

Popular Fiction Studies: The Advantages of a New Field

Stephen Knight's *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*, published in 1980, begins with the claim that "not very much has been written about crime fiction" (Knight 1). This was true in relative terms: although a great deal had, in fact, been written about crime fiction, the most celebrated and conventionally literary of popular genres, it was only a stream compared to the flood of work that emerged in the 1980s. "Crime fiction" and other established genres of popular novels—such as romance, thriller, science fiction, horror novel and Western—have each drawn extensive attention from a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives, but they have more often than not been considered and analyzed as disparate categories. "Popular fiction" as a general object of study has rarely been explored, in part because it is often subsumed under the umbrella of popular culture. This is a mistake: just as film and television have developed their own approaches that reflect the unique social, cultural, political, and industrial dimensions of each medium, so popular fiction should occupy its own critical space. In this article I explore the most significant debates about popular fiction within the United States, such as the significance of genre and the role of reception studies, and suggest that to fully recognize the possibilities of studying popular fiction, scholars should begin to treat it as a unique medium that deserves its own field.

"Popular fiction" has been defined in a number of ways (in Western, English-language criticism) over the last half-century. Although the specific terminology has often reflected the author's approach to the topic,

the subject's actual domain is rarely questioned. Popular fiction is defined by what it is not: "literature." Most critics openly or implicitly adhere to the following claims: Whereas "literature" is indifferent to (if not contemptuous of) the marketplace, original, and complex, popular fiction is simple, sensuous, exaggerated, exciting, and formulaic (for example, Gelder; Radway; Makinen; Warpole). "Real" writers spend decades agonizing over each sentence, while genre hacks produce a new paperback each year, to be "consumed" in airports and quickly discarded (Gelder 12-15). A persistent thorn in definitions of "popular culture" is the ambiguity of the word "popular": If a "literary" novel—by Philip Roth, for example—sells more copies than Nora Roberts' latest romance, which is "popular"? Can both be? Is the definition qualitative or quantitative? The significance of this distinction was highlighted by the controversy surrounding Jonathan Franzen's rejection of Oprah Winfrey's official endorsement of his novel *The Corrections*. When Franzen said in 2001, "I see this as my book, my creation, and I didn't want that logo of corporate ownership on it" (*Fresh Air*), he publicly alluded the wall between "real" literature and popular fiction, a distinction which would exist no matter how many copies *The Corrections* might sell. The contrast between "popular fiction" and "literature" occurs against the backdrop of continuing debates about the categories "low" and "high" culture by authors such as Lawrence Levine (1988) and Andreas Huyssen (2002) (among many others), but the study of popular fiction requires its own attention. Although many of the aforementioned terms used to stereotype popular fiction have been questioned by scholars, most would agree on a basic distinction: a novel is "popular fiction" if its success is measured (by the public and its publisher) as much by its sales and the devotion of fans (by its author) as opposed to timeless literary quality.

A Brief History of Popular Fiction Criticism

In the 1960s, American scholars showed little interest in popular fiction, and when they did mention the subject (primarily in English departments), it was, as sociologist Tony Bennett put it, primarily to present popular fiction as evidence of "both symptom and cause of a generalized social problem" of cultural degeneracy (Bennett xi). Early works viewed genres ahistorically and merely applied traditional methodologies of literary criti-

cism to more widely read fiction. Two representative examples are Bruce Merry's 1977 *Anatomy of a Spy Thriller* and Jerry Palmer's 1979 *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre*. Both are highly indebted to Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, focus entirely on the written texts themselves (as opposed to, for example, their political economy or reception), and assume a simple relationship of direct influence between readers and the novels. Although both studies yield insights into the thriller—Merry sees it in the context of the Cold War, while Palmer focuses on competitive (masculine) individualism and conspiratorial fears in the United States—their assertions about what the genre “means” (*to whom* is rarely discussed) are based almost entirely on their presumed status as literary ‘experts.’

