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Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Citation for published version (Harvard):
Tattersdill, W 2017, 'Looking at the Issues: Science and Fiction as Genres in the Fin de Siècle Magazine', *Textual Practice*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 417-431. https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2016.1249706

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Looking at the Issues: science and fiction as genres in the *fin de siècle* magazine

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The first problem confronting a would-be scholar of *fin de siècle* magazines is one of scale. 'Magazine' is a catchall term which can signify years' or even decades' worth of issues, multiple shifts in editorial staff, adjustments in pricing or nuances in target demographics, and all the other varying characteristics of a multiply-authored textual enterprise lived over time. That's for one title: in 1891 there were 2,263 in print according to one contemporary estimate, and this had risen to 2,767 by 1907.[1]

Much of this corpus is now closer to our fingertips than ever before. ProQuest's *British Periodicals* resource currently returns over 1.2 million articles dated during this period, and those are just the ones which have been scanned.[2] But there is also a sense in which the digital database conspires to hide the nature of the magazine.[3] Keyword searching produces a fluid and unique list of algorithmically relevant articles which are necessarily read abstracted from those alongside which they first appeared in print: 'the various digital archives that provide access to historical newspapers', James Mussell has written, 'constitute a genre that reconceives the newspaper as a repository of articles about something, where "something" is whatever is entered into

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1   Henry Sell, ed., *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press and Advertisers' Reference Book* (London: Sell's Advertising Agency, 1891), p. 12; Henry Sell, ed., *Sell's Dictionary of the World's Press and Advertisers' Reference Book* (London: Sell's Advertising Agency, 1907), p. 8.

2   <http://search.proquest.com/britishperiodicals> [accessed 5 June 2015].

3   For a book-length account of the issues raised by the digitisation of the periodical archive, see James Mussell, *The Nineteenth-Century Press in the Digital Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

a search field'.[4] The result of this is that newspaper and magazine articles are routinely read and presented apart from the associative contexts of their publication in order to support particular arguments: the searchability provided by the ongoing digitisation of the periodical archive serves to decline the use of "the issue" as a unit of study.

For scholars working on specific subjects or authors this may be fair enough, but I want to argue here that it is occasionally useful – even though it may be also be tedious – to attempt a recovery of the issue, putting articles which attract our attention back alongside the material with which they first appeared. Such an approach is particularly helpful when we are trying to think about genre, which is continually formed and re-formed, I suggest, in the associative contexts of magazines. In the case of general magazines, articles representing very different forms of fiction and non-fiction routinely appear together, and their material proximity (and conceptual allegiance under the masthead) itself constitutes a limited yet potentially productive dialogue. Avowedly popular publications perform this work in a way which usefully entangles two distinct yet habitual uses of the term *genre*: the scholarly register of 'types of speech acts' (journalism/science/literature) and the everyday register of popular fiction (romance/thriller/detective story). Scrutinising the issue as a site of generic construction and interchange is an opportunity to think about the relationship between these two.

One genre of popular writing which has thrived on an enduring relationship with magazines is science fiction. A commercial entity in its own right from the launch

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4   James Mussell, 'Elemental Forms', *Media History*, 20 (2014), 4–20 (p. 15).

of specially-devoted pulps in the late 1920s (the first was *Amazing Stories* in April 1926), science fiction depended on magazines for the consolidation of its archive, the demarcation of its literary territory, and the development of its community of readership: even today, when paperback novels, cinema, and television have rendered them virtually invisible to most, magazines continue to be the proving ground for new talents in the field.[5] But this symbiotic relationship between form and genre also stretches back to the era before the explicit articulation of science fiction in the '20s: Mike Ashley has pointed out that the appearance of the first monthly devoted exclusively to the genre 'was neither sudden nor a surprise, but the inevitable result of years of development of science fiction in the popular magazines'.[6] In the process of emergence and yet unnamed at the *fin de siècle*, science fiction provides an excellent example of the ways in which a fledgling genre could thrive in the periodical format.

I have suggested elsewhere that the magazine has been a productive home for science fiction precisely because it is a format conceptually oriented around a sequence of issues rather than a discrete text.[7] Jim Mussell and Bob Nicholson, meanwhile, have both separately surveyed the arguments for quantitative analyses of

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5   For a useful sketch of science fiction's magazine history, see Mike Ashley, 'Science Fiction Magazines: The Crucibles of Change', in *A Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. by David Seed (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 60–76.

