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# Literary **Lab**

Popularity/Prestige

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## Popularity/Prestige

### 1. Introduction

What is the canon? Usually this question is just a proxy for something like, “Which works are in the canon?” But the first question is not just a concise version of the second, or at least it doesn’t have to be. Instead, it can ask what the structure of the canon is—in other words, when things are in the canon, what are they in?

This question came to the fore during the project that resulted in Pamphlet 11. The members of that group were looking for morphological differences between the canon and the archive. The latter they define, straightforwardly and capaciously, as “that portion of published literature that has been preserved—in libraries and elsewhere” (2).<sup>1</sup> The canon is a slipperier concept; the authors speak instead of multiple canons, like the books preserved in the Chadwyck-Healey Nineteenth-Century Fiction Collection, the constituents of the six different “best-twentieth century novels” lists analyzed by Mark Algee-Hewitt and Mark McGurl in Pamphlet 8, authors included in the British *Dictionary of National Biography*, and so forth (4).

In spite of their multiplicity, these canons have in common a simplistic structure. They are essentially binary, a list of names at the entrance to the club: You’re either in or you’re out. Perhaps you belong in some other canon, but that one will have the same logic of two states, inclusion and exclusion. That kind of organization quickly leads to unsatisfactory outcomes if the goal is to compare the canon to the archive. A canon of thousands of books, like the one ultimately used in Pamphlet 11, could easily include *Ulysses* and *Frankenstein*, but what do these two novels really have in common? If the goal is to find morphological signatures of canonicity, does it really make sense to assume that they are more like each other than like various things in the archive, which surely includes forgotten modernist experimental novels

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<sup>1</sup> Note that according to this definition the archive contains the canon. To be precise, then, Pamphlet 11 distinguishes the canon from the rest of the archive, rather than from the archive as a distinct set. For simplicity and consistency, however, I will continue to refer to the canon and the archive as though they are distinct.

and vanished examples of Gothic horror? And this is before we consider even further-afield, more difficult to classify elements of the canon, a Stephen King bestseller or a minor Herman Melville commercial failure.<sup>2</sup> In order to distinguish the canon from the archive, it soon became clear that we needed to understand exactly how the canon is structured relative to the archive

One solution is to stretch the binary into a spectrum; arguably, this is what we see with the ranked lists used in Pamphlet 8. In some respects this is a clear improvement over the binary model: It enables us to see, for instance, that William Shakespeare might be more canonical than Herman Melville, who is more canonical than Nathanael West, and so on down through authors and works that are barely remembered, if not quite forgotten. Yet even here we quickly begin to see problems. For example, is Melville's *Pierre* more canonical than Stephen King's *The Shining*? Probably not; many more people have read *The Shining*. But is it fair to say that *The Shining* is more canonical than *Pierre*? Probably not; scholars, teachers and critics prize Melville far higher than King.

This last conundrum points the way out of these difficulties and into a workable model of the structure of the canon. It suggests two different ways of entering the canon: being read by many and being prized by an elite few—or, to use the terms arrived at in Pamphlet 11, popularity and prestige. With these two dimensions, we arrive at a canonical *space*, a distribution of works that can account for the readership of King, the scholarly reputation of Melville, and the relative positions of everyone else. Inspired by the findings of that study, this pamphlet expands them into a much larger dataset, incorporating many more authors, genres, and eras, all to the purpose of more thoroughly exploring the resulting structure of the canon as a complex cultural space: Its entanglement with what Pierre Bourdieu might call “consecration”; its organization of different kinds of cultural fields; its relationship to the archive; and even its mechanisms of formation. In the end the goal is simple—to understand, finally, not just what is in the canon, but what the canon is.

## 2. Popularity/Prestige

At the center of this argument is **Figure 1**.<sup>3</sup> The rings represent 1,406 authors, their names assembled over the course of Pamphlet 11 from a disparate combination of sources.<sup>4</sup> It was

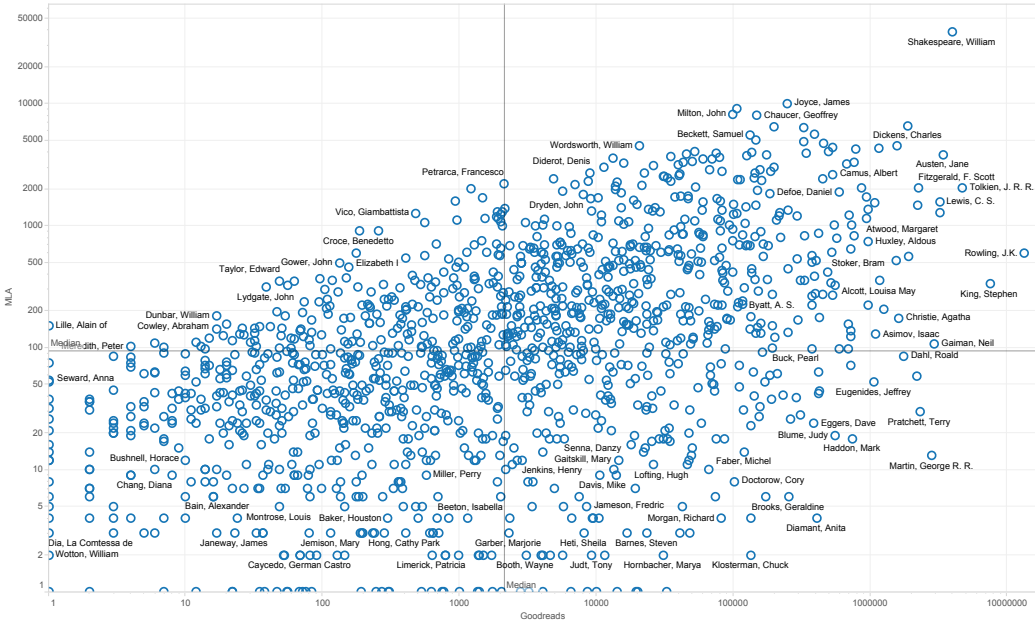
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2 This issue is easiest to see with a large canon, but subsists even with smaller ones. Take the *Norton Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, a fairly narrow subset of the overall literary canon. A morphological analysis using its contents as a canon would still have to put Philip Larkin, Audre Lorde, and Lyn Hejinian in one group, while the “archive” would contain any number of conservatives, radicals, and L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets.

3 This figure is similar to Figures 3.2 and 3.3 in Pamphlet 11, which depict a different version of popularity/prestige. For those, popularity was measured by reprints and translations, and prestige by the same MLA scores used in this pamphlet, plus the lengths of biographies in the *British Dictionary of National Biography*. This pamphlet uses simpler and more robust metrics (described below) to create a present-day picture of the canon for many more authors, who represent many more genres, historical periods, and cultural contexts.

4 Specifically, the sources include ECCO, the Raven-Garside-Schöwerling bibliography, the Chadwyck-Healey Nineteenth-Century Fiction corpus, the Internet Archive of the University of Illinois, Stanford PhD exam lists, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century best-of lists used in Pamphlet 8.

not designed to be comprehensive, but, to borrow a phrase from that pamphlet, “multiple, explicit, and measurable” (3). As it is, the list is heavily biased toward the English language, and a little less biased toward the past few centuries (though the earliest authors date to the Middle Ages). By virtue of its size, the roster includes most of the well-known authors in English-language literary history, but we did not take steps to ensure that everyone anyone could think of would be included. Instead, this list simply is what it sounds like: A fairly long list of authors, many of them clearly canonical, most of them familiar to someone, and many quite obscure.



**Figure 1** The axes on this graph are scaled logarithmically.

The authors are organized according to two metrics. The X axis measures their number of ratings on the website Goodreads. Self-described as “the world’s largest site for readers and book recommendations”, Goodreads allows users to review and rate virtually any book still in print (and many that no longer are).<sup>5</sup> Most authors have dedicated pages on Goodreads that aggregate the ratings and reviews given to all of their books. Three metrics on these pages have obvious use as measures of popularity: The total number of ratings, the ratings themselves on the site’s 1-5 star system, and the number of reviews written by users. The first metric shows baseline awareness of the existence of an author; the second shows appreciation of the author; the third shows a more heavily weighted version of the first on a per-unit

<sup>5</sup> At the time of our data collection, the site claimed to have 50 million users and a database of 1.5 billion books; both numbers have since risen dramatically (<https://www.goodreads.com/about/us>).

basis, since reviews require much more labor than ratings to produce. Our interest in popularity as the opposite of obscurity led us to the first metric.

On the Y axis, authors are arranged according to statistics drawn from the MLA International Bibliography, a massive, curated collection of academic articles in literary criticism and associated fields.<sup>6</sup> The MLA provides substantial metadata about the articles in its collection, and we focused on one field: “Primary Subject Author”, which explains which authors are centrally considered in each article. It is therefore a reasonable indicator of how frequently academics are publishing articles about any given writer. Because MLA information sits behind a paywall and is difficult to scrape, this aspect of the project was only possible thanks to the diligent work of research assistants Micah Siegel, Mirae Lee, and Emmerich Anklam, who looked up all 1,400 authors in the “Primary Subject Author” field and recorded the number of results returned. This gave us a metric for the presence of each author as a subject of academic discussion. If Goodreads gives us a way to measure authors’ reach in the masses, the MLA gives us a way to measure their importance among a large group of experts—the kind of readers who might confer cultural consecration, or prestige.