A surprising amount of criticism still follows this model. One oft-cited example is Walter Nash's *Language in Popular Fiction*, published in 1990. Nash, originally a medievalist, has written on subjects ranging from humor to rhetoric but is perhaps best known for *Language in Popular Fiction*. *Language* reflects the lasting popularity of New Criticism: concerned primarily with women's magazines and action novels, Nash ignores new developments in literary criticism, such as the relevance of ideology, structuralism and historicism. Instead, he provides a close reading of the language of a variety of novels, from which he draws conclusions about their genres. Given the immense amount of popular fiction published in each genre every year, his selection is not nearly large enough to support his confident generalizations. More importantly, although Nash's focus on style certainly contributes to the study of popular fiction, his lack of attention to social and political context, readership, and political economy limits the potential of his work.¹

New Perspectives in the 1980s

The profusion of book-length studies of popular culture published in the 1980s was the result of the influence of feminism, the New Left, and, within the academy, cultural studies, but it should also be recognized as a reaction to the myopia of New Criticism. One of the first cracks in the dam was the 1978 English translation of Pierre Macherey's *A Theory of Literary Production*, which applied an Althusserian “symptomatic” reading to

literary texts, specifically the works of Jules Verne. Macherey's work, heavily reliant on psychoanalytic criticism, broke new ground in its attempt to see popular fiction as reflective of sociopolitical currents, whereas previous critics merely considered social context as background or focused on an author's biography. In addition, Macherey fundamentally challenged previous criticism by exposing and denouncing the "interpretive fallacy" of many critics—that their role was to discover and explain the singular meaning contained in a given text. This simple acknowledgement delegitimized 'expert readings' and opened the door to intensive studies of reader reception.

Macherey's work, along with a general blurring of the lines between high and low culture that we now associate with postmodernism, were powerful influences on Janice Radway's groundbreaking study of romance readers, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (published in 1984). In a 1987 re-introduction to the work, often considered the best study of popular fiction to date, Radway traced its intellectual origins to a debate within American Studies, which at that point (she writes) still tended to assume that the history and "character" of the United States could be inferred from its classic literature. She not only focused on *popular* literature but asserted that "if literature is to be treated as a document in the study of culture, it is first necessary to know something about who reads, why they do so, and how they go about it" (ix). Radway's study was a fascinating amalgamation of approaches: a loose ethnography of viewers that represented an unprecedented attention to reception of literature and a thorough history of the political economy of publishing, with feminist psychoanalysis at its interpretive center.

Each of these strains was reflected in later criticism. Radway's broadest contribution was her attention to social context, which was influenced by the turn towards social history within history departments. Although Radway was unaware of the developments occurring in the field that has come to be known as cultural studies, particularly at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, they paralleled major aspects of her approach and were similarly influential. Following the model of E.P. Thompson, Richard Hoggart, Althusser and above all Antonio Gramsci, authors such as Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige and John Storey credited popular culture with political as well as aesthetic significance. Although their research interests varied widely, their unifying question was

the political role that popular culture served in establishing hegemony in the contemporary (Western) world. The first fruits of this line of thought in the study of popular fiction were two studies published by Michael Denning in 1987, *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* and *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*. *Mechanic Accents* in particular was a masterful combination of literary study, archival research, and social history that has much in common with *Reading the Romance*: a focus on the political economy of literary production that frames a detailed examination of readers; a special awareness of the role of one category of identity, gender in Radway's case and class in Denning's; and a subtle appreciation of the way that popular books constitute a "contested terrain, a field of cultural conflict where signs with wide appeal and resonance take on contradictory disguises and are spoken in contrary actions" (3). If previous critics of popular fiction might be seen as endorsing the "culture industry" perspective put forth by Adorno and Horkheimer in 1944, Radway and Denning (the first implicitly, the second quite consciously) replace top-down meaning-making with a hegemonic field where reception is as important as production.

Attention to reception in one form or another became the norm for studies of popular fiction in the 1980s. This reflected a turn towards reception of media audiences in general, in part as a result of David Morley's *The 'Nationwide' Audience*, which pioneered a critical approach in which watching television was considered a complex cultural practice. The general influence of similar ethnographic and social turns in other disciplines, such as literary studies, communication, and history, was equally noteworthy (see Ang's 1991 work). Although the pendulum of emphasis and methodology has not swung all the way towards readers (as opposed to publishers or authors), there has been a distinct turn towards reception as a potentially transgressive act since the 1980s, especially among feminist critics. If there has been one dominant influence on the study and writing of popular novels over the last twenty-five years, it has been the activist intellectual work of feminism.

