

The German Bestseller in the Late Nineteenth Century



Edited by
Charlotte Woodford and Benedict Schofield

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Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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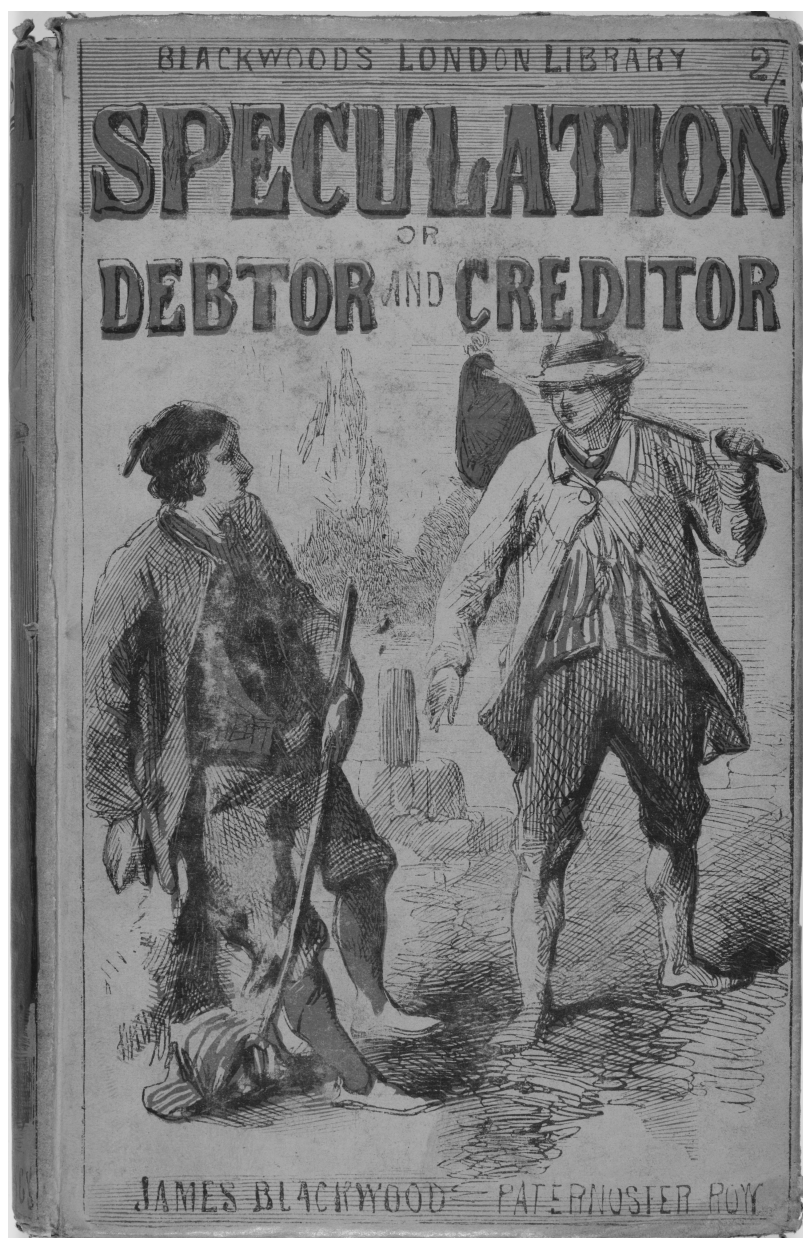
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C. W.
B. S.
October 2011



Front cover illustration to Speculation. Or Debtor and Creditor: A Romance in Five Books, by Gustav Freytag, translated by J. Stewart (1857). Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

Introduction: German Fiction and the Marketplace in the Nineteenth Century

Charlotte Woodford

IN 1855, THE JOURNALIST AND FUTURE NOVELIST Theodor Fontane welcomed Gustav Freytag's novel *Soll und Haben* (Debit and Credit, 1855) as "die erste Blüte des modernen Realismus. . . . Der Freytagsche Roman ist eine *Verdeutschung* (im vollsten und edelsten Sinne) des neueren englischen Romans" (the first flourish of modern realism. . . . The Freytag novel is a *German* version—in the most complete and noble sense—of the more recent English novel). Fontane praises Freytag for his characterization: his protagonists might be equally at home in Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) or *Oliver Twist* (1838). The novel merits comparison with the best of William Thackeray, and the action scenes, he points out, could come straight from one of James Fenimore Cooper's adventure novels set in the New World. Freytag, Fontane implies, has looked to foreign bestsellers that have been commercially successful in Germany and produced his own masterpiece, which imitates, but also transcends, its models. In particular, while the English novel excels, for Fontane, in its faithful reproduction of material reality, Freytag's novel is thoroughly German in its attention to form, and in the values it represents.

This volume examines some of the bestsellers or *Erfolgsbücher* of the period of literary realism in the nineteenth century, and seeks to better understand German fiction of that era by situating it in its historical and material context. Many novels of nineteenth-century Germany, particularly those that were commercially successful in their own day, have been marginalized in German studies, and deserve to be more widely studied.¹ Moving beyond the narrow canon of literary realism in this period to examine the broad "cultural field" of late nineteenth-century German fiction, to use Bourdieu's term,² the studies in this volume engage in detailed analysis of fiction's aesthetic strategies to explore the fertile crossover between so-called high literature and works written for the mass market. The bestseller is not synonymous with "Trivialliteratur," a German term that still carries with it the connotation of predictable, lowbrow fiction with few literary merits.³ The *literary* qualities of the bestseller are indeed a particular focus of this volume. Not all of the bestsellers discussed here

are equally successful purely in aesthetic terms, of course. However, popularity is not as such a counterindicator of literary merit. With this volume we hope to provide new insights into fiction that flourished in the age of realism, by close reading of works that have been selected specifically because they were widely read and enjoyed.

