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Introduction

Serial Formats and the Form of the Series, 1850–1930

The essays collected in this volume take as their starting point the veritable explosion of serialized formats during the nineteenth century. Alongside increasingly serialized industrial production, communication, and consumption, nineteenth-century Europe witnessed a burgeoning interest in the form of the series and in practices of serialization across different modes of representation, many of which we have inherited and or have extended to new media. The particular focus of this volume concerns how a serialized-media culture raised new and profound epistemological questions. Just as the accelerated rhythm, anonymity, and broadened accessibility of new media today have created novel possibilities for the dissemination of misinformation and, conversely, given us cause to interrogate standards of trustworthiness, serialized formats of the nineteenth century prompted questions of veracity, fictionality, and credibility. Dedicated to a range of visual and textual media prominent between 1850 and 1930, the essays collected here explore how serialization and the series as a form open aesthetic and epistemic possibilities for negotiating these questions. By inquiring how series provide creative answers to epistemic uncertainties, the volume contributes to a growing treatment of serialized formats as more than a set of limiting, normative conventions.¹ Indeed, the impetus for this volume was to explore how aesthetic and epistemic possibilities are

1 Simon Rothöhler's *Theorien der Serie zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2020) is paradigmatic for current interest in the topic. While nineteenth-century literature in particular has long been understood to be constrained and diminished by the format and economic interests of periodical publishing, more recent approaches have reevaluated the periodical as a medium for literary experimentation and innovation. For a summary and an example of this reevaluation, see Daniela Gretz, "Poetik der Miszelle? Präliminarien zur Koevolution von periodischer Presse und

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specifically created by exploiting the affinities and potential differences between serialized formats and the series as a form.

A first answer to the question of what constitutes a series can be gleaned from a delightful scene in the “Einleitung,” which follows on the heels of the more renowned “Vorrede,” to Adalbert Stifter’s *Bunte Steine* (1853). The scene, which literalizes one German term for “serializing,” *Reihenbildung*, succinctly presents the epistemic problems and possibilities series raise when the narrator, who identifies himself as the author in the introduction, describes his lifelong habit of collecting stones (along with more ephemeral vegetable matter and unspecified “Erddinge”):

Als Knabe trug ich außer Ruten, Gesträuchen und Blüten, die mich ergötzten, auch noch andere Dinge nach Hause, die mich fast noch mehr freuten, weil sie nicht so schnell Farbe und Bestand verloren wie die Pflanzen, nämlich allerlei Steine und Erddinge. Auf Feldern, an Rainen, auf Heiden und Hutweiden, ja sogar auf Wiesen, auf denen doch nur das hohe Gras steht, liegen die mannigfaltigsten dieser Dinge herum. Da ich nun viel im Freien umherschweifen durfte, konnte es nicht fehlen, daß ich bald die Plätze entdeckte, auf denen die Dinge zu treffen waren, und daß ich die, welche ich fand, mit nach Hause nahm.

As a boy I took home twigs plants and flowers that caught my fancy, and other things too that pleased me almost better still because they did not lose their color and vitality as quickly as the plants did, namely all kinds of stones and things of the earth. On fields on margins on heaths and pastures and even on meadows where nothing grows but high grass these things lie about in profusion. As I was allowed to roam far and wide, I inevitably discovered the places to find these things, and took home what I found.²

Once the boy returns home, this free, aimless movement (“herumschweifen”) through the landscape and the accidental nature of his findings give way to a museal drive to order them. To do so, he creates a series, placing the objects in a row, an activity the narrator recalls as pleasurable. The practice of making a series, at least in this instance, fosters an affective attachment to the objects, their order, and the very act of placing in a row: “When I had time, I laid out my treasures in a row to contemplate and delight in them” (Wenn ich Zeit hatte, legte ich meine Schätze in eine Reihe, betrachtete sie und hatte mein Vergnügen an ihnen).³ The reader also learns that the narrator’s childhood drive to accumulate and organize stones

modernem Roman mit Blick auf Raabes *Stopfkuchen* und einem Ausblick auf Fontanes *Stechlin*,” *Colloquia Germanica* 49.2–3 (2016): 305–328.

2 Adalbert Stifter, “Einleitung” to *Bunte Steine*, ed. Helmut Bergner, vol. 2.2 of *Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Alfred Doppler and Wolfgang Frühwald (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1982), 17; Adalbert Stifter, “Introduction” to *Motley Stones*, trans. Isabel Fargo Cole (New York: New York Review Books, 2021), 9.

3 Stifter, “Introduction,” 9; Stifter, “Einleitung,” 18.

has not abated, and that he continues to gather more items, to draw them, and to build an archive to pass on to further generations. The brief introduction concludes by anticipating an expansive future to the collection: “As more stones exist than can be counted, I cannot say in advance how long this collection shall be” (Weil es unermesslich viel Steine gibt, so kann ich gar nicht voraussagen, wie groß diese Sammlung werden wird).⁴ Because nature and the series are potentially infinite, the practice of collecting and serial ordering can be extended indefinitely.

If this row of stones is taken to be exemplary, serializing comes into view as an open-ended affective practice that endows an anterior and arbitrary experience with a perspicacious spatial order. By being placed in a row, the objects are classified as being of the same kind, which invites comparison, yet they are simultaneously parsed such that their particularity remains appreciable. To the series belong not only the set of objects but also those differences established in the repetitive act of placing additional stones. If one broadens one’s view to encompass the place of the introduction within *Bunte Steine*, it becomes apparent that the ordered stones also embody certain poetological claims. In fact, the row of stones references at least three different orderings. In the first place, the narrator belongs to Stifter’s band of self-taught naturalists who perform geological surveys in the interest of generating knowledge about the earth’s deep time.⁵ Second, the narrator draws an explicit analogy between his collection of stones and the texts gathered in the volume: both are attributed to the same desire to collect. Like the narrator’s story collection – a “celebratory gift” (Festgeschenk), as the title page designates the volume – the collection of stones is presented as a private archive that has been made public in the form of an inheritance.

