Introduction

This book is about the evolution of French and to a lesser degree English novels – by which I mean French- and English-language novels – from 1601 to 1830. And while *evolution* is very much at the center of my preoccupations, I do not offer a "story" about that evolution. There is no plot, as we might want if we thought of the novel moving forward, perhaps from birth, episode by episode, toward a resolution, some happy state of stability – as if, in other words, the novel's own history could be made into a kind of novel. Accordingly, there are no characters, either: no starring roles or cameo appearances for individual novels or novelists, lending a hand to the genre on its long journey. In fact, for reasons I will explain, I even doubt that there exists an entity, "the novel," that evolves. So when I say "the novel" or "the French (or English) novel," I do so not ontologically (as if this abstraction somehow had a kind of being) but pragmatically: the novel is a set of diverse practices grouped together based on shared traits, uses, and functions. So it's important to keep in mind that there is no one "thing" out there whose story we can (but really shouldn't) tell, because the novel is better thought of as a *system* of things: a system of literary artifacts.

In lieu of a story, *Technologies of the Novel* offers a quantitative account of the ceaseless yet patterned flux of the novel system over these twenty-three decades. But to give this brief description meaning, to explain why the whole project is not merely an inevitable consequence of enthusiasm for all things quantitative and digital, I need to give a brief account of my dissatisfaction – which is a methodological dissatisfaction – with previous histories of the novel. For the purposes of this introduction, I will for the most part keep accusations general: specific disagreements with scholars of the novel will become clear enough in the rest of the book. I propose, rather, a kind of caricature – hopefully recognizable – designed to highlight features of the historiography of the novel that I believe we have naturalized.[1]

The novel, we're often told, is the modern genre par excellence. Little wonder, then, that histories of the novel in England and France almost inevitably amount to modernity stories: they retrace not only the birth of a "new species of writing" (to use the language of more than one

early observer) but also, and more crucially, the homologous process by which purportedly traditional worldviews – identities, subjectivities, epistemologies, governmentalities – were replaced by our own. The history of the novel is the history of how Then became Now, of Them becoming Us. Oft-told, the tale is also, therefore, two-poled – with, in between, a rich "period of transition," corresponding to the novel's proverbial rise over the course of the long eighteenth century.

Modernity narratives such as this do not and cannot recognize the manifest complexity of the cultural archive. Rather, they want to make it go away, to convert the diversity of practices – a diversity that is synchronic as well as diachronic – into epiphenomenal noise. That noise is said to mask the profound cohesion characterizing a given epoch, ruled by what Michel Foucault famously called an "episteme": a kind of template that organizes all knowledge production over a certain period of time. Whence the widespread idiom, also associated with Foucault, according to which such-and-such concretely observable discursive phenomenon is said to be *made possible* (or *thinkable*) by the invisible but all-powerful cause that is the episteme. Furthermore, and to more marvelous effect, this type of analysis reveals that discourses which to the untrained eye might appear unrelated or even at odds are in fact profoundly connected. And the more unexpected the connection, the more marvelous the effect.

Too often in histories of the novel, then, the cultural archive is not a disparate mass of stuff made by a variety of human actors operating under divergent and ever-changing constraints and motivations. Rather, it's a kind of text whose individual parts are all there for a reason – much like high schoolers are still taught, via trickle-down New Criticism, that no element of a poem or novel is insignificant. Everything fits together, provided you know how to read the signs. And indeed, rise-of-the-novel studies take individual cultural products like novels as signs. In this critical idiom, novels are now no longer autonomous signifying systems (like the New Critical poem was) but have become parts of the much larger signifying system that is Culture. (Thus, the implication of Stephen Greenblatt's preferred name for New Historicism, "Cultural Poetics": all discourse has in effect become a huge poem. New Historicism is a New Criticism writ very large.[2]) Culture can be grasped through the work, but not in the banal sense that the work might be said to be a particularly fine example of a period's or place's preoccupations. Instead of being the visible part of a visible whole – shorthand or synecdoche – the work functions much more mysteriously as a clue to an *invisible* wholeness (a wholeness traversed, like that of the New Critical poem, by tensions and paradox).