The Emergence of the Mass Market in the Nineteenth Century

In 1816, Friedrich Perthes, a proponent of the German book trade, was convinced that the main purpose of the book trade was to bring about “Einheit der deutschen Literatur” (unity of German literature), by distributing print culture throughout the lands where German was spoken, so that “allenthalben möglichst gleichartig lebhafter Antheil an Sprache, Wissenschaft und Literatur erregt und erhalten werde”⁴ (everywhere, in the most uniform way possible, lively participation in philology, science, and literature is aroused and maintained). Over the course of the nineteenth century, the book trade in the German-speaking lands was industrialized, leading to the creation of a mass market throughout the German-speaking world, a national market that was the prerequisite for the existence of the bestseller.

A publisher at the end of the nineteenth century described the book-selling industry as a survival of the fittest:

Der Kampf ums Dasein verschärft sich noch fortwährend. Man verlernt immer mehr, Rücksichten zu nehmen, und wer den Wettlauf nicht aushalten kann, nun, der mag fallen.⁵

[The struggle for existence gets harder all the time. You learn more and more not to be cautious, and he who cannot survive the competition, well, he will perish.]

In 1835, legislation was passed in the German Confederation to ensure publishers’ exclusive rights over authors in whom they had invested, preventing pirate or unauthorized editions by other publishers.⁶ The establishment of copyright law (*das Urheberrecht*) then followed, which gave intellectual property rights to authors in Prussian law in 1837, in the law of the North German Confederation in 1870, and in German law upon unification in 1871.⁷ This new legal framework securing both publishers’ and authors’ rights allowed publishers to invest in new works and further fostered the production and distribution of literature in German as well as maximizing profits.

The Prussian Customs Union and, from 1868, the North German Confederation created an extensive market in which books could be sold

without tariffs. The railways, together with the invention of the telegraph, enabled authors and publishers to reach those markets efficiently.⁸ Trade became concentrated in large centers, for the telegraph facilitated a swift ordering service, enabling customers to place orders from booksellers some distance away from their hometowns. With the postal service so much cheaper and more efficient by rail, it was much easier than ever before to buy books, magazines, and newspapers printed elsewhere. One bookseller lamented: “Schade, daß nicht auch die Bestellungen per Telegraph ausgeführt werden können, was würde dann erst für eine Bewegung in den Buchhandel kommen.”⁹ (It is a shame that orders cannot also be fulfilled by telegraph: what a revolution that would bring about in the book trade.) Indeed, already in 1853, one voice claimed that the general public had become too impatient as a result of the ready availability of books on demand: “Das Publikum will nicht mehr warten wie sonst auf eine Bestellung, jeder glaubt, was er heute bestellt, kann übermorgen schon da sein.”¹⁰ (The public is no longer content to wait for an order, as before. Everyone believes that what he orders today can be with him as early as the day after tomorrow.) The rapidly accelerating lifestyle created by modern industrial culture informed people’s reading habits:

Man fährt nicht mit dem Schnellzug und empfängt die Nachrichten nicht durch den Telegraph, ohne innerlich davon beeinflußt zu werden. . . . Das Buch mit seiner behäbigen Breite ist nichts für ein Geschlecht, das sich zwischen Arbeit und Genuß nur da und dort ein halbes Stündchen mit Lesen beschäftigt.¹¹

[You do not travel by express train and receive your news by telegraph without it influencing your mentality. . . . The book, with its sedate breadth, is unsuitable for a people that can only find a short half hour to read here and there, between work and pleasure.]

The general public, it was claimed, was unable to appreciate books that required time and effort to enjoy.

The impact of industrialization on the book trade was not limited to the distribution of literature. In the course of the nineteenth century, every aspect of the printing of books was transformed.¹² The industrial printing press or “Schnellpresse” was invented in Germany by Friedrich Koenig, using a steam engine for power. It more than doubled the speed of production, and was first put into large-scale use in 1814 to print *The Times* in London. However, it took the rotary printing press, first used in Germany in 1865, to make it cost effective to produce mass editions.¹³ New methods of paper production, beginning with mechanization through steam, were also crucial for the nineteenth-century print revolution.¹⁴ In 1844, Friedrich Gottlob Keller invented a new method of making paper from wood pulp, rather than the rags that had made paper so costly.¹⁵ In 1874, sulphite pulp was first used in paper production in Germany, making

for cheap, acidic paper that deteriorated more rapidly than high quality paper but that made production, and the end product, less expensive.¹⁶ These developments were important prerequisites for the production of mass editions, as well as for the expansion of serialized fiction, including in newspapers and journals.¹⁷ Karl Gutzkow's *Die Ritter vom Geiste* (The Knights of the Spirit) was one of the first modern German novels serialized in a newspaper. It was published in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* in Leipzig in 1850, appearing in three short installments a week.¹⁸

The second half of the nineteenth century therefore witnessed the rise of the periodical, and the reading of family journals in particular, such as *Die Gartenlaube* and *Über Land und Meer*, became immensely popular throughout Germany.¹⁹ The circulation of the weekly *Die Gartenlaube* rose from 5,000 copies in 1853, the year of its foundation, to 382,000 copies in 1875.²⁰ E. Marlitt's *Goldelse* (Gold Elsie) was the first novel to be serialized there, in 1866. *Über Land und Meer* saw its circulation rise from 10,000 copies in 1861 to 150,000 in 1872. In 1870, the family journal *Daheim* had a print run of 70,000.²¹ Authors were anxious to secure publication in these family journals, since they paid their contributors well. Novels by popular authors such as Karl May (1842–1912) were also distributed by *Kolportage*, that is, in a series of installments sold weekly or monthly by door-to-door salesmen for the price of one mark or less per installment.²² May worked briefly as an editor for the *Kolportage* publisher, Heinrich Gotthold Münchmeyer, and then from 1882 wrote five serialized novels for his firm. Among these, the novel *Der verlorene Sohn oder der Fürst des Elends* (The Prodigal Son or the Prince of Misery), was delivered in 101 installments, each with an illustration, from August 1884 until July 1886.²³ It came to 2,412 pages in total. The structure of *Kolportage* novels was repetitive and their themes sensationalist; they often drew on crime stories from the daily press. Indeed, for many observers, the market was dominated by predictable and imitative lowbrow fiction.

