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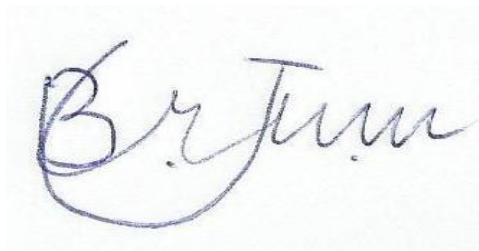
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Bart-Jan Crum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'B' and a long, horizontal flourish at the end.

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Abstract:

This paper will evaluate the discussion about the death of the novel from a publisher's perspective. The question that we essentially try to answer is 'to what extent are the publishing world and the academic world in line with one another?'. To answer this question properly we need to take a look at both fields separately to then synthesise the findings in our conclusion. The Man Booker prize is discussed in light of the question 'how do we properly evaluate and what do we consider (quality) literature?'. While this paper by no means asserts to have found the answers to these irrefutably complex questions, it does show to have these complexities into consideration in order to come up with a nuanced and relatively objective conclusion. This research is framed in the Bourdieusian Field theory, which functions as a lens through which we look at the field of cultural production. Because the publisher's perspective is a relatively unexamined factor in the discussion about the death of the novel, juxtaposing the academic and the publishing world will arguably lead to original insights on the basis of a relatively new perspective. This stands in opposition to research on the same topic, which has predominantly taken readership as its measurement. After examining both fields, this paper concludes that the death of the novel can not only be very well argued against on the basis of the academic discussion, but also by looking at the publishing world. In this sense, both worlds are in agreement. The two chapters seem to strengthen each other in coming to the conclusion that the death of the novel is far from evident. Although this is not the main point of this paper, it does seem to be the logical conclusion of it.

Keywords: *academic discussion, death of the novel, Bourdieu, publishing world, Man Booker prize*

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Introduction

It is safe to say that the academic debate about the death of the novel has not yet resolved reached a consensus. Multiple recent sources dealing with this topic indicate that the discussion is still relevant today. Will Self wrote an article in *The Guardian* titled 'The Novel Is Dead (this Time It's for Real)'. He claims that the discussion about the novel as a medium of literature has been resolved and that its death is undeniable (Self). There is even a source going back all the way to the early 20th century (Allen). This shows that this topic is both relevant and has quite a history. Sources discussing the death of the novel tend to take readership - the extent to which readers consume works of literature - and the exhaustion of genres - everything has been done before - as a means of saying something about the state of the novel. What has not been done before is comparing the academic discussion to the publishing industry, which is what this paper does.

If we want to say something about the novel in the publishing world, the field in which we are operating, which is the literary field, has to be properly defined. This field is not as unified as one might initially think. To help make sense of the literary field, we need a theoretical framework. This will aid understanding and prevent oversimplification of concepts. The adopted method of this research is the Bourdieusian field theory. This theory provides us with tools to make sense of the complex field of the publishing world within the literary field. Each field operates within their own rules working towards its own goals. These fields are by no means isolated structures, but rather heavily interactive. Each field has agents which bring with them their habitus or dispositions. For example, a literary critic writing for a newspaper has to abide by different rules (which Bourdieu calls doxa) than a reader of a certain social/ethnic/cultural background. Although they operate under different rules and dispositions and occupy different fields, the critic could influence the reader by writing a passionate review of a certain book or genre, thereby increasing its economic and/or

symbolic capital. This reader might praise the critic for his accurate reviews and thereby assigning him symbolic capital, increasing the influence said critic has. Although this effect may not be astoundingly significant, it does show that different agents in different fields interact with one another by being able to assign capital to each other's products. Adopting a Bourdieusian perspective on the publishing industry will help us come to a better understanding of the role of publishers as agents in the literary field (Bourdieu 1983).

Since the question 'what constitutes ('quality') literature?' is not one that is relevant to our research, this paper examines the relationship between the academic and the publishing world by taking a corpus of books associated with the Man Booker Prize. Although the prize certainly has economic capital, it also provides a well-defined concept of a certain level of literary quality, a certain prestige, symbolic and/or cultural value. It is without question that the Booker Prize not only brings the economic capital itself, the winner receives 50,000 pounds, but is also guaranteed to provide the author with a boost in sales for said book and arguably the rest of their books. An article in *The Telegraph* points out "According to Nielsen Bookscan, sales can increase from anything between 463% (Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall*) to 1918% (Howard Jacobsen, *The Finkler Question*) after a Man Booker Prize win." (Blumsom). Less obvious is the claim that this prize also carries with it the promise of a certain level of literary quality. This has to do with literary quality harder being harder to define than sales numbers. However, if there is an institution which has the promotion of literature as its main objective, it is the Man Booker Prize.

Taking the academic discussion as a starting point, we have something to compare to the results from the publishing industry. The Bourdieusian field theory will serve as a tool of analysing this field and help us make sense of the relation between these two worlds. This will provide the foundation for answering the research question, which is: to what extent are

the publishing world and the academic world in line with one another regarding the death of the novel?

The first chapter focuses on the academic discussion. Taking sources from both sides of the discussion and comparing and contrasting them and will make for a clear starting point of this research.

