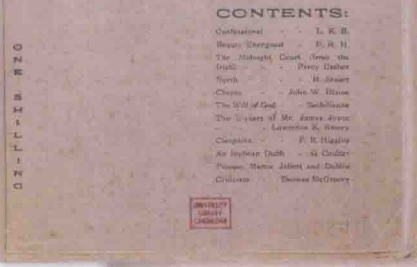
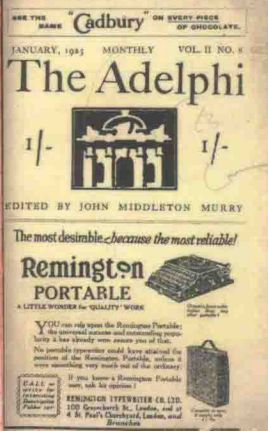
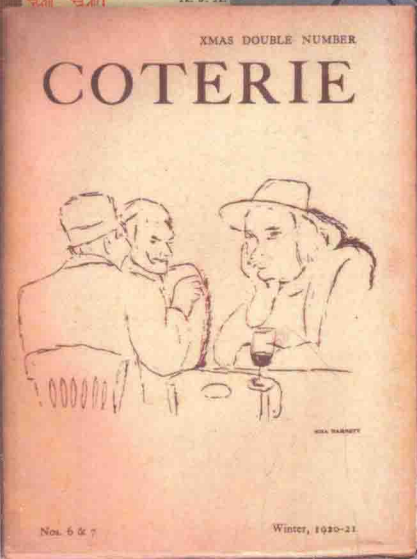
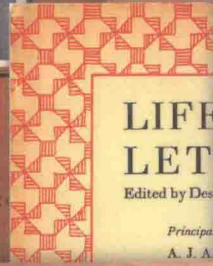
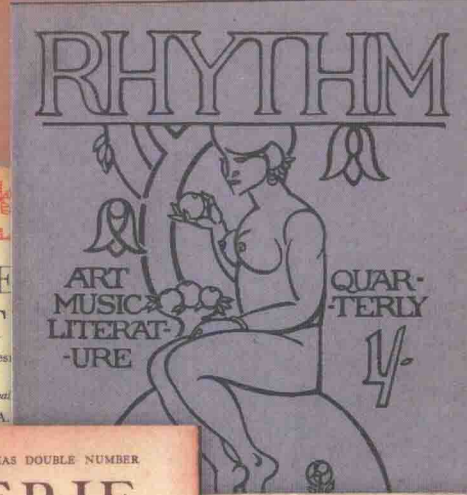


The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines

Volume I, Britain and Ireland 1880-1955



Edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker

Nos. 5 & 7

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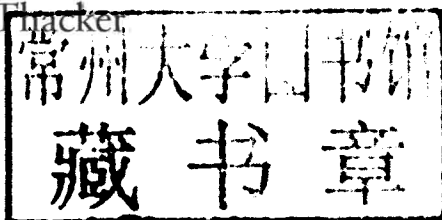
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CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations and Tables</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>xvi</i>

General Introduction	I
----------------------	---

PETER BROOKER AND ANDREW THACKER

Introduction	I
Materialist modernisms and periodical codes	5
Modern, modernist, avant-garde	9
Defining 'littleness'	11
Cultural formations	16
Methods and models	21
Structure and periodization	23

PART I. VICTORIAN PRECURSORS

Introduction	29
--------------	----

1. The Pre-history of the 'Little Magazine'	33
---	----

KYRIAKI HADJIAFXENDI AND JOHN PLUNKETT

2. In the Beginning, There Was <i>The Germ</i> : The Pre-Raphaelites and 'Little Magazines'	51
--	----

MARYSA DEMOOR

PART II. *FIN DE SIÈCLE* VENTURES (1884–1906)

Introduction	69
--------------	----

3. Aestheticism and Decadence: <i>The Yellow Book</i> (1894–7), <i>The Chameleon</i> (1894), and <i>The Savoy</i> (1896)	76
---	----