These metrics show *a* version of popularity and prestige, but it is important to note right off the bat that this is far from the *only* version. It is not intended to be definitive—we are far less interested in ranking authors once and for all than in exploring a conceptual arrangement of canonicity.<sup>7</sup> To begin with, this is a contemporary picture of the canon; Goodreads launched in 2007, and the MLA data, though it extends back roughly a century, is heavily weighted toward the past few decades.<sup>8</sup> This means that we are providing a sense of the canon as it is today, rather than a picture of how it got that way. For the latter, it would make more sense to seek contemporaneous metrics, like the reprints and translations used in Pamphlet 11, historic library catalogues and checkouts, sales data, and so on. Unfortunately, none of this information is readily accessible at a scale like that used in this project, if it can be had at all. As often happens, one major advantage of contemporary data is that it exists.

As these alternate metrics suggest, an equally important question surrounds the appropriateness of our measures. For popularity this is mainly about the optimal answer to an easy question—what have people read? For prestige the question itself is much more complicated. Ted Underwood and Jordan Sellers, for instance, have used contemporaneous re-

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6 <https://www.mla.org/Publications/MLA-International-Bibliography/Frequently-Asked-Questions>

7 It is also worth noting that neither MLA nor Goodreads is 100% accurate. For more obscure authors in particular, issues of consistency sometimes crop up—e.g., Alain of Lille appears on Goodreads as “Alain de Lille” and “Alain of Lille”, which respective numbers of ratings of 1 and 4. Less-well-known MLA authors are not as rigorously tagged, either; William Dunbar gets credit for some articles that appear to be about Mary Dunbar. Still, in broad strokes the numbers are correct; authors are generally appearing in the right region of the graph, especially as they become more canonical.

8 During an early presentation of this material at the Literary Lab, Mark Algee-Hewitt raised an important question: Is it appropriate to compare several decades of MLA data with one decade of Goodreads data? The slow rate of academic publishing and the historical nature of prestige, which can only be developed over time, suggest that some lag is appropriate. It would therefore be difficult to know the optimal cutoff point for measuring MLA articles (or, alternately, the rates for a time-decay function), but since the academy’s internal canon has changed over the past hundred years, (see section 5, below), answering this question likely merits further research.

views in prestigious magazines as a proxy for the canonical status of works of poetry. This works quite well for their article, which examines the rates of change in literary standards, but would be difficult to scale to this project's breadth of genre, nationality and era.<sup>9</sup> James English, meanwhile, has used prizes as a proxy for cultural value, and Bourdieu's work suggests that we might want to measure peer estimation based on how often writers refer to each other.<sup>10</sup> Compared to the MLA metric, the former would raise the prestige of writers like Pearl S. Buck (Nobel Prize, 1938) and James A. Michener (Pulitzer Prize, 1948) in comparison with, say, Gertrude Stein and Ralph Ellison (neither won either prize); the latter might raise both T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound based on the one editing the other. These are all plausible and different kinds of prestige, more or less recognizable to different kinds of readers, for different kinds of questions, and for different authorial goals. As Antonio Gramsci asks, "Who are these 'elect' anyway? ... Every writer or artist has his 'elect', intellectuals being in fact fragmented groups and sects."<sup>11</sup>

For this work, influenced by John Guillory's assertion that the school plays the largest role in the creation of the cultural capital associated with the literary canon,<sup>12</sup> and concerned with the version of the canon most proximate to our own work as academic researchers and teachers, we chose a version that emphasizes a kind of scholarly prestige. As Pamphlet 11 puts it, this graph depicts the market and the school. And with these axes as a starting point, we can finally begin to unravel not just what the canon includes, but how it works as a structure and a cultural space.

### 3. The structure of the canon

One simple way to begin dissecting this cultural space is, well, to dissect it. Lines drawn through the median values on each axis create four quadrants that stand in for four ways of being canonical. In the Southeast we have the popular—authors like George R.R. Martin or E.L. James who have sold a lot of books, but who remain largely unnoticed in the academy. In the Northwest are their opposites, a John Gower or a Thomas Wyatt, discussed somewhat

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9 To discover which poetry had been reviewed, Sellers personally examined 15 magazines published in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This would be difficult, though certainly not impossible, to extend to a longer time span and additional genres. Ted Underwood and Jordan Sellers. "How Quickly Do Literary Standards Change?". (2015): figshare. [http://figshare.com/articles/How\\_Quickly\\_Do\\_Literary\\_Standards\\_Change\\_/1418394](http://figshare.com/articles/How_Quickly_Do_Literary_Standards_Change_/1418394).

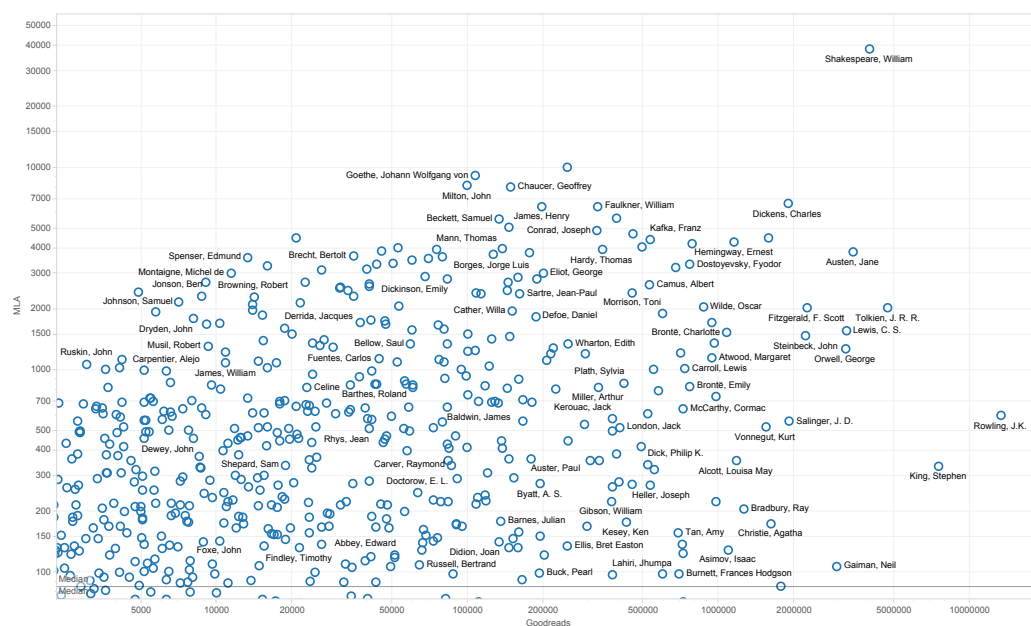
10 This might result in a "citation network" based on the presence of any given author's name within another's writing. This is a conceptually interesting idea, but a daunting problem of co-reference resolution for the Williams's alone (our author list features ten different people with that last name). One of the advantages of both Goodreads and the MLA is that their author tags are fairly reliable; if they say a rating/article is for William Carlos Williams, it is almost certainly not for Tennessee or Sherley Ann Williams. For more on prizes, see James English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

11 Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Cultural Writings*. Edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Translated by William Boelhower. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985. p. 275.

12 In his words: "The particular authors who happen to be canonical have a minor role in this system of reproduction, but the far larger role belongs to the school itself, which regulates access to literary production by regulating access to literacy, to the practices of reading and writing. The literary syllabus is the institutional form by means of which this knowledge is disseminated..." Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

often in scholarly journals, but little read by the public. The Southwest contains the barely canonical, those writers not quite forgotten, but not often remembered. This quadrant contains a lot of writers important to specialists—critics like Leslie Fiedler and thinkers like Alain Locke, highly important within their fields, but not broadly known.<sup>13</sup> And finally, there is the Northeast—the site of the hypercanonical. These writers are both widely read and widely written about, the people who most obviously made the club in older, simpler forms of the canon.