Dieser Sammelgeist nun ist noch immer nicht von mir gewichen. Nicht nur trage ich noch heutzutage buchstäblich Steine in der Tasche nach Hause, um sie zu zeichnen oder zu malen und ihre Abbilder dann weiter zu verwenden, sondern ich lege ja auch hier eine Sammlung von allerlei Spielereien und Kram für die Jugend an, an dem sie eine Freude haben und den sie sich zur Betrachtung zurechtrichten möge.

I have never yet lost the spirit of collecting. To this very day I literally carry home stones in my satchel to draw them or paint them, and make further use of their images, and not only that, here I am starting a collection of diverse odds and ends and fancies for young people, for them to take pleasure in, arrange to their liking and contemplate.⁶

4 Stifter, “Introduction,” 9; Stifter, “Einleitung,” 19.

5 On Stifter’s fascination with geology and its poetic implications, see Peter Schnyder, “Schrift – Bild – Sammlung – Karte: Medien geologischen Wissens in Stifters *Nachsommer*,” in *Figuren der Übertragung: Adalbert Stifter und das Wissen seiner Zeit*, ed. Michael Gamper and Karl Wagner (Zurich: Chronos, 2009), 235–248.

6 Stifter, “Einleitung,” 18; Stifter, “Introduction,” 10.

To make the analogy even more explicit, the titles of the six novellas collected in *Bunte Steine* – “Granit,” “Kalkstein,” “Turmalin,” “Bergkristall,” “Katzensilber,” and “Bergmilch” – explicitly recall the stones of the child’s collection. In this context, it’s important to note that the volume is indeed a collection and serial ordering of works previously published under different titles in various periodical publications. The book format serves as a technology that removes these stories from their original publication venue and places them in a row. The volume of texts, like the boy’s original practice of placing in a row, formats the texts in a way that best suits the dual purpose of appreciating, for generations to come, the texts individually and as a sum; the book volume and the serial order therein represent a format, a specific arrangement of the texts, adapted to the aims of combination and perpetuity.⁷ Contained in the “archive” of *Bunte Steine*, each novella can be individually appreciated as a repetition of its previous publication and at the same time each is presented anew in virtue of its relationship to the neighboring texts. Finally, the collections are analogous in a third way: the autobiographical introduction suggests that the row of stones and, by extension, the collection of novellas act as a record of the narrator’s life while he was collecting these items. The volume memorializes the narrator’s life thus far and formats it in a way to be passed on to further generations.

In each of these three functions – standing in for a geological, a textual, and a personal history – the series of stones proposes a mimetic relationship between its form of representation and the history it represents. At the same time, we know that each of those histories is also generated through the very process of ordering; only in a row do these objects become a record, and only then can they stand in for these different historical orders. As narrated in the introduction, the practice of placing in a row first produces a collection and a history from what would otherwise remain discrete and unrelated items. The scene of making a series thus brings into view what recent Stifter scholars have identified as the crux of his writing: a compulsive drive to minute mimetic faithfulness, a drive whose exertion lays bare the artifice of its own construction.⁸

⁷ I employ the term *format* here, following Susanne Müller, as a specific arrangement of information within the conditions of a medium. *Bunte Steine* formats its texts in a serial order within the medium of the book. See Susanne Müller, “Formatieren,” in *Historisches Wörterbuch des Mediengebrauchs*, ed. Heiko Christians, Matthias Bickenbach, and Nikolaus Wegmann (Cologne: Böhlau, 2015), 253–267.

⁸ On the collapse of mimetic reference in Stifter’s writing, see Sabine Schneider and Barbara Hunfeld, eds., *Die Dinge und die Zeichen: Dimensionen des Realistischen in der Erzählliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2008); and Christian Begemann, *Die Welt der Zeichen: Stifter-Lektüren* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1995).

Beyond Stifter's poetics, the example illustrates a tension between mimetic and antimimetic impulses that is fundamental to the series as it was conceived in the late nineteenth century. Recent research on the significance of the series and serialization as a principle for generating, testing, and communicating knowledge in the natural sciences has demonstrated that the narrator's claim of correspondence between the row of stones and historical orders of things is by no means out of the ordinary for the nineteenth century. In the often-quoted words of James Clerk Maxwell, the nineteenth century came to the realization that the book of nature might actually not be a single-authored tome with beginning and end but instead a serialized magazine without end: "Perhaps the 'book,' as it has been called, of nature is regularly paged; if so, no doubt the introductory parts will explain those that follow, and the methods taught in the first chapters will be taken for granted and used as illustrations in the more advanced parts of the course; but if it is not a 'book' at all, but a *magazine*, nothing is more foolish to suppose that one part can throw light on another."⁹ If the book of nature is a magazine consisting of many unrelated parts and not a single coherent book, then the most adequate form of understanding and representing nature is itself a series, such as a periodical publication. In their excellent introduction to a special journal issue on "Seriality and Scientific Objects in the Nineteenth Century," Nick Hopwood, Simon Schaffer, and Jim Secord chart the shift from the tabular taxonomies and encyclopedias of the eighteenth century to the preponderance of series and serials in the next century. In this context, they quote Michel Foucault's description of the shift from the classical episteme of the eighteenth century to the modern episteme: "For eighteenth-century thought, chronological sequences are merely a property and a more or less blurred expression of the order of beings; for the nineteenth century, they express, in a more or less direct fashion, and even in their interruptions, the profoundly historical mode of being of things and men."¹⁰ Serial arrangements – whether in printing formats, at the world fair, or in a museum – were valued as especially lucid and legible, that is, as possessing the capacity to capture the progressively changing world of things and our knowledge of them. Gowan Dawson has specifically demonstrated in what way the

9 James Clerk Maxwell and William Garnett, *The Life of James Clerk Maxwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 243.