The second chapter elaborates on the publishing world. By delving into the workings of the publishing world using the Bourdieusian field theory, we can come to a better understanding of this world and specifically its relation to the academic discussion. The chapter will also take a critical look at the Man Booker prize and its capacity for evaluating literature relatively objectively. With figures from the Publishers Association combined with numbers indicating the influence of the Man Booker prize, this section will provide an evaluation of the publishing world in relation to the discussion about the death of the novel.

The conclusion will take the previous chapters and briefly summarise them, weighing the academic discussion and its consensus to the findings on the publishing world. The publishing world and its sales numbers are either completely in line, or to some extent in contrast with the academic discussion. The aim of this paper is not to take a certain position on the debate about the death of the novel, but rather, to balance the two – academic and publishing world - out against each other. The preliminary hypothesis is that the academic discussion is, at least to some extent, out of touch and not nuanced enough to accurately say something about the state of the publishing world.

Since the literary field does not consist of only a writer and a reader, it makes sense to elaborate on the complexities of this field. In order to do so in a well-founded manner, the next part of this introduction will focus on the Bourdieusian field theory. This theory will give us more clarity into the literary field, which leads to a more informed conclusion.

The Bourdieusian field theory revolves around the idea that a field, such as the literary field, consists of multiple relational institutions. As mentioned before, the literary field does not consist of merely a writer and a reader, but there are multiple institutions involved in not only the production, but also the consumption of literature. Publishers, literary agents, book sections in newspapers, universities and reviewers are all part of the literary field. It might be argued that these institutions operate independently from one another and they each have their own prestige or forms of capital, a term that will be explained later. However, Bourdieu's field theory argues that these fields are for a large part relational. For example, universities might have a large impact on which books are considered 'great works', which can influence students' attitudes toward those books. As a result, the publishers might notice an increase in the sales of those books while others are decreasing. The universities might also be influenced by institutions such as the Man Booker Prize or specific literary agents. So even though one might initially think predominantly about writers and readers when the term 'literary field' is used, Bourdieu's theory argues against this line of thinking by explaining how these institutions are far from independent.

In his article "The field of cultural production", Bourdieu says: "The literary or artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces. The network of objective relations between positions subtends and orients the strategies which the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions (i.e. their position-takings), strategies which depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations (*rappports de force*)."

(Bourdieu 312-3) What Bourdieu illustrates here is the idea that every individual, agent from here on, will seek to defend and improve their position within each of the fields they are placing themselves in. This is true for both academics and publishers, although in different ways.

Another notion Bourdieu puts forward is that of ‘capital’. This could be seen as the currency with which agents can improve or defend their position within a field. Consequently, the most important structure to figure out is how the capital is distributed and what kind of capital is meant. In the case of novels, we can think of economic capital as an important factor for writers and publishers to improve their position in their field. If the evaluation of literary value were as straightforward as that, there would be no need for institutions such as the Man Booker prize. Therefore, we also have to take symbolic, cultural, linguistic, educational and social capital into account (Bourdieu 322-34). In the case of capital, the economic type might be the most concrete and understandable, as it relates to monetary value. A writer might not have economic capital as his main objective. He might write as a hobby and be more concerned with teaching his readers something of value, in which case he focuses more on educational capital. A publisher arguably has a stronger urge to publish books that sell well over books that contain a valuable message.

Writers who have established themselves as ‘great writers’ will have less economic concerns and can afford to be more disposed to symbolic and cultural capital. Randal Johnson writes about the first capital that “[s]ymbolic capital refers to degree accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge and recognition.” The second type is defined as “a form of knowledge, an internalized code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts.”(Johnson 7).

The last definition we need to elaborate on is ‘habitus’. Agents who occupy those fields have to play by certain *doxa* in order to be accepted in that field. Following those rules, both written and unwritten, will result in the accumulation of capital, which leads to a better position within said field. The thing that we have yet to add to this field is the dispositions of each individual agent known as ‘habitus’. Bourdieu says that habitus is “neither a result of

free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time: dispositions that are both shaped by past events and structures, and that shape current practices and structures and also, importantly, that condition our very perceptions of these” (Bourdieu 170). These dispositions might be interpreted as the agent’s strategy within their field.

From a bottom-up perspective we have agents who have their habitus, which influences their capacity to gather different types of capital. Different agents occupy an institution and compete with one another for capital within this institution. An institution, which has its own doxa, is part of a larger construct, namely a field. By taking this perspective, we might come to a better understanding of the relation between the academic and the publishing world, both of which are occupying a place in the literary field.

The extent to which the publishing world aligns with the academic discussion will form the basis for forming the conclusions that are made in this paper.

Chapter 1

With articles titled ‘The novel is dead (this time it’s for real)’, ‘Against the “Death of the Novel”’ and ‘Why do we always proclaim that the novel is dead?’, one thing we can conclude is that the discussion on the novel’s prevalence and vitality has not yet reached a consensus. In this chapter, arguments on both sides are juxtaposed and examined in light of one another. First the claims in favour of the death of the novel will be shown, followed by opposing voices. The conclusion of this chapter will show that the academic discussion, at least in this study, has a tendency of favouring opponents of the death of the novel. This means that the novel is more likely to be alive and kicking than dead. If this consensus turns out to be reflected throughout the publishing world and specifically the UK publishing world, this paper could perhaps provide an argument against the death of the novel (in the UK).

