studies, tea rooms, garden pavilions, stucco ceilings and friezes, fireplaces, mirrors, staircases, coffee tables and chairs; items of food and clothing (hats, coats, skirts); and elements of visual décor, particularly titles and descriptions of contemporary paintings.

The extent of the thematic overlap between Fontane’s notebooks and family magazines becomes clear from a review of the list of articles appearing in family magazines between the

94 Here and in what follows, I will only give a spectrum of examples for each group of objects and localities, not complete listings of all the notebook pages on which they occur: churches, tombstones, church bells, etc., e.g., A1, 3r, 4r, 6r, 7r; A2, 12r, 46v; A3, 10r–v, 40r, 59r, 73r, 87r; A4, 10v–11r, 24v; A5, 46r–49v, 52v; A6, 27v–28r; A7, 82r; A18, 15r; B1, 31r–35r. On the function of such objects in Fontane’s writing, see the overview by Thielking.

95 Palaces, gardens, trees, etc., e.g., A2, 13r; A3, 9v; A5, 7v–8r, 39v; A7, 28r–29r, 48v, 56v–57r; A14, 8r–11r.

96 Interiors, e.g., A2, 22r-23v; A3, 1r, 56v–58r, 87r; A5, 14v–16r, 28r-30v; 44v–45r; 57r–64v; A7, 15v–17v; A13, 3a [sic], 20r; A15, 34r; A17, 16r–17r; A18, 36r 37r.

97 Food and clothing, e.g., A5, 77r; E3, 19v–21r; E5, 16v–17r, 36v–46r.

98 Paintings, e.g., A1, 50r; A5, 3a [sic]; A7, 16v; A9, 62v–64v, 77v; A17, 24r–25r; B1, 9r–10v; B9, 28r–32r; E2, 1r–28r.
1850s and the 1880s. The connection is so close that some of these titles are almost interchangeable with titles of Fontane’s notebook entries, e.g., “Ueber Kirchenglocken. Deren Alter, Formen, Inschriften und Schicksale” (IBDK 8: 208), “Ein berühmtes berliner Haus” (IBDK 6: 261), or “Für Gartenfreunde. Die alten Bäume” (IBDK 3.1: 279). Further contributing to the effect of familiarity, Fontane’s materials adhere to the aesthetic standards prevalent in mass media. For example, his drawings of noble mansions or churches usually provide an elevation view and focus on the façade, fenestration, and roof structures, components that are fully in line with the aesthetic conventions that contemporary popular art-historical volumes and travel guides convey (Karge 269–271; Keisch, “Aus der Werkstatt” 279–281). Or Fontane copies his notes directly from mass media, as in notebook E5. Evaluating reproductions and descriptions in the Münchner Bilderbogen and other sources, Fontane describes and draws some sixteenth-century garments with which he intends to clothe his heroine Grete Minde in the eponymous novella project published later, noting to himself, “Grete selbst muß gestaltet sein wie die hübsche Frau (No 4) auf dem Münchner Bilderbogen” (46r). Through the replication of these mass-medial aesthetic standards in his notes, he minimizes the gap between his own text production and circulating texts and images.

Yet the communicative effect he achieves by dint of accumulating objectifications and localities of domestic everyday life exceeds mere familiarity; the availability of these materials also allows for ironic exaggeration as a literary effect. Richard Brinkmann has remarked that Fontane’s production, especially his fiction, abounds in what he calls “Versatzstücke in Genre-

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99 The articles are listed by title in the Inhaltsanalytische Bibliographien deutscher Kulturzeitschriften des 19. Jahrhunderts (IBDK). For this study, the Gartenlaube (IBDK vols. 3.1, 3.2), Deutsche Roman-Zeitung (vol. 6) and Westermanns Monatshefte (vol. 8) have been evaluated. They represent the spectrum of themes and topics between a liberal-popular and a decidedly more intellectual magazine.
Bildern,” a reference to the very items of furniture, tableware, food, clothing, and images mentioned above. He has argued that through the overly-ostentatious deployment of these fixtures ("Versatzstücke"), Fontane renders the very procedure of familiarization ironic.

Brinkmann’s strongest example is a scene in *Mathilde Möhring* in which the working-class protagonist’s mother contently beholds a genre painting of a flute-playing boy by the contemporary French traditionalist William Bouguereau, while the protagonist Mathilde, uncurling her hair, watches this entire scene in the mirror (436). Study of Fontane’s notebooks reveals the overabundance of domestic and everyday objects that makes such ironic doubling possible in the first place.

An altogether different group of entries also fulfills a twofold communicative function within the spectrum of popular culture, yet it does not comprise objectifications of everyday life, but recordings of anonymous voices and discourses. Truisms, idioms, banal jokes clipped from newspapers, pious *sententiae*, and stanzas of folksongs copied from anthologies occur in Fontane’s notebooks as direct quotations from popular-literary culture with its underlying mode of secondary orality.100 As such, they can either be used and understood at face value—that is, as part of the formulaic repository of folklore—for familiarity, entertainment, and the straightforward realization of aesthetic expectations (kitsch). Or they can be used as markers of a

100 To give an impression of the simplicity characteristic of some of these quotations, see the following example (E6, 4r): “In einer Stadt in Smaland (Schweden) begegneten sich kürzlich, nach der „Nerike Allemanda“, zwei Bauern, zwischen denen sich folgendes Gespräch entspann: „Kannst du mir Auskunft über Etwas, was ich Dich fragen will, geben? – Ja, Du mußt Dich aber beeilen, denn ich habe viel zu thun und muß gleich weiter gehen. – Was gabst Du deiner Kuh ein, da sie kürzlich krank war? – Ein Pfund Terpentin! Hierauf trennten die beiden Bauern sich, trafen einander aber wiederum nach Verlauf einiger Tage. Es entstand nun folgendes Gespräch: „Du hast mir da einen schlechten Rath gegeben. – Wie so? – Ich gab meiner Kuh, wie Du der deinigen, ein Pfund Terpentin ein und sie starb gleich darauf. – Ja, das that meine auch!” For additional instances of quoted folksongs, idioms, etc., see A2, 68v–69r, 73v; A9, 50r; A12, 27v–28r; B1, 5v–6r; E3, 24r.
particular mode of speech, as communication without a sender, and hence as a mode of speech that has a poetological surplus. Truisms, platitudes, and *sententiae* appear frequently in this function in Fontane’s novellas and novels, most prominently in the famous “Das ist ein weites Feld,” as Kremer and Wegmann have analyzed. In this function, they produce the effect of a particular conversational realism, of communication mimetically describing itself (63–64).

Fontane pays close attention to such self-descriptions of communication, listening to the buzz of voices that, above all other media, newspapers contain, and evaluates them. He reflects this practice in his apologetic poem “Zeitung” from 1895 (GBA II.2: 472–473), in which he renders the newspaper buzz and his following it in acoustic terms. The notebooks contain plenty of material traces of this practice, and they thus provide the repository out of which Fontane is able to import elements of secondary orality into his text production. It is particularly in the latter, mimetic function that truisms, platitudes, and idioms attract literary interpretation on the part of the erudite reader, since they call for applying the semantically-underdetermined phrases to specific contexts that Fontane’s narratives provide, and in which they can easily take on very different valences.¹⁰¹

Entries revolving around the sensational, the erotic, and the occult provide another group of materials replete with popular-cultural significance. Figuring prominently as core ingredients of yellow popular fiction, these materials can also enter the highbrow version of popular culture. Yet to do so, they must be edited in order to meet the strict standards of moral rectitude set by the family magazines, which essentially ban open descriptions of sex of any kind and also

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¹⁰¹ Exemplarily, Manfred Rösel’s study on the single sentence “Das ist ein weites Feld” paraphrases the efforts of the erudite reader and the ease with which interpretation proliferates on this basis—Rösel’s monograph is dedicated to the analysis of all the contexts in which the sentence comes up and the meanings it takes on. Truisms, commonplace phrases, and mottos, moreover, also function as joints connecting *Wanderungen* episodes (see Chapter One).
discourage authors from making reference to prenuptial love affairs, adultery, and divorce.

(Needless to say, plenty of love stories in family magazines nonetheless touch upon these topics yet code them carefully; Graf 29.) Fontane’s notes show that he edits his materials just as much as he has to, making the degree of required editing dependent upon the topic. His summary of the life of “Gräfin Schw. . . n” (A12, 86v–87r) exemplifies this practice, illustrating how Fontane prepares material about a member of the nobility so that it makes for a potentially piquant yet still acceptable story. Having heard about the life of the Countess of [Sophie von] Schw[erin] (1785–1863) from his friend and noble informant Mathilde von Rohr, Fontane, in his notes, turns the proper names of the two most important figures into ciphers, thus casting the material in the style of a rumor and fictional tale while organizing the plot around popular-literary elements such as unrequited love, misfortune, a duel, and adoption:

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In this form, the material is not only fit for family magazines, but also for further processing in Fontane’s own text machinery. Having broken it down into semantically open narrative formulas ("Die Adoptiv= und die Pflegetochter"), the material can easily be expanded or woven into other textual patches.

Compared to his notebook entries on the occult, it becomes clear that Fontane exploits the leeway that family magazines grant contributors on this particular topic. His notes on occult phenomena provide much more evocative and precise details. This fully accords with the standards of the magazines, in which articles on supernatural events, spiritualist practices, and superstitious beliefs appear far more often than those on other topics. In the *Gartenlaube* and the *Deutsche Roman-Zeitung*, to mention but two examples, numerous accounts delve into great descriptive detail, at times presented in the disguise of folkloristic or scientific research (e.g., articles such as “Die Mechanik des Tischrückens”; “Die besessenen Knaben von Illfurth”; “Berliner Gespenster”; “Pigmentfäule und blutende Hostien”; “Die Vögel im Volksglauben”; “Ein elektrisches Mädchen”; or “Photographirter Spiritismus”\(^\text{102}\)). A set of glossed newspaper clippings that Fontane pastes into Notebook E2 operates exactly along these lines. The clippings give some folkloristic background, though their emphasis—heightened through Fontane’s markings in red pencil—is on the recounting of the superstitious fears and practices of soothsaying, viz. “Wer an einem heiligen Tage geboren ist, besonders die Sonntagskinder, können die Leichenzüge derjenigen lange vorher sehen, die in ihrer Gegend sterben werden”; or “Um Mitternacht geht die Magd in den Hühnerstall und greift hinein; ist’s ein Hahn, dann ist die Heirath vor der Thür”; and “Ebenso, wenn man den Schatten an der Wand sah, oder mißgeformt

\(^{102}\) IBDK 3.2: 67, 69; 6: 372.
oder ohne Kopf erschien, zeigte dies die mehr oder minder besorgliche Zukunft an” (E2, 50v, 52v).

How prominent a place occult stories occupy in Fontane’s filing system becomes clear from a list of “Spukgeschichten” that Fontane assembles and tags with references of where each of these stories can be found (A15, 6r, 7r). Like the truisms and conversational phrases discussed above, the “Spuk,” too, belongs to one of the frequently-interpreted phenomena in Fontane’s writing, generally considered as a means of rendering literary the fear of the “other,” of that which is foreign (e.g., Sittich, Ehlich). There is no reason to doubt these interpretations per se, but Fontane’s notebooks remind the reader of the primary context for the “Spuk” in Fontane’s working environment: the attempt at popularizing his textual production for a wide spectrum of audiences. The “Spuk” is part of his compilatory craft.

Notes for the drafting of particular characters, finally, constitute another group of entries that allow for traveling the spectrum of popular culture. In this case, the spectrum is marked by the replication of established narrative types on the low end and sociological interpretation of these types on the high end. Through this practice, Fontane brings together a central device of popular-literary storytelling with a highbrow scientific discipline—sociology and the descriptive paradigm of the milieu—that has just begun to emerge (Kremer and Wegmann, 62–69). Paradigmatically, his notebooks thus make clear that his protagonists are not “nach dem Leben gezeichnet,” as Fontane himself claims repeatedly,103 but that they are constructed for the effects of a very particular verisimilitude that he achieves through this process of blending.