The Feminist Influence

Especially in the 1980s, many feminist scholars were drawn to popular fiction via the popularity of romance novels. Feminism, an activist movement whose academic representatives often maintain a strong connection to the “real” world, has led to methodologies and epistemologies that favor the study of popular over elite texts. (Merja Makinen’s recent overview, *Feminist Popular Fiction*—one of the few works to recognize popular fiction as a distinct field—expertly details the history of feminist criticism of popular novels.) The first notable publication was Germaine Greer’s 1970 polemic *The Female Eunuch*, which argued that romance novels pacified, deceived, and manipulated their female readers and should be shunned by women. Radway’s study was motivated in part by this knee-jerk reaction to romance novels, as was Tania Modleski’s similarly sophisticated and even-handed *Loving With a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*. Representative of general feminist interest in the romance was the collection *The Progress of the Romance: The Politics of Popular Romance*, published in 1986, which generally supported the work of Radway and Modleski, rejecting the assumption that readers were passive imbibers of patriarchal indoctrination. This work, often termed “appropriation” because of its deliberate attempt to reclaim popular fiction from those who see only control by both traditional (androcentric) literary critics and the “culture industry,” was at first rarely applied to other genres of popular fiction. Early efforts (in the late 1970s) were modest in ambition: feminists searched for strong female characters, veiled critique of hierarchy, or a validation of difference and community in crime novels (Makinen 92-128). In the last two decades, feminist scholars such as Priscilla L. Walton, Manina Jones, and Merja Makinen have begun to reinterpret other genres, especially crime and detective novels, while feminist *authors* write explicitly feminist popular fiction of all stripes. In addition to questioning the formation of patriarchal canons and more readily acknowledging and studying emerging genres, many feminist critics have followed Radway’s model of moving critical interpretation towards reader reception.

The Existence and Significance of Genre

Perhaps the primary debate surrounding popular fiction is the significance and meaning of genre. Literary generic categories, as we understand them in the United States, have existed since the 1930s (Denning 76), although dedicated scholarly attention began only in the 1970s. Frederic Jameson's 1975 article "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre" argued that "genres are essentially contracts between a writer and his readers; or rather ... they are literary institutions ... like other agreements or contacts" (135). This assertion of the nature (and, indirectly, usefulness) of literary genre was an addition to an extensive theoretical debate that dates back to Aristotle's *Poetics*. In recent decades the finer points of genre and generic distinctions have become an increasingly weighty issue in some academic fields, engaged by writers as diverse as Northrop Frye, Frederic Jameson, Tzvetan Todorov, Jacques Derrida, and Carolyn Miller. The use of genre as a method of social analysis has broadened to include the field of communications, for example, and is now applied in the form of "speech action" to subjects such as Presidential addresses—in this view, almost every act of communication (or action) belongs to a certain genre. These theoretical debates could be easily applied to the study of popular fiction, but are often entirely ignored or not explicitly referenced.

Jameson's insight into the close connection between readers and authors (we might add publishers) predated Radway's ethnographic work, but its ripples took almost a decade to hit the shore. (For example, Ken Warpole's *Reading By Numbers: Contemporary Publishing and Popular Fiction*, published in 1984, claimed that genres are simply "convention-bound and formulaic" (1)). Often citing Jameson, critics since the late 1980s have understood genres as "relational and historical" categories that change over time in response to political and social conditions, such as technological developments, corporate ownership, publishing, and the unpredictable tastes of readers themselves (McCracken 12). Some have questioned how genres have been formed and represented by the canonization of specific works, an argument which mirrored the canon-making debates ("history wars") in schools and universities in the United States in the 1990s. Writers such as Kathleen Gregory Klein have claimed that since canonical

authors are generally male, conservative critics have misunderstood entire genres through their biased choices of representative texts.

