In this revisionary study, Will Tattersdill argues against the reductive ‘two cultures’ model of intellectual discourse by exploring the cultural interactions between literature and science embodied in late nineteenth-century periodical literature, tracing the emergence of the new genre that would become known as ‘science fiction’. He examines a range of fictional and non-fictional fin-de-siècle writing around distinct scientific themes: Martian communication, future prediction, X-rays, and polar exploration. Each chapter explores a major work of H. G. Wells, but also presents a wealth of exciting new material drawn from a variety of late Victorian periodicals. Arguing that the publications in which they appeared, as well as the stories themselves, played a crucial part in the development of science fiction, Tattersdill uses the form of the general interest magazine as a way of understanding both the relationship between the arts and the sciences and the creation of a new literary genre.

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought – in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as ‘background’, feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

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# Contents

*List of illustrations*  
*Acknowledgements*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: material entanglements</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Intrinsic intelligibility: communications with Mars, and between disciplines, in the pages of the magazines</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Distance over time: using periodicals to predict the future</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 New photography: X-rays and the images of the New Journalism</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Further northward: polar exploration and empire in the fact and fiction of the popular press</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: bad science and the study of English</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes*  
*Bibliography*  
*Index*  

v
Illustrations


1.2 A heliostat designed by Sir Francis Galton. © UCL Galton Collection. 30


2.1 Detail from the first page of Kipling’s *With the Night Mail*. Courtesy of Cambridge University Library. L996.c.37, vol. 23, December 1905, p. 52. 68

2.2 From the ‘advertising supplement’ of the book version of *With the Night Mail* (1909). Courtesy of the General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Shirley 3399 (n.p.). 70

Illustrations

2.4 Screenshot from ProQuest’s *British Periodicals* database. The screenshot and its contents are published with permission of ProQuest LLC. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.


3.2 Advert for Patent Sound Discs, taken from *The Strand Magazine*. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford. Per 2705 d.272, vol. 12, July 1896, p. viii. This ad faces the one reproduced as Fig. 3.1.


3.5 A page from the *Idler*, showing a radiograph of the hand of the artist Frederic Villiers. Courtesy of Cambridge University Library. L996.c.41.1, vol. 12, September 1897, p. 244.


4.2 Detail from a map showing the route of the *Fram* expedition. The solid line is *Fram’s* arctic drift (East to West), the dotted line is Nansen’s sled journey with Johansen. The North coasts of Norway and Russia are seen at the bottom of the image; Greenland is on the left. From Nansen’s *Farthest North* (1898). Courtesy of the Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham. G 700 N, vol.1, plate (inside rear cover).

Illustrations


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This book exists because of my parents, to whom it is dedicated. I don’t just mean that they have been an unfailing source of emotional support without which this book could not have been written, although goodness knows that is true. I also mean that the realities of academic life in the United Kingdom practically close off the profession to anybody who does not have someone else both willing and able to pay the bills for a while. Currently, doctoral graduates are all but required to be out of paid work for at least a year while they revise, publish, and look for jobs (for many, it is much longer). In my case, I was able to move back into my teenage bedroom during this period. I was fed and kept warm and safe, and I was permitted the space and time to find work. It was embarrassing and it was stressful; it was an enormous privilege, and I am one of the very lucky few. Young scholars less fortunate in their circumstances are increasingly being pushed out of academia, their work correspondingly unlikely to find print.

You will have your own opinion on the desirability of a university system staffed exclusively by those from affluent backgrounds.

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