On the side of narrative, the characters in the notebooks frequently resonate with popular-literary schemata in that they operate along the lines of the Ständeklausel, according to which

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103 E.g., in a letter to Siegfried Samosch from September 18, 1891 (HFA IV.4: 157), or in the preface to his autobiographical piece Meine Kinderjahre (HFA III.4: 9).
characters from the lower social ranks are allocated to comic parts of the plot, and characters from the higher social ranks to tragic parts; they summarize in themselves, moreover, sets of consistent attributes amounting to stable roles. Frequently, therefore, characters appear nameless in the notebooks or bear names that remain subject to change. On the sociological side, Fontane’s characters are constructed around modes of speech, political or moral views, or a particular profession, all of which accord with the demands of scientific milieu description. The sociological function of the characters, then, is to embody their milieu. When combined, schematic narrative encoding and basic sociological milieu description amount to a twofold typification that makes the characters at once accessible from the perspective of popular-literary storytelling and from the perspective of proto-sociological readings. A double-page from Fontane’s set of notes on the novel Vor dem Sturm yet again provides the strongest example of this process of twofold typification, formally supported by the mixture of modularized and enumerative entries, which results in a complex dramatis personae of fused narrative and social types (E2, 46v–47r; fig. 14; see next page).

Even without complete analysis, the example shows at a glance the aforementioned elements of Fontane’s twofold character construction in interaction. On the first layer of notation, identifiable by the larger script in ink and the regular text direction, characters are clustered according to their social stratum, which is clearly signaled by noble names, collective designations such as “Die Adligen aus der Umgegend,” or professions (as in “Schulze Kniehase”). The two opposite ends of the social ladder are marked by Brandenburgian Kleinadel and “das arme Volk auf dem Forstacker,” with representatives of the upper-middle class in between. The characters, moreover, appear narratively interpreted—that is, not “erfunden” but “gefunden”—either according to straightforward popular-literary roles (“Der Förster, der Müller,
der Krugwirth”) or according to circulating anecdotes about existing people. They are thus also easily identifiable as types (“Der eine wie Landrath von Z[ieten];” “der andere wie der von dem […] Massow erzählt”).

Figure 14. Notebook E2, pages 46r and 47v (transcription below). On this double-page, Fontane employs a number of interacting modules and lists to construct a dramatis personae of narrative and social types for the novel project Vor dem Sturm. Published with the permission of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.
The expansion of the initial list on the right—realized through a second layer of text with changed direction and in part written in pencil—shows Fontane’s purposeful accumulation of more types to produce a picture that is representative of society as a whole. While on the cited double-page, the initial list grows through the addition of twelve figures into an entire “Gesellschaft bei Tante Amélie,” this circle of narratively pre-encoded social types becomes even wider on the following pages: Fontane assembles entire groups under headings such as “Die verschiedenen Offiziere: der märkische Gourmand, […] / der passionierte Engländer, / der Schillianer, der Braunschweiger der in Spanien gefochten. […].” With entries in other notebooks and glued-in paper slips, Fontane gradually complements the outlined array of types, systematically amassing figures in six numbered groups—“Die Militair-Gruppe;” “Die
kameralistische Gruppe”; “Die Lehrer=Gruppe”; “Die Kaufmanns=Gruppe”; “Die Künstler=Gruppe”; and “Die Theologen=Gruppe”—all of which culminate in his summarizing phrase “Dies ist der Stock der Gesellschaft […]” (E3, 6v). The above example thus makes very clear that the protagonists are placeholders for social strata, the milieus associated therewith, and, ultimately, a description of society as a whole.\(^\text{104}\)

As further analysis of the example reveals, Fontane continues and refines this process of blending to the point that he creates an effect of verisimilitude with his figures. The strategy to achieve this effect relies on a paradoxical individualization of his types. Note that Tante Amélie and Marie Kniehase receive additional attributions on pages 46v and 47r (“Reich. Prince Henri. Preußisch und französisch […]”), lending them more of a personal profile. With these additions, Fontane exceeds the literary device of the narrative type and furnishes his figures with peculiarities, quirks, and antics that make them readable as individuals. A sketch of Lewin von Vitzewitz, for example, describes him as “Ein alter Herr von beinah 70, vorne, elegant, er kann nur bei 17° Wärme leben, dieser mit Mantel und Ueberrock, beim Diner immer ein Töpfchen heißes Wasser neben sich zur Regulierung der Temperatur” (E3, 25r). Yet upon closer examination, it becomes clear that even the supposed peculiarities are still bound up with current discourses, commonplaces, and narrative schemata that are not so individual after all. This paradox is perfectly expressed in Fontane’s reference to the “Originale” at Tante Amélie’s salon. These are called “originals” and yet again are actually types (“Der Geizhals”). Even Lewin von Vitzewitze’s quirk is readable in light of current topoi—the Gartenlaube and other family magazines dedicate numerous articles to the regulation of body temperature and the merits of hot

\(^{104}\) The panorama does not appear in full in the published novel; Fontane reduces it in the further processes of text production. Cf. GBA VdS 2: 387–389. The practice of amassing types in groups is not an individual instance in Fontane’s production but is consistent with other projects, e.g., Storch von Adebar and Der Stechlin. See Petersen 65–66.
Fontane, adding more and more of such double-coded attributes to his figures and carefully designing their telling names, perfects this pseudo-individualization of his types to the point that readers, even up to the present day, routinely reverse the priorities: focusing on the “individual,” they treat Fontane’s figures as realistic, representative, and typical of Wilhelminian values or gender roles in late nineteenth-century Prussia. Fontane himself fuels such readings, throwing references such as “Nach einer wahren Geschichte” into the subtitles of his stories, or telling his colleagues and friends about readers who insist on his stories being “real.” In a letter to the literary critic Paul Schlenther, sent after the publication of *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, Fontane writes about an encounter with a female reader who claims to be the protagonist of his most recent novella: “Eben […] war eine Dame von sechsundvierzig bei mir, die mir sagte, ‘sie sei Lene; ich hätte ihre Geschichte geschrieben.’ Es war eine furchtbare Szene mit Massenheulerei. Ob sie verrückt oder unglücklich oder eine Schwindlerin war, ist mir nicht klar geworden” (qtd. in Betz, *Erläuterungen*, 74). Upon opening the notebooks, however, it becomes clear that the characters’ verisimilitude is the effect of a carefully applied method carried out on the basis of a stock of popular-cultural elements fused with sociological interpretation, which lends the characters great identificatory and representative potential.

In the final analysis, this chapter has made the material underside of Fontane’s text production visible and has revealed the central features of a filing system in which a stable set of topics and themes moves with great fluidity. This combination of recurring topics and a dynamic notational space, as the chapter has further argued, fulfills an important function in Fontane’s

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105 E.g., IBDK 3.2: 15, 17; 6: 505; 8: 258. I am indebted to Alice Christensen for pointing me to the widespread discourse on body temperature, the thermometer, and the role of the thermometer in the later nineteenth-century bourgeois household.

106 For a recent example, see the contribution by Krause. Contrary to postwar Fontane scholarship, his contemporary critics at times looked right through the constructedness of his characters and reproached him for “ein Übergewicht des Milieus” (according to Petersen 10).
communication with the literary market: while the dynamic filing system keeps his material in a state of balanced convertibility and enables him to respond with his productive process to the multiple temporality of the market, the content of his notes serves as the basis on which Fontane is able to address a multiple readership with his production, accumulating and modifying objects that belong to lowbrow and highbrow popular culture alike. In contrast to previous inquiries, this chapter has not proven the ties Fontane establishes with popular culture for individual works, but has analyzed his participation in this thick and multi-layered popular-cultural context on a fundamental level.

This conclusion has larger implications for the assessment of Fontane’s text production tout court, for it rebuts both the common approach to his production and the deep-seated misunderstanding of the particular “realism” that the common approach implies. Usually, descriptions of Fontane’s text-generating process operate along the lines of a real-world / fictional-world binary and evaluate sources, dispositions, and drafts in light of the question of whence Fontane derives the elements to insert into his text (Helmstetter calls this characteristic of common approaches the “Denkfalle der Realismusforschung,” 16–17). The goal of such approaches is to map the fictional world of the emerging novel or novella onto the “real world” and to identify the “Referenzfiguren” behind fictional characters in order to distinguish between the parts of the story that Fontane models on the “outside world” or “real life” and those that he “makes up.” The otherwise well-informed commentary in the Große Brandenburger Ausgabe of Vor dem Sturm engages in precisely this game of revealing, calling the protagonist Lewin “in

\[107\] For one of the strongest analyses of individual Fontane works, see Demetz, “Fontane als Unterhaltungssautor.” Many individual studies on this topic appeared in the 1970s, and Betz summarizes these in his overview.
It then has to shift among several additional “Referenzfiguren” behind Lewin because this reading generates inconsistencies. Accordingly, the commentary characterizes Lewin as somewhat similar to the younger brother of the General Ludwig von der Marwitz and to the Lieutenant York von Wartenburg (GBA VdS 2: 378), without realizing that it is because of Fontane’s strategy of creating types that similarities to other figures proliferate so easily. These types, to be sure, are derived from circulating literary sources, such as Marwitz’ autobiography in a heavily edited version by the conservative Marcus Niebuhr, and Johann Gustav Droysen’s Leben des Feldmarschalls York von Wartenburg (1851–1852). Though mentioning these and other textual sources minutely, the commentary equates them without reflection with the “Realität” that becomes “unmittelbar […] in die fiktionale Welt des Romans eingepasst” (GBA VdS 2: 373, 379).

Analysis of Fontane’s notebooks makes this unreflecting understanding of the “realism” of Fontane’s production untenable, for it becomes apparent in the notebooks that his text production happens first and foremost in interaction with a circular popular-cultural and literary context that is to a great degree self-referential. Whatever enters into Fontane’s repository from the “outside world” is either directly derived from textual and visual mass-medial sources or, if not derived from mass media, filtered through Fontane’s techniques of reading, forms of notation, and the ongoing attempt at popularizing his output. There is, in other words, a forceful

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dispositif at play, regardless of whether Fontane interacts with textual and visual sources or the so-called real world. “Realism,” then, is only an apt description for Fontane’s production if it designates a “publicistic realism,” to work with a suggestion by Rudolf Helmstetter (40–41), that is to say, the absorption and modulation of topics and materials that are already present in the mass-media in order to replicate their ways of world-making in the literary text. The notebooks not only show that this happens at the very basis of Fontane’s production; they also show how. With the knowledge of this process arises a new set of problems that the final chapter of this study will take up: first, the problem as to how the compiler finds his way through the many options that his filing system makes available; second, the problem as to how the compiler organizes the transition from his dynamic filing system with its recurring yet discrete set of topics to coherent texts that retain the double quality of being accessible to the broader masses and enjoyable from the perspective of more erudite readers.
Having studied the material underside of Fontane’s text production, one may find it hard to imagine how the compilatory process actually happens, given his varied, formally-heterogeneous, and constantly-growing stock of source materials. The question arises, then, as to how Fontane makes his selections, glues the material snippets together, and smooths the resulting patchwork in order to arrive at publishable texts that are capable of appealing to popular and erudite readers. This chapter argues that Fontane’s textual practices enable him to
produce his compilations through a communicative process that determines the poetic 
organization of the source materials and takes his multiple target audiences into account. 
Fontane’s compiling can thus be understood as a process of literary communication with his 
readership.