In response to these challenges to the critical application of the concept of genre, many scholars have reasserted its significance. Their claims are worth noting. First, readers often reinforce generic walls by devoting themselves to one genre to the exclusion of all others. Second, genres, especially established categories such as crime fiction, are often self-referential: texts refer and respond to the genre's traditions, a game within a game that fans expect and enjoy (Gelder 7). Third, the existence of generic partitions is reified by material factors: for example, the blurbs on the back of novels (almost always provided by authors from the same genre), the genre's name printed on each book, and the classification of popular fiction in the physical organization of most bookstores.

The Direction of the Generic Approach

Putting aside, for the moment, the question of the value of a genre-based approach to popular fiction studies, the literary genres that most critics identify—the thriller, Western, romance, fantasy, etc.—were categorized and calcified over five decades ago and should be altered wholesale. Genres *do* remain important to readers, but as Derek Longhurst notes, they constantly evolve in reaction and relation to the world. Although minority authors such as Walter Mosely have begun to “appropriate” major genres along the feminist model, minority characters should not have to appear in traditional genres to merit scholarly attention, as they often have. Specifically African-American genres, for example, have existed for at least four decades but have been almost entirely ignored by academics. “Gangsta” fiction of the 1970s, with its focus on pimps and street revolutionaries, has had a major following and political influence. In addition to the popular Iceberg Slim, Donald Goines has sold more books than any other African-American author in history (Goode). Today’s “street fiction,” written and devoured by black middle-aged women, among others, offers sensational tales of tough love by prolific authors such as Zane and Noire and is sold in droves on the Internet and on street corners in major cities (Ditkoff). Both genres are almost entirely ignored by scholars.

A number of minor genres, not as popular as thrillers and romances but nonetheless possessing formulas and “contracts” with devoted readers, are similarly beneath the critical radar. For example, the collection *Political Mythology and Popular Fiction*, written entirely by political scientists, identifies “middle-class fiction,” the historical novel, the small-town American novel, the sports novel, and America-at-war fiction. In my own work, I have noticed the burgeoning genres of alternate history novels (by authors such as Harry Turtledove) as well as disaster fiction. Although thrillers continue to be of great significance, especially given their success in sales, scholars might look to identify smaller, newer, and previously ignored genres.

Such a shift would require an even greater awareness of readers, but the study of reception has undergone a great deal of recent criticism. First, critics say, reception often reduces a complex interrelated network of cultural practices and relationships to interpretations that rely on one or two determining factors (such as race or gender). Second, in adopting a definitive stance on the question of hegemony and resistance, scholars tend to romanticize readers’ responses as evidence of independent creativity or resistance. Third, audience research makes falsely authoritative claims and is too often treated as a scientific ‘slice of reality.’ Because researchers (like all scholars) inevitably bring biases to their work, attempts to uncover readers’ understandings and conceptions of individual texts amount to second-order interpretation (Ang 187; Radway “What’s”).

These arguments are compelling, but they should be regarded as cautionary reminders. One might call forth once again the words of Stephen Knight, who admitted that although his *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* would be more persuasive with more attention to readership, “it has seemed better to make a beginning, to offer analysis, than to remain silent about audiences as most literary criticism does” (4). Although a methodological overemphasis on reception can be misleading, studies such as *Reading the Romance* show that attention to reception—even if it is technically impossible to arrive at an unbiased representation, and even if it must be tempered by an acknowledgement of the limits of the chosen methodology—is necessary in a field that is so obviously dependent on its readers for its shape and direction. An instructive example is the field of American history, where the rise of social and cultural history in the 1970s has challenged the value of the “objectivity question.” If “objectivity” is agreed to

be an impossible goal, critics should adjust their expectations and allow mixed, interdisciplinary methodologies to answer a new series of questions.

“Popular Fiction” as a Field

The future of the study of popular fiction is difficult to predict. We have seen the two dominant modes. The first is the traditional, text-oriented, formulaic approach that views popular fiction as a meretricious cousin of real literature. The second is the feminist-cultural studies approach, which sees in readers the ability and tendency to reinterpret texts that are seemingly conservative and patriarchal in a resistant, transgressive, unpredictable and/or socially and politically informed manner. However, a number of recent developments suggest that new and often more complicated approaches are on the horizon, often occasioned by critiques of the apparent rigid binary of these two modes. (The term “popular fiction”—as compared to “literature”—itself manifests the distinction between these two approaches, along with the distinction between authors such as Nora Roberts and Franzen. In this way, renaming the field “popular literature” might signal a third way to these critical extremes.)