In 1878, in a letter to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, the poet and highly regarded critic, Betty Paoli reflected on a serialized novel by one of their female acquaintances, Emmy von Dincklage: "In der 'Heimath' hat ein Roman von E. Dincklage begonnen; der Anfang gefällt mir nicht sonderlich und gemahnt an den Ton der Erzählungen in der Gartenlaube"²⁴ (a novel by E. Dincklage has begun in *Die Heimath*; I didn't much like the start, which reminded me of the tone of the stories in *Die Gartenlaube*). The Austrian novelist Ebner-Eschenbach responded with some sarcasm: "Wenn Dinklages Roman in der 'Heimat' nur recht gartenläubelt, dann ist's gut, dann gefällt er gewiß. O tempora, o mores" (If Dinklage's novel in *Die Heimat* imitates the *Gartenlaube* style, that's fine, then it will certainly please the readers. *O tempora, o mores*).²⁵ Ebner strikingly turns the title of the family weekly into its own verb "gartenläubeln," clearly intended to be a pejorative term to denote a particular type of fiction,

undemanding of the reader, mimicking the successful novels of Marlitt, whose bestselling romances made *Die Gartenlaube* such a success. Nevertheless, there was clearly a market for such fiction, and in the commercial world of the late nineteenth century, all writers tried to accommodate popular demand to some extent. Ebner-Eschenbach herself wrote the story *Ihr Beruf* (Her Calling) for *Die Gartenlaube*, commenting while writing that it was inhibiting to remember that the story had to be suitable for reading aloud in the presence of a sixteen-year-old girl.²⁶ Many writers tried to satisfy both their poetic ambitions and popular taste simultaneously by writing fiction intended to work on several levels, offering romance, adventure, or suspense for the middlebrow market, while simultaneously addressing a readership that liked to think of itself as more sophisticated or intellectual in its tastes.

Aside from the *Kolportage* novel or serialized fiction in journals, book buying itself remained a luxury.²⁷ Among the lower middle classes and even many of the professional middle classes, book buying was mostly limited to educative works or presents.²⁸ Even when book ownership began to increase among the middle classes toward the end of the century, it was only for the few who had money to spare:

Das Buch ist eben mit Ausnahme der Schulbücher und einiger anderer eine Luxusware und kommt erst in zweiter Linie in Betracht, nachdem andere, wichtigere, näher liegende Bedürfnisse befriedigt sind.²⁹

[With the exception of school books and a few others, books are a luxury item and are only considered for purchase once other, more important and immediate needs have been satisfied.]

For most of the nineteenth century, the general public accessed books through subscription libraries, and these libraries therefore represented the most important purchasers of books. With a first print run of a new novel usually in the region of one thousand to fifteen hundred copies,³⁰ a publisher would hope to sell around eight hundred to the lending libraries.³¹ Indeed, alongside the family weeklies, it was through the lending library that authors made their names: “99 Procent (!) der Deutschen Roman- und Novellen-Schreiber verdanken ihren Namen und ihre Existenz nur den Leih-Bibliotheken”³² (99 percent of German novelists and short-story writers owe their names and their livelihood solely to the lending library). The borrowing figures for lending libraries in the nineteenth century are therefore a very good indication of popular tastes.³³ By Alberto Martino’s calculations, the French novelists Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue were the most in demand in German libraries before 1888, and he estimates historical novelist Luise Mühlbach to have been the most widely read German author.³⁴ Mühlbach’s popularity continued into the period 1889–1914, while Dumas and Sue began to lose out to homegrown fiction.³⁵ The works of Balduin Möllhausen and Wilhem Jensen were very popular

in this later period; they often feature in Martino's study within the top fifteen most widely read authors.³⁶ The library of Joseph Max Schenk in Prague in 1891 held over a hundred volumes of Möllhausen's works, and seventy-five of Jensen's, alongside sixty-seven volumes by the English writer Wilkie Collins, forty-three by Berthold Auerbach, and twenty volumes each by Marlitt and Felix Dahn.³⁷

Borstell's, the Berlin library owned by Fritz Borstell, possessed 600,000 volumes at the turn of the century and was the most significant in the empire.³⁸ Readers included the Bismarcks and even members of the Hohenzollern family.³⁹ Libraries with buying power such as Borstell's were able to buy hundreds of copies of novels at a heavily discounted rate, before eventually selling them off to smaller institutions. They were also able to buy up publishers' surpluses. Thus, in contrast to the small numbers of volumes owned by Schenk's in Prague, in 1898 Borstell's managed to have 2,315 copies of Freytag's *Soll und Haben* alone (making it the novel most represented in the library), alongside 1,688 copies of Dahn's *Ein Kampf um Rom* (A Battle for Rome), and 1,285 copies of Marlitt's *Goldelse*.⁴⁰ These large figures show how print runs had increased by the end of the nineteenth century for works that had already proven commercially successful.

