

Comparing Literary Worlds: An Analysis of the Spaces of Fictional Universes in the Work of Two US Prose Fiction Debut Cohorts, 1940 and 1955.

Bo G. Ekelund, Mikael Börjesson, Mattias Bolkeus Blom and Anders Olsson.

Authors of novels and short stories create “possible worlds,” in Thomas Pavel’s term. They are also “recognizable worlds,” that is, they display structures and features that readers can relate to, as being reasonably familiar to them. One of the goals of the research project “Literary Generations and Social Authority” is to inquire into the social conditions of possibility for those possible worlds, and to look at the whole space of fictional universes that a cohort of new writers generates. As a “space of possible literary choices” it is a version of a collective social imaginary. The core of this paper is the beginning of an analysis of that space.¹

But first we need to say something about the project as a whole. Our main concern is to research changes in the social conditions of authorial practices within the production of prose fiction, that is, primarily the novel, in the US in what has often been referred to as “the American century.” To make comparisons over time possible, we have constructed three cohorts including all the writers who published their first book-length work of prose fiction in the US in the three years 1940, 1955, and 1970. In practical terms, we have retrieved a great deal of information for a data set that can be used for researching these changes, and also for placing individual authors and describing their trajectories.

The three cohorts comprise 993 individuals. There are 243 authors in the 1940 cohort, 317 in the 1955 cohort and 433 in the 1970 cohort. At the moment only the 1940 and 1955 cohorts have been moved into the data set for analysis. Those 560 individuals are described by 581 variables, and many of those variables have a dozen modalities.

The descriptive variables can be divided into four broad categories:

- Prosopography. Prosopographical variables describe the life of the individuals: social origins as determined by parents’ occupation, birth year, birth place, gender, education,

¹ This is still very much a work in progress, and for the purposes of this paper we have chosen to dispense with an apparatus of footnotes. It is necessary, however, to acknowledge our debt to Brigitte Le Roux & Henry Rouanet’s indispensable *Geometric Data Analysis: From Correspondence Analysis to Structured Data Analysis*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004.

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memberships in organizations, occupation, career, marital status, spouse's occupation if any, where they lived and where they died.

- Recognition. Variables measuring various forms of recognition: specifically literary recognition in the shape of awards, academic articles, reviews and more general social recognition, mainly in the form of citations in biographical dictionaries.
- The space of the literary debut. These variables describe the literary debut, which for us marks the moment of entry into a literary field. These are of two different kinds: one set referring to the properties of the publishing house and to the reception, on the one hand, and a set describing various properties of the work of fiction itself. These latter variables we have chosen to call "sociotopes."
- Literary trajectory. A number of variables then describe the literary trajectory that follows upon the debut.

The results discussed in this paper are mainly to do with the third category, the space of the literary debut.

Our study deals fundamentally with how individual agents attain the status of published author. The original choice to construct our cohorts by the publication of a first novel or short story collection in the same year laid the tracks we have followed the past four years. The assumption is that the moment of the literary debut, and the particular qualities associated with the debut, mark a decisive point. If we choose to call that moment the "entry into the field" we are not ignorant of the fact that many of the authors have been knocking on that door with handfuls, or even dozens, of stories published in literary magazines, glossy weeklies, or pulp rags like *Thrilling Detective Stories* or *Ranch Romances*. (In fact, there is one writer from the 1940 cohort, William Merriam Rouse, who had published at least 120 stories before his debut; James P Olsen had published 75, of which ten were published in the same year as the debut). But we are concerned with a period in which the book form defines authorship. That form itself is changing in these years, and one of the key differences between 1940 and 1955 is to be found in the format of the Paperback original, which creates new positions in the field of published fiction.

To illustrate this point, one can take the case of Edward de Roo, who had three manuscripts declined by Houghton Mifflin between 1953 and 1955, and instead made his debut with Ace books, with *The Fires of Youth*. "A novel of upset high school adolescents" as *Publishers Weekly* summarized it.

So, the moment of the debut brings together changes in the logic of publishing with the “expressive drives,” the authorial aspirations, and social strategies of many different individuals. The outcome of that meeting is a given set of published works, each of which is the result of one specific history combining with a more general, institutional history, and for us the space represented by those works then becomes a starting point for analyzing trajectories forwards and backwards.

The point of comparison, then, must be the *structure* within which individual writers accede to authorship. An aim of our work has been to reconstruct that structure by means of the data that are available to us. It has seemed to us all along that this structure can helpfully be thought of as a space, and thus we have seen as a model the type of analysis carried out by Pierre Bourdieu in *Homo Academicus* and his study of the field of publishers, and by Gisele Sapiro in her study of the French literary field during the occupation. Correspondence analysis, or geometric data analysis as Brigitte LeRoux and Henri Rouanet now terms their version of it, has the virtue of visualizing the differences that make up this structure. As Bourdieu says, these individuals are united by what divides them, their different ways of embodying the competence and illusion demanded by the field, and their struggle over positions within it.

However, we are not trying to lay bare the “structure of the field” as such. Our material is focused on a sub-population of the field as a whole, those who are newcomers, relatively speaking. Since one fundamental tension of all fields is created precisely between newcomers and those who already hold a position, our analysis cannot lay claim to a representation of that structure. The space of the literary debut is what we have tried to reconstruct, in order to represent the oppositions and tensions which create that particular space of differences.

We move to the analysis of the space of fictional universes. This space can be seen as one “space of possibles” as it was realized by the debut writers in our two cohorts. Our coding of the fictional universes by means of the variables we call sociotopes has aimed not so much to do justice to those elements of the literary text that invite literary recognition, but the ways that these novels (and a few short stories) have created possible worlds, with their own social characteristics. Many of these variables will be familiar to all of you, but we need to give a brief overview of them before we look at the figures.

The first set of sociotopes describes the setting, one variable identifying the geographical region, and one placing the setting on a scale of urban/rural. Temporal coordinates are given in

another variable - - the one we are using in this analysis just registers the choice between a contemporary and a non-contemporary time frame. Several variables describe the main character or characters, giving gender, age and occupation or social position, ethnic, national and religious characteristics. A variable that turned out to be very significant was the existence of an antagonist in the story. We also coded the novels for narrative perspective, but this variable did not contribute significantly to the overall variance of the material.

Two variables are not among the familiar, traditional terms. After setting and character one would expect plot to follow, and we have chosen two ways of reckoning with the chief characteristics of the plot, that we call “frame” and “dynamic.”

The frame is the configuration of characters which define and contain the plot.

- Individual frame. In a novel with an individual frame, the plot is concerned with one (or, exceptionally more than one) individual who is clearly foregrounded against a social background represented by various characters whose importance wax and wane, but never eclipse that of the individual. The plot follows this individual.
- Romantic pair frame. The romantic pair frame is defined by the early establishment of a romantic pair, sometimes complicated by the presence of a false object of desire, and the plot revolves around the eventual confirmation or disconfirmation of their mutual desire. While an individual frame will often include the typical reward of the successful male protagonist with a comely woman towards the end, this is a reward for the achievement, not the achievement itself, as in the romantic pair frame. Exceptionally, the romantic pair frame can include more than two characters, in a romantic triangle.
- Domestic frame. A romantic pair is not married, except at the very end of the plot. The domestic frame, in contrast, typically involves a married couple and their children or extended family, and follows this family, sometimes for more than a generation. The plot depends on the preservation of this family’s integrity.
- Community frame. The community frame also includes a larger number of people, but now people who are related socially but not by kinship. Some individuals may be more important than others, but there is no simple foreground/background relation between them. The plot, like in the domestic frame, depends on the preservation of the community’s integrity.

- Multiple frames. This configuration is rarely found, and the category is more of an escape clause, but occasionally novels will have plots structured according to several distinct frames.
- Mystery plot device frame. The classical murder mystery typically assembles a special kind of community, a “community around a crime,” into which it inserts an outsider who investigates the crime. The frame is both the community and the sleuth, with different emphases. We have chosen to make this a specific frame. Note that not all detective stories are framed in this way. The hard-boiled detective story normally has an individual frame.

The “dynamic” is the movement described by the characters in the frame by means of the plot. It is primarily seen in social terms. We are thinking here of Bourdieu’s comment that everyone seeks to perpetuate and if possible augment their social being. But in many stories a loss of social being may be quite obviously compensated for by a moral triumph, so the “dynamic” must be seen in terms of the fictional universe’s own principles.

- Achievement. The most common dynamic is the one we have called achievement, which means that the individual or family or community has augmented their social being, or, in some cases, has perpetuated their social being against the odds.
- Rehabilitation. This pertains to an easily recognized movement in which the framed character(s) are first thrown into a social abyss and must then recreate their social beings. In the thriller genre, the motif of the falsely accused individual who must prove him or herself innocent is a good example. The murder mystery often plots the rehabilitation of its community around a crime: the sleuth acts as an outside instrument for rehabilitating a community that has been seemingly irreparably shattered by a murder. This turned out to be one of the difficult border cases: some crime thrillers quite obviously frame an individual, whose success is the stake of the plot, while others function in the way I have just described.
- Drift. Drift designates a lack of significant achievement. Often we can see a kind of cyclical emplotment, with the framed character(s) back where they started, or at a dead end.
- Decline. In contrast, the dynamic of “decline” moves the character(s) in the frame down in the social scale, often in a movement of outright disaster, death being the limit case.

