

The Bestseller List and its (Dis)contents

The construction of 'the bestseller'

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Abstract

'Bestseller' is a pivotal and highly influential concept in the current literary market, where a title's presence on a bestseller list also serves to reinforce the title's bestseller status. In spite hereof, there is a lack of exact knowledge of bestselling patterns on the Danish book market, as well as a conceptual vagueness regarding the distinction between 'the best and the rest': how to define a bestseller and differentiate it from the remaining titles on the market? These two issues are addressed in the following article. Firstly, a Top 40 list of the bestselling fiction books from Danish book stores in the period of 2008-11 is presented, and its contents are analysed in terms of genre, nationality, and thematic qualities. Hereafter, the bestselling list serves as a point of departure for a discussion of the divergent and contingent criteria underlying possible definitions of bestsellers and their inclusion on bestseller lists, thereby developing a more faceted picture of the bestseller concept. Lastly, Robert Escarpit's temporal distinction between fastsellers, steadysellers and bestsellers is related to the article's empirical data in order to discuss a widespread assumption of the volatility of the bestseller.

Keywords Bestseller concept, Bestseller lists, Literature Sociology, Book Market, Book Statistics.

Introduction

'Bestseller' is a pivotal concept in the current literary market, where publishing houses are increasingly concentrating their editorial and promotional efforts on the publication of potential bestsellers (Thompson, 2010; Todd, 2006; Schiffrin, 2000). And apart from large sales figures, appointed 'bestsellers' typically attract a disproportionate amount of public attention (Berglund, 2012), while the 'bestseller' status is widely exposed as a promotional paratextual 'brand', for example, in advertisements and on book covers.

Thus, the naming of 'Bestsellers' is not merely a descriptive utterance about consumption of literary texts; it is also a *performative utterance* that stimulates attention. This self-perpetuating, promotional quality of the concept relies heavily on *bestseller lists* that authoritatively communicate the bestseller status of certain literary works:

The bestseller list is as much ahead of the event as behind it, and exists to *create* as much as to record them. It is dynamic not passive; an engine, not a catalogue. It belongs to the publicity rather than the accounting department of the trade. (Sutherland, 2007, p. 34, original emphasis)

But in spite of its cultural impact, the status of the bestseller currently remains unclear in especially two respects. Firstly, there is a lack of exact knowledge on current bestselling patterns of the Danish book market. Secondly, there is a need for critical perspectives on the definition *and delimitation of the bestseller*. Studies on specific bestsellers generally deal with 'spectacular megahits' (Hall, 2012, p. xvii) and 'hyper bestsellers' (Berglund, 2012); a narrow elite of undisputed bestsellers (mostly of a global range), leaving the question of how to actually define a bestseller, and differentiate it from the remaining titles on the market largely untouched.

In the following pages, these two issues will be explored in a heuristic study on *adult fiction bestsellers*. The data material for the study consists of statistical reports on the sales of Danish book stores made by Nielsen Bookscan (hereafter NB) in cooperation with the

Danish Book Trade Association ('Boghandlerforeningen') during the period of 2008-11 (until week 40).

This study claims to gain new territory as the topic scarcely has been researched in a Danish context¹, partly because systematic bestseller studies historically has been impeded by an absence of sufficiently valid and detailed data (Handesten, 2010). The available material of recent years consists mainly of broad statistics on book sales (Forlæggerforeningen, 2013) and consumption (Boghandlerforeningen and Forlæggerforeningen, 2012; Kulturministeriet, 2012) - not providing any information on the specific books in question - and weekly bestseller lists published by the major book store chains (Bog & Idé, Arnold Busck og Gad) which are not fully reliable due to inconsistent registration and divergent criteria (Handesten, 2010; Wichmann, 2008).²

In light of this 'extraordinary lack of evidence' (Bloom, 2002, p. 6), which is far from being merely a Danish phenomenon,³ NB's reports represent the first reliable, detailed accounts of book circulation on the Danish market. In the following study, the reports will be analysed in order to fulfil this article's twofold ambition:

Firstly, a Top 40 list of the bestselling fiction books in the period of 2008-11 is presented and its contents are briefly analysed. The objective is not to discern the 'DNA of the bestseller' (a task that, if possible at all, would require more ample space than is permitted for this article), but to provide a broad overview: which traits in terms of genre, nationality, and thematic qualities are prevalent among the bestselling titles in Danish book stores in the period of 2008-11?