Will Self, an English novelist, is one of the most outspoken people claiming that the novel is dead. “No more: in the digital age, not only is the physical book in decline, but the very idea of 'difficult' reading is being challenged”(Self). Self claims that the only question we need to ask ourselves is if we believe society to be capable of disconnecting from all the modern connections for the sake of difficult, let alone leisurely, reading. This is not to say that the serious novel will not be read anymore. It simply will not be a central part of our culture anymore. There is an argument to be made for the central focus of our culture changing. In an article from *The Spectator*, Allan Massie makes the claim that “[o]ur culture has become visual rather than literary” (Massie). Consequently this could suggest that books receive less attention, with difficult works being the likely first to go, as they would take up the most time or require the most attention. So there are sources claiming that difficult reading (as a central part of culture) will become a thing of the past. Self posits a question allowing everyone for themselves to form an opinion on whether the novel will survive our modern culture. “This is the question: if you accept that by then the vast majority of text will

be read in digital form on devices linked to the web, do you also believe that those readers will voluntarily choose to disable that connectivity? If your answer to this is no, then the death of the novel is sealed out of your own mouth.” (Self). The proposition Self makes here is that (technological) connectivity and difficult reading are somehow in an inverse relationship. The claim he makes is that the death of the novel can be derived from the extent to which we are connected via our technology. As it is hard to dispute the idea that technology, and thereby connectivity, is becoming a larger part of our everyday life, Self’s claim suggests that the novel as a form will disappear.

American novelist Philip Roth most likely identifies with the same line of thought. He stated back in 2009 that the novel will be dead in 25 years. Not only that, but he claims that estimate to be even optimistic (The Daily Beast). His argument overlaps largely with Will Self’s. Roth draws a comparison between novel readers of today and people reading Latin. This falls neatly into Self’s claim of novels not completely disappearing, but not being a central part of culture anymore. Because both Roth and Self are successful writers, their views and opinions can be regarded as having a solid foundation in experience. Since these arguments are relatively recent, it makes sense to also look at older arguments in this discussion to see whether it is solely a recent issue.

In a 1966 article titled *‘The Curious Death of the Novel’* Louis Rubin has written an overview of reasons arguing that the novel is dead. The novel used to have a unified aim of debunking class structures, but “[n]ow that the class structure is permanently fluid (try that one at the Belle Meade Country Club), there is no place for the novel” (307). Because the fluidity of our contemporary class structure can be questioned here, there is need for nuancing this statement. The interpretation of this argument here is that class structures used to be far more rigid and distinct. Novels are said to have had the aim of challenging these structures. If we take our current class structure to be permanently fluid, it could be argued

that the novel has lost one of its biggest functions. This leads to the idea that the novel, through the absence of a coherent goal, will most likely cease to exist, as it has fulfilled its earlier function.

There is also the claim that contemporary society has changed so rapidly that the novel as a way of transcending everyday reality seems to fall short. “The bewildering cacophony of modern times, with its continual crises, its everyday reality more weird than anything formerly portrayed in the most visionary works of fiction, has left no room for the mere loveliness of the belles lettres.”(307). So the novel as a sensational experience cannot trump the complexity of modern day life, which is one of the reasons it is claimed to be dying.

Turning to a less abstract argument, Scottish author Ewan Morrison writes:

“Will books, as we know them, come to an end?

Yes, absolutely, within 25 years the digital revolution will bring about the end of paper books. But more importantly, ebooks and e-publishing will mean the end of "the writer" as a profession. Ebooks, in the future, will be written by first-timers, by teams, by speciality subject enthusiasts and by those who were already established in the era of the paper book.” (Morrison)

Here we have an author who does not reason from the position of the novel and its contestable functions or values, but rather from a more practical standpoint. He claims that the novel will die because the profession of writer is ceasing to be sustainable. With the technological advancements, mainly ebooks and e-publishing, it will become harder and harder to make a living off of writing novels. While this is arguably not the most profound

argument in favour of the dying novel, its practicality makes it difficult to provide a strong counterargument against it.

Now that we have outlined several arguments in favour of the death of the novel, both recent and historical, we will provide opposing arguments, which will later on be compared to the arguments already posited.

While Self's arguments are eloquently written, its foundation can be questioned. His way of constructing his arguments is by drawing on a comparison between his own values and his son's. Because they are from a different generation, the disparity between the place of novels between both perspectives forms the basis of Self's argumentation. A Sunday Book Review from the *New York Times* states: "Those who tell us that the novel is dead remind me of that professor. They want to assert that they alone possess the knowledge of what writing is for, what it means and how it is received. They want to be the "deciders.""(Schillinger and Moser). This is essentially what Self seems to be doing in his article. He does not provide us with a definition of what 'difficult' literature entails, just that it is not central to our culture anymore. Schillinger goes to state that "Their (Self's) pronouncements are made, I believe, from a position of urgent sincerity that often has two separate foundations. One is nostalgia: They yearn to find in contemporary literature the strong resonance they felt with the books that first shaped their sensibilities. The other is ambition: They themselves intend to write a novel that will show others what proper writing is." (Schillinger and Moser) This argument is strengthened by the fact that Self is indeed a writer himself. So there is a certain contradiction embedded in authors who claim that the novel is dead while at the same time continuing to write novels.