6   Mike Ashley, *The Time Machines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Pulp Magazines from the Beginning to 1950* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), p. 44.

7   For which, see Will Tattersdill, 'Periodicity, Time Travel, and the Emergence of Science Fiction: H. G. Wells's Temporal Adventures in the Pages of the New Review', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 46 (2013), 526–538.

the periodical corpus.[8] Implicit in all three approaches is the notion that the periodical is usefully read as a large cohort of text, situated in different vehicles of transmission over a span of time. I continue to believe that this notion is both important and useful. However, I also believe that the relationship between science and fiction in popular culture – my underlying research interest – can be seen in periodicals *without* direct reference either to their temporal aspect or the weight of the archive, at the level of the *individual magazine issue*. My project here is to substantiate this belief with a close reading of a single issue of a particular magazine, tracing some of the generic structures which were active in the emergence of science fiction as a discrete entity – structures which would be missed or subdued in an analysis which treated only articles uncovered by keyword searching. The larger (and, for the most part, implied) argument behind this article is that science fiction and the periodical have formal resonances which explain their mutually beneficial shared history; the proximate argument is that uses of *genre* in the *fin de siècle* magazine were central to the discursive environment in which science fiction (and more besides) could come into being.[9] Whatever your investment in the history of science fiction, though, I hope the following will convince you that issues, as well as articles and titles, continue to be useful units to think with.

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8   Mussell, 'Elemental Forms'; Bob Nicholson, 'Counting Culture; Or, How to Read Victorian Newspapers from a Distance', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 17 (2012), 238–46.

9   For considerably more on all this, see my *Science, Fiction, and the* Fin de Siècle *Periodical Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

The *Strand Magazine* (Jan 1891 – Mar 1950) was the first, and remains the best-known, of a particularly successful range of mass-market monthlies associated with the New Journalism.[10] Published by George Newnes, the influential editor of *Tit-Bits* (Oct 1881 – Jul 1984), it is the type specimen for what Mike Ashley calls the 'Standard Illustrated Popular Magazine', a term applied both to the *Strand* and to its waves of imitators.[11] Taking advantage of improvements in print and distribution technology which allowed heavily-illustrated magazines to be made available at the affordable price of 6d., the *Strand*'s instant success was consolidated by its publication, beginning from the seventh issue (July 1891), of the first series of Arthur Conan Doyle's immediately popular Sherlock Holmes stories.[12] The lynchpin of the *Strand*'s commercial model was Newnes's realisation that 'the new mass-market magazine reader would have a short attention-span and would prefer to absorb fiction in self-contained episodes': Newnes made sure that his new periodical depended far less than its predecessors on serialized novels, championing instead its 'most crucial innovation

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10 For an account of the New Journalism, see James Mussell, 'New Journalism', *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, ed. by Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor (Gent: Academia Press, 2009), p. 443. For a sketch of the *Strand*'s whole history, see Jerold J. Savory, 'The Strand Magazine', in *British Literary Magazines*, ed. by Alvin Sullivan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984), iii, 397–402. A fuller account is Reginald Pound, *The Strand Magazine 1891-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1966).

11 Mike Ashley, *The Age of the Storytellers: British Popular Fiction Magazines 1880-1950* (London: The British Library, 2006), p. 197. Publications which followed the *Strand*'s model included *The Idler* (Feb 1892 – Mar 1911), *Pearson's Magazine* (Jan 1896 – Nov 1939), and the *Harmsworth Monthly Pictorial Magazine* (later *Harmsworth Magazine*, later still *Harmsworth London Magazine*, and finally *London Magazine*, Jul 1898 – May 1933).

12 The *Strand* ran every subsequent Holmes story – fifty-six short tales and two novels – until Conan Doyle finally retired his detective in 1927.

in fiction – the short story *series*'.[13] This method of storytelling combined the way in which the serial encouraged repeat custom with the advantage of multiple entry points: potential new readers were not isolated by their ignorance of preceding instalments, and were therefore easier to initiate into a purchasing habit. This innovation, of which the Holmes stories were one of the first major expressions, shifted the primary characteristic by which fiction was marketed from specifics of plot to features of kind, helping to pave the way for the emergence of "formula fiction" as we now understand it.