- Contradictory. The typical contradictory dynamic is when a character wins the world but loses his soul, or more commonly, suffers a loss of social being, but scores a moral triumph.
- Coming-of-age, again, is a highly distinctive type, and to a great extent it implies a corresponding frame of “individual within a family” but we have tried to classify the frame according to the emphasis in the particular case. The dynamic can be of various kinds: The individual may be worse off, socially, at the end of the plot than at the beginning, but he or she has gained maturity at any rate.

We are now ready to move to the geometric data analysis of the sociotopes. The presentation will move between the 1940 and 1955 cohort. Figure 1 and Table 1 show, first, that the first three axes account for 89% of the differences making up this multi-dimensional space for the 1940 cohort. The space of fictional universes in 1940 is less multi-dimensional than is the case in 1955, with a dominant first axis which accounts for 59% of the total variance in the data set compared to the 42% of the 1955 analysis. The second axis accounts for 17% and the third for 13.6%. Then there is a sharp drop to the fourth axis, which means that interpretation cannot meaningfully go beyond the first three axes. As we can see in Figure 13 and Table 3, the variance in the 1955 material generates four axes which can be interpreted, with a less dominant first axis (42%) and each of the subsequent three axes accounting for more than the corresponding axes in 1940.

Along the first axis we have two recognizable poles (Figure 2). At one pole, on the left, we have the “Mystery plot device” frame and the dynamics of “Rehabilitation,” typical of the conventional murder mystery, aligned with an agonistic plot, a mature protagonist and settings in the Northeast, in a metropolis.

The opposing pole organizes settings in the South, non-agonistic plots, “Contradictory” dynamics, protagonists who are either children, adolescents or older than 65, multiple protagonists of mixed gender, a “Community” frame or multiple frames, and a time frame removed from the present.

The most fundamental opposition appears to be the one between agonistic and non-agonistic stories. An agonistic plot is understood simply as one where the protagonist is faced with an antagonist, a personified enemy or obstacle to the protagonist’s plans and desires.

Metropolitan settings in the Northeast are opposed to settings in the South, and in the past.

The murder mystery is clearly one of the distinctive positions in this universe, since the kind of “community around a crime” we have labeled “mystery plot device” is the distinctive frame for the plot, just as “rehabilitation” is its distinctive dynamic at this pole. This configuration of frame and dynamic pattern is opposed to, on the one hand, a community frame or multiple frames, and on the other a contradictory dynamic. It is striking that the right-hand pole generated by the first axis displays patterns that are anything but clear-cut: multiple protagonists of mixed gender, protagonists of ages that depart from the norm of young and mature, a community frame or multiple frames, a time frame which is non-contemporary, and contradictory patterns for the plot. The easy identification of a genre pattern on one side thus contrasts with features that do not correspond to any one simple configuration.

Although the first axis captures other types of difference as well, it seems fair to designate it the axis of formulaic versus non-formulaic stories.

If we take a closer look at the way settings define the oppositions here, we find the metropolis the distinctive choice at one pole. A metropolitan setting is strongly correlated with the mystery genre in the 1940 material, and the murder mystery as a genre is much more dominant at this point than fifteen years later, in 1955. Nearly a fourth of the first novels are murder mysteries, as compared to only six percent (5.7%) fifteen years later. A murder mystery is twice as likely as a non-genre novel to take place in one of the three metropolitan areas, and predominantly New York City. But the distinctiveness of the metropolitan setting at this pole is also affected by the quarter, roughly, of the non-genre books that take place in a metropolitan city.

This association between the past and the South is a profound cultural marker which runs through US literary history as a symbolic resource. In contrast, the Northeast is equivalent with contemporaneity. In 1940, 84% of the novels set in the Northeast have a contemporary time frame, while settings in the South and the West have a contemporary setting in 57% and 58% of the cases, and a European setting is more commonly historical than contemporary (54%) It is worth noting that the association between the South and the past is even stronger in the 1955 material (55% set in the past), while Europe has become a more contemporary place (41% in non-contemporary).

In general, the fictional universe of 1940 is more anchored in its own time than the 1955 novels: 71% of the novels have a contemporary time frame in 1940, and the corresponding figure in 1955 is 59%.

For reasons that are perhaps quite obvious, vanity press-published novels look backwards to an even greater extent; less than half, 49%, of the 1955 vanity press novels are set in the present.

To sum up the main opposition along the first axis of the 1940 cloud of modalities for the fictional universes, we see the conventions of a metropolitan setting featuring a murder mystery and a rehabilitation plot, opposed to features associated rather with an avoidance of the most common conventions: multiple protagonists of mixed gender and varied age, community frames, and plots that take us to contradictory endings.

The first axis in 1955 displays many similarities with the first dimension of the 1940 material and some interesting differences (Figure 14). The mystery genre again is a key factor at one pole, with a Rehabilitation plot and the “Mystery plot device” frame marking distinctive positions. The most important difference along the first axis is between agonistic and non-agonistic plots and the contribution of these factors is significantly higher than in the 1940 material. The agonistic plot is strongly correlated with a young, male protagonist, while the non-agonistic plot is associated with a female or mixed gender protagonist and with ages other than young and mature. On the non-agonistic side we also find the domestic frame and, not surprisingly, the coming-of-age plot. The setting associated with the non-agonistic fictional universe is the medium-sized or small city. The South is no longer as distinctive a choice in the first dimension, nor is the non-contemporary time frame as significant along this first axis, which is, instead, more determined by the gendering of the distinctive choices.

For the 1940 cohort, the second axis produces the gender opposition which was part of the first dimension in 1955 (Figure 3). But in other regards the second axis generates one pole which is very similar in both spaces. In 1940 as in 1955, a contemporary time frame is opposed to a non-contemporary, so we could label it the axis of time. There is, at the contemporary pole, a fascinating association between the “Romantic pair” frame and settings in the Northeast and a metropolis. In 1940, however, this pole is distinguished also by a domestic frame and the mixed gender multiple protagonists along with the female main character. The non-contemporary pole looks quite different in 1940, too. A mature, male protagonist acting within an individual frame and moving across multiple locations forms the sharp contrast with the “Romantic pair” frame set in one large city.

The second dimension of the 1955 space shows a very strong opposition between metropolitan settings and non-urban settings, first of all (Figure 15). And this is aligned with the

contrast between contemporary and non-contemporary time frames. It is no surprise that a metropolitan setting should be associated with contemporaneity, and this was true also in 1940. Settings in the Northeast and in Europe are found at the contemporary, metropolitan pole, and the pattern further links a “Romantic pair” frame and a dynamic of “Drift or decline” with this setting. The opposite pole to metropolitan, urbane love and decline in the present is represented by non-contemporary, non-urban settings in the West, with a dynamic of “Rehabilitation” among a community. What suggests itself is a Western scenario of regeneration through violence, and while there is no certainty that these elements combine in any single story, the interesting thing here is that the West is opposed to the Northeast and Europe as “Rehabilitation” is opposed to “Drift and decline.”

The association between the “Romantic pair” frame and a metropolitan setting is in fact a very strong one both in 1940 and 1955. That frame is overrepresented among the books with a metropolitan setting by a ratio of 1.53 in 1940 and 1.72 in 1955. The metropolitan city clearly has an erotic-romantic aura for writers in both cohorts. But the material seems to suggest that the importance of the metropolis has otherwise declined, or has dispersed to other urban centers. In 1940 a large majority of the novels are set in either a metropolis or in a non-urban setting (63%) while in 1955 both categories decrease in importance, amounting to almost exactly half of the total (50%).

For the analysis of the 1940 material, the third axis gives the last dimension of significance, accounting for 14% of the total variance in the material (Figure 4). One set of modalities contributing to the third axis describe the protagonist and the frame for the story, marking a pole of femaleness and youth framed by the “Romantic pair” focus. This pole is also distinguished by movement across many locations, both in terms of general setting and in terms of the urban/rural divide. It is strongly marked by the dynamics of “Achievement.” At the opposite pole we find two separate contrasts, one of maturity and the “community around a crime” favored in the mystery genre, and the other one characterized by a community frame, multiple protagonists of mixed gender, and a contradictory plot dynamic. This dimension appears to combine and correct some of the oppositions of the first two axes.

The relation between a female protagonist and a dynamic of “Achievement” is well established in the material: half of all stories with a female protagonist belong to that category. If we add “Achievement,” “Rehabilitation” and “Coming-of-age” to form a class of “happy

endings” we see that female protagonists entered their fictional life projects with very good odds, 88% of them enjoying a positive resolution. Male characters had a harder time, but 75% of them still were on balance better off at the end of the story. In contrast, the characters in the fictional universes of 1955 lived in an age of diminished expectations, 63% enjoying a happy ending compared to 76% fifteen years earlier. Outright decline was almost twice as likely in 1955 than in 1940, 17% against 9%. However, female characters were almost as much in the favor of the gods in both cohorts, and it was male characters and mixed gender characters that bore the brunt of this decline in fortunes.