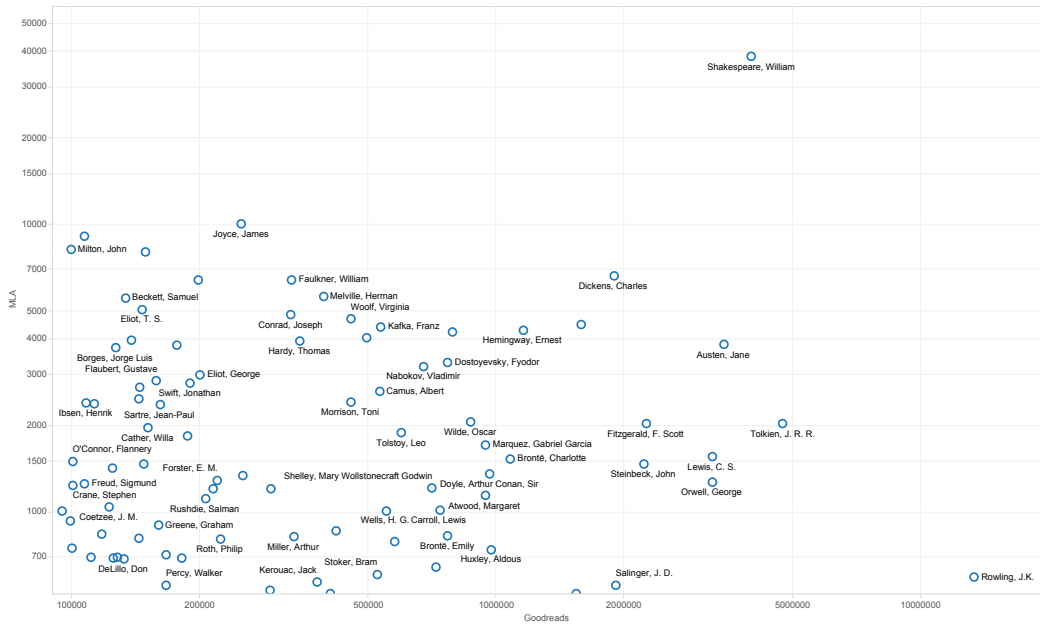
A closer look at this quadrant reveals an important feature of the canon arranged as a popularity/prestige space: It is fractal. Zoom in on the Northeast, as in **Figure 2**, and it is immediately obvious that not everyone in it is canonical in the same way. King and J.K. Rowling sell a lot of books; Pound and John Dryden appear in a lot of books; Ambrose Bierce and Ishmael Reed sell and appear in a medium amount of books; William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens are doing undeniably well in the stores and the schools. In other words, the quadrant system is exactly replicated at this smaller, but heightened, scale. This holds at any level of zoom (see, for example, **Figure 3**, which zooms in still farther on **Figure 2**); the bottom right will always be more popular, the top left more prestigious, the top right most canonical, until,



**Figure 2**

13 As these examples show, the authors on this graph represent a wide variety of genres, not just novels and poetry but also criticism and philosophy. Does it really make sense to compare, say, Fiedler and Martin? The practical reason Fiedler is on this graph is that he appeared on a PhD exam list. But results for Fiedler or, say, Fredric Jameson, also offer a useful example of the importance of remembering the specific terms that organize this space. These metrics are designed to capture literary canonicity, not overall cultural canonicity; Fiedler is surely a more canonical critic than Martin (and maybe a more canonical critic than Martin is a novelist), but that is not what this graph shows. The remarkable thing is that, by the terms of Goodreads and the MLA, Fiedler and Jameson have *any* literary canonicity—perhaps like a more recent version of Samuel Johnson or Joseph Addison. This figure does a good job of capturing that.





**Figure 3**

if you are always moving toward the top right, you finally arrive at a canon that consists solely of Shakespeare.<sup>14</sup> The space therefore replicates the intuitive notion that the canon can grow arbitrarily from the top corner. Rita Dove, criticized by Helen Vendler for including too many poets in an anthology, argues that a larger number is reasonable “if you are a mere mortal not satiated by a steady diet of ambrosia.”<sup>15</sup> In this graph, we see that the disagreement is largely one of degree; the borders of the canon can be set at fairly arbitrary restrictiveness on either metric, and the basic structure of the space will hold, in or beyond Elysium.<sup>16</sup>

Two important conclusions follow directly from this fact. First, and probably most important from the perspective of digital humanities projects: Distance *within* the canon or archive may be greater than distance *between* the canon and archive. Consider a version of the canon consisting only of the Northeast quadrant (as in **Figure 2**). This version contains both Ursula K. Le Guin and Philip Sidney. One person missing from this canon is Joe Haldeman, the 20<sup>th</sup> century American science fiction writer. With just over 170,000 Goodreads reviews, and just under 30 MLA hits, he falls a bit short of the lower middle section of this more restrictive canon. If we imagine a project that sought to compare this canon with the archive on the basis of textual features, Le Guin and Sidney would be considered together, and Halde-

14 Or, arguably, J.K. Rowling; Goodreads users interact with her works quite a bit more than they do Shakespeare’s. This is a good example of the contingency of this graph. Because Goodreads data is so recent, it shows people who are popular now; but, as the analysis of best-sellers in section 5 shows, very popular authors are not necessarily remembered for very long. If we reran this experiment in 200 years, Rowling’s position might well slide to the left; E.L. James might well disappear. This may also hold for prestige; see Figure 9, below.

15 Dove, Rita. “Defending an Anthology.” *The New York Review of Books*. December 22, 2011.

16 It is also worth noting that zooming in on any random part of the graph would produce the same effect; that is, even if you zoom in on the Southwest, or the middle, the new, smaller space will feature a similar arrangement of authors—popular on the right, prestigious on the top.

man would stand as a contrast, almost certainly leading to confusing if not outright wrong results. The corpora of Le Guin and Haldeman surely have more formal features in common with each other than either does with the works of a Renaissance poet. In other words, the distance from Le Guin to Sidney within the canon is greater than the distance from Le Guin to Haldeman across the canon/archive border—just as we see here.<sup>17</sup>

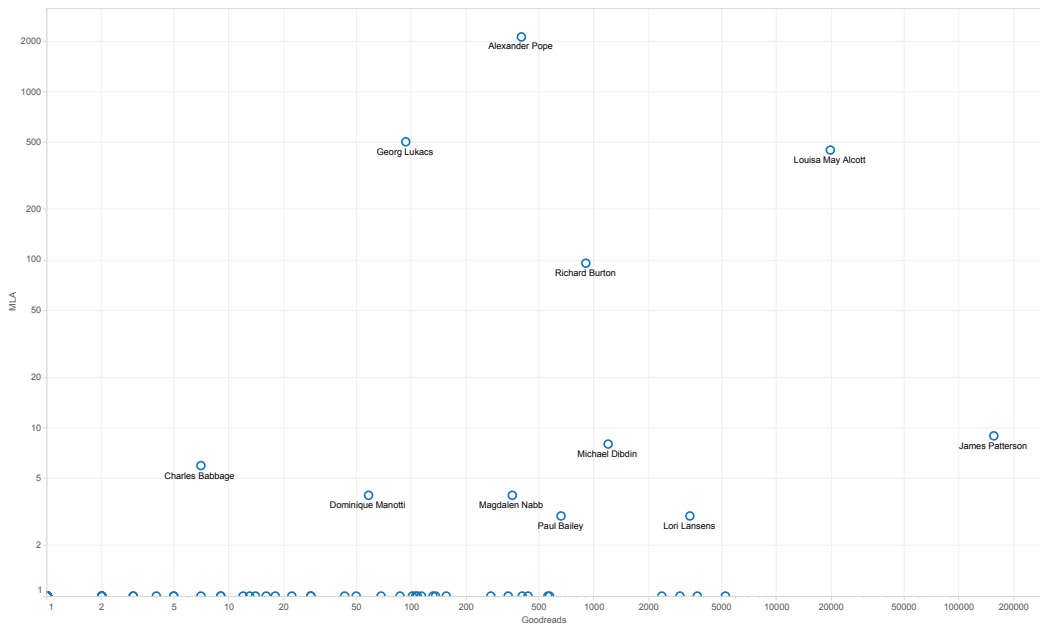
This is not merely a question of the canon being wrong or insufficiently capacious, though that is inevitably a risk; Haldeman, for instance, was missing from this project's original list of authors entirely, having failed to meet any of the criteria used to determine it. He therefore counted as part of the archive in Pamphlet 11, recreating precisely the grouping of Le Guin/Sidney against Haldeman that we see in this toy example. But recall the earlier example of Mary Shelley in comparison with Joyce and a forgotten Gothic horror story, say one that appeared once in a little-read, never-digitized magazine: Even the most inclusive canon imaginable might have placed that story in the archive. Rather than a question of who should and should not make the cut, this is a question of how we should arrange the things we *do* include, according to a more correct understanding of the operations of the canon as a more complicated cultural space. Popularity/prestige space opens up a way to understand not only different ways of being canonical, but differing degrees of variation between canon and archive on the basis of differing locations within each space.

Haldeman's status as a popular author who still failed to make several kinds of canons points to the second conclusion: The archive is also a fairly complex space. A traditional understanding of the archive would suggest that basically everything in it is at zero on both popularity and prestige, although the case may not be so dire for things that can plausibly be studied (i.e., excluding the portion of the archive destroyed, never read in the first place, etc.). To examine this truism of canon/archive studies, we generated a list of 116 somewhat randomly selected books and checked the Goodreads and MLA scores for their authors (**Figure 4**).<sup>18</sup> Of these, 11 had both prestige and popularity, another 68 had popularity alone (a nice confirmation of the robustness of Goodreads scores), and 37 had zeroes on both metrics. Two

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17 Calculating this distance would entail important theoretical (read: subjective) decisions at the outset, since this space does not use interchangeable units on its axes; that is, having one more MLA article is probably not equivalent to having one more Goodreads rating. So it is important not to take the specific distances on this graph too seriously, although, as we show below, the general arrangement of the space tracks intuitive understandings of cultural and literary reception quite well.

