

## Introduction

And now I will hazard a second assertion, which is more disputable perhaps, to the effect that on or about December 1910 human character changed.... The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing-room, now to borrow *The Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat....All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature. Let us agree to place one of these changes about the year 1910.

Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* (London: Hogarth, 1924), 5, [HathiTrust](#).

More than any other writer of the twentieth century, James Joyce shaped modern literature. His experiments with narrative form helped to define the major literary movements of the century, from modernism to postmodernism. By developing methods of tracing individual consciousness, Joyce, along with Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf, helped us to understand the functioning of the human mind. Equally capable of realistic portrayal of urban life in Dublin and playful deformations of the English language, Joyce expanded the possibilities of the novel—as a record of intimate human experiences, as a massive encyclopedia of human culture, and as a funhouse mirror that shows the world a transformed image of itself.

Martin Puchner, “James Joyce,” in *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*, vol. F, *1900 to the Present*, 3rd. ed., ed. Puchner (New York: Norton 2012), 174.

Thus the economic preparation of postmodernism or late capitalism began in the 1950s, after the wartime shortages of consumer goods and spare parts had been made up, and new products and new technologies (not least those of the media) could be pioneered. On the other hand, the psychic *habitus* of the new age demands the absolute break, strengthened by a generational rupture, achieved more properly in the 1960s...It is my sense that both levels in question, infrastructure and superstructures—the economic system and the cultural “structure of feeling”—somehow crystallized in the great shock of the crises of 1973.

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), xx.

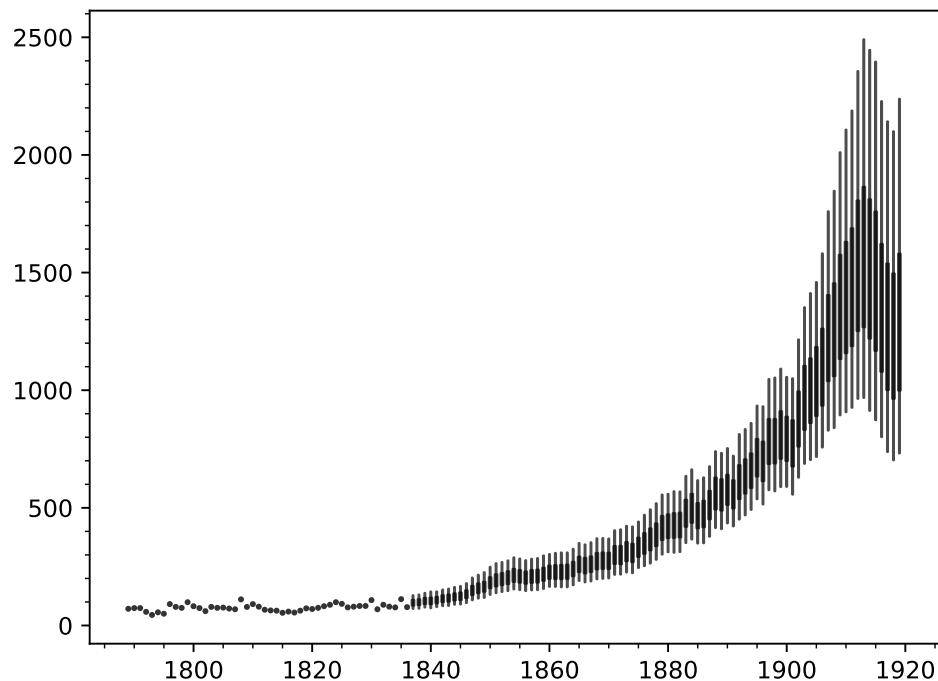
The literature of this period [“after World War II”] would remain obsessed by individuals...but its true originality, I will argue, is to be found at the level of its patron institutions, whose presence is everywhere visible in the texts as a kind of watermark.

Mark McGurl, *The Program Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4.