The third axis in the 1955 material also has a pole which connects “Achievement” within the “Individual” or “Romantic Pair” frames with multiple locations, but compared with 1940 there is the addition of a European setting, a non-contemporary time frame and the absence of a strong gendering of the main character (Figure 16). This pole is clearly opposed to the other pole, which combines the “Mystery Plot Device” frame with “Rehabilitation” dynamics, settings in the West or the Northeast and in a metropolis, and a “Contemporary” time frame. “Rehabilitation” is a kind of achievement, but a special type, and the third axis opposes two scenes of achievement, one involving the mystery-solving sleuth and a community around a crime fixed in one place, in the present, either in the Northeast or the West, and one involving movement across various locations on the part of an individual or a romantic pair, in a time removed from the present. To some extent, axis three gives us the rehabilitation plot in the present as contrasted with the rehabilitation plot in the past (and in the non-urban West) that formed one pole of axis 2.

The 1955 material contains variances that warrant the interpretation of four axes. The fourth one has two poles associated with two less common frames, both representing alternatives to the normative “Individual” frame. At one pole, a “Domestic” frame is associated with Female main characters, with coming-of-age plots, with achievement, and the Midwest or a generic, unidentified US as setting. Often enough, as a reader, one gets the sense that these unidentified US settings are Midwestern, and while that may be a stock reaction not intended by the authors, it is clearly correlated with the Midwest here. The other pole links a “Community” frame with multiple protagonists and a “Contradictory” dynamic. The Southern setting does not contribute greatly to the axis, but there is a meaningful pattern here with the two regional settings associated with non-dominant ways of framing the story.

So far, we have seen how the debut writers in our two cohorts have realized a “space of possibles” and it has become clear that certain structures remain the same in the two spaces.

If we add to these spaces the modalities describing the social background of the authors, some patterns emerge which give a clear indication of how the authors’ place in the actual social universe is associated with an orientation to certain choices in the space of possible fictional universes. We will start with the 1940 cohort. Figure 6 shows supplementary biographical modalities projected onto the plane of axes 1 and 2. The first two axes create a distinct distribution of social characteristics, with three discernible groupings.

One cluster in the upper left quadrant gathers authors with parents in the economic elite, authors who are born in New York City and authors who reside in New York City or out west at the time of the debut, authors who have a Jewish cultural background. Crucially, they make their debut at an early age. Consequently, many are unmarried at the time of the debut.

Crossing over into the right-hand quadrant we find families with a large amount of cultural capital as well as professionals, workers and service workers. Moving further to the right, we have a distinct cluster of writers born in the South and living in the South at the time of the debut, from farming families. Here we find the few authors, too, who dropped out of school before high school. Otherwise the two clusters in the upper half have high levels of education. This cluster is associated with divorced or widowed status, which is suggestive given the distinctiveness of a domestic frame and multiple protagonists of mixed gender, but we are talking about very few individuals in this category.

Biographical variables that contrast with both groups in the upper quadrant are found in the lower right-hand quadrant. These authors make their debut late, have parents who are Educators or belong to the economic middle strata, they have little higher education, and live in the Northeast (but not New York) or the Midwest at the time of the debut. They are associated with a clear religious stance of Protestant Christianity, and they are commonly married at the time of the debut.

One overriding division along the second axis places men in the lower half and women in the upper half. Not surprisingly, here we find the clearest expression of a direct relation between biographical modalities and literary choices, since this division corresponds to the predominance of male characters at the lower pole of the second axis and of female characters at the other pole. This gender logic may also be seen at work in the association of male characters and authors with

the “Individual” frame, which is opposed to “Romantic pair,” “Community” and “Domestic” frames at the other pole.

In terms of the fictional universes, the cluster of biographies associated with New York City and a high level of economic capital is linked to settings in the Northeast and a metropolis, with the mystery genre and contemporary time frames, and is placed at the agonistic rather than the non-agonistic pole of the first axis. However, to some extent this cluster is also linked with the “Romantic pair” frame and female characters.

Those two literary modalities occupy a position where the NYC/economic elite cluster borders onto the cluster of authors from families with a high level of cultural capital, (and a markedly lower level of economic capital). Apart from the “Romantic pair” frame and female characters, this cluster is strongly associated with contemporaneity, and also aligned with “Domestic” frames and multiple protagonists of mixed gender, and they are placed nearer the non-agonistic pole.

As we move further in the same direction we move farther from the Contemporary, metropolitan cluster and we find a cluster of authors living in the South and having a family background of farming. The corresponding sociotopes include a setting in the South, differently aged protagonists, a “Community” frame.

Finally, the space marked out by the Midwest and Northeast, middle class and teacher backgrounds, a late debut age and male gender corresponds to the literary universe dominated by an “Individual” frame and male, mature protagonists facing an antagonist in a non-contemporary setting. The fact that the modality “Active military service” is found here is consistent with the conventions of war novels.

The correspondence of prosopographical and literary universes is perhaps just what one might expect, but only given a literary ideology stressing personal experience, what used to be called an expressivist fallacy, the creative writing course ethos of writing about what you know. If we look at Tables crossing birthplace and setting for the 1940 and 1955 cohorts, we get a good idea of how the choices that constructs the fictional universe feeds on lived background (Tables 9 and 10). But more than that, we can get a sense of how different backgrounds allow for imaginative appropriations.

We are looking at small numbers of authors in each category, but the distribution in 1940 corresponds to what we might expect. More than half the Northeasterners wrote about the

Northeast and a corresponding choice was made by the Southerners and Westerners and only somewhat less frequently by those born outside the US. The interesting exceptions are the Midwesterners: only a quarter of them placed their novels in the Midwest.

The authors who were born in New York City among the 1940 cohort chose to write about New York, the Northeast or a setting abroad. What is striking is that not one of them chose to write about the South, the Midwest or the West. In 1955, more of the New York City-born writers chose to set their books outside the US, nearly as great a share of that group as of those born outside the US, but they also felt freer to choose other US settings.

Another interesting difference between the cohorts is a general decrease in literary local patriotism, except for writers born in the South, who cling even more tenaciously to their native ground. Note also that the 1955 cohort is more cosmopolitan, in general, with a higher proportion of writers choosing settings abroad (27% against 14%).

If we turn to the 1955 cohort and the distribution of prosopographical modalities across the space determined by the first two axes, the pattern from 1940 can be recognized, but it is modified in suggestive ways (Figure 18). Two poles can be discerned, aligned diagonally, with one pole having a center in the upper left quadrant, and one in the lower right-hand quadrant. The upper one joins birthplace in New York and residence in New York at the time of the debut, low age at debut, Jewish cultural background, and a working-class background as the most distinctive modalities, most removed from the opposite pole. Secondarily, we also have birth and residence in the Northeast, family background including cultural producers, service workers and professionals.

Social background in the economic elite and the middle class are not so clearly associated with this pole, but is now placed along with a Master's degree, residence in the West, and the lack of any ethnic markers in a mediate position between the two poles.

The pole opposed to New York City and an early debut is quite distinct: here we find birthplaces in the South and the Midwest, residence at debut also in those parts of the country, we find religion: Protestant Christian and other Christian stances; these characteristics are linked with a late debut, and with a social background that include fathers' occupations in education or in farming.

A plain opposition between male and female writers is articulated along the first axis, and corresponds almost exactly to the choice of male and female characters, and also to the

opposition between agonistic plots and non-agonistic plots. It would appear that the fictional universe is more strongly determined by the sex of the author than was the case in 1940.

Looking at Tables giving the gender of the authors and of the main characters, we see that the correlation is more rigid in 1955 than in 1940, at least on the part of male writers, who choose overwhelmingly to follow a male protagonist (Tables 11 and 12). On the other hand, a larger share of the women chooses to write about a male protagonist in 1955, so the male perspective has become much more dominant, overall, with women adapting to it.

The clouds of individuals that are then projected onto these oppositions have the function of inviting a renewed analysis of the individual debut work, now placed within a set of tensions (Figure 22). William Gaddis's massive, modernist work *The Recognitions* is now found right in between the recognizable clusters, at a position of tension between different choices, and that may be a good way to start thinking about it. Science fiction authors and authors of Westerns rub shoulders, wedged in between the straightforward crime and suspense authors on one side and historical novels and war novels on the other. A handful of female writers of region-based novels – Shirley Ann Grau, Thyra Ferre Bjorn, Alberta Wilson Constant, Marjorie McIntyre, Kate Farness, Delight Youngs - are seen to have also their interest in communities in common. Carol Grace, Nancy Hallinan, Angna Enters and Gretchen Finletter all feature the sophisticated urbane and largely feminine world which is distinct from the works of the writer just mentioned, but even more so from the dark, masculine urban worlds of Harvey Swados, Mario Puzo and Allan Harrington.

The analysis of the fictional worlds has just begun with this first step of objectification. There is no doubt, however, that the map of this “space of possibles” has made a new space of inquiry possible.

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1940 Sociotopes

Figure 1. Modified rates, axes 1-10.

