Distant Aesthetics: Amazon's Impacts on the Aesthetics of the Novel

Thomas Edward Williams

Washington, D.C.

B.A. English, University College London, 2003

M.A. Issues in Modern Culture, University College London, 2004

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of English, University of Virginia

May 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

This thesis will examine the effect that the books retailer, Amazon, has had on the Booker Prize. Specifically, it will explore the ways that Amazon has shaped the kinds of books that have featured in the Booker Prize's shortlist and longlist in the years between 1998, when the company launched in Britain, and 2009.[1] My wager is that the Booker Prize, or the "Booker" as I will refer to it in this thesis, has steadily come to recognise a different kind of novel as being worthy of its attention and that it has done so as a consequence of Amazon. According to the CEO of one large publishing house, "The power of Amazon is the single biggest issue in publishing today."[2] It is not simply that Amazon is a big company — it is — but, rather, that Amazon is now many publishers' largest customer giving it unprecedented power over the industry. Critics are turning their attention to the company's role. Mark McGurl's recent book, *Everything and Less: The Novel in the Age of Amazon* argues that Amazon is a "pervasive" influence that is organizing the contemporary novel along two different axes.[3] On the first axis we find the maximalist novel that embraces "geographical and historical sprawl" and on the second, the minimalist romance that assures "its readers that the deepest truths are to be discovered in the small world of the romantic couple."[4] This is a serious charge and this thesis

---

[1] The Booker Prize started to formally release a longlist that it then cut down to a shortlist in 2001. The analysis in this thesis looks at both shortlisted and longlisted books but focuses on the shortlisted books so that we are considering similar numbers of books each year. I shall make it clear where longlisted books are included. 2009 might seem like an arbitrary choice, but it is necessary. My method of analysis relies on access to digital texts, and these are harder to find for novels published after 2009. The libraries that feed into the Hathi Trust, my source for digital texts, have either not acquired or not digitised many of the texts published after 2009.

[2] Qt John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* 431

[3] Mark McGurl. *Everything and Less: The Novel in The Age of Amazon.* 11

[4] Ibid. 260

will, in part, explore some of McGurl's conclusions using computational modelling; but its primary aim is to understand how the Booker Prize has come to mediate Amazon's effect. The Booker Prize is the preeminent award for literature in Britain and, for many, it is synonymous with literary value; it is deeply involved in contemporary canon formation and shapes the kinds of books that are studied, read, and imitated. If Amazon is having the kind of effect that McGurl describes, how is the Booker Prize responding to the challenge? After all, the Booker is in a unique position to either challenge or enable Amazon's influence because both are complicit in the "regulation of reading and writing," playing a role in deciding what is read: Amazon, by algorithmically marketing specific books to its customers, and the Booker by identifying certain books as more worthy of attention than others.[5] The Booker's response to Amazon will help us understand how economic forces interact with literary value and, importantly, will let us see where the two come into contact, so that we can clear see how the novel is being affected.

My approach is deliberately abstract. I want to shift our perspective away from "a particular text in order to examine it in relation to other texts to…see in its entirety the configuration….to which all texts belong," to better understand how Amazon relates to that configuration.[6] To do this, I will examine the Booker Prize as a system (relying on Niklas Luhmann's theories to do so) and consider a large number of novels, too many for one person to read and remember, using a mixture of topic modelling and close reading. This approach will help me tell a story of change that operates above "the level of the individual writer, page, or text" to uncover "*a specific form of knowledge*…[with] fewer elements" to ultimately give "a sharper sense of their overall

---

[5] Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. 17
[6] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*. 3

interconnectedness."[7] In the end, it will reveal how Amazon and the Booker Prize interact with

one another to recognise a particular kind of novel and to distinguish it with literary value,

reshaping the form of the novel for future generations.

---

[7] Richard Jean So. *Redlining Culture: A Data History of Racial Inequality and Postwar Fiction.*
6; Franco Moretti. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History.* 1

Chapter I: The Rise of Topical Minimalism

Topic Modelling the Booker Prize

Topic modelling relies on two key principles: first, that every document is made up of a mixture of different topics; and second, that those topics are constructed of repeating patterns of words that appear in close proximity to one another. In topic modelling, we take many documents and cut them up into their component words and then the computer sorts through them, looking for patterns which it then classifies as topics. Importantly, the computer is instructed in how many topics it should find (which can significantly change the results).[8] Because all documents contain all topics in varying strengths, the results that the model returns are probabilistic and the higher the probability, the more confident the machine is that the topic is present in a document. As a consequence, topics can often coexist in documents at the same time, at different strengths. The product of a topic modelling exercise is, firstly, a set of topics expressed as words that we then must make sense of, and, secondly, a list of documents that belong within the topics.

In this exercise, I identified every book either shortlisted or longlisted for the Booker Prize between 1969 and 2009 in the Hathi Trust library and while not every text was present, of the

---

[8] Nan Z. Da criticises topic modelling as a method for this reason. In her view, it is "unstable as an 'aboutness' finder for sophisticated texts because you need only tweak small details to discover completely different topics." While I agree that small changes can make a difference to the outcome, we are not using topic modelling in the way she imagines that it is used. We are not using it as an "aboutness" finder but, rather, as a way of measuring the mix of topics in novels over time. See Nan Z. Da, "The Computational Case Against Computational Literary Studies." 625

369 books, I found 287 useable texts.[9] Because the books are all still in copyright, I used the

Hathi Trust non-consumptive format for my analysis. These are lists of the words on each page

in alphabetical order with some stop words removed — stop words being common words like

and or *the* which carry little information.[10] The files were segmented into 1000-word blocks —

novels contain multiple topics and so dividing up the books in this way gives the best chance of

finding a variety of them — and then the computer counted the frequency of all the words in

each section.[11] I also removed additional low-information words from the texts, including things

like character names, before finally feeding the corpus into the Structural Topic Modelling

algorithm and instructing it to look for 35 topics.[12]

Once this work was done, I calculated the average number of topics contained in the texts per

year and plotted this over time to visualise the changes. This graph shows the results:

---

[9] The collection is public and can be found at
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/mb?a=listis;c=1335516225.The Hathi Trust has created a space
where researchers can access in copyright material and perform computational analysis. It does
not hold all the texts nominated for the Booker Prize, but it does offer something approaching the
kind of scholarly edition that Katherine Bode has in mind when she writes, "What literary history
needs is not close or distant reading, or a simple integration of the two, but a new scholarly
object for representing literary works in their historical context, one capable of managing the
documentary record's complexity, especially as it is manifested in emerging digital knowledge
infrastructure." See Katherine Bode, "The Equivalence of 'Close' and 'Distant' Reading; or,
Toward a New Object for Data-Rich Literary History." 86
[10] For more information, see Eleanor Dickson Koehl and Jennifer Christie, "Basic Walk-through
of an Extracted Features 2.0 File."
[11] See Matthew Lee Jockers, *Macroanalysis*. 134
[12] Removing stop words was an arduous process and I relied on Andrew Piper's
Dict_English_NamesPlus.csv, found at
https://github.com/piperandrew/enumerations/tree/master/03_Topoi, which contains 7,000
English names, and supplemented it other information (e.g., the names of publishers) to reduce
the number of low information words in the texts. Identifying the correct number of topics to
look for is complicated. I tried a number of options, settling eventually on 35 because these
topics measured well for coherence and, also, made sense to me. Andrew Piper, "Enumerations
Code."

Average Number of Topics Per Year in Booker Prize Shortlist
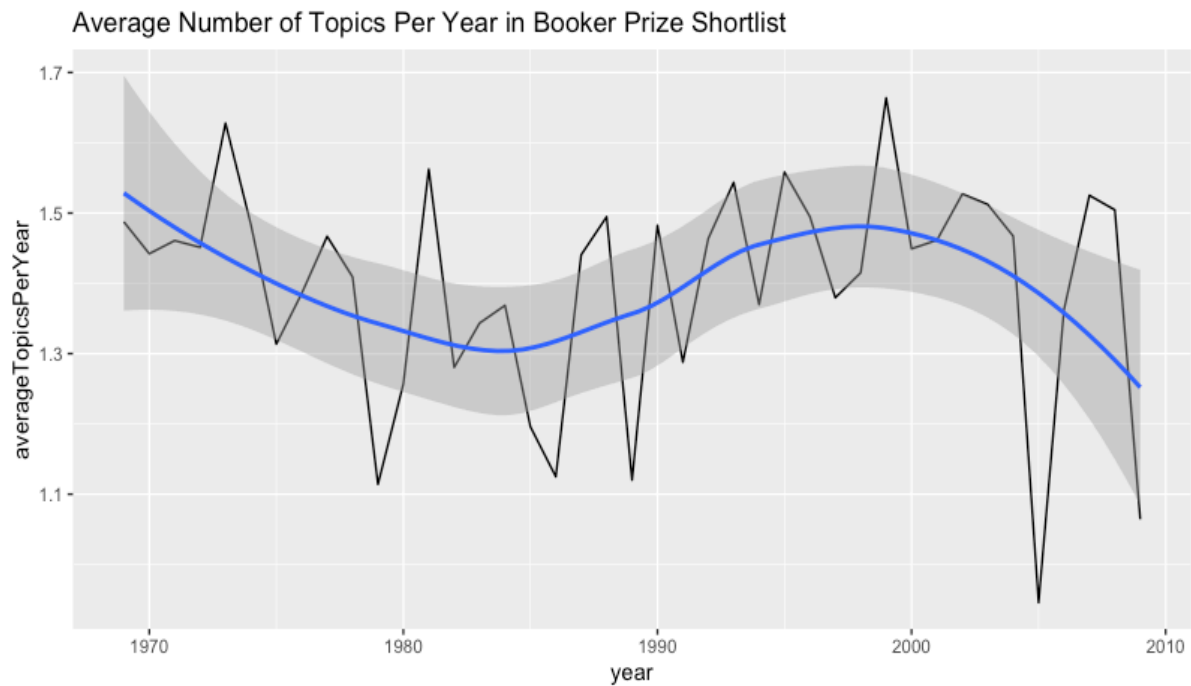
The trend here is clear. There is a steady rise in the average number of topics found in novels shortlisted for the Booker Prize between 1980 and 1999 and, after, 2000 there is a steady decline. What does this mean and what is the cause of this change?[13]

To put this graph in literary terms, what we are seeing is a change in heteroglossia. I am using the term here in a way that is related to Mikhail Bakhtin's definition but differs in specific ways. For Bakhtin, heteroglossia, at its most basic level, describes the ways that voices in a novel compete and coexist with one another. A character's voice and a narrator's voice can cohabit within a passage in ways that are hard to unpick but that bring competing perspectives to the

---

[13] The code for this exercise can be found at
https://github.com/twilliams81/bookerPrizeProject2023/blob/main/second%20iteration%20of%20topic%20modelling.R

text; for example, a passage might contain "the author's ironic transmission, and a mimicking of the irritation of the character."[14] In Bakhtin's view, part of the power of the novel is the way that it can draw together these different voices in a lively, carnivalesque way.[15] Paul DiMaggio, Marsh Nag and David M. Blei, analysing how newspapers responded to political attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts, use the term slightly differently. Their work uses topic modelling to show that topics can coexist in the same text enabling writers to simultaneously communicate to different audiences. It is in this sense that I use the term.[16] For my purposes, heteroglossia reveals how a novel balances topics rather than voices. Still, like Bakhtin, the principle behind this approach is that the novel works as a form because it can combine multiple topics together that are geared to reach a heterogeneous audience. This contrasts with forms like the epic or various religious texts which tend to be authoritarian, monological documents.[17]

One way of thinking about heteroglossia would be to see it as a measure of the health of the form: are novelists able to balance multiple topics in their work or not? This is particularly important in the age of Amazon because, to put things in Mark McGurl's terms, while contemporary society reflects the pluralistic nature of the novel and while the traditional monological authorities like religion hold less sway, capitalism dominates. A different kind of monology has asserted its sovereignty. For McGurl, Amazon's pre-eminence within the publishing trade is the perfect example of this kind of monology, and he argues that its power in the industry has brought particular pressures to the form, forcing the novel to comply with the

---

[14] Bakhtin, quoted in Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin.* 20
[15] Ibid. 20
[16] Paul DiMaggio, Manish Nag, and David Blei, "Exploiting Affinities between Topic Modeling and the Sociological Perspective on Culture." 582
[17] Mark McGurl, *Everything and Less: The Novel in The Age of Amazon.* 250

standards it sets. He casts those standards in the terms of genre, arguing that Amazon reorganises

literary fiction around generic conventions,

> If part of the point of calling the present phase of literary history the Age of Amazon is to draw our attention to the structuring of the literary genre system by popular generic forms, this does not mean that literary fiction need be ignored, only reframed and redefined.[18]

In his view, novels in this genre system can be sorted into the two distinct types: the maximalist

novel and the minimalist novel. Because of this he argues that the novel is on a road that "leads

to the chaotic sameness, or personified entropy, of the zombie horde."[19] The graph above would

seem to confirm some parts of McGurl's analysis and contradict others. What this data shows is

that novels selected for the Booker Prize are getting less topically diverse over time. Reframed in

McGurl's terms, the Booker, in the 80s and 90s, appears to have generally recognised the kind of

novel he would call "maximalist;" that is, novels that have a sprawling sweep and embrace

diverse topics in their texts. After Amazon's entrance into the market, the Booker appears to

prefer the less heteroglossic, "minimalist" novel. The Booker Prize, in this view, is choosing —

in general, but with exceptions — to recognise the minimalist novel in the age of Amazon. Is this

a result of a restructuring of the literary marketplace around "popular generic forms" as McGurl

suggests? Or is something else happening?