LAUREL BRAKE

4. Symbolism in British 'Little Magazines': *The Dial* (1889–97),
The Pageant (1896–7), and *The Dome* (1897–1900) 101
DAVID PETERS CORBETT
5. 'The Arts and Crafts Movement': *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*
(1884–94), *The Evergreen* (1895–7), and *The Acorn* (1905–6) 120
IMOGEN HART

PART III. EARLY STATEMENTS (1899–1915)

- Introduction 145
6. Yeats and the Celtic Revival: *Beltaine* (1899–1900), *Samhain*
(1901–8), *Dana* (1904–5), and *The Arrow* (1906–9) 152
ALEX DAVIS
7. The New Poetry, Georgians and Others: *The Open Window*
(1910–11), *The Poetry Review* (1912–15), *Poetry and Drama* (1913–14),
and *New Numbers* (1914) 176
DOMINIC HIBBERD

PART IV. TRANSITIONS

- Introduction 199
8. Democracy and Modernism: *The New Age* under
A. R. Orage (1907–22) 205
ANN L. ARDIS
9. Ford Madox Ford and *The English Review* (1908–37) 226
CLIFF WULFMAN
10. *The London Mercury* (1919–39) and Other Moderns 240
J. MATTHEW HUCULAK

PART V. INTERVENTIONS

- Introduction 263
- II. Gender and Modernism: *The Freewoman* (1911–12),
The New Freewoman (1913), and *The Egoist* (1914–19) 269
JEAN-MICHEL RABATÉ

12. The 'Little Magazine' as Weapon: *BLAST* (1914–15) 290
ANDRZEJ GASIOREK
13. Harmony, Discord, and Difference: *Rhythm* (1911–13),
The Blue Review (1913), and *The Signature* (1915) 314
PETER BROOKER

PART VI. EDITORS AND PROGRAMMES

- Introduction 339
14. The Idea of a Literary Review: T. S. Eliot and *The Criterion* 346
JASON HARDING
15. Enemies of Cant: *The Athenaeum* (1919–21) and *The Adelphi* (1923–48) 364
MICHAEL H. WHITWORTH
16. Standards of Criticism: *The Calendar of Modern Letters* (1925–7) 389
JOHN LUCAS
17. The Cause of Poetry: Thomas Moulton and *Voices* (1919–21),
Harold Monro and *The Monthly Chapbook* (1919–25) 405
MARK S. MORRISSON
18. Desmond MacCarthy, *Life and Letters* (1928–35),
and Bloomsbury Modernism 428
JANE GOLDMAN

PART VII. INTO THE 1920s: DISPERSAL AND DIFFERENCE

- Introduction 455
19. Aftermath of War: *Coterie* (1919–21), *New Coterie* (1925–7),
Robert Graves and *The Owl* (1919–23) 462
ANDREW THACKER
20. Literature and the Visual Arts: *Art and Letters* (1917–20)
and *The Apple* (1920–2) 485
REBECCA BEASLEY
21. Cinema and Visual Culture: *Close Up* (1927–33) 505
LAURA MARCUS
22. Interventions in the Public Sphere: *Time and Tide* (1920–30)
and *The Bermondsey Book* (1923–30) 530
JANE DOWSON

23. Cultural Criticism at the Margins: Wyndham Lewis,
The Tyro (1920–1), and *The Enemy* (1927–9) 552
PAUL EDWARDS
24. Nostalgia and Reaction: Austin O. Spare and *Form* (1916–17,
1921–2), *The Golden Hind* (1922–4), and *The Decachord* (1924–31) 570
STEPHEN ROGERS