The issue of genre itself remains at the heart of almost every general study of “popular fiction.” Apart from three exceptions, notably Jerry Palmer’s *Potboilers: Methods, Concepts and Case Studies in Popular Fiction*, McCracken’s *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction* (1998), and Gelder’s *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field*, all primarily concerned with British literature, there has been little attempt to unify the field of popular fiction despite the obvious continuities between different genres. (The recent *Encyclopedia of American Popular Fiction*, which makes nuanced connections within its short biographies of major authors, is a noteworthy step.) Critics, publishers, and readers are all invested in the continued existence of generic boundaries for very different reasons, but there are a number of persuasive arguments to move beyond genre in future scholarship. First, as noted above, the existence of generic categories tends to lead scholars toward one-dimensional conceptualizations. For romance readers, it is their status as women; for Denning’s dime novels readers, their position as the working-class. However, as the intersection

of a variety of factors, such as race, class, ethnicity, gender, politics, and religion is acknowledged as a more accurate description of the formation of identity and community, genre-based criticism can prevent this development from influencing the study of popular fiction.

Finally, the existence of “bestsellers” seems to challenge the importance of genre. Bestsellers tend to cross generic boundaries, either occupying two (or more) genres or mixing the formulas of both. In her 2001 *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction* (2001), Joyce J. Jaricks attempts to assist librarians dumbfounded by reader requests by creating a list of “sure bets” that almost all readers will enjoy. What do bestsellers and “sure bets” tell us about the relevance of the concept of genre and existing genres? What do they reveal about genre readers? The conventional imagination of genre readers, created by ethnographies such as *Reading the Romance*, depicts fans of popular fiction as individuals (or groups) devoted to their literary niche, often devouring page-turners at an impressive clip. But if the ‘average’ reader is in fact a traveler picking up a novel with an eye-catching cover at an airport, should genres remain the central axis of analysis? This is a question that Jameson phrased nearly two decades ago. In a 1984 article, “Towards a New Awareness of Genre,” he argues that instead of placing a novel in a genre as if we were dropping it into a bucket, we might triangulate works *among* different genres. If a book was simultaneously a Western and street fiction, how does this alter the neat formulas of literary critics? Perhaps most importantly, how might this new perspective reflect the social, cultural, and political context in which it was published and consumed?

This would be one of the primary concerns of the field of “popular fiction studies”: a fresh approach to genre criticism and the relevance of genre itself. Within the study of popular culture, popular fiction is the underdeveloped brother of film and television studies. One advantage of considering popular fiction as a separate field would be to isolate its particular political economy and cultural position. More attention must be paid to the specific factors of consumption. For example, publishers and booksellers can attest that book covers and a novel’s placement in a bookstore—both factors that are directly tied into the political economy of publishing—may be as significant as content in determining sales. While some works, such as the collection *Consuming Books: The Marketing and Consumption of Literature*, have addressed this subject, most authors have ignored these

nuts and bolts issues. Greater attention to them would be a fruitful step toward understanding consumer choices and the relationship between political and industrial factors (such as shifts in corporate ownership) and the success of individual books.

Indeed, one further advantage of considering a subject as a “field” is to create scholars who specialize in it. Currently, the majority of authors who approach the genre of popular fiction, and many of the most insightful, do so as an isolated project, an outlier in an academic career dedicated to other pursuits. One might predict that scholars working in an acknowledged (sub)field might be more free and intellectually interested in pursuing in greater depth the approaches outlined here. The study of popular fiction remains in its infancy, subject to ‘expert’ interpretations and conjectures by academics who may be quite out of touch with the “average” reader. As other subjects are mined for new perspectives and further complications of dominant narratives in an increasingly crowded academe, the formation of the field of popular fiction presents a fertile opportunity to develop a greater understanding of American popular culture.