10 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), 301. See Nick Hopwood, Simon Schaffer, and Jim Secord, "Seriality and Scientific Objects in the Nineteenth Century," *History of Science* 48.3–4 (2010): 254. See also Geoffrey Cantor and Sally Shuttleworth, eds., *Science Serialized: Representations of the Sciences in Nineteenth-Century Periodicals* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004). On the specific history of series in nineteenth-century mathematics as a way of making abstract knowledge vivid, see Julia Mierbach, "Die Reihe: Zur mathematischen Poetik einer Denkfigur um 1800 (Goethe, Schelling, Herbart, Novalis)," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 92.3 (2018): 377–427.

emergent field of paleontology welcomed serialized formats and its narrative use of suspenseful cliffhangers not only because it provided a way to revise standing hypotheses in light of emerging discoveries but also because nature itself was understood to be a rhythmical and progressive order.¹¹ A serialized format seemed particularly well suited to capturing the veritable order of things.

If we turn, however, to the end of the time period covered in this volume, the series is no longer underwritten by the same mimetic promise. For a more modernist aesthetic that we perhaps most immediately associate with Arnold Schönberg's serial music, but which can already be perceived in Stifter's work, the series becomes an organizing principle profoundly at odds with mimetic impulses.¹² From this modernist perspective, the series is not a form of representation that captures the unfolding nature of things but instead a self-organizing and autopoietic entity that plainly breaks with the mimetic drives of nineteenth-century realisms. It is the tension between these two conceptions of the series, and not simply its ubiquity across nineteenth-century media or the present, that makes it an exciting subject of inquiry. The series comes into focus as an epistemic practice that seeks to generate knowledge about the world and about itself.

With that tension in mind, I would like to propose two specific ways of parsing the relationship between truth and serialized formats – and series more broadly. The first takes serials into view as a historical phenomenon of mass media and popular culture and defines the truth of the series in terms of its referential value, that is, its ability to capture a progressive history. The second, in contrast, takes its cue from a mathematical definition of series and defines the truth value of a particular unit in a series as a matter of whether it abides by the operation, rule, or law of the series. Truthfulness in this case is established and made evident within the serial form. As such, the series provides one way for aesthetic objects to assert truthfulness independently of the strictures of referentiality. As a way of relating to two types of truthfulness, one might ask whether a specific series relies on the formatting conventions of serialization to establish its lawful form, creating a frictionless affinity between it and the format of serialization. Or perhaps a series

11 “Serial works, like the natural world, followed a strict temporal sequence and, whether published in weekly, monthly, or quarterly installments, were closely tied to patterns of seasonal change.” Gowan Dawson, “Paleontology in Parts: Richard Owen, William John Broderip, and the Serialization of Science in Early Victorian Britain,” *Isis* 103.4 (2012): 667.

12 For a discussion of such a modernist perspective on series and its break with the nineteenth century, see Michael McGillen, “Erich Auerbach and the Seriality of the Figure,” *New German Critique* 45.1 (2018): 133. McGillen writes that modernist seriality was no longer conceived of as a linear, temporal, or progressive sequence. Erich Auerbach, for example, was interested “in serial repetition as an alternative to the logic of progressive development and fulfillment” (132n66).

instead explicitly breaks with the norms of serialized formats to institute its own authority. Truthfulness in this case relies on the difference between serial form and serialized format. In this introduction, I will say a few words about each of these relationships of series and truth; the volume in its entirety more broadly contributes to a history of serialization by examining different sites of interaction between serialized format and the series form, and their competing notions of truthfulness. The tension between them marks nothing less than the epochal shift in the history of the series from a means of representation best suited to capture the progressive order of nature to the adamantly nonmimetic principles of seriality we associate with modernism.

The ubiquity of series since the late eighteenth century – in everything from industrial manufacturing to scientific practice to leisure consumption – has tempted many a recent scholar to define the very dawn of modernity as “a global culture of seriality.”¹³ In their various medial refractions, serials serve any number of purposes: they generate, enumerate, visualize, and archive knowledge; they manage and protract our attention; and, following Benedict Anderson, they create an imagined community that collectively participates in the synchronized consumption of new periodical media.¹⁴ An illustration from the thousandth issue of the illustrated family weekly *Über Land und Meer*, published in Stuttgart in 1878, nicely illustrates the relationship between assembly-line production and the serialized print format (see Figure 1.1). The image openly credits the sequenced and standardized production process with the regular printing and consumption of *Über Land und Meer* since 1858. The center of the image features a factory building, which is framed by ten chronological scenes detailing the stages of production of the periodical including engraving, typesetting, printing, drying, and delivery. Each vignette depicts the laborers organized in rows, and most of the vignettes foreground well-ordered paper objects as well. The parceling of the production process is, in turn, reproduced in the parceled visual schematic of the single image, a schematic that also alludes to the ideally perspicuous layout of a magazine. Finally, with the arabesques made of paper that adorn the name of the publication and printers, the spread from *Über Land und Meer* exhibits a high

13 Mark W. Turner, “Serial Culture in the Nineteenth Century: G. W. M. Reynolds, the Many Mysteries of London, and the Spread of Print,” in *Nineteenth-Century Serial Narrative in Transnational Perspective, 1830s to 1860s: Popular Culture – Serial Culture*, ed. Daniel Stein and Lisanna Wiele (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 196.