18 Generating a random list of books is more challenging than it might seem, especially if the goal is to access the archive rather than already-curated collections like those in libraries or currently in print. Our method was to use random-number generation (via Google Sheets—not “true” random numbers, but close enough for our purposes) to create International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs), then look those up and see what books they referred to, if any. We excluded non-literary works (nonfiction, cookbooks, textbooks, etc.) This is a limited method, since it can only capture books which have ever been assigned an ISBN, meaning they must have been published sometime in the second half of the twentieth century. This excludes the unpublished portion of the archive as well as the portion never reprinted after 1970, and it is worth emphasizing that these are substantial lacunae, perhaps especially in the contemporary world, where so much work is published/distributed through alternative methods. Moreover, our approach privileges successful authors, since, for example, Alcott is getting republished (and accruing ISBNs) much more often than any given failed novelist (see Fredner, Erik. “How Many Novels Have Been Published in English? (An Attempt).” *Techné*. Stanford Literary Lab. March 14, 2017). So, the proportion of authors with zeroes on both metrics is probably higher than reported here. Still, the list certainly shows a lot of authors who would be archival by the standards of most canons.



**Figure 4**

authors (Alexander Pope and Louisa May Alcott) were in the Northeast quadrant of **Figure 1**. On one hand, this helps explain why past research, including within the Literary Lab, *has* managed to reveal important distances between canon and archive without framing either in popularity/prestige or similar terms: The average text in the archive is much farther away from the Sidneys and Le Guins on both metrics than Haldeman is.

On the other hand, this is not the indistinguishable blob of forgotten texts that the archive sometimes appears to be. The realm of literary failure is vast and varied, and authors have discovered untold ways to occupy it.<sup>19</sup> There are those who are discussed without much being read—like Osbern Bokenham, with 25 MLA appearances to a mere 3 Goodreads reviews—the many more who are read but not discussed—like Elaine Showalter, with 1 MLA article and over 20,000 Goodreads reviews—and everything in between and below. Along these lines, it is worth noting that making it onto the initial graph is not necessarily an indisputable mark of canonicity—both Bokenham and Showalter are in **Figure 1**. In fact, if not displayed with logarithmic scaling, the chart suggests that nearly everyone is in the archive—the canon of authors escaping from the general blob consists of perhaps 40 names (**Figure 5**). The point is that the archive is itself fractal, and no less than the canon, can only correctly be considered as a complex cultural space embodying multiple methods of being forgotten.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Dawkins, on a different selectional system: “however many ways there may be of being alive, it is certain that there are vastly more ways of being dead” (9). Dawkins, Richard. *The Blind Watchmaker: Why the Evidence of Evolution Reveals a Universe Without Design*. New York: Norton, 1986.

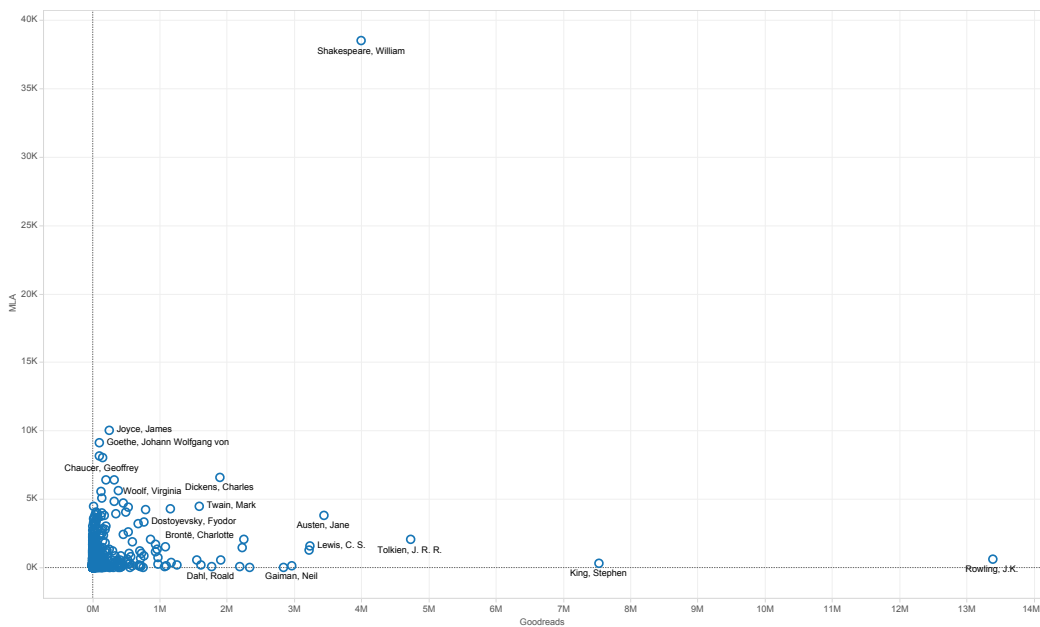


Figure 5

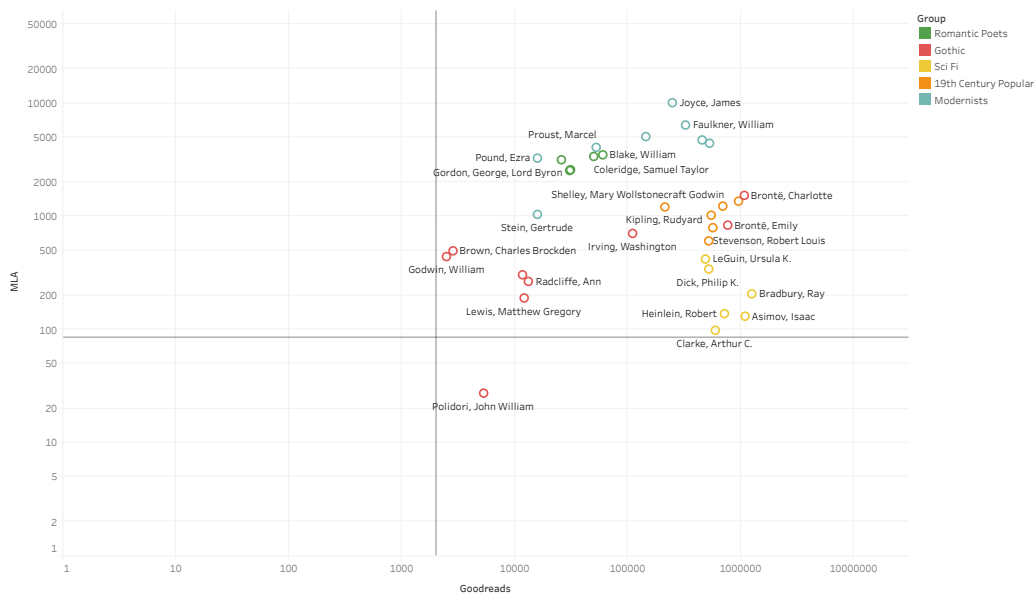
#### 4. Cultural spaces

It is one thing to show that the canon and archive are complicated by depicting them spatially; it is another to represent the literary field in a way that resembles critical thinking or lived experience. Popularity and prestige may successfully locate Haldeman slightly closer to Le Guin than to Sidney, but is that just a coincidence? After all, these metrics do not make use of any formal considerations or historical knowledge; they are just measures of reception.<sup>20</sup> It would be surprising if they were able to replicate some semblance of genre, form, period, etc.—and yet, to an unexpected degree, they do.

To test this, we looked for groups of authors who shared something important in common, according to our subjective judgement. And surprisingly often, considering that, again, these metrics do not overtly consider form or history, we found that the authors clustered together. In the group Romantic Poets, for instance, we looked on the graph for six authors: William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge, William Blake, Percy Shelley, George Gordon (Lord Byron), and John Keats. As it turns out, all are located in a fairly prestige-heavy position of the hypercanon, clustered so closely that in **Figure 6** it looks like there are only five of them—Keats and Shelley almost completely overlap each other.

Not every grouping is quite that successful; the Modernists do occupy the sort of prestigious canonical position one might expect, but they are fairly widely dispersed. Yet, more

<sup>20</sup> As we saw in Pamphlet 11, formal features and literary history appear to be deeply *entangled* with these measures—confounding variables, perhaps—but they are not explicitly feeding into this chart in any way; we aren't weighting ratings or articles by their genre or period.



**Figure 6** For purposes of comparison, in this image the axes and median lines are retained from Figure 1.

often than we expected, the results look like those for Science Fiction, where the authors were not only clustered, but arranged more or less according to their intuitive literary reputations—Le Guin and Philip K. Dick more “literary” (prestigious) than Robert Heinlein or Arthur C. Clarke, with Ray Bradbury (whose *Fahrenheit 451* is a mainstay of U.S. secondary school classrooms) more well-known than any of them.

At times the graph even showed aspects of the groups that we had not initially considered. The Gothic group initially seemed like an unsuccessful cluster; but, on closer examination, it actually appears to sort a large, historically sprawling genre into several micro-clusters: William Godwin and his avowed follower Charles Brockden Brown less popular than anyone else, the classic Gothics Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Matthew Lewis in a cluster, and the Brontës’ later brand of semi-Gothic stories pulled over near the Victorians, where it resided in literary history as well. Washington Irving was a wild-card; is he the semi-Gothic writer of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”, or do the fairy tales and histories complicate his position? Apparently it is the latter. For all its capacity to connect Romantics and Gothics, the chart does not simply allow genre groups to cohere, but shows how authors like Irving are implicitly categorized by their reception history.<sup>21</sup>

As another example of this, we called one group 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Popular, and included an assortment of authors who, historically and formally, have relatively little to do with each other, but who in our estimation seemed to have similar cultural importance: Arthur Conan Doyle, Mary Shelley, H.G. Wells, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Bram Stoker. They

<sup>21</sup> John Polidori is an interesting member of the Southeast quadrant. A writer of some literary historical importance but little presence in popular culture or secondary school, we might have expected him to be in the Northwest—but then, he did write about vampires, recently an excellent way to get Goodreads ratings.

did not work in the same genre or with the same forms (compare Conan Doyle’s short detective stories with Stoker’s experimental horror novel), and Shelley in particular has little to do with the rest historically. But this arrangement of the canon confirmed what we had felt on an intuitive level—that all of these authors have created characters or stories with a similar cultural presence. This literary field does not place Mary Shelley with the men who were in the room when she created Frankenstein’s monster—Byron and Percy Shelley—but instead, with the men who created similar monsters—Dracula and Mr. Hyde.