As a response to Roth's argument, Paul Auster, an American writer and director, has stated blatantly that "[he] strenuously disagrees" (Big Think). Auster argues that the novel, as opposed to the sonnet, is not something that is fixed, but malleable. As our society is

constantly reinventing itself, so the novel will reinvent itself along the same path. Every historical event needs its story to be told one way or another. Since the novel is claimed to be so flexible, it will always be very suitable to tell those stories.

The big problem, which Rubin himself addresses, is that the arguments he puts forward, however valid, cannot be pinned to a certain age. Class structures are always changing, but, more importantly, reforming. “As for television doing the trick, not long ago it was movies that were blamed; a few decades ago the magazines and book clubs were destroying literature.”(308) It can very well be argued that the rise of Netflix is cause for concern to literature enthusiasts, which would be an argument very similar to the previous argument. Rubin’s conclusion is that our view of literature is mostly based on looking back, since we simply cannot put today’s literature in perspective. It will be multiple years before we can say with relative safety which books are and which books are not to be considered quality literature (325).

Even in the early 1900s, Jules Verne made the claim that the novel will have disappeared in fifty to a hundred years. His claim is that newspapers will replace novels because they are not necessary anymore for the filing of everyday events (Allen et al 289). So as a means of encapsulating reality, the novel is not essential anymore. Newspapers are said to be more adept at doing so. Given the date of publication, 1902, we can argue that his claim was not borne out, as novels are still available and mentioned in literary sections of newspapers like *The Guardian*. More importantly, however, is the parallel between this and the Netflix argument it provides. The fact that this same reasoning is used throughout the 20th century, namely that a new medium will replace novels, decreases the validity of that argument. It could be argued that technology is a change of an unprecedented magnitude with regard to how we live our lives, but again this might be the same thought process people went through when the steam engine was invented or newspapers came into being.

Booker Prize winner of 2011 Julian Barnes makes an interesting remark on the interplay between books and films. “Books speak one language; films another. The novel, perhaps, is fundamentally subjective and introverted (written by one person to be read by another). Whereas cinema at least purports to be objective and extrovert – to show things as they are and to speak to people en masse. This naturally shapes the type of stories they like to tell.” (Brooks) If we take this to be true, films and novels are distinct formats of expression, it provides a counterargument to the idea that film will aid the supposed decline of the novel.

Ben Jeffery makes an interesting point in his article for the *Times Literary Supplement*. He says that “[w]hen we say that a cultural practice is ‘dead’, we do not mean, necessarily, that it has stopped happening, or even that it happens less than it used to, but that it no longer matters somehow.” (Jeffery 16). This viewpoint is in line with Will Self when he says that the ‘true’ novel will still be around, but just not as a central part of our culture. While this might be a valid claim, it does greatly depend on what we call dead. One could argue that the novel is alive on the basis of earlier mentioned sources saying it will not disappear, at least not completely. This point neatly illustrates possible difficulties in assessing this discussion. As previously mentioned, the definition of a ‘novel’ falls outside the scope of this paper. Self and Roth, however, seem to be talking about a specific level of literary quality when they refer to ‘the novel’. In order to avoid having to distinguish between ‘quality’ literature and ‘bad’ literature, we specified earlier that we take as a corpus the longlist nominees for the Man Booker Prize. By using this framework as a determiner for ‘quality’ literature, the arguments in the next chapter will hopefully be made with respect to the idea of ‘the novel’ that Self and Roth have in mind.

The next possible roadblock to tackle in this paper is how to define ‘death’ (of the novel). As Jeffery states earlier, the difference between life and death, within the scope of this paper, does not lie in novels being either read or not. Just as Self does not claim that

reading as a leisurely practice will cease to exist altogether, it seems to be about the extent to which it happens. While this is certainly something to keep in mind, the next two chapters will deal with this issue more extensively.

There are several arguments to be made for both sides of the discussion about the death of the novel. In the following part, the arguments will be summarised and synthesised into a tentative consensus which will form the foundation and context of the next chapters.

Self and Roth primarily make the same point. According to them, writers will continue to write and readers will continue to read, but the idea of difficult reading as a central part of culture will disappear (Self; Roth). The problem with this claim is that it is not very well substantiated by either of the mentioned authors. Both point towards technology as the guilty party of the ‘obvious’ decline of the novel, but how today’s technology harms the idea of difficult reading in a sense that television has not been able to do for the past fifty years they do not seem to explicate. An additional objection to this claim one might have is that the weight of the argument lies in both men’s authority as writers. This does not automatically invalidate this argument, but should in no way act as substitute for properly substantiating one’s argument. Also, Auster provides a direct response to Roth’s claims, which can be said to balance each other out, since both are authors (Auster).

In his book “The Value of the Novel”, Peter Boxall responds specifically to Self’s article. He says that

“what Self’s essay tends to overlook, like those other ‘death of the novel’ essays that came before it, is that this precarity is not a mark of the failure of the novel, not a sign of its demise, but the very condition of its being. Self’s nostalgia for the world to which the novel seemed to him to belong – and the connected tendency to resist the new forms of democracy enabled by contemporary information technology- is based, I think, on a partial understanding of the way that the novel has historically negotiated

the claims of collective life, and of how such claims impact upon the freedom of the mind to contemplate its own singularity, its freedom from an archive of knowledge or from a community of other thinkers.” (Boxall 140)

This relates to the idea that the novel will constantly reinvent itself. As the article by Allen shows, the discussion in itself can be an argument for the life of the novel. Boxall criticises Self for his rigid idea of what a novel entails, which is an argument we have not yet taken into consideration.