The *Strand*'s commercial model necessitated diversity; it published a wide range of kinds of writing in order to achieve and sustain its high sales. The magpie-like proclivities of its implied reader led it to publish everything from political commentary to historical romance to verse, as we shall see in due course. But the magazine also *obscured* diversity, reconciling its eclectic contents to each other through various formal and rhetorical means. Perhaps the most interesting of these for our purposes is the almost complete absence of any kind of signposting system: whilst modern periodicals tend to label distinct sections ('comment', 'features', 'sport', and so on) and always arrange them in roughly the same order issue to issue, publications like the *Strand* were much less rigid, seldom giving any paratextual clues as to how specific items should be read. Advertisements were always in supplements at the front and back (the bulk in front), and the 'Curiosities' section was nearly always the last item in the issue, but beyond this basic arrangement fact and fiction could occur at any mix

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13 Ashley, *The Age of the Storytellers*, p. 197. Original emphasis.

and in any order, and it sometimes requires an experienced reader to distinguish between them.

The end result of this commercially-motived series of decisions is a text which presents multiple different genres with the same level of locutionary agency, with no clear mechanism for demarcating them from one another and no labelling system restricting individual articles to a rigid set of generic criteria. The innovation of the "series" (of which there were also non-fictional examples, such as 'Illustrated Interviews' or 'Portraits of Celebrities at Different Times in Their Lives') guaranteed a certain familiar repetitiveness, but no individual item was formally affixed to a genre by anything other than its internal characteristics. It is precisely this quality which makes the *Strand*, and other magazines like it, such a vivid site on which to explore the interactions between a whole range of generic discourses, including those of science and fiction. '[S]tudying Victorian periodicals', Mark W. Turner has written, 'helps bring into focus the ways cultural products circulate and accumulate meanings within a social system...'.[14] In the pages of demotic magazines of the *fin de siècle*, cultural impressions of science and fiction were being shaped at the same time that science fiction itself was beginning to become a commercial genre.

Interrogating the mechanics of this development naturally leads us in the direction of Mikhail Bakhtin, since what we are searching for is ultimately something very similar to his heteroglossia. There is a point worth pausing over here, however.

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14 Mark W. Turner, 'Toward a Cultural Critique of Victorian Periodicals', *Studies in Newspaper and Periodical History*, 3 (1995), 111–25 (p. 111).

Superficially, a periodical cannot contain authentic dialogue at the level of a single issue, since most of its constituent parts would be composed in isolation from each other. Contributors would not be aware – as, indeed, most writers in the present issue of *Textual Practice* are not – what pieces were to accompany theirs in print. Therefore, the argument runs, they could not knowingly or unknowingly participate in a discussion with them at the level of the individual issue (unless by special arrangement): dialogue can be replicated within one article or between two issues, but is never visible within the material vessel of a single magazine. A study of 1850s periodicals by Dallas Liddle puts this point forcefully:

> Many separate monologic discourses collected in a single issue of a periodical cannot constitute Bakhtin's dialogized heteroglossia, but can only be a site where monologic discourse is multiplied.[15]

What Liddle sets aside here is the fact that texts need not directly reference each other in order for their *genres* to be in dialogue. Precisely because Standard Illustrated Popular Magazines self-consciously exist in a series-oriented commercial economy of types – because they are popular, rather than capital-L literary[16] – their individual contents are more than capable of, indeed, *inevitably must*, respond to the other discourses to which they are physically appended. 'All texts', as John Frow points out,

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15 Dallas Liddle, *The Dynamics of Genre: Journalism and the Practice of Literature in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 153.

16 For discussion of the commercial concerns underlying this distinction, see Robert Eaglestone, 'Contemporary Fiction in the Academy: Towards a Manifesto', *Textual Practice*, 27 (2013), 1089–1101 (pp. 1097–98).

'are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures'.[17]

It seems to me that Liddle's point would be conclusively dismissed if we could find evidence that contact between genres in the discursive format of the periodical had led to new, hybrid forms of writing, and with this in mind we turn to my specific example for this article, which is the June 1898 issue of the *Strand*. Apart from the fact that it was a double number, and therefore provides us with a larger amount of material to work with, this was a fairly typical issue, and any other specimen of the magazine could reasonably be subjected to similar analysis.[18] The issue is the last in the magazine's fifteenth volume, and most of it is available on ProQuest's *British Periodicals* database for anybody with access interested in following along.[19]

Pride of place in the issue in question is given to 'The Beetle-Hunter' (pp. 603-12), the first in Arthur Conan Doyle's new series of tales, *Round the Fire*. This adventure is neither as realistic as Walter Wood's tale of 'A North Sea Rescue' (pp. 709-15), nor as fantastical as Cutcliffe Hyne's 'The Lizard' (pp.635-41), both of which also appear. The sixth instalment in L. T. Meade's continuing series *The Brotherhood of the Seven Kings* (pp.649-64), co-written with the physician Robert Eustace, adds to the adventure element, but there is much else on offer here: an illustrated interview with

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17 John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 48.