Secondly, the bestselling list will serve as a point of departure for a discussion of the divergent and contingent criteria underlying possible definitions of bestsellers, thereby hopefully developing a more faceted picture of the bestseller concept.

Apart from the Bookscan reports, the article will draw on supplementary statistics from the Danish book market (for example, Forlæggerforeningen, 2013; Boghandlerforeningen, 2011) as well as a number of theoretical and historical studies on the bestseller phenomenon (for example, Handesten, 2010; Sutherland, 2007; Bloom, 2002; Sutherland, 1981).

Lastly, it should be emphasised that the scope of NB's reports are limited to book store sales and therefore only provide a partial picture (approximately 45%) of the total circulation of fiction lit-

erature in Denmark, excluding book clubs, sales in drugstores and supermarkets, internet sales, and library acquisitions.⁴ This limitation will be briefly addressed in the concluding remarks.

The bestselling books – the list and its content

Appended to this article, Table 1 shows the Top 40 list of the bestselling fiction titles in Danish book stores in the period of 2008 – October 2011, extracted from the NB 's reports. However, as the reports are organised to serve as a management tool for the book industry, the data had to be revised for the occasion. That implied first and foremost a *condensation* of NB's data (that are organised on the level of editions) in order to provide information on the full status of the given titles. In addition, the data layout has been *simplified*, leaving only those categories that are relevant for the present study.⁵ Concerning the length, 40 was considered a sound compromise between depth and clarity, but should be regarded as contingent and purely instrumental (more on this below).

Moreover, the production of the list was faced with a question of *inclusion*. Like all key players in the literary system, NB's reports use the age of the target group as a dividing principle, differentiating (in accordance with Dewey's classification system) between children, adolescents and adults. These distinctions, however, are complicated by the fact that some of history's bestselling authors have managed to appeal to readers across age boundaries (Bloom, 2002), among them J.K. Rowling and Stephenie Meyer, who also are among the period's bestselling authors (see Table 2). But in NB's reports, the editions of their books are categorised alternately under all three age categories, making them a curious borderline phenomenon for this study. However, as their books are predominantly consumed by a young, but not necessarily under age audience, they have been included on the list.

In terms of *genre*, NB (again following Dewey) only distinguishes between *Crime Novel* ('Krimi og Spænding'), *Poems* ('Digte'), *Humor* (covering mostly satirical magazines), and the diffuse category of *General Fiction* ('Skønlitteratur'). But the list nonetheless blatantly confirms the huge popularity of the Nordic crime novel.⁶ Half of the titles on list belong to this regional subgenre, and its dominance is even more overt at the top of list, where 11 out of the first 15 titles, including rank 1 to 6, are Nordic crime novels. This is reflected in the

national distribution on the list, which has a strong domestic representation (15 out of 40 titles), and where Scandinavian authors account for 70 % (28 out of 40) of the titles. In 1995, more than half of the most popular novels in Denmark were written by British and American authors (Secher, 2000, pp. 13ff.), but the otherwise profound Anglo-Saxon impact on Danish cultural life appears to have been declining on the book market, as only eight of the titles on the list are of Anglo-Saxon origin. But compared to 1995, there are also recurring traits, for example, the weak quantitative impact of the literature of continental Europe (only one title on the list), and the presence of a few, globally popular 'ethnic' titles. Whereas these titles in 1995 belonged to South American movement of magical realism, the literary preferences seems to have shifted with the political focus towards the Arab and Muslim world (K. Hosseini (no. 9 and 11) and A. Aswany (no. 36)).