Matthew Schneider-Mayerson
University of Minnesota

Note

¹One of the few counterexamples was John Cawelti’s 1976 *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories of Art and Popular Fiction*. Developed from his 1970 article “The Concept of Formula in Popular Literature,” Cawelti’s book connected genres and formulaic plots to historical context via literary archetypes, psychological interests, and societal needs, and thereby identified the complicated but central relationship between reader, writer, and social context.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Social Studies Association, 1944. Print.
- Ang, Ien. "On the Politics of Empirical Audience Research," *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World*. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Bennett, Tony, ed. *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- Brown, Stephen, ed. *Consuming Books: The Marketing and Consumption of Literature*. London: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories of Art and Popular Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1976. Print.
- Ditkoff, Anna. "Once an Anonymous Internet Sex Writer, Now the Diva of Erotica, Zane Has Erected Her Own Hot Publishing Empire." *Baltimore City Paper* 15 Sep. 2004. Web. 8 Sep. 2008.
- Franzen, Jonathan. *The Corrections*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001. Print.
- . "Fresh Air." National Public Radio. 15 Oct. 2001. Radio.
- Denning, Michael. *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller*. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1987. Print.
- . *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America*. New York: Verso, 1987. Print.
- Frye, Herman Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton University Press, 1957. Print.
- Gelder, Ken. *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Goode, Gred. "Dopefiend to Kenyatta's Last Hit: The Angry Black Crime Novels of Donald Goines," *MELUS* 11. 3 (Autumn 1984): 41-48. Print.
- Greer, Germaine. *The Female Eunuch*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970. Print.
- Longhurst, Derek. "Introduction: Reading Popular Fiction." *Gender, Genre, and Narrative Pleasure*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989. Print.
- Modleski, Tania. *Loving With a Vengeance: Mass-Produced Fantasies for Women*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982. Print.
- Hamilton, Geoff and Brian Jones, eds. *Encyclopedia of American Popular Fiction*. New York: Facts on File, 2009. Print.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "High/Low in an Expanded Field," *Modernism/modernity* 9.3 (Sep. 2002): 363-374. Print.

- Jameson, Frederic. "Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre." *New Literary History* 7.1 (1975): 135-63. Print.
- . *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. Print.
- Klein, Kathleen Gregory. *Women Times Three: Writes, Detectives, Readers*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular P, 1995. Print.
- Knight, Stephen. *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction*. London: MacMillan, 1980. Print.
- Levine, Lawrence. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of a Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University P, 1988. Print.
- Longhurst, Derek. "Introducton: Reading Popular Fiction," *Gender, Genre and Narrative Pleasure*. London: Unwin Hyman: 1989. Print.
- Macherey, Pierre. *A Theory of Literary Production*. Translated from the French by Geoffrey Wall. London and New York: Routledge, 1978. Print.
- Makinen, Merja. *Feminist Popular Fiction*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print.
- McCracken, Scott. *Pulp: Reading Popular Fiction*. Manchester, UK and New York: Manchester University, 1998. Print.
- Merry, Bruce. *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977. Print.
- Morley, David. *The 'Nationwide' Audience: Structure and Decoding*. London: British Film Institute: 1980. Print.
- Nash, Walter. *Language in Popular Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Palmer, Jerry. *Thrillers: Genesis and Structure of a Popular Genre*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979. Print.
- . *Potboilers: Methods, Concepts and Case Studies in Popular Fiction* London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Radford, Jean, ed. *The Progress of the Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986. Print.
- Radway, Janice. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina P, 1994. Print.
- . "Reading *Reading the Romance*" (1987). *Studies in Culture: An Introductory Reader*. Ed. Ann Gray and Jim McGuigan. London: Arnold, 1997. 62-79. Print.
- . "What's the Matter with Reception Study?: Some Thoughts on the Disciplinary Origins, Conceptual Constraints, and Persistent Viability of a Paradigm." *New Directions in American Reception Study*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 327-52. Print.
- Saricks, Joyce J. *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*. Chicago and London: American Library Association, 2001. Print.

- Velasquez, S.J. "Masons Brace for New Dan Brown Novel," *The Salt Lake Tribune* 10 Sep. 2009. Web. 8 Sep. 2010.
- Walton, Priscilla L., and Manina Jones. *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1999. Print.
- Warpole, Ken. *Reading by Numbers: Contemporary Publishing and Popular Fiction*. London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1984. Print.