This communicative process is possible because of the ways in which Fontane makes use 
of his peculiar paper tools and principal forms of notation. Relying heavily on the reductive form 
of the list in drafting dispositions for his texts, Fontane is able to survey his projects-in-the-
making from a distant, removed perspective. He can thus assess and comment on his projects 
from the standpoint of an outside reader before he has actually realized them in full. Looking at 
his dispositions and drafts, one finds that Fontane anticipates his readers’ reactions and factors 
those into the revision process to manipulate the composition of his compilations until he is 
satisfied with the mixture. At all stages in the compilatory process, then, Fontane’s paper tools 
allow him to oscillate between surveying larger sections of a project and developing small 
portions of it in great detail, thus separating the patching together and connecting of materials 
(the inside perspective of the compiler) from their poetic evaluation (the outside perspective of 
the reader and Fontane’s diverse target audience). Unlike other authors who carry out revisions 
in this way, Fontane realizes the separation physically by externalizing his self-comments on 
extra notes and sheets that he stores together with portions of the project-in-the-making. 
Allocating the reading comments and the actual compilatory work to different media, Fontane 
makes it possible to relate them to one another continually so that Fontane-the-reader and 
Fontane-the-compiler can enter into a dialog and set multiple feedback loops in motion. Through 
these recursive feedback loops, Fontane makes important decisions about the project under 
way—e.g., about turning points in the plot or about the use of symbols—to design a range of
literary effects that he assumes his multiple target audiences will appreciate and enjoy. Lastly, the ongoing dialog between Fontane-the-reader and Fontane-the-compiler gradually leads the project to a publishable state on the basis of a poetics of effect, calibrated for the marketplace in which Fontane intends to publish.

This chapter will address Fontane’s multi-layered process of compiling in three steps. It will focus first on those elements that have “genetic priority” (Hurlebusch 39) in his compiling. These are dispositions in list-form and, as the content of these lists, brief sketches or tableaux of individual scenes (“Einzelscenen”) that structure the narration. The chapter will then analyze how Fontane, through the recursive dialog between the reader and the compiler, evaluates the dispositions and scenes, connects them, and repeatedly instructs himself on revisions to design the desired literary effects. Concluding with an analysis of Fontane’s attempts to control the reception of his compilations, the chapter will show how his responsive compilatory process does not cease with the publication of his texts, but continues: it includes a full series of acts of literary communication that transforms Fontane’s compilations into parts of the mass media from which they are derived.109

109 The examples in this chapter are taken from two well-documented cases: Fontane’s production of the novels Vor dem Sturm and Der Stechlin. As his first and last novels, they encompass the roughly three decades during which Fontane compiles and sells novels. The production of Vor dem Sturm has left plenty of traces in Fontane’s notebooks; moreover, there are 2,700 folio sheets of manuscript materials that Walter Hettche has analyzed in an enormous undertaking. I am gratefully incorporating Hettche’s findings into my own inquiry, and I am also drawing on Roland Berbig’s study of the production history of Vor dem Sturm (“Mediale Textprozesse”). As for Der Stechlin, I am building on Julius Petersen’s study, “Fontanes Altersroman,” which describes the production history of the novel and makes numerous pages of draft materials available. When I quote from the drafts of Der Stechlin, I rely on Petersen’s transcriptions. Gabriele Radecke’s genetic study of Fontane’s working methods in L’Adultera is also an important source for this chapter. Radecke distinguishes four stages in Fontane’s working methods: the “produktive Stoff- und Materialsammlungsphase,” the “produktive Dispositions- und Entwurfspahse,” the “produktiv-reproduktive erste Niederschrift,” and the “reproduktiv-rezeptive Revisionsphase” (Vom Schreiben, 73–90). Her differentiation provides a very helpful
1. Compiling by Eye: The Poetic Function of Lists and Genre Scenes

Fontane’s compiling begins with lists. In the compilatory process, lists obtain a key poetological function, since they mediate Fontane’s relationship to his ever-growing reservoir of “Stoff.” Yet they do not help him “organize” the “Materialfülle” and impose structure on the heterogeneous content he has gathered, as existing inquiries in Fontane’s manuscripts usually contend (Hettche, “Die Handschriften zu Vor dem Sturm,” 203). To assume that Fontane could structure his material by writing up lists is to reduce the complexity of the problem that the very nature of the material poses. As this study has established, Fontane works with material in excess. His material repertoire is a maelstrom, a powerful whirlpool of textual snippets, and is thus far too massive and too confusing to be simply structured and shaped into form. Accordingly, Fontane responds to this problem not with structure, but with the opposite: movement. The lists that he employs at the beginning of the comilatory process are devices of motion, not of structure. With his lists, Fontane engages in a practice that Marshall McLuhan describes as the only appropriate response to material in excess—he saves himself, like the sailor in Edgar Allen Poe’s A Descent Into the Maelstrom, “by studying the action of the whirlpool and co-operating with it” (McLuhan v). Writing out ever-more lists, Fontane not only “co-operates” with the maelstrom, but he even exploits its creative potential.

Fontane’s lists enable this creative approach to the maelstrom because of their formal features. By reducing, equalizing, and sequencing items, his lists not only draw together

overall framework for approaching the productive process. My own inquiry has shown, however, that Fontane’s productive process is too irregular to be fully captured in these clearly-defined stages. I therefore seek to bring out the characteristics of his textual practices through a different lens, focusing less on developments in his manuscripts and more on the media, communicative processes, and forms of notation that organize the relationships between his materials and drive his production forward across the different stages.
elements from the stock of material, but they also plot paths through this material. In the lists, the administration, navigation, and creative recombination of the stored material converge, and the paths-already-plotted can easily turn into paths-yet-to-be-taken. The logistics of managing material can without difficulty grow first into a course for future action and then into production because the lists make it so easy to move, reorder, recombine, and extend the listed items. The poetic function of the lists is that they do not freeze the material; rather, they require Fontane to dive repeatedly into the stock of material and produce ever-more sequences and paths in a process that transforms the influx of lists into an outflow. The lists keep Fontane in the reflective observation of the maelstrom and keep him in motion, thus enabling him to access the overabundance, retrieve parts from his reservoir, and connect them with one another.

The result of these listing movements is the growth of Fontane’s projects in the form of extensive dispositions that draw in ever-more source materials and gradually increase the scope and the generic diversity of the projects. The notebook entries on his first novel, Vor dem Sturm, illustrate the radical nature of this growth and testify to the poetic function of Fontane’s lists. A global analysis of these entries (many of which have been individually analyzed earlier in this study) shows that the lists indeed have an “engine function” and ultimately drive the compilatory process. The earliest extant notebook entry,\(^{110}\) a list-like accumulation of keywords and narratively-disconnected phrases, is the starting point for Fontane’s roaming of the dynamic notational space, in which all kinds of source materials are kept next to one another. Finding aids such as back references across different notebooks (E3, 1v), orienting labels (E2; E3), and tabs at the tops of notebook pages (E2, 46v) encourage him to traverse the different source materials and

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\(^{110}\) The entry, titled “Material” (A12, 142r–143r), will be discussed in detail below. In dating the entries that belong to Vor dem Sturm, I rely on the commentary to the GBA of Vor dem Sturm and on the information provided in Walter Hettche’s studies.
to jump back and forth between them, which facilitates his “co-operation” with the maelstrom. As a result, the dynamic notational space is filled interchangeably with more list-like dispositions for the project and a variety of further materials, e.g., cascades of keywords for “Dialoge” and “Gespräche” of the characters (E2, 49r–48v; E3, 16r, 17r); newspaper clippings about occult practices in the region in which the project is set (E2, 49v, 50v, 52v); numbered lists of ever-more “Situationen” to be included in the project (E2, 50r, 51r; E3, 1r); a list of diverse textual sources under the heading “Bücher” (E2, 52r, 53r); book excerpts providing military-historical background (E2, 54v–59r); and lists of “Figuren” (E3, 2r–7r).

111 This procedure, the traversing of the “hot juxtaposition” and the continuous production or modification of list-like dispositions, remains central, regardless of whether Fontane works with high or low intensity on his project. In phases of peak intensity (after he has signed the book contract with Wilhelm Hertz112) as well as those of slow-going progress, the combination of lists and source materials proves productive. By dint of this method, Fontane casts an ever-wider net across materials already accumulated and integrates them over the course of the long production history of Vor dem Sturm. The list of “Spukgeschichten” from Notebook A15 (ca. 1869; analyzed in Chapter Three) can as easily become part of the project as Fontane’s notes on some objects on display at the Ruppiner Museum in Notebook A2 (1873), which later take on an important symbolic function in the novel. Descriptions of the village of Küstrin (B4, ca. 1877), produced in the context of a Wanderungen essay, are in the same way integrated into the material basis of Vor dem Sturm and provide the locality for parts of the plot. Crisscrossing the “hot juxtaposition” of sources and lists, Fontane repeatedly mobilizes parts of his diverse material

111 While the notebooks highlight Fontane’s practice of letting his projects grow through lists, the practice is not limited to the notebooks. Hettche has shown that Fontane also uses this method on folio sheets (“Die Handschriften,” 201–202).
112 Fontane signs the contract in early November, 1865. See GBA VdS 2: 395, 435.
stock to generate ever more lists, which cumulatively make his project unfold like the bellows of an accordion.

While the list-based “accordion principle” accounts for the beginning of the compilatory process in formal terms, the content of Fontane’s project expands by way of not a formal means, but of a primarily aesthetic one: the composition and insertion of genre scenes. In these roughly-sketched scenes, Fontane arranges characters, plot elements, and localities into tableaux in which stylistic features of genre texts and contemporary genre images (Genrebilder) come together. Frequently first among the items on his lists with dispositions, they enjoy genetic priority in the compilatory process, for which they have important poetic implications both on the production end and the reception end. On the production end, they are an efficient way to establish moments of coherence. In just a few keywords, they integrate Fontane’s multiple-status objects, his social-narrative types, and their characteristic surroundings into clearly-defined, even outright clichéd units that help organize the story to be told. The tableaux, then, provide the compiler with fixed arrangements that can easily be taken up and moved without destroying their inner composition; they serve as the dots that Fontane connects in working on his compilation further. They should not, however, be confused with mere structuring devices. Rather than assisting in the organization of the structural or syntagmatic axis of the story, the tableaux serve as placeholders for elements on the paradigmatic axis, and more specifically, for certain atmospheres and atmospheric effects to be detailed later in the compilatory process. They help Fontane to begin the compilatory process not from the perspective of plot development, but from that of emphatically-expressed atmospheric scenes and corresponding aesthetic effects. It is in this primarily atmospheric function that the tableaux take priority in his compiling and make clear that the plot serves mainly to hold the genre scenes together.
One can study this pivotal and aesthetic function of the genre scenes as well as the inferior importance of the plot in the earliest extant notebook entries on *Vor dem Sturm*. In Notebook A12 (presumably dating to 1862), Fontane accumulates under the general heading of “Material” what he himself calls “Scenen” as the basic stock of ingredients for his project, some of which he relates to a very rough timeline, spanning from Christmas Eve of 1812 to Easter of 1813. Yet although he sets a timeline, the elements of the story he intends to tell are not fully sequenced; nor is there an arc to the plot. Fontane really only amasses a number of stills frozen in time, as both the content and stylistic features (such as nominal formulations, the sparing use of verbs, and the preference for the present perfect over the simple past) indicate. The scenes, moreover, absorb and organize many of the popular-cultural references identified earlier in this study and arrange them into atmospheric units:

Material.
Die Zeit vom Weihnachtsheiligabend 1812 bis Osterheiligabend 1813. Winter= und Schnee= Landschaft. Predigerhaus. […]
Eine halbe Meile entfernt ein andres Dorf mit dem Schloß eines alten Adligen. Etwa Friedersdorff und Marwitz. Charakter Marwitz, aber gemäßigtter, viel Züge von Knesebeck. […]
In der Klosterstraße eine Chambre garnie für die 2 Freunde vom Lande (Predigersohn und Adelssohn) und Zusammenkunftsort für den literarischen Club. (halb die Lokalität aus Dresden, halb Jüdenstraße.)
Die eingeführten Gäste: der blasse, hagre häßliche Comtoirist (der Begeisterungsmensch) andere Figuren à la Faucher, Maron etc. Schill, Erzherzog Karl, Fichte, Schleiermacher – die Helden des Tages. […]
Dorffiguren: der wahnsinnige Tischler, der den Geldtopf auf dem alten Kirchhof sucht. – Der Leichenseher oder der, der den Leichenwagen stehen sieht. – Die gespenstischen Mäher […]
Die Scenen in der Prima des grauen Klosters. […]
Etwas Colonie=Leben; ihre Vertheidigung warum sie so französisch waren.
Das Erscheinen der Franzosen in Frankfurt. Versuch zur Aufhebung aller. Scheitert zum Theil. Eine Franzosenjagd im Walde. […]

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113 In part, the notebook materials belonging to *Vor dem Sturm* are reprinted in the GBA (VdS 2: 429–449). The edition, however, neither provides the notebook materials in full, nor connects the materials to Fontane’s working methods.