Modernity is the common name for the invisible wholeness. In rise-of-the-novel studies, individual novels clue us in on a process of change: the slow revolution, not necessarily grasped consciously by the writer, that turns the foreign wholeness of the premodern into the familiar wholeness of now. The fact that modernity is often viewed critically – things were better before! – makes no difference: busters and boosters share the same methodological premises. And canonicity itself isn't my beef: unless we change our premises, it won't help to study more novels, or novels by the Others of literary history. The reason so many historians of the rise of the novel are content with just a few texts isn't merely habit and convenience. Rather, a few texts are all you need if those texts just happen to be *magical* – magical, because they are privileged links with the world of true causes. The job of such critics is to follow the wormholes threading between the objects of the phenomenal world and the world beyond. That's amazing: who wouldn't want to be part of such a critical journey? And it's comforting: we can rest again, no longer in the hands of God but now in the bosom of Culture, which, even if we hate it, at least makes sense.

Of course, all histories of the novel don't operate *precisely* like this, even when they are indeed modernity stories: sometimes, after all, it's held that people – great writers and thinkers – are actively responsible for bringing modernity into existence. It's a particularly common view of cultural evolution, of course. Great individuals drive things forward with their great works. They break the mold, disrupt the status quo, change the paradigm: with X, the novel is born; with Y, the novel becomes truly modern; after Z, the novel will never be the same again. The individual creates, and other individuals, now all drones or epigones, imitate. Until by some miracle someone again emerges from the crowd to shake us out of our collective torpor, our enslavement to genre or tradition. This position appears staider than the idea that literary works are surface effects of an invisible cause, and in a way the conceptions are incompatible. Yet in practice the two get along just fine, because the greatness of individual writers is simply rewritten as their uncanny sensitivity to the subterranean cultural transformations of the moment. Hence, we manage to have our cake and eat it too, making deep Culture our subject while staying within the comfort zone delimited by a few fetishized, often taught figures.

Technologies of the Novel is designed to break completely with the assumptions I've just caricatured. It is not a modernity tale: as I said at the outset, this book offers no characters, no plot leading to Now. Nor is it an antimodernity tale, claiming, as some have, that we supposed moderns are just going through the archetypal motions.[3] *Technologies of the Novel* is,

instead, an a-modern study: a study of the novel that simply puts aside the category of the modern. Not of *novelty*: novelty exists. But unlike modernity, it does not arrive just once. It is constantly being generated by our innovative species. We are always creating new artifacts, among which are novels. The novel, I will ultimately argue, can be profitably compared to the engine, the telephone, or the toilet: it's not one "thing" that is constantly changing, it's actually an array of discrete artifacts made into a family not because they share DNA but by dint of a shared function within a given culture.

Novels, then, are artifacts created by human beings. The proposition's banality stands in stark contrast to the rhetoric adopted by typical histories of the genre, where the novel invariably does a lot of heavy, world-historical lifting. I'm not, of course, denying the global impact of certain successful artifacts: the gun, the shipping container, the noodle, among the hundreds we can choose from – including, arguably, the novel itself. But acknowledging this is quite different from claiming that novels – or guns, noodles, and shipping containers – are of a piece with a more massive and all-pervasive transformation that is the advent of modernity. In common parlance, or maybe just the idiom popularized by Fredric Jameson, we speak of the "logic" of cultural phenomena, that is, of the way that they are profoundly imbricated with one another and with the realm of true causes (usually, Capitalism).[4] But looking for the hidden "logic" comes down to noting patterns and resemblances, which sometimes mean something, but more often don't. Don Quixote, according to the Foucault of *The Order of Things*, was the last representative of the Renaissance episteme, still stuck in a world of analogy and resemblance – "a diligent pilgrim," Foucault describes him, "breaking his journey before all the marks of similitude."[5] But how can Quixote's adventures put an end to "the old interplay between resemblance and signs" when we still have literary historians? Rise-of-the-novel studies sees giants – Modernity, Capitalism, the Individual – where by a more sober reckoning there are just windmills: technological artifacts.

This is a taunt, but it's also a proposition about how we could start to think about the novel. What would a technological understanding of literary evolution look like? For starters, and as I've hinted, it would speak of "the novel" only as shorthand for a system of objects serving roughly the same purpose. Those objects themselves would be seen as formal artifacts that are not historically stable. First, because they need to be invented: they cannot simply arise in sympathy with the "logic" of their historical moment. And invention is in fact a process, since successful artifacts cannot emerge fully formed from the head of their inventor. Just as the internal combustion engine, say, is still going through considerable refinements, various novelistic

artifacts – say, the epistolary novel – actually need to be "worked on" by their users: tinkered with, adapted, sometimes repurposed. And just as the windmill, once abandoned by the industrialized West, can stage a comeback as a "green" electricity generator, novelistic artifacts can also be exhumed and made to do new things. When I speak of the evolution of "the novel," then, I really mean the evolution of all these types of novels – a systemic evolution. Thus, we really have two different sorts of evolution, which, as I will eventually argue, may be evolutionary in a different way: one occurs at the level of the artifact (the windmill), another at the level of the system of artifacts (power production).

