

**The Cultural Production of Romance Fiction**  
**Genre Prestige as a Predictor of Market Valuation**

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## INTRODUCTION

Romance is a stigmatized literary genre. Literary critics (both amateur and professional) argue that the genre is weakly written (Cuthbert 2007) and commonly ascertain (amongst other things) that the structure of the romance novel is formulaic and the content sappy, trashy, and even pornographic. (Gilchrist 2011 and Blundell 2009) In an effort to grab the attention of readers or viewers, the media reinforces and perpetuates the stereotypes of the genre, describing it with derogatory terms like “mommy porn” and “smut.” (Bourdreau 2012) The term “bodice ripper” (an allusion to the often risqué romance paperback cover images of half-naked, lust-filled men forcefully embracing half-naked, heavy-bosomed women) has become synonymous with romance via the mainstream media. Defense of the genre has not by and large taken a literary spin. Rather than debunk these criticisms, some commentators and fans have sought to embrace them and spin them in a positive light. For example, one newspaper article (Dalton 2008) pegs the “pregnant prose” of romance to be in-tune with the lifestyle of average women. Another article (Leong 2008) claims that the raw, unadulterated intimacy of romance is merely reflective of modern relationships and should be embraced. This stance of “yes, romance is soft porn geared toward women: so what?” may empower romance readers and writers, but they do not address the low status of the genre as an art form.

The continued marginalization of romance as art coincides with its unparalleled position as the fiction market’s leading genre: according to the Romance Writers of America’s website, in 2011 romance fiction revenue totaled \$1.368 million, controlling 14.3% of the market (the highest of all fiction genres). There is undoubtedly a link between the revenue generated by romance publications and the success of the publishers that publish them. Why then does the genre continue to get so little respect?

In this paper, we attempt to reconcile the popularity and sales strength of the romance genre with its low prestige. We posit that publishers, who gain enormously from the sale of romance novels, perpetuate the genre’s continued low status in the

literary world. In particular, we explore the link between hierarchical genre classifications and the cultural production of romance novels relative to the production of other types of fiction.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Genres of all forms of art (fiction literature in our case) are ordered and ranked hierarchically according to prestige. (DiMaggio 447) As per previous literature, the rank of a particular genre on the hierarchical ladder is the key determinant of the cultural value of that genre. (DiMaggio 447) But what determines the prestige of genres in the first place?

Some of the previous literature suggests that genre divisions and hierarchies are constructs that are merely reflective of already-existing societal hierarchies that divide groups of individuals; therefore, genres may only inherit the prestige of the demographic or social strata that engage in its consumption. (DiMaggio 1987) The genres are then valued (or devalued) accordingly. But who are the acting perpetrators of said valuation? According to Paul Hirsch, the “perpetrators” may be the publishers; decisions of investment (or valuation) are made by the publishers. (1972)

In attempting to explain the valuation of genres, this idea is radically different from the major academic approaches often labeled “content studies” and “consumption studies.” (Becker 1982 and DiMaggio 1987) Content studies would peg the construction of prestige hierarchies on the differences in the literary content between genres. Consumption studies, which are limited to the analysis of the consumption of literature, are kin to content studies in that they accept the same “menu” of genre categorizations developed by the content studies. (DiMaggio 1987) Both root their analysis on the “natural divisions” (based on content and theme) between genres. They differ only in their units of analysis: the actual art works for content studies and the consumers of the works for consumer studies. (DiMaggio 1987 441) If content and consumption studies do not peg publishers as the perpetrators of genre valuation, where do we get this idea? There is another component we have yet to discuss: arts cultural production.

Industry and cultural production studies are radically different from content/consumption studies; in fact, most cultural production studies completely ignore content. (Becker 1982) They attempt to analyze the systems in which art works are produced and distributed. (Becker 1980, Hirsch 1972, Coser 1975) Cultural industry studies outline the process in which “gatekeepers” shape and maintain the status quo in art worlds. They do so by analyzing the inner workings of the publishing or art production industries and take a macro (sometimes economic) approach to art production and distribution. (Hirsch 1972 & Coser 1975) Publishers are considered to be the gatekeepers of high art. (Hirsch 1972, Coser) Decisions of whether or not to publish, at what price to publish, and in what format to publish books are all made at the production level. (Hirsch 1972) These decisions regarding the way that art gets produced and distributed is a key signal of that product’s value, at least in the eyes of the gatekeepers. (Becker 1982)

DiMaggio says that “the producers and distributors of high art are the creators of said [genre] hierarchies.” Taking this into account, it seems that cultural production constructs or reinforces prestige of various fiction genres and the genre hierarchies that are formed. Therefore, cultural production may be directly related to hierarchical genre classification insofar as the value gatekeepers place on a certain genre is indicated by that genre’s prestige. This paper examines three types of cultural production decisions reflecting publisher’s valuation as these relate to the prestige of the romance genre.