---

[18] Ibid. 208
[19] Ibid. 251

The Emergence of the Minimalist Novel and the Development of Micro-genres

Before attempting an answer, I want to compare two very different novels to understand how heteroglossia operates in this study. *Disgrace*, by J. M. Coetzee (the winner of the 1999 Booker Prize) is a highly heteroglossic novel whereas *The Van* by Roddy Doyle (shortlisted in 1991) is not. In every 1000 words of *Disgrace* there is an average of 1.9 topics competing for our attention; in *The Van* there is an average of 1.1 topics. In fact, *Disgrace* contains seven topics in total, with the primary focus of the novel being split between Topic 5 (featured in 93% of the passages) and Topic 32 (featured in 73% of passages).[20] *The Van*, meanwhile, consists of just two topics: Topics 2 and 18, with the latter featuring in every single passage. In other words, *The Van* is "about" Topic 18 whereas *Disgrace* is mainly "about" Topics 5 and 32 with several other topics featuring over the course of the novel. For clarity's sake, I have chosen not to give the topics names. Appendix I contains all topics mentioned in this thesis along with the keywords and top titles to give a sense of each topic's theme.

We can get a sense of how topics emerge in the novel by considering specific passages. According to the model, the most significant words in Topic 18 include "big," "maybe," "want," "looked," "something," "put," "look," "thought," "wanted," and "around."[21] If we look at how these words are featured in *The Van* we can see how the topic is woven through the action. For

---

[20] Technically speaking, all topics are present in all documents and so I had to use a threshold to determine topics that are strongly present. In this I am following Andrew Piper who identifies 20% as a reasonable threshold. See Andrew Piper, *Enumerations*. 76

[21] The model identifies the most probable words that form a topic. This list, and the lists of words that follow, are always the model's ten most probable words. But topics are made up of many words and so the passages I quote from may also contain a broader selection.

example, in the opening pages we see Jimmy Rabbitte Sr sitting on the front step of his house in

Dublin:

> The car went by again, the other way this time. [Jimmy] got a *better* look at the driver but he still didn't know him. He *looked* as if he was searching for a house he didn't know. He was only *looking* at the even numbers across the way…There was *nothing* else happening…[Jimmy] *looked* at this watch; the dinner'd be ready soon.[22] (Words found in Topic 18 are emphasised)

"Looked," and its variants, are important words in the passage; so, too, is "nothing." In the

context of the novel this makes sense; it is a distillation of key themes: there is plenty of looking

and searching but little finding in a city where nothing seems to happen. Jimmy Sr is

unemployed and is searching for ways to spend his time; when his friend Bimbo starts a food

truck, Jimmy joins him but their friendship falters when the logic of capitalism asserts itself.

Bimbo owns the truck and Jimmy, at first an equal partner, is forced into a subordinate role as an

employee causing a rift between them that is unresolved at the end of the novel. Throughout,

Jimmy and his family want things — a VHS player, records, books — but money is tight and,

until Jimmy starts working, these items are beyond their means. The backdrop for all this is

Dublin where "there was nothing … happening," making work particularly difficult to find.

Ultimately, what helps Jimmy get through these lean times is the family structure and the state

(libraries feature heavily), suggesting that these institutions remain relatively uncorrupted by

capitalism. Topic 18 then seems to be about frustrated consumerism: there is plenty to want but

little capital to acquire it.

Another passage will help underscore this point. Towards the end of the novel, in a climactic

scene, a health inspector visits the food truck and finds that it does not meet requirements:

---

[22] Roddy Doyle, *The Van.* 2 — 3

> Bimbo *looked* around the van.
> —It's not tha' bad, he said
> — Yes, it is, said [the inspector]
> …
> — I had *nothin'* to do with this, said Jimmy Sr.
> Bimbo said *nothing*.
> — I didn't, Bimbo; I swear.
> …
> Bimbo said *nothing*.[23] (Words in Topic 18 are emphasised)

As in the previous passage, the characters look but do not find very much. The result of the action in this section is silence: Bimbo says "nothing." The separation between them — Bimbo owns the truck, the means of production — prevents him from seeing the truth about his former friend and all he can see now is an employee who he believes has let him down. Just as capitalist logic has left Dublin struggling, it corrodes Bimbo's trust in his friend and leaves him with nothing. All of this unfolds in a repeating pattern of words that include "looked," "wanted," "money," "nothing" and more; it is a pattern that structures the entire novel. In the crudest sense, it is what the book is about: looking for things and getting nothing. Put in slightly different terms, Topic 18 is about the ongoing problems and ultimate frustrations of consumerism. It is also, plainly, a family drama and set within a small world. It might make a political case against the corrosive effects of capitalism, but this is in contrast with its narrow focus on the family. The entire novel features just two topics in total — Topic 18 and Topic 2 — and so, in this way, its breadth is limited making it an example of a topically minimalist novel.

---

[23] Ibid. 299 — 302

Disgrace is quite different. As mentioned above, it consists mainly of Topic 5 (93%) and Topic

32 (73%), but it also contains several other topics. For example, in the opening 1000-word

passage both Topics 32 and 4 are present and compete for dominance. In the following passage,

the main character David Lurie, considers his experiences with a prostitute called Soraya and his

career plans. I have highlighted the words in Topic 4 in red and Topic 32 in blue:

> He has toyed with the idea of asking her to see him in her own time. He would like to
> spend an evening with her, perhaps even a whole night. But not the morning after. He
> knows too much about himself to subject her to a morning after, when he will be cold,
> surly, impatient to be alone.
> …
> During their sessions he speaks to her with a certain freedom, even on occasion
> unburdens himself. She knows the facts of his life. She has heard the stories of his two
> marriages, knows about his daughter and his daughter's ups and downs. She knows many
> of his opinions.
> …
> In the past few years, he has been playing with the idea of a work on Byron. At first, he
> had thought it would be another book, another critical opus. But all his sallies at writing it
> have bogged down in tedium. The truth is he is tired of criticism, tired of prose measured
> by the yard. What he wants to write is music: *Byron in Italy*, a mediation on love between
> theses in the room of a chamber opera.

Topic 32 is about writing and history (its key words include "life," "world," "perhaps,"

"history," "years," "story," "work," "read," "ash" and "love"); Topic 4 is about urban life and,

in particular, working and living in a city environment (its keywords include "years," "day,"

"children," "mother," "people," "world," "night," "life," "around" and "city").[24] What we see in

Disgrace is that, at first, these two topics alternate in different paragraphs; but then, in the third

paragraph, the topics start to overlap with one another. The opening pages hold both a

---

[24] Topic 32 is strongly present in novels like Graham Swift's *Waterland* and Julian Barnes'
Flaubert's Parrot which are both about writing, storytelling and family. Topic 4, meanwhile, is
present in novels like *Saturday* by Ian McEwan and *Shalimar the Clown* by Salman Rushdie.
Notably, both of these novels open in similar ways with the central character looking out over
the city in which they live (London in *Saturday* and Los Angeles in *Shalimar the Clown*).

consideration of city life, organised around words like "work," "night" and "day," and a

discussion of writing about family life, as evidenced by the presence of "daughter," and

"writing." It is in passages like this that we see why the model identifies *Disgrace* as

heteroglossic.

Things get more complicated as the novel proceeds: Topic 4 disappears, and Topic 32 becomes

more prominent as David Lurie heads to the countryside to be with his daughter. Topic 5, a topic

focusing on domestic trauma, will eventually come to be the most prominent topic in the novel,

appearing in almost every passage in the novel but it is never allowed to dominate entirely. In

many ways, the novel can be understood as a conflict between Topic 5 and Topic 32 that is

waged through the character of David. Here is the central rape scene, where Topic 5 is dominant

(I have highlighted the topic's keywords in green):

> Something is wrong, he knows at once.
> …
> A blow catches him on the crown on the head. He has time to think, *If I am still conscious then I am all right*, before his limbs turn to water and he crumples.
> He is aware of being dragged across the kitchen floor. Then he blacks out.
> …
> As he lies sprawled he is splashed from head to foot with liquid. His eyes burn….So he was wrong! He and his daughter are not being left off light after all!
> …
> He hears his car start, and the crunch of tyres on gravel. Is it over? Are they, unbelievably, going?
> 'Lucy!' He shouts, over and over, till he can hear an edge of craziness in his voice.[25]

This is a violent, domestic scene in which a father must struggle with the knowledge of his own

inadequacy as his daughter is being attacked. This topic is central to the entire novel, present to

greater or lesser degree, in most passages. Topic 32, is slightly less common, but is still key and

---

[25] J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*. 93 — 97

rises to the surface in moments when David is thinking about the past, in particular when he is

writing about Byron and Byron's Italian lover, Teresa Guiccioli (Topic 32 words are highlighted

in blue):

> In the letters he wrote to her Bryon calls her *My friend*, then *My love*, then *My love for
> ever*. But there are rival letters in existence, letters she cannot read and set fire to….In the
> year's since Byron's death, his friends have written one memoir after another, drawing
> upon his letters. After conquering the young Terese from her husband, runs the story they
> tell, Byron soon grew bored with her…it was in order to escape her that he sailed off to
> Greece and to his death.[26]

If Topic 32 is about writing and history — and in the passage above is appears to be specifically

about the way that history comes to be written and whose voice is heard — it seems plausible to

see the novel explicitly trying to contrast the domestic trauma of Topic 5 with the problems of

history explored in Topic 32. David cannot integrate South Africa's past and its present; the only

way he can explain the domestic trauma his daughter experienced is to see it as continuous with

South Africa's history of racial trauma because that is how he has come to understand his place

in the country. As he tells Petrus: "It is not finished. Don't pretend you don't know what I mean.

It is not finished. On the contrary, it is just beginning. It will go on long after I am dead and you

are dead."[27] This is a tension that the novel refuses to settle: was Lucy's violent experience the

result of domestic problems — estranged from her family and therefore vulnerable — or national

ones — the ongoing racial trauma and deprivation of the black population in South Africa? It is

conflict examined through David and written deeply into the fabric of the text, via repeating

patterns of words that form the warp and weft of the novel. This makes the book a very different

one to *The Van*. It might share an interest in the family, but it is more interested setting the

experience of the family within South African history. As part of this, the novel introduces

---

[26] Ibid. 182
[27] Ibid. 202

multiple topics (Topic 4, as we have seen, but also Topics 3, 9, 14 and 15 too) and so, both thematically and topically, it is written on a far broader canvas than a novel like *The Van* making it an example of a topically maximalist novel.

Disgrace is the kind of maximalist novel that rose to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s. Other examples include, *The Moor's Last Sigh* by Salman Rushdie (shortlisted in 1995), *Crossing the River* by Caryl Philips (shortlisted in 1993) and *In Custody* by Anita Desai (shortlisted in 1984). To be clear, this type of novel does not disappear after 2000 — in 2008 *The Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh was nominated — but, according to my analysis, it does appear less frequently after 2000. Nor is topical maximalism the property of one particular type of fiction with Ian McEwan's novel *The Comfort of Strangers* (shortlisted in 1981) also appearing within this group. That said, there is some evidence that the most heteroglossic authors in this period were born outside Britain.[28] Still, the point here is that topical maximalism grew through the 80s and 90s, reaching an apogee in 1999 when *Disgrace* won. Heteroglossic maximalism triumphed but then declined steadily thereafter. The question remains: why did the Booker stop recognising this kind of book?

For McGurl the change is a result of a reorganisation of the novel around a generic order imposed by Amazon. He draws on a broader argument that, since 1999, the literary novel has turned towards genre. Andrew Hoberek, one of the leading proponents of this theory, writes:

---

[28] The most heteroglossic novels of the 1980s and 1990s were *Rhine Journey* by Ann Schlee, *The Comfort of Strangers* by Ian McEwan, *Disgrace* by J. M. Coetzee, *The Moor's Last Sigh* by Salman Rushdie, *Crossing the River* by Caryl Philips, *In Custody* by Anita Desai, *The Good Terrorist* by Doris Lessing, *Lies of Silence* by Brain Moore and *Flying to Nowhere* by John Fuller.