18 It is worth restating that the *Strand* changed significantly over the course of its lifetime, and my prefatory comments should only be read as descriptive of the magazine up until around 1905.

19 <http://www.proquest.co.uk/en-UK/catalogs/databases/detail/british_periodicals.shtml> This resource is not perfect. At the time of writing, two items have been redacted for copyright reasons; the articles are also reproduced in the wrong order; and only a fraction of the issue's advertising supplements have been included. The scans have been taken from microfilm, as a result of which most illustrations are illegible. Nevertheless, only a few libraries have complete runs of the *Strand*, so *British Periodicals* remains the best way of accessing the material quickly.

Jan van Beers (pp.669-80), an article about different forms of pictorial handwriting (pp.688-98), a fictionalised tale of Nelson's youthful indiscretions (pp.681-87), and a short piece of popular physics, F. M. Gilbert's 'What Makes a Cricket Ball Curve in the Air?' (pp.730-32). A photographic feature (pp.716-19) shows two children modelling various stages of the 'Jack and Jill' nursery rhyme; it comes just a few pages after pictures of the new submarine boat being tested in Baltimore (pp.705-8). All of these items, and the many others in the issue, successfully cohere in the genre of 'general magazine' precisely because the other genres they evoke are so miscellaneous.

From this brief sketch of some of the issue's contents, it certainly seems as if a broad range of fictional and non-fictional genres is represented. But on closer inspection, the situation becomes more intriguingly complex. It transpires that very few of the items in the issue are ultimately reducible to the genres in which I described them above. One of the key insights of genre theory is that texts can (and routinely do) participate in far more than one genre; genre is better seen as a collection of elements present to a greater or lesser extent within texts than as an exclusive category into which texts themselves are to be placed. It is here that we can make good use of John Frow's important contention that

> …texts – even the simplest and most formulaic – do not 'belong' to genres but are, rather, uses of them; they refer not to 'a' genre but to a field or economy of genres, and their complexity derives from the complexity of that relation.[20]

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20 Frow, p. 2.

Frow understands genre as 'typified rhetorical action' (p. 89), and one of the consequences of this understanding is an emphasis on the multiplicity of ways in which a single text can engage with a spectrum of discourses. Frow also stresses that the ways in which this participation takes place contribute to shifting the economy of genres to which he refers – over time, genres move because of the discursive uses made of them by individual texts. As Bakhtin pointed out, 'the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any given definition; the boundaries themselves are constantly changing'.[21]

This nuanced understanding of what genre is – a fluid set of discourses operating within texts as well as between them – allows us to notice that the miscellaneous tone of the whole magazine issue is replicated in microcosm at the level of the article. A good example from the June 1898 *Strand* is Cutcliffe Hyne's 'The Lizard' (pp.635-41), a reading of which will serve to illustrate the theoretical position I have so far outlined. The story is straightforwardly surmised: a casual spelunker near Kettlewell in Yorkshire (the narrator) enters a newly-discovered cave in which he at length finds a "living fossil", a sleeping dinosaur-like creature which, awoken by his intrusions, proceeds to attack him. Rather than eyes, the creature has 'two enormous feelers, or antennae, each at least six feet long, and tipped with fleshy tendrils like fingers'.[22] After a terrifying battle, the narrator wounds the creature with his knife and it slinks into the darkness of the cave system. Severely weakened, our hero returns to daylight,

21 Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Cary Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 3–40 (p. 33).

22 Cutcliffe Hyne, 'The Lizard', *Strand Magazine*, 15 (1898), 635–41 (p. 639).

where he prudently opts not to tell his story to the superstitious locals.