14 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). Kristen Belgum describes the emergence of such a community through a specific periodical in *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity in “Die Gartenlaube,” 1853–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

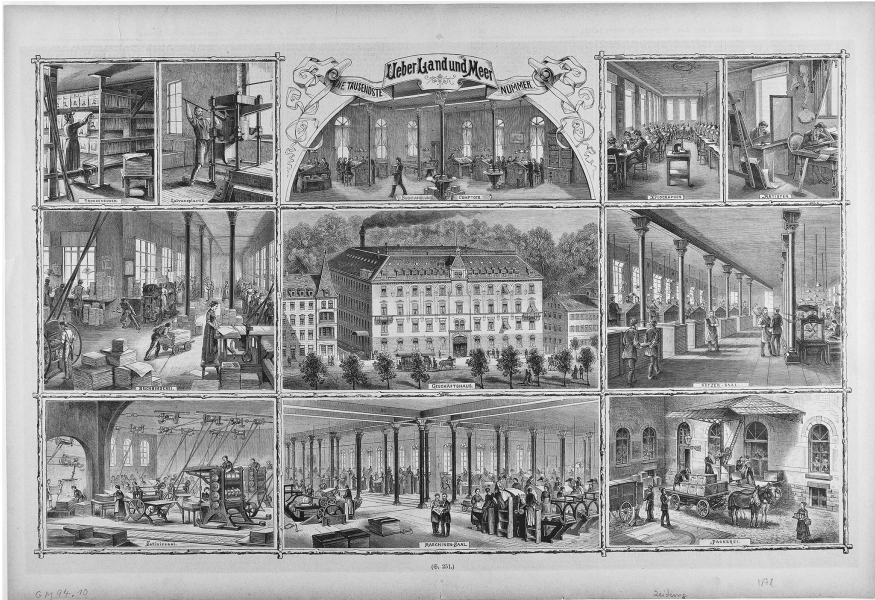


Figure 1.1: Illustration of the publishing house and press of the magazine from *Über Land und Meer*: *Allgemeine Illustrirte Zeitung*, October 1878, 251. Mainz, Gutenberg-Museum. Photo: D. Bachert.

degree of self-reflexivity that scholars have identified as a distinguishing characteristic of serials, a characteristic that makes them a rich field for investigating media phenomena.¹⁵

There are different genealogies to account for the series and seriality boom in publishing and presentation formats in nineteenth-century science, literature, and visual culture. As an overarching thesis, one might consider a transition from cyclical to linear time, as advanced in Karol Berger's *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow*.¹⁶ Berger argues that the insistence on linearity and progression in European music beginning with Mozart is symptomatic of a transition from a predominantly Christian and agricultural society – which imagined itself in a cyclical, seasonal time embedded within an inaccessible divine eternity – to a secular, industrial society that casts its history as a progressive movement from past to present and into an unknown future. This open-ended, linear temporality underlies the sequential order

¹⁵ See Frank Kelleter, “Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality,” in *Media of Serial Narrative*, ed. Kelleter (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2017), 18.

¹⁶ See Karol Berger, *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

of nineteenth-century print culture and reshapes the way in which the era narrates its fictions and its own history. In this vein, Clare Pettitt's recent book *Serial Form* argues that the early nineteenth century demonstrates a "gradual uptake of practices and understandings of sequential time" that anticipates and makes possible the series as "the defining form of modernity," "a form of knowledge," as she defines the series, "about being in time."¹⁷ Umberto Eco, whose essays on seriality from the early 1980s are responsible for much of today's interest in the topic, provides an alternative perspective that examines the series from a structural perspective rather than as a specifically modern historical development. According to Eco, serials structured through repetition and variation provide a modern society of consumers with orientation among an inundation of products.¹⁸ If industrialized production entails a constant flow of new goods, then a serial structure of repetition with measured variation ensures familiarity in the age of constant novelty.

More specifically with regard to nineteenth-century visual culture, one might point to the invention and dissemination of new technologies such as lithography and photography that eased the production process and reduced the costs of reproducing and printing images. Starting in the 1880s, such technologies sparked an explosion in widely available illustrated print material. In his discussion of Eadweard Muybridge's now iconic serial photographs of movements and the automated rotations of Berlin's *Kaiserpanorama*, Jonathan Crary argues that image series constituted an automated form of restructuring modern perception and attention to match an intensified flow of commodities and capital.¹⁹ For Crary, Muybridge's image series exemplify how this form of automated perception, which was removed from a familiar space-time continuum and the associated rules of causality, was put to work in processes of rationalization and control yet also possessed a potential for creative synthesis that refused such discipline. As mass-produced objects, lithographs and photographs can always be placed in varied combinations and orders and so also provided a historical precedent for experiments with seriality in painting.

¹⁷ Clare Pettitt, *Serial Forms: The Unfinished Project of Modernity, 1815–1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 6.