Ownership of a small personal library started to become more common after the important changes in the German bookmarket that took place in 1867, known in studies of the history of the book as the year of the classics, or *Klassikerjahr*. On 9 November 1867, the copyright expired for authors who had died before 9 November 1837.⁴¹ The publishing house of Anton Philipp Reclam (1807–96) immediately brought out the first thirty-five volumes of the Universal-Bibliothek, slim paperback volumes, with their pale pink covers, at the inexpensive price of two silver groschen.⁴² Goethe's *Faust I* was number one in the series, initially with a print run of five thousand. By December another five thousand followed, with ten thousand more in February 1868. Reprinting continued every year, usually another ten thousand copies; the print run rose to fifteen thousand copies per reprinting in 1877 and twenty-five thousand in 1899.⁴³ *Faust II* and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (Nathan the Wise) experienced similar success, with small initial annual print runs of five thousand and three thousand, respectively, from 1867 onward, followed by ten thousand a year after 1873.⁴⁴

In 1869, Reclam began to publish opera librettos, followed in 1870 by translations of works from classical antiquity and from 1871 onward translations from other languages such as Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* in 1891 and *War and Peace* in 1892. Ibsen's dramas were among the most popular works in translation. Moreover, Cotta Verlag, which had held the rights to classic authors such as Goethe and Schiller before 1867, published a series in competition with Reclam's, the Bibliothek für Alle, start-

ing in November 1867. Unlike the Reclam volumes, which could be purchased individually, the Cotta series was by subscription only, with weekly instalments for two silver groschen each, beginning with a selection of Goethe's works in thirty installments.⁴⁵ Publication of the canon of German classics was a national project, the distribution throughout the nation of a shared heritage. However, the promotion of contemporary German fiction was also seen as a national enterprise. When the *Deutsche Roman Zeitung*, for example, began serializing contemporary German novels in 1864 with Wilhelm Raabe's *Der Hungerpastor* (The Hunger Pastor) for only the same price as a public library subscription, it was to secure a readership for new fiction by German authors to rival the popularity of works in translation.⁴⁶

The German Bestseller

Within days of each other in 1857, only two years after publication in Germany, three English translations of Freytag's novel *Soll und Haben* were published. One of those translators commented, in an exaggeration characteristic of the advertising industry: "It can very rarely happen that a book with which every German household has been familiar for years [!] takes so long finding its way to English firesides." He reassured the readers that in fact "the moral of [Freytag's] tale is thoroughly English, as are many of its chief characters," and hoped that the work would provide much entertainment for "a few hours by the fireside or in a railway carriage."⁴⁷ In the foreword to one of the two rival translations, Baron Christian Bunsen, Anglophile, scholar, and former Prussian ambassador to the Court of St James's, recommended Freytag's work to an English readership in comments that locate the novel firmly in the tradition of the European novel, before calling it a work "which undertakes faithfully and yet in a poetic spirit to represent the real condition of our most peculiar and intimate social relations."⁴⁸

This reception of *Soll und Haben* suggests it would be misleading to regard German literature, especially in the nineteenth century, as following a *Sonderweg*, a special path very different from French or British literature. In an early analysis of German popular fiction, the historian George Mosse states that "the overwhelming content of the popular literature of this age is characterized by those limited horizons which . . . gave German literature as a whole its peculiar cast during most of the nineteenth century."⁴⁹ He notes that German popular literature was characterized by "little variety of style or indeed content" and "a self-conscious quest for identity." Mosse looks only at Marlitt, May, and Ludwig Ganghofer (1855–1920) and loosely connects the reading of such conservative lowbrow fiction with conventionalism in a broader sense and hence with the intellectual origins

of fascism. A wider glance at the tradition of the German social and historical novel in the nineteenth century offers far greater variety, including many more links to the wider European tradition of the novel. As Jeffrey Sammons points out, in the German novel of this period, “one can sense the presence of foreign models from Turgenev to Zola.”⁵⁰ Fontane’s comments about the closeness of *Soll und Haben* to the English novel seem affirmed by the fact that in the early part of the nineteenth century, the German market too contained an abundance of translations of foreign novels by authors such as Dickens, Sue, or Dumas.⁵¹ The protagonist, Marlene, of Hedwig Dohm’s *Schicksale einer Seele* (Fates of a Soul, 1899), recalls being in trouble at school at the age of eleven for admitting to having read a German translation of Sue’s *feuilleton* novel *Les Mystères de Paris* (serialized 1842–43), a work which was the talk of the town at the time. It was described by her headmaster as a “Schandwerk” (shameful book). She later knew better than to admit devouring Sue’s *Le Juif errant* (serialized 1844–45). Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (1847) gave rise to a long line of governess novels in German by authors such as Amelie Boelte, and its plot resonates in many of Marlitt’s romances, among others.⁵² The historical novels of Sir Walter Scott, such as *Waverley* (1814), were appreciated throughout the century alongside novels that trace the national German tradition back into the past, such as Dahn’s *Ein Kampf um Rom* (1876) or Mühlbach’s *Friedrich der Große und sein Hof* (Frederick the Great and His Court, 1853).⁵³ The American James Fenimore Cooper’s adventure novel *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) provided a model for many authors, among them Karl May, whose Westerns, such as his *Winnetou* novels (three volumes, 1893), captured the imagination of generations of readers.⁵⁴

In 1929, Siegfried Kracauer wrote one of the earliest German cultural analyses of the bestseller for his column in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*.⁵⁵ He draws attention to the importance of emotional identification for the success of a novel, echoing Faust with the words “das Gefühl ist alles” (emotion is everything), but continues bathetically, “wenn alles andere fehlt” (even if everything else is lacking), alluding to the tendency of some best-selling fiction to prioritize emotionality or sensationalism over form.⁵⁶ Reading indeed provided an outlet in the nineteenth century for emotions that were held carefully in check within bourgeois society. Kracauer notes the escapism provided by fiction, whether it be an escape to distant countries or to the realm of the erotic.⁵⁷ He emphasizes the bestseller’s avoidance of difficult questions: “Denn nichts wünschen die heutigen Träger großer Bucherfolge aus Selbsterhaltungstrieb dringlicher als das Versinken peinlicher Fragen im Abgrund des Schweigens” (in a drive for self-preservation, the representatives of today’s big successes in the world of books want nothing more urgently than to plunge painful questions into an abyss of silence).⁵⁸ However, it could be argued that the novels in this study do