The relative positions of the poets and the novelists in **Figure 6** replicates in part Bourdieu’s famous drawing of the literary field, which likewise positions poetry in the high-prestige, lower popularity region, and novels in the popular, less esteemed region. Bourdieu, however, is concerned not so much with clusters of like minded-authors as with the relative cultural positions of literary forms on a broad scale—poetry versus the novel versus plays, and so forth. He diagrammed this at least twice, with slightly different results (see **Figures 7.1** and **7.2**); he also preferred, in place of popularity and prestige, a terminology of economic success and consecration (which is wrapped up in various ways with autonomy, intellectual audiences, the “Academy”, and peer estimation).<sup>22</sup> Still, his work is conceptually fairly close to the work of this project, which means that we can check our empirical results against his theoretical framework. The clusters of authors of **Figure 6** align nicely with intuitive, lived experience, but in Bourdieu’s chart we have a literary sociological standard of comparison.

In order to make the comparison, we turned back to Goodreads to extract formal data for our authors. Goodreads allows up to three “genre” tags per author, encompassing the very broad (“Poetry”, “Nonfiction”, and even “Literature & Fiction”) and the specific (“Utilitarianism”, “Hard Boiled”, “Science Fiction and Travel”). These are not very systematic; authors may have three genres or none, and they may be tagged precisely or quite vaguely.<sup>23</sup> Still, the tags are generally defensible (e.g., Sherman Alexie has Literature & Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry), and with minimal data cleaning we managed to associate about 900 of our authors

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22 Bourdieu is surely using the word “Academy” to refer to the Académie française as metonymy for “institutional consecration” more generally. We also tie prestige to “the academy”, but in the specific, English-language sense of the school, since our prestige scores are based entirely on academic articles. This is part of a broader simplification of Bourdieu’s fairly diffuse understanding of consecration, which would be difficult, if not impossible, to measure on a single dimension (see note 31, below). Nonetheless, it seemed worthwhile to leave the term “Académie” in the discussion, since Bourdieu is not exactly *not* talking about the school—it is just that he considers it as one factor among several. The graphs are located on page 122 of *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996, and page 49 of *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

23 It appears that the specificity of tags varies unevenly across categories. For instance, Jeremy Bentham is tagged for “Utilitarianism” while Philippa Foote is tagged only with the broader designation “Philosophy”, which suggests differing levels of granularity for “Utilitarianism” and, say, “Ethics”. We could imagine similar effects for, e.g., “Science Fiction” vs. “Historical Fiction”—perhaps the latter is usually just tagged as “Literature & Fiction”. Investigating these potential effects is beyond the scope of this pamphlet, but readers may wish to bear them in mind when considering the data.

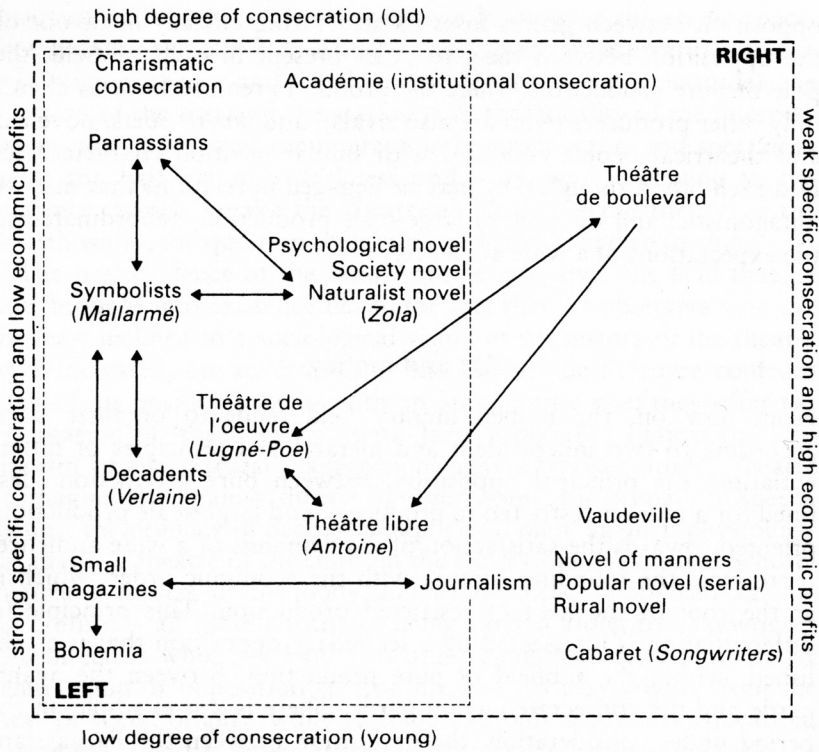


Figure 71

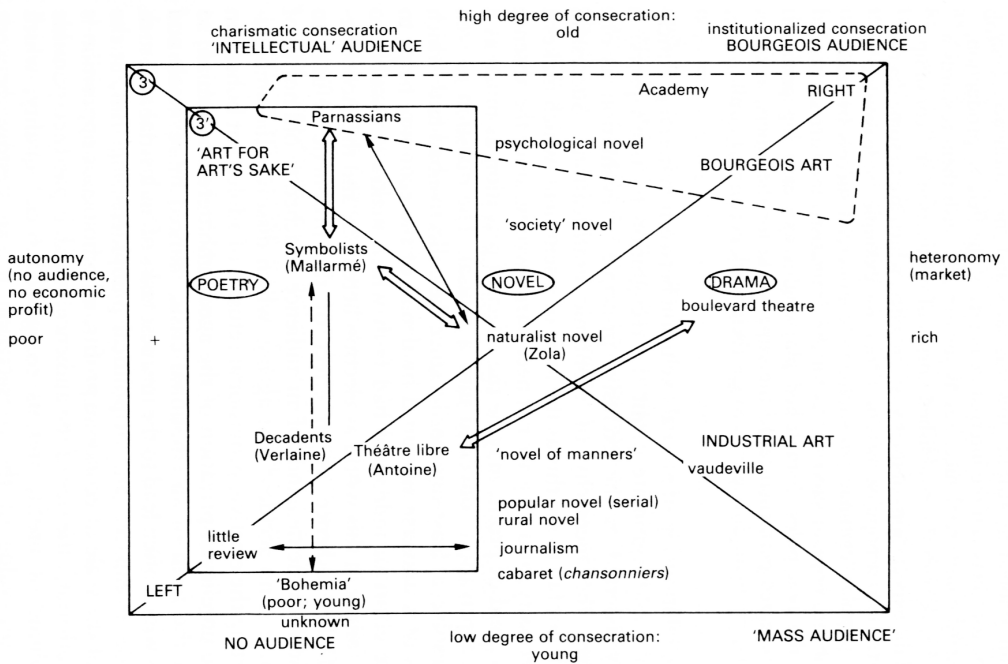
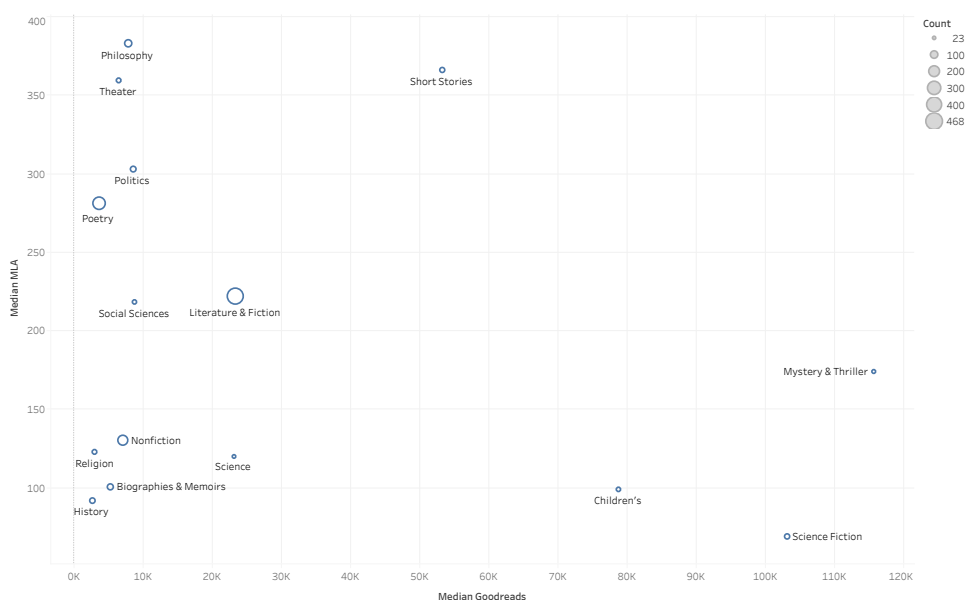


Figure 72

with at least one genre.<sup>24</sup> **Figure 8** shows the median prestige and popularity for every genre associated with at least 20 authors.<sup>25</sup>

Since Bourdieu did not use any quantifiable data or measurements, our comparisons are necessarily impressionistic; nonetheless, our work tends to concur with his educated guesses. Poetry in particular sits almost exactly where he placed it in **Figure 7.2**, in a region of “strong specific consecration and low economic profits” (or, as he puts it in the other version of the chart, “no audience, no economic profit”). The catch-all term “Literature & Fiction”, which often appears to stand in for the novel on Goodreads, is located more or less in the middle, and genres like “Mystery & Thriller” or “Science Fiction & Fantasy” are virtually exactly where he places the “Popular novel” in **Figure 7.1**.<sup>26</sup> On a broad level, real-world data about popularity and prestige appear to confirm Bourdieu’s intuitions.