Suppose, now, that we wanted to classify this diverting tale. In the summary of the *Strand* issue above, I described 'The Lizard' as an "adventure", and it does at first seem of a sort with the form made popular by Rider Haggard and his imitators, not only in the plot but in the colonial attitude the narrator often slips into as he explores what he believes to be virgin territory ('I wanted to (so to speak) annex the whole of the cave's main contours', p. 636). The slow journey to the place where the lizard is buried, though, is the longest section of the story – longer by far than the confrontation which follows it – and the tale's affect is therefore principally based on suspense. This suspense is drawn precisely from an ambiguousness of genre, since what the narrator finds (hidden state documents? smuggler's captives? a magical artefact?) will finally determine the kind of story we are reading. This moment is deferred repeatedly while the narrator crawls through holes, swims across subterranean lakes, and gradually notices the onset of a foreboding musk: 'It is hard to define these things', he says, 'but that smell, although it might very possibly lead to a new discovery, somehow did not cheer me' (p. 636). There are still other genre discourses at work here: taking account of the whole story, we might legitimately consider it a horror tale, especially in light of the creature's enormous feelers (splendidly illustrated by Paul Hardy), the unsettling lack of an explanation for the creature's existence, and its closing line: 'I have given up the shooting on the moor near there. Somehow the air of the district sickens me. There seems to be a taint in it' (p. 641). On the other hand, the absurdity of the creature may provoke us to think more in terms of fantasy than horror. Numerous other generic discourses suggest

themselves to the sharp-eyed: there is something of travel writing in here, for instance, and more than a hint of the personal memoir. Some of these are genres which did not (strictly speaking) exist when Hyne was writing, and I think that we may justly consider science fiction alongside them.

Despite a plot-level superficiality which would guarantee a swift dismissal from many critics, then, this "adventure" bulges with complexity when considered in the light of its genre activity. At the same time, however (and remembering Thomas O. Beebee's interpretation of genre in terms of its 'use value'[23]), it should be noted that the genre of 'The Lizard' is not *limitlessly* subjective: it may contain traces of many genres which make finally affixing it in any one problematic, but it is still definitely not (for example) a romance, or an editorial, or a war report. Whilst there is no perfectly right answer to the question of this tale's genre, there are several wrong ones.

My point in observing all of this is that the constellation of "right answers" shifts in subtle but important ways if the story is read alongside the rest of the magazine. Associative harmonies and disharmonies can serve to emphasise generic elements in a text, shifting it in the reader's mind towards a certain definition. Consider the tone in which Hyne's narrator describes his frightening discovery:

> Its four legs were jointless, and ended in mere club feet, or callosities; its tail was long, supple, and fringed on the top with a saw-like row of scales. In colour it was a bright grass-green, all except the feelers, which

23 Thomas O. Beebee, *The Ideology of Genre: A Comparative Study of Generic Instability* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

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were of a livid blue.[24]

And compare it with this:

> To guard against large animals, each little knot of buds is carefully
> placed, for safety, in the angle formed by the main stem with one of its
> short, stout branches. Stem and branch alike end in a forbidding prickle,
> and the buds are so set in the axil that it is simply impossible for any
> browsing creature to get at them without encountering both these
> serious weapons.[25]

The second quotation comes from 'A Very Intelligent Plant' (pp. 626-34), the eleventh
in a series of Grant Allen's *Glimpses of Nature*, which appeared earlier in the same
issue of the *Strand*. The organisms under scrutiny are very different – Allen is
describing a gorse bush – but there is considerable crossover in the ways they are
portrayed. Allen is intent on estranging his audience from the familiar gorse, asking
them to see the plant afresh in the light of the relationship between its physical
features and evolutionary necessity. As a result, his gorse is a more forbidding entity
than might usually be thought, wielding 'serious weapons' and 'forbidding prickles'.
Equally, the description given by Hyne's narrator of the lizard-creature is not an
illegible sketch of a horrific monster but the survey of a fossil hunter presenting his
find: consider that 'or callosities', the subclause which lingers over specialist
terminology in the very instant in which the narrator is being attacked.

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24 Hyne, p. 639.