¹⁸ See, for example, Umberto Eco, "Interpreting Serials," in *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 83–100. Norbert Bachleitner similarly argues that the "feuilleton novel was a consequence of the liberalization of society that encouraged a free press and an audience searching not only for entertainment but also orientation in a world that had become complex and disjuncting." Norbert Bachleitner, "The Beginnings of the Feuilleton Novel in France and the German-Speaking Regions," in Stein and Wiele, *Nineteenth-Century Serial Narrative*, 45.

¹⁹ See Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 138–148.

Historians of print and of literature, on the other hand, are likely to refer to the rise of periodicals as a publishing format and point to Eugène Sue's incredibly popular *Les mystères de Paris* (starting in 1842) or Charles Dickens's *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (starting in 1836) as historical turning points. The publication of serialized novels introduced new practices of writing and reading that challenged notions of narrative continuity, formal unity, and authorship. Narratives needed to possess multiple open-ended storylines so that they could be extended indefinitely, a practice that is at odds with the closure attributed to a more classical concept of form. Serialized formats also gave unprecedented power to editors and to the public, who could express preferences by means of their purchasing power, thus demoting the singular genius author of Romanticism to one step in a briskly paced, collaborative, and machinated production process.²⁰ The best defense against the frequent charge that serialized publication and the associated market pressures produced discontinuous storylines comes from Dickens's preface to the book edition of *The Pickwick Papers* from 1837. The preface responds to the charge that "the publication of the book in monthly numbers, containing only thirty-two pages in each" might make the described events seem "unconnected or impossible" by recalling the mimetic realism that serialized forms promise: "And if it be objected to the *Pickwick Papers*, that they are a mere series of adventures, in which the scenes are ever changing, and the characters come and go like the men and women we encounter in the real world, he can only content himself with the reflection, that they claim to be nothing else."²¹ Dickens thereby alludes to what many saw and continue to see as the specific democratic potential of periodical literature,²² namely, that it is not only read across class lines thanks to its publishing format but that the fluidity of its storylines can incorporate the dense and varied fabric of urban society and depict the intersecting personal histories of diverse social types. And if the series did not already truthfully render an intertwined, democratic metropolis, at least the mass readership of *The Pickwick Papers* would retrospectively bring that society into being. In his foreword to *Die Ritter vom Geiste* (1850–1851), often considered the first German-language novel to borrow the style of the French serial novel, Karl Gutzkow

20 On the nineteenth-century author as a factory laborer, see Petra McGillen, *The Fontane Workshop: Manufacturing Realism in the Industrial Age of Print* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2019); and Claudia Stockinger, *An den Ursprüngen populärer Serialität: Das Familienblatt "Die Gartenlaube"* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2018).

21 Charles Dickens, "Preface" to *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1837), n.p.

22 On the imagined communities generated by means of periodical publishing, Kelleter writes that "serial storytelling has widely come to understand and to perform itself as an essentially democratic culture." Kelleter, "Popular Seriality," 29.

similarly promises a faithful social realism, proclaiming that “The new novel is the novel of *juxtaposition*. The whole world is in it! Time in it is like a spread-out cloth!” (Der neue Roman ist der Roman des *Nebeneinanders*. Da liegt die ganze Welt! Da ist die Zeit wie ein ausgespanntes Tuch!) and recommended a ratio of 10,000 to 1 for calculating the representation of social types in a given plot.²³ Critics of the nearly four-thousand-page novel responded that Gutzkow had produced a novel so incoherent that no reader would be likely to see herself reflected therein.

As a phenomenon of print culture, serialization can more specifically be traced, for one, back to changes in printing technology that have been well documented in recent scholarship.²⁴ Most salient among these developments are the rotary printing press, which exponentially increased printing rates, and the production of paper from tree pulp, which made the natural resources for paper production appear unlimited – at least until the end of the century when the ecological costs of mass paper production came into view.²⁵ Technologies of transportation enabled the speedy and widespread dissemination of reading material, while rising literacy rates and increased leisure time created a population of potential readers who could consume the products of this new popular culture. According to a now familiar historical narrative, these diverse factors constituted the conditions for a modern mass press characterized, first, by its periodicity: its reliable and frequent publication; second, by its publicity: its widespread accessibility and correspondingly high circulation rates; third, by its topicality: its increasing ability to report on events in real time; and fourth, its universality: its coverage of a wide variety of subjects. These last two characteristics of journalistic culture, topicality and universality, particularly press the question of truth. As scholars such as Norbert Bachleitner or Claudia Stockinger have noted, the spatial juxtaposition of vastly different types of items – lead news stories and miscellanies, articles on popular science and works of fiction and advertisements – each with truth claims specific to its genre, creates a field of texts and images in which the boundaries between these genres become fluid.²⁶ An imagined consumer who successively reads the spread of texts performs this erosion of boundaries, Bachleitner and Stockinger argue, and risks reading fiction as fact and fact as fiction.

²³ Karl Ferdinand Gutzkow, *Die Ritter vom Geiste: Roman in neun Büchern*, ed. Thomas Neumann (Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1998), 9–10. All translations of sources are mine unless otherwise noted.

²⁴ See Lothar Müller, *Weißer Magie: Die Epoche des Papiers* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2012).

²⁵ See Richard Menke, “New Grub Street’s Ecologies of Paper,” *Victorian Studies* 61.1 (2018): 60–82.

²⁶ See Norbert Bachleitner, *Fiktive Nachrichten: Die Anfänge des fiktiven Feuilletonromans* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012).