**Figure 8** Note that this chart does not use logarithmic scaling for its axes.

Not everything aligns, however. In part because it treats a different body of literature—trans-historical, mostly English-language authors, instead of 19<sup>th</sup>-century French literary genres and schools—our graph contains a different array of subclasses. One specific finding that merits further investigation is the position of “Short Stories” in one of the most canonical areas of the graph. This result, which we did not expect, makes sense on closer examination:

24 We tried to have a light touch when cleaning the data; our biggest intervention was probably combining the “Mystery”, “Thriller”, “Mystery & Thriller”, and “Mystery & Thrillers” categories. Beyond that, the job mostly consisted of resolving typos and spelling differences (“theatre” and “theater”, for example).

25 Authors could be double-counted; for example, Alexie’s MLA and Goodreads scores factor into the averages for Literature & Fiction, Nonfiction, and Poetry.

26 Goodreads does not use the tag “Novel” (or any near equivalents) for any of our authors. It is tempting to see this as part of a general cultural tendency not to recognize the novel as a unique literary form, instead conflating it with literature in general, or even using it almost as a synonym for “book” (which is also not a tag). Oddly, the tags “Prose” and “Novella” do exist.



Among the authors with this tag we find a mix dominated by American and international writers of the past 150 years, ranging from the obviously canonical (Flannery O'Connor and Franz Kafka) to the globally popular (Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Luis Borges) to the contemporary (George Saunders and Harryette Mullen).<sup>27</sup> It may be that short stories combine an optimal format for literary experimentation/formal precision and marketing/teaching, since they are small enough to sustain a concentrated burst of style and still appear in a magazine or textbook. It may also be that the rise of creative writing programs, which often treat short stories as their unit for formal instruction, has generated practitioners and readers.<sup>28</sup> But these are just speculations: Once again, the mere arrangement of literature into this cultural field suggests new ways to classify, research, and interpret it.

The position of “Theater” in our graph points to an important philosophical difference between our work and Bourdieu’s. Where he describes several kinds of theater distributed in different regions of the chart, we have a monolithic genre incorporating everyone from Oscar Wilde to Amiri Baraka to Samuel Beckett. Most of all it incorporates Shakespeare, whose overwhelming presence pulls the whole field toward him—his 38,000 MLA articles are almost four times as numerous as those about the next-most prestigious author (James Joyce, with about 10,000 articles; in general, the distribution of MLA articles appears to follow a rough power law).<sup>29</sup> In part, our divergence from Bourdieu simply reflects differences in the role of theater in 19<sup>th</sup>-century France versus the contemporary English-speaking world.<sup>30</sup> In part, however, it reflects a kind of canonicity, exemplified by Shakespeare, that Bourdieu deems impossible.

In Bourdieu’s image, and particularly clearly in **Figure 7.2**, the top right of the graph consists of Bourgeois Art. This is, for him, what the convergence of popularity with prestige produces, at least in the genres he analyzes, and this is where his “consecration” really diverges from our “prestige”. He wants to draw a distinction between intellectual and institutional consecration; our metric makes no such distinction. The logic of his approach suggests there is essentially no way for something to be both respected by the intelligentsia and popular with the public at large. But does this way of thinking really make sense for someone like Shake-

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27 Here is the list of the 46 authors with the short story tag, in full: Ambrose Bierce, Jorge Luis Borges, Richard Brautigan, John Cheever, Charles Chesnutt, Kate Chopin, Julio Cortázar, Roald Dahl, Junot Díaz, Nathan Englander, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ford Madox Ford, Mary Gaitskill, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, William Dean Howells, Washington Irving, Henry James, M. R. James, Sarah Orne Jewett, Ha Jin, Edward P. Jones, Franz Kafka, Heinrich von Kleist, Sheridan Le Fanu, H. P. Lovecraft, Katherine Mansfield, Gabriel García Márquez, W. Somerset Maugham, Guy de Maupassant, Herman Melville, Eduard Mörike, Harryette Mullen, Flannery O'Connor, Cynthia Ozick, Ann Petry, Raja Rao, John Reed, J.D. Salinger, William Saroyan, George Saunders, Terry Southern, Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, David Foster Wallace, Richard Wright, and Émile Zola.

28 See McGurl, Mark. *The Program Era*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. p. 339.

29 Of course, the chart shows medians rather than averages, muting the Shakespeare effect on the final position for theater. Still, I felt it was worth noting his immense outlier status: I rounded off 493 Shakespeare articles—roughly the equivalent of every Hart Crane article. There is a realistic chance that Shakespeare will have added another Hart Crane’s worth of articles by the time this pamphlet is published.

30 As Algee-Hewitt pointed out in conversation, our results probably reflect an increase in the relative prestige of theater in the U.S. and elsewhere during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when less-consecrated mass entertainment shifted largely to television and film.

speare? What definition of prestige, consecration (whether specific, charismatic, or institutional), intellectual interest, or peer admiration would fail to place him somewhere near the top? The problem is that Shakespeare has every kind of consecration—on Bourdieu’s chart, he should probably be at the top left *and* the top right. And this is just Shakespeare—other members of our Northeast quadrant—Geoffrey Chaucer, Beckett, Kafka, Emily Dickinson, to name a few—seem even more obviously misplaced as “bourgeois” rather than near the poets, symbolists, and “art for art’s sake” crowd. The idea that intellectual appreciation is on a sliding scale with institutional appreciation ultimately appears to make Bourdieu’s chart unworkable for our canon. To the extent that these really are not opposing values, as the case of Shakespeare seems to show, it suggests a serious flaw in Bourdieu’s sketch.<sup>31</sup>

But Bourdieu wasn’t working on our canon. For his assortment of 19<sup>th</sup>-century French genres and schools, his chart appears to have functioned quite well. None of the problematic authors I mentioned were 19<sup>th</sup>-century Frenchmen, because, frankly, it would have been difficult to think of a good example. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century English would also have been difficult to mine—in their case, because they align popularity and prestige too well. Jane Austen and Dickens and George Eliot are clearly popular, prestigious, and bourgeois all at the same time. This points to something that became increasingly apparent over the course of the Canon/Archive project: The canon seems to function differently in different literary historical contexts. There are multiple kinds of canonicity even among the hypercanonical, Beckett’s and Shakespeare’s and Austen’s and Melville’s. And although it is a snapshot of a fairly limited historical moment—the present, give or take a few decades—the field created by popularity and prestige encodes some of these different literary historical modes of being canonical.

## 5. Ways of being canonical

The book that inspired many of the questions behind this project was *Moby-Dick*, which a footnote in Pamphlet 11 calls “the nemesis of any general theory of the canon” (5). Especially in an investigation that began with Walter Scott and Austen at its center, the path to canonicity for *Moby-Dick* seems borderline impossible. Though the careers of Scott and Austen both appear to counter any assumption that prestige and popularity are at odds with each other, Scott did this through immediate fame and acclaim, while Austen only slowly acquired both, the latter largely following on the persistence of the former. At first glance, these seemed like the two alternative paths to the canon: Either instant success on both fronts, or modest popularity leading to greater success in both areas over time. And then there is *Moby-Dick*, which famously achieved neither: it never sold out its first print run of 3,000, and its decades-

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<sup>31</sup> In the text accompanying the earlier version of the chart, Bourdieu writes, “Thus we find three competing principles of legitimacy,” which are, roughly, consecration by artists, by institutions of the dominant classes, and by popular success—but I mainly want to highlight that there are three of them (*The Field of Cultural Production*, 50-51). The difficulties in interpreting Bourdieu’s charts may be rooted in his trying to graph three dimensions on two axes.

long obscurity outlived Melville himself.<sup>32</sup> If canonicity is about cultural survival of the fittest, how can we account for a death and resurrection?

Over the course of the canon/archive and popularity/prestige projects, Hannah Walser developed an explanation for the *Moby-Dick* question: the very different modes of canon formation in Britain and the U.S. for works produced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The British canon of this period mainly consists of writers that the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British public actually read, like Austen, the Brontës, and Dickens. In a sense it developed from the ground up, with critics ultimately consecrating that which the public had already chosen. By contrast, the selection of writers like Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, and Dickinson as the exemplars of American literature was a 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomenon orchestrated by prestigious critics like D.H. Lawrence and F.O. Matthiessen. The critics behind this canon largely ignored what the American public had actually been reading (largely the same nascent canon as the British—Dickens sold well in the States).<sup>33</sup> If the archive exerts a gravitational force, always pulling everything back toward obscurity, the British have escaped it with an airplane and the Americans with a rocket—the horizontal versus the vertical takeoff, both aimed at the corner farthest from the origin.<sup>34</sup> The question for our purposes is whether the popularity/prestige field can capture this—or better yet, add something to it.