Clearly, the scenic elements take priority in this first set of notes. They structure clusters of types and localities and integrate references to popular-literary sources. (Notice that the “Leichenseher” among the “Dorffiguren” relates directly to Fontane’s notes on superstition analyzed above, and that the “Gräfin Schwerin-Geschichte” also re-appears here, a carefully edited version of which we could study on pages 86r and 87r in the same notebook.)

In the subsequent entries, Fontane moves through his materials and makes momentous changes to the larger organization of the project, but the genre scenes remain stable. Their endurance indicates yet again that they are the pivotal aesthetic components around which the rest of the material revolves. In two sets of briefer entries (144r–144v; 146r–146v), Fontane plays with the overall partitioning of the amassed material, allocating it to varying three-volume structures. He also changes the timeframe of the story, replaces the constellation of figures originally centered on two friends with a new emphasis on two pairs of siblings, and notes down two different endings. The genre scenes, however, remain intact and undisturbed by these big conceptual shifts. In fact, with a more detailed disposition for the planned first volume in between these two sets of rough conceptual entries, Fontane even expands the genre scenes. The more their degree of detail increases, the less space is dedicated to the plot of the story. The atmospheric elements such as time of day, locality, mood, and certain sounds receive ever more emphasis:

Erster Band.
II. Der Morgen. Der alte Diener, der die Stiefel putzt. Das Einheitzen von außen in den alten Kachelofen; das Bummern der großen Scheite und Torfstücke. Der alte Diener weckt ihn. […] (A12, 144v; printed in GBA VdS 2: 433)

It would exceed the limits of this study to reproduce Fontane’s entire disposition for the first volume. Suffice it to say that he fleshes out more of the previously-accumulated scenes in the same manner and inserts a plethora of additional ones.\textsuperscript{114} Formulations such as, “V. Die Bauernhochzeit oder irgend eine andre Festlichkeit mit möglichst viel Lokalton” underline yet again that Fontane does not employ these genre scenes randomly but clearly reflects on their use, mobilizing them as vehicles for the desired effect of “local tone” (a category that will be discussed below) and familiarity. In this very function, a set of unchanging atmospheric genre scenes continues to recur across Fontane’s production: countless Christmas and New Year’s Eves, outings, sleigh rides, church visits, weddings, funerals, and dinner parties are staples of Fontane’s narratives and have given way to a number of Motivstudien in Fontane criticism.\textsuperscript{115} The prominence of these scenes, as analysis of the notebook reveals, is due to Fontane’s textual strategy of organizing his compilatory process around them.

On the reception end, the overall effect Fontane achieves by working with genre scenes is increased recognizability and readability for his compilations. Fontane’s genre scenes reproduce, or at least refer to, a particular type of actual illustrations—genre images—that circulate increasingly through family journals, newspapers, Bilderbogen, large-scale art exhibitions, and catalogs of companies mass-producing those images for home decoration. What Fontane mimics in his textually-composed genre scenes, then, is a response to a publishing culture that becomes

\textsuperscript{114} E.g., “Weihnachtsbaum. Der alte auf dem Sopha. […] Der Kaffee am Kamin. Der Alte dampft seine kurze Pfeife”, or “IV. Die Jagdparthie jenseits der Oder; übers Eis; die Heiterkeit; die Zusammenkunft: Bürger, Philister, Adel, alles zusammen, aber einig in einem Gefühl […]” (A12, 145r).

\textsuperscript{115} Some examples of such Motivstudien from the last decade are Masanetz, Radecke (“Das Motiv des Duells”), and Salmen.
increasingly visual and in which the same motifs, at once stereotypical and successful, continually recur in minimally-different versions across media and places of publication. Graf asserts that from the 1860s to 1900, the text-to-image ratio in family journals strongly trends toward a “Verlagerung des Schwerpunkts auf […] Illustration[en]” (324) that present and represent the ever-same motifs, such as “Landleben und –bewohner[n], vornehme[r] Welt, Künstler[n], Ehe und Familie, Reisen und Expeditionen, Militär, Antike, Religion und Kirche und Tierbilder[n]” (329). Mimicking these and similar motifs in his production, Fontane anticipates this medial trend while also ensuring that his textual output remains competitive and compatible with the visual code dominating his main places of publication, a code with which he could expect his wide target audience to be familiar (just as he could with his multiple-status objects).

The use of genre scenes, then, fulfills a communicative function that facilitates the popular reception of Fontane’s compilations, providing the reader—quite literally—with familiar images. Due to his media expertise, Fontane is entirely aware of the communicative potential of mass-produced images, as his description of the Neuruppiner Bilderbogen in the Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg suggests (GBA W1: 131–133). Admitting that the illustrations in this early mass medium are often of mediocre artistic quality, he nonetheless casts his analysis of the Bilderbogen in the favorable terms of immediate recognizability, high entertainment value, and high communicative performance, which, in his assessment, overrule questions of quality. Fontane concludes that the Bilderbogen fulfills a more important function of mediation (“Vermittlung”) between the reader and “the world out there” than even the quickly-developing press (“Zeitungswesen”) with its “ins Unglaubliche gesteigerten Kommunikation” (133). With his textually-composed genre scenes, Fontane thus consciously taps the huge communicative
potential of the mass-medial image. Finally, specific references to existing genre images and their painters in his drafts provide additional evidence that the integration of familiar visual scenes is purposeful and strategic. In the drafts for the opening scene of *Großmutter Schack*, to name but one example, Fontane notes down: “Die Lattenlaube à la [Theodor] Hosemann” (HFA I.7: 248–50, 676). He thus instructs himself to model the setting of his story on the artistic style of a well-known genre painter, illustrator, and caricaturist of the day.

The success of this textual-visual principle of composition becomes manifest in the voices of his contemporary critics. Across the board, they compare Fontane’s production to actual images and describe his prose in visual terms. Regardless of whether they review him favorably or negatively, popular images provide the aesthetic standard against which they measure him: The influential critic Ludwig Pietsch emphasizes in his review of *Vor dem Sturm* that the strength of the narration “liegt mehr im historischen Genrebilde und im intimen zeit- und sittengeschichtlichen Idyll, als in der Malerei der großen geschichtlichen Leidenschaften und Handlungen,” and Ludovika Hesekiel explicitly asserts that Fontane “versenkt sich in die Kleinmalerei des deutschen Familienlebens […]” (qtd. in GBA VdS 2: 380, 418). From the initial drafts to the finished compilations, Fontane’s genre scenes remain highly recognizable as aesthetic features of his production, and they set the terms for readers’ reception.

The gathered insights on the beginning of Fontane’s compilatory process and the function of lists and genre scenes can be expanded across typical distinctions such as “the early Fontane” versus “the late Fontane.” They hold generally true even though *Vor dem Sturm* is of a

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116 Additional examples are the reviews by Paul Heyse, Wilhelm Lübke, and Friedrich Karl Schubert. While Heyse and Lübke liken Fontane’s narration to a “Porträtgalerie” and the “herrliche Landschaften im Stil der alten Holländer,” respectively, Schubert critically writes that the plot moves too slowly because the novel “zerfällt […] in freilich sehr naturgetreue Einzelbilder […].” Reviews printed in GBA VdS 2: 411–428.
somewhat special nature within Fontane’s production, considering that it is his first finished novel, and considering also that the importance of genre scenes is perhaps more explicit in this novel than elsewhere (as Fontane’s intended subtitle—“Ein Zeit- und Sittenbild aus dem Winter 12 und 13”—indicates). These qualifications notwithstanding, numerous additional examples leave no doubt that the combination of lists and genre scenes—and hence the combination of a particular notational technique and a mass-medial aesthetic means—is the foundation of Fontane’s compiling. Looking at draft materials and other sources that document the materialization of such different projects as *Irrungen, Wirrungen; Allerlei Glück; Der Stechlin*; and a range of endeavors from the *Nachlass*, the similarities to the initial production process of *Vor dem Sturm* become clear.117 Yet if this is how Fontane’s compiling generally starts, the question as to how he manages to turn the disconnected lists and genre scenes into smooth texts becomes all the more pressing.

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2. The Author’s Selbstgespräche: Fontane’s Communicative Revision Practice

It is no secret that dispositions become texts and texts become smooth texts through elaboration and revision. Fontane is not exempt from this rule, and yet the common reconstructions of his revision process do not tell the whole story. Buying into Fontane’s self-descriptions, scholars usually present him as someone who writes the first drafts of his texts rapidly, in an eruptive “[Erzähl-]Fluss” (Berbig, “Mediale Textprozesse,” 104), and then spends a lot of time refining them slowly, an action that Fontane himself calls “pusseln.” While these accounts are right to assume that there are different tempi within Fontane’s working process, they nonetheless ignore the core mode of production and productivity to which Fontane adheres: that is, compiling. His revision process is not about writing and refining; his revision process is about managing the fundamental heterogeneity of his source materials, handling the creative potential of the pastiche, reconciling the differences between foreign sources and his own additions, and organizing an abundance of discrete passages of text. Fontane’s revision process, to use yet again his own terminology from his personal notes, is much more about “einschieben,” “einschalten,” “einstreuen,” “verwenden,” “unterbringen,” “erledigen,” “benutzen,” and “anknüpfen” than it is about “schreiben.”

He wrestles with a problem that he also observes acutely in other compilers, and that he calls—disrespectfully yet technically precise—the problem of the “Wurstmaschine,” meaning that compilers have to homogenize their production if they do not want to end up with “Salat, Kompendiumsgemengsel” (HFA IV.4: 613).

118 These and similar verbs appear frequently in Fontane’s notes as quoted in Petersen 16, 22, 28, 39, 55, and Radecke, Vom Schreiben, 246; they also appear, among other places, in E3, 1v, 7r, and 22r.
Fontane addresses this problem in two ways. Outwardly, he simply conceals it, describing his production process as different from what it actually is. In a letter to Wilhelm Hertz, for example, Fontane claims to have produced *Vor dem Sturm* without poetic rules and entirely “ganz nach mir selbst, nach meiner Neigung und Individualität […]“, ohne jegliches bestimmte Vorbild,” asserting further that his goal as a writer is to do justice to himself and his “Stoff” (*Briefe an Hertz*, 130). Making his novel an equivalent of his individuality as a person in this rather unscrupulously-staged self-description, Fontane mobilizes the strongest concept available to rebut the impression that his project could consist of a number of different parts that are actually not his own. (Note that in the case of the *Wanderungen* project, too, Fontane mobilizes the concept of “individuality” to prevent the impression that his episodes could be unoriginal; see Chapter One.) After the publication of *Vor dem Sturm*, he goes so far as to simulate a surprise about the content of his own book, claiming that he was unaware that it contains, “ganz gegen mein Wissen und Willen,” a pious tendency. Fontane maintains that this tendency is so natural that he could never have manufactured it, even if he had wanted to, and arrives at the conclusion that apparently, the content of *Vor dem Sturm* is “nichts als der Ausdruck meiner Natur” (*Briefe an Hertz*, 196).