PART VIII. COMMITMENT TO THE NEW

- Introduction 591
25. Cambridge Magazines and Unfinished Business: *Experiment*
(1928–30), *The Venture* (1928–30), and *Cambridge Left* (1933–4) 599
SCOTT MCCRACKEN
26. Art and Politics in the 1930s: *The European Quarterly* (1934–5),
Left Review (1934–8), and *Poetry and the People* (1938–40) 623
PETER MARKS
27. Poetry Then: Geoffrey Grigson and *New Verse* (1933–9),
Julian Symons and *Twentieth Century Verse* (1937–9) 647
STAN SMITH
28. A New Prose: John Lehmann and *New Writing* (1936–40) 669
FRANÇOISE BORT
29. ‘National papers please reprint’: Surrealist Magazines in Britain:
Contemporary Poetry and Prose (1936–7), *London Bulletin*
(1938–40), and *Arson: An Ardent Review* (1942) 688
ROD MENGHAM

PART IX. BEYOND THE METROPOLIS

- Introduction 707
30. *Wales* (1937–9), *The Welsh Review* (1939–40) 714
CHRIS HOPKINS
31. From Revolution to Republic: Magazines, Modernism, and
Modernity in Ireland: *The Klaxon* (1923), *The Irish Statesman*
(1923–30), *The Dublin Magazine* (1923–58), *To-Morrow* (1924),
Ireland To-Day (1936–8), and *The Bell* (1940–54) 735
FRANK SHOVLIN

32. Modernism and National Identity in Scottish Magazines:
The Evergreen (1895–7), *Scottish Art and Letters* (1944–50), *The
 Scottish Chapbook* (1922–3), *The Northern Review* (1924), *The Scots
 Magazine* (1924–), *The Modern Scot* (1930–6), *Outlook* (1936–7),
 and *The Voice of Scotland* (1938–9, 1945, 1955) 759
 CAIRNS CRAIG
33. A New ‘Art of the Theatre’: Gordon Craig’s *The Mask* (1908–29)
 and *The Marionette* (1918–19) 785
 OLGA TAXIDOU
34. Modernism as ‘Uninfected Discourse’: Laura Riding,
Epilogue (1935–7) and *Focus* (1935) 806
 MARK JACOBS

PART X. THE CALL TO CRITICISM AND MODERNIST
 DESTINIES

- Introduction 827
35. ‘Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth . . .’: *Scrutiny* (1932–53) 833
 SEAN MATTHEWS
36. Cyril Connolly’s *Horizon* (1940–50) and the End of Modernism 856
 SEAN LATHAM
37. The Apocalyptic Poets, ‘New Modernism’, and ‘The Progressive
 View of Art’: *Poetry London* (1939–51) and *Indian Writing* (1940–2) 874
 JAMES KEERY
- Bibliography* 899
Index 931

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Cover of <i>The Adelphi</i> (Jan. 1925) and advertisements from <i>Rhythm</i> (1912–13)	7
2. Cover of <i>The Germ</i> (Jan. 1850)	53
3. Cover of <i>The Yellow Book</i> (Oct. 1895)	78
4. Cover of <i>The Chameleon</i> (1894)	79
5. Advert for the publisher Leonard Smithers (c.1894)	80
6. Cover of <i>The Savoy</i> (Jan. 1896)	82
7. Cover of <i>The Dial</i> (1897)	104
8. Cover of <i>The Pageant</i> (1896)	107
9. Cover of <i>The Dome</i> (Lady Day, 1897)	114
10. Inside cover of <i>The Dome</i> (Lady Day, 1897)	115
11. Cover of <i>The Evergreen</i> (Winter, 1896–7)	121
12. Cover of <i>The Century Guild Hobby Horse</i> (April 1884)	122
13. Front cover of <i>The Acorn</i> (1905)	123
14. Cover of <i>The Studio</i> (April 1893)	124
15. Page 13 of <i>The Century Guild Hobby Horse</i> (April 1884)	128
16. Page 151 of <i>The Evergreen</i> (Winter, 1896–7)	128
17. Design by Aubrey Beardsley for J. M. Dent's Sir Thomas Malory, <i>Le Morte D'Arthur</i> (1893–4)	129
18. Cover of <i>Beltaine</i> (Feb. 1900)	154
19. Cover of <i>Sambhain</i> (Dec. 1906)	161
20. Cover of <i>Dana</i> (June 1904)	170
21. Cover of <i>Open Window</i> (Feb. 1911)	178
22. Cover of <i>Poetry Review</i> (Feb. 1912)	179
23. Advertisement for the Poetry Bookshop from <i>Poetry and Drama</i> (Mar. 1913)	187

