

I began this article by saying that quantitative data are useful because they are independent of interpretation; then, that they are interesting because they demand an interpretation; and now, most radically, we see them *challenge* existing interpretations, and ask for a theory, not so much of 'the' novel, but of *a whole family of novelistic forms*. A theory—of diversity. What this may mean, will be the topic of my third article.

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#### A NOTE ON THE TAXONOMY OF THE FORMS

The genres of figures 9 and 10 are listed below in the following way: current definition (in capitals); dates of beginning and end; and critical study from which I have drawn the chosen (and not always explicit) periodization. Since both figures are meant as a first panorama of a very large territory, soon to be improved by further work, a few words of caution are in order. First, except for the (rare) cases in which quantitative data or full bibliographies are available, the initial date refers to the genre's first recognizable example rather than to its genuine take-off, which occurs usually several years later; as our knowledge improves, therefore, it is likely that the chronological span of novelistic genres will turn out to be significantly shorter than the one given here. On the other hand, a few genres experience brief but intense revivals decades after their original peak, like the oriental tale in 1819–25, or the gothic after 1885, or the historical novel (more than once). How to account for these Draculaesque reawakenings is a fascinating topic, which however will have to wait for another occasion. Finally, the chart shows neither detective fiction nor science fiction; although both genres achieve their modern form around 1890 (Doyle and Wells), and undergo a major change in the 1920s, in step with the overall pattern, their peculiar long duration seems to require a different approach.

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