Allan Massie makes the bold claim that our modern society has become visual rather than literary. (Massie) He sees the rise of cinema as a sign that the novel is in decline. However, the problem of substantiating can be found in this point as well. There may be a rise in cinema revenues, but that is not the point. Massie’s argument is predicated on the idea that films and books are inversely correlated. Barnes’s comment on the differences between the two formats suggests this does not necessarily have to be the case (Brooks). Moreover, Barnes seems to claim that they are more independent than one might assume.

The two arguments Rubin outlines have to do with debunking class structures and encapsulating reality. It is assumed that the novel used to have a unified aim of challenging these structures and to capture reality, which could be contested. Fortunately, the latter claim can be refuted by looking at when newspapers came into being, which can be said to have risen significantly from the 19th century onward. Since then, there have been many great authors. Dostoyevsky, Joyce, Proust, Hemmingway and Orwell, just to name a few. These examples suggest that the supposed decline of the novel was not caused by the rise of newspapers. Had this been the case, the novel would have already died when the mentioned authors wrote their seminal works.

There is also something to be said with regard to Rubin’s arguments and Allen’s. Both papers show possible reasons for the novel about to die, some of which can be refuted,

as was attempted in the previous paragraph. However, the fact that other arguments cannot be so easily countered and are still relevant today, can in itself be a counterargument. If Allen was right, the novel should have died about ten to fifty years ago. Moreover, the vitality of the discussion that this chapter is devoted to, indicates that it is contestable, and thereby not irrefutably dead. This may sound paradoxical, but is not necessarily so. If the novel is dead, there would be no need for recent sources adding to the discussion. It would have been long evident that the novel is dead and the need for having the discussion seems futile. So in a backwards way, the discussion on the death of the novel might even be viewed as one of the clearest indicators of its vitality.

The discussion seems, to a certain extent, to revolve around what can be considered a (literary) novel. The most articulate arguments in favour of the death of the novel do not suggest that reading and writing as a whole will become a thing of the past. Self's claim was that 'difficult' reading was challenged. Death is also not to be taken as the complete annihilation of the concept of the novel, but rather not being a central part of our culture anymore. If we take this into account, the argument becomes harder to refute. This semantic part of the discussion is something to take into consideration, but falls outside the scope of this thesis. This is the specific reason for choosing to adopt the Man Booker prize as a measure of literary value. Nevertheless, this does strengthen Self's argument.

As this concludes the summary of arguments it should be mentioned that the manner in which claims are weighed against each other is by no means completely objective or unbiased. It seems to be the case that the arguments in favour of the death of the novel are easier to refute than the ones against its death. Arguments from the early 20th century are, in an abstract sense, still applicable today. The television was cause for concern for novelists just as the computer is today. But unless advocates for the death of the novel are able to come up with a concrete reason why computers or smartphones will do what television was,

arguably, unable to do, the argument remains weak. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, it might even work the other way, indicating the life rather than the death of the novel. One of the most profound arguments against the death of the novel is paradoxically the return of the same type of argument. New technology has come into being and this will certainly replace literature. As novels have had the chance to die after the rise of newspapers, television and, more recently, computers and smartphones, it can very well be argued that the repetition of this argument is a strong sign that the novel is not dead, or at least in the same state as it was at the beginning of the 20th century. Taken all the arguments into consideration this chapter concludes with an optimistic view to the novel. Although some might still claim that the novel is dead, the consensus of this chapter is that this is far from evident. Moreover, the arguments in favour of the death of the novel seem less convincing than the arguments against the death of the novel. This chapter argues that the novel, from the perspective of the academic discussion, is not as dead as many writers proclaim. These proclamations may even be a sign that it is still very much alive.

Chapter 2

As the introduction has specified, our use terms such as ‘field’ ‘agent’ and ‘doxa’ stem from our theoretical framework, the Bourdieusian Field theory. In this next piece, the aim is to frame the research question in the context of the academic discussion, using the terminology and theory from Bourdieu and synthesising them into an evaluation of the publishing world, specifically in the UK, in relation to the Man Booker prize. One of the major problems we will come across in this chapter, and subsequently the conclusion, is the question that was posed in the first chapter, namely ‘when do we consider a cultural practice (such as reading novel) to be dead?’.