This is where the historical limitations of the project are most frustrating. As noted, our MLA data is roughly a century old, though heavily weighted toward today, and the Goodreads site is only about as old as the iPhone. It is clear that neither metric shows the canon as it changes over time—and preliminary investigation confirms the well-founded suspicion that it has been changing. Within the MLA, for instance, critical attention has migrated over the years, not only because new authors enter the canon, but because at times former mainstays and mediocrities have switched places. **Figure 9** shows a version of this in miniature, in the changing rankings by decade among the authors (from our list) with the 20 highest current MLA scores.<sup>35</sup> Popularity may fluctuate even more: **Figure 10** shows the current popularity and prestige scores of the authors of the ten bestselling books in the U.S. 100 years ago. Of these, none surpass median prestige, and four have been forgotten almost entirely—in 1918 Stephen McKenna's *Sonia* outsold every book in America save nine, and a century later that

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32 Even the Melville revival did not save the remaindered books from the first print run, since they all burned in a warehouse fire in 1853; though this was just a few years after *Moby-Dick* was published, “few noticed and fewer cared”, as Andrew DelBanco puts it. DelBanco, Andrew. *Melville: His World and Work*. New York: Knopf, 2013. p. 7.

33 Walser has synthesized this argument in part from two truisms of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Americanist criticism: First, that the current canon of 19<sup>th</sup>-century American authors are formally and/or conceptually radical (see, for example, Douglas, Ann. *The Feminization of American Culture*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), and second, that the current American canon does not reflect what the American public actually read in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was largely a combination of sentimentalism and British fiction (see, for instance, Baym, Nina. *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). The reasons for the specific selections made by 20<sup>th</sup>-century critics entail a host of issues ranging from changing formal tastes to issues of social justice (or lack thereof) to nationalist politics. See especially: Walser, Hannah. *Mind-Reading in the Dark: Social Cognition in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*. Dissertation, Stanford University, 2016.

34 We are indebted to John Guillory for this metaphor, suggested in conversation.

35 These rankings are cumulative; by the end of the chart, authors are still getting credit for articles written about them in the 1940's.

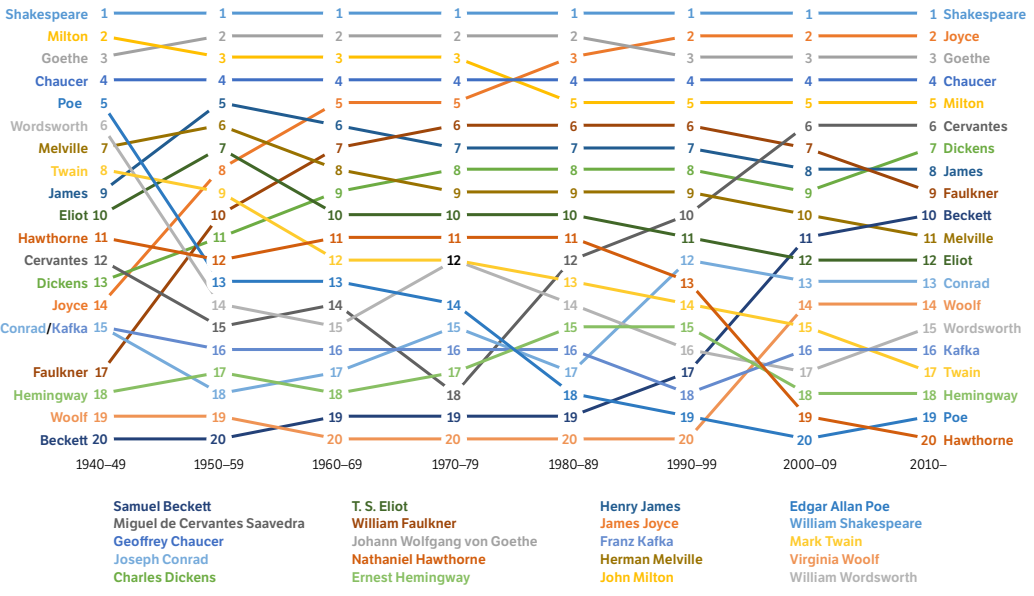


Figure 9

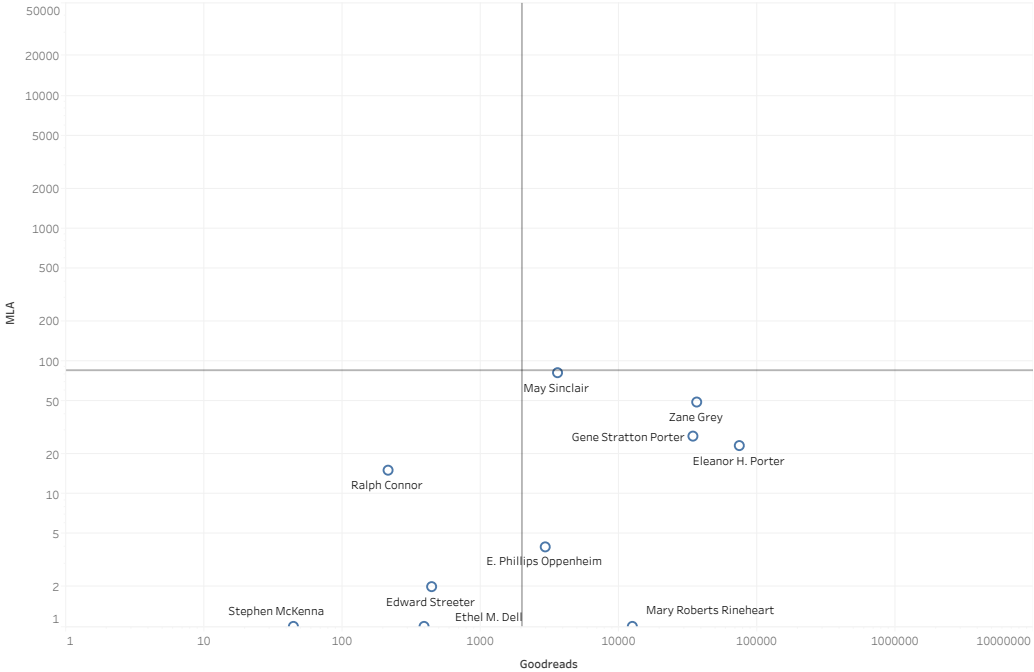


Figure 10 For purposes of comparison, in this image the axes and median lines are retained from Figure 1.

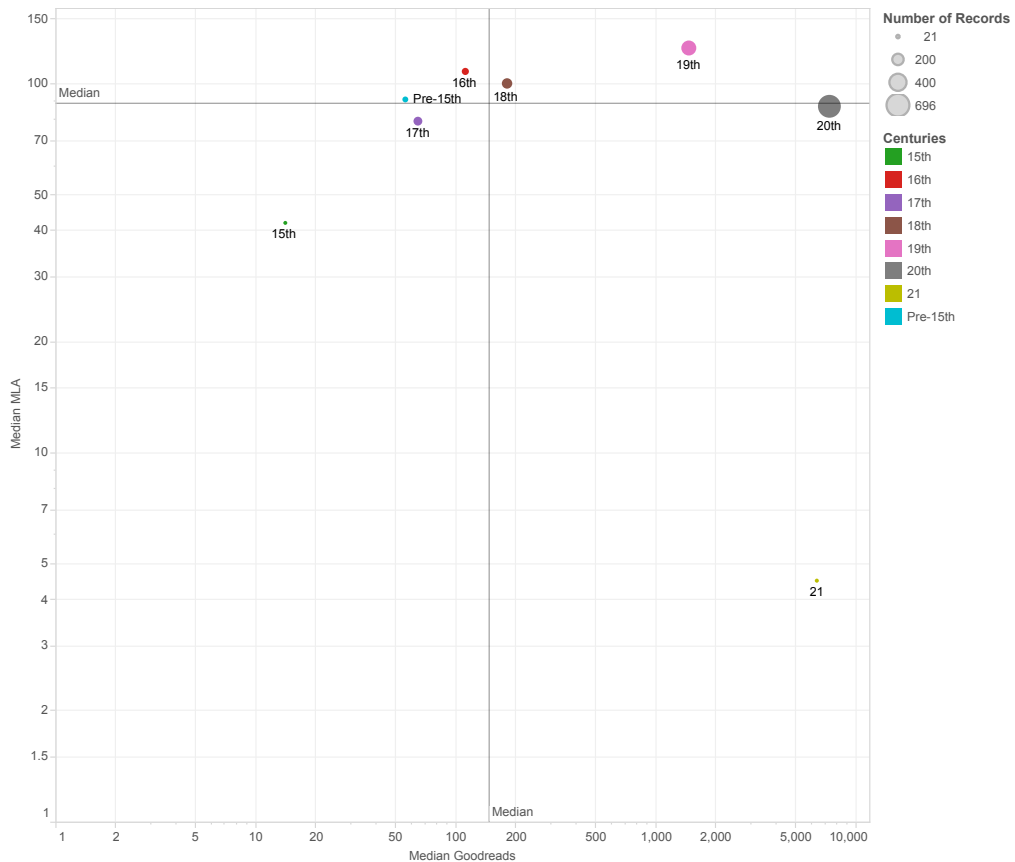
has netted him 45 ratings on Goodreads and one academic article. And the two may rise and fall in tandem as well: As Pamphlet 11 shows, Walter Scott's early-19<sup>th</sup>-century dominance of both popularity and prestige virtually overwhelms the English literary field; in this project's version of today, he has retreated to the middle of the Northeast Quadrant, just below the prestige of Mary Wollstonecraft and the popularity of James Fenimore Cooper. He does not even make the elite canon of **Figure 3**.