In his study of the publishing business, John P. Thompson emphasises the author's previous sales record and the manuscript's comparability to other, bestselling texts, as the two foremost parameters used in determining a book's market potential (Thompson, 2010, pp. 198ff.). In that light, it comes as no surprise that most of the titles on the list are either part of a series of books and/or written by 'brand authors' (Bloom, 2002, pp. 75ff.), whose established popularity make them rather safe investments for the publishers. The 40 titles are written by 20 authors, the first 11 titles by five authors, and the six most selling titles by only two authors, Jussi Adler-Olsen and Stieg Larsson. Therefore, it is fair to speak of a group of *bestselling authors* (see Table 2), whose (almost always serial) novels are guaranteed success because of a large, faithful audience. A tendency that is also indicated by the strikingly similar sales figures for some authors (see, for example, Läckberg [no. 26 and 27], Marklund [no. 32 and 33] and Ragde [no. 34 and 35]).

The serial phenomenon is virtually omnipresent among the crime novels where the use of recurrent protagonists and environments has become a main feature of the genre. But it also applies broadly to the remaining titles. For example, Ken Follett's two most selling titles (no. 7 and 8) are related parts in an epic story set in medieval England; H. V. Holst's *Dronningeofret* is the final part in a trilogy about gender, power, and politics; and the contributions of Jane Aamund and A. B. Ragde represent episodes in ongoing family sagas.

And there seems to be a broad public preference for family sagas and historical novels, as nine of the titles on the list can be placed under one – or both – of these genre labels. This also applies for two of the most ‘high literary’ works on the list by Carsten Jensen and J.S. Sørensen. Moreover, the stories of these novels are poignantly placed in certain provincial locations, making the novels part of a current wave of ‘province realism’ in Danish fiction that highlights the life conditions and developments in peripheral areas of Danish society.

In the above I have briefly outlined some main characteristics of the best selling fiction titles of the period in question. But how many of the titles on our lists are to be regarded as bestsellers, and according to which criteria?

The construction of the bestseller (list)

A bestseller study is at the outset confronted with the challenge of defining the bestseller concept. Clive Bloom gives the following suggestion: “How then might we define a bestseller? In theory the answer is simple: the work of fiction sold in most units (books in a given price range) to the most people over a set period of time” (Bloom, 2002, p. 6). But the definition is only simple ‘in theory’, as Bloom’s response also raises a number of questions. Firstly, Bloom’s notion of ‘price range’ points to the need to discern between the amounts of *sold copies* and *the revenue of the title* as bestseller criteria. The two parameters are presented on the list as respectively ‘Volume’ (column D) and ‘Value’ (column E), and as can be seen, the titles’ respective locations on the two rankings (column A and F) are far from identical, as the list includes all formats, ranging from price heavy hardbacks to considerably cheaper paperbacks.⁷

Here, we have followed the main tendency to give primacy to the parameter of sold copies, as it most directly reflects the dissemination and impact of the given titles. However, the revenue parameter should not be shrugged off as merely an economic issue: The extended willingness to pay for a given title also poses interesting sociological questions about (conceptions of) the novelty and cultural value of the title as well as the social patterns of reception. Here, it should be noticed that the total share of paperbacks in the Danish book market is higher than represented in the present study, as the super market chains almost exclusively sell these cheaper editions

(Boghandlerforeningen, 2010). And due to its partial scope, our study is presumably culturally biased, as book stores are primarily attended by the cultural upper and middle class (Handesten, 2010, p. 118).

Secondly, Bloom's use of the singular form 'the work' (and 'best-seller') appears misleading, as the bestseller always appears in plural, as part of a bestseller list, and its bestselling status is usually defined *relatively* due to its position on this list. In this light, 'best-seller' can be defined tautologically as a title that appears on a best-seller list. The problem with this conception is that the bestseller status thereby depends on the contingent length of the bestseller list at it is highly unlikely that the in/out-dichotomy logic of the list reflects any significant differences in popularity. This problem is illustrated by our top 40 list, which reveals large differences between the included titles. Stieg Larsson's number one title has sold almost twice as many copies as no. 10 on the list – and more than four times as many as no. 40, whereas the differences between no. 10 and 11, and again between no. 20 and 21, the usual dividing lines of best-seller lists, are merely 2 and 6 %, respectively. More significant lines can be drawn between, say, Larsson's number one title and the rest or between the first eight titles and the remaining titles on the list. Moreover, there is little doubt concerning the bestseller status of a number of titles (for example, the works of Larsson, Follett, Hosseini, et al.), especially since the titles have already obtained this status due to their global popularity. But that does not change the fact that behind the 'logic of the list', the books' sales figures represent a continuum where it is very difficult to draw distinctive lines between the best and the rest.