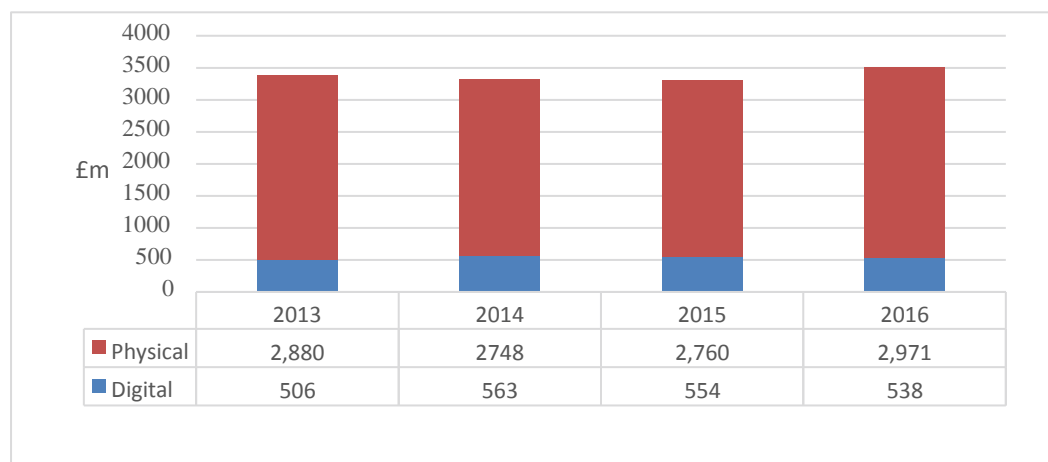
It is useful to keep in mind that the previous chapter focused on the academic discussion and that this chapter will focus on publishers and sales. This relates to Bourdieu’s Field theory. Agents in the academic institution will have a different habitus than publishers. Participants in the academic discussion tend to be less interested in economic capital and more interested in symbolic capital. Publishers, on the other hand, arguably have the opposite. Although some publishers might be said to value literary quality more than others, every publisher is more dependent on his books selling than an academic is. Writers can be said to operate somewhere in the middle of those two extremes. As a result of this, the comparison between publishers and the academic discussion arguably leads to a more nuanced perspective of the literary field in relation to the death of the novel. So these two different institutions, the publishing world and the academic world, have different priorities when it comes to the promotion of literature. This leads, from a Bourdieusian perspective, to the idea that these two agents, publishers and (academic) critics, have a different habitus and abide by different doxa. While the relatedness of these two worlds is by no means undisputable, they will provide different perspectives on the same field.

The Man Booker prize functions as a filter for what we deem to have literary value versus what does not. In this way, we do not run into the problem of having to define literary value ourselves. Since the Man Booker prize main objective is to promote literary quality, and it has done so since 1969, it would seem a relatively objective institution to take as a point of reference. There is, however, quite a contradiction embedded in the prize. This contradiction is illustrated by Max Klinger “Any art which is successful economically is seen to be ‘selling out’. It is for this reason that the field of cultural production is referred to as ‘the economic world reversed’ by Bourdieu, as in the subfield of cultural production in which production is most autonomous from the field of power and therefore is governed most in accordance with the autonomous internal logic of the field of cultural production itself, symbolic recognition is dependent upon the ability to produce works that systematically invert the principles of h[ie]rarchization that exist within the economic sphere.” (Klinger)

Because the Man Booker prize is said to unite symbolic and economic capital, which, according to Bourdieu, are in an inverse relationship, it is unclear to what extent the prize assigns literary value or symbolic capital versus the amount of economic capital. This suggests that in looking at the influence of the Man Booker prize on sales numbers, the longlist might be a better indication of literary value than the shortlist or even the winner. The winner of the Man Booker prize has the most economic capital. To contrast, if the Booker prize were to only influence the winner significantly, it could be argued that it is mainly through economic capital that readership is influenced and therefore not through symbolic capital. However, if the shortlisted and longlisted books also have a significant increase in sales, it might be argued that those sales might be, at least to a larger extent, due to the literary value which is recognised or established by the prize. In short, this paper deems the influence of the prize on the shortlist and the longlist to be more indicative of literary value or symbolic capital, while the influence on the winner might have more to do with economic

capital. The internal contradiction of the prize is something that we have to keep in mind and is a possible subject for further research. Nevertheless, we assume that every book selected by the Man Booker prize contains the necessary symbolic capital to be considered literature by most standards.

On the whole, the book sales in the UK does not seem to have drastically changed over this period. Here we have the “The invoiced value of UK publisher total sales of physical and digital books” (PA Statistics Yearbook 2016)



Even though the decline of ‘the novel’ is not refuted on the basis of this statistic, we can say that book sales over the past four years have been relatively stable. There are other data strengthening this claim. The PA Statistics also state that “UK consumers spent 6% more on books in 2016 than in the previous year, with young generations of consumers fuelling the growth. In contrast consumers bought 4% fewer ebooks”. Now this may not seem all that significant, 6% increase against a 4% decrease, but the physical book sales comprise a significantly larger part of the total sales. The fact that physical sales seem to be increasing while digital sales are decreasing can also aid in refuting the argument of technology being at the heart of the supposed decline of the novel. If technology fuels that decline, we would at least expect to see the reverse happening, physical sales decreasing and digital sales

increasing. Also “[b]oth online and store purchases were up in terms of value, with sales through online channels up 5% to £1,169m and sales through stores up 7% to £1,130m in 2016;” (The UK Book Industry in Statistics 2016)

The Publishers Association also published a piece on their website in May of 2016 stating that “[n]ew figures released today by The Publishers Association shows that the UK publishing industry is in good health with total sales of book and journal publishing up to £4.4bn in 2015. The figures also revealed the UK’s love affair with the printed book is far from over as for the first time since the invention of the ebook, overall physical book sales increased while digital sales decreased.” Audiobooks also rose by 29% in 2015. Publishers Association Chief Executive, Stephen Loting also said “Whether it be the latest fiction bestseller, our world renowned scientific journals or textbooks for the classroom, the UK publishing industry continues to punch well above its weight. At a time when the Government is looking for world leading sectors to drive growth in the UK economy, they could do a lot worse than look to the success of our publishing industry.” (Strong Year for UK Publishing Industry as It Grows to £4.4bn)

An article from *The Telegraph* even stated that “The Publishers Association study has revealed that sales of print books are rising, while digital sales are down for the first time since the invention of the e-reader. Experts have hailed the figures, saying the claim that the "physical book is doomed" can "finally be refuted".” (Prior, qtd in Furness) 2015 was the year in which the “books fought back”, according to Anna Bond, UK sales director for Pan Macmillan.