> We can locate the genre turn's explicit emergence, quite neatly as the calendar goes, in an event that occurred on the cusp of the twenty-first century's arrival: the 1999 conferring of the National Book Critics Circle (NBCC) Award for Fiction upon Jonathan Lethem's *Motherless Brooklyn* (1999).[29]

To be clear, Hoberek is discussing American fiction, but his argument is applicable to the Booker Prize nominees too; many of the same conditions apply in the UK. In his view, novelists in the late 1990s and early 2000s increasingly felt free to select amongst several different genres in their work because the distinctions between high and popular forms of art were weakening. Rachel Greenwald Smith makes a similar point, arguing that contemporary writers started to work within a "compromise aesthetic" because, in her view, "contemporary art is at its most socially relevant when it forges compromises between strategies traditionally associated with the mainstream on the one hand and those associated with experimental departures from the mainstream on the other."[30] The compromise here being between popular and high art which, by borrowing from both, can be simultaneously mainstream and experimental. It takes advantage of neoliberal and postmodern conditions in which advertising has embraced experimental art and artistic prestige is increasingly conferred through financial success.[31] In this light, novelists see genre as an opportunity to experiment with form, thereby earning literary prestige, whilst remaining within the boundaries of genre enough to be considered mainstream. In McGurl's

---

[29] Andrew Hoberek, "Literary Genre Fiction".

[30] Quoted in Adam Kelly. 'Formally Conventional Fiction'. In *American Literature in Transition, 2000–2010 47*

[31] This is an interesting contrast to Theodore Adorno's suggestion that mass culture standardises art. He writes that, "Th[ere]is…[a] glaring and yet ineliminable contradiction between the presentation, elegant technical finish and modish procedures on the one hand, and the old-fashioned traditionally individual and culturally derived decayed contents on the other, the contradiction that is revealed in the standarization of what is individual." For him, technical sheen masks culturally stale standardized material. In Greenwald Smith's view such "technical finish" still allows the space for experimentation. See Theodor W. Adorno and J. M. Bernstein. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. 65

view, this has pushed the novel toward two different extremes: the maximalist, globe-trotting

novel, which includes science fiction, fantasy and the geopolitical thriller, and the minimalist,

domesticated romance, such as autofiction and mysteries.[32]

My analysis, however, suggests a different explanation. Amazon's impact on the novel is not to

push it towards genre but, rather, to gather the novel into a constellation of micro-genres. In this

instance, I do not mean the kind of micro-genres that Netflix uses to serve up recommendations

but, rather, I want to suggest that the conditions of the market favour topical minimalism because

it is easier to group minimalist novels together into micro-genres, even if much of that work is

done without realising it.[33] As I see it, the borrowing from crime, romance, and fantasy that

Hoberek identifies is part of a larger story that is made visible through my analysis. Amazon has

established a set of conditions whereby novelists are incentivised to write topically minimalist

novels and the Booker Prize is rewarding this kind of writing with recognition, perpetuating this

version of the form.

One clue to how this works surfaces where we compare *The Van* with Roddy Doyle's 1993

Booker Prize winning novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. Like *The Van*, it is saturated in the

language of Topic 18.[34] Its opening contains the familiar pattern of words:

---

[32] Mark McGurl, *Everything and Less: The Novel in The Age of Amazon.* 209

[33] According to Ed Finn, Netflix uses microtagging to categorise the content on its platform. These tags enable the creation of over 75,000 genres depending on how they are combined (including "British Comedies Set in the Victorian Era" and "Emotional German Language WWII movies.") See Ed Finn, *What Algorithms Want*. 93 – 95

[34] Though not quite as much as *The Van*. 72% of *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*'s passages feature Topic 18 and it has an average of 1.4 topics per passage

> I *looked* back and there was no one after us….We got into the gap and *looked* to see if there was anyone coming to get us…We wrote Liam's name and address with a black marker on a new plastered wall inside one of the houses. *Nothing* happened.[35]

Set in the 60s, the backdrop of *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* is the same Dublin as in *The Van* where little happens. Paddy, like Jimmy Rabbitte Sr, is looking for something — in Paddy's case, adventure; in Jimmy's case, work — and both are frustrated by the circumstances of their environment. Paddy's world is limited by his family; he steals small things because, like Jimmy Sr, his consumer desires are continually frustrated but, unlike Jimmy Sr, Paddy's frustration leads to violence when he and his gang beat up other boys ("We got Edward Swanwick onto the ground and…started pouring Persil onto his face; Liam held [his] head by the ears so he couldn't get…away.").[36] Eventually, Paddy is left isolated from the rest of his friends as his family falls apart around him, unable to find the kind of support that Jimmy Sr gets from his. *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* is, stylistically, a very different novel — it is told in the first person and the narrator is a young boy — but it uses the same patterns of words at *The Van* and its fundamental theme is the same. So too is its focus: it revolves around the family, and, like *The Van*, it has low heteroglossia: it features only 1.3 topics for every 1000-word passage. In this sense, it is a minimalist novel, one that features only two topics and that is interested in the narrow world of a young boy; it does not explicitly try to set the story against a backdrop of any larger, historical moment.

This matters because topically minimalist novels like *The Van* and *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* are easier to associate with one another. They are topically similar but, also, there are fewer topics

---

[35] Roddy Doyle, *Paddy Clarke Ha, Ha, Ha.* 3 — 5
[36] Ibid. 156

overall, making it easier to spot similarities and then to sort them together. To be sure, *The Van* and *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* share an author but a closer look at Topic 18 shows that it is not simply a Roddy Doyle topic; it has novels by Patrick McCabe and Michael Collins, to name just two, and they are set in Ireland, and Midwest America. They are each dominated by Topic 18 and have low heteroglossia (1.2 topics per 1000-word passage and 1.4 respectively). For readers, this means that Topic 18, with its focus on capitalism, consumerism, and the family, is a meaningful micro-genre. If they were to read any of these novels, they might feel familiar and connected.

Compare this to a novel like *Disgrace*, which is far harder to place. Its topical maximalism means it can be collected together with any of the many books that feature one of its topics. Its topical maximalism means that it will never fit neatly within one single micro-genre because it will always exceed the boundaries of a group defined by more topically minimalist novels. For example, it could sit well with *Carry Me Down* (shortlisted in 2006), which is dominated by Topic 5; both revolve around domestic trauma (Topic 5 words are highlighted in green):

> Some night, before I go to sleep my mother performs a finger puppet show for me. There's a cardboard apple-box with curtains painted on it and holes in the side for her hands to go through. This box stays in my room, near the foot of my bed, and the puppets are stored in my cupboard
> …
> My father is in his armchair by the fire…when he sees me walk into the living room, he keeps his legs tightly crossed, and looks at me as though he has never seen me standing by his chair before. He has swept his eyes and the artery on his left temple pulses in time with the grandfather clock; it looks like mercury pumping inside sausage skin, ugly and hot.[37]

---

[37] Maria J. Hyland, *Carry Me Down.* 14 — 15

But *Carry Me Down* does not try to set this against a wider national history; there are just 1.1 topics per 1000-word section in the novel. Therefore, gathering *Disgrace* and *Carry Me Down* together under this topic does not make sense. *Carry Me Down* is more likely to be associated with novels like *The Dark Room* by Rachel Seiffret (shortlisted in 2003) which has an average of 1.3 topics per 1000-word passage and where Topic 5 is dominant (the novel tells the story of three young Germans dealing with the war but, despite this backdrop, it is organised around their experiences of family trauma rather than explicitly historic ones) creating a micro-genre. This is not the kind of turn to genre that Andrew Hoberek describes. The writers I am discussing are not borrowing from other genres; instead, their novels concentrate on fewer topics and have a low heteroglossia, establishing micro-genres that make it easier to constellate them with other, similar novels in the same micro-genre. What we are seeing is crystallisation at a particularly low level and, as I hope to show now, it is a result of Amazon's dominance of the literary marketplace.

Chapter II: Amazon and the Booker

Amazon's Rise to Dominance

The rise of Amazon in publishing can only be fully understood if it is put in the wider context of the digital change that roiled the publishing industry in the late 90s and 2000s. The threat of Google Books and the collapse of the music industry helped create the conditions for Amazon to dominate the trade. Between 1998, when it launched in the UK, and 2009, when our study ends, Amazon altered the landscape of British publishing completely, establishing itself as the main route for publishers to reach readers and resulting in serious consequences for the novel form.

When Amazon entered the British market, trade publishing was characterised by chain retailers like Waterstones, on the one hand, and conglomerate publishers, on the other. During the 80s and 90s, a system developed whereby the chains and publishers partnered in co-op deals to place books in highly visible locations within the bookstores.[38] When Amazon launched, publishers hoped that it would diversify their options and that it might disrupt the power of the large chain stores. What the trade did not appreciate was that Amazon was a very different type of business, one that leveraged data as a marketing tool and that was only peripherally interested in books. Access to customer data was not a concern for publishers in the late 90s; their biggest worry was

---

[38] According to John Thompson in *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing* a store like Barnes & Noble could charge $10,000 for a title to be placed on a prominent place in all of its stores for a two-week period. One week on a step ladder cost $25,000. Over the 1990s and early 2000s the amount of money spent on this kind of positioning grew enormously and by 2010 it accounted for "half or more of the total marketing spend of many houses, compared to 30 – 35 per cent in the 1980s." See John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* 117

changes to formats and the introduction of new distribution models. Publishing was terrified by the collapse of the music industry and executives watched in horror as the CD market, which was worth $938m in 1998, cratered to $296m in less than a decade.[39] The cause of this rapid decline was the easy availability of music online thanks, firstly, to illegal download sites like Napster and then, secondly, to the legal stores like iTunes that took their place. It was further fuelled by a music industry that fiercely resisted digital distribution, creating an enormous amount of pent-up demand that Napster and then Apple were able to exploit.

Publishers were concerned that they were similarly vulnerable and there was a general sense that print was under threat. In 2000, PricewaterhouseCoopers forecast that the eBook market would be worth $5.5bn by 2004 and would make up 17% of the market and while this proved to be wide of the mark, it did a lot to concentrate the minds of publishers.[40] They set about preparing for change by establishing processes that would enable them to produce eBooks easily once a distribution method became available this included ensuring that digital texts were part of all production pipelines.[41] In the end, eBooks did not disrupt the market in the way digital music did, in part because publishing was better prepared and more open to digital opportunities. When Amazon launched Kindle in 2007, explosive growth quickly gave way to steady sales but eBooks did absorb a great deal of time and attention from publishers because, in their minds, they were the most significant threat to their future.[42] As John B Thompson puts it in his history

---

[39] John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* 17
[40] Ibid. 19
[41] Ibid.
[42] The faltering rise of the eBook is a fascinating story in and of itself, but we do not have space for it here. For more information on this see John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* pp 20 — 67

of the digital revolution in publishing, "for years everyone in the publishing industry was living in a state of deep uncertainty, as if they were moving towards a cliff but never knew whether they would ever reach the edge and what would happen if they did."[43] I am arguing that one result of this uncertainty was that the books shortlisted for the Booker Prize became less topically diverse. One explanation for this is that publishers, in preparing for eBooks, were adopting the platform logic of Amazon almost by accident. Scared that eBooks would dominate, the industry sought books that they thought would work well in a future that had not yet arrived and this meant acquiring less topically diverse books because early experience suggested that they would do well on web-oriented platforms like Amazon. In practice, this meant looking for books that were more focused and minimalist because there was a sense that these kinds of books would suit Amazon. To be clear, I am not suggesting that this was deliberately done; only that publishers — and writers — worked in a milieu in which fears about eBooks were real and this created the conditions where these less topically diverse books appealed.

If the threat of digital collapse did much to focus publishing, another digital player helped distract it from Amazon's rise. In 2004 Google announced that they had partnered with the libraries of Harvard University, Stanford University, the University of Michigan, and Oxford University as well as the New York Public Library to create digital editions of their holdings. This would make hundreds of thousands of digital editions of books available for search. At first, publishers were broadly supportive of the initiative and entered into a series of agreements with Google that regulated how they could approach copyrighted material.[44] Orphan works became a

---

[43] Ibid. 19

[44] John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* Pp 125 — 126

sticking point though. These were books which were in copyright but where the rights holders could not be found.[45] To manage this, Google proposed a system whereby they could scan these works and make their content available for search until a rights holder came along and objected. To the trade publishing industry, this inverted the usual process of copyright whereby the rights holder controlled all rights until they opted into an agreement with another party. The issue was litigated for twelve years, costing Google and the Authors Guild, who brought the action, millions of dollars and contributing further to the general sense of fear and uncertainty in the industry. While Google seemed to be working to benefit readers by widening access to books, publishers saw them as a threat to the system that was fundamental to their businesses. Moreover, Google was a very different kind of operation with very different incentives to act that publishers struggled to understand. The result was that trade publishing, like music before it,

> found themselves caught up in a vortex of change that deeply affected their business, but over which they had little or no control. This was a process that was being driven by others — by large technology companies based primarily on the West Coast of the US, far away from the traditional heartlands of Anglo-American trade publishing.[46]

The point here was that the publishing industry was facing change that they could not control and, in some cases, could not understand, as demonstrated by the significant legal battles between Google and the publishers where both sides struggled to understand the businesses of the other.[47] Google it seemed, was the threat to be faced directly while Amazon, though certainly

---

[45] According to John B. Thompson, Google estimated that 70% of all published works fell into this category. See John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing*. 129
[46] John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* 11
[47] Here is John B. Thompson on the problem: "The different economic logics that underpin old media industries like publishing, on the one hand, and new media player like the internet-based tech companies, on the other, help explain why publishers and tech companies became locked in long-running and bitter disputes, such as the dispute over the Google Library Project and the confrontation with Amazon over eBook pricing that ended up with the Department of Justice's suit against publishers and Apple for alleged price-fixing. A key part of what lies behind these

a challenge, did not seem intent on destroying the business of publishing. By focusing so much time and attention on Google, though, publishers had fewer resources to deal with Amazon, a factor that contributed to its steady dominance of the trade.