25 Grant Allen, 'A Very Intelligent Plant', *Strand Magazine*, 15 (1898), 626–34 (p. 630).

I hope it will be clear by now that I am not claiming that there was anything so unsophisticated as a direct influential relationship between these two pieces of writing, which were almost certainly written in isolation from each other. But each partakes, for a moment, of some of the other's characteristic tone when laying its subject before the public, and this is a fact which the commonalities of historical moment and physical location provided by the magazine format serve to emphasise. The absurdity of the lizard itself, together with the implausible way in which it has been preserved underground for millions of years, may prompt the first-time reader to surmise that science has no voice in the story, but the tonal subtleties of the narrator's description of the creature, combined with his avowedly scientific ambition ('I was beginning to picture [the fossil's] restored shape posed in the National Museum'), bring us into contact with science's force as a thread of genre within Victorian popular culture.[26] And the traffic, to use Gillian Beer's well-worn phrase, is two-way: Grant Allen's piece, intent on the serious task of describing a plant in evolutionary terms, relies on some important fictive rhetorical techniques, and the estrangement which he is keen to perform is not functionally dissimilar to the 'cognitive estrangement' which would become for Darko Suvin one of science fiction's key characteristics.[27]

This is not to say, of course, that Allen is writing science fiction – although he

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26 Hyne, p. 638.

27 Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 7–8.

did, in the *Strand* and elsewhere[28] – but rather to illustrate that a part of each genre is detectable in the others, and reading the whole issue brings such correspondences and reactions to the fore. 'It is', says Frow, 'different *framing* […] that governs the different salience of [text's] formal features', and part of the original frame for Hyne's tale was the rest of the periodical in which it appeared.[29] Reading the whole issue restores that frame and gives us a view of a particular dimension of intertextuality, a dimension rooted in the physical properties of the magazine. Thinking about genres in this way, we begin to see them not as a way of segregating parts of the issue from their neighbours, but as currents running through the various contents of the magazine, now quieter, now louder: strands within the *Strand*. We see the truth of this when we consider the commercial obligations towards explicit genre demarcation that are circumvented by publication in a general magazine. From the colour of its cover to its positioning in a bookshop, a discrete volume has to identify itself in order to sell: even in the 1890s, when these commercial systems were in comparative infancy, publishers' lists and the titles of short story collections tied pieces down in a manner that the general magazine, by offering a hybrid genre of its own, to some extent dissipated. The genre-evoked suspense element of 'The Lizard', arguably its most distinctive feature, is considerably harder to recapture when we approach it – as modern readers are most likely to – in an anthology of classic dinosaur tales.[30] It is harder even to notice the

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28 See, for instance, Grant Allen, 'The Thames Valley Catastrophe', *Strand Magazine*, 14 (1897), 674–84.

29 Frow, p. 9. Original Emphasis.

30 For example, in Chad Arment, ed., *Sauria Monstra: Dinosaurs, Pterosaurs, and Other Fossil Saurians in Classic Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Landisville, PA: Coachwhip Publications, 2009).

16

possibility that it once existed.

Reading a story with the preconceptions brought by the labelling capacity of an anthology is not different, in some respects, from reading an article with the preconceptions bestowed by the efficacy of keyword searching. When we re-situate 'The Lizard' in the *Strand*, we see it surrounded not by other dinosaur stories but by an equal weighting of fictional and nonfictional items. Among other things, this resituated reading might cause us to pay attention to the ways in which Hyne's story tackles the notion of evidence – the relationship between narrative and fact – and it turns out that his treatment of this idea is far from straightforward. The narrator opens by saying he does not anticipate or require that his story be believed, and returns to the theme in closing, saying that he 'had the sense to hold my tongue' when questioned about his adventures.[31] This disclaimer is strictly unnecessary in a tale which is not engaged in any genuine attempt at hoax, and yet to a reader of *fin de siècle* periodicals the gesture is an extremely familiar one – it has even been given a name. John Clute's 'Club Story' is defined by the *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* as the performance of a piece of fiction through the mitigating frame of a 'safe' environment such as the gentleman's club through which 'authors and readers could sideline the question of the believability of the tall tale'.[32] Standard Illustrated Popular Magazines are littered with stories of this type, of which the classic example is perhaps H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (*New Review*, Jan-May 1895), and another example awaits us in in the pages

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31 Hyne, p. 641.

32 John Clute, 'Club Story', *Science Fiction Encyclopedia*, 2012 <http://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/club_story> [accessed 26 January 2012].

of June 1898 *Strand*: the first instalment of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Round the Fire*.

