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The trade in books has always been and remains an ambiguous commercial activity, associated as it is with literature and the exchange of ideas. This collection is concerned with the cultural and economic roles of independent bookstores, and it considers how eight shops founded during the modernist era provided distinctive spaces of literary production that exceeded and yet never escaped their commercial functions. As the contributors show, these booksellers were essential institutional players in literary networks. When the eight shops examined first opened their doors, their relevance to literary and commercial life was taken for granted. In our current context of box stores, online shopping, and ebooks, we no longer encounter the book as we did as recently as twenty years ago. By contributing to our understanding of bookshops as unique social spaces on the thresholds of commerce and culture, this volume helps to lay the groundwork for comprehending how our relationship to books and literature has been and will be affected by the physical changes to the reading experience taking place in the twenty-first century.

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