If the comparison between novels and windmills is useful – I'll raise much later the question of whether it is merely an analogy – then "the novel" is indeed a system of discrete and evolving artifacts. The epistolary novel, the memoir novel, the third-person "omniscient" novel we associate with the realist nineteenth century: these are some of the novel's many technologies that compete with and relay one another over the course of its history. Technologies, not genres. Whereas genres are usually thought of in terms of their contents, technologies are formal arrangements. "Genre" suggests a segmentation of a logical whole, or distinct pieces of the puzzle that is literature; technologies can be adapted for many various and sometimes contradictory purposes – moral uplift, but also pornography. Genres may be something close to Northrop Frye's archetypal modes or else the mere generational blips described by Franco Moretti;[6] technologies need time to develop and spread, as well as to fall into disuse, which they almost always do.

Like any technology, the technologies of the novel do not develop on their own, either naturally or in accordance with the internal imperative of "working better" than previous artifactual iterations. "The 'working' and 'nonworking' of an artifact," writes one Science and Technology Studies scholar, "are socially constructed assessments, rather than intrinsic properties of the artifact."[7] Indeed, modern Science and Technology Studies, with its strongly constructivist bent, has been formulated to counter an earlier history of technology, one that insisted on the implacable necessity of innovation – human inventiveness as driven by the fulfillment of fundamental biological needs, and driving toward the advancement of humanity. But "progress" is a term with only relative meaning: it must be understood, writes George Basalla, "within very restricted technological, temporal, and cultural boundaries and according to a narrowly specified goal."[8] Thinking along these lines rids us of the temptation to map formal change in the novel onto deep "shifting paradigms." Partly, there's just way too much formal change for that: if each of the successive formal waves

I will be talking about needed a paradigm for a cause, "paradigm" would be stripped of the momentous importance that makes it a popular term to begin with. No, novelistic artifacts are just things invented by humans in accordance with their values – values that themselves are always changing, so that the form that works in 1780 may not work as well in 1820.

Though I'm going to postpone until the last chapter a more detailed exploration of how Science and Technology Studies may relate to literary history, one further "technological" point needs to be made. People ceaselessly produce novel artifacts, but they can't produce any artifact at any time. That is, the artifacts they produce – in accordance with their perceived needs or possibly just because their culture prizes innovation for its own sake – have to come from somewhere. One novelistic artifact that will figure in this book is third-person, "omniscient" novels about protagonists whose literal existence is a matter of indifference: this is more or less the type of novel one thinks of as "the classic nineteenth-century novel." One obvious reason people don't write such novels in the seventeenth century is because their values are different. That is only one reason, however. Another is that third-person omniscient novels with fictional protagonists need to be invented: they evolve from something else that isn't present in the seventeenth century. Our practices, therefore, are *materially* as well as axiologically constrained. "Whenever we encounter an artifact, no matter what its age or provenance, we can be certain that it was modeled on one or more preexisting artifacts," writes Basalla, who dubs this change-within-continuity "the stream of made things."[9] This, of course, is why it makes sense to speak in terms of evolution and not just plain "change": evolution is *constrained* change.[10]

Material constraints, axiological constraints, but not, I think, epistemological constraints: it's really to confuse the matter to say that a nineteenth-century artifact is – to return again to the vocabulary popularized by Foucault – "unthinkable" two centuries earlier. People don't invent this or that form of the novel because the episteme has shifted, or because some new notion of personhood is ascendant or because that novel synchs with the logic of capitalism. Their new practices derive from a ceaseless interaction between their values (conscious and unconscious) and the material constraints placed on them by the old artifacts they have at their disposal; the new artifacts then help to create new values and desires; and so on and so forth. That some of those values involve personhood or capitalism or what counts as knowledge – obviously. But they are just values, not worldviews, Zeitgeists, or conceptual orders.