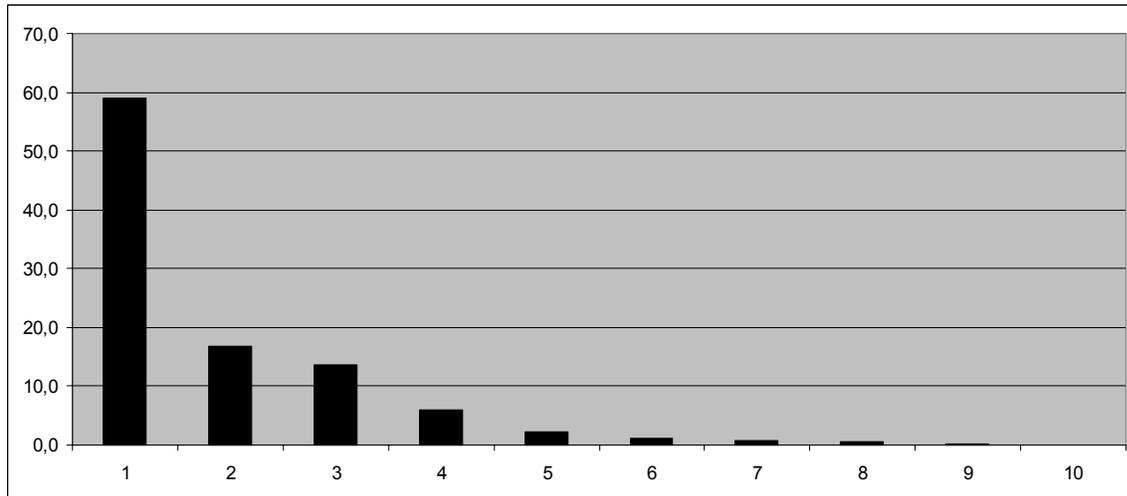


Table 1. Eigenvalues, rates and modified rates for axes 1-10.

Axis	Eigenvalue	Rate	Modified rate	Cumulative modified rate
1	0,3555	11,4	58,9	
2	0,2479	7,9	16,7	75,6
3	0,2357	7,5	13,6	89,2
4	0,1980	6,3	5,9	95,1
5	0,1690	5,4	2,2	97,3
6	0,1567	5,0	1,1	98,4
7	0,1508	4,8	0,7	99,2
8	0,1473	4,7	0,6	99,7
9	0,1389	4,4	0,2	99,9
10	0,1336	4,3	0,1	100,0

Table 2. Variables and modalities, axes 1-4.

	Variables	Contribution (Ctr.)	Cumulative ctr	Modalities - plus	Ctr	Modalities - minus	Ctr
Axis 1	Dynamic	20,76		Contradictory	2,92	Rehabilitation	13,29
	Frame	19,26	40,02	Community/multiple	4,86	Mystery plot device	13,09
	Antagonist	13,67	53,69	No antagonist	6,12	Antagonist	7,55
	Main character, age	12,96	66,65	Prot-Age-Other	8,26	Mature	3,83
	Setting, region	12,38	79,03	South	4,35	Northeast	3,20
	Setting, urban/rural	8,55	87,58			Metro	6,01
	Time frame	6,62	94,20	Not contemporary	4,70		
	Main character, gender	5,80	100,00	Gender-Mixed	4,61		
	Total				35,83		46,97
	Axis 2	Frame	22,60		Domestic	6,62	Individual
				Romantic pair	4,18		
Setting, urban/rural		20,08	42,68	Metro	5,17	Urb-multi/other	8,40
Main character, gender		19,75	62,43	Gender-Mixed	7,89	Male	9,19
				Female	2,67		
Time frame		16,49	78,92	Contemporary	4,79	Not contemporary	11,70
Setting, region		9,00	87,92	Northeast	3,03		
Main character, age		4,73	92,65			Mature	3,06
Antagonist		3,82	96,47				
Dynamic		3,53	100,00				
Total				34,35		43,06	
Axis 3	Frame	28,26		Romantic pair	9,36	Community/multiple	7,39
				Individual	4,08	Mystery plot device	6,10
	Main character, age	18,57	46,83	Young	10,12	Mature	5,96
	Main character, gender	15,81	62,63	Female	8,64	Gender-Mixed	6,71
	Setting, region	11,91	74,54	Multiple locations	7,71		
	Dynamic	11,19	85,73	Achievement	3,67	Contradictory	4,08
	Setting, urban/rural	9,54	95,26	Urb-multi/other	4,03		
	Antagonist	4,70	99,96				
	Time frame	0,04	100,00				
	Total				47,62		30,23
Axis 4	Setting, region	33,99		West	9,46	Europe	13,83
				Midwest	3,09	Northeast	3,23
	Dynamic	26,99	60,98	Achievement	10,95	Drift/decline	13,10
	Setting, urban/rural	19,14	80,12	Non-urban/suburban	4,86	Urb-multi/other	9,46
	Frame	9,74	89,86	Domestic	4,22	Mystery plot device	2,35
	Main character, age	4,91	94,77				
	Main character, gender	2,56	97,32				
	Time frame	1,72	99,04				
	Antagonist	0,96	100,00				
	Total				32,58		41,96

Figure 2. Sociotopes 1940-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=210), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 2, modalities contributing to axis 1.

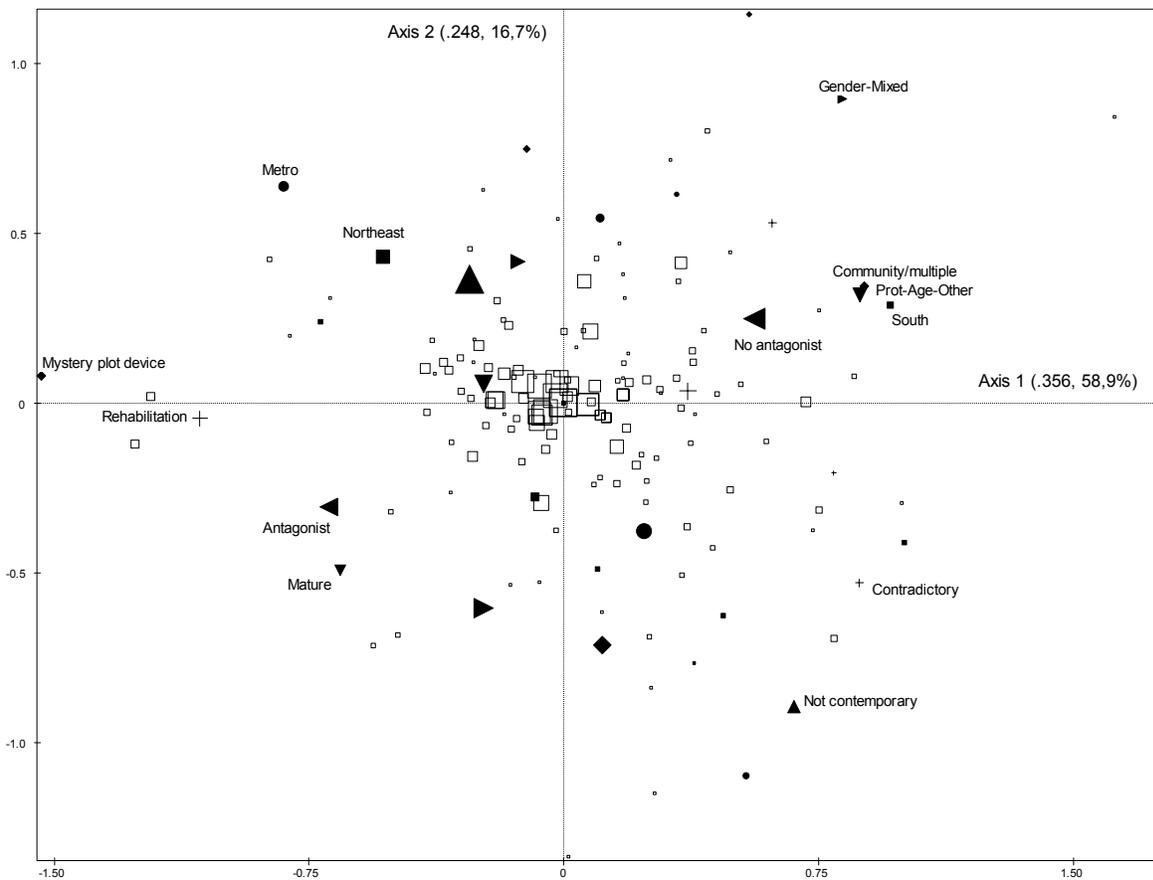


Figure 3. Sociotopes 1940-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=210), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 2, modalities contributing to axis 2.