Within his own paper cosmos, Fontane’s treatment of the problem of homogenizing his sources is very different, however. For instead of concealing the problem, he makes it explicit and develops a mechanized practice to tackle it: he puts himself in a position in which he can read and evaluate his own drafts, dispositions, and compilations-in-the-making from a distant perspective. But unlike in a typical revision process, Fontane does not just edit his texts and directly write changes into his manuscripts. Rather, he employs extra sheets of paper to record his reading impressions of sections of his compilations and to note down instructions for
revision. He *physically* separates the processes of drafting, elaborating, and refining his compilations, from those of reading and evaluating them, and he realizes both sets of operations with the help of different media of notation. As a result, he can relate sections of his drafts and his reading impressions to one another—or, to be more precise, he can apply the reading impressions and instructions to revision of the drafts. This practice enables Fontane to force the difficult revision of the extremely heterogeneous abundance of textual components into a schema, which, in turn, helps to keep the abundance processable. A salient example of this mechanized (yet not necessarily mechanical) revision practice can be found in the drafts of *Der Stechlin*. On an extra sheet of paper that Fontane adds to a bundle of individual scenes, he notes:

> Capitelanfänge und Einzelscenen bis zum Eintreffen in Kluster Wutz. Alles ist hier allererster Entwurf, also durch das Andre schon überholt; aber mancherlei aus diesem zuerst Hingeworfenen wird gut zu gebrauchen sein. Ich muß es in die Capitel=Convolute einschieben, liegen lassen, dann lesen und dann auf dem Convolut ganz kurze Angaben machen (in richtiger Reihenfolge): das das etc. [...]. (Qtd. in Petersen 16)

In this example, Fontane literally spells out the order of the next steps to be performed, and the rigor with which he instructs himself is indicative of the effort that is required to produce coherent text out of the heterogeneous sources. Yet even more significant than the rigor of his self-instructions is the *form* that they take: separating drafting from reading and evaluating, Fontane turns revision into a *communicative process* in which two instances of Fontane’s authorship—Fontane-the-compiler and Fontane-the-reader—talk to one another in the form of a conversation that the author has with himself (“Ich muß…”). Previous inquiries into his manuscripts have also characterized his revision practice as a “Selbstgespräch” in which the author gives himself “Regiebemerkungen” (e.g., Hettche, “Erste Skizze,” 217). Although these

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119 This can be seen as an extension of his practice of separating from one another projects that are in different stages, and realizing the separation with the help of the “Kasten” discussed in Chapter Three.
studies have produced a number of significant results regarding Fontane’s working methods and his narrative technique, they stop short of analyzing what this phenomenon really means for his poetics; in fact, none of the existing inquiries fully acknowledges the “-gespräch” in “Selbstgespräch.” This, however, is the decisive point: by allocating the steps in his revision process to different instances and putting them in conversation with one another, Fontane makes the entire process subject to the recursive logic of communication. Externalizing his reading impressions, he can observe and assess them more easily, re-read them, and relate them anew to the sections of the compilation to which they refer. This process allows him to observe his own readings of his drafts. He thus enters into a movement that Christoph Hoffmann, analyzing the notebooks of Ernst Mach, calls “Schreib-Lese-Schleifen” (“Umgebungen,” 90), and through these “loops of reading and revising,” Fontane continuously manipulates and reworks his heterogeneous drafts. The entire process is such that Fontane “von Anbeginn eine spätere Überarbeitung einkalkuliert[e],” as Hettche has concluded (“Die Handschriften zu Vor dem Sturm,” 199), without connecting this conclusion to the communicative logic of Fontane’s revision practice.

Fontane applies this procedure to all kinds of materials that are part of his compilations, from unmodified source texts, to dispositions in the form of keywords, to drafts that have undergone multiple rewrites. The externalized stance of the reader, then, provides some homogeneity in the challenging process of compiling and helps him accommodate the extremely

120 Petersen, for example, views the “Selbstgespräch” as a symptom of Fontane’s “pedantische Schwerfälligkeits des sorgfältigen und umständlichen Mitsichzurategehens” (16), yet not as a process with a real impact on Fontane’s poetics. Similarly focused on Fontane’s personality, Berbig suggests in his analysis that the author, through the “persönliches Sprechen,” finds his voice and inserts himself into the manuscript (“Mediale Textprozesse,” 105). More focused on narrative technique, Hettche and Radecke show the gradual development of narrative voice out of the authorial comments (Hettche, “Die Handschriften,” 201; Radecke, Vom Schreiben, 74–90, 121–126), but in their analyses, too, the communicative nature of this process falls short.
irregular project development. Whether a text section is in the first draft or the fifth, it becomes subject to the distinct observations of Fontane-the-reader. All parts of the project thus obtain the same status, regardless of their respective degrees of refinement. Accordingly, one finds the comments of Fontane-the-reader in almost all kinds of manuscripts and in a lot of different places within them: frequently, on the above-mentioned extra sheets of paper that Fontane adds to his bundles of drafts and sources and on the envelopes that enclose these bundles, yet also directly on the flipsides of pages with drafts and in marginalia. In the latter cases, the externalized comments of Fontane-the-reader, though not allocated to a different medium of notation, nonetheless remain clearly distinguishable from the main text to which they refer, since Fontane often circles them, sets them off with straight lines, or uses a pen in a different color. In this manner, Fontane-the-compiler and Fontane-the-reader are in a constant exchange, and the reader instructs the compiler on all compilatory core operations. For example, on a sheet added to a bulk of material for Der Stechlin, the reader tells the compiler how to use and combine some of the accumulated textual sources:

Notizen, die in den verschiedenen Kapiteln untergebracht werden müssen:
1. Die Geschichte vom Sühne=Blut in Siam (sehr interessant).
2. Äußerungen von Pastor Rauh=Cladow über die Aufgabe der christlich Sozialen und das Unausreichende der sogenannten Conservativen.
3. gute – dem christlichen Sozialismus entsprechende Äußerungen des verstorbenen W. Wyl (Dr. Wilh. Ritter v. Wymetal). (Qtd. in Petersen 39)

In addition to directing the distribution of the material, the reader also tells the compiler the order in which he should arrange certain components (“Reihenfolge: 1. Der Aussichtsturm.
Landschaftsschilderung. Kurze Plauderei. / 2. Dann ins Dorf, in die Schule zu Krippenstapel […],” qtd. in Petersen 22), which parts he should treat as central (“Dies ist für das Gespräch zwischen Dubslav und Lorenzen die Hauptstelle […],” qtd. in Petersen 38), and which parts he should shorten, delete, rewrite, and expand. That the reader examines the compiler’s progress,
plans the development of the project in a sometimes accountant-like fashion, and really instructs the compiler becomes clear from a note-to-self that at once summarizes and plots the further elaboration of the figure of Pastor Lorenz[en] in Der Stechlin. On an extra sheet that prefaces a bundle of materials on the pastor, Fontane writes:

Pastor Lorenz
s. auch das hier einliegende Convolut.
Pastor Lorenz ist in einer Beziehung die Hauptfigur: die Geschichte mit dem Stechlin=See, die den gedanklichen Kern des Ganzes bildet – wird durch ihn vertreten; was an der Stechlin=Geschichte Symbol und Zeichen ist, das wird durch ihn beständig gedeutet. [...] Vorläufig schweben mir folgende Situationen und Gespräche vor:
4. Lorenz im Gespräch mit Adelheid.
5. Lorenz im Gespräch mit dem Alten (zum Theil schon geschrieben).
(Qtd. in Petersen 47)

Both a balance sheet and a plan for the amplification of the project, Fontane’s list of situations in which the figure of the pastor comes up (or is supposed to come up) indicates how closely the reader and the compiler interact with one another in this communicative revision practice. It is through this practice of recursive exchange that Fontane drives his compiling projects forward, across the challenges that large quantities of heterogeneous sources pose.

Fontane’s communicative revision practice has forceful implications for his poetics. Most importantly, this peculiar revision practice allows him to customize his projects for publication and, more specifically, for his target audiences. A closer examination of the overall stance of Fontane-the-reader brings this capacity for customization to light. It is not a mere personal stance, driven by intuition or taste alone, but one that is thoroughly reflective of the literary market; Fontane-the-reader looks at the compilations-in-the-making from the perspective of his
multiple target audiences of popular and erudite readers. The comments and instructions of Fontane-the-reader combine the different reading expectations and interpretative patterns of his lowbrow and highbrow readerships. These are expectations that Fontane-the-reader anticipates: he comments on his compilations from the perspective of how they will be received.

This practice is evident in the specific nature of the comments. It is striking that Fontane often manipulates poetic textual features that normally gain traction in the interpretations of erudite readers, including symbolism, the use of a leitmotif, the constellation of figures, charged descriptions of settings, moments of prefiguration, and, more generally speaking, interactions between form and content. In the note-to-self cited above, for example, Fontane-the-reader assigns the figure of Pastor Lorenzen a function that directly influences the symbolic interpretation of the novel (“[…] die Geschichte mit dem Stechlin=See […] wird durch ihn vertreten; was an der Stechlin=Geschichte Symbol und Zeichen ist, das wird durch ihn beständig gedeutet […]”). Numerous other instances could be cited in which Fontane-the-reader ensures that his compilations contain a sufficient quantity of highbrow features, including semantic lacunae purposefully inserted to open his compilations to interpretation (e.g., “Die von ihm gewählte [Lesart] unbestimmt halten,” E3, 1v). At the same time, his comments also address features of which he could assume his popular readership to be appreciative. To the drafts of Vor dem Sturm, for example, Fontane adds the comment: “In dem Charakter von Hoppen=Marieken die Vogelverständige und die Kräuterverständige mehr hervorheben, als bisher geschehn” (E3, 25r). With his comments, Fontane-the-reader anticipates the expectations of his broad readership and translates them into instructions for the calibration of specific literary features while his compilations are still in progress. In Fontane-the-reader, his multiple target audiences enter into
the ongoing revision process. This is only possible because the process is communicative and recursive in the above-described way.

3. Fine-Tuning by Ear: Maximizing Effects

As Fontane proceeds with the expansion and revision of the compilations and produces the connecting tissue between the genre scenes, he yet again relies on his peculiar modes of notation and an aesthetic means, both of which assist him in getting the mixture right for his broad target audience. Just as in the case of his dispositions at the beginning of the compilatory process, he continues to employ lists and other reductive forms of notation when putting down his readerly comments. These forms of notation enable him to survey sections of his compilations-in-the-making and to work with a reduced degree of detail. They thus facilitate the manipulation of these sections, the composition of the mix, and the calibration of the desired literary features. The aesthetic means by which he organizes the content of his expanded compilations is no longer predominantly visual, as in his dispositions, but it is also acoustic. In addition to the briefly-sketched genre scenes—visual placeholders for highly-recognizable, popular-cultural references—Fontane, in his drafts, now works with acoustic placeholders, calling this aesthetic means the “Ton” or “Lokalton.”

Fontane’s mobilization of the aesthetic category of the “Ton” implies an understanding of language that treats it as material for the production of a particular, identifiable style and sound.

\[12^1\] The notion of the “Ton” or “Lokalton” appears prominently across Fontane’s letters, e.g., HFA IV.2: 625; IV.3: 82, 120; IV.4: 490. See also the entry on “Lokalton” in the Fontane-Lexikon, 284.
An aesthetic phenomenon with characteristic qualities, the “Ton,” too, is recognizable and can be employed as a marker or identifying feature; yet unlike a genre scene, it addresses the readers’ acoustic faculties and stocks of familiar sounds, rather than their visual faculties and stocks of familiar images. The “Ton” thus functions at once to expand and to authenticate Fontane’s compiling; it guides Fontane-the-compiler’s further text production while ensuring that his readers can still easily relate to and enjoy the produced text since it “resonates” with them. The category of the “Ton” therefore helps Fontane further to develop the familiarity and recognizability that the genre scenes provide at the basis of his compilations. This acoustic emphasis, however, does not merely comply with the aesthetic principle behind the genre scenes; rather, it adds a whole new medial dimension to Fontane’s texts, supplementing their visual qualities with acoustic ones. In Fontane’s creative process, the “Ton” is both an aesthetic phenomenon and a poetic principle that guides, to a considerable degree, the production of the textual tissue with which the genre scenes are connected.