As the music market collapsed and as publishers tried to stop Google undermining their business model, Amazon grew at a rapid rate. By the year 2000, it was generating nearly $3bn in revenue; by 2010 its media sales alone (books, music, TV, DVDs, and video games) delivered just under $7bn. In contrast, Barnes & Noble's sales were worth $4.5bn. Amazon, founded a mere fifteen years earlier, had come to dominate the market, a fact underscored in 2011 when the bookstore Borders went into bankruptcy.[48] It became increasingly clear in the 2000s that Amazon was many publishers' single biggest customer.[49] Amazon was an example of a different kind of disruption: it was able to harness the efficiencies of the internet to grow sales through personalised marketing (harnessing the data they collected) and through better distribution rather than by fundamentally altering the format, as had happened in music, or changing the business model, as Google threatened. Amazon took advantage of its position to negotiate greater and greater discounts by using a number of different tactics. The company was under a particular pressure in the early 2000s because, while it had grown quickly, it struggled to make a profit. Consequently, the company looked for as many ways as possible to improve its margins, wielding its new power to extract concessions from publishers. According to Brad Stone in his account of the company, *The Everything Store*, if a publisher refused to accept Amazon's terms

disputes is a very different way of thinking about the value of content." John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* 447

[48] John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* pp 144–145

[49] John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* 141

then the latter would secretly remove their books from the recommendation algorithm which would cause their sales to drop by as much as 40% forcing them back to the negotiating table.[50] The notorious Project Gazelle saw Amazon rank publishing houses by increasing vulnerability and then approach them demanding high discounts and improved payment cycles, resulting in many publishers being forced to extend generous terms to keep their biggest customer.[51] To some, Amazon's emergence as a major player came as a shock; whereas once, effects of commerce were laid squarely at the feet of conglomerate publishers, Amazon was a new antagonist. Steve Wasserman, a former editor of the *Los Angeles Times Book Review* described this shift as follows:

> A surpassing irony: for years many of us worried that the increasing conglomeration of publishers would reduce diversity. (We were wrong.) We also feared bloated overheads would hold editors hostage to an unsustainable commercial imperative. (We were right.) But little did we imagine that the blunderbuss for change would arrive in the form of an avaricious imperium called Amazon. It is something of a surprise to see so many now defending the practices of corporate publishers who, just yesterday, were excoriated as philistines out to coarsen the general culture.[52]

Generous terms were only part of what Amazon demanded from publishers. They also forced publishers to adapt to their methods of marketing. In 2001, Amazon replaced its entire editorial team with a personalised recommendation algorithm which had proven itself to generate more revenue at a lower cost.[53] Early on, the company recognised that it could accumulate a vast

---

[50] Brad Stone, *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon.* pp 301 – 302
[51] Ibid. 302
[52] Steve Wasserman. 'The Amazon Effect'. In *Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century.* 42
[53] There is some debate about the overall effectiveness of these algorithms. Brad Stone has pointed out publishers have seen their sales drop when their books are not part of the algorithm. But James F. English has argued, in his essay "Prestige, Pleasure, and the Data of Cultural Preference: 'Quality Signals' in the Age of Superabundance," that only around 10% of customers

amount of data on the ways that customers used the site, something which would eventually

enable a personalised shopping experience. At first, Amazon tried to group customers together so

that, if the buying habits of two customers seemed to resemble one another, they might each be

recommended the products the other had bought. This did not work very well, and a better

solution proved to be "item-to-item collaborative filtering" which builds tables of pairs of items

that customers purchase together and then assigns a numerical value to these pairs. An algorithm

then generates recommendations determined by the most highly correlated items.[54] In 2001 it

was ready for release, populating Amazon's "Customer's Also Bought" recommendations and

the countless emails and Pay-Per-Click (PPC) ads that it targets at customers. If a bookshop

offers a curated experience of limited content, then Amazon becomes a vast room of infinite

content in which most of what is available exists in the shadows and the items that Amazon

thinks you might like are illuminated by its algorithms. It might appear like Amazon offers a

wider choice of content, but its algorithms tend to suggest a narrow set of items because they are

based on past behaviour. As Niko Pajkovic explains, "feedback loops reinforce a user's pre-

existing preferences, diminishing their exposure to a diverse range of cultural offerings."[55]

To be recommended, items must look like past purchases. That is not to say that everything

needs to be identical but, rather, for an item to be suggested by Amazon it must resemble a

---

who read a lot choose to buy a book based on Amazon's algorithmic recommendation. More recent data suggests that as much as 35% of Amazon's sales are driven by its algorithm. See Brad Stone, *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon.* 170;
James F. English, "Prestige, Pleasure, and the Data of Cultural Preference: 'Quality Signals' in the Age of Superabundance." 131; and Mark Davis, "Five Processes in the Platformisation of Cultural Production: Amazon and Its Publishing Ecosystem."
[54] John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing.* pp 185 - 186
[55] Niko Pajkovic. "Algorithms and Taste-Making: Exposing the Netflix Recommender System's Operational Logics". 225

previous purchase in some way. Amazon's access to vast amounts of sales data enables it to connect purchases over both space and time. If a group of individual readers buy Book A today and if those same individuals have, at various times, also bought Book B, then other readers who have bought Book B before might be recommended Book A. At the heart of the recommendation mechanism then, is the idea that books are sorted together by readers' purchases. There are several ways that publishers can try to increase the chances of books being bought by the same customer. Series fiction is one, with multiple readers wanting to buy the next book in the series; genre fiction is another, with readers' preference for detective fiction or romance being sated with more of the same. Another way is to commission books that are similar in style and content. To a certain extent, this has always been the case: Daniel Steele, John Grisham, and J. K. Rowling have all had their imitators, some of whom have done well. But, after 2000, what we see is publishers — and writers — leveraging this recommendation system by producing increasingly topically minimalist novels at the expense of books like *Disgrace*. The latter are harder to sort together with other books because, as we have seen, they fit less neatly into micro-genres, whereas novels like *The Van* or *Carry Me Down*, which contain fewer topics, are easier to categorise. I am not claiming that Amazon uses topic modelling to recommend novels or to connect them together but, instead, I am suggesting that Amazon has produced the conditions where editors, readers and writers feel compelled to ensure that books can be bracketed together and that the mechanism that has developed is topically minimalist fiction. Mark McGurl is right when he argues that Amazon has "draw[n] our attention to a heretofore unrecognized dimension of the contemporary genre system, the sorting mechanism—differing it its particulars depending on whether it is operating in the editorial offices of publishers, bookstores, online search, or

academia—that categorizes individual works of fiction as iterations of a generic kind."[56] The

logic of Amazon has impinged upon the process of writing and publishing fiction and the results

are clear.

It is impossible to know how deliberate this is. The process of acquisition can be vague. When

Claire Squires, a Professor of Publishing Studies at the University of Sterling, interviewed

editors about their decision making process their "immediate response…centred around terms

such as 'instinct' and 'gut reaction.'"[57] However she learned that it was less haphazard than they

implied, concluding, "editors needed to fit their editorial taste-making and selection to their

company environment. Gut reactions were, in actuality, learned business decisions, in constant

negotiation with that environment."[58] This is an important point to understand because the

environment that structured book acquisitions in the period we are discussing was a challenging

one. Production process had adapted to eBooks well before a marketplace had developed for

them; Google was threatening to upend the business model; and, together with Amazon, it

seemed that the West Coast of America was bringing a sea change to traditional industry in ways

that were hard for publishing to understand. The publishing process was becoming further

commodified by digital technology and so adapting to Amazon's needs was a smart move at first

and a necessary one once it asserted dominance. The sorts of "learned business decisions"

include acquiring books that can be sorted together with similar themes, a strategy that reinforces

---

[56] Mark McGurl. *Everything and Less: The Novel in The Age of Amazon.* 194
[57] Claire Squires. "Taste and/or Big Data?: Post-Digital Editorial Selection." 29
[58] Ibid. 31

itself over time accounting for the steady decrease in heteroglossy as publishers become ever more reliant on Amazon.[59]

Novelists selected for the Booker seem to be aware of this. In *The Accidental* by Ali Smith (shortlisted for the 2005 prize), Eve Smart, one of the five main characters, writes what she calls "autobiotruefictinterviews."[60] This is a type of book that she has invented but, despite its apparent originality, in proves to be formulaic. The books form a series called the Genuine Article and they imagine what might have happened if a person who died before their time had continued to live. They are structured in a "Question & Answer format" and, at the time of the events of the novel, Eve is writing her seventh Genuine. Their success has taken everyone by shock, not least her small publisher, Jupiter Press, which, thanks to their high sales, has been acquired by HarperCollins. Eve is frustrated by their similarity and when she suggests making a change ("I thought I might write about a person dies…Finished. Done. Kaput. End. No more story"), her editor responds:

> …the Genuines don't generally do that, do they? I mean, the Genuines formula is life-affirming, because they affirm life, don't they…[W]hy you'd want to change the historical focus, which is the Genuine premium, in other words which is, if you ask me, and I think if you were to ask the readers too, why they work so well, why they're so popular, why readers have just cottoned on to the formula, it's because their particular historical focus –…[61]

---

[59] David B. Neiborg and Thomas Pell see a similar effect in the news industry writing, "[T]he impact of platform sorting practices is exceptionally strong because many news organizations are incentivized to align their content strategies with platform-defined markers of popularity, rather than traditional quality indicators. By doing so news organizations are effectively reifying dominant platform governance strategies." David B. Neiborg and Thomas Pell. "The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the Contingent Cultural Commodity". New Media & Society 20, no. 11 (2018). 4286

[60] Ali Smith, *The Accidental*. 81

[61] Ibid. 198

Eve Smart has created the kind of book that Amazon incentivises, a micro-genre that requires

little variation, and her publisher is desperate for her to repeat "the formula" to keep on going.

Indeed there is the implication that the conditions that demand such formulaic writing have sunk

deep roots into Eve's editor's thoughts: she can only express herself through repetition ("the

Genuines formula is life affirming, because they affirm life…[This] is why they work so well,

why they're so popular, why readers have just cottoned on to the formula.") Amazon's centrality

to both the series' success and to Eve's frustration surfaces in an earlier scene:

> Eve (42) sat in the church with all its buried dead outside under the grasses and paving
> stones and wondered how her books were doing on Amazon. She wondered if there was
> anywhere…she could go online and look it up and find out.[62]

The suggestion, here, is that the lifeless church prompts Eve to think about Amazon because

Amazon is similarly lifeless. It is a place where generic, formulaic books — books like the

Genuine Article series — thrive and where the ongoing conglomeration of publishing is

perpetuated as risk-taking independent publishers who were willing to try something new are

swallowed whole by organisations looking for the predictable revenues that formulaic books can

generate. In Smith's view, Amazon is a threat to the kind of experimental novel that she likes to

write, insisting on formulaic fiction over something riskier and, in our terms, topically diverse.

Still, Ali Smith might not be able to resist the pressure of Amazon. Between 2016 and 2020,

Smith wrote the Seasonal Quartet, four books connected by the seasons which can be read

together or as standalone books. Maybe Amazon is not the Grim Reaper that Smith initially

imagined in *The Accidental* if a compromise can be found.

