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978-0-521-83392-9 - Literature, Technology, and Modernity, 1860–2000

Nicholas Daly

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MODERNITY, 1860–2000

Industrial modernity takes it as self-evident that there is a difference between people and machines, but the corollary of this has been a recurring fantasy about the erasure of that difference. The central scenario in this fantasy is the crash, sometimes literal, sometimes metaphorical. Nicholas Daly considers the way human/machine encounters have been imagined from the 1860s on, arguing that such scenes dramatize the modernization of subjectivity. Daly begins with Victorian railway melodramas in which an individual is rescued from the path of the train just in time, and ends with J. G. Ballard's novel *Crash* in which people seek out such collisions. Daly argues that these collisions dramatize the relationship between the individual and modern industrial society, and suggests that the pleasures of fictional suspense help people to assimilate the speeding up of everyday life. This book will be of interest to scholars of modernism, literature, and film.

NICHOLAS DALY is Lecturer in the School of English at Trinity College, Dublin. He is the author of *Modernism, Romance, and the Fin de Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880–1914* (Cambridge, 1999), and of articles in *Novel*, *ELH*, *Victorian Studies*, and *New Formations*, among others.

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Acknowledgments

This book started out as an article I wrote to give myself an excuse to put off the redrafting of my PhD thesis. Eventually I did return to that inevitable project, which has meant that there has been quite a long period between the writing of that first article (begun in Providence, RI in 1995), and the completion of this slim volume (in Dublin in 2003). I have used that time to amass as many debts as possible, intellectual and otherwise, to friends and colleagues, and even a few unfortunate acquaintances. Some of those names I really must give here, though this is far from being a comprehensive roll-call.

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