In letters to his “Stoff-Lieferanten,” Fontane reflects on this poetic quality of the “(Lokal-)Ton” and makes explicit its twofold function for his production. Intending to produce a ballad that is supposed to take place in the Riesengebirge—to cite one of the strongest examples—he relies on Georg Friedlaender’s expert knowledge of the region and asks him for “Lokalbenennungen” in order to assist his creative process:

Also alles was am Weg liegt und – es sei was es sei – irgend einen Namen führt, wodurch es jeder kennt. Eine Waldpartie (wie Birkicht oder Tannicht) eine Steinpartie oder ein Einzelstein mit phantastischem Namen, ein Quell- und Brunnenplatz, ein Kretscham und

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122 I am building on observations that Kreienbrock has made about Rainald Goetz’s approach to language. Kreienbrock argues that Goetz pays particular attention to the ways in which sentences are connected, the “vibes,” “rhythm,” “sound,” and Motorik that discourse produces, especially discourse in the mass media. Despite the anachronism inherent in the comparison, this is also an apt description of Fontane’s attention to language as it is captured in the notion of the “Ton.” See Kreienbrock, 229–230.
Bauden-Namen – das wäre mir das Liebste. Vielleicht auch Namen eines Bergwassers, Teiches, Moorgrundes, Wiese. Ganz exakt braucht es gar nicht zu sein, nur so viel um den Lokalton herauszubringen. *(Briefe an Friedlaender, 86)*

After Friedlaender has delivered some material, Fontane thanks him, explaining exactly how the elements of “local tone” have shaped his text production:


The correspondence with Friedlaender exactly expresses what the “Ton” does in Fontane’s “Schreib-Lese-Schleifen” and the production of connecting tissue. The “Ton” provides familiarity, since the readers can identify it, associating it with certain places (or, in other examples, certain people and social milieux). Fontane even purposefully inserts actual local names—not only poeticized ones—into his production so that his readers can literally find themselves in the texts.123 At the same time, the “Ton” also assists in Fontane’s own text production. When he is writing new texts sections rather than modifying existing ones, it provides an aesthetic template that he can fill and vary on the basis of his impression (“Eindruck”) of the acoustic qualities.124

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123 In one of the letters to Wilhelm Hertz, written in the context of developing a marketing strategy for *Vor dem Sturm*, Fontane explains the importance of local names as a means of drawing in the readers: “Ich kenne Barnim und Lebus [= actual regions in which the novel is set] und beide werden mir meine Treue lohnen. Es ist der Theil unserer Provinz, wo das meiste Geld und das stärkste Selbstbewußtsein zu Hause ist. Das giebt ein gutes Publikum. Außerdem freut sich jeder, seinen Namen gedruckt zu sehn” (*Briefe an Hertz*, 196).

124 In the latter function, the “tone” is the starting point for a practice that has strong connections with the rhetorical technique of “percursio” analyzed in Chapter Two of this study. Again, Fontane employs a mode of technically-enhanced spontaneity that is rapid and associative, and yet also in need of a poetic springboard from which it can develop.
Precisely in this twofold function, specific tones figure prominently in the comments with which Fontane-the-reader instructs Fontane-the-compiler on further text production. In this context, the tones are not always called “Töne,” but rather “Stile,” yet they function in just the same way: Fontane notes down a brief starter (in the quotation from the letter to Friedlaender, this is the “Namen-Anregung”) that determines the tonality or the stylistic characteristics in which a passage should be continued. The continuation itself, however, does not always follow immediately; Fontane frequently postpones it to move on to the next section in the revision process. For example, his draft materials on Vor dem Sturm contain, on the flipside of a manuscript page, a stylistic starter to initiate the further development of the indirect speech of one of the protagonists: “Und wenn es nicht glücke, sei die Welt keinen Schuß Pulver werth gäb es keine ewige Gerechtigkeit, über die er ohnehin so seine Gedanken habe. Noch etwas weiter in diesem Stil” (qtd. in Hettche, “Die Handschriften zu Vor dem Sturm,” 204). Similarly, Fontane instructs himself on how to begin and develop the end of Der Stechlin, and more specifically, Melusine’s letter to Pastor Lorenz. Fontane characterizes the tone of the letter through a couple of sentences, and then ends with “etc.” (“[…] Und richtige Menschen sind die, die sich um mehr als ihren Maulwurfshügel kümmern. Mit anderen Worten etc.”; qtd. in Petersen 18). Such definitions of tonalities and styles can also be indirect, referring not to sentences that Fontane has already formulated, but to established literary styles and canonical texts. In Der Stechlin, this is the case in the drafts of a dialog between Pastor Lorenzen and Dubslav: “[…] Nun Lorenzen, wie denken Sie eigentlich darüber. […]. Haben Sie den Glauben daran? […] Das Gespräch setzt sich fort. Lorenzen wie [Pastor] Windel, aber nicht schopenhauerisch, sondern Bergpredigt, christlich sozial” (qtd. in Petersen 39).
Fontane’s frequent use of abbreviations such as “etc.” in his comments and drafts is indicative of his mastery of the tonal and stylistic repertoire on which he draws, whether for the mixing-together of sources or for the production of new text. No matter the style or tone, Fontane is confident that he is able to imitate and elaborate on it. He knows these tones and styles completely, and the “etc.” strongly suggests that they are too obvious to him, too tedious, even too clichéd to be expanded upon at this moment in the compilatory process. Accordingly, he defers that step to the next “Schreib-Lese-Schleife.” Despite all his mastery, Fontane nonetheless carefully prepares for the final elaboration of the briefly-sketched tones and styles. He puts together extensive lists of speech patterns, such as tongue slips, locally-bound idioms, *bons mots*, and characteristics of dialect, all of which one finds scattered across his *Nachlass*. One of the best examples is a folio sheet with more than a dozen numbered pairs of proper names in incorrect and correct pronunciation. At times presenting very subtle differences, the list of pairs is characteristic not only of the systematicity but also of the meticulousness—the finely-attuned ear—with which Fontane prepares for the elaboration and acoustic authentification of his compilations-in-the-making (fig. 15):
Figure 15. Folio sheet from Fontane’s *Nachlass*, listing pairs of proper names in correct and incorrect pronunciation (transcription below). Published with the permission of the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach*. Accession Number 59.1197; Microfiche No. 005053, Fiche 14.
This and other components from Fontane’s cache of linguistic peculiarities make it easier for him
to perform the *craft* of imitating and manipulating the different tones and styles when producing
the connecting tissue and smoothing existing textual parts. The *art* of compiling—the careful

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125 For the imitation of unfamiliar dialects, Fontane at times relies on helpers. Radecke has been
able to show that in the productive process of *L’Adultera*, Fontane sends the draft of a dialog that
mixing-together of these tones and styles in order to arrive at a balanced and homogenous text—remains intricate, though. In approaching its complexities, Fontane relies heavily on the faculty of the ear, which provides a homogenizing instance in his authorship and on the way to publishable compilations.\textsuperscript{126}

The close analysis of salient examples from Fontane’s revision practices has shown that genre scenes and tones are the two central parts of Fontane’s poetics of compiling. Addressing visual and acoustic faculties, this poetics aims at increasing the compilations’ “Wirkung”: their effectiveness as pieces of literature that his multiple readerships might enjoy. Indeed, the “Wirkung” or effect is the aesthetic master program that directs the revision process, the feedback loops of reading and revising, and the production of connecting tissue. One can conclude this from the numerous instances in which Fontane, explicitly or implicitly, refers to this concept and approaches his production from the perspective of its future reception.\textsuperscript{127}

“Wirkung,” of course, is an old and ill-defined category, and its specific nature in the context of Fontane’s production is difficult to reconstruct. There are a few hints about its characteristics, however. In the first place, the “Wirkung” is supposed to be as unpretentious as possible; the reader must not notice the mechanics underneath the compilations’ surfaces. In a note, added to

he wants to color with Swiss inflections to a South-German friend and asks him to make the necessary acoustic corrections. See Vom Schreiben, 84–87.

\textsuperscript{126} In Fontane scholarship, much has been written on his “Ton,” yet common studies do not acknowledge that it is actually \textit{sampled} on the basis of an accumulated repertoire of discursive tones and styles. It is a mixture, not something that Fontane develops on his own. Cf. Petersen, 68. There is more evidence of the importance of acoustic qualities and of the ear as a media-poetic principle in Fontane’s production: according to a number of anecdotes and letters, Fontane reads his drafts of literary texts out to his wife and his daughter, asking their critical opinion as they \textit{listen}. Frequently, he also has them read texts out to him. See Fricke 77; P. Meyer 234–235; GBA T2: 80, 146; GBA E3: 74.

\textsuperscript{127} E.g., Briefe an Hertz, 189, 196. Fontane’s striving for “Wirkung” exceeds a mere “Wirkungsästhetik” insofar as he really calculates effects as part of the productive process. It is therefore much more of a “Wirkungspoetik,” as the following analysis will show.
lists of idioms and quotations intended for the project *Allerlei Glück*, Fontane cautions himself against the overuse of these stylistic features, reminding himself: “[ich] muß mich namentlich hüten, durch zu viele kleine Eigenheiten wie Citate, Redensarten, Berolinismen, fremdländische Ausdrücke usw. *wirken zu wollen*. Das wirkt schließlich bloß gesucht und überladen” (qtd. in Petersen 68; emphasis added). The “Wirkung,” moreover, is supposed to increase the readers’ fascination with Fontane’s texts. This objective becomes clear if one recalls the role that the category plays in the author’s own reading practices (see Chapter Two): Fontane understands “Wirkung” as a force that brings texts to life, turns reading into an experience for all of the senses, and makes readers curious, greedy, even feverish and sleepless. The sophistication that Fontane has developed in analyzing and manipulating the effectiveness of his reading materials is now available to him for his own production. In his compiling, he can draw on his observations—refined through decades of both omnivorous and thoroughly professionalized reading—of what factors and aesthetic ingredients influence the “Wirkung” of a literary text.

It remains difficult to define with greater precision the “Wirkung” that Fontane intends to achieve. His revision practice at large is too erratic to allow for many generalizations, and one would have to analyze each compilation-in-the-making in its own right to specify the respective intended “Wirkungen.” The one characteristic that is constant in his compiling is his unflagging attempt to *maximize* the “Wirkung.” It is because of his strong commitment to the “Wirkung” that he is provisional and tentative in his text production. This idiosyncratic provisionality is not only evident in Fontane’s filing system and the production of *Wanderungen* episodes (see Chapters One and Three), but also in the dialog between Fontane-the-reader and Fontane-the-compiler in the production of novellas and novels. Frequently, this dialog is driven by modal verbs, unfolds in the subjunctive mood, and is interspersed with adverbs that cast their referents
in terms of likelihood and probability but not definiteness: “ich müsste,” “ich darf,”
“wahrscheinlich,” “vielleicht,” “vorläufig.” As we have seen, there are also plenty of clear and
definite instructions (“Hier muss ich…”), yet they often become obsolete in the next feedback loop and are thus also not binding. The degree of detail with which Fontane works, moreover, remains curiously low for some of the text sections, even deep into the compilatory process. Hettche has been able to show that parts of the latest manuscript of Vor dem Sturm—which Emilie is supposed to copy for the printers—represent the first coherent drafts of project sections that, prior to this point, have still been in list-form (“Die Handschriften zu Vor dem Sturm,” 206). Bringing a reductive and hence easily changeable form of notation this far into the compilatory process, Fontane leaves the possibility for modification open. Precisely such variability and provisionality give the compiler the chance to continue the fine-tuning of the “Wirkung” up to the very last minute.129

Despite Fontane’s own definitions of “Wirkung,” the concept should not simply be reduced to fascination, suspense, and entertainment. The overall effectiveness for which Fontane strives in his compiling cannot be subsumed under exclusively popular-literary categories. The few existing inquiries in Fontane’s manuscripts have revealed that his revision process frequently makes the drafts more complex and raises their literary level. Scholars have described (to follow