The alternative approach is to define an *absolute* (national) criterion for a bestseller's sales figures. But apart from being dependant on information on a title's total sales, this absolute number is determined to be contingent and disputable. Should it be minimum 10-15,000 copies? (Handesten, 2010, p. 115). Or should it correspond to 1 % of the population, as suggested by a number of American studies (Sutherland, 1981, p. 6), thereby including all titles on the Danish market with sales of minimum 56,000 copies. Or should it be 29,000, as our list – accidentally – implies? And should the criterion be varied according to genre, since, say, 10,000 sold copies would be outstanding for a collection of poems but average for a crime novel?

Moreover, the relative as well as the absolute definition are relativised by the *temporal* dimension. For what does, thirdly, Bloom's 'set period of time' imply? Within what timeframe is it legitimate to measure a title's bestseller status? What is the *relationship between bestseller and time*? In terms of the relative definition, there is a lack of synchronicity between the publishing of bestseller lists and that of literary texts. While bestseller lists cover delimited time periods, the issuing of literary titles is happening in a flux across these periodical limits, thereby giving titles different 'life times' on the list. This is also noticeable in the Top 40 where titles published in the beginning of the measured period (see Column G) dominate the list, as they have had more time to accumulate sales. Therefore, a slight change in time period would presumably have given entirely different results.

Regarding the absolute definition, the time frame for measuring could in principle be extended infinitely. There is, however, a widespread inclination in bestseller theory to narrow this time frame significantly, as the bestseller is perceived as closely attached to its momentary context, and its popularity explained by its resonance with social themes and aesthetic conventions in contemporary society (Handesten, 2010; Bloom, 2002; Sutherland, 1981). This contextualising of the bestseller leads to an assertion about the *volatile* nature of the bestseller: Bestsellers live on the momentary lust for novelty rather than the long-standing curiosity. They sell quickly - and quickly stop selling because they fail to outlive their own opportunistic excitations.

These conceptions of the 'bestseller' term thus display an intermixture of quantitative and value-laden criteria, which largely adds to the ambiguity of the concept. Whereas 'bestseller' in a market context, as mentioned above, possesses positive anticipatory connotations, it is in academic works primarily used derogatively as a synonym for commercial opportunism, representing the 'dark side' of the classic dichotomy between masterpiece and mayfly. Although this appears as a too crude and reductionist approach, the question of the durability of bestsellers remains.

In an approach to this question, the French literature sociologist Robert Escarpit (1972) suggests a distinction between '*Fastsellers*' (titles with large momentary sale, but steep downward sale curves - that is, the conception of the volatile bestseller above), '*Steadysellers*'

(titles with relatively low but stable and long sales – typically associated with ‘classics’⁸) and ‘Bestsellers’ that is the small minority of titles that combines the two. A Bestseller is thus a Fastseller, which eventually turns into a Steadyseller (Escarpit, 1972). It would require a much larger temporal perspective to explore in depth concrete figurations of fast-, steady-, and bestsellers, but an impression might be obtained from Table 3 that illustrates the temporal distribution of sales (divided in semiannual sequences) for a selected group of the study’s titles published in or before 2008 (cf. ‘DOP’). The table reflects the rather brief life spans of the market: for seven of the titles more than half of the sales are concentrated in the span of one year and more than 80 % in span of two years, and titles published before 2008 tend to have very low figures towards the end of the period. This general pattern, however, conceals some large individual differences, with Leif Davidsens *På udkig efter Hemingway*, at one extreme, accumulating 80 % of its sales in only half a year, while the figures of Ildefonso Falcones’ *Cathedral of the Sea* are distributed almost evenly across the period. Moreover, the spans generally do not form a one-sided regression since most titles experience one or more revivals related to the issuing of new (mostly paperback) editions. These re-issuings are probably responses to demand (and, in some cases, connected to the release of movie adaptations), but also potentially contribute to this demand by enhancing the accessibility and visibility of the titles. On the face of it, the table appears to confirm the volatile existence of the bestseller, and none of the titles seemed destined to fulfil Escarpit’s exclusive definition of the bestseller. On the other hand, the table indicates, firstly, that the durability of a given literary work is to a large degree dependent on market decisions regarding its accessibility, and, secondly, that the ‘steadiness’ of Escarpit’s bestseller most likely will not reveal itself as a smooth temporal line of popularity, but rather as a winding, oscillating path of oblivions and revivals.