Every decision or effort related to a work of art affects the way that the work “will come out.” (Becker 1982) Therefore, valuation decisions made by the publisher regarding a book’s cover price (sales decision), format (production decision), and market (distribution decision) will have implications for the book’s critical reception. We posit that the lower the genre romance ranks on the prestige hierarchy, the less value publishers will place on romance’s cultural production.

Within publishing, profit maximization and demand are the key determinates of book price. (Laband and Hudson 2000) A book’s cover price is directly correlated to author income. Also, Coser (1975) and Hirsch (1972) both discuss publisher’s intentional oversaturation of the market with “failure” products thus actively

devaluing the oversaturated genre. Publishers make less money on hardcover publications than they do on paperbacks because of production costs. Yet, there is the common notion that hardcover books are more prestigious and worth more than paperback books. (Wyatt and Arnold) Results from Laband and Hudson's 2000 study on the pricing and economics of books support this notion. In their results, hardcover books are priced \$52.68 more than paperback books. Lastly, "Participation in the established distribution system is one of the important signs by which art world participants distinguish serious artists from amateurs. People who use alternative systems created for those rejected by the regular system, whatever their reason, may mark themselves as non-serious" (Becker 1982:97) If romance fiction is priced lower (raw valuation), printed in cheaper formats, and relegated to experimental markets, then we can conclude that the cultural production of romance fiction is reflective of the low hierarchical classification of romance fiction and a perpetrator of its continued devaluation.

We hypothesize that romance novels will be priced lower than all other genres of commercial fiction. Next, we hypothesize that romance fiction (compared to other genres of fiction) will be less likely to be printed in hardcover format and more likely to be printed in mass-market paperback format. Lastly, we hypothesize that romance novels are more likely than any other genre of commercial fiction to be published in e-book only format: this is a distribution decision that limits a published book's market. What is the significance of showing a relationship between hierarchical genre classification and the cultural production of romance novels? There are three big reasons. The first is that we will have found another causal actor (along with the mainstream media) in the perpetual marginalization of romance fiction: this is in line with DiMaggio's claim that "Neither content studies nor production studies have developed an adequate theory of genre development and differentiation." We hope to posit a more "adequate theory." The second reason: conclusions made about the valuation of a particular genre can also be made about the hierarchical status or prestige of the labor involved in writing that genre (explained further in the conclusions section). The last reason is that a study of this

type, utilizing this data, has never been executed before: we are breaking ground by using quantitative data to analyze and discuss cultural production.

## **DATA & METHODS**

### *Sample:*

To test the above hypotheses, we will be using a 37,656-observation sample from R.R. Bowker’s “Books in Print” dataset. Bowker is an online bibliographic database management company. The full dataset is millions of entries long and is a population of publishing data that contains information on every North American fiction publication from 2002 to 2011. Each entry is a publication separated by ISBN number (each book title has its own ISBN for each format which the title has been published in, thus each title’s format is a separate entry.)

### *Measures:*

#### Prestige indicator:

To test our hypothesis we will use regression analysis (explained in detail in the next sub-section). The goal of our analysis is to compare romance to other genres of commercial fiction including: action, fantasy, horror, mystery, sci-fi, suspense, western, general fiction, and literary fiction. We posit that romance occupies a low position in the genre classification hierarchy. Therefore, romance, as a genre, serves as a proxy for genre classification and as an indicator of low genre prestige. In our analysis, “Romance” is a 0/1 dummy variable that will be main independent variable included variable in all hypothesis tests.

