Journalism and the Novel

Journalistic fiction is a rich field for study that has played an important role in the creation of the English and American literary canons. In this original and engaging study, Doug Underwood focuses on the many notable journalists-turned-novelists found at the margins of fact and fiction since the early eighteenth century, when the novel and the commercial periodical began to emerge as powerful cultural forces. Writers from both sides of the Atlantic are discussed, from Daniel Defoe to Charles Dickens, and from Mark Twain to Joan Didion. Underwood shows how many literary reputations are built on journalistic foundations of research and reporting, and how this impacts on questions of realism and authenticity throughout the work of many canonical authors. This book will be of great interest to researchers and students of British and American literature.

Doug Underwood is Professor of Communication at the University of Washington.
JOURNALISM AND THE NOVEL: TRUTH AND FICTION,
1700–2000

DOUG UNDERWOOD
To my mother, Mary E. Underwood
Whose love of literature and whose loving support have inspired me always
Contents

Acknowledgements viii

Introduction 1

1 Journalism and the rise of the novel, 1700–1875: Daniel Defoe to George Eliot 32

2 Literary realism and the fictions of the industrialized press, 1850–1915: Mark Twain to Theodore Dreiser 84

3 Reporters as novelists and the making of contemporary journalistic fiction, 1890–today: Rudyard Kipling to Joan Didion 135

4 The taint of journalistic literature and the stigma of the ink-stained wretch: Joel Chandler Harris to Dorothy Parker and beyond 158

Epilogue The future of journalistic fiction and the legacy of the journalist-literary figures: Henry James to Tom Wolfe 184

Appendix The major journalist-literary figures: their writings and positions in journalism 199

Notes 236

Index 259
I have a lot of people to thank for their help and support in the research, shaping, and writing of this undertaking. My wife, Susanne Kromberg, and our two girls, Marika and Alida, were a priceless source of love, inspiration, and affection throughout (as manifested in the delight of seven-year-old Alida, who loves Charlotte’s Web, in discovering that E.B. White is both an author in this study and someone who shares with her Daddy a one-time employer, The Seattle Times). My department chair, Jerry Baldasty, gave invaluable advice in the development of the manuscript and encouragement throughout the process. Other University of Washington colleagues, including David Domke, Patricia Moy, Phil Howard, Matt McGarrity, Cindy Simmons, Crispin Thurlow, Tony Giffard, W. Lance Bennett, Keith Stamm, Roger Simpson, Tony Chan, Richard Kielbowicz, David Sherman, and Diana Smith, also were supportive in various ways. Dana Bagwell, my graduate student collaborator in our study of contemporary journalists’ literary ambitions, and my undergraduate researchers (Carly Avery, Bill Hayes, Ollie McMillan, Roop Randhawa, and Molly Talbert) provided great assistance. I am particularly grateful to Ray Ryan for seeing the possibilities in the manuscript and helping to make its publication a reality.