Doyle's series, written during the 'great haitus' of Sherlock Holmes (after an attempt to kill off the detective which would peter out in 1901), is a collection of tales united solely by the framework of their being related at the same social gathering. A different guest relates each instalment, preserving the month-to-month independence so crucial to the Newnes format. The generic embeddedness of both this kind of series and its club story setup can be seen from the fact that Doyle sets it up with nothing but the title (*Round the Fire*) and these opening sentences:

> A curious experience? said the doctor. Yes, my friends, I have had one very curious experience. I never expect to have another, for it is against all doctrines of chances that two such events would befall any one man in a single lifetime. You may believe me or not, but the thing happened exactly as I tell it.[33]

'The Story of the Beetle-Hunter' then follows, with no further reference to the context of its re-telling. The setup is so familiar that it can, by June 1898, be done almost entirely by innuendo. What Doyle effectively does with this passage is to place intonational quotation marks (for Bakhtin, a crucial part of the language of the novel's language of heteroglossia) around the entire tale, implied inverted commas around everything other than the phrase 'said the doctor'. The effect, considered alongside the phrase 'You may believe me or not' dismisses the importance of the story's factual authenticity whilst simultaneously foregrounding its dubiousness.

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33 Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Story of the Beetle-Hunter', *Strand Magazine*, 15 (1898), 602–12 (p. 603).

Hyne's piece takes this a step further: the club audience of 'The Lizard' are the readers of the *Strand* themselves, the audience to whom the narrator makes an explicit appeal in the first sentence: 'It is not in the least expected that the general public will believe the statements which will be made in this paper'.[34] Stressing like Doyle's doctor that he does not expect his tale to be believed by most readers, the narrator claims that he is publishing solely in the hopes of attracting the attention of another explorer, a character whose knife he found near where the frightful creature was unearthed. In making this appeal, Hyne tacitly incorporates elements of another genre associated with the periodical (although not the *Strand*): the classified ad. But the gesture also serves to incorporate the story's magazine publication into its fictional apparatus. The phrase 'drawing the reader in' is overused, but here it is warranted quite literally; the fire around which Hyne's tall tale is told is synonymous with the *Strand*'s real-life publishing community. Consolidating this technique by writing nothing for the first few pages of his tale which reveals whether or not it is fantastical in content, Hyne very knowingly draws on the ambiguity created by his shared mixed publication space to sharpen the affect of his writing.

The discursive climate of the *Strand* magazine is – among many other things – suggestive of a complex but far from straightforwardly oppositional relationship between fact and fiction. The June 1898 issue provides an even more straightforward suggestion that its various different types of content should not always be read separately: an instalment of *Miss Cayley's Adventures* (pp. 733-43), a novel in which a

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34 Hyne, p. 635.

plucky young Girton graduate bicycles around the continent fighting crime, comes

from the pen of Grant Allen, the self-same author of the natural history piece on

intelligent plants to which I have already referred. Such coincidences remind us that

writers, as well as implied readers, were considered capable of crossing smoothly

between the realms of fact and fiction in the pages of the *fin de siècle* mass media.

Surely this very flexibility – the discursive meeting place of genres – is one of the

reasons that general magazines proved such an effective facilitator of the emergence

of science fiction.

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For Bakhtin, the 'novel' is certainly not limited to the material prose volumes

with which we commonly associate the term: it encompasses a thread of rebellious

discursiveness which can be traced back at least as far as Ancient Greece. 'The

prehistory of the novelistic word', he says, 'is not to be contained within the narrow

perimeters of a history confined to mere literary styles'.[35] We can certainly include the

contents of periodicals in this conception, for each of their constituent articles is not

only explicitly in dialogue with itself but also implicitly in dialogue with its neighbours.

This fact is emphasised by the physical object which binds them together,

foregrounding their harmonies and holding their contradictions in suspension.

The facility for suspending contradictions is key to the general magazine's

commercial success, but also to its suitability as a nurturing ground for the genre of

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35 Mikhail Bakhtin, 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by
    Michael Holquist, trans. by Cary Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas
    Press, 1981), pp. 41–83 (p. 83).

science fiction. Precisely because it was a print venue in which many different

locutions of fiction and non-fiction could rub shoulders without ever coming into direct,

provocative, *ad hominem* contact with each other, publications like the *Strand*

supported complex networks of subtle and supportive genre discourse and the

emergence of new forms of popular writing was one of the consequences. This

important characteristic of the *fin de siècle* magazine is blurred when we isolate an

article from an issue or pursue keyword searches too dogmatically. I suggest that to

bring it back into focus, we might combine the kind of reading I have been undertaking

here with a renewed sense that larger, thematic concerns, mobile through the text of

the periodical press, might usefully be approached as textual genres. Such a

combination suggests some level of mechanical equivalence between 'romance' or

'science fiction' on the one hand and 'journalism' or 'literature' on the other, and

thereby effects a reconciliation of the two divergent uses of the word 'genre' which I

mentioned in my opening. As a brief example, let us consider science in this light for a

moment.