---

[62] Ibid. 191

We see similar anxieties about genre in Sarah Waters' *Fingersmith* (shortlisted in 2002). In the book, Maud has been raised in a country house where her uncle is writing an index of pornographic literature. He has built a library of the books and has one of the largest collections in England; in the evenings he sometimes asks Maud to read from them. In one scene she recollects the kinds of books she was forced to read:

> I think of the books I have lately read...to my uncle: they come back to me, now, in phrases, fragments—*pressed her lips and tongue—takes hold of my hand—hip, lip and tongue—forced it half-strivingly—took hold of my breasts—opened wide the lips of my little—the lips of her little cunt*. (Emphasis in the original)[63]

The language — stale and repetitive and unerotic — disgusts Maud even as its haunts her ("I cannot silence them. I can almost see [the words], rising darkly from their own pale pages, to gather swarm and combine") because it is the product of generic, unimaginative writing. Several pages later though, the words that have haunted her are redeployed in a very different scene:

> When [Sue] puts up my nightgown and reaches between my legs, we both grow still. When her *hand* moves again, her fingers no longer flutter, they have grown wet, and slide, and in sliding seem, like her *lips* as they rub upon mine, to quick and draw me, to gather me out of the darkness, out of my natural shape…The *hand* moves even slower. She begins to press…She does not hesitate now, however, but comes nearer to me and put her *hips* about my thigh; then presses again.[64] (Emphasis added)

In this passage, I have italicised the words common to both sections to show how Waters deliberately reuses the same language to demonstrate how it can be dull and lifeless in genre writing and lively and fresh in literary writing. Waters suggests that genre writing opposes literary writing because it relies on formula for its effect and so genre writing is the inferior of the two modes. But, at the end of the novel Maud starts writing the kind of generic erotica the novel seems to despise. When she is asked if there it makes any money she responds, "Enough if

---

[63] Sarah Waters, *Fingersmith*. 296
[64] Ibid. 299

I write swiftly."[65] This is the bind that writers like Ali Smith and Sarah Waters understand they must negotiate and that seems to surface in their work. Contemporary publishing, through Amazon, incentivises them to write novels that have generic qualities or, in the terms of this essay, the qualities of micro-genres, because that is the pathway to financial success. Both resist it in their works — Smith has Eve try to resist writing formulaic books; Waters shows the superiority of literary writing — but, still, both know that they must compromise to a certain extent. And both do compromise. Ali Smith has gone on to write a series. Waters' novel, meanwhile, has an average of 1.4 topics per 1000-word section and it concentrates on Topic 2; this topic relies on a pattern of words that includes "door," "looked," "room," "opened," and "bed;" other novels that feature it heavily include Susan Hill's *I'm the King of the Castle*. Topic 2 appears to be a modern gothic genre and, interestingly enough, it features heavily in Sarah Waters 2006 novel *The Night Watch.* While Waters is not writing generic fiction, she does seem to rely on a gothic micro-genre in at least two of her books. Readers of one are likely to find the other familiar. In other words, there appears to be a compromise with Amazon.

The Role of the Booker Prize

Having established the ways that Amazon's impact is felt in the novels we are discussing, it is time to turn to the wider question of why the Booker Prize chooses to recognise these particular novels and to understand the consequences of doing so. The Booker Prize has been remarkably successful since it was first awarded in 1969. It has survived because it has been particularly good at negotiating its position within the literary field and, through careful management of its

---

[65] Ibid. 581

position, it has been able to establish itself as the premier prize for books in Britain. It is synonymous with literary value for a very large number of readers. This was by no means inevitable and, as we shall see, it is due to a strategy that recognised its situation at the nexus of art and capital and used it to its advantage. The Booker is not unique in this — literary prizes are common enough and they work strangely — but the Booker is a particularly good example of the complex way that literary value is recognised and rewarded. In this section, I will argue that through its careful management and its structure, the Booker Prize has become a self-perpetuating system that enables different interests in the publishing trade to come together to identify literary value, even when they bring with them different definitions of that value, ultimately creating a situation where (almost) everyone wins. To do this, I turn to Niklas Luhmann's system theory to describe how the Booker operates. I argue that, rather than being a pure measure of literary value, the prize is deeply entwined within the larger literary field and experiences similar pressures.[66]

In general, literary awards are unique in the way that they bring together artists, the trade, and outsiders (often businesspeople) in ways that are mutually beneficial. There are not many opportunities for capital and art to meet otherwise but they are, apparently, necessary. Art certainly needs capital but capital, too, needs art and artistic prizes, some might say, to help

---

[66] I am using the term "literary field" in the sense that Pierre Bourdieu might recognise. In his view, to understand how an object like the literary field operates we need "break with the substantialist mode of thought…which tends to foreground the individual, or the visible interactions between individuals, [to see] the structural relations…between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions." In my reading, the institutions of the literary field include publishers, distributors, retailers, literary departments in universities and literary prizes (amongst others). See Pierre Bourdieu and Randal Johnson, *The Field of Cultural Production*. 29

capital mystify its exploitative practices. Culture-washing, as it is known, is a way to obscure all manner of sin. Today, this is such a common practice that our faith in aesthetic awards has been weakened though it is not entirely extinguished. People understand that awards do not recognise pure artistic merit, nor are they entirely corrupted by the presence of capital. Instead, they are an altogether more complex affair that balances autonomy with a recognition that prizes work within a system of commerce that will validate (or invalidate) their choices. A prize that recognises aesthetic merit but does not pay heed to the market will either be short-lived or irrelevant. James F. English describes this relationship between aesthetic value and capital as "dependent independency" and argues that the game is played at an increasingly advanced level, so much so that players must "develop new, more ambiguous strategies or styles of play" to obscure the reality.[67] If we look at the history of the Booker Prize, we begin to see how this works.

The prize was first awarded in 1969 (to a largely forgotten novel called *Something to Answer For* by P.H. Newby) and was inspired by the Prix Goncourt, the French prize for fiction. Tom Maschler, then a young publisher at Jonathan Cape, wanted to find a way to recognise the best of British fiction and proposed the idea of a prize to the Young Publishers Society. To avoid the implication of bias — he did not want to be involved in judging a prize that one of his novelists might be competing for— the first prize was overseen by the Publishers Association.[68] Maschler, and Graham C. Greene, managing director at Cape, approached Booker Plc, a multinational that had its roots in the Guyanese sugar trade, to sponsor the prize and they jumped at the

---

[67] James F. English. "Winning the Culture Game: Prizes, Awards, and the Rules of Art." 111
[68] Anna Auguscik. *Prizing Debate*. 88

opportunity. The company had recently started to acquire publishing rights to literary estates of writers like Ian Fleming and Agatha Christie in an effort to diversify its portfolio and to benefit from significant tax incentives. These generated plenty of revenue for the company, earning £100,000 in profit in 1968 and four times that by the mid-1970s.[69] It saw this new prize as an opportunity to deepen its ties with the publishing trade.

Things did not start off well. The Publishers Association pulled out after just one year and, a management committee was set up in its place.[70] This committee was supposed to represent the different parties with a stake in the prize and, a first, was made up of an author, two publishers, a bookseller, and a librarian. The Booker chairman, a second company representative, and the administrator of the prize, Martin Goff, rounded out the committee.[71] Its job was to amend the rules and to recruit judges but, in these early years, they had their work cut out for them. According to the minutes of meetings in 1970 and 1971, judges routinely turned them down; publishers complained that the fees were too high; and Tom Maschler caused so much chaos that the chair of the committee resigned.[72] Given all this, Booker Plc's enthusiasm for this new project was quick to cool and they prepared for an early exit.[73]

Things turned around in 1972 when John Berger was awarded the prize for his novel *G.* He gave a speech that attacked the sponsor's colonialism. Berger was, at the time, a well-known

---

[69] James F. English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value.* 200

[70] Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate.* 88

[71] Ibid. 89

[72] James F. English. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value.* 202 — 203

[73] Ibid. 203

television presenter and his speech was widely reported. This came hot on the heels of a smaller

scandal the previous year in which a judge, the conservative commentator Malcom Muggeridge,

a familiar face on British TV where he was known as "Saint Muggs" for his cultural piety,

resigned, writing that the books that had been nominated "seem to me to be mere pornography in

the worst sense of the word…."[74] Rather than being the Booker Prize's undoing, these scandals

proved to be its making. In 1971 there were just 50 stories in the press about the prize; in 1972

there were over 200.[75] With all this new found attention, publishers stopped complaining about

the high entrance fees, judges became a lot more willing to sign on and Booker Plc renewed its

sponsorship of the prize for another 7 years.[76] The scandals persisted (there were more

controversial speeches and judges continued to behave poorly), but the management committee

recognised that these helped fuel the prize's success and took active part in generating them by

leaking continuously to the press.[77]

The management committee, as well as keeping the prize in the papers, were careful to adapt the

prize to the changing needs of the publishing trade. For example, the first prize, while awarded in

1969, was for books that were published between December 1967 and November 1968. In 1971

the rules were changed so that the winner had to have been published that year meaning that the

prize could appear more contemporary.[78] 1984 saw further rule changes; that year half of the

---

[74] Ibid. 204
[75] Ibid. 206
[76] Ibid. 206
[77] J. G. Farrell won in 1975 for *Siege of Krishnapur* and, in his acceptance speech, argued that miners deserved far better pay. In 1994 the Chairman of the Poker judges, John Bayley, withdrew a novel by his wife, Iris Murdoch, for consideration; his fellow juror James Wood argued strongly that *his* wife's novel should be shortlisted.
[78] This meant that no prize was awarded for books published in 1970 and so, in 2010 the Lost Booker was awarded for the best book published that year.

books on the shortlist were not published when it was announced, and readers had to wait before they could buy them. Thereafter, it was agreed that shortlisted books had to be published by the September of the year of the award. This brought further problems because it excluded books published between October and December, which was the busiest sales period in the trade and when many prestige titles were released. By the late 80s, the rules were changed yet again to accommodate this and so the window for eligibility became between October 1 the previous year and September 30 the year of the prize.[79] This ensured that the judges could consider the widest selection of books and that the books shortlisted could benefit from the boost in sales that shortlisting brought them. The committee, then, continually adapted the rules to improve the commercial opportunities of the shortlisted books. In other words, the economics of publishing were a key factor in the committee's decision making. The prize, therefore, was never a pure celebration of autonomous art. Instead, it was caught between a need to recognise literary value and the need for the novels it was recognising to sell.

The final task of the committee was to appoint judges. In 1977 it was established that the jury would be made up of "an academic, a critic or two, a writer or two and the man in the street."[80] The aim of this was clear: literary merit was important but so too was the view of ordinary readers. More recently, the jury has consisted of "a literary critic, an academic, a literary editor, a novelist and a major figure" with the "major figure" replacing the "man in the street" but still fulfilling the same function: representing the ordinary reader, albeit a more glamorous and media

---

[79] Further details of this history of rule changes can be found in Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*. 85

[80] Martin Goff, "Introduction." *Prize Writing: An Original Collection of Writes by Past Winners to Celebrate 21 Years of the Booker Prize*. Ed. Martin Goff. qt in Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*. 90

friendly version.[81] What the committee does not do is provide any criteria about *how* to judge the

prize. The goal is to recognise the "best" book but what is meant by "best" is undefined and

different juries take very different approaches. Martin Goff, writing about the prize in 1989,

described the challenge as follows,

> The judges' biggest problem [...] is [...] the definition of the 'best novel of the year'. It is
> very flexible and each set of judges will give their own interpretation. It is not, of course,
> the only aim of the Prize. Booker Plc want to reward merit, raise the stature of the author
> in the eyes of the public and increase the sales of books. The rub probably comes in the
> third aim. Booksellers in any case regard the choice of the winner as good if the book
> sells well and bad if it does not. [...] To find a book that passes the tests of literary critics
> and academics, and pleased the booksellers is not easy.[82]

So, while there were no booksellers on the jury their opinion was important to the jury.

Commerce is the ghost that stalks the Booker's banquet, unseen but certainly felt. No jury

wanted to select a book that would not sell because the consequences would affect the reputation

of the prize as a whole. The management committee, too, wanted to select the judges that were

going perpetuate the prize and therefore stay away from anyone who might push for

uncommercial choices. I am not suggesting that this is an explicit condition, but the committee

and the jury were both trying to serve two masters: aesthetic merit and commercial success.

Literary value, for the Booker Prize, was, and remains, a combination of these two elements.

In 2002, the Booker Prize Foundation was established to oversee the management committee,

now renamed as the Advisory Committee but fulfilling the same role. In her book *Prizing*

---

[81] "How the Prize Works," *The Man Booker Prizes* 31 May 2012. Qt in Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*. 90
[82] Martin Goff, "Introduction." *Prize Writing: An Original Collection of Writes by Past Winners to Celebrate 21 Years of the Booker Prize*. Ed. Martin Goff. qt in Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*. 99

Debate, Anna Auguscik writes that the years of structural development are an important feature

of the prize:

> [T]he Booker's main distinguishing characteristics is its intricate structure of checks and balances, which became more and more professionalised over the years and culminated in a tripartite framework consisting of the Booker Prize Foundation, the Advisory Committee and the judging panel....The 'structure of the management' and the 'careful choice and balance of judges' — as Goff described them — are the result of constant changes in negotiations with the participants who have collaborated with the Booker, and who have entered into a, at times, precarious alliance.[83]

Her point is a good one and it recognises the agency that that management committee has and the

alliances that various stakeholders in the process develop. It is my contention that this creates a

self-perpetuating system that operates with the wider literary field and is subject to the same

pressures, but which remains distinct from the field itself.