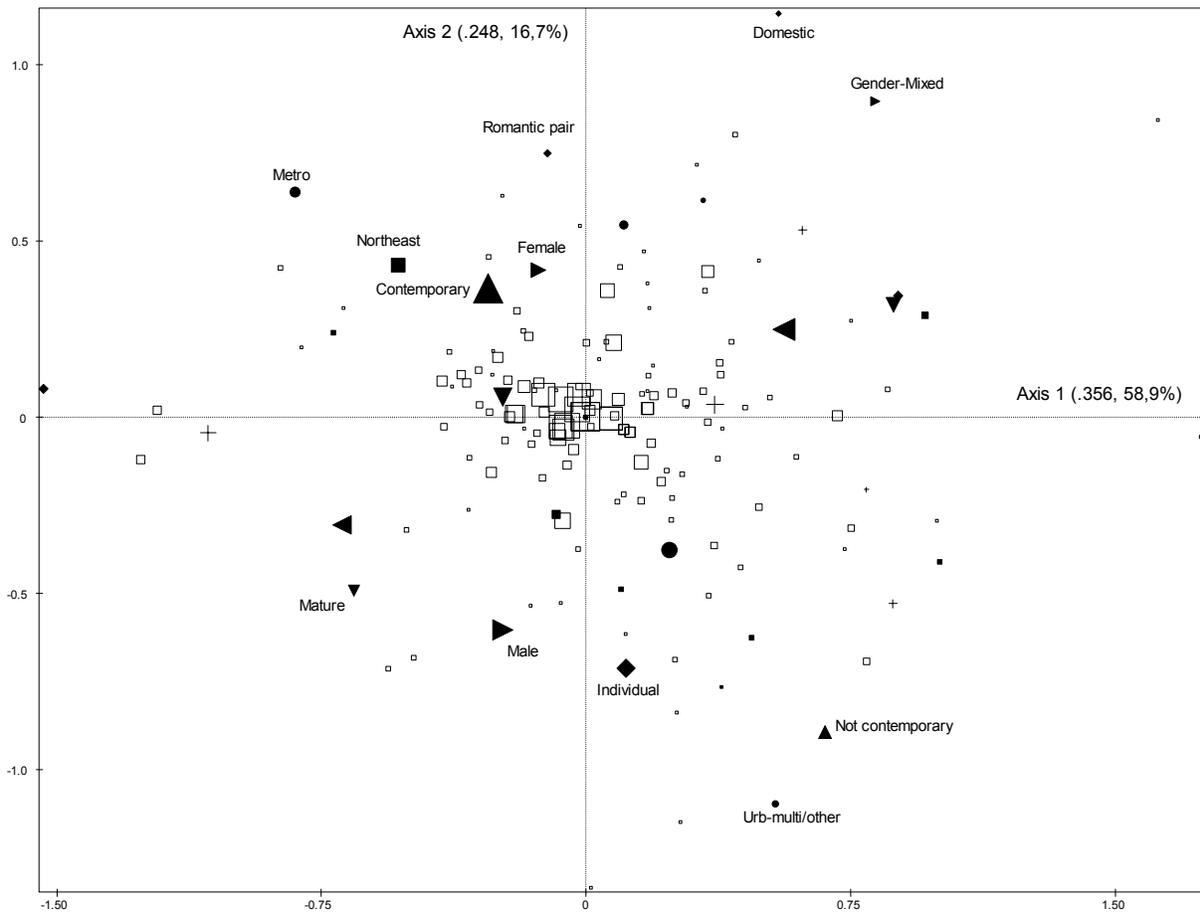


Figure 4. Sociotopes 1940-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=210), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 3, modalities contributing to axis 3.

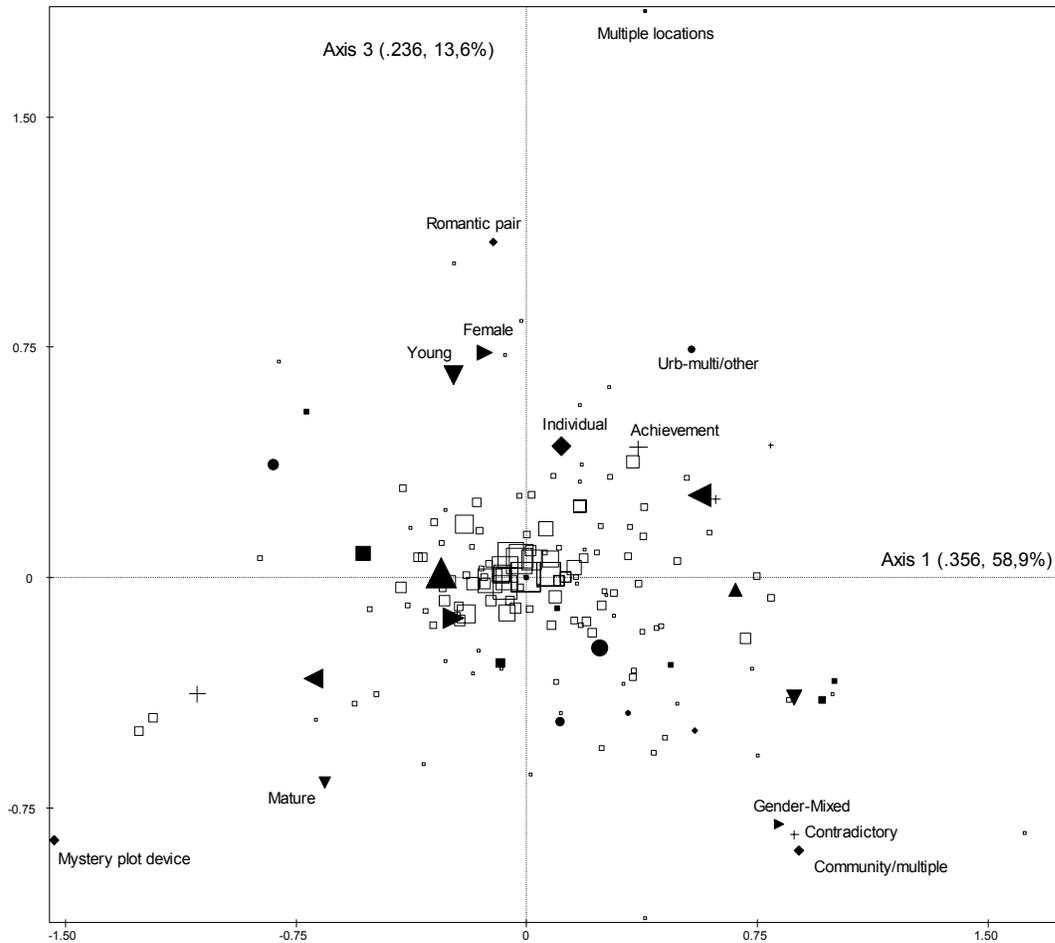
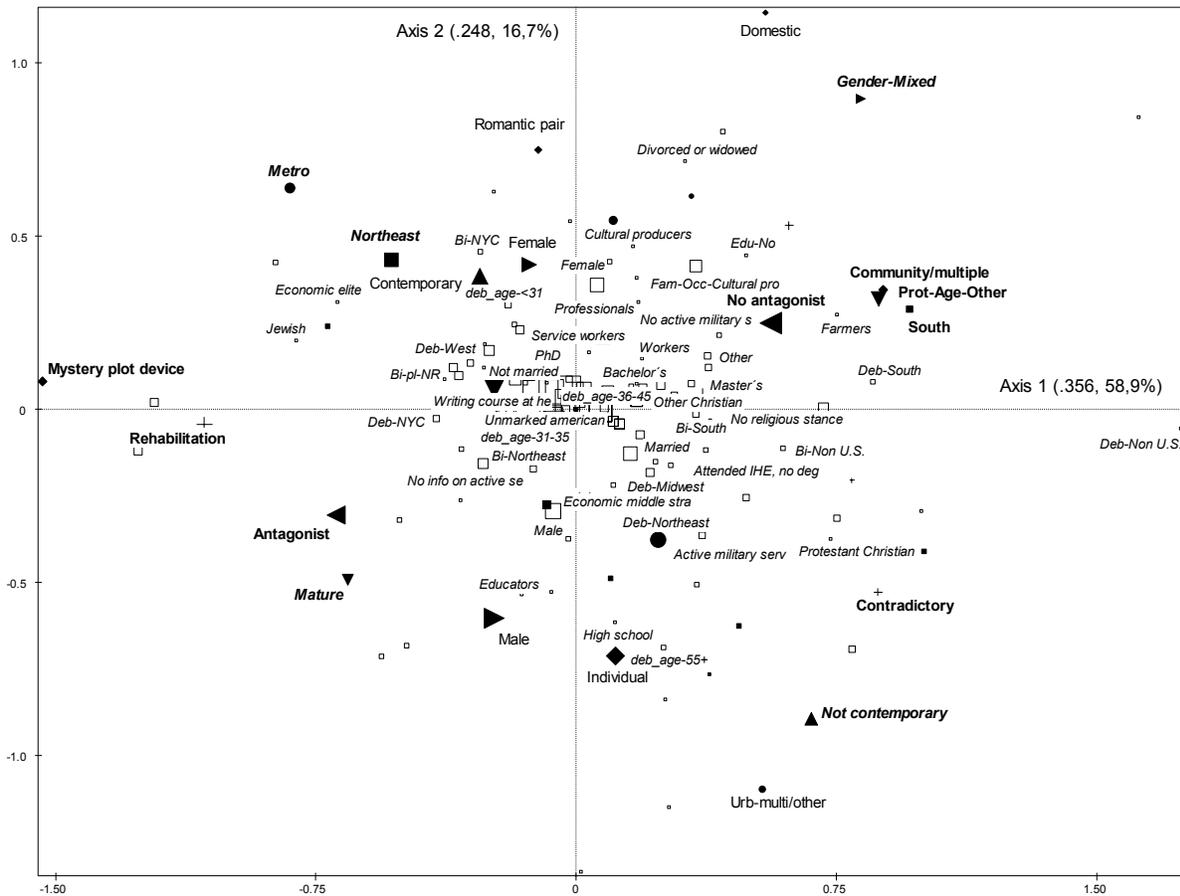


Figure 5. Sociotopes 1940-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=210), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 2, supplementary modalities - biography.



