



Consumerism and Prestige

The Materiality of Literature in the Modern Age

Edited by Anthony Enns and Bernhard Metz

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This anthology explores the relationships and interdependencies between literary production and distinctions of taste by examining how the material aspects of literary texts, such as the cover, binding, typography and paper stock, reflect or even determine their cultural status. In many cases, for example, the distinctions between “highbrow” and “lowbrow” taste have little to do with the content of the texts themselves, as books often function as markers of socioeconomic status, like clothing or home décor. One might even go so far as to say that the concept of literary taste is more closely related to fashion sense than critical judgment. The anthology seeks to address this claim by examining how the tensions between consumerism and prestige reflect fundamental historical changes with regard to the development of technology, literacy and social power.

Readership

It will appeal to a wide range of scholars in the fields of literature, history, sociology, book studies, and library and information science.

Key selling points

- It makes an original and significant contribution to the growing body of scholarship on the history of the book.
- It illustrates the benefits of a sociological approach to literary criticism by examining how the material properties of literary texts influence their critical reception as well as the process of canon formation.
- It also demonstrates the advantages of a comparative and cross-cultural approach to literary criticism by providing a wide range of case studies that cover many different geographical regions and cultural traditions.
- It also provides a significant contribution to digital humanities scholarship by showing how the material distinctions associated with print are now being reconfigured through new forms of electronic display.

About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Anthony Enns is an associate professor in the Department of English at Dalhousie University.

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