24. Cover of <i>Poetry and Drama</i> (Mar. 1913)	190
25. Cover of <i>New Numbers</i> (Dec. 1914)	195
26. Cover of <i>The New Age</i> (Feb. 1916)	207
27. Cover of <i>The New Age</i> (May 1907)	209
28. Advertisement from <i>The New Age</i> (Dec. 1908)	221
29. Cover of <i>The English Review</i> (Dec. 1908)	227
30. Advertisement, 'What to Read', from <i>English Review</i> (Dec. 1908)	232
31. Cover of <i>The London Mercury</i> (Feb. 1925)	241
32. Cartoon by Will Dyson, <i>London Mercury</i> , 1923	250
33. Cartoon by Will Dyson, <i>London Mercury</i> , 1923	251
34. Cover of <i>The Freewoman</i> (May 1912)	272
35. Cover of <i>The New Freewoman</i> (June 1913)	276
36. Cover of <i>The Egoist</i> (Nov. 1914)	282
37. Cover of <i>BLAST</i> 1 (1914)	291
38. Cover of <i>BLAST</i> 2 (1915)	295
39. Cover of <i>Rhythm</i> by John Duncan Fergusson for <i>Rhythm</i> (Summer, 1911)	318
40. Cover of <i>The Blue Review</i> (May 1913)	319
41. Cover of <i>The Signature</i> (Oct. 1915)	322
42. John Duncan Fergusson, <i>Rhythm</i> 1911, oil on canvas, University of Stirling	327
43. Anne Estelle Rice, <i>Schéhérazade</i> , in <i>Rhythm</i> , 1:1 (Summer 1911)	329
44. John Duncan Fergusson, <i>Les Eus</i> , c.1911–13, oil on canvas, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow. Fergusson Gallery, Perth and Kinross Council, Scotland	331
45. Anne Estelle Rice, drawing, <i>Rhythm</i> , 1:4 (Spring 1912)	331
46. John Duncan Fergusson, <i>Rose Rhythm</i> , <i>Kathleen Dillon</i> , 1916, private collection	333
47. Cover of <i>The Criterion</i> (Apr. 1925)	348
48. Cover of <i>The Athenaeum</i> (Feb. 1920)	365
49. Adverts, rear cover of <i>The Adelphi</i> (Jan. 1925)	381
50. Cover of <i>The Calendar of Modern Letters</i> (Nov. 1925)	390
51. Cover of <i>Voices</i> (Jan. 1919)	406