1955 Sociotopes

Figure 7. Modified rates, axes 1-10.

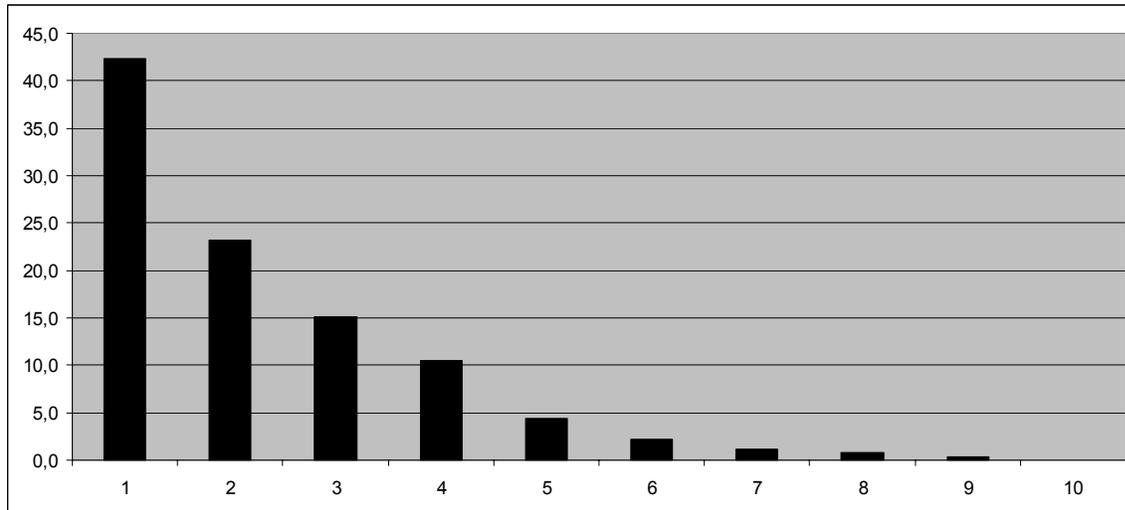


Table 3. Eigenvalues, rates and modified rates for axes 1-10.

Axis	Eigenvalue	Rate	Modified rate	Cumulative modified rate
1	0,3140	10,0	42,3	
2	0,2650	8,5	23,2	65,6
3	0,2380	7,6	15,1	80,7
4	0,2190	7,0	10,5	91,2
5	0,1861	6,0	4,4	95,6
6	0,1681	5,4	2,2	97,8
7	0,1555	5,0	1,1	98,9
8	0,1503	4,8	0,8	99,7
9	0,1410	4,5	0,3	100,0
10	0,1304	4,2	0,0	100,0

Table 4. Variables and modalities, axes 1-4.

	Variables	Contribution (Ctr.)	Cumulative ctr	Modalities - plus	Ctr	Modalities - minus	Ctr
Axis 1	Main character, age	20,07		Prot-Age-Other	14,32	Young	3,54
	Antagonist	18,45	38,51	No antagonist	8,75	Antagonist	9,70
	Main character, gender	16,98	55,50	Gender-Mixed	6,66	Male	5,74
				Female	4,59		
	Frame	16,92	72,42	Domestic	10,24	Mystery plot device	3,42
	<i>Dynamic</i>	11,57	83,99	Coming-of-age	6,99	<i>Rehabilitation</i>	2,23
	Setting, region	8,65	92,64				
	Setting, urban/rural	7,21	99,85	City/town	3,04		
	Time frame	0,15	100,00				
	Total				54,58		24,62
Axis 2	Setting, urban/rural	22,00		Metro	9,84	Non-urban/suburban	9,83
	Dynamic	20,98	42,98	Drift/decline	8,87	Rehabilitation	6,68
	Time frame	17,76	60,74	Contemporary	7,21	Not contemporary	10,55
	Setting, region	17,70	78,44	Northeast	6,40	West	2,48
				Europe	2,98		
	Frame	12,93	91,37	Romantic pair	3,55	Community/multiple	6,50
	Antagonist	4,55	95,92				
	Main character, age	4,05	99,97				
	Main character, gender	0,03	100,00				
	Total				38,85		36,05
Axis 3	Setting, region	24,27		Multiple locations	8,70	West	4,43
				Europe	3,59	Northeast	2,73
	Frame	23,16	47,43	Individual	3,35	Mystery plot device	16,62
	Dynamic	19,31	66,74	Achievement	3,24	Rehabilitation	13,58
	Setting, urban/rural	16,98	83,73	Urb-multi/other	8,70	Metro	2,58
	<i>Time frame</i>	9,55	93,27	Not contemporary	5,67	Contemporary	3,87
	Main character, age	5,09	98,36				
	Main character, gender	1,20	99,56				
Antagonist	0,44	100,00					
Total				33,26		43,82	
Axis 4	Dynamic	29,95		Coming-of-age	6,15	Contradictory	16,96
				Achievement	5,67		
	Main character, gender	27,06	57,00	Female	7,07	Gender-Mixed	19,77
	Frame	22,92	79,92	Domestic	4,21	Community/multiple	13,48
	Setting, region	13,06	92,98	Midwest	3,39	South	2,28
				Reg-Unidentified US	2,83		
	Setting, urban/rural	5,54	98,52				
	Main character, age	1,33	99,85				
	Antagonist	0,12	99,97				
	Time frame	0,03	100,00				

Figure 8. Sociotopes 1955-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=175), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 2, modalities contributing to axis 1.

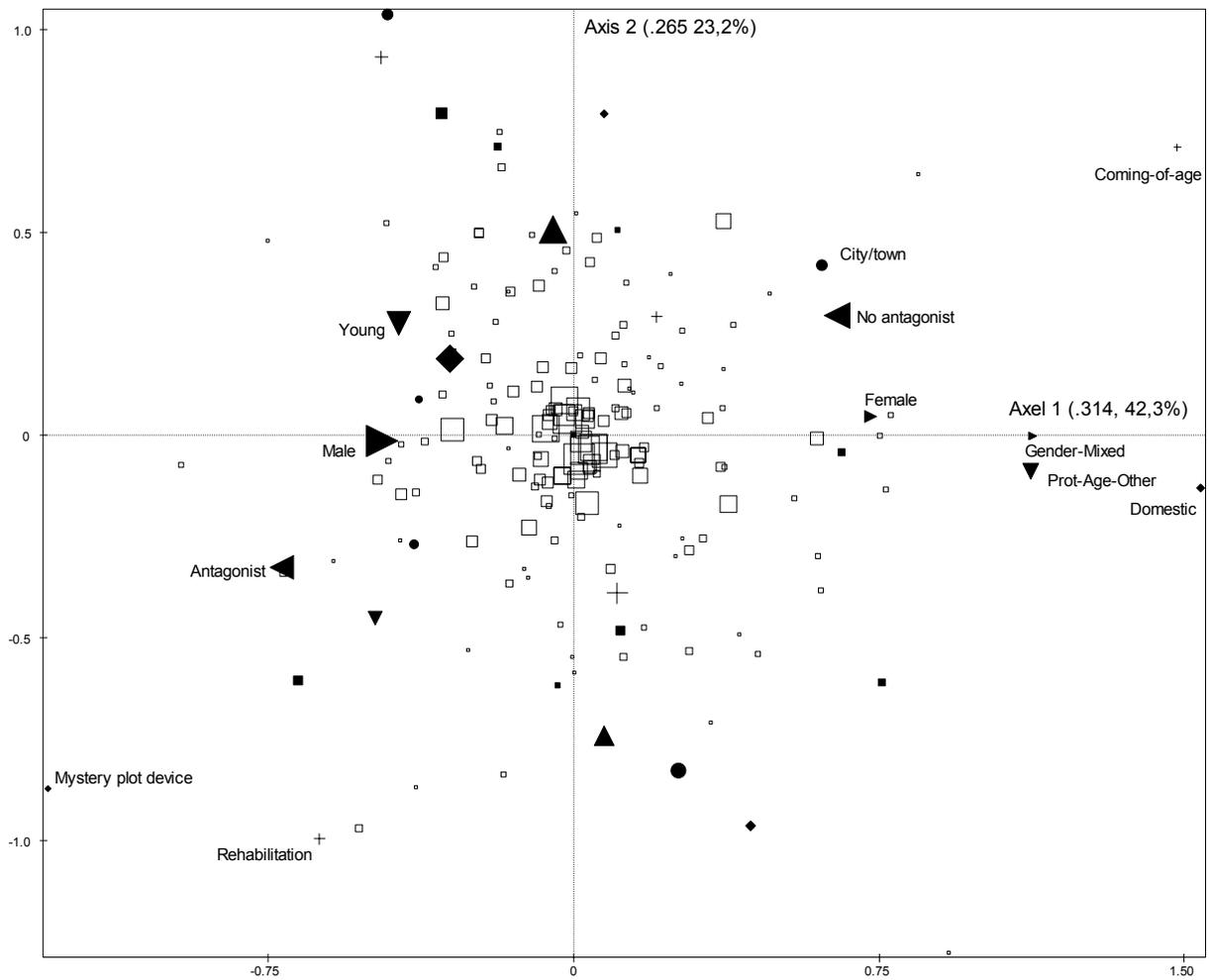


Figure 9. Sociotopes 1955-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=175), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 2, modalities contributing to axis 2.