If we turn our attention toward the Man Booker prize, we immediately observe a significant effect in the winning novels. As was hinted at in the introduction, winning the Booker prize, according to the winners from 2001 up to 2012, results in an increase in sales between 473% and 1918%. Given that these two extremes occurred right after one another, it

is by no means established that, on the basis of these winners, we observe either a steady decline or a steady increase in sales after winning the prize. There is no trend visible that suggests the increase in sales is diminishing over the years. On average, the winner of the Man Booker prize has its book sales increased by 971.6%. So, on the basis of this statistic there is no grounds for saying that the novel is dead.

Comparing the years 2011 and 2012 yields another argument against the death of the novel. The total revenue of Booker prize longlisted books has increased by 11%. This means that the total revenue of the 2012 longlisted books was £228.523,38 more than in 2011. (Stoddard) This suggests that the Booker prize has a significant influence on every longlist book as well, not only on the winner.

It can be argued that these statistics have nothing to do with symbolic capital i.e. literary value. One could make the case that the only reason the sales from Booker prize nominees increase is a consequence of its status. If this view is taken to be correct, then the whole reasoning behind this paper collapses. The assertion here is not that this makes for a weak argument. Rather, this tries to show that the conclusions based on these arguments are not to be taken as irrefutably true. In this way it might arguably add to the papers objectivity and nuance.

An article from Bustle makes the claim, though unsubstantiated, that “[t]he Man Booker Prize is all about encouraging readership, celebrating quality fiction, and talented authors.” (Weiss) The problem with such claims is illustrated in an article from *The American Prospect*. Here, Deborah Cohen makes the assertion that “Cultural prizes notoriously reward the wrong works for the wrong reasons: On the long list of worthies deprived of the Nobel for literature are Tolstoy, Proust, and Joyce.” (Cohen) Because hardly anyone will back the idea that these mentioned authors are unsuited for the Nobel prize for literature, it makes for a convincing suggestion that prizes are not the best way of evaluating fiction. Allan Massie

wrote another good argument against the idea of prizes being able to objectively evaluate literature. He writes in a *Telegraph* article: “in the end, all judgments on literature are subjective. There are no absolute standards. Judges ask themselves, and each other: is this a good novel? Is it well written? Is it distinctive or run-of-the-mill? Am I likely to want to read it again, and will I get more out of it when I do? Will it still be read in 20, 30, 50 years? It’s obvious that there are no certain answers to these questions. People will even disagree about the quality of the writing. What one reader finds to be “stylistic brilliance”, another condemns as “showing off”. Some delight in the manner of the writing; others are more concerned with the matter.” (Massie) There is certainly something to be said for the idea that appreciation of art and literature is something rather subjective. Therefore, it would be hard to parameterise this and try to objectively judge it. However, this idea of literature being completely subjective is one we might object to. The postmodern idea that there are no absolute truths and values seems to play a role here. This is in stark contrast with one of the tenets of liberal humanism, namely that “good literature is of timeless significance; it somehow transcends the limitations and peculiarities of the age it was written in, and thereby speaks to what is constant in human nature. Such writing is ‘not for an age, but for all time’: it is ‘news which stays news’.” (Barry 17) While this may seem gravely off-topic, it is necessary to mention that this paper supports the latter idea over the former. So the assumptions are that literature can be of a timeless significance and therefore is able to be evaluated relatively objectively.

This discussion seems similar to the discussion about the death of the novel. While the former is questioned on the grounds of its judging criteria, the latter is under evaluation for its contestable value and utility in contemporary society. The discussions are quite distinct, but the underlying question in both is ‘what is good literature and how do we value it(given that it still has value and utility)?’.

The inherent objective value of literature and the possibility for the evaluation of literary value is far from irrefutable. However, the assertions made in this paper are predicated on the idea of these notions being true. The fact that the Booker has attracted so much economic capital nevertheless remains an argument against its ability to evaluate literary value properly. As previously mentioned, the field of cultural production is taken to be the economic world reversed, which leads to an inevitable contradiction within the Man Booker institution.

Summarising the numbers at the beginning of this chapter and following it up with conclusions on the basis of those will be the manner in which this chapter is considered finished. We have seen that in the UK, the total book sale revenues from 2013 up to and including 2016 have risen by 3.6%. While this may not be the most significant of numbers, the fact that it has risen at all over the course of the last four years is arguably reason for optimism. On the basis of the numbers in this article, we are also able to make a convincing case against the idea of technology fostering the decline of the novel. Physical sales continue to gradually increase while digital sales seem to decrease after having peaked in 2014. With regards to the Man Booker, it is hardly questionable that the prize has a significant influence on the reception of books. On average, the author of the winning novel sees its sales increase tenfold. The shortlisted novels from 2012 garnered little under quarter of a million pounds more than in 2011, which we take to be an argument against the death of the novel as well.