not so much avoid confronting difficult questions as offer the reader some help in dealing with them. Melodrama, for example, a common feature of many of the texts discussed in this volume, explored by Todd Kontje in chapter 2, suggests the existence of a moral order in which rightness is always affirmed and wrongdoers are mostly punished.⁵⁹ National belonging offers hope of collective greatness, while a discourse of social criticism is an appeal to the collective consciousness that needs to be changed in order to bring about reform. Even if a novel depicts a world in which protagonists seek in vain for fulfillment and belonging, which Gabriele Reuter's *Aus guter Familie* (From a Good Family, 1895) has in common with Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), the readers are offered identification with the protagonists and empathy with their situation as a compensation for the lack of ready answers. The reader is flattered by a sense of privileged insight and the feeling of transcending intellectually the petty bourgeois milieu in which the novels are located. Kracauer's essay "Das Ornament der Masse" (Mass ornament), also from his column in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, examines how participation in the mass cultural events of the era of capitalist production results in a loss of individuality.⁶⁰ Reading, however, provides a curious mixture of anonymity and belonging, at the same time. Novels provide a reader with a sense of shared experience by identification with a protagonist, even if that protagonist feels alienated from society. A curiosity of fiction is that it often depicts a sense of loneliness in a highly accessible way: a reader can share in the protagonist's isolation, and thereby feel some consolation in having his or her own similar feelings affirmed. The experience of reading can be anonymous; some fiction is read in secret or surreptitiously, in snatched moments, in order to experience vicariously something beyond one's narrow daily existence. However, reading is not always an individualistic pastime. Some novels, Dahn's *Ein Kampf um Rom*, for instance, reflect shared national values, and so the buying of that novel for a younger member of the family, for instance, is an act of transmitting values from one generation to the next. Serialized novels were often read aloud within the family; the latest installment was devoured by individual readers simultaneously across the nation. Even when one reads a novel secretly, it is often being read by others in the same way. Therefore, reading a bestseller can also be to participate in a community of readers.

The Poetics of Success

The chapters in the first section of this volume explore the aesthetic strategies that contributed to the success of the German novel in the nineteenth century. Benedict Schofield explores the complex composition of Freytag's *Soll und Haben*, one of the most widely read German novels of

the late nineteenth century, which ran to seventy-four editions between publication in 1855 and 1910.⁶¹ Schofield shows how Freytag attempted to appeal to male and female readers through a story of interclass romance in the first three volumes of the novel and a colonial adventure story, reminiscent of Cooper, in the final three. Freytag's novel offered opportunities for identification as well as escapism; it appealed to the aspirations of the emergent German middle classes, affirming their values, represented through the order and stability of Schröter's, the business around which the novel is based. It also appealed to their literary sensibilities through dynamic plots and vivid, if one-dimensional, characters.

Felix Dahn's *Ein Kampf um Rom* is one of the bestselling German novels of all time, and has never been out of print. A historical novel depicting the Goths' defeat in Italy in the sixth century, it locates the origins of German national culture in the immediate post-classical era. Todd Kontje argues that its lasting popularity lies in Dahn's ability to combine historical fiction with melodrama. Like Freytag in his cycle of historical novels, *Die Ahnen* (The Ancestors, 1872–80), Dahn rewrites the history of the German past to reflect the nationalism of the present, peopled by what Kontje calls "Germanic supermen," whose ethnic difference is determined by the geographical conditions of their ancestral homeland, giving rise inevitably to common ethnic or racial character traits. Kontje's essay examines the importance of melodrama for this discourse of national belonging and contrasts Dahn's novel with the humanism and spirit of reconciliation of one of its models, Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819).

Nicholas Saul examines the friendship and rivalry of Wilhelm Jensen and Wilhelm Raabe, both successful and prolific writers who tried to appeal simultaneously to both the mass market and the more discerning reader. Raabe is often said to have been jealous of Jensen's greater commercial success and to have responded by attacking the quality of Jensen's work through satirical depictions of his rival. In chapter 3 Saul examines Jensen's attempts to respond to Raabe's attacks in kind with a coded portrayal of Raabe. Jensen's works did not always sell, and Saul explores why Jensen's novella *Sanhita* (1877) and his novel *Fragmente* (1878) were *not* commercial successes. Jensen, a committed Darwinist, saw the marketplace as the survival of the fittest, and Saul demonstrates that his use of self-reflexive fiction aimed at the more intellectual reader may in fact have backfired commercially.

When the literary journal *Das litterarische Echo* asked public lending libraries and book-sellers in 1901 to list books most in demand in the past year, Clara Viebig's novel *Das tägliche Brot* (Daily Bread, 1900) topped the lists.⁶² Caroline Bland asks what made the novel, and Viebig's *Das Weiberdorf* (The Village of Women, 1900), such successes. Bland argues that Viebig has been unfairly dismissed as a writer of trivial fiction and

offers a revaluation of her writing, examining her narrative techniques and subtlety of characterization, and showing her to have had genuine poetic aspirations. A naturalist writer, Viebig treated topical themes such as economic migration and women's work, or the relationship between the cities and the provinces. She participated in the *Heimat* movement, but distanced herself from its *völkisch* nationalism, becoming adept at satisfying the appetites of her readers as well as breaking new ground for a female author by tackling subjects such as promiscuity, petty crime, and alcoholism.

Viebig's novels, like Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), and Reuter's *Aus guter Familie*, were published by Samuel Fischer, whose stated aim was to bring intellectually demanding literature to a mass readership, and by doing to force the public into accepting new ideas and values ("dem Publikum neue Werte aufzudrängen").⁶³ Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, though challenging for the general public in terms of its length as well as its breadth of cultural reference, contrived to be both a commercial success and a literary classic. Ernest Schonfield investigates what makes it so compelling to read, showing how Thomas Mann draws on many of the genres that had been so popular in the nineteenth century: regional literature, the family novel, the romance, the novel of suspense. The novel affirms middle-class fears and anxieties in a period of economic change and speaks to the cultural pessimism that was popular at the turn of the century. Schonfield shows how *Buddenbrooks* blends a variety of popular genres, including melodrama, the horror of the gothic novel, and the extravagant humor of farce.