Concluding remarks

On the basis of empirical data from Nielsen Book Scan, this article extracted and analysed a top 40 list of the best selling fiction works in Danish book stores in 2008-11. Thereafter, it discussed some of the contingencies involved in the construction of bestseller lists and, thereby, the denomination of bestsellers. In dealing exclusively with

book store sales, this article should be regarded as a preliminary domain-specific study hopefully paving the way for future, supplementary research. Still, there are good reasons to insist on the exemplary value of the study, especially since the problem of definition and delimiting the bestseller are of general relevance.

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A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Rank	Title	Author	Volume	Value	Rank	1st publ.	Subj. Group	No Ed.
1	Pigen der legede med ilden/ The Girl who Played with Fire	Larsson, S.	125.191	17.090.243	3	Oct 13, 2006	Crime Novel	5
2	Kvinden i buret / Mercy	Adler-Olsen, J.	109.063	11.116.933	14	Sep 12, 2007	Crime Novel	6
3	Mænd der hader kvinder/ The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo;	Larsson, S.	108.382	15.018.137	5	Jun 15, 2006	Crime Novel	5
4	Fasandræberne / The Pheasant Killer	Adler-Olsen, J.	95.789	11.005.192	16	May 28, 2008	Crime Novel	6
5	Luftkastellet der blev sprængt / The Girl who Kicked..	Larsson, S.	93.110	17.987.375	2	Oct 8, 2007	Crime Novel	6
6	Flaskepost fra P/ Mess. in a Bottle	Adler-Olsen, J.	88.780	12.730.422	10	Dec 9, 2009	Crime Novel	6
7	Uendelige verden/ World w. Ends	Follett, K.	87.461	23.221.422	1	Mar 31, 2008	General Fiction	12
8	Jordens søjler/ Pillars of the Earth	Follett, K.	84.454	13.265.830	9	1991	General Fiction	28
9	Drageløberen/ The Kite Runner;	Hosseini K.	77.399	7.517.861	26	Jan 14, 2008	General Fiction	8
10	På udkig efter Hemingway	Davidson, L.	72.171	14.136.001	7	Sep 23, 2008	Crime Novel	3
11	Under en strålende sol/ Spl. Suns	Hosseini, K.	70.949	9.870.997	21	Aug 14, 2008	General Fiction	8
12	Det forsvundne tegn/ Lost symbol	Brown, D.	66.651	13.502.907	8	Nov 16, 2009	Crime Novel	6
13	Hypnotisøren/The Hypnotist	Kepler, L.	64.057	15.298.108	4	Jan 15, 2010	Crime Novel	3
14	Journal 64	Adler-Olsen, J.	59.762	12.615.090	11	Nov 10, 2010	Crime Novel	7
15	Alfabethuset/ Alphabet House	Adler-Olsen, J.	59.472	4.745.261	34	Apr. 15, 2009	Crime Novel	4
16	Havets katedral/Cathedral of..	Falcones, I.	56.814	10.969.391	17	Mar 12, 2008	General Fiction	7
17	Dronningeofret	Holst, H. V.	55.478	12.505.263	12	Oct. 4, 2008	General Fiction	4
18	Ulykkesfuglen/The Stranger	Läckberg, C.	54.878	12.011.478	13	Mar 6, 2008	Crime Novel	7