It is probably too much to assert that the novel is on the rise on the basis of this thesis. However, the numbers in this chapter seem to provide a good foundation for claiming the novel is not dead. The fact that these numbers are from the perspective of the publishers makes for an original addition to this discussion. The Man Booker prize has also been evaluated to larger extent than one might expect. The conclusion of that section may even be

undercutting the credibility of the arguments based on that prize. Nevertheless, it would seem only fair to remark the possible objections proponents of literary prizes might have.

On the whole, the sales in the UK publishing industry seem to be on the rise. The Man Booker also seems to be increasing in the economic capital it attracts. Although there is a serious contradiction embedded in asserting that literature is on the rise on the basis of sales numbers, we take this to be an indication of the novel being alive and well. A question for further research might be 'what other choice do we have?'. The assumption we make is that the state of literature being 'healthy' is one where it sells well. If the field of cultural production is indeed a reversal of the economic world, this would suggest the exact opposite.

On the basis of this assumption the novel does not seem to be in any significant trouble. Sales have risen over the past four years, the Booker does not seem to be in a downward spiral by looking at its revenues. Not in the least part. Therefore, we conclude the publishing world to be very optimistic with regard to the discussion about the death of the novel. There is no reason to assume that novels are dying and that literature is on its inevitable way of becoming extinct.

Conclusion

How we determine literary value seems to be a question that is inherent to reading novels and studying literature. The extent to which prizes are able to aid is something that seems inherent to prizes awarded for not only literature but for all form of cultural production. This refers to the Bourdieusian idea that the field of cultural production is an inversion of the economic world. A problem that seems to be at the core of both chapters is the idea that we try to evaluate a complex concept as the literary novel, which is a product of not only the writer, but his socio-economic background and time. The readers, publishers, literary agents, reviewers and Booker prize judges are also, in some sense, a product of their background and the times in which they live. If we want to truly evaluate the timeless significance of literature it seems that the current approach is perhaps not the best way of conducting this endeavour. We simply cannot detach ourselves from our own dispositions and prejudices, which might lead to prizes awarding the wrong works for the wrong reasons, as Deborah Cohen noted. This line of thinking is based on what Rubin suggested in his article “The Curious Death of the Novel” where he implied that our view of literature is based on looking back.

As the first chapter established, it is by no means irrefutable that the novel is dead. Moreover, one can make a good case of arguing for the life of the novel rather than its death. Many authors have commented negatively on the discussion while at the same time continuing to write novels themselves. While this does not automatically refute their argument, it does make you question their reasons for taking the stance they are adopting. The argument of novels being replaced by newspapers, television and computers is refuted on the basis of neither newspapers nor television having convincingly killed the novel. It can be argued very strongly that the historical utility the novel has, is less necessary in contemporary society. Since women are able to vote now, it can be said that the need for first wave feminist

novels has diminished since the early 20th century. To claim on the basis of this argument that there is no more need for novels altogether seems a stretch. Class structures can be said to be more fluid than a century ago, but the idea that this is the sole purpose of the novel arguably underscores its capabilities.

The second chapter has adopted a publisher's perspective and at the same time taken a critical look at the Man Booker prize. While they may not be as comparable as we take them to be here, the numbers do seem to be in line to some extent. One of the most powerful facts that spring from this chapter is the increase in physical sales in relation to digital sales. Since there are specific claims made that the novel will die as a result of e-books and other technological advancements, the fact that physical books rise while digital sales decrease, the numbers from the Publishers Association strongly refute those claims. So with this paradox in mind we do take the stance that literature is doing better than expected.

The aim of this paper was to compare the academic discussion with the publishing world. To a certain extent, we can say that these are not in line with one another. The academic discussion seems to be more divided in its view on literature. Many writers seem convinced of the death of the novel and they provide goods arguments for this conviction. However, the general message from both these chapters seem to suggest that they are in agreement. This might have to do with the interpretation of the arguments and the arguments provided but nevertheless provides a parallel. The central claim from the first chapter is that the academic discussion, although divided, seem to be leaning towards the life rather than the death of the novel. The second chapter suggests the same, UK-publishers overall do not seem to be experiencing significant drops in their sales numbers and the Booker prize also does not seem to be in a particularly downward trend. However, the academic discussion and the publishing world do seem to be operating quite independently from one another. Nevertheless, none of the institutions mentioned here seem to be convincingly argue for the

death of the novel. The novel seems to be in good health, both from an academic perspective as well as a publisher's perspective. However, it should be mentioned that the academic discussion is way more divided and less evident in providing this view. The publishing world is more outspoken in the sense that the numbers provide a strong case against the death of the novel. This is an argument for saying that the two fields, although they generally come to the same conclusion, are independent from one another. If the academic discussion and the publishing world were more related, we would expect to find the numbers from the publishing world less optimistic and straightforward. That way, the two world could be said to be more in line with each other.

Since this conclusion is based on some previously mentioned assumptions, it seems that examining some of these assumptions provides relevant subject for further research. These assumptions revolve mainly around how to properly evaluate literature. Since this probably is too broad of a topic for further research this needs to be specified. The research question that could strengthen or weaken the assertions made in this paper could be 'to what extent can the Man Booker be said to evaluate literary quality?'. This type of research would specifically focus on the validity of the Booker as a measure of literary value, which is something that is taken as a given throughout this paper.

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