Short Fiction

The chapters in the second section of the volume examine the popular genre of the novella, whose serialization in newspapers was widespread. They examine how writers sought to accommodate the tastes of contemporary readers, in particular through regional literature, while also writing challenging prose. Adalbert Stifter's short stories that make up the collection *Bunte Steine* (Colorful Stones, 1853) were originally published individually in bestselling journals. The collection of stories became a classic, one of the most frequently borrowed volumes from libraries throughout the nineteenth century. The story that is the subject of Martin Swales's contribution, *Bergkristall* (Rock Crystal), traces the fate of children lost on a mountainside on Christmas Eve, and began its life as a Christmas story for a family journal. With its rural setting and the sensitive attention it pays to the life of the community, the story comes close to *Heimat* or regional art. But the narrative tries to take the reader beyond undemanding popular literature, Swales argues, by taking us into uncharted territory, themati-

cally, stylistically, and generically, before returning us to the security of the village and family in the happy ending. The story thus disconcerts the reader, in electrifying prose, through the experience of the unfamiliar, while also providing the consolation of homeliness and the eventual restoration of order.

Anita Bunyan examines one of the bestsellers of the 1840s and 1850s, the *Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten* (Black Forest Tales of Village Life, 1843) by the Jewish-German writer Berthold Auerbach. Auerbach's tales of authentic rural German life met in some parts with the prejudice that he, as a Jew, could not possibly fully understand the mentality of the ordinary German people. Others criticized his tales as too escapist, too idyllic a portrayal of rural life, at one remove from the problems faced by rural society. However, Bunyan argues that they participated directly in the intense ideological battles of the mid-nineteenth century and tapped acutely into the aspirations and anxieties of middle-class German readers and critics.

Christiane Arndt explores how Theodor Storm, in his short story *Der Schimmelreiter* (The Rider on the White Horse, 1888), develops a form of gothic realism. She shows Storm to have been conscious that the presence of the ghost of Hauke Heien in the narrative frame of his story was problematic within a realist aesthetic. The ghost is *not* safely contained in the folk imagination of a bygone age, reassuringly present only in the mind of the villagers of the tale, but rather it intrudes into the narrative frame of the narrator and so cannot be explained away. Arndt explores how Storm also self-consciously reflects on the conditions of the story's own publication through the multiple frames of narration in which the ghost is also present. *Der Schimmelreiter* was published in *Deutsche Rundschau*, whose audience was the educated bourgeoisie, and thus the periodical offered stories containing more formal experimentation than journals whose stories were aimed at the mass market.

Imagination and Identification

In this section, the contributions show how the novel offered the imaginative potential of escape from the narrow confines of the bourgeois world, whether through travel, sentimental identification, romance, or the lure of the erotic. Balduin Möllhausen (1825–1905), whose travel narratives are the subject of Peter Pfeiffer's essay, was one of the most prolific and widely read authors of the late nineteenth century, specializing in adventure novels and novellas for the masses. Möllhausen's travel writings were based on his own experiences of the American Wild West as part of an expedition he undertook with Duke Paul Wilhelm of Württemberg. Travel writing, so widely read in the nineteenth century

and beyond, is frequently omitted from studies of realism, and its inclusion here enables an investigation of the productive crossover between fiction and other accounts that make a claim to factuality. Möllhausen's tales were so successful, Pfeiffer argues, because they satisfied both the readers' thirst for knowledge of the Wild West and their desire for adventure and escapism.

The romances of E. Marlitt, the pseudonym used by Eugenie John, reached an audience of hundreds of thousands of readers—or more—when serialized in *Die Gartenlaube*. They were among the bestselling novels in the German language, and were immediately translated for readers in Britain and the United States, sometimes repeatedly.⁶⁴ Katrin Kohl locates Marlitt in a tradition of social novels by women from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. She analyzes Marlitt's poetics on the basis of her novels, letters, and the preface to *Reichsgräfin Gisela* (Countess Gisela, 1869), showing Marlitt to stand in a long tradition of educating the nation through literature. Kohl shows how jealous other writers were of Marlitt's success, and argues convincingly that as readers we need to rethink the automatic assumption that only difficult writing holds literary value.

Charlotte Woodford's contribution shows how later women writers offered a critique of the aesthetic strategies and gender roles of the romance. Bertha von Suttner's novel of the peace movement, *Die Waffen nieder!* (Lay Down Your Arms!, 1889), vividly explores the human cost of war in a narrative that spans the period from the Austrian defeat in Italy in 1859 to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71. The narrative combines sentimentality with challengingly realistic depictions of conditions on the battlefield. Woodford argues that Suttner's criticism of militarism and modern nationalism extends beyond an indictment of war to a revision of the aesthetic strategies through which war and gender roles were represented in contemporary literature. Woodford also analyzes how Gabriele Reuter's socially critical *Aus guter Familie*, published by Samuel Fischer, brings together elements from the sentimental novel and the French naturalism of Zola that Reuter so admired, giving voice to the hopelessness that the author felt afflicted many adult women unable to escape the repressive conventions of bourgeois patriarchy. From the rapid success of the novel, it is clear that these were sentiments with which many readers identified.