52. Cover of <i>The Monthly Chapbook</i> (May 1923)	420
53. Cover of <i>Life and Letters</i> (July 1928)	429
54. Contents page of <i>Life and Letters</i> (Mar. 1932)	440
55. Cover of <i>The Owl</i> no. 1 (May 1919) by William Nicholson	468
56. <i>The Picnic</i> by William Nicholson, from <i>The Owl</i> (May 1919)	471
57. Cover of <i>Coterie</i> , no. 6/7 (Winter 1920-1) by Nina Hamnett	474
58. Cover of <i>Coterie</i> , no. 3 (Dec. 1919) by William Roberts	480
59. Cover of <i>New Coterie</i> , no. 2 (Spring 1926) by William Roberts	481
60. Cover of <i>Art and Letters</i> (Jan. 1918)	488
61. Cover of <i>The Apple</i> (First Quarter, 1920)	496
62. Cover of <i>Close Up</i> (Jan. 1929)	506
63. Signed photograph of Sergei Eisenstein, <i>Close Up</i> (Jan. 1929)	524
64. Picture of Paul Robeson in 'Borderline', <i>Close Up</i> (July 1930)	524
65. Cover of <i>Time and Tide</i> (1920)	533
66. Cover of <i>The Bermondsey Book</i> (Dec. 1928-Feb. 1929)	544
67. Cover of <i>The Tyro</i> , no. 2 (1922)	558
68. Cover of <i>The Enemy</i> , 3 (First Quarter, 1929)	560
69. Cover of <i>Form</i> (Apr. 1916)	572
70. Cover of <i>The Golden Hind</i> (Jan. 1923)	578
71. Cover of <i>The Decachord</i> (May-June 1924)	583
72. Cover of <i>Experiment</i> (Nov. 1929)	601
73. Cover of <i>Cambridge Left</i> (Summer 1933)	603
74. Cover of <i>European Quarterly</i> (Nov. 1934)	626
75. Cover of <i>Left Review</i> (July 1936)	633
76. Cover of <i>Poetry and the People</i> (Sept. 1938)	641
77. Cover of <i>New Verse</i> (Jan. 1933)	648
78. Cover of <i>Twentieth Century Verse</i> (Mar. 1938)	649
79. Cover of <i>New Writing</i> (Spring 1936)	671
80. Cover of <i>Contemporary Poetry and Prose</i> (July 1936)	690
81. Cover of <i>Arson: An Ardent Review</i> (1942)	701
82. Cover of <i>Wales</i> (Autumn 1937)	719
83. Cover of <i>The Welsh Review</i> (Aug. 1939)	727

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

xv

84. Cover of <i>The Klaxon</i> (1923)	738
85. Title page of <i>The Klaxon</i> (1923)	739
86. 'Cinema' from <i>To-Morrow</i> (Sept. 1924)	743
87. Cover of <i>Ireland To-day</i> (Aug. 1936)	752
88. Cover of <i>The Bell</i> (Feb. 1945)	754
89. Cover of <i>The Scottish Chapbook</i> (June 1923)	766
90. Cover of <i>Northern Review</i> (Sept. 1924)	773
91. Cover of <i>The Modern Scot</i> (Apr. 1932)	774
92. Cover of <i>Outlook</i> (Apr. 1936)	778
93. Cover of <i>The Mask</i> (Jan. 1911)	786
94. Illustration for 'Mask of the Fool' by W. B. Yeats, designed by Gordon Craig, <i>The Mask</i> (Apr. 1911)	793
95. Announcements, <i>The Mask</i> (July 1911)	803
96. Isadora Duncan, <i>The Mask</i> (Aug. 1908)	804
97. Cover of <i>Epilogue</i> (Autumn 1935)	807
98. <i>Alice in the Grotto</i> by John Aldridge, in <i>Epilogue</i> , 2 (Summer 1936)	820
99. Cover of <i>Scrutiny</i> (June 1933)	834
100. Cover of <i>Horizon</i> (Feb. 1948)	860
101. Cover of <i>Poetry London</i> (Oct.–Nov. 1942)	875
102. Cover of <i>Indian Writing</i> (Spring 1940)	893

LIST OF TABLES

1. Timeline for Selected Periodicals, 1908–19	22
2. Prices of Selected Periodicals, c.1850–1950	24

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

PETER BROOKER AND ANDREW THACKER

Introduction

‘Usually the history of a little magazine’, wrote Malcolm Cowley, ‘is summarised in its format. The first issue consists, let us say, of sixty-four pages, with half tone illustrations, printed on coated paper. The second issue has sixty-four pages, illustrated with line cuts. The third has only forty-eight pages; the fourth has thirty-two, without illustrations; the fifth never appears.’¹ Cowley has in mind the short life of the magazine *Broom* during whose final days he served as a co-editor. *Broom* in fact lasted for twenty issues over the three years that it was published in turn in Rome, Berlin, and New York, but did in the end decline by stages in the way Cowley describes. He tells this