Technologies of the Novel has some broad claims to make about shifts in values over the nearly two hundred and fifty years studied here, along

with lots of little claims about the rises and falls of individual artifacts. And as I've just suggested, it also makes the more general proposal that the evolution of these artifacts is best understood as properly technological. It avoids, however, causal claims: it is a dangerous business, I think, to try to pin specific formal swerves to whatever sociopolitical events happen to occur within their vicinity (the absolutist court, the Revolution), or to link a form to a given socioeconomic group (the military aristocracy in steady eclipse, the ever-rising bourgeoisie), or to explain it as the material symptom of an emerging ideology (the exchange economy, the liberal subject). On the one hand, the sheer historical elasticity of most of these purported "causes" makes for a situation in which they can be wheeled in to explain whatever is in need of explanation. On the other, there is the standard danger of taking correlation for causation. Correlations are everywhere, especially for humans trained as hermeneuts, that is, trained to make meaning out of patterns in artworks. All correlations are not necessarily red herrings, of course. For instance, it may well be true that certain forms of the novel are practiced more in the provinces or abroad than in the capital, or that others are practiced more by male aristocrats than by bourgeois women. Unfortunately, to conscientiously weigh the merits of such associations would require data I have not attempted to gather. This book is by design a largely descriptive account of a cultural system's behavior. Customary histories of the novel have made for a situation in which we really don't know some very basic facts about that history: if novels lengthen or shorten over time, how many of them in the eighteenth century take the form of first-person memoirs, what proportion, in the 1670s, have historical settings – that sort of thing. So just because I don't talk about reasons for formal change doesn't mean that I hold that literature evolves on its own or that writers are writers only and not also social animals turning around and around in the cage that is historical context. Such a position would be ludicrous. I assume that values both literary and extraliterary are behind what people read and write, that those values are ever-changing, and that all people at any given moment don't share the same ones. To the extent that I do ask "why," I focus the question on the patterns discernable in the record of the artifactual evolution of the novel.

The urge to study literature as a large system is very much associated with certain branches of Digital Humanities: Moretti calls it distant reading; Matthew Jockers, macro-analysis.[11] While the scale, in *Technologies of the Novel*, is very much macro and distant, in other respects this study has not been produced with the typical Digital Humanities toolkit – word searches, collocation studies, and the like. Instead, I analyze "metadata" that I myself

have created through the hands-on, passably old-world manner of consulting novels (physically or digitally) that I categorize and measure according to a number of formal features. The many graphs in this book come from these "tags" and measurements: basically, I'm counting, and counting relatively small numbers. The properly *digital* nature of this process can be debated. Arguably, no one thing that I do here couldn't have been done by analogue means a hundred years ago. On the other hand, digitization of primary sources and above all the invention of the ubiquitous yet still magical spreadsheet have enabled me to undertake a project that otherwise would have required considerably more travel and untold hours of calculation and graphing. Even if the only algorithms I've used are the ones most computer-users have gotten used to – the ones running silently in the background of our garden-variety applications – they are just as indispensable and every bit as "digital" as the more exotic tools now also available: Latent Dirichlet Allocation, a topic modeling algorithm; measurements of Kullback–Leibler divergence; the text analysis environments of DocuScope and WordHoard; and the Google Ngram Viewer.[12]

Technologies of the Novel is, then, digital and distant; but it is most certainly not antianalogue or anticlose. All literary interpretation isn't "magical"; all meaning is not on the surface; individual works can indeed be shown to be representative of wider practices and ideologies; the canon may in many cases be a good proxy for the archive. And quantitative methods are not intrinsically more "scientific" than those of close reading: I want more data about the history of the novel, but how different is this from a scholar directing attention to understudied aspects of *Middlemarch* in the hopes of arriving at a better understanding of George Eliot's art? Those previously invisible passages are data too. And we want rich data not because at a longed-for level of richness it will reveal the truth to us, or make the humanities truly scientific. More modestly, the richer our data, the more our explanations are *constrained* – thus reducing the risk of critical whimsy – and the more probable and convincing they become. In my opinion, rise-of-the-novel criticism has been data-poor and thus largely unconstrained: it is a relatively simple matter to come up with explanations – even ingenious explanations – when one has only to correlate a few carefully chosen elements.

Most researchers want rich data, but of course there are always practical limits, digital tools or no. *Technologies of the Novel* traces decade-to-decade changes over nearly two and a half centuries of the novel's so-called rise. Yet while we have excellent or at least serviceable bibliographies covering this considerable span, I have not tagged *all* novels produced during this

period. Rather, I've tagged a sample of each decade's production, according to a procedure I discuss in detail in the Annex. Very briefly, the figures given for a decade are estimates derived from a consultation of all available novels published for the first time in given years of that decade – for example, years 7, 8, and 9. ("Available" means slightly different things for the English novel than for the French; this too is explained in the Annex.) The number of given years varies according to the production since low populations need heavier sampling than larger populations. For most of the span, I have examined more than half of all novels published, sometimes eighty percent or more. The total corpus, English and French, contains approximately two thousand novels. In our era of Big Data, researchers' aspirations often gravitate immediately to huge data sets; yet as a practical matter, sampling can provide nearly as much information as a census.