Elizabeth Boa's chapter examines Margarete Böhme's *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (Diary of a Lost Girl, 1905) together with *Die Lebensgeschichte einer wienerischen Dirne* (The Story of the Life of a Viennese Prostitute, 1906), the fictional memoir of an Austrian girl named Josefine Mutzenbacher. *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* was an immediate bestseller, and continued to be so into the 1920s. The heroine is a fallen woman who, having become pregnant and having refused to marry the father of her child, is excluded from respectable society and eventually becomes a

prostitute. Boa argues that the success of the novel derives from a combination of melancholic sentimental identification together with social protest. *Die Lebensgeschichte einer wienerischen Dirne*, on the other hand, is an erotic and often comic account of the sexual awakening and compulsive sexual experiences of a girl from the age of five to fourteen. Although the sexual curiosity and freedom experienced by the fictional female narrator is unrealistic, the novel is of lasting cultural as well as literary historical value as a result of its drastic portrayal of slum conditions and its satire of patriarchal institutions.

This volume places a wide variety of late nineteenth-century German fiction in its cultural context in order to reveal through close reading the complexity of the intricate relationship between the canon and the mass market. In this way, the usefulness of distinct categories such as “popular literature” is called into question, in an attempt to pay close attention to the literariness of works sometimes dismissed as merely popular.⁶⁵ Moreover, the contributors hope to make clearer the links between German fiction and the broader tradition of the European and American novel in this period, with the result, perhaps, that these works will give pleasure to new generations of readers, whether in German or translation.

Notes

¹ Jeffrey L. Sammons comments on the marginalization in German studies of nineteenth-century social, political, and historical novels in “The Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists: An Attempt at a Clarification,” in *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*, ed. James Hardin (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991), 29.

² See Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” in Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, trans. Richard Nice, ed. Randal Johnson (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993), 29–73.

³ See Peter Nusser, “Trivialliteratur,” in *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Klaus Weimar et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 3:692. For Nusser, “Trivialliteratur verzichtet weitgehend auf die Begründung historischer, politischer, kultureller, vor allem aber auch psychologischer Zusammenhänge und verkürzt die Realität auf groben Raster” (*Trivialliteratur* [lowbrow literature] renounces extensively any analysis of historical, political, cultural, and in particular any psychological context, and it reduces reality to a crass framework”); it makes extensive use of clichés and stereotypes, as well as reproducing, rather than challenging, the value systems of the readership (692). See also Peter Nusser, *Trivialliteratur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1991).

⁴ Friedrich Perthes, “Der deutsche Buchhandel als Bedingung des Daseins einer deutschen Literatur” (1816), in *Der deutsche Buchhandel in Urkunden und Quellen*, 2 vols., ed. Hans Widmann (Hamburg: E. Hauswedell, 1965), 1:90.

⁵ Otto Eltermann, “Zur Lage,” from “Buchhändler-Warte: Nachrichten der Allgemeinen Vereinigung Deutscher Buchhandlungs-Gehilfen,” 1 (1898): 72, in Widmann, *Der deutsche Buchhandel*, 1:127.

⁶ Reinhard Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels: Ein Überblick* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1991), 208.

⁷ See Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 238–39.

⁸ See “Eisenbahnen und Telegraphen,” from *Der Buchhandel vom Jahre 1843 bis zum Jahre 1853*, 57–60 (Hamburg: Verlags-Bureau 1855), cited by Widmann, *Der deutsche Buchhandel*, 113–14.

⁹ “Eisenbahnen und Telegraphen,” 60, cited by Widmann, *Der deutsche Buchhandel*, 114.

¹⁰ “Eisenbahnen und Telegraphen,” 58, cited by Widmann, *Der deutsche Buchhandel*, 113.

¹¹ E. Peschkau, “Die Zeitungen und die Literatur,” in *Die Gegenwart* (1884), 59, quoted by Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 268.

¹² See Peter Neumann, “Industrielle Buchproduktion,” in *Geschichte des Deutschen Buchhandels im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Georg Jäger, vol. 1, *Das Kaiserreich 1870–1918* (Frankfurt am Main: Buchhändler-Vereinigung, 2001), part 1, 170–81.

¹³ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 205.

¹⁴ See Peter F. Tschudin, *Grundzüge der Papiergeschichte* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 2002); Dard Hunter, *Papermaking: The History and Technique of an Ancient Craft* (London: Pleiades Books, 1947), 341–73; and Hermann Kühn and Lutz Michel, *Papier: Katalog der Ausstellung* (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 1986).

¹⁵ Kühn, *Papier*, 142; see also Hunter, *Papermaking*, 374–99.

¹⁶ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 204; see also Hunter, *Papermaking*, 391–93.

¹⁷ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 204.

¹⁸ Monika Estermann and Stephan Füssel, “Belletristische Verlage,” in *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Georg Jäger, vol. 1, *Das Kaiserreich 1870–1918* (Frankfurt am Main: Buchhändler-Vereinigung, 2001), part 2, 197.

¹⁹ See Andreas Graf, “Familien- und Unterhaltungszeitschriften,” in Jäger, *Geschichte des Deutschen Buchhandels*, 1/2:409–522.

²⁰ Reinhard Wittmann, “Das literarische Leben 1848 bis 1880,” in *Realismus und Gründerzeit*, ed. Max Bucher et al., 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976), 1:194; see also Estermann and Füssel, “Belletristische Verlage,” 164–299.

²¹ Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek: Geschichte einer literarischen Institution (1756–1914). Mit einem zusammen mit Georg Jäger erstellten Verzeichnis*

der erhaltenen Leihbibliothekskataloge (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1990), 303.

²² See Mirjam Storim, "Kolportage-, Reise- und Versandbuchhandel," in *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, ed. Georg Jäger, vol. 1, part 2, 523–93, especially 580–83 on Karl May.

²³ See Storim, "Kolportage-, Reise- und Versandbuchhandel," 581. See also Gustav Frank, *Krise und Experiment: Komplexe Erzähltexte im literarischen Umbruch des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: DUV, 1998), 544–67; and Gustav Frank, "Trivilliteratur als 'Verlorener Sohn' des Realismus: Zu einem literarhistorischen Ort von Karl Mays früher Kolportage," *Jahrbuch der Karl May-Gesellschaft* 30 (2000): 271–330.