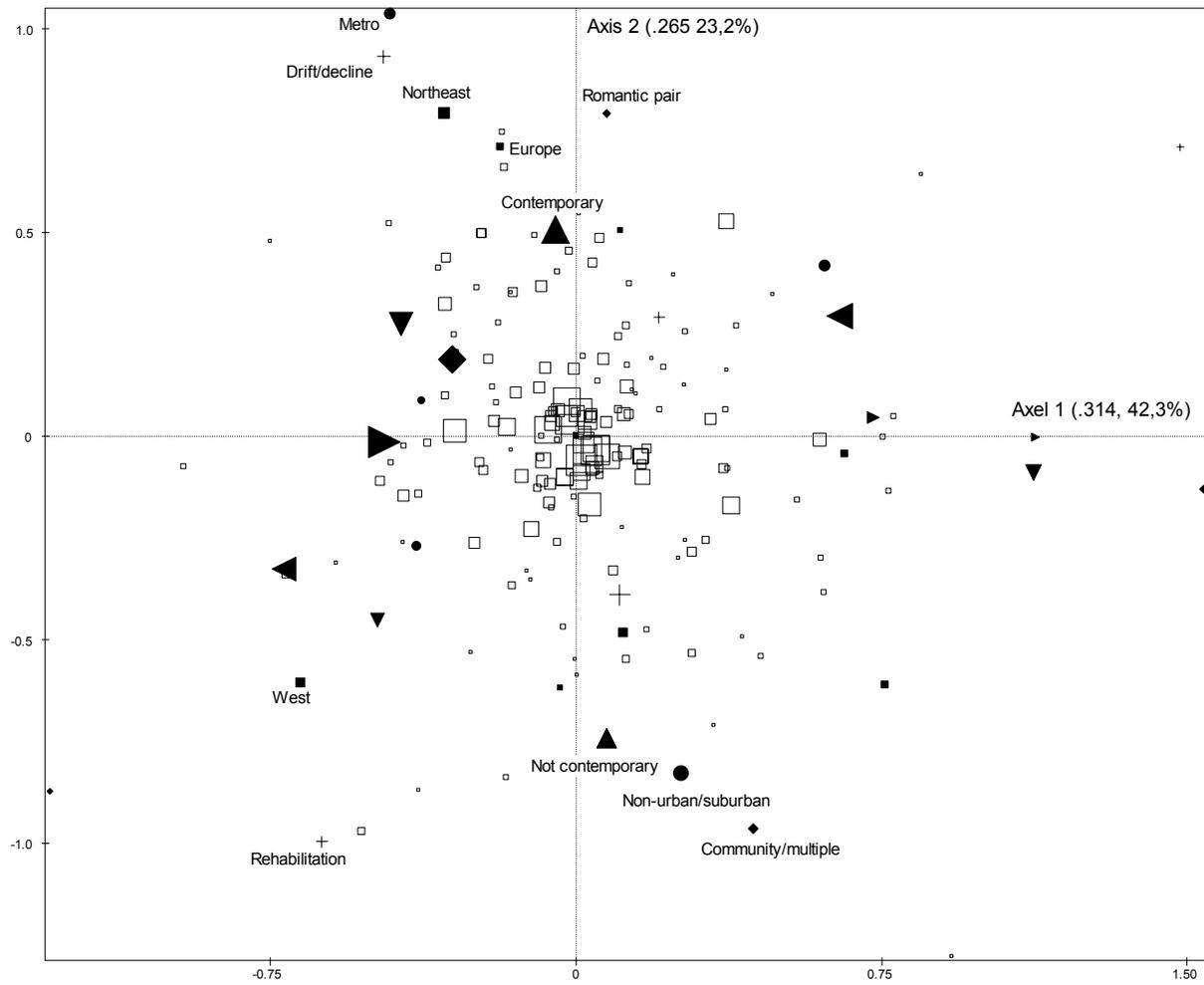


Figure 10. Sociotopes 1955-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=175), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 3, modalities contributing to axis 3.

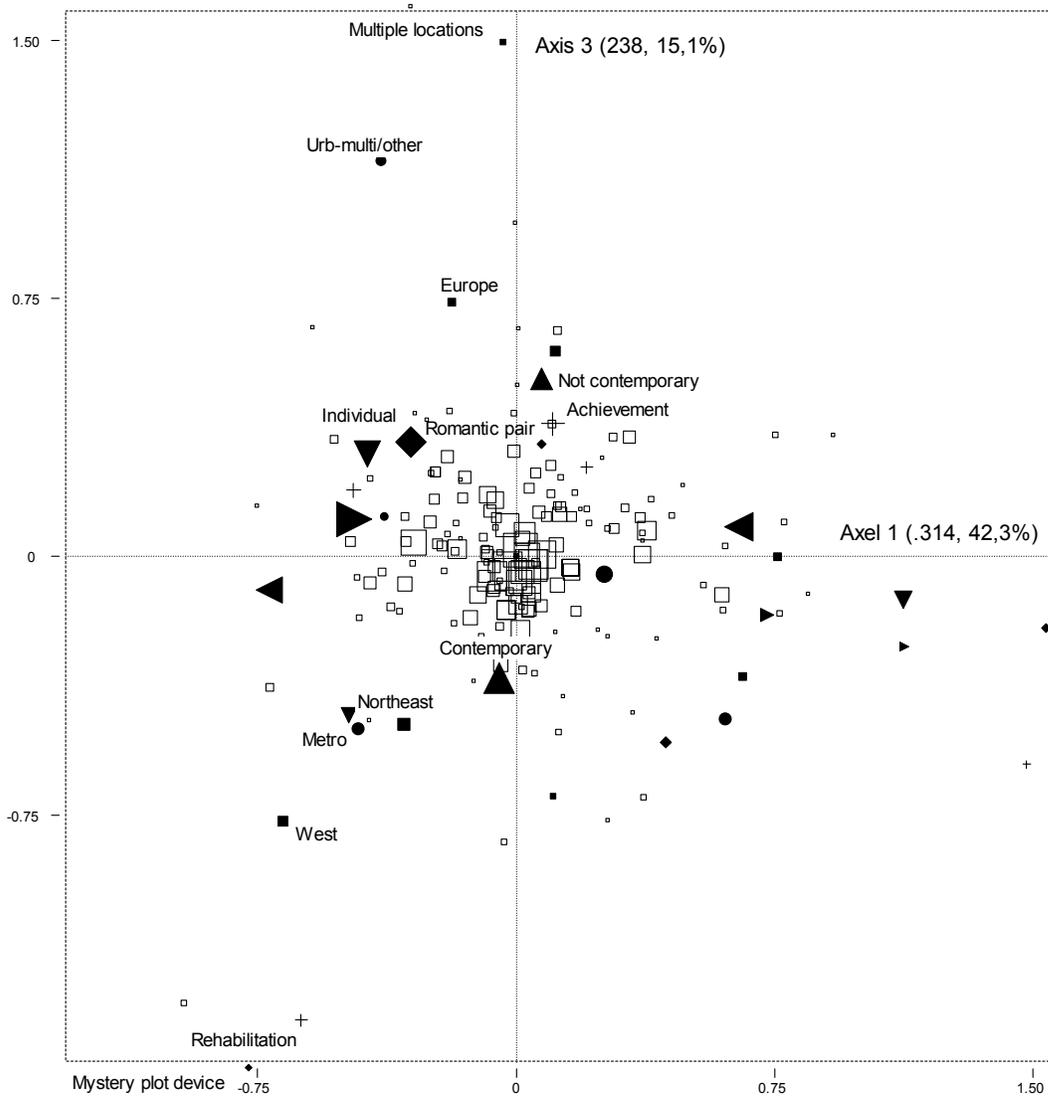


Figure 11. Sociotopes 1955-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=175), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 4, modalities contributing to axis 4.