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Rank	Title	Author	Volume	Value	Rank	1st publ.	Subj. Group	No Ed.
19	Nymåne/New Moon	Meyer, S.	54.136	11.043.738	15	Mar 20, 2009	Various	16
20	Giganternes Fald/ Fall of Giants	Follett, K.	51.365	14.367.704	6	Sep 28, 2010	General Fiction	12
21	Tusmørke/Twilight	Meyer, S.	48.294	7.230.586	27	Sep 30, 2005	Various	7
22	Berlinerpoplerne/Berlin Poplars	Ragde, A. B.	48.218	3.805.343	39	Apr 25, 2008	General Fiction	3
23	Prædikanten/The Preacher	Läckberg, C.	46.940	4.426.815	35	Aug 21, 2007	Crime Novel	6
24	H. Potter og dødsregalierne / ..Death Hallows	Rowling, J. K.	45.573	10.188.208	19	Jun 13, 2008	Various	13
25	Dinosaurens fjer/The Dinosaur Feather	Gazan, S-J.	43.724	7.840.660	23	Sep 5, 2008	Crime Novel	4
26	Isprinsessen/The Ice Princess	Läckberg, C.	43.559	4.237.309	38	May 3, 2007	Crime Novel	7
27	Stenhuggeren/ The Stonecutter	Läckberg, C.	43.209	6.076.777	29	Mar 12, 2007	Crime Novel	5
28	De grønne skove	Aamund J.	42,931	10,884,805	18	Apr 28, 2008	General Fiction	2
29	Flagermusmanden/The Bat	Nesbø, J.	42.223	5.511.390	31	Mar 26, 2007	Crime Novel	4
30	Min broders vogter	Davidson, L.	42.195	9.140.111	22	Mar 22, 2010	Crime Novel	2
31	Eksil / Exile	Ejersbo, J.	40,523	9,995,424	20	Apr 1, 2009	General Fiction	5
32	En plads i solen/Long Shadow	Marklund, L.	39.990	7.826.275	24	Nov 1, 2008	General Fiction	4
33	Livstid/Lifetime	Marklund, L.	39.863	5.094.882	32	Oct. 24, 2007	Crime Novel	4
34	Ligge i grønne enge	Ragde, A. B.	38.443	4.323.035	36	Sep 30, 2008	GeneralFiction	3
35	Eremitkrebse	Ragde, A.B.	37.615	3.184.343	40	Oct 19, 2007	General Fiction	3
36	Yacoubians hus/The Y. Building	Aswany, A.	31.478	4.767.301	33	Oct 16, 2007	General Fiction	3
37	Mærkedage	Sørensen, J.S.	31.207	5.928.163	30	Mar 29, 2007	General Fiction	3
38	Havfruen/The Drowning	Läckberg, C.	29.311	6.350.453	28	Mar 22, 2010	Crime Novel	4
39	Vi, de druknede/We, the Drowned	Jensen, C.	29.150	4.314.097	37	Nov 10, 2006	General Fiction	3
40	Formørkelse / Eclipse	Meyer, S.	29. 071	7.720.278	25	Aug 7, 2009	Various	4

Table 1: The Fiction Bestseller Top 40 from Danish Book Stores, 2008-11

Rank	Author	Volumes	Revenue	Titles	Eds.
1	Jussi Adler Olsen	475.395	57.330.517	7	21
2	Stieg Larsson	326.683	50.095.755	3	10
3	Ken Follett	279.496	56.991.150	8	11
4	Camilla Läckberg	269.172	41.187.978	8	39
5	Liza Marklund	253.951	29.127.462	11	26
6	Jo Nesbø	215.766	31.935.976	10	41
7	Stephenie Meyer	212.758	45.567.610	7	40
8	Leif Davidsen	157.916	29.179.224	14	40
9	J. K. Rowling	154.830	32.607.602	7	81
10	Khaled Hosseini	148.348	17.388.858	2	16