²⁴ Unpublished letter from Betty Paoli to Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, 16 June 1878, Wienbibliothek HIN 236.282. Emmy von Dincklage (1825–91), a writer of regional (*Heimat*) literature, had become a member of a Lutheran *Damenstift* (community of lay women) in 1866. Paoli might be referring to Dincklage's novel *Die Schule des Herzens* (The School of the Heart), first published in 1877 and reprinted in 1879 and 1883. See also Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, *Tagebücher*, ed. Karl Konrad Polheim and Norbert Gabriel (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1989–97), 2:508: 1 July 1877, "Nachm[ittag] lasen wir eine sehr alberne Novelle von der Dincklage. Es ist strafbarer Leichtsinn dergleichen drucken lassen" (This afternoon we read a very silly novella by Miss Dincklage. It should be a punishable folly to allow such a thing to be printed). However, there was clearly a market for Dincklage's numerous regional novellas, many of which were set in her native Emsland.

²⁵ Unpublished letter from Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach to Betty Paoli, 17 June 1878, Wienbibliothek, HIN 48384.

²⁶ Letter from Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach to Theo Schücking, 17 January 1902, Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, *Briefwechsel mit Theo Schücking: Frauenleben im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Edda Polheim (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001), 124.

²⁷ Rolf Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1973), 135. See Wittmann, "Das literarische Leben," 190.

²⁸ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 165. See also Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 233 and 266.

²⁹ Widmann, *Der deutsche Buchhandel*, 1:125, quoting Eltermann, 67.

³⁰ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 200.

³¹ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 234. See also *Börsenblatt* (1870), 221:3023, cited by Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 165.

³² Widmann, *Der deutsche Buchhandel*, 1:253, quoting Otto Glagau, 1883.

³³ See Martino, "Erfolgsautoren," in *Deutsche Leihbibliothek*, 404–47.

³⁴ Martino, "Erfolgsautoren," 404–10.

³⁵ Luise Mühlbach is consistently mentioned among the top three "Erfolgsautoren"; for 1889–1914 by Martino, "Erfolgsautoren," 410–15.

³⁶ See Martino, "Erfolgsautoren," 410 and 415.

- ³⁷ Martino, "Erfolgsautoren," 435.
- ³⁸ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 255. Schenk's library in Prague, mentioned above, contained fifty thousand volumes in total (Martino, "Erfolgsautoren," 435).
- ³⁹ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 267.
- ⁴⁰ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 255.
- ⁴¹ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 173.
- ⁴² Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 175.
- ⁴³ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 178.
- ⁴⁴ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 178.
- ⁴⁵ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 185.
- ⁴⁶ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 201.
- ⁴⁷ Gustav Freytag, *Speculation. Or Debtor and Creditor: A Romance in Five Books*, trans. J. Stewart (London: James Blackwood, Paternoster Row, 1857), quotations and the earlier information on the publication history of the rival translations, "Preface," iii–iv.
- ⁴⁸ Gustav Freytag, *Debit and Credit*, translated from the German of Gustav Freytag, by L.C.C., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1857), with a preface by Baron (known to British readers as "Chevalier") Christian von Bunsen, quoted here, xviii.
- ⁴⁹ George L. Mosse, "What Germans Really Read," in Mosse, *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: H. Fertig, 1980), 52–68.
- ⁵⁰ Sammons, "Bildungsroman for Nonspecialists," 44.
- ⁵¹ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 164 and 201.
- ⁵² Elisa Müller-Adams, "'Ich fühlte immer, dass ich auf Glas stand': Fremdheit bei Amelie Boelte (1811–1891)," in *Schwellenueberschreitungen: Politik in der Literatur von deutschsprachigen Frauen 1780–1918*, ed. Caroline Bland and Elise-Mueller-Adams (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2007), 227–48.
- ⁵³ See Brent O. Peterson, *History, Fiction, and Germany: Writing the Nineteenth-Century Nation* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2005).
- ⁵⁴ See Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Ideology, Mimesis, Fantasy: Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Karl May, and Other German Novelists of America* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998).
- ⁵⁵ Siegfried Kracauer, "Das Erfolgsbuch," in Kracauer, *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), 64–74.
- ⁵⁶ Kracauer, "Das Erfolgsbuch," 72.
- ⁵⁷ Kracauer, "Das Erfolgsbuch," 72.
- ⁵⁸ Kracauer, "Das Erfolgsbuch," 73.
- ⁵⁹ See Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976).
- ⁶⁰ Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*, 50–63.
- ⁶¹ Estermann and Füßel, "Belletristische Verlage," 166.
- ⁶² Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 298.

⁶³ Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, 279. See also Peter de Mendelssohn, *S. Fischer und sein Verlag* (Frankfurt: Fischer 1970), 47.

⁶⁴ For example, *Gold Else, A Novel, Translated from the German of E. Marlitt*, by W. C. Wrangmore, in *Wigand's Pocket Miscellany*, vols. 19, 20 (1868); and *Gold Elsie, from the German of E. Marlitt*, by Mrs. A. L. Wister (Philadelphia, 1868; repr. London: Strahan & Co., 1873).

⁶⁵ Michael Butter, "Caught between Cultural and Literary Studies: Popular Fiction's Double Otherness," *Journal of Literary Theory* 4, no. 2 (2010): 199–216, argues convincingly that popular fiction is often overlooked both by literary scholars more interested in "high" literature and cultural theorists who pay greater attention to other forms of popular culture. For Butter, detaching the label "popular" from "popular literature," so that there is only "literature" represents a helpful way forward. See also the other contributions to the special number of *Journal of Literary Theory* 4, no. 2 (2010), ed. Gerhard Lauer, Fotis Jannidis, and Simone Winko, especially Thomas Hecken, "Populäre Kultur, populäre Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft: Theorie als Begriffspolitik," *Journal of Literary Theory* 4, no. 2 (2010): 217–33, who calls for more empirical studies of literature beyond the canon, including the bestseller.

Part I: The Aesthetics of Success and Failure