In his *Introduction to Systems Theory*, Niklas Luhmann uses Talcott Parson's theory of a system

to describe how an action is produced. According to Talbott, it is possible to identify four

components that must interact for an action to "take shape."[84] He divides them up through a

cross classification, splitting them, on the one hand, between Instrumental — that is, necessary

for an action to *happen* — and Consummatory — necessary for an action to be *accepted*. On the

other hand, he splits up the components by internal structure and external relations. The result is

a grid or a matrix with Instrumental / Consummatory on the horizontal axis and Internal /

External on the vertical axis. The matrix is further split into four boxes that are labelled A, for

Adaptation; L, for latent pattern; I, for integration; and G for goal attainment. Adaptation, here, is

an external process that tries to create the conditions for the successful action. Latent pattern is

---

[83] Anna Auguscik, *Prizing Debate*. 86
[84] Niklas Luhmann, *Introduction to Systems Theory.* 10

an internal system that ensures continuity of conditions so that the action can occur at point in the future. Integration is where the action is combined with existing conditions. Goal attainment is the immediate fulfilment of the goal (as opposed to it happening at some point in the future).[85] Talbot and Lehman argue that this matrix represents the necessary elements for a system to create an action, importantly, in a way that is ongoing. The latent pattern, for example, ensures that the system can work at any time when it is required. Adaptation means that the system is modifying itself on an ongoing basis so as to create the correct conditions for the system to perform an action. Integration is essential for the action of the system to be accepted by the world at large. And goal attainment is necessary for the system to create the desired state.

To make this clear, here is the Booker Prize fitted into the Talbott/Luhmann matrix.

	Instrumental	Consummatory	
L Internal	The Booker Rules	The Literary Field	I
External A	The Management / Advisory Committee	Awarding the Prize	G

---

[85] For more details on these naming conventions and this method see Niklas Luhmnn, *Introduction to Systems Theory*. 10 —11

The latent pattern, in this case, is the rule book that is necessary internally for the prize to be awarded. The Adaption segment is the prize's Management / Advisory Committee which must continually modify the rules for the prize to remain successful and to ensure that it is perpetual relevant as external conditions change. Both of these are necessary for the system to function. The Integration function is carried out by what I have called the Literary Field, for want of a better term. This covers both the publishing and retail sections of the trade as well as the media and academia and, in this model, it is a necessary condition for the awarding of the prize. Luhmann writes that a "society is already integrated either morally or by means of values or normative symbols before any can act in it" and, in this case, the literary field is the "society" that must be integrated by the "means of values" so that the action — that is, the awarding of the prize — can take place.[86] This means that the prize can only be awarded if the various elements of the field — publishing, retail, media, and academia — are willing to integrate the results and therefore they have a necessary role in the process that establishes the Booker's version of literary value. Moreover, Luhmann notes that it is common for there to be "interpenetration of the L function and the I function…[which] occurs via 'institutionalisation'"[87] I take this to mean that Institutions enable and mediate the flow of information between, in our case, the Literary Field and the Booker rules, and we certainly see that in the past in the ways that the retail trade came to alter the rules when it lobbied for better eligibility periods. But there are many Institutions in the Literary Field and not all of them have equal power. Academia and the cultural media are increasingly marginalised Institutions (the space devoted to books in newspapers,

---

[86] Ibid. 9
[87] Ibid. 23

magazines and on television continues to shrink while academia is increasingly specialised) whereas publishers and book retailers continue to grow.[88] Of these, as we have seen in the previous section, Amazon is the largest player and has increased its influence since it launched in Britain in 1998. While I do not think that Amazon, or the publishing industry for that matter, holds explicit influence over who the prize is awarded to, I consider it is as an essential and influential part of the Booker Prize system. In other words, the "precarious alliance" that Anna Auguscik identifies is not just noticeable in who is on the various juries and committees that make the Booker work but, rather, it is written into the system itself, a system that continues to self-perpetuate.

The impact that Amazon has had on the Booker Prize is clear from the data: there has plainly been a decline in heteroglossia after the year 2000. There are three potential explanations for this. First, this shift reflects a general trend in trade publishing and, were we to examine a wider corpus of fiction, we would see a similar pattern. Second, that publishers are only submitting books of this kind for consideration, leaving the Booker with little choice. Or, third, that the Booker juries are deliberately deciding to recognise these kinds of novels. It is impossible for us to know which of these is true because it is hard to tell at which point in the Booker system Amazon exerts the most pressure. It would be more accurate to say that Amazon touches the Booker system at so many points that its influence is impossible to ignore, and the truth is that,

---

[88] Here I agree with John Guillory who argues that the professionalisation of literary departments "insulates some kinds of knowledge work…from the volatility of the market. In these cases, the value of scholarship is assessed indirectly, in the context of *the university's internal consumption of knowledge goods*…" One consequence of this insulation is a separation, in some cases, from the wider cultural field and, therefore, academia exercises less influence over it. See John Guillory, *Professing Criticism*. 40

by the end of the decade, its effect is being felt both at the publishing and the judging level simply because it is such a large and all-encompassing organisation. But, in many ways, where it is felt matters less than whether it is felt at all. The Booker, as the preeminent arbiter of literary value in the UK, could do something to resist Amazon's effect by recognising the kinds of novels that are not suitable for its platform and, the truth is, it sometimes does. Different juries make different decisions. But the risk is huge. The Booker's reputation rests not just on its judgement but also on its reputation for selling books; if shortlisted novels were to not sell well, then the prestige of the Booker would quickly fade. To maintain itself, the Booker needs to work with the marketplace and, as such, it is unlikely to ever set about validating books that do not align with the conditions that Amazon has imposed. Instead, it approves of the kind of topically minimalist fiction that the age of Amazon has produced and, in doing so, it is having a significant effect on the ongoing shape of the form. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Prize helped establish writers like Salman Rushdie, Peter Carey and Kazuo Ishiguro, paving the way for a different type of literary novel; for some, it helped establish the postcolonial novel. In other words, the Booker has a history of encouraging the development and expansion of the form. But, here, the prize appears to be doing something else: validating a new variety of fiction, one that publishers and writers will want to reproduce. It is true that, in the past, there has been change but it has always been inaugurated by external forces. What will be necessary for the Booker Prize to valorise a different kind of novel?

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis has been to see whether Amazon has had an impact on the Booker Prize. The data I have explored through topic modelling suggests that it has. For critics like Mark McGurl, Amazon has ushered in an age of "chaotic sameness" and my analysis appears to support this view. Certainly, the Booker Prize is recognising novels that are topically minimalist. Most critics tie the change to big shifts in the industry, like the launch of the Kindle, or the economy. Dan K. Sinykin, for example, writes that "[t]he conglomerate era [of publishing] ended in 2007 with the financial crisis and Amazon's introduction of the Kindle e-reader," arguing that publishing was dominated by conglomerate publishers until 2007.[89] I am making a different argument. The Booker Prize started to recognise less topically diverse novels in 2000, just as Amazon was finding its footing in the UK market, and it continued to do so throughout the decade as the company became more and more dominant. The change that enabled this shift was the introduction of algorithmic recommendation amidst an industry that was concerned about digital change; it was less about reading technology, then, and far more about how books were sold and distributed. Amazon enforced a mindset on publishers, one that values novels which are topically minimalist because these novels are easy to connect into micro-genres. The sorting mechanism that Amazon imposed and that encouraged these micro-genres seeped into the wider literary field with the result that the Booker judges seem to have embraced it too. The effect of this is significant because the Booker Prize is one of the most important ways that literary value is established in Britain and the wider markets the Booker operates in. In

---

[89] Dan N. Sinykin. "The Conglomerate Era: Publishing, Authorship, and Literary Form, 1965–2007". 486

conclusion, Amazon has had a dramatic effect on the novel and one that the Booker Prize has

chosen to validate. Time will tell if anything changes this situation.

Appendix I

A Table of Topics, Key Words and Key Titles

This table should give the reader a sense of the important words and titles in each topic discussed in this thesis. The words in the Keywords column are the ten most probable words in a topic; the novels in the Titles column are the ones where the topic is strongly present.

Topic	Keywords	Titles
2	looked, hand, face, thought, head, eyes, door, away, put, room	Fingersmith – Sarah Waters I'm the King of the Castle – Susan Hill The Night Watch – Sarah Waters So Many Ways to Begin – Jon McGregor Shadows on our Skin – Jennifer Johnston The Birds on the Trees – Nina Bawden A Bend in the River – V. S. Naipaul John Brown's Body – A. L. Barker The Dressmaker – Beryl Bainbridge The Black Prince.
3	people, hotel, look, girl, asks, really, perhaps, car, small, please	Rates of Exchange – Malcolm Bradbury The Driver's Seat – Muriel Spark According to Mark – Penelope Lively A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian – Marina Lewycka Small World – David Lodge Waxwings – Jonathan Raban Heliopolis – James Scudamore Moon Tiger – Penelope Lively Hotel World – Ali Smith The Conservationist – Nadine Gordimer Heligoland – Shena Mackay
4	years, day, children, mother, people, world, night, life, around, city	All for Love – Dan Jacobson The Keepers of Truth – Michael Collins The Stone Carvers – Jane Urquhart Gifted – Nikita Lalwani Maps for Lost Lovers – Nadeem Aslam Shalimar the Clown – Salman Rushdie Mrs. Eckdorf in O'Neill's Hotel – William Trevor The Gift of Rain – Tan Twan Eng Waxwings – Jonathan Raban Astonishing Splashes of Colour – Clare Morrall

Topic	Keywords	Titles
5	look, want, eyes, around, something, face, head, away, feel, room	The Taxi Driver's Daughter – Julia Darling Something Might Happen - Julie Myerson Carry Me Down – M. J. Hyland The Dark Room – Rachel Seiffert The Harmony Silk Factory – Tash Aw A Distant Shore – Caryl Phillips Brick Lane – Monica Ali The Accidental – Ali Smith In a Free State – V. S. Naipaul Astonishing Splashes of Colour – Clare Morrall
9	life, mother, love, years, though, children, thought, family, felt, wife	The Next Big Thing – Anita Brookner Winnie and Wolf – A. N. Wilson Jigsaw – Sybille Bedford Praxis – Fay Weldon The White Hotel – D. M. Thomas The Public Image – Muriel Spark The Hand-Reared Boy – Brian W. Aldiss Who's Sorry Now – Howard Jacobson The Comfort of Strangers – Ian McEwan On Chesil Beach – Ian McEwan
14	people, thought, judge, court, police, case, told, something, asked, though	In Their Wisdom – C. P. Snow Arthur & George – Julian Barnes Europa – Tim Parks Judge Savage – Tim Parks England, England – Julian Barnes The Blue Tango – Eoin McNamee Anthills of the Savannah – Chinua Achebe Under the Frog – Tibor Fischer Amsterdam – Ian McEwan St. Urbain's Horseman – Mordecai Richler
15	doctor, dr, hospital, nurse, bed, day, room, home, patient, thought	Yellow Dog – Martin Amis The Strange Case of Dr Simmonds & Dr Glas – Dannie Abse A Five Year Sentence – Bernice Rubens The Elected Member – Bernice Rubens Fasting, Feasting – Anita Desai Serenity House – Christopher Hope Any Human Heart – William Boyd The Gate of Angels – Penelope Fitzgerald Saturday – Ian McEwan Bitter Fruit – Achmat Dangor
18	big, maybe, want, looked, something, put, look, thought, wanted, around	The Van – Roddy Doyle Paddy Clarke, Ha-Ha-Ha – Roddy Doyle The Butcher Boy – Pat McCabe From Scenes Like These – Gordon M. Williams. Dogside Story – Patricia Grace The Keepers of Truth – Michael Collins Earthly Powers – Anthony Burgess Beyond Black – Hilary Mantel Reef – Romesh Gunesekera Hotel World – Ali Smith

Topic	Keywords	Titles
32	life, world, perhaps, history, years, story, work, read, ash, love	English Passengers – Matthew Kneale The Handmaid's Tale – Margaret Atwood The Mulberry Empire – Philip Hensher Flaubert's Parrot – Julian Barnes England, England – Julian Barnes Elizabeth Costello – J. M. Coetzee Fire from Heaven – Mary Renault Waterland – Graham Swift The White Hotel – D. M. Thomas Rumours of Rain – André Philippus Brink

Appendix II

A Complete Bibliography of novels used in the topic modelling exercise.

A. L. Barker. *John Brown's Body*. London: Hogarth Press, 1969.

A. N. Wilson. *Winnie and Wolf*. London: Hutchinson, 2007.

A. S. Byatt. *Possession: A Romance*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1991.

Abdulrazak Gurnah. *Paradise*. 2. Dr. London: Hamilton, 1994.

Achmat Dangor. *Bitter Fruit*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2001.