#### A SENSE OF SCALE

year	new titles	new fiction/juvenile
1880	2100	562
1900	6400	1805
1950	11000	2118
2000	120000	17130

Yearly new title production in the US. Source: *A History of the Book in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 4:60–61, 5:512.



“New novels, 1789–1919,” in Allen Riddell and Michael Betancourt, “Reassembling the English Novel, 1789–1919,” *Journal of Cultural Analytics* 2 (2021), 18, [doi:10.22148/001c.19102](https://doi.org/10.22148/001c.19102). The vertical bands indicate the authors’ estimate of the uncertainty in the yearly numbers.

A popular novel in 1800 might have a combined print-run in its early years of up to 12,000. By the 1890s, a similarly popular novel might see 100,000 copies and more produced in its first five years in different editions.

Simon Eliot, “From Few and Expensive to Many and Cheap: The British Book Market 1800–1890,” in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 294.

Hall Caine’s 1901 *The Eternal City* sold more than a million... By 1964, there were more than 40 million copies of Ian Fleming’s James Bond thrillers in print...By 1970, 23,5000 titles were published, more than twice the figure for 1950.

Jonathan Rose, “Modernity and Print I: Britain 1890–1970,” in Eliot, and Rose *Companion to the History of the Book*, 349–50, 352.

## QUALITATIVE CHANGES

Perhaps we are wrong in thinking that the industrial book revolution was just one continuous historical process in the UK. The surges in production between 1830–55, and 1875–1914 might better be accounted for by a two-phase process...The second, which we might call ‘the mass-production revolution’, was characterised by such technical processes as rotary printing (1870s on), hot-metal typesetting (late-1880s on), widespread use of lithographic and photographic techniques and the gradual displacement of steam power by electricity as the prime mover, had its major effects at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The rise of the public library, the 6d paperbound edition, the professional literary agent, the professional associations (Society of Authors, Publishers’ Association, Booksellers’ Association), evolution of the royalty system, improvement of US and international copyright arrangements, the mass circulation daily newspaper were characteristic features of this second phase.

Simon Eliot, *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing, 1800–1919* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1994), 106–7.

Reading for entertainment by the general population is something very rare and very recent. Reading has always been associated with education and with urban social elites. Although contemporary commentators deplore the decline of “the reading habit” or “literary reading,” historically the era of mass reading, which lasted from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century in north-western Europe, Japan, and North America, was the anomaly. Today reading is returning to its former, narrower social base: a self-perpetuating minority that I have called the reading class.

Wendy Griswold, *Regionalism and the Reading Class* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 66.

## GENRE: WHAT EVERYONE THINKS

Genres are essentially literary *institutions*, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact.... It is not merely the performance situation, but the generic contract and institution itself, which, along with so many other institutions and traditional practices, falls casualty to the gradual penetration of a market system and a money economy. With the elimination of an institutionalized social status for the cultural producer and the opening of the work of art itself to commodification, the older generic specifications are transformed into a brand-name system against which any authentic artistic expression must necessarily struggle. The older generic categories do not, for all that, die out, but persist in the half-life of the subliterary genres of mass culture, transformed into the drugstore and airport paperback lines of gothics, mysteries, romances, best-sellers, and popular biographies.

Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 106–7.