More important than the sampling procedure itself, however, is the population sampled. In this matter, too, the Annex provides more detailed justifications, but some basic orientation is necessary up front. After all, what is a novel in the first place? How do novels differ from biographies, histories, travel narratives, and so on? It's an unavoidable question, to which I give both a pragmatic answer and an age-old philosophical (more precisely, Aristotelian) answer: a novel is a work classified by previous bibliographers as a novel, and a novel is a plotted narrative. (I use the latter criterion to weed out disparate works included by bibliographers who deliberately sought to cast a very wide net.) More important, perhaps, is a second question: what constitutes the *system* of novels? Those being published for the first time only, thus giving a series in which each point has equal value? Or should we attempt to assay the "footprint" of individual novels – by paying more attention (but how much?) to those being reedited, translated, exported, anthologized, mentioned by other writers, featured in circulating libraries, or published in the cultural center – Paris and London – as opposed to, say, in Nantes and Edinburgh?[13] And shouldn't foreign novels being translated into French or English be part of the system? Obviously, many choices are possible; equally obviously, some of them are trickier than others to implement. And some are potentially deforming: studying only republished works – works with a history of success – is tantamount to doing a history of innovation using "winners" alone. By contrast, I am interested in losers as well, being mindful that many winners were for a time losers, in the sense that the commercial successes of given forms – say, the memoir novel – were preceded by a lot of mostly anonymous failure. For a form to "work," a series of people need to work on that form. In this account, what loses or wins – or wins and then loses, since formal dominance doesn't last forever – is measured by counting the

number of individual new products (novels) that incorporate a given formal trait. *Technologies of the Novel* is not, therefore, a study of consumption; but the one-sided nature of my focus is more apparent than real, assuming that over the long term the choices of producers can never be independent of the choices of consumers. The premise, then, is that there must be some sort of (probably imperfect) feedback loop, whereby the reception of artifacts (partially) determines subsequent production. In this study, the population of novels for any decade – which I refer to as "novel production" or "the novel market" – is made up of first-time publications of works originally written in French (or English, in the chapter dealing with cross-Channel developments). This choice, which is pragmatic in addition to being motivated by the intellectual considerations I've just laid out, should not be taken to imply that there are not other ways to measure the novel's production and the success and failure of its forms (and I heartily encourage others to pursue them).

But why should we think that a formal analysis of the novel market would be interesting in the first place? The systemic and quantitative focus of this book derives not from my perception of an abstract "need" for a history of the novel commensurate with our digital moment, but because I had a question that I could not answer otherwise. Scholars started to raise the question about a hundred years ago: why did many novelists in the eighteenth century pretend their novels were literally true? In the last few decades, a number of influential solutions have been put forth (mostly for England), all arguing in one way or another that the modern (English) fictional novel resulted from a conceptual change whose history leads back to eighteenth-century truth pretense. In my last book, I set out to follow in their path and give an account that extended to France the argument about what Catherine Gallagher has famously called "the rise of fictionality."[14] The writing of that book, however, undid my confidence in the method, which involved the type of magical reading I've just critiqued (no doubt with the zeal of the convert). And while I was able, in an eleventh-hour recalibration, to avoid reading my carefully selected base texts as windows onto an invisible conceptual change, the result was that I knew I hadn't answered the question. For to even approach the question of *why*, we need to know *what* happened (which we didn't): how far back did the truth pretense go? How were novels written before it? When popular, how many novelists used it and how many didn't? Did it fade away quickly or was it stubbornly persistent? The only way of answering such first-order questions is by looking at a lot more novels, yes, but more crucially, by looking at them *systematically*, in roughly the manner I have described. Examples and counterexamples, no matter how doggedly we multiply them, can never prove a trend. The whole point of cherry picking

is to get pleasing cherries, not to know just how rare those cherries are. If you want to know what else is in the bin, you have to empty it out.

The ten chapters of this study are split into three parts.