Adam Foulds. *The Quickening Maze*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2009.

Alan Hollinghurst. *The Folding Star*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1994.

Ali Smith. *Hotel World*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2001.

———. *The Accidental*. 1. publ. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005.

Alice Munro. *The Beggar Maid: Stories of Flo and Rose*. 1st Vintage contemporaries ed. Vintage
     Contemporaries. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Alice Thomas Ellis. *The 27th Kingdom*. London: Duckworth, 1982.

Amitav Ghosh. *Sea of Poppies*. London: John Murray, 2008.

André P. Brink. *An Instant in the Wind*. London: W. H. Allen, 1976.

André Philippus Brink. *Rumours of Rain*. London: Vintage, 2000.

Andrew O'Hagan. *Our Fathers*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1999.

Anita Brookner. *Hotel Du Lac*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

———. *The Next Big Thing*. London; New York: Viking, 2002.

Anita Desai. *Clear Light of Day*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

———. *Fasting, Feasting*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1999.

———. *In Custody*. Repr. London: Heinemann, 1984.

Anita Mason. *The Illusionist*. London: Hamilton, 1983.

Ann Schlee. *Rhine Journey*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981.

Anne Enright. *The Gathering*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2007.

Anthony Burgess. *Earthly Powers*. New York, N.Y: Simon and Schuster, 1980.

Arundhati Roy. *The God of Small Things*. New York: Random House, 1997.

Barbara Pym. *Quartet in Autumn*. London: Macmillan, 1977.

Barry England. *Figures in a Landscape*. New York: Random House, 1968.

Barry Unsworth. *Morality Play*. 1. publ. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995.

———. *Pascali's Island*. London: M. Joseph, 1980.

———. *Sacred Hunger*. First edition. New York: Doubleday, 1993.

———. *The Ruby in Her Navel: A Novel of Love and Intrigue in the Twelfth Century*. 1st ed. New
    York: Nan A. Talese, 2006.

Ben Okri. *The Famished Road*. London: J. Cape, 1991.

Bernard MacLaverty. *Grace Notes*. 1. publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 1997.

Bernice Rubens. *A Five Year Sentence*. London: W. H. Allen, 1978.

———. *The Elected Member*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969.

Beryl Bainbridge. *An Awfully Big Adventure*. London: Duckworth, 1989.

———. *Master Georgie*. London: Duckworth, 1998.

———. *The Bottle Factory Outing*. London: Duckworth, 1974.

———. *The Dressmaker*. London: Duckworth, 1973.

Brian Moore. *Lies of Silence*. 1st ed. in the United States of America. New York: Doubleday, 1990.

Brian W. Aldiss. *The Hand Reared Boy*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970.

Bruce Chatwin. *Utz*. 1st American ed. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking, 1989.

Carol Shields. *The Stone Diaries*. 1st American ed. New York: Viking, 1994.

Caroline Blackwood. *Great Granny Webster*. London: Duckworth, 1977.

Caryl Phillips. *A Distant Shore*. London: Secker & Warburg, 2003.

———. *Crossing the River*. 1. Vintage internat. ed. Vintage International. New York, NY: Vintage
    Books, 1995.

Catherine O'Flynn. *What Was Lost*. Birmingham: Tindal Street Press, 2008.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. *Purple Hibiscus*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill,
    2003.

Chinua Achebe. *Anthills of the Savannah*. London: Heinemann, 1987.

Christopher Hope. *Serenity House*. London: Macmillan, 1992.

Christy Brown. *Down All the Days*. New York: Stein and Day, 1970.

Ciaran Carson. *Shamrock Tea*. London: New York: Granta Books, 2001.

Claire Messud. *The Emperor's Children*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

Clare Morrall. *Astonishing Splashes of Colour*. Birmingham: Tindal Street Press, 2003.

Colin Thubron. *To the Last City*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2002.

Colm Tóbín. *Brooklyn*. London: Viking, 2009.

D. M. Thomas. *The White Hotel*. New York: Viking Press, 1981.

Damon Galgut. *The Good Doctor*. 1. publ. London: Atlantic Books, 2003.

Dan Jacobson. *All for Love*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005.

Dannie Abse. *The Strange Case of Dr. Simmonds & Dr. Glas*. London: Robson, 2002.

David Lodge. *Nice Work*. 1st American ed. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking, 1989.

———. *Out of the Shelter*. London: Macmillan, 1970.

———. *Small World: An Academic Romance*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1984.

David Malouf. *Remembering Babylon*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.

David Mitchell. *Cloud Atlas*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004.

David Storey. *Pasmore*. London: Longman, 1972.

———. *Saville*. London: Cape, 1976.

Derek Beaven. *If the Invader Comes*. London: Fourth Estate, 2001.

Doris Lessing. *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1971.

———. *The Good Terrorist*. London: J. Cape, 1985.

———. *The Sirian Experiments*. 1st ed. Canopus in Argos--Archives. New York: Knopf: distributed by Random House, 1981.

Edward Docx. *Self Help*. London: Picador, 2007.

Edward St. Aubyn. *Mother's Milk*. 1st ed. New York: Open City Books, 2005.

Elizabeth Bowen. *Eva Trout*. New York: Knopf, 1968.

Elizabeth Mavor. *A Green Equinox*. London: M. Joseph, 1973.

Elizabeth Taylor. *Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1971.

Eoin McNamee. *The Blue Tango*. Large print ed. Leicester: Thorpe Books, 2003.

Fay Weldon. *Praxis*. New York: Summit Books, 1978.

Ferdinand Mount. *Fairness*. A Chronicle of Modern Twilight. London: Chatto & Windus, 2001.

Francis King. *A Domestic Animal*. Harlow: Longmans, 1970.

———. *The Nick of Time*. London: Arcadia Books, 2003.

Gail Jones. *Sixty Lights*. London: Harvill, 2004.

Gaynor Arnold. *Girl in a Blue Dress*. Birmingham [England]: Tindal Street Press, 2008.

George Mackay Brown. *Beside the Ocean of Time*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 2011.

Gerard Woodward. *I'll Go to Bed at Noon*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2004.

Gordon M. Williams. *From Scenes Like These*. New York: Morrow, 1969.

Graham Swift. *The Light of Day*. 1st American ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

———. *Waterland*. New York: Poseidon Press, 1983.

H. E. Bates. *A Little of What You Fancy*. London: Joseph, 1970.

Harry Thompson. *To the Edge of the World*. Pbk ed. San Francisco, CA: MacAdam/Cage Pub, 2007.

Hilary Mantel. *Beyond Black*. London: Fourth Estate, 2004.

Hisham Matar. *In the Country of Men*. London: Viking, 2006.

Howard Jacobson. *Kalooki Nights*. 1. publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 2006.

———. *Who's Sorry Now?* London: Jonathan Cape, 2002.

Ian McEwan. *Amsterdam*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1998.

———. *Atonement*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2001.

———. *Black Dogs*. New York: Bantam Books, 1994.

———. *On Chesil Beach*. London: J. Cape, 2007.

———. *Saturday*. London: Cape, 2005.

———. *The Comfort of Strangers*. Repr. London: Cape, 1990.

Indra Sinha. *Animal's People*. London: Simon & Schuster, 2007.

Iris Murdoch. *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. New York: Viking Press, 1970.

———. *Bruno's Dream*. New York: Viking Press, 1969.

———. *The Black Prince*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1973.

———. *The Book and the Brotherhood*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1987.

———. *The Good Apprentice*. London: Chatto & Windus/Hogarth Press, 1985.

———. *The Nice and the Good*. New York: Viking Press, 1968.

———. *The Sea, the Sea*. Harmondsworth, Eng.; New York: Penguin Books, 1980.

J. G. Ballard. *Empire of the Sun*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.

J. G. Farrell. *Troubles*. London: Cape, 1970.

J. L. Carr. *A Month in the Country*. Brighton [Eng.]: Harvester Press, 1980.

J. M. Coetzee. *Disgrace*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1999.

———. *Elizabeth Costello*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.

———. *Life & Times of Michael K*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1983.

———. *Slow Man*. New York: Viking, 2005.

———. *Summertime*. 1st American ed. New York: Viking, 2009.

James Hamilton-Paterson. *Cooking with Fernet Branca*. New York: Europa Editions, 2014.

James Kelman. *A Disaffection*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1989.

———. *How Late It Was, How Late*. New York: Delta, 1996.

———. *Translated Accounts*. London: Secker & Warburg, 2001.

James Lever. *Me, Cheeta: An Autobiography*. London: Fourth Estate, 2008.

James Meek. *The People's Act of Love*. Edinburgh; New York: Canongate, 2005.

James Robertson. *The Testament of Gideon Mack*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2006.

James Scudamore. *Heliopolis*. London: Harvill Secker, 2009.

Jan Morris. *Last Letters from Hav*. Harmondsworth: Viking, 1985.

Jane Gardam. *God on the Rocks*. London: H. Hamilton, 1978.

Jane Urquhart. *The Stone Carvers*. 1st American ed. New York: Viking, 2002.

Jennifer Johnston. *Shadows on Our Skin*. London: H. Hamilton, 1977.

Jill Paton Walsh. *Knowledge of Angels*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Jim Crace. *Quarantine*. London: Viking, 1997.

John Arden. *Silence Among the Weapons: Some Events at the Time of the Failure of a Republic*.

    London: Methuen, 1982.

John Banville. *Shroud*. 1st American ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

———. *The Book of Evidence*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1989.

———. *The Sea*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2005.

John Berger. *From a to X: A Story in Letters*. London; New York: Verso, 2008.

———. *G*. New York: Viking Press, 1972.

John Fuller. *Flying to Nowhere: A Tale*. New York: G. Braziller, 1984.

John McGahern. *Amongst Women*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking, 1991.

John Murray. *Jazz, Etc*. Hexham: Flambard, 2003.

Jon McGregor. *So Many Ways to Begin*. London: Bloomsbury, 2006.

Jonathan Raban. *Waxwings*. 4. print. London: Picador, 2003.

Julia Darling. *The Taxi Driver's Daughter*. London: Viking, 2003.

Julia O'Faolain. *No Country for Young Men*. London: Allen Lane, 1980.

Julian Barnes. *Arthur & George*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf, 2006.

———. *England, England*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1999.

———. *Flaubert's Parrot*. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1985.

Julian Rathbone. *King Fisher Lives*. London: Joseph, 1976.

Julie Myerson. *Something Might Happen*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2003.

Kate Grenville. *The Secret River*. 1. publ. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006.

Kazuo Ishiguro. *An Artist of the Floating World*. New York: Putnam's, 2013.

Kingsley Amis. *Ending Up*. London: Cape, 1974.

———. *Jake's Thing*. London: Hutchinson, 1978.

———. *The Old Devils*. London: Hutchinson, 1986.

Kiran Desai. *The Inheritance of Loss*. 1st ed. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006.

Lee K. Abbott. *Dreams of Distant Lives*. Fredonia, New York: White Pine Press, 1990.

Len Deighton. *Bomber*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Linda Grant. *The Clothes on Their Backs*. London: Virago, 2008.

Lisa Moore. *February*. Toronto: House of Anansi, 2009.

Lloyd Jones. *Mister Pip*. 1. publ. London: John Murray, 2007.

Madeleine St. John. *The Essence of the Thing*. London: Fourth Estate, 1997.

Magnus Mills. *The Restraint of Beasts*. London: Flamingo, 1998.

Malcolm Bradbury. *Rates of Exchange*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1983.

Margaret Atwood. *Alias Grace*. 1st ed. New York: Nan A. Talese, 1996.

———. *Cat's Eye*. First Anchor books edition. New York: Anchor Books, 1998.

———. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Repr. London: Cape, 1986.

Margaret Laurence. *The Fire-Dwellers*. New York: Knopf, 1969.

Maria J. Hyland. *Carry Me Down*. 1. publ. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006.

Marina Lewycka. *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian*. 1. publ. London: Viking, 2005.

Marina Warner. *The Leto Bundle*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2001.

———. *The Lost Father*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1988.

Mark Haddon. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. London: Doubleday, 2003.

Martin Amis. *Time's Arrow, or, the Nature of the Offense*. 1st Vintage International ed. New York:
    Vintage International, 1992.

———. *Yellow Dog*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2003.

Martin Booth. *The Industry of Souls*. 1. publ. Stockport: Dewi Lewis, 1998.

Mary Lawson. *The Other Side of the Bridge*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2006.

Mary Renault. *Fire From Heaven*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1969.

Matthew Kneale. *English Passengers*. 1. publ. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2000.

Melvyn Bragg. *A Place in England*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf, 1971.

Michael Collins. *The Keepers of Truth*. 1st Scribner Paperback Fiction ed. New York: Scribner
      Paperback Fiction, 2001.

Michael Ondaatje. *The English Patient*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf, 1992.

Michèle Roberts. *Daughters of the House*. 1. print. New York: Avon Books, 1994.