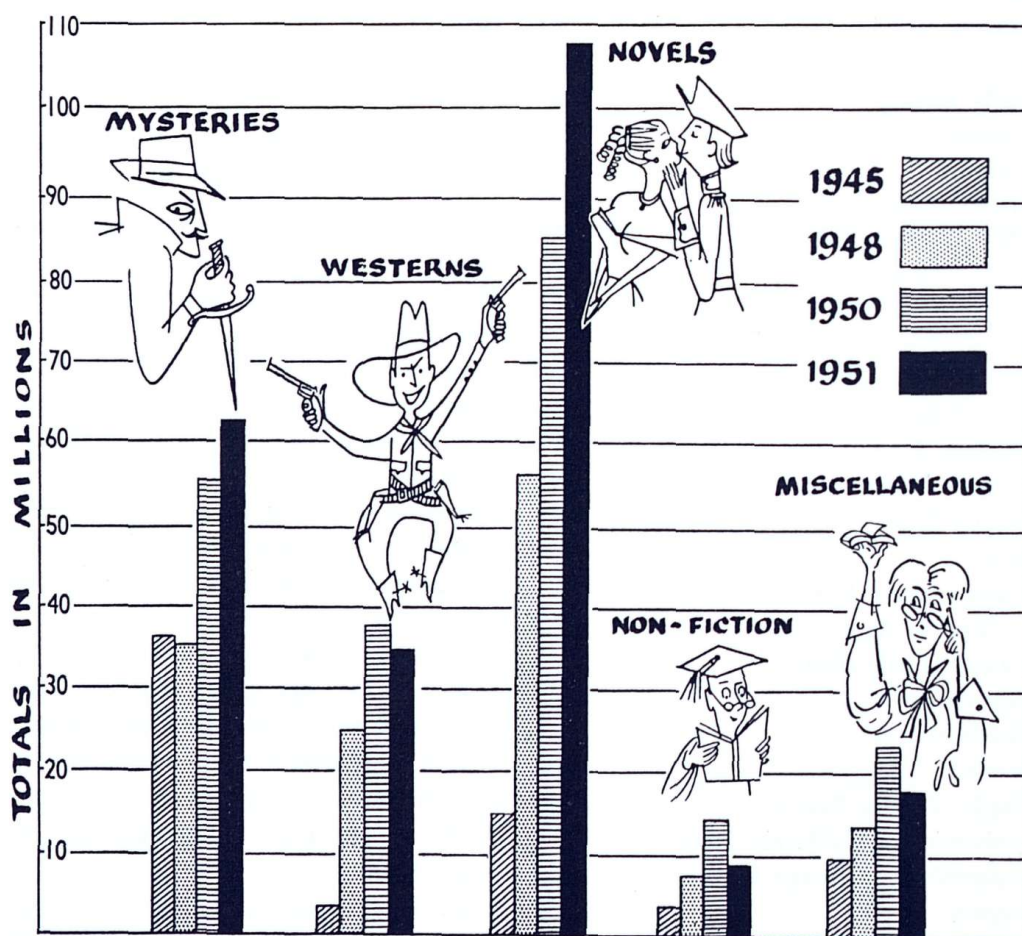
It is generally taken for granted that genres actually exist, that they have distinct borders, and that they can be firmly identified... Genre theorists have typically assumed that texts with similar characteristics systematically generate similar readings, similar meanings, and similar uses... Genre theoreticians and other practitioners are generally loath to recognize (and build into their theories) the institutional character of their own generic practice. Though regularly touting ‘proper’ approaches to genre, theorists rarely analyze the cultural stakes involved in identifying certain approaches as ‘improper’. Yet genres are never entirely neutral categories. They—and their critics and theorists—always participate in and further the work of various institutions.

Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), 11–12.

## PAPER-COVERED NEWSSTAND REPRINTS AND ORIGINALS BY CATEGORIES

(Distribution figures are given in millions, to the nearest million. Figures in parentheses show what percentage of the total sale for the year were accounted for by each category.)

CATEGORY	1945	1948	1950	1951
Mysteries	36(54.5)	35(25.9)	56(26.2)	62(26.8)
Westerns	2(3.0)	24(17.8)	38(17.7)	35(15.2)
Novels	15(22.7)	56(41.4)	85(39.7)	108(46.7)
Nonfiction	3(4.5)	7(5.2)	13(6.1)	9(3.9)
Miscellaneous	10(15.2)	13(9.7)	22(10.3)	17½ (7.5)



*Publishers' Weekly*, January 19, 1952: 196, [digitalarchives.publishersweekly.com](http://digitalarchives.publishersweekly.com).