I remain skeptical that nineteenth-century readers of periodical literature struggled to differentiate factual from fictional genres, reportage from literature. Unlike readers a century prior, readers of the nineteenth century certainly had a well-established notion of novelistic fiction as consisting of events and persons that were probable or even realistic but lacked a stabilizing referent in reality.²⁷ What seems more certain is that the contiguous publication of fact and fiction established significant feedback loops between fictional worlds and the ones in which readers lived; the mass-media culture of serialization is a participatory culture. There is perhaps no better example of such a feedback loop than the best-known character of serialized fiction, Sherlock Holmes, whose fictional status is as often overlooked today as it was in the past. Holmes owes his incredible ability as a detective not merely to his powers of empirical perception but also to his compulsive reading of daily newspapers, whose crime reports endowed him with encyclopedic knowledge of criminal behaviors and tactics. Arthur Conan Doyle's nineteenth-century readers, many of whom may well have shared Holmes's reading habits, were likely to be familiar with the same crime reporting and so were well able to follow the procedures and outcomes of individual cases. Newspaper reports served as a source for fictional detective stories, while reading these stories both drew on one's own knowledge of specific cases in the news or, for less exhaustive readers, supplemented their knowledge of criminality. Detective fiction thereby exploited and contributed to a growing body of criminalistic knowledge.

The ambition of this volume is to understand the series not only as an epistemic practice that represents and generates knowledge about the world but also as a structure that produces knowledge about itself. Since belonging to a series means being defined relationally by what precedes and follows an element, a second possibility for evaluating the truth value of a series depends on the relation of its units and the operation they establish internally. For a strict definition of the series, one might recall the Fibonacci sequence, famously imagined as a newly introduced population of immortal and punctually reproducing rabbits. If after reaching sexual maturity in their second month, each heterosexual pair of rabbits reproduces at the conclusion of the following month, always resulting in one additional heterosexual pair, then the total number of pairs of rabbits at any point is the sum of pairs at the conclusion of each of the past two months. That is, the newest unit in the series is the sum of the past two units of the series. At the end of the second

27 On the emergence of fictionality in the European novel, see Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel*, ed. Franco Moretti, vol. 1, *History, Geography, and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 336–363.

month, there is still one pair; at the end of the third month, two pairs; at the end of the fourth, three pairs, and so on (0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, . . .). The law of the sequence can thus be summarized as $F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$. Defined in this way, the series is a generative, lawful, self-regulating, and, in this case, potentially infinite operation. The relationship among its sequenced units is asymmetrical, transparent (the operation can be identified from the sequence), transitive (it applies to any unit of the sequence taken in order), and irreflexive (the relation is binary: it depends on two elements).²⁸ Insofar as each new unit is constructed from the previous units, one might also describe such a serial structure as fundamentally historical. At the same time, the series is without a teleology, its units are not related through cause and effect, and it lacks a hierarchical relationship of elements. Thinking back to the population of Fibonacci's rabbits, one might even conclude that the series is a fundamentally equalizing and democratic structure, or, from another perspective, irredeemably homogenizing.

A less strict definition of seriality comes by way of understanding the series as a law of morphology. Eva Geulen, for example, glosses *seriality* with the German *Folgerichtigkeit*, an ordering, in other words, that is logical and consistent.²⁹ Series provide a minimalist type of formation or formal arrangement, a threshold at which form can be distinguished from a lack of form. A similar, though again looser, notion of the series, comes by way of Paul Kammerer's spectacular *Das Gesetz der Serie* (1919). Kammerer's defines the series as

eine gesetzmäßige Wiederholung gleicher oder ähnlicher Dinge und Ereignisse – eine Wiederholung (Häufung) in der Zeit oder im Raume, deren Einzelfälle, soweit es nur sorgsame Untersuchung zu offenbaren vermag, nicht durch dieselbe, gemeinsam fortwirkende Ursache verknüpft sein können.

a lawful repetition of the same or similar things and events – a repetition (accumulation) in time or in space, whose individual cases cannot be connected through the same, continuing cause as far as careful investigation can tell.³⁰

Here the series serves to establish patterns of repetition among spatially and temporally discontinuous events that do not stem from a common cause. As Kirk Wetters has recently argued, Kammerer's series is at root a "morphological theory"

²⁸ See Jennifer Dyer, *Serial Images: The Modern Art of Iteration* (Zurich: LIT, 2011).

²⁹ *Folgerichtigkeit*, Geulen writes, was Goethe's "only methodological maxim" for his studies on morphology, and it can only find its adequate form of expression in an open series of morphological notebooks. See Eva Geulen, "Serialization in Goethe's Morphology," *Compar(a)ison* 2 (2008): 59.

³⁰ Paul Kammerer, *Das Gesetz der Serie: Eine Lehre von den Wiederholungen im Lebens- und im Weltgeschehen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1919), 36.

because it establishes lawfulness among otherwise seemingly arbitrary units.³¹ From that perspective, Kammerer's search for patterns of repetition in his urban environment and his meticulous records of them is not so dissimilar from the ordering of stones practiced by the narrator of Stifter's introduction to *Bunte Steine*. Comparing texts as dissimilar as these two suggests that the series is at root the possibility of structuring and ordering experiences that might otherwise seem arbitrary and that it does so according to principles beyond or contrary to a more dominant logic of causality. The logic of the series is, in other words, one that breaks with or even provides respite from a principle of cause and effect – or, from yet another perspective that captures Stifter and Kammerer, one that concedes to a repetition compulsion.