128 Qtd. in Petersen 18, 22, 24, 28, 43, 47; see also A12, 142v; E3, 4r, 7r.
129 Radecke’s analysis of L’Adultera contains a compelling example of how Fontane revises an advanced draft in order to increase the “Wirkung.” On the envelope containing the well-developed draft of the fifth chapter of the novel, Fontane notes down: “Dies 5. Kapitel ist was Gang und Inhalt angeht im Wesentlichen in Ordnung, nur folgendes ist zu beachten: 1. Van der Straaten muß auch schon, als alles noch gut und glatt geht, ein paar Berolinismen einstreuen. “Alter Freund und Kupferstecher” ist gut. Kaput, Kuckuck. Wenn schon, denn schon. Na ob etc. Im Wesentlichen aber hält er sich bis zuletzt. Er fängt ganz anständig an und wird immer schlimmer. 2. Noch ein paar Unterbrechungen. Duquede muß noch mal sagen: “Er wird überschätzt” und der Polizeirath muß auch noch ‘mal hineinreden.” (Qtd. in Radecke, Vom Schreiben, 247)
Radecke’s succinct summary of the existing research on Fontane’s manuscripts) the revision process in the terms of the “Verdichtung” and “Prägnantwerdung” of his formulations, the increasing ambiguity, subtlety, and fictionality of description, the growing emphasis on acoustic effects, the multiplication of allusions, and the refinement of the narrative perspective, and Radecke confirms these findings with her own genetic analysis of L’Adultera (Vom Schreiben 17–32). In the revision process, then, Fontane frequently strengthens those features that make his compilations more literarily challenging. At the same time, however, he also produces connecting tissue that transforms a draft into veritable pulp and hence decreases the literary level. In a section from the manuscript materials of Vor dem Sturm (which Hettche discusses in one of his analyses), Fontane turns a list of keywords into a passage that fully realizes the straightforward aesthetic templates of popular-literary storytelling:

Er stützte die Stirn in seine Hand und träumte, und in seinem Traume klang es immer vernehmlicher wie leises, fernes Glockenläuten. Er horchte danach, voll wachsender Sehnsucht, und endlich war es ihm, als füle er das Labsal einer Träne und als kam’ es wie Befreiung über sein schwerbedrücktes Herz. (Qtd. in Hettche, “Erste Skizze,” 219)

This is not just “in gefährlicher Nähe zum Kitsch,” as Hettche has remarked: this is kitsch and could stem directly from a novel of Eugenie Marlitt or other epitomes of highly-successful nineteenth-century pulp fiction. In Fontane’s production, such pulpy passages are no rare occurrences; Hettche has found additional instances in which Fontane lowers the level of his drafts through the insertion of banal adjectives and narrative formulas (“Erste Skizze,” 218–219). The “Wirkung” that Fontane attempts to maximize, then, is a hybrid phenomenon.

In his analysis, Hettche silently laments Fontane’s engagement in popular-literary storytelling, perceiving of it as a missed opportunity. In Hettche’s view, had Fontane not touched these popular formulas and not smoothed his production, he could have been a much more modern author. Bracketing the question of how “modern” Fontane’s lists of keywords really
could have become (first and foremost, they are part of a rhetorical stock and hence not necessarily modern at all), Hettche’s analysis misses the truly remarkable, hybrid characteristic of Fontane’s compiling: his capability of doing both highbrow and lowbrow revision, of raising and lowering the complexity of his production, and of arriving at texts that function at once as page-turners and canonizable literature. Through his virtuosic skills of combining sources from an extremely wide range, Fontane creates mixtures—in his own terminology: characters and settings with “gemischte[n] Züge[n]” (A12, 142r)—that appeal to popular and erudite readers alike, without ever giving one audience priority over the other. That Fontane gives up neither on literary quality nor on popular appeal gets at the core of his literary innovation and innovativeness. The conventional plots, narrative formulas, clichéd genre scenes, and familiar tones do not work against this innovativeness, but with it, as do the literary allusions and the chains of topoi rippling through the narratives, the manifold uses of dense symbolism, and the carefully-performed subversions of the popular-literary templates. Given the range of characteristics fundamental to Fontane’s compilatory enterprise, his production can be read and appreciated in a new light: as an artfully-sampled mixture in which the mash-up of circulating genres, stylistic registers, discursive sounds, and clichéd images amounts to generic hybrids that forge highbrow and lowbrow sources into new literary forms.

4. Publication and Beyond – Fontane’s “sichere Technik”

It is commonly assumed that a book is finished when it is published: the author can no longer modify the text; it is out, in circulation under his or her name, and the only possibility to
make changes is a new edition or some other iteration in a different version. In Fontane’s case, however, the production process is by no means complete with the publication. Rather, his textual practices extend well into the phase when his projects spring off the press, just as sales are about to begin. In fact, he continues to change the nature of his compilations—not by modifying the recently-published texts directly, but by influencing their reception. Fontane attempts to maximize the effectiveness of his projects even after they have been printed.

Everything he does to ensure the success of his projects and to control their reception ought to be analyzed as a substantial component of his textual practices and, indeed, his poetics—on a par with his accumulation of source materials, drafting of dispositions, and production of compilations. Three characteristics are striking about the post-publication aspect of Fontane’s textual practices: how, after publication, he continues the poetic program that has directed the text production proper; how well he integrates his post-publication practices with the economic conditions of the literary market; and how conscientiously he goes about this entire process. Continuing with the example of Vor dem Sturm, this section will examine each of these three characteristics.\textsuperscript{130}

In every literary market, there are channels and modes of distribution that organize the ways in which published texts actually find their readers. The market in which Fontane publishes is largely determined by subscription, at least when it comes to the most important media of publication, family journals and newspapers. In the aftermath of the revolution of 1848, the Prussian regulators are reluctant to allow a free literary marketplace driven by Straßenverkauf and independent booksellers. Rather, they firmly implement the Postzwang for journals and

\textsuperscript{130} The focus will be on Fontane’s publication of the book version, not the magazine version preceding the book. The former is better-documented and provides the more insightful case. On the publication of the magazine version, see Berbig, “Mediale Textprozesse,” 108–116.
papers, meaning that publishers are legally obligated to sell their products through various models of subscription and rely on the Prussian postal system for delivery. One of the consequences of this distribution model is that publishers have no direct contact with the readership; the Prussian post informs them only about subscription numbers, not about readers’ names or addresses (Graf 65). Although books are not subject to the Prussian Postzwang and may be sold through bookstores, the publishing situation for the (much more important) journals and papers is pervasive enough to affect books, too. For journals and books alike, exact knowledge of the anonymous readership—“seine soziale Zusammensetzung, geographische Differenzierung, unterschiedliche Vorlieben und andere Einflussfaktoren” (Graf 65)—is therefore extremely valuable for publishers and authors alike. Successful publication is much more likely when publishers and authors are able to de-anonymize and effectively address their readers.

As this study has revealed in this and the previous chapters, Fontane possesses the desired knowledge about his readership to an unusually high degree, and he makes enormous efforts to keep this knowledge up-to-date. Given the need to form bonds with anonymous readers, the “Lokalton” serves not just as a means of aesthetic familiarity, but also as a device for directly addressing his regional readership, and for providing readers with textual references that they might enjoy tracing. This function of the “Lokalton” becomes clear in Fontane’s reflection on the success that the book version of Vor dem Sturm has unexpectedly achieved in the region around Poznan. In a letter to Hertz, Fontane retrospectively makes sense of the success, explaining it minutely with the migration of a fraction of his established local readership:

Vitzewitz, Pudagla, Drosselstein etc. eigentlich zu verstehen sei. Dies bildet immer das Haupt-Interesse. Rätsel lösen. (*Briefe an Hertz*, 192)

In this reflection, the “local tone” is contained in the actual townships of Manschnow and Gorgast, which are the bases for some settings in the novel, and also in the poeticized names of the protagonists. The elements of “local tone” provide entertaining references to well-known living people from the region. Fontane’s reflection, then, binds together (with striking exactitude) the aesthetic and economic functions of the “local tone”: it provides a segment of his readership—the “reiche[n] Bauerssöhne aus dem Dreieck Wrietzen–Küstrin–Frankfurt”—with literary discoveries that are amusing enough for them to buy the novel.

With a meticulously-planned marketing campaign, Fontane and his publisher Hertz strive to expand the established local circles of readers and promote the book version of the novel across Prussia as well as some other states of the German Empire. In order to do this, they attempt to address readers indirectly, through reviewers working for influential newspapers, magazines, and the Prussian administration. While this strategy is by no means unusual in the contemporary German publishing scene, the closeness of the collaboration between author and publisher is extraordinary (Berbig, “Das Ganze als Ganzes,” 85). Indeed, Fontane and Hertz calculate every step and watch over the entire process of launching the book in a months-long conversation. They develop and send back and forth a two-column list of potential reviewers, whom they differentiate, according to one of Fontane’s letters, into “Schafe und Böcke” (presumably, denoting reviewers whom Fontane and Hertz find either gullible or stubborn; *Briefe an Hertz*, 192). They share the work of writing to the reviewers, sending them free copies of *Vor dem Sturm*, and even discuss the fashion in which they should contact each respective “Schaf” or “Bock”—with a notecard, a “Liebesbrief,” or a personal visit (194–195). The employed strategy is very similar to Fontane’s strategies for researching and accumulating
sources (see Chapter Two): He and Hertz rely on the principle of “snowballing” to increase their communicative reach, contacting mainly those reviewers who have influence on easily-widening circles of readers. For example, Ludovika Hesekiel is on the list because the “Landpastoren” listen to her and might recommend the novel to the members of their parishes (195). Similarly, Hertz suggests writing to the influential Prussian school inspector (“Schulrat”) Gustav Adolf Klix, who is responsible for curriculum design and textbook distribution, with the intention of making Vor dem Sturm a standard school text (ibid.).

In addition to aiming for communicative reach, Fontane and Hertz make their selection of reviewers based on the nature of the criticism that they expect the reviewers to voice. Through reviewer selection, they attempt to control exactly the kind of “Wirkung” that the book will arouse. Their strategy is twofold. On the one hand, they pick reviewers such as the literary historian Julian Schmidt, a critic whom they are not able to influence particularly much, yet whom they hope will write a review that is potentially drastic and that will thus generate media attention. Fontane is explicit about this objective in one of the letters to Hertz: “Es schadet gar nichts, wenn er auf die Schwächen des Buches stark hinweist, wenn nur das Ganze nicht zu kurz kommt, will sagen nicht lau und flau behandelt wird. Das ist der Tod; nicht ein energischer, aber wohlmeinender Tadel” (198–199). On the other hand, they enlist reviewers with whom they have strong personal ties, knowing that they will be able to dictate (more or less directly) the frame of reference in which the book will receive attention. The attention they seek advances precisely the poetic program of Vor dem Sturm and thus carefully connects Fontane’s book to existing, successful popular literature, while also highlighting how his novel differs from and surpasses

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131 On the role of Gustav Adolf Klix in the Prussian administration, see HFA IV.5/2: 459. Fontane enthusiastically supports the idea of integrating his book into the curriculum. He and Hertz attempt the same strategy with the Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg, as Berbig has shown (“Das Ganze als Ganzes,” 83–84).
the average. Again, it is Ludovika Hesekiel who is supposed to provide this made-to-order review. Fontane instructs her carefully to emphasize the differences between his novel and circulating popular novels by Willibald Alexis, George Hesekiel (the reviewer’s father), and Walter Scott, all of which have functioned as important templates for Vor dem Sturm (GBA VdS 2: 417–418). By telling her to highlight the differences, Fontane benefits from the popularity of these other books while nonetheless ensuring that his own novel will be perceived as innovative and different.