These small examples suggest that the canon is in a constant state of flux; but they cannot tell us everything about its history, because of a combination of missing data (what was the 80th best selling book of 1918?) and historical incommensurability (were prestige and popularity even distinct in, say, 1650, when most people could not read?).<sup>36</sup> Future work can and should provide an increasing number of snapshots like the picture of the early-19<sup>th</sup>-century in Pamphlet 11 or the picture of the 2010's in this pamphlet; eventually these would accrue like still frames into animated history. At the moment, all we can say for sure is where we are now.

Yet, like anything else built up over time, the canon does retain vestiges of its own creation—its history has left traces in its present form. We noticed this when we turned to a broader historical picture. **Figure 11** shows the median prestige and popularity for each century in our data-set (with all pre-15<sup>th</sup>-century authors grouped together). In some ways this image seems to confirm intuitions about popularity: It is more quickly achieved than prestige (Goodreads has responded to the 21<sup>st</sup> century much more than the MLA has), and present-day readers appear to prefer texts from the present. Yet closer inspection reveals some wrinkles. First, the pre-18<sup>th</sup> centuries are in a jumbled order; it could be that beyond a certain age texts simply read as “old”, and readers' awareness of them is determined by other factors, but in any case this complicates the idea that recency determines popularity. Second, the arrangement of prestige is obviously not historically bound. The 19<sup>th</sup> century dominates; the order, such as it is, is then 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, pre-15<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>—there is no pattern there at all. It is true that recency has some effect on possible prestige, as we can see with Beckett and Joyce in **Figure 9**; the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century may have lower medians because of the slow rate of academic uptake for writers from the past few decades. But prestige does not uniformly increase with time. This suggests one of two things: Either prestige is, eventually, randomly

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36 As Katherine Bode observes, digital literary scholarship frequently runs up against “the lack of an appropriately historicized object for data-rich analysis, more specifically the fact that producing such an object is itself a critical and interpretive enterprise” (94). This is partly a function of the sheer complexity of the histories of literary works, “from the documentary forms they take to the relative positions and prestige of the individuals and institutions involved in producing them (authors, publishers, editors, illustrators, booksellers, advertisers) and the interconnected systems (economic, religious, educational, legal, geopolitical) in which they circulate” (88). Fortunately, some current research is creating these data-rich historicized objects, notably Bode's own work on Australian newspapers, which uses the model of the scholarly edition. Bode, Katherine. “The Equivalence of “Close” and “Distant” Reading; or, Toward a New Object for Data-Rich Literary History.” *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 78, no. 1, pp. 77-106.



**Figure 11**

historically distributed, or methods of entering the canon change over time, and the texts that use those methods retain traces of them even as the canon ages.

If the latter case holds, then this implies that 16<sup>th</sup> century authors enter the canon primarily via prestige, whereas 18<sup>th</sup> century authors use a bit less prestige but more popularity. We may have a sense that this is how these periods occupy canon space today; the question is whether it is fair to extrapolate from that to history. Here we have an opportunity to avail ourselves of the H in DH. Rather than reading from the graph to theory, we can go the other way: We already have a good theory of divergences in British and American canon formation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so we can simply see if the data reflect that theory well. Generally, it appears that they do. Melville, for instance, is far less popular than Dickens or Austen (or Emily Brontë); the list of most popular 19<sup>th</sup>-century authors is replete with British writers like Doyle, Lewis Carroll, Wilde, Mary Shelley, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Ranked by prestige, however, writers like James, Melville, and even Hawthorne actually surpass most of this field, including Austen. Not everything fits—Poe and Twain are quite popular—but broadly speaking, the top of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American canon *does* seem to be more prestigious and less

popular than the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British canon.<sup>37</sup> Melville is, more or less, where the critical tradition has placed him.

The prevailing literary critical wisdom, in other words, is reflected in the chart even with its historical limitations. On its own, this is a nice two-way vindication, of both the prevailing wisdom and this new methodology. But the implications extend a bit farther: this finding suggests that modes of *becoming* canonical may have a lasting, identifiable effect on modes of *being* canonical. The airplane approach, for example, leaves authors high and to the right; the rocket approach leaves them higher but farther left. If we extend this principle to the scale of the century, as in **Figure 11**, we begin to see the grounds for interpreting existing differences as evidence of historical habits of creation and reception. Of course, more research would be necessary to say anything much more detailed about, say, 16<sup>th</sup>-century popularity and prestige; but it is perhaps not surprising to find that things can only be the way they are by virtue of getting there, and that knowing either tells us something about the other.

## 6. Conclusion

For the most part this pamphlet has focused on the implications of arranging literary history in this kind of a conceptual, spatial format—as is so often the task in DH work. This is important not just because of its ramifications for projects that examine canon and archive, but for its capacity to enhance our historical understanding of various canons based on whatever cuts we want to make—American versus British, the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel, popular but critically ignored genres, and so forth. Used well, and enhanced by the kinds of additional work mentioned so far (and, hopefully, plenty more that we have not thought of yet), the spaces of popularity and prestige allow for much more accurate depictions of the literary field.

Yet there is one other important point to make, one so obvious that it risks becoming hidden: there is a canon. At times this may not feel true. In the aftermath of the canon wars, the conservative side of the battle has not so much conceded as refused to acknowledge the battle: Today conservative pundits are less apt to argue against inclusiveness in the canon—as, for instance, William F. Buckley once did—than to inveigh against or ignore the humanities entirely. From another angle, the very existence of the canon may seem inherently hierarchical and exclusionary in a way that is antithetical to progressive ideals. Matthew Wilkens, making a similar strong claim for the existence of the canon, describes a colleague who told him that talking of canons at all was “thirty years out of date”.<sup>38</sup>

Like Wilkens’s work, this project suggests that neither of these ways of ignoring or avoiding the canon is tenable. If we accept that the canon can be framed in popularity/prestige

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<sup>37</sup> We attempted a few more quantitative measures of this comparison, but they all ran up against the fundamental incommensurability of any two groups of authors. There is no way to pick the groups without begging the question (e.g., should the American canon contain Melville? Should the British contain Bram Stoker?), and authors do not have cross-national equivalents (e.g., you can’t just say Eliot = Melville, as tempting as that might be).

<sup>38</sup> Wilkens, Matt. “Canons, Close Reading, and the Evolution of Method.” *Debates in the Digital Humanities*. 2012. <http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/debates/part/5>.

metrics, or anything remotely like them (sales, prizes, ratings, presence on syllabi, etc.), then it is simply unavoidable that the canon exists. As long as some reasonably large number of people are reading books and thinking about them, some books will be read and thought about more than others (indeed, as Wilkens points out, there are so many books in existence that it would be impossible for them all to have equal cultural presence). The creation of the canon is subjective, the result of many individual institutions susceptible to arbitrary, ideological, random, formal, political, and other motivations, but in the end the actions of those actors objectively exist. Our representation of this reality may not be perfect—it is difficult to operationalize people’s thoughts—but in some form or another it is clear that the canon will be out there in the world, and the evidence of our work so far indicates that it should be identifiable, measurable, and possibly even adjustable.

It is this last point, adjustment, that may prove most interesting to a general literary critical audience, particularly those concerned that the inevitable canon represents (and participates in) a just society. To take a classic example: Before 1970, Zora Neale Hurston was the primary subject author in just 4 MLA articles, and all of her novels were out of print; none had sold more than 5,000 copies.<sup>39</sup> It was famously the efforts of prestigious scholars and writers, especially Alice Walker, that recuperated her. And it worked: Today Hurston has over 700 MLA articles, *and* she has more Goodreads ratings than authors ranging from the canon that predated her (John Milton, Laurence Sterne, William Blake) to that which followed (Thomas Pynchon, Ishmael Reed, Lorraine Hansberry). No doubt much of the public familiarity with her work derives from its now-common presence in classrooms, but this is precisely the point. It is clear that in her case, as with the canon of American 19<sup>th</sup> century writers, the rocket model worked—a boost in prestige, driven by scholars and practitioners, and mediated through the classroom, led to a boost in popularity. The arc of escape from obscurity pulled her not just up but away.

So, to the fact of the existence of the canon, we can add one last finding: that we do not merely study what people read; people read what we study. Each axis does its work in the creation of the space, in the most successful cases combining two forms of literary survival into the form of literary thriving. That is the canon.

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39 Hemenway, Robert, and Alice Walker. *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1980. p. 6.