Among the very plentiful literature on seriality in contemporary scholarship, there is a general tendency to generate definitions that are even looser than Geulen's. These loose definitions often speak of series merely as a generic marker, namely, as a certain pattern of production (for example, of television series) and consumption. This class of looser definitions of series originates from Eco's work, where the series describes any act of repetition and encompasses reprises, copies, serials, and sagas as well as cases of citation, parody, intertextuality, and plagiarism, which provide, so argues Eco, a form of satisfying cultural consumption in the regular return of the familiar.³² The advantage, to my mind, of a somewhat stricter definition such as the notion of *Folgerichtigkeit* that Geulen proposes is that it understands the series as a generative form that establishes a rule for itself and so provides a standard for its own aesthetic truthfulness. As a lawful and self-regulating entity, the series institutes an autopoietic form that can insist on its own standards of truthfulness. The contributions of this volume provide examples for such self-regulating series, while also attending to the historical and media specificity of serialization practices as well. Each case study examines the relationship between the conventions of serialized formats and an autopoietic process of formation by means of a series form.

31 Kirk Wetters, "The Law of the Series and the Crux of Causation: Paul Kammerer's Anomalies," *MLN* 134.3 (2019): 646. Of that morphological theory, Wetters explains, "The 'law of the series' in this sense is akin to physical laws of gravity and inertia. It is a law that might be described as 'autopoietic' insofar as it recursively produces the minimal forms of regularity out of a random and incoherent infinity. In other words, out of chaos it produces the minimal constants of being and time" (647).

32 Umberto Eco, "Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Postmodern Aesthetics," *Daedalus* 134.4 (2005): 1919–2207. For a critique of Eco's definition of the series as a repetition based on the nonidentity of its units, see Christine Blättler, ed., *Kunst der Serie: Die Serie in den Künsten* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2010); and Elisabeth Bronfen, Christiane Frey, and David Martyn, eds., *Noch einmal anders: Zu einer Poetik des Seriellen* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2016).

By way of a final example, I would like to suggest that the question of serialization in the nineteenth century is a pertinent one not only because of its ubiquity as a form of representation but also because it is closely related to the question of what constitutes a poetics of realism. In his reading of Gustav Courbet's *After Dinner at Ornans* (1849–1850), T. J. Clark suggests that Courbet's composition generally operates according to an additive principle, a placing next to one another in space. That principle reaches its apotheosis in the mammoth painting *Burial at Ornans*, in which an astonishing number of funeral guests pan across the more-than-six-meter-long canvas and frame the gaping grave in the foreground's center, into which both they and the painting's beholder threaten to fall (see Figure 1.2).³³ For Clark, the artless, additive principle of composition exhibits a commitment to a form of pictorial democracy, or at least to an egalitarian principle. In his response to Clark's reading, Michael Fried notes that there is a certain affinity between Clark's attribution of Courbet's realism to an additive principle and Roman Jakobson's "observations on the predominance of metonymic over metaphoric structures in realist art and literature."³⁴ Leaving the question as to whether an additive principle is an adequate description of Courbet's *Burial at Ornans* (a description Fried contests) aside, I take Clark's and Fried's observations to suggest a more broadly applicable relationship between the many programmatic realisms of the nineteenth century, as dissimilar as they are, and the preponderance of series and serial publications in those realisms, which are nothing



Figure 1.2: Gustav Courbet, *Burial at Ornans*, 1849–1850. Oil on canvas, 315 × 668 cm. Paris, Musée d'Orsay. © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d'Orsay) / Gérard Blot / Hervé Lewandowski.

³³ See T. J. Clark, *Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

³⁴ Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

other than additive in their structure. In other words, the reality effects of those realisms are made possible by the very structure of an iterative sequence that can, by means of repetition and difference, establish a rule for itself with the potential to be extended. Realisms, we can then hypothesize, are neither a matter of mimesis nor simply a protomodernist practice of foregrounding the qualities of one's medium but instead rely on exhibiting a persuasive coherence and continuity of their structures of seriality.

The individual contributions to this volume provide ten case studies of forms of series in relation to historical conventions of serialization. They demonstrate how the form of the series develops its own particular coherence and continuity both by adopting or resisting those conventions or by employing them as a point of departure for an array of formal arrangements. The ten contributions themselves invite being placed in different orders. Their historical breadth, reaching from Heinrich Heine's reports from Paris (Franzel) to futurist experiments in photography (Müller-Helle), suggests a chronological lineage that maps the growing omnipresence of serial forms and their increasing association with commercialization. Alternatively, the ten essays could be easily grouped by whether they consider pictorial or narrative series, or even by the more specific serial media they treat: feuilletons (Franzel, McBride), the ideal of the *Gesamtwerk* (Wimmer, Wittmann), the tension between the form of a series and that of a cycle (Maskarinec, Ubl, Wittmann), photography (Ehninger, Müller-Heller, Wittmann), novels published in periodical installments (Strowick, Maskarinec), painting and printing (Wittmann, Strowick, Ubl), and household furnishings (Ehninger, Krajewski). Rather than abide by these more obvious orders, the essays in this volume are grouped according to whether they place an emphasis on the series as a temporal or a spatial arrangement. While these two categories are certainly not mutually exclusive, the distinction makes it possible to focalize the series either as a way of ordering temporal units, whether these units be times of day or historical epochs, or as way of organizing items in space, for example, as a practice of collecting or, in defiance of a serial order, dispersing. The first five essays examine the form of the series in relation to questions of time, temporalities, and history; the second set of five approach spaces of series ranging from the Victorian living room to standardized paper sizes.