Table 2: Top 10 Bestselling fiction authors 2008-11

	Title	DOP	2008-1	2008-2	2009-1	2009-2	2010-1	2010-2	2011-1	2011-2	Total
1	Pigen der legede med..	Oct 13 2006	42.225 35 %	29.437 25 %	18.236 15 %	23.354 20 %	1.350 1 %	3.572 3 %	876 0,7 %	387 0,3 %	119.437
2	Kvinden i buret	Sep 12 2007	426 0,5 %	10.372 10 %	4.915 4,5 %	15.546 14 %	13.467 12 %	31.136 29 %	21.143 20 %	10.852 10 %	107.857
3	Mænd der hader kvinder	Jun 15 2006	30.119 28 %	28.398 27 %	20.509 19 %	21.335 20 %	804 0,8 %	3.853 4 %	940 0,9 %	382 0,3 %	106.340
4	Fasandræberne	May 28 2008	1.374 2 %	16.627 18 %	3.662 4 %	9.972 11 %	4.936 5 %	27.243 30 %	20.401 22 %	6.904 8 %	91.119
5	Luftkastellet der blev..	Oct 8 2007	17.559 20 %	17.645 20 %	13.536 15,5 %	32.857 37 %	1.911 2 %	3.824 4 %	904 1 %	420 0,5 %	88.656
7	Uendelige verden	Mar 31 2008	12.568 16 %	26.089 32,5 %	4.101 5 %	18.281 23 %	3.901 5 %	9.947 12 %	3.097 4 %	2.130 2,5 %	80.114
8	Jordens søjler	1991	8.060 11 %	19.690 26 %	6.821 9 %	18.918 25 %	4.300 6 %	9.794 13 %	5.152 7 %	2.344 3 %	75.079
9	Drageløberen	Jan 14 2008	32.609 43 %	19.826 26 %	8.615 11 %	9.305 12 %	1.329 2 %	3.008 4 %	409 0,5 %	1.010 1,5 %	76.111
10	På udkig efter Hemingway	Sep 23 2008	X	56.277 80,5 %	3.493 5 %	8.541 12 %	509 1 %	766 1 %	X	410 0,5 %	69.996
11	Under en strålende sol	Aug 14 2008	11.177 17 %	23.381 34 %	14.029 20 %	12.972 19 %	1.590 2 %	3.576 5 %	993 1,5 %	1.170 1,5 %	68.888
16	Havets katedral	Mar 12 2008	6.292 11 %	14.142 25 %	3.133 6 %	9.248 16 %	2.767 5 %	11.156 20 %	5.961 10 %	4.115 7 %	56.814
37	Mærkedage	Mar 29 2007	12.225 39 %	8.366 27 %	1.330 4 %	4.302 14 %	1.921 6 %	1.633 5 %	1.430 5 %	X	31.207
39	Vi, de druknede	Nov 10 2006	2.909 10 %	10.798 37 %	3.025 10 %	4.478 15 %	1.627 6 %	4.543 16 %	727 2,5 %	1.043 3,5 %	29.150

Table 3: Temporal distribution of sold copies

Notes

- 1 There are of course exceptions to this rule. A recent example is Lars Handesten's article "The hitchhiker's guide to the bestseller galaxy" (Handesten, 2010), in which Handesten outlines a study of the history of the bestseller in a Danish context.
- 2 This is not a new condition, as bestseller lists have traditionally been actively influenced by publishers and book sellers on account of their promotional qualities (Sutherland, 2007).
- 3 The only major exception is USA, where *Publisher's Weekly* and *New York Times* since 1912 and 1930, respectively, have been publishing bestseller lists based on systematic extraction of data from the country's book stores (Sutherland, 2007).
- 4 Despite ambitions of a 100% coverage of the book market, Boghandlerforeningen never managed to persuade other stakeholders into partaking in the agreement with Nielsen Book Scan, which eventually lead to the abandonment of the project in 2011. This contrasts to the USA and the UK, where Nielsen Bookscan Reports have become a vital tool in publishing houses' strategies. See Thompson (2010).
- 5 Excluding, for example, data on publishers and edition-specific issues as Recommended Retail Price and Format. Moreover, English titles of the books are only mentioned if English versions of the books figure in the sales statistics.
- 6 For more on the subgenres and developments in this extensive genre, see Agger (2008), for example.
- 7 The four main formats are (ranged according to price): Sewn BB Hardback, BB Hardback - paper over boards, Sewn BC Paperback, and BC Paperback - paper over boards. In addition, there are a number of audio formats, but their market shares are too peripheral to influence the statistics significantly.
- 8 A famous example is Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), which has never appeared on any bestseller list, but is one of the most studied novels in American history (Sutherland, 2007, p. 12).