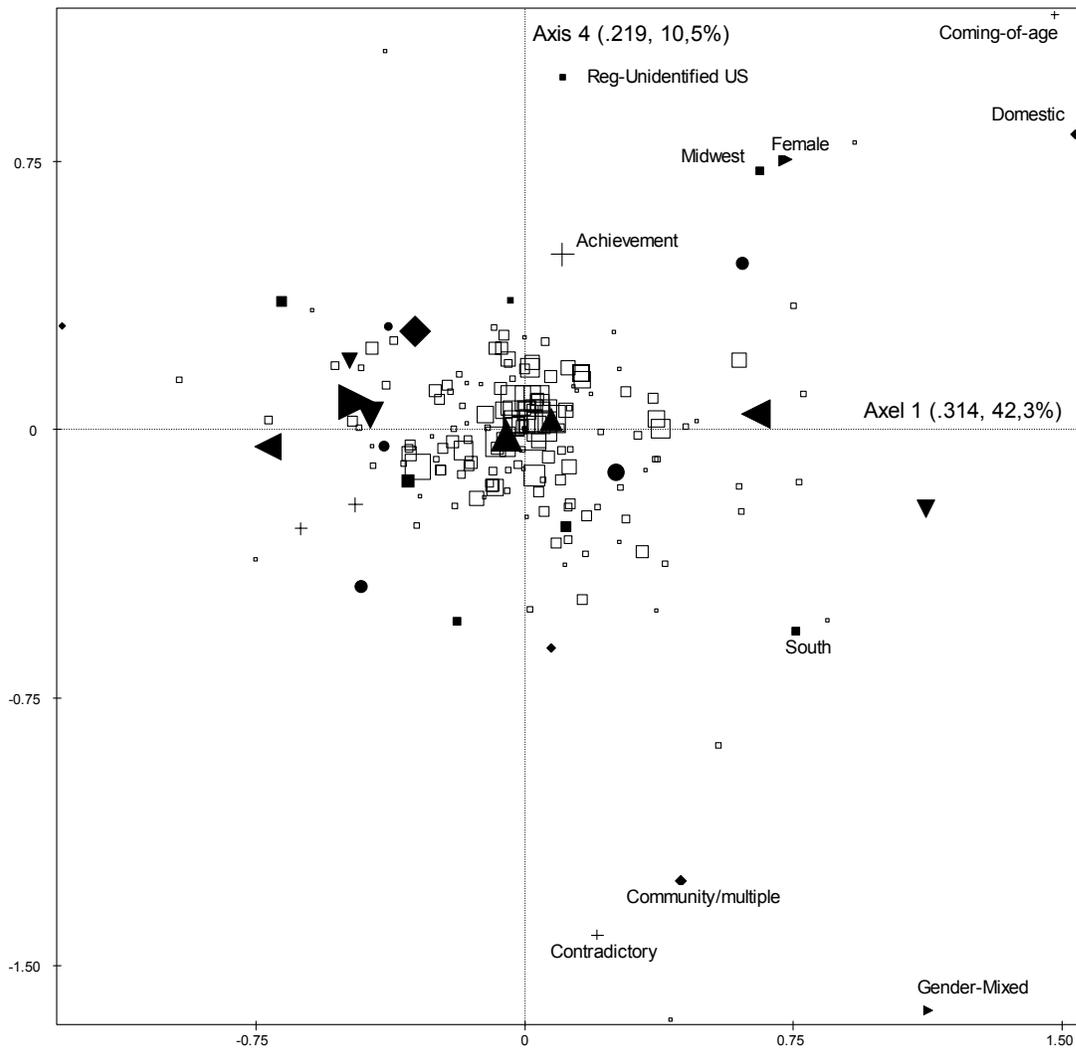


Figure 12. Sociotopes 1955-cohort, only legitimate publications (n=175), cloud of modalities, plane of axes 1 and 2, supplementary modalities - biography.

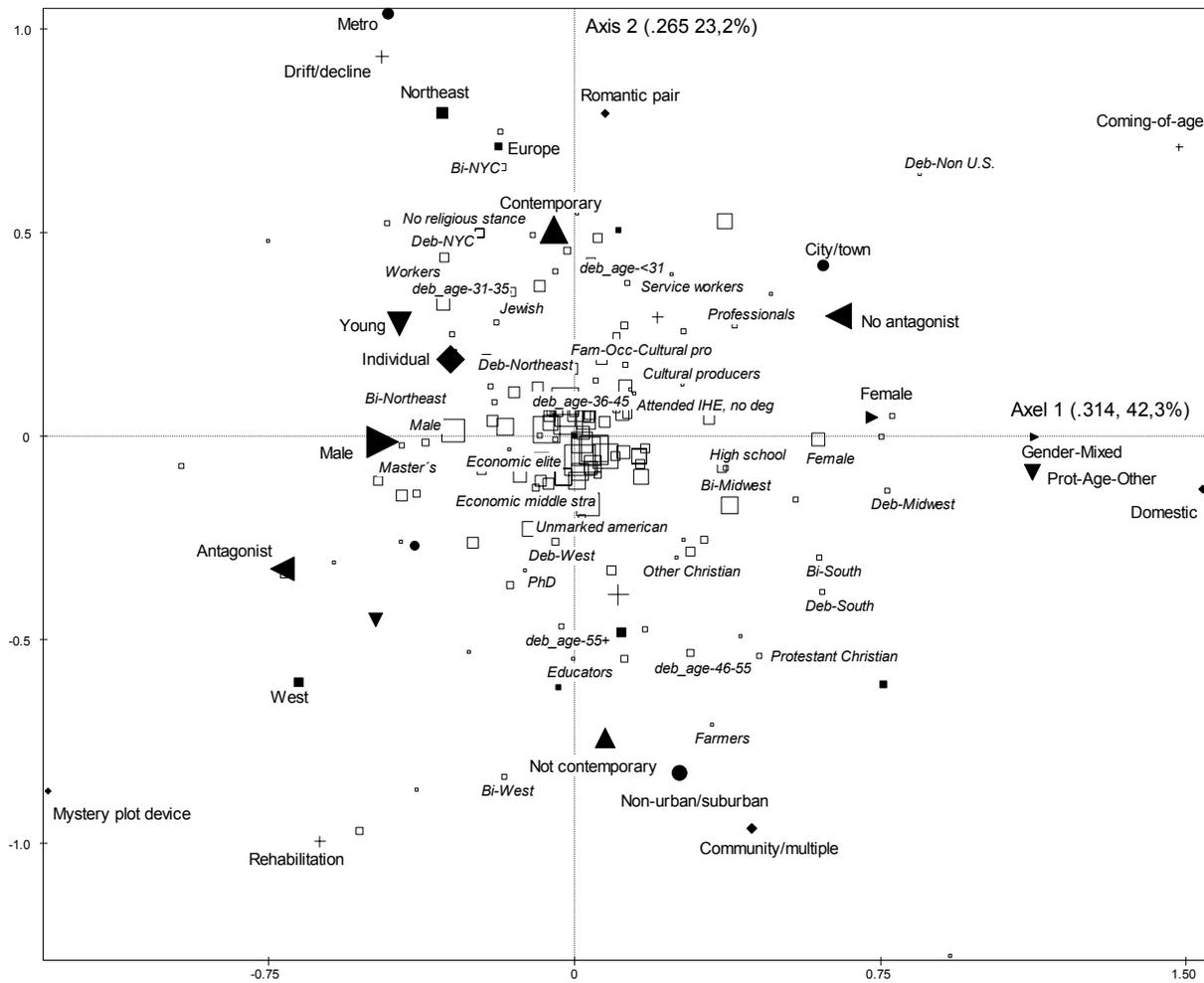


Table 5. Birthplace of author and Setting, 1940 (n=210)

Birthplace (% in)	Setting						Unidenti- fied, multiple	Total
	NYC	North- east	South	Midwest	West	Non-US		
New York City	41.2	23.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.6	11.8	100.0
Northeast	23.5	52.9	0.0	2.9	2.9	11.8	5.9	100.0
South	6.3	3.1	56.3	6.3	15.6	3.1	9.4	100.0
Midwest	6.8	9.1	15.9	25.0	13.6	13.7	15.9	100.0
West	0.0	7.7	0.0	0.0	53.8	7.7	30.8	100.0
Non-US	6.7	6.7	0.0	13.3	20.0	46.7	6.7	100.0
No response	21.8	10.9	5.5	5.5	25.5	12.7	18.2	100.0
Total	15.7	16.7	13.3	9.0	17.1	14.3	13.8	100.0

Table 6. Birthplace of author, Setting, 1955 cohort. (n=175)

Birthplace (% in)	Setting						Unidenti- fied, multiple	Total
	NYC	North- east	South	Midwest	West	Non-US		
New York City	29.6	7.4	7.4	7.4	3.7	29.6	14.8	100.0
Northeast	17.2	27.6	6.9	3.4	6.9	24.1	13.8	100.0
South	4.3	8.7	56.5	8.7	0.0	13.0	8.7	100.0
Midwest	2.7	2.7	8.1	32.4	13.5	32.4	8.1	100.0
West	0.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	41.7	33.3	16.7	100.0
Non-US	21.1	5.3	0.0	10.5	10.5	31.6	21.1	100.0
No response	0.0	14.3	7.1	3.6	35.7	25.0	14.3	100.0
Total	10.9	10.9	12.6	11.4	14.3	26.9	13.1	100.0

Table 7. Gender of author, gender of main character, 1940 (n=209)

Author (% in)	Character			
	Male	Female	Mixed	Total
Male	75.9	11.2	12.9	100
Female	18.3	54.8	26.9	100
Total	50.2	30.6	19.1	100

Table 8. Gender of author, gender of main character, 1955 (n=174)

Author (% in)	Character			
	Male	Female	Mixed	Total
Male	82.8	6.0	11.2	100
Female	31.0	51.7	17.2	100
Total	65.5	21.3	13.2	100