With these strategies, Fontane tries to establish himself at once as a locally-rooted author, and as one who is relevant for Prussia as a whole. Likewise, he tries to establish his work at once as popular and enjoyable, and as intellectually challenging and—concerning Vor dem Sturm and the Wanderungen—ideologically aligned with a proper Prussian education. These strategies of self-fashioning ought to be called successful, given that Fontane has managed to polarize his critics along the terms that he himself has set. His contemporary critics are torn between praising and mocking him for his connections to popular-literary storytelling. In his favorable review for the Vossische Zeitung, Ludwig Pietsch is pleased that Fontane has resisted the narrative cliché and has not turned the lower-class orphan Marie Kniehase into an “unerkannte Baronin” at the end of the novel, and Fontane thanks him for picking up on this conscious deviation from the template (GBA VdS 2: 414–415). Otto Roquette, by contrast, expresses annoyance in the Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung that the novel contains too many “Spuk- und Gespenstergeschichten,” and then ironically demands more of them, wondering in his review why Fontane has left out the “Spuk” in a scene in which the protagonist Hirschfeldt visits a church at night: “Vielleicht läßt sich der Dichter bewegen bei einer künftigen Auflage des
Today’s best-informed critic of *Vor dem Sturm*, Walter Hettche, continues this polarizing pattern of assessment on the basis of popular-literary references, situating Fontane’s novel between “kitsch” on the one side and the narrative powers of the “stream of consciousness” on the other (“Die erste Skizze,” 214, 218–220). From the nineteenth-century to the present day, then, the voices of Fontane’s critics correspond to the extremes that Fontane himself combines so artfully in the compilatory process and his overall working methods.

The basis for these working methods, as Julius Petersen has already remarked in the late 1920s, is a “sichere Technik” on Fontane’s part (74). Although Petersen, in his comprehensive study of the manuscripts of *Der Stechlin*, neither approaches Fontane as a compiler, nor really focuses on questions of technique, he arrives at this conclusion, uttering it with noticeable disappointment. After all his painstaking spadework, the philologist had apparently hoped for more. It is, however, a question of perspective whether the conclusion of a “sichere Technik” is a reason for disappointment. As this chapter has shown, Fontane’s “sichere Technik” does not exhaust itself in the arts and crafts of compiling; it also encompasses the ongoing and reflective analysis of the literary marketplace, the inclusion of rivaling medial forms (images, sounds), the assessment of possible readerships, and the strategic distribution of book copies to prompt desired reviews and generate attention. The “sichere Technik” thus consists of a series of activities through which Fontane’s productive process happens not just *within* the larger network of literary communication, but *as* literary communication itself. The most important tool in this process—the tool through which Fontane is able to perform his “sichere Technik” with

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132 The same argument around popular-literary topoi has also accompanied the reception of *Irrungen, Wirrungen* and *L’Adultera*. See Betz (“Fontane Scholarship and Trivialliteraturforschung”) for details.
virtuosity—is the list. The list enables him to integrate—using the very same medium of notation—administrative, poetic, and economic interests. It is in lists that he plans the development of scenes, attempts to maximize their “Wirkungen” through anticipatory calculations, and connects the calculations to distinct places of publication and their readerships. The list is the medium and the notational form that shapes Fontane’s working methods, defines his paper cosmos, and organizes the interactions with other participants and institutions in the “communication circuit” (Darnton 189). It is only fitting, then, that in the end, the author should disappear in his most important medium. The last document that we have from Theodor Fontane is a sheet of paper, found on his desk shortly after his death, which enumerates the names of critics and friends who are supposed to receive the first copies of Der Stechlin (P. Meyer 249). Needless to say, this document is, of course, a list.
CODA

“Das Schreiben taylorisieren”

»Erste Inspiration: Können Sie uns merkwürdige Beispiele nennen, wie Ihnen der erste Einfall zu einem Werke kam?«

»Das ist ganz verschieden. Gemeinsam ist den Einfällen oder auch Plänen das scheinbar unvermittelte Kommen.

Ich halte sie in Reserve. [...]«

[Robert Musil, »Zur Physiologie des dichterischen Schaffens – Ein Fragebogen,« 1928]

Treating Fontane as a sample case, this study has analyzed his creative process as one of literary communication at a special historical moment: that of the emergence of modern mass media in the later nineteenth-century. The study has shown how Fontane, as one of Germany’s first freelance penmen working under the new media-historical conditions, manages to build his authorship upon acts of communication with the literary marketplace. In fact, literary communication provides the self-sustaining foundation and framework on which Fontane’s authorship rests—self-sustaining because it depends solely on the market (rather than on external patrons), with which it is in a constant, circulatory exchange.

The study asked whether the inclusion of literary communication in the creative process might give rise to innovative literary forms. It has found innovativeness in Fontane’s particular, technologized modes of text production. His modes of text production, perhaps best summarized as “mass-medial, market-bound compiling,” enable an almost ceaseless output. Employing a
number of paper tools and creative techniques (along with his wife as a copyist), Fontane publishes at least 2,700 contributions in newspapers and journals during the roughly six decades of his career.\textsuperscript{133} This output includes the release of almost one novel or novella per year during the last two decades of Fontane’s life. The “Text Factory Fontane” is the answer to the roll-fed rotary press and the increasing capacities for the distribution of printed matter. At the same time, Fontane’s idiosyncratic modes of production enable a plurality of styles and textual genres that are compatible, yet not fully congruent, with the aesthetic standards of the market. Fontane’s output, though ceaseless and market-bound, remains distinct \textit{within} mass media.

As the study has shown, the technologized production process (i.e., the foundation of Fontane’s authorship) has “hardware” and “software” components, or physical devices and modes of operating these devices. To recapitulate briefly, the hardware components consist of Fontane’s postal library network of addresses and sources; the multi-part filing system with a flexible inner architecture capable of storing material in excess; the forms of note-taking—above all else, lists—that break up texts into discrete elements; and the different media employed in the processes of compiling and revising. The central characteristic of Fontane’s hardware is that it separates different steps and agents from one another in the productive process, e.g., the address from the addressee, the less-advanced from the more-advanced drafts, and the reader from the compiler. The separation makes the compilatory process more mechanical, but it is also a necessary precondition for the complex communicative relationships that develop between those steps and agents. The operating information for the physical devices—the “software”—is Fontane’s popularity project. Aiming for “popularity” in the mass-medial and the aesthetic

\textsuperscript{133} This figure is taken from Rasch’s \textit{Theodor Fontane Bibliographie}, which lists all of the Fontane contributions that have hitherto been identified, covering the period 1839 to 1898. See the \textit{Theodor Fontane Bibliographie}, Chapter Seven (275–834).
senses, Fontane uses his library network and filing system in the absorption, modification, and imitation of popular-cultural content that circulates through the publishing sphere. This content is literary (from the classics to yellow pulp), historical as well as current (from archival documents to newspaper stories), visual (with genre images), and acoustic (with attention to tones and discursive sounds). With his technique of “brutal reading,” Fontane skillfully mixes the accumulated elements and thus exceeds merely mechanical modes of text production with virtuosic compiling.

The interaction between hardware and software generates different styles and modalities of expression (Schreib- und Kompilationsweisen). The study has outlined them, focusing on four central loci of Fontane’s creativity. According to their respective functions, they can be categorized as Fontane’s administrative styles (book-keeping; sending out requests; excerpting), his public-relations styles (pitching of his projects; initiation of reviews), and his poetic styles (carefully-calibrated highbrow/lowbrow mixtures; poetics of effect). In the productive process, Fontane applies all of these styles and makes them respond to one another. Accounting in the library network thus might touch off poetic production, which perhaps triggers the accumulation of more sources, or the strategic announcement of the project-in-the-making to a publisher, which, in turn, influences its poetics, and so forth. As an author, Fontane is innovative because in the realization of his projects, he builds creative momentum from the interaction of the different styles.

Taking the analysis one step further, one finds that the reconstructed foundation of Fontane’s authorship coincides with the epistemological foundation of his texts. In his textual output, he does not just draw on mass media occasionally. Rather, they create the condition of possibility for the existence of his textual output and for its formal and aesthetic organization.
The study has made this epistemological foundation evident, along with the formal conventions and patterns that spring from it, and that accordingly run through Fontane’s production. For those who read (and enjoy) his novels and novellas in a series, plowing through them one after another, the study is therefore capable of explaining the typically-Fontanean features that continually recur, e.g., the schematic plots and conflicts; the (mass medially-coded) “realism” of description; the clichéd atmospheres and motives along with their ironic subversion; the proto-sociological types; and the highbrow literary allusions. All of these features become explicable as the outcomes of technical rules of Fontane’s text production. Analysis of his textual output from below, from the perspective of the texts’ material underside, thus makes the aesthetic organization of his novellas and novels plausible. What is more, exposure of the rules of text production makes common scholarly readings predictable: to know the epistemological foundation on which Fontane’s texts are compiled is to anticipate the results that common scholarly readings will produce, unless they distance themselves from the epistemological foundation. This predictability, however, is the steppingstone for the re-appreciation of Fontane on new and different grounds. Having seen the engine-room of his text production, one can pull him out of the “realism” pigeonhole and cherish him not because of his “gently comprehending stories” about conflicts in nineteenth-century Berlin society (to cite a principal topos of common Fontane criticism\textsuperscript{134}), but because of his technologized compiling style and his calculating, media-poetic intelligence.

A mere twenty-four years after his death, precisely this technologized Fontane re-appears in an unexpected place: in the personal poetic toolbox of Robert Musil. In 1922, Musil compiles

\textsuperscript{134} The example is taken from Sammons’ recent assessment of Fontane’s contribution to literary history ("The Nineteenth-Century German Novel," 200–202).
a two-part list, titled “Erzählungstechnik” and “Erzählungstechnik II,” that enumerates forty-five rules of literary writing (Hoffmann, Dichter am Apparat, 242; fig. 16).

Figure 16. The first page of Robert Musil’s list of poetic rules, “Erzählungstechnik.” Klagenfurter Ausgabe, NL II.1, 142.
In part, the rules are derived from Hugo Münsterberg’s *Grundzüge der Psychotechnik*; yet they are also derived from three authors whom Musil reveres and reads with operative attention: Knut Hamsun, Leo Tolstoy—and Theodor Fontane.

Musil’s list attempts to rationalize text production through clear-cut instructions, imperatives, and aesthetic laws, as in rules 8 and 15, to give but two examples: “8. Die eigentlichen Motoren ins Gewöhnliche legen. Was das Geschehen vorwärts treibt, sind keine ungewöhnlichen Gefühle, […] sondern die alltäglichen geläufigen”; and “15. Spannen! Den Leser das Kommende raten lassen. Ein Stück mitdenken und dann allein gehn lassen […]” (NL 142–143). In the production of *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, the rules are supposed to be his remedy for writer’s block, enabling him to alter his writing method so that he can continue even when he is stuck (Hoffmann, *Dichter am Apparat*, 245). Fontane appears as rule no. 16 on the list: “In kleinen Zügen charakterisieren, so wie Fontane es unbestimmt lässt, ob der Federhalter der Pastorstochter oben einen Adler oder eine Taube hat (3/128.)” (Musil, Nachlass 143). With this entry, Musil turns Fontane into the metonymy of a poetic procedure.

The strictly itemized list concludes with the remark, “[…] das Schreiben taylorisieren.” The remark refers to Frederick Winslow Taylor’s (1856–1915) invention of a factory management system designed to increase efficiency by turning the production process into a series of controllable motions. Musil’s concluding entry thus encapsulates the stakes of rationalized text production: is it possible to break down the writing process into specialized, repetitive tasks and rules that, when followed, reliably lead to the creation of more literary text? After an analysis of Fontane’s paper tools, it comes as no surprise that Musil should choose him as an authority to establish mechanized text logistics as a mode of creativity. And if one now returns to the image with which this study began—the famous “Schreibtischfoto”—one will
encounter a very different kind of desk: not the desk of an ingenious writer, but the desk of a
virtuosic compiler and practitioner of creative text processing. As often, it is the practitioner
himself who inadvertently finds the most insightful description of the particular features and the
poetic advantages of his working methods. In a letter to his wife (GBA E3: 249), Fontane notes
in passing what would have been the perfect epigraph to Musil’s list: “[…] mit seinem schon
mitgebrachten Wissensbestand flinker operiren lernen; alles “more fluently”, darin allein liegt
der Vortheil und gerade diesen Vortheil veranschlage ich sehr hoch.”
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