Michelle De Kretser. *The Lost Dog*. 1. publ. in Great Britain. London: Chatto & Windus, 2008.

Mick Jackson. *The Underground Man*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1998.

Mohammed Hanif. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

Molly Keane. *Good Behaviour*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf: distributed by Random House,
      1981.

Monica Ali. *Brick Lane*. London: Doubleday, 2003.

Mordecai Richler. *Solomon Gursky Was Here*. Markham, Ont., Canada; New York, New York, USA:
      Viking, 1989.

———. *St. Urbain's Horseman*. New York: Knopf, 1971.

Muriel Spark. *Loitering with Intent*. London: Bodley Head, 1981.

———. *The Driver's Seat*. New York: Knopf, 1970.

———. *The Public Image*. New York: Knopf, 1968.

Nadeem Aslam. *Maps for Lost Lovers*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf, 2005.

Nadine Gordimer. *The Conservationist*. London: Cape, 1974.

———. *The Pickup*. Cornell University ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2007.

Naeem Murr. *The Perfect Man*. London: William Heinemann, 2006.

Neil Cross. *Always the Sun*. London: Scribner, 2004.

Nicholas Mosley. *Impossible Object*. New York: Coward-McCann, 1969.

Nicholas Shakespeare. *Snowleg*. London: Harvill, 2004.

Nick Hornby. *How to Be Good*. 1. publ. London: Viking, 2001.

Nicola Barker. *Clear: A Transparent Novel*. 1. publ. London New York: Fourth Estate, 2004.

———. *Darkmans*. London: Fourth Estate, 2007.

Nikita Lalwani. *Gifted*. London: Viking Press, 2007.

Nina Bawden. *The Birds on the Trees*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1970.

Pat Barker. *The Ghost Road*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Dutton, 1996.

Pat McCabe. *Breakfast on Pluto*. 1st ed. New York: HarperFlamingo, 1998.

———. *The Butcher Boy*. Princeton, N.J.: Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, 2008.

Patricia Grace. *Dogside Story*. Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001.

Patrick White. *The Vivisector*. New York: Viking Press, 1970.

Paul Bailey. *Gabriel's Lament*. Repr. London: Cape, 1986.

———. *Peter Smart's Confessions*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1977.

Paul Scott. *Staying On*. London: Heinemann, 1977.

Penelope Fitzgerald. *The Beginning of Spring*. London: Collins, 1988.

———. *The Bookshop*. London: Duckworth, 1978.

———. *The Gate of Angels*. London: Collins, 1990.

Penelope Lively. *According to Mark*. London: Heinemann, 1984.

———. *Moon Tiger*. London: A. Deutsch, 1987.

———. *The Road to Lichfield*. London: Heinemann, 1978.

Peter Ackroyd. *Chatterton*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987.

Peter Carey. *Illywhacker*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

———. *Theft: A Love Story*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006.

———. *True History of the Kelly Gang*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf, 2000.

Philip Hensher. *The Mulberry Empire, or, the Two Virtuous Journeys of the Amir Dost Mohammed Khan*. London: Flamingo, 2002.

Philip Pullman. *The Amber Spyglass*. 1st American ed. His Dark Materials, bk. 3. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.

R. C. Hutchinson. *Rising*. London: Michael Joseph, 1976.

Rachel Seiffert. *The Dark Room*. London: Heinemann, 2001.

Robert Edric. *Gathering the Water*. London: Doubleday, 2006.

———. *Peacetime*. London; New York: Doubleday, 2002.

Robertson Davies. *What's Bred in the Bone*. 1st American ed. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking, 1985.

Roddy Doyle. *Paddy Clarke, Ha-Ha-Ha*. 1st American ed. New York: Viking, 1994.

———. *The Van*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1991.

Rohinton Mistry. *A Fine Balance*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1996.

———. *Family Matters*. Princeton, N.J.: Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic, 2003.

———. *Such a Long Journey*. New York: Knopf, 1991.

Romesh Gunesekera. *Reef*. New Delhi, India: Penguin Books, 1998.

Rose Tremain. *Restoration: A Novel of Seventeenth-Century England*. 1st American ed. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Viking, 1990.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. *Heat and Dust*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

Ruth Rendell. *A Guilty Thing Surprised*. Hutchinson, 1970.

Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*. Reprinted. London: Cape, 1984.

———. *Shalimar the Clown*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2005.

———. *Shame*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf, 1983.

———. *The Moor's Last Sigh*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1995.

———. *The Satanic Verses*. 1st American ed. New York, N.Y: Viking, 1989.

Sam North. *The Unnumbered*. London: Scribner, 2004.

Samantha Harvey. *The Wilderness*. 1. publ. London: Jonathan Cape, 2009.

Sarah Waters. *Fingersmith*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2002.

———. *The Night Watch*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2006.

Seamus Deane. *Reading in the Dark*. First Vintage International edition. New York: Vintage
    International, 1998.

Shena Mackay. *Heligoland*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2003.

———. *The Orchard on Fire*. 1st ed. Wakefield, R.I.: Emeryville, CA: Moyer Bell; Distributed in
    North America by Publishers Group West, 1996.

Shirley Hazzard. *The Bay of Noon*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1970.

Shiva Naipaul. *Fireflies*. London: Deutsch, 1970.

Stanley Middleton. *Holiday*. London: Hutchinson, 1974.

Steve Toltz. *A Fraction of the Whole*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008.

Stevie Davies. *The Element of Water*. London: Women's Press, 2001.

Susan Hill. *I'm the King of the Castle*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970.

———. *The Bird of Night*. London: Hamilton, 1972.

Sybille Bedford. *Jigsaw: An Unsentimental Education; a Biographical Novel*. 1. publ. London: Hamilton, 1989.

Tan Twan Eng. *The Gift of Rain*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Myrmidon, 2007.

Tash Aw. *The Harmony Silk Factory*. London; New York: Fourth Estate, 2005.

Terence Wheeler. *The Conjunction*. London: Angus & Robertson, 1969.

Thomas Keneally. *Confederates*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.

———. *Gossip from the Forest*. London: Collins, 1975.

———. *Schindler's List*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

———. *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith*. New York: Viking Press, 1972.

Thomas Kilroy. *The Big Chapel*. This ed., publ. 1987. Dublin: Poolbeg, 1987.

Tibor Fischer. *Under the Frog*. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1992.

Tim Parks. *Europa*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1998.

———. *Judge Savage*. London: Secker & Warburg, 2003.

Tim Winton. *The Riders*. Scribner ed. New York: Scribner, 1995.

Timothy Mo. *An Insular Possession*. 4. impr. London: Chatto & Windus, 1986.

———. *Sour Sweet*. London: Deutsch, 1982.

———. *The Redundancy of Courage*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1991.

Tom Rob Smith. *Child 44*. 1st ed. New York: Grand Central Pub, 2008.

V. S. Naipaul. *A Bend in the River*. 1st ed. New York: Knopf; distributed by Random House, 1979.

———. *Half a Life*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf, 2001.

———. *In a Free State*. 1st American ed. New York: Knopf, 1971.

Will Self. *Dorian: An Imitation*. 1. publ. London: Viking, 2002.

William Boyd. *An Ice-Cream War*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982.

———. *Any Human Heart*. New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 2003.

William Trevor. *Mrs. Eckdorf in O'Neill's Hotel*. London: Bodley Head, 1969.

———. *The Children of Dynmouth*. London: Bodley Head, 1976.

———. *The Story of Lucy Gault*. 1. American ed. New York, NY.: Viking, 2002.

Zadie Smith. *The Autograph Man*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2002.

Zoe Heller. *Notes on a Scandal*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2003.

Zvi Jagendorf. *Wolfy and the Strudelbakers*. Stockport, U.K: Dewi Lewis Pub, 2001.

Theodor W. Adorno and J. M. Bernstein. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*.
Routledge Classics. London; New York: Routledge, 2001.

Bibliography

Adam Kelly. "Formally Conventional Fiction". In *American Literature in Transition, 2000–2010*,

  edited by Rachel Greenwald Smith, 1st ed., 46–60. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

  https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316569290.004.

Ali Smith. *The Accidental*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005.

Andrew Hoberek. "Literary Genre Fiction". In *American Literature in Transition, 2000–2010*, edited

  by Rachel Greenwald Smith, 1st ed., 61–75. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

  https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316569290.005.

Andrew Piper. "Enumerations Code". Github. Accessed 3 March 2023.

  https://github.com/piperandrew/enumerations/tree/master/03_Topoi.

———. *Enumerations: Data and Literary Study*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press,

  2018.

Anna Auguscik. *Prizing Debate: The Fourth Decade of the Booker Prize and the Contemporary

  Novel in the UK*. Culture & Theory 132. Bielefeld: transcript, 2017.

Brad Stone. *The Everything Store: Jeff Bezos and the Age of Amazon*, 2014.

  https://archive.org/details/everythingstorej0000ston.

Claire Squires. "Taste and/or Big Data?: Post-Digital Editorial Selection". *Critical Quarterly* 59, no. 3

  (n.d.).

Dan N. Sinykin. "The Conglomerate Era: Publishing, Authorship, and Literary Form, 1965–2007".

  Contemporary Literature 58, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 462–91.

David B. Neiborg and Thomas Pell. "The Platformization of Cultural Production: Theorizing the

  Contingent Cultural Commodity". *New Media & Society* 20, no. 11 (2018).

Ed Finn. *What Algorithms Want: Imagination in the Age of Computing*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017.

Eleanor Dickson Koehl and Jennifer Christie. "Basic Walk-through of an Extracted Features 2.0 File". Hathi Trust Research Centre, 25 March 2022. https://wiki.htrc.illinois.edu/display/COM/Basic+walk-through+of+an+Extracted+Features+2.0+file#BasicwalkthroughofanExtractedFeatures2.0file-Featuressection.

Franco Moretti. *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History*. Paperback ed. London: Verso, 2007.

J. M. Coetzee. *Disgrace*. A Penguin Book Fiction. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2000.

James F. English. "Prestige, Pleasure, and the Data of Cultural Preference: 'Quality Signals' in the Age of Superabundance". *Western Humanities Review* 7-, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 119 – 139.

———. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*. First Harvard University Press paperback edition. Cambridge, Massachusetts London: Harvard University Press, 2008.

———. "Winning the Culture Game: Prizes, Awards, and the Rules of Art". *New Literary History* 33, no. 1 (2002): 109–35. https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2002.0005.

John B. Thompson. *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing*. Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2021.

———. *Merchants of Culture: The Publishing Business in the Twenty-First Century*. Second edition. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2012.

John Guillory. *Cultural Capital*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

———. *Professing Criticism: Essays on the Organization of Literary Study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022.

Maria J. Hyland. *Carry Me Down*. 1. publ. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006.

Mark Davis. "Five Processes in the Platformisation of Cultural Production: Amazon and Its Publishing Ecosystem". *Australian Humanities Review* 66 (May 2020).

Mark McGurl. *Everything and Less: The Novel in the Age of Amazon*. London; New York: Verso, 2021.

———. *The Program Era: Postwar Fiction and the Rise of Creative Writing*. 1. Harvard Univ. Press paperback ed. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2011.

Matthew L. Jockers and Rosamond Thalken. *Text Analysis with R: For Students of Literature*. S.l.: SPRINGER NATURE, 2021.

Matthew Lee Jockers. *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History*. Topics in the Digital Humanities. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013.

Nan Z. Da. "The Computational Case Against Computational Literary Studies". *Critical Inquiry* 45, no. 3 (Spring 2019). https://doi.org/10.1086/702594.

Niklas Luhmann. *Introduction to Systems Theory*. Translated by Peter Gilgen. Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity, 2013.

Niko Pajkovic. "Algorithms and Taste-Making: Exposing the Netflix Recommender System's Operational Logics". *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 28, no. I (2022): 214–35.

Pascale Casanova. *The World Republic of Letters*. Convergences. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Paul DiMaggio, Manish Nag, and David Blei. "Exploiting Affinities between Topic Modeling and the

    Sociological Perspective on Culture: Application to Newspaper Coverage of U.S. Government

    Arts Funding". *Poetics* 41, no. 6 (December 2013): 570–606.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2013.08.004.

Pierre Bourdieu and Randal Johnson. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*.

    New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Richard Jean So. *Redlining Culture: A Data History of Racial Inequality and Postwar Fiction*. New

    York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

Roddy Doyle. *Paddy Clarke Ha, Ha, Ha*. 1. paperback ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995.

———. *The Van*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

Sarah Waters. *Fingersmith*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2002.

Steve Wasserman. "The Amazon Effect". In *Literary Publishing in the Twenty-First Century*, edited

    by Travis Kurowski, Wayne Miller, and Kevin Prufer, First edition. Minneapolis, Minnesota:

    Milkweed Editions, 2016.

Sue Vice. *Introducing Bakhtin*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, Distributed exclusively in

    the USA by St. Martin's Press, 1997.