A superficial glance for 'science' amidst the contents of the June 1898 *Strand*

would turn up several interesting articles: perhaps most obviously F. M. Gilbert's

'What Makes a Cricket Ball Curve in the Air?' (pp.730-32), non-fictional pieces on 'A

Submarine Boat' (pp.705-8) and 'A Single Line Railway' (pp. 756-60), and L. T. Meade

and Robert Eustace's 'The Star-Shaped Marks' (pp.649-64), a detective melodrama

which centres on the recently-discovered X-rays. But itemising these surface

appearances only begins to describe the role of science as a generic thread in the

periodical's polyvocal space. My example, Hyne's 'The Lizard', suggests recurring

scientific attitudes and languages, the notion of hypothesis, the valorisation of the

quest for knowledge, the impulse to explicate – all significant themes in the cultural

actuation of late-Victorian science, and yet much harder to find with keywords. It does

not at all surprise us that science is so present in the subtext of the New Journalist

monthlies, for they were themselves the products of cutting-edge developments in

printing and distribution technology, selling themselves on their 'newness', their high

volume of illustration, their rapid production times. The 'Jack and Jill' feature in the

issue I've been discussing (pp. 716-19), which consists of five heavily annotated

pictures of two children dressed up in various scenes from the nursery rhyme, could

not possibly seem less engaged with science (or more stolidly 'Victorian') to twenty-

first century eyes – not, that is, until one remembers the novelty of the mass-printed

photograph and the innovation represented by the introduction of the halftone

process around two years before this issue appeared.[36] Mussell has pointed out that 'it

is the performance of a scientific narrative, rather than the representations of

scientific observation, that provides the scientific value of popularisation': a great

many of these publications, deliberately or otherwise, were closely engaged in this

project.[37] It is for this reason that projects like the SciPer index are based on

examinations of 'each periodical run in its entirety': 'only a scholarly reader', says

SciPer's editorial policy 'can reliably identify and index those references in a periodical

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36 For which, see P. M. Handover, *Printing in London* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), p. 169.

37 James Mussell, *Science, Time and Space in the Late Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press: Movable Types* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 66.

text which are likely to be of relevance to scholars'.[38]

Treating science as a genre in the *fin de siècle* magazines sharpens our appreciation not only of the relationship between this textual space and the emergence of science fiction, but also of the complexity of the wider relationship between literature and science as active in popular culture. Viewing the participants as genres moving in an economy of genres, we are struck anew by the irreducibility of the "two cultures" conversation to a straightforward binary conflict between fact and fiction, epistemology and ontology, empiricism and whimsy, or anything else. Gowan Dawson and Jonathan Topham have even suggested that 'the twentieth-century disciplinary organisation of knowledge which insisted on a clear distinction between culture and science was heavily dependent upon the marginalisation of the periodical press – with its awkward interconnectedness – as a subject of academic study'.[39] Reading periodicals, then, is recognised as an antidote to reductive models of intellectual exchange. My suggestion is that by reading them with an eye on genre, we can allow them to do similar work for popular fiction, which suffers from many of the same taxonomic preconceptions.

'[I]f one accepts a notion of the plural intertext', says Mark W. Turner, 'rigid generic boundaries break down'.[40] What the popular magazine offers us is a formal and historical framework for understanding the generic conversation that produced

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38 'Editorial Policy' <http://www.sciper.org/policy.html> [accessed 5 June 2015].

39 Gowan Dawson and Jonathan R. Topham, 'Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical', *Literature Compass*, 1 (2004), 1–11 (p. 8).

40 Turner, p. 120.

science fiction – genre, after all, 'has to do at once with systems and with historical change'.[41] This conversation was a big, messy one, entangling science, storytelling, X-rays, bicycling New Women, a young Nelson, gorse bushes, spelunking for dinosaurs, cricket balls, and incalculable other things in the 2,263 (rising to 2,767) publications through which it moved. It is a complex affair. But to take advantage of this complexity, and to have a chance of apprehending a corner of it responsibly, we need to be alive to the evolving, interchanging generic currents present in the material objects themselves. Every now and then, we have to read the whole thing.

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June 2015

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41 Frow, p. 12.