Part I tackles head-on the problem of the truth pretense to which I have just referred. Chapter 1 covers that pretense over the period in which previous scholarship has repeatedly (albeit vaguely) located its heyday and its eventual decline – the years 1681–1830. And while previous scholarship did at least get the "decline" part right – truth claims more or less disappear over those years – it turns out that a systematic study of the archive reveals crucial complications. On the one hand, the replacement of truth claims with the acknowledgement of what some might label "fiction" simply doesn't occur on a timetable that would support any of the explanations traditionally offered. On the other, it becomes easy to see that truth claims themselves have a history, and that that history does not at all correspond to the hazy assertion (also made by previous scholars) that the "true story" novel was some sort of dialectical reaction against an earlier fanciful novel, one that frequently goes by the name of romance. Chapter 2 therefore backtracks to 1601, examining the rise of the truth pretense (which will later fall) as well as an earlier rise (and fall), that of novels with various sorts of historical subject matter. Taken together, the chapters of this section describe, then, a succession of three dominant truth strategies or postures: the Aristotelian novel (which takes known individuals as it subject matter), the pseudofactual novel (which asserts the literal existence of protagonists of whom no one has heard), and the invented – possibly "fictional" – novel (which is indifferent as to the literal existence of its protagonists).

Three truth postures over nearly 250 years: that is relatively slow change, and indeed, the two postures I am able to track completely (the Aristotelian and the pseudofactual) take over one hundred years each to come and go. However distinct I believe these postures to be from one another, that distinction comes from their subject matter rather than their form. An understanding of the evolution at work needs to take in more artifactual dimensions. To give an example: Aristotelian novels can take the form of long third-person novels featuring interlocking first-person inset narratives; or – essentially at a different moment – they can be much shorter third-person narratives with little to no insetting. Such artifactual forms, however, are not chained to a given truth posture: short third-person narratives with little to no insetting are also found with pseudofactual postures. The microchapters of Part II describe these artifacts and their cycling, a cycling that only imperfectly overlaps with the truth postures examined in Part I. Five major artifacts retain my attention. Two I've just mentioned – the short, minimally inset form known as the *nouvelle*, and the long, inset novel

usually called a *roman* (but that for reasons I will explain might better go by the name of the Heliodorian novel). Two additional artifacts are associated with the pseudofactual posture: these are the first-person forms of memoir and epistolary novels. The fifth artifact is a particular type of third-person novel that expands rapidly at the turn of the nineteenth century – a longer third-person novel with specific structural and narrative traits. It is this artifact, indeed rarely advanced as true, that may strike some as distinctively fictional. Part II is rounded out by an additional chapter that provides a comparative look at the situation in England over the years 1701–1810.

Parts I and II are thus largely descriptive; in Part III, which contains just one chapter, I step back and develop the technological model to which I've repeatedly alluded, and that I believe makes the best sense of the observed data. My most basic position is that the literary forms I've isolated are evolving technological artifacts competing with others in the accomplishment of tasks that producers and consumers feel are important at any one moment. More specifically, and leaning heavily on W. Brian Arthur's theory of technological evolution, I argue that the novel over this period underwent three successive morphings, one of which can better be described as what Arthur calls a *redomaining* – a moment when artifacts were drawn from a discursive domain previously outside that of the novel and introduced into the novel system.[15] But these morphings mustn't be confused with paradigms or epistemes or even with "periods" plain and simple: on one level there are moments of rupture, but at the same time change is slow and constant; the artifacts associated with a given domain themselves evolve; and most important, the artifacts don't have to evolve in the way they do. The changes I describe happened, but they could have happened earlier, later, or maybe not at all. Indeed, in the English system, though broadly similar to the French, various changes did happen earlier, later, and not at all. No necessity – historical, ideological, artistic, nor even technological – explains the record, which is what it is because of a lot of different people made a lot of decisions for a variety of reasons and that's how it turned out.

The chapters of this book are designed to be read sequentially, in that I unfold the various classifications I use (e.g., the alternate-world novel, the document novel, the *nouvelle*) bit by bit. Many of these "tags" are my own confection: I've come up with them in a back-and-forth between my initial hunches and the archive. The advantage is that they correspond very well to period practice, and the disadvantage is that they don't necessarily correspond to common literary-historical categories and genres (e.g., the baroque novel, the sentimental novel, the Bildungsroman, the Gothic novel). As such, they will be mostly unfamiliar to readers, and I spend more time

toward the beginning of the book in an expository mode; once the main categories are in place, I am able to move more quickly. Readers needing clarification on terminology may consult the Glossary of Novel Types.

While the graphs on which my argument is based figure directly within the text, a smaller set of graphs containing auxiliary information – and designated here by an "E" (e.g., Figure E3.3) – are available from an online repository, as are the data used to compose all the graphs.[16]

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.