At issue in the initial two essays is the relationship between serialized printing formats, the narration of history, and the production of knowledge about time itself. In "Heine's Serial Histories of the Revolution," Sean Franzel shows that Heinrich Heine's Parisian writings seek to undermine a linear, teleological account of the French Revolution by introducing multiple temporalities; the ephemeral formats of the newspaper were apposite to the representation of unfolding historical trajectories in which the texts themselves could participate.

Writing about precisely the academic historiography Heine so disdained and resisted in his journalistic writing, Mario Wimmer's "World History in Six Installments: Epistemic Seriality and the Epistemology of Series" demonstrates that the mimetic promise of the series to capture the progressive history of things was not only at the heart of the embrace of periodical publishing in the natural sciences but was also integral to Leopold von Ranke's vision of world history as a series of historical epochs. These epochs conformed to the confines of a single book volume that would be available annually in time for the Christmas market; their narratives were stylized to anticipate the coming historical era as well.

In contrast, Elisabeth Strowick's "'Nachkommenschaften': Stifter's Series" reads the Roderer family's genealogy as uncovering a twofold law of the series consisting in doubling and dispersion, as the perpetuation and undoing of a serial order. Stifter's story of a landscape painter who paints in the form of a series in the hopes of capturing "real reality" – which anticipates experiments in seriality in photography and painting described elsewhere in this volume – itself employs, as Strowick shows, the series as a narrative technique for bringing that law to the fore.

The next three contributions (Wittmann, Müller-Heller, Ehninger) each explore what is at stake in photographic series. Writing on Claude Monet's iconic haystacks, Barbara Wittman argues in "*Le temps retrouvé*: Claude Monet's Series between Impression and Belatedness" that for Monet, the form of the series, as specifically inspired by photographic series and in repudiation of cyclical forms, negotiates the competing demands to capture the impression of the moment and to deliver a finished and completed artwork. Like exhibitions, but with greater permanence, series establish second-order works in which both of these demands can be satisfied.

Insofar as it addresses the end of the volume's timeframe, Katja Müller-Heller's "Sequencing Failure: Photodynamism and the Knotting of Time" reconstructs a more modernist critique of nineteenth-century photographic series. She shows that the photodynamic experiments conducted by the futurist photographer Anton Giulio Bragaglia and dispatched by postcard undermined the strict temporal order of, for example, Étienne-Jules Marey's photographic series and introduced, by means of blurring, an open-ended future. Like Franzel's and Strowick's contributions, Müller-Heller demonstrates the way in which decisively taking leave from a strict serial order introduces the possibility of nonlinear temporalities.

Eva Ehninger's "Trying on the Drawing Room: 'Realness' and Truth in and out of Photographs" opens the section of this volume on serialized spaces with an examination of late nineteenth-century British handbooks on furnishing and decorating both private homes and carte de visite photography studios. The conventions of carte de visite photography, which Ehninger elaborates in detail, reveal the degree to which practices of serialization permeated all aspects of Victorian life. Not only were these photographs themselves reproduced in series and then

placed in personal albums; the many details of the studio settings provided standardized choices for fulfilling the imperative to display individuality. Ehninger's essay explores the irreconcilable tension these photographs embody as commercial, serialized products that promise authentic expression – a tension to which McBride returns at the conclusion of this volume.

By relating Gottfried Keller's novella "Der Landvogt von Greifensee" to the tradition of the *Decameron*, my essay develops a model of an erotic series premised on the unmarried status and open-ended desire of the protagonist. In "The Bachelor: Gottfried Keller's 'Der Landvogt von Greifensee' and the Erotics of Series," I argue that Keller's novella imaginatively enacts the possibility of a unified form within the conditions of fragmented periodical publishing. Along with Franzel's and Wimmer's contributions to this volume, I thereby explore how periodical publications are conceived in relation to and in anticipation of a republication in book form; we argue that the although the book format is often understood as the periodical's antithesis, it can also be understood as a further permutation of a serial form.

In "Max Klinger's *Ein Handschuh* as Cycle and Series," Ralph Ubl shows that as a narration of the impossible restoration of a pair of lovers, Klinger's *Ein Handschuh* is a reflection on the seriality of printing and nineteenth-century consumer culture and at the same time performs a manifold of possible pairings and relationships among its ten sheets. Wittman, Ubl and my essays thus examine how the forms of some series define themselves against cyclical genres, while also never fully taking leave thereof.

In "DIN A: The Basis of All Thought," Markus Krajewski narrates the competing dreams for a global, systematic standardization of paper formats around 1900, beginning with Wilhelm Ostwald's ambitions to create a relationally defined series of paper formats that would ultimately encompass not just offices but also the domestic environment: a nearly utopic vision of serialized standards for ordering public and private life.

Patrizia McBride's "Serial Untruth: The Feuilleton and the Ornamental Image" concludes this volume by recounting how Alfred Polgar's, Hugo von Hofmannsthal's, and Robert Musil's imagistic writing in early twentieth-century Viennese feuilletons responded to pervasive charges against feuilleton writing as a form of commercialized writing that relied on clichés and conventions to pander to paying readers. McBride shows that in response to these derisive charges, the miniatures acted as sites of literary experimentation for communicating affective experience. As in Franzel's analysis of Heine's journalistic writing with which this volume begins, McBride argues that the ephemeral character of the newspaper affords the very possibility of affective engagement in a condensed and poignant form. Her contribution also thereby summarizes one argument at the heart of this volume:

that the proliferation of serialized media formats, while long regarded by their contemporary users and by scholars as an arrangement of mass media that constrained creativity, became a site for testing the aesthetic, affective, and epistemic possibilities of the series as a form.

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