**Table 1.1 Prestige Indicator - Key Variable of Analysis:**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Included Variable</b>	<b>Omitted Variables</b>
Genre	0/1 Dummy	“Romance”	“Action,” “fantasy,” “horror,” “mystery,” “sci-fi,” “suspense,” “western,” “general fiction,” and “literary fiction”

#### Publisher Valuation Indicators:

To test our proposition that romance's low genre prestige is a determinant of low cultural production valuation, we will use four hypothesis tests. Each hypothesis test will include one of the "Publishing Valuation Indicators" (Table 1.2) as the dependent variable for analysis. These variables are indicators of the three cultural production decisions: pricing, formatting, and distribution. "Cover price" is a continuous variable that denotes the price set by the publisher for each entry (publication); obviously, this variable is reflective of the publishers pricing decision for that publication. Lower cover price equals lower valuation by the publishers and higher cover price equals higher valuation. "Hardcover" and "Mass Market Paperback" are both 0/1 dummy variables indicating whether or not a publication was printed in either of the two formats. The other possible formats are "softcover," "audiobook," "other print," and "ebook." Each entry in our dataset is mutually exclusive by format; that is, for example, a single entry cannot be both "ebook" and "hardcover." These variables are reflective of formatting decisions made by publishers. If a publisher publishes a book in hardcover, then that book is highly valued. Consequently, if a book is published in mass-market paperback, then that book is being devalued by publishers. Lastly, "ebook only" is a 0/1 dummy variable which indicates whether or not a title was printed only in ebook format in our dataset. If an ebook title appears as printed in more than one format in our dataset and was not released solely as an ebook, then that title is not an "ebook only" publication and each entry for that title will reflect this appropriately. An "ebook only" publication is an indicator of low valuation by publishers: decision makers within publishing companies felt that the publication was not worthy of investing in print publication. This variable is thus reflective of distribution decisions made by publisher.

**Table 1.2 Dependent Variables – Publishing Valuation Indicators:**

<b>Cultural Production Decision</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Pricing</i>	Cover Price	Continuous	Indicates the cover price of an entry.
<i>Formatting</i>	Hardcover	0/1 Dummy	Indicates whether or not an entry is a hardcover book
	Mass Market Paperback	0/1 Dummy	Indicates whether or not an entry is a mass market paperback
<i>Distribution</i>	Ebook Only	0/1 Dummy	Indicates whether or not an entry is an ebook with a title that was never published in any other format

Control Variables:

Our analysis attempts to explore the causal structure of the genre prestige to genre valuation relationship. How do we do this? By controlling out for groupings of variables (which are not cultural production valuation indicators) that will most certainly affect this proposed relationship. Table 1.3 below lists all the variables involved in our analysis; Table 1.4 indicates the regression grouping which the variables belong to, as well as what the omitted variables are for each variable and which regression the groupings are used in.

First, publication “format” is controlled for via five dummy variables inserted into the model that indicate whether or not an observation is: hardcover, softcover, mass-market paperback, audiobook, or “other print.” Due to known differences in cover prices by format (Laband and Hudson 2000), it is essential to control out for “format” in the “price” model; this must be done in order to make valid conclusions about the relationship between genre and cover price without the threat of spuriousness due to format.

Next, author status variable “debut” is a dummy variable that indicates whether or not a publication is the author’s debut publication We feel that author status will have implications on all cultural production valuation decisions: if a publication is an author’s debut, this will most likely affect the publisher’s decisions



regarding pricing the book, publication format, and even distribution. Therefore, author status is controlled out for in all regression hypothesis tests.

Next, publisher variables (different from the dependent variables that are measures of cultural production decisions) are controlled for. Added to the regression are two variables measuring: a) the quantity of books published by the publisher in the previous year (publisher size) and b) the ratio of ebooks published by the publisher in the previous year to their total publication count (publisher categorization). Controlling for publisher size is essential: we suppose that the cultural production decisions of a small publishers may be radically different than those of large publishers. Controlling for the type of publisher is also essential: we feel that e-book publishers will make different pricing and production decisions than standard print publishers. We will control with these variables in all hypothesis tests.

Lastly, there are two more variables that make up our control group: pagination and year of publication. Pagination is a continuous variable that indicates the number of pages of each publication. Year of publication is represented by a series of ten dummy variables that indicate what year (from 2002 to 2011) an entry was published. We will control out for these two variables in all models of all four of the hypothesis tests.

**Table 1.3 Control Independent Variables:**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Description</b>
Format	0/1 Dummies	Additional X variable	Indicates whether or not an entry is an, ebook, hardcover, softcover, mass market paperback, other print, or audio book.
Debut	0/1 Dummy	Additional X variable	Indicates whether or not an entry is the authors debut publication in our dataset
Count of books by publisher	Count	Additional X variable	Indicates the count of books published by the publisher in the previous year for each entry
% of ebooks by publisher	Count	Additional X variable	Indicates the percentage of ebooks published by the publisher in the previous year for each entry
Pagination	Continuous	Control	Indicates the number of page of the publication entry
Year	0/1 Dummies	Control	Indicates the year of publication

**Table 1.4 Regression Analysis Independent Variable Groups:**

<b>Grouping</b>	<b>Included variables</b>	<b>Omitted Variables and/or Comparison Group (if applicable)</b>	<b>Controlled for in (regression)</b>
<i>a.</i> Format	“Hardcover”, “softcover”, “mass-market paperback”, “audiobook,” “other print”	“Ebook”	Price only
<i>b.</i> Author status	“Debut?”	Publications that are not an authors debut	All
<i>c.</i> Publisher	1. Count of books by publisher (previous. year) 2. Percentage of e-books by publisher (previous year)	N/A (Count and percentage variables)	All
Control	1. Pagination 2. “Year 2002” to “Year 2010”	1. N/A (Continuous variable) 2. “Year 2011”	All

*Analysis:*

The main analytical tools used will be descriptive and bivariate statistics and regression analysis. We will run at least two regressions (null and full models) for each of the four cultural production valuation hypotheses discussed earlier. A

dummy variable representing romance fiction will be included in every model; “Romance” is the main independent variable in our analysis. For each separate regression, we will start with a null model: this model will regress genre onto the dependent variable controlling only for “pagination” and “year” (the “Control Group” variables). We will then move to the full model by adding groups of independent variables in an attempt to see what effect the variables have on the relationship between genre and the model’s dependent variables. The groupings will include variables pertaining to: a) book format, b) author status and c) publisher status (see Table 1.4). In the models where book format is the dependent variable we will not control out for format.

Since there are four different hypotheses, each focusing on a separate cultural production valuation dependent variable, we will have four distinct hypothesis-testing regressions to run (each with its own array of models). The first regression will pertain to cultural production dependent variable “cover price”. Since “cover price” is a continuous variable we will use OLS regression. The next two regressions focus on the two “format” dependent variables: “hardcover” and “mass-market paperback.” Since these are both 0/1 dummy variables, we will use logistic regression. The last regression will use “ebook only” (indicator of valuation via distribution decision) as the dependent variable. This also is a 0/1 dummy variable: therefore, we use logistic regression.

## **FINDINGS**

### Descriptive Statistics and Cross-Tabulations

The average cover price for the publications in our 37,656-publication sample is \$16.45. The average cover price for romance publications (7,388 entries, second only to general fiction) is \$12.50; this is the lowest average cover price of all commercial fiction genres. 16% of all publications are hardcover publications; only 9.8% of romance publications are hardcover publications (lowest of all commercial fiction genres). 9.2% of all publications are mass-market paperback prints; 24.1% of romance publications are mass-market paperback publications (highest of all commercial fiction genres.) 9.3% of all titles never made it out of digital print

(ebook) format. 13.9% of romance publications are ebook-only titles; this is the second-highest of all commercial fiction genres (sci-fi is the highest).

**Table 2.1 Dependent Variable Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>Cover Price</b>	<b>Hardcover?</b>	<b>Mass Market Paperback?</b>	<b>Digital Print Only?</b>
<b>Stats:</b>	Mean: \$17.53	Yes: 6,041 (16%) No: 31,615	Yes: 3,447 (9.2%) No: 34,209	Yes: 3,492 (9.3%) No: 34,164

**Table 2.2 Genre Statistics**

<b>Genre</b>	<b># of publications</b>	<b>Average price</b>	<b>% in hardcover</b>	<b>% in mass market paperback</b>	<b>% published only as ebook</b>
Suspense	2,426	\$21.79	15.2%	9.6%	4.0%
Mystery	4,067	\$21.42	25.9%	6.5%	5.7%
Historical	1,665	\$20.21	19.3%	2.3%	5.6%
Literary	3,125	\$19.97	20.6%	1.8%	4.9%
Fantasy	1,789	\$17.83	13.7%	12.7%	7.8%
Action	1,154	\$17.77	13.2%	5.6%	5.4%
Sci-Fi	1,673	\$17.72	13.3%	10.3%	<b>14.3%</b>
Westerns	792	\$17.69	35.1%	10.4%	0.0%
General	<b>12,892</b>	\$17.40	15.0%	3.9%	10.2%
Horror	685	\$16.52	15.0%	3.8%	13.1%
Romance	7,388	<b>\$12.50</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>	13.9%

Mass-market paperback books carry the lowest average cover price at \$6.57; the majority of mass-market paperback books are romance publications (51.7%). The second-lowest average cover price by format is ebook at \$6.81; 27.7% of all ebook publications is romance (highest of all commercial fiction genres).

**Table 2.3 Format Statistics**

Book Format	#	% of Total Publications	Average Price	% of Format that is Romance
Audiobook	4,920	13.1%	\$38.09	14%
Hardcover	6,041	16%	\$26.32	12%
Other Print Type	1,622	4.3%	\$35.82	14.4%
Softcover	<b>13,638</b>	<b>36.2%</b>	\$15.93	11.5 %
e-Book	9,322	24.8%	\$6.81	27.7%
Mass-market Paperback	3,447	9.2%	<b>\$6.57</b>	<b>51.7%</b>

37.5% of all ebook publications are titles that never escape digital print; this category accounts for 9.3% of the total publications in our sample. Not surprising, these publications carry a low average cover price: \$5.22. Romance publications account for 29.5% of all publications that fit in this category; this is the highest of all commercial fiction genres.

**Table 2.4 Format Statistics (ebook-only titles)**

Book Format	#	% of Total Publications	% of e-Book Publications	Average Price	% of Format that is Romance
e-Book Only	3,492	9.3%	37.5%	\$5.22	29.5%

There are 7,945 debut publications in the dataset (21.1% of all publications.) 14.2% of all romance publications are debut publications (second least only to Westerns). Debut romance publications carry the lowest average cover price when compared to the average cover price for debuts of other commercial fiction genres. Additionally, 13.2% of debut titles are romance fiction, second only to general fiction.

**Table 2.5 Debut Publications**

Genre	# debut publications	% debut publications	Avg Price if Debut	% of total Debut Publications
Suspense	384	15.8%	\$17.51	4.8%
Mystery	710	17.5%	\$18.81	8.9%
Historical	479	28.8%	\$19.59	6%
Literary	564	18.1%	\$19.35	7.1%
Fantasy	397	22.2%	\$15.31	5%
Action	274	23.7%	\$18.18	3.5%
Sci-Fi	346	20.7%	\$14.55	4.4%
Westerns	97	12.3%	\$18.42	1.2%
General	3,473	26.9%	\$17.25	43.7%
Horror	172	25.1%	\$13.35	2.2%
Romance	1,049	14.2%	\$11.60	13.2%

For every one-book increase in the quantity of books published by a publisher in the previous year, there is a near one-cent (0.7¢) increase in average cover price.

For every one-percent increase in the percentage of ebooks published by the publisher in the previous year there is a \$0.17 decrease in average cover price.

For every 10-page increase in pagination, there is a \$0.30 increase in cover price.

**Table 2.6 Year-to-Year Average Cover Price Variance**

Year:	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Avg. Cover Price:	\$18.38	\$17.50	\$17.44	\$18.91	\$18.37	\$19.33	\$17.81	\$16.60	\$15.58	\$16.54
# of ebooks	421	302	702	430	565	979	1,282	1,264	1,797	1,580

There is not much of a yearly trend in pricing except a drop beginning in 2008. As we can see, this drop can be attributed to the digital movement. The market became saturated with never-before-matched quantities of cheaply priced ebooks.

### Regression Analysis

#### *Price Models (Table 2.7):*

Romance fiction is negatively correlated to cover price. That is, when controlling for only our “control group” variables (Model 1), the average cover price of Romance fiction is \$6.86 less than the average cover price for all other commercial fiction genres. (P<0.25) When controlling for format variables (Model 2), we see the Romance affect on cover price remain but shrink; the average cover price for romance publications is now \$1.52 below the average cover price of all other commercial fiction genres. (P<0.25) When controlling for author status (Model 3), we see the Romance affect on cover price shrink slightly, but remain significant; the average cover price for romance publications is now \$1.45 below the average cover price of all other commercial fiction genres. (P<0.25) Lastly, when controlling for other publisher variables (Model 4), we see the romance effect on cover price

increase once more to \$1.82. (P<0.25) Most importantly, the effect remains significant throughout all four models.

**Table 2.7 Cultural Production Regression 1: Price and Romance Fiction**

		<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>
		<i>Price</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Price</i>
	Romance	<b>-6.858***</b>	<b>-1.519***</b>	<b>-1.453***</b>	<b>-1.822***</b>
		(0.186)	(0.137)	(0.138)	(0.138)
Book Format	Mass Market		1.308***	1.362***	-0.889***
			(0.228)	(0.228)	(0.254)
	Hardcover		21.14***	21.09***	19.49***
			(0.217)	(0.217)	(0.256)
	Softcover		10.19***	10.08***	8.524***
			(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.242)
	Audiobook		41.16***	41.32***	39.35***
			(0.374)	(0.374)	(0.394)
	Other Print		16.15***	16.16***	14.66***
			(0.961)	(0.960)	(0.957)
Author	Debut publication?			0.916***	1.270***
				(0.123)	(0.122)
Publisher	# Books published (Prev Year)				0.0139***
					(0.000589)
	% Of ebooks published (Prev Year)				-0.0338***
					(0.00271)
Control Group	Pagination	0.00335***	0.0125***	0.0128***	0.0135***
		(0.000506)	(0.000367)	(0.000370)	(0.000365)
	Year 2002	-1.276***	-1.427***	-1.773***	-2.165***
		(0.360)	(0.247)	(0.251)	(0.248)
	Year 2003	-1.258***	-1.519***	-1.617***	-1.900***
		(0.363)	(0.249)	(0.249)	(0.246)
	Year 2004	-1.392***	-1.904***	-1.977***	-2.268***
		(0.358)	(0.245)	(0.245)	(0.242)
	Year 2005	-1.556***	-1.911***	-1.945***	-2.393***
		(0.347)	(0.238)	(0.237)	(0.235)
	Year 2006	-0.623*	-0.647***	-0.681***	-1.132***
		(0.334)	(0.228)	(0.228)	(0.225)
	Year 2007	1.963***	2.062***	2.094***	0.731***
		(0.309)	(0.211)	(0.211)	(0.214)
Year 2008	-0.449	0.633***	0.654***	-0.389*	
	(0.304)	(0.208)	(0.207)	(0.209)	
Year 2009	-1.040***	0.00966	-0.0102	-0.297	
	(0.321)	(0.219)	(0.219)	(0.216)	
Year 2010	-1.049***	-0.235	-0.255	-0.639***	
	(0.321)	(0.219)	(0.219)	(0.217)	
	Constant	17.80***	2.391***	2.149***	3.475***
		(0.280)	(0.270)	(0.272)	(0.315)
	Observations	22,608	22,608	22,608	22,608
	R-squared	0.069	0.567	0.569	0.580

*Production Models (Tables 2.8 and 2.9):*

Compared to other genres of commercial fiction, romance fiction has a low likelihood of being a hardcover publication. When controlling for only our “control group” variables (Model 1), Romance publications have a -0.7 log-likelihood of being a hardcover publication; that is, Romance publications have 0.5-to-1 odds of being a hardcover publication when compared to the group of other commercial fiction genres. (P<0.25) After controlling out for author status (Model 2), Romance publications remain at 0.5-to-1 odds of being a hardcover publication with a -0.7 log-likelihood. (P<0.25) Lastly, when controlling for publisher variables (Model 3), Romance publications are still less likely to be hardcover publications with 0.63-to-1 odds of being hardcover and a log-likelihood of -0.46. (P<0.25)

Compared to other genres of commercial fiction, romance fiction has a high likelihood of being a mass-market paperback publication. When controlling for only our “control group” variables (Model 1), Romance publications have 7.3-to-1 odds (log likelihood: 1.99) of being a mass-market paperback publication. (P<0.25) After controlling out for author status (Model 2), Romance publications remain at 6.8-to-1 odds of being a mass-market paperback publication (log likelihood= 1.92, P<0.25). Even after controlling for publisher variables (Model 3), Romance publications remain at 4.9-to-1 odds of being a mass-market paperback publication. (log likelihood= 1.56, P<0.25).

*Distribution Models (Table 2.10)*

Compared to other genres of commercial fiction, romance fiction has a higher likelihood of being an ebook-only publication; that is, until we control out for publisher variables. When controlling for only our “control group” variables (Model 1), Romance publications have 1.4-to-1 odds of being ebook-only publications when compared to other genres of commercial fiction. (Log likelihood=0.35, P<0.25) After controlling out for author status (Model 2), Romance publications remain at 1.4-to-1 odds of being ebook-only publications. (Log likelihood=0.33, P<0.25). However,



after we control out for the variables, the romance effect on ebook-only likelihood disappears: P=0.613.

**Table 2.8 Cultural Production Regression 2: Likelihood of Hardcover Publication**

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		<i>Hardcover</i>		<i>Hardcover</i>		<i>Hardcover</i>	
		Log	OR	Log	OR	Log	OR
	Romance	<b>-0.699***</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>-0.704***</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>-0.456***</b>	<b>0.63</b>
		(0.0477)		(0.0480)		(0.0500)	
Author	Debut publication?			-0.0385		-0.177***	
				(0.0395)		(0.0404)	
Publisher	# books published (Prev Year)					-0.00200***	
						(0.000213)	
	% of ebooks published (Prev Year)					-0.0179***	
						(0.000994)	
Control Group	Pagination	0.00192***		0.00190***		0.00203***	
		(0.000111)		(0.000112)		(0.000113)	
	Year 2002	0.731***		0.745***		0.732***	
		(0.0791)		(0.0804)		(0.0812)	
	Year 2003	0.761***		0.765***		0.711***	
		(0.0791)		(0.0792)		(0.0798)	
	Year 2004	0.801***		0.804***		0.716***	
		(0.0781)		(0.0781)		(0.0788)	
	Year 2005	0.651***		0.652***		0.590***	
		(0.0771)		(0.0771)		(0.0779)	
	Year 2006	0.509***		0.510***		0.463***	
		(0.0753)		(0.0753)		(0.0761)	
	Year 2007	0.458***		0.456***		0.555***	
		(0.0707)		(0.0707)		(0.0735)	
	Year 2008	-0.0584		-0.0590		0.0389	
		(0.0739)		(0.0739)		(0.0756)	
	Year 2009	-0.0865		-0.0857		-0.0162	
	(0.0789)		(0.0789)		(0.0799)		
Year 2010	-0.191**		-0.191**		-0.0886		
	(0.0802)		(0.0802)		(0.0813)		
	Constant	-2.030***		-2.017***		-1.764***	
		(0.0671)		(0.0684)		(0.0696)	
	Observations	22,608		22,608		22,608	

**Table 2.9 Cultural Production Regression 2: Likelihood of Mass Market Paperback Publication**

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
		<i>Mass Market</i>		<i>Mass Market</i>		<i>Mass Market</i>	
		Log	OR	Log	OR	Log	OR
	Romance	<b>1.988***</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>1.916***</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>1.560***</b>	<b>4.9</b>
		(0.0412)		(0.0417)		(0.0453)	
Author	Debut publication?			-1.174***		-0.853***	
				(0.0657)		(0.0686)	
Publisher	# books published (Prev Year)					0.00605***	
						(0.000226)	
	% of ebooks published (Prev Year)					0.00555***	
						(0.000579)	
Control Group	Pagination	0.00202***		0.00173***		0.00199***	
		(0.000136)		(0.000137)		(0.000144)	
	Year 2002	0.776***		1.171***		0.945***	
		(0.101)		(0.104)		(0.106)	
	Year 2003	0.609***		0.670***		0.558***	
		(0.104)		(0.105)		(0.106)	
	Year 2004	0.578***		0.619***		0.515***	
		(0.103)		(0.104)		(0.105)	
	Year 2005	0.520***		0.516***		0.286***	
		(0.100)		(0.101)		(0.103)	
	Year 2006	0.490***		0.501***		0.320***	
		(0.0985)		(0.0991)		(0.0999)	
	Year 2007	0.238**		0.193**		-0.578***	
		(0.0964)		(0.0967)		(0.102)	
	Year 2008	0.0667		0.0328		-0.962***	
	(0.0965)		(0.0968)		(0.107)		
Year 2009	0.215**		0.212**		-0.176*		
	(0.0989)		(0.0994)		(0.103)		
Year 2010	0.439***		0.427***		-0.247**		
		(0.0960)		(0.0964)		(0.106)	
	Constant	-3.322***		-3.040***		-3.462***	
		(0.0915)		(0.0921)		(0.0959)	
	Observations	22,608		22,608		22,608	

**Table 2.10 Cultural Production Regression 3: Likelihood of ebook-only Publication**

		<b>Model 1</b>		<b>Model 2</b>		<b>Model 3</b>	
		<i>Ebook-Only</i>		<i>Ebook-Only</i>		<i>Ebook-Only</i>	
		Log	OR	Log	OR	Log	OR
	Romance	<b>0.351***</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.333***</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>-0.076</b>	<b>0.9</b>
		(0.124)		(0.125)		(0.150)	
Author	Debut publication?			-0.149		0.132	
				(0.127)		(0.162)	
Publisher	# books published (Prev Year)					-0.00366***	
						(0.000991)	
	% of ebooks published (Prev Year)					0.0696***	
						(0.00244)	
Control Group	Pagination	-0.00445***		-0.00447***		-0.00368***	
		(0.000415)		(0.000414)		(0.000519)	
	Year 2002	-0.311		-0.256		0.333	
		(0.244)		(0.248)		(0.307)	
	Year 2003	-1.055***		-1.038***		0.377	
		(0.325)		(0.325)		(0.380)	
	Year 2004	-1.305***		-1.291***		-0.181	
		(0.350)		(0.350)		(0.403)	
	Year 2005	-1.000***		-0.992***		0.0275	
		(0.298)		(0.299)		(0.358)	
	Year 2006	-0.575**		-0.568**		0.335	
		(0.246)		(0.246)		(0.303)	
	Year 2007	-0.673***		-0.676***		-0.338	
		(0.224)		(0.224)		(0.278)	
	Year 2008	-0.133		-0.135		-0.124	
	(0.191)		(0.191)		(0.248)		
Year 2009	0.0276		0.0306		-0.486**		
	(0.194)		(0.194)		(0.244)		
Year 2010	0.383**		0.384**		-0.00378		
	(0.183)		(0.183)		(0.234)		
	Constant	-2.704***		-2.666***		-5.683***	
		(0.168)		(0.171)		(0.287)	
	Observations	22,608		22,608		22,608	

**DISCUSSION**

There is a strong relationship between valuation and the genre classification hierarchy. Also, more broadly, there is a relationship between cultural production and prestige.

Through our hypothesis tests we were able to show that romance (a proxy for low genre prestige with a low ranking in the genre classification hierarchy) is strongly devalued by the publishers. Acting as gatekeepers to cultural production, it seems that publishers perpetuate the genre classification hierarchy by actively and consciously devaluating certain genres (romance fiction in this analysis). They do so via decisions of pricing, production, and distribution. That is, in our case, romance publications are consistently priced (by the publishers) lower than other genres of commercial fiction. Romance, via publisher decisions, is more likely to be produced in low-valued formats and is also less likely to be produced in high-valued formats. Lastly, romance fiction has a higher likelihood of being relegated to a secondary market by publishers. Our analysis shows that these decisions made by the publishers are determinates of genre prestige; as long as they are repeated, romance fiction will remain lowly ranked in the genre classification hierarchy.

The idea of this happening (cultural production decisions effecting prestige) is not new; there are several chapters of *Art Worlds* that discuss how production and distribution decisions affect a final product. (Becker 1982) Also, Paul Hirsch discusses how “investments” made by cultural producers ultimately affect the consumption and perception of their cultural products. (1972) It is new, however, to use analytics to test hypotheses related to these ideas.

These findings not only speak to the publishing industry (macro level) but, more importantly, have implications for each individual author who chooses to publish their work (micro). Faced with the findings, romance authors may make different decisions as to their work; even if they do not chose to write in different genres, they will be at least be well-informed as to the status quo of romance and cultural production.

There were several limitations to this study that should be considered for future research. First, our analysis concentrated on one genre (Romance) compared to other ten genres of commercial fiction; it would be interesting to see how each individual genre performed using the same analytics. We supposed that publishers might also devalue some of the other low-prestige genres, like fantasy and sci-fi. Next, missing from our research are several control variables. Controlling for

publisher categories (such as “Big-6 publisher” and “Indie publisher”) could possibly change the outcome of the analysis. Also, more variables regarding authors should be created and controlled out for. Lastly, a major limitation of our research is that we do not consider (at all) consumption studies. While our study acknowledges the separation of our analysis from market analysis, economic data (such as the pricing “sweet spot” for romance fiction) should be taken into consideration. Unfortunately, there is not much published quantitative data (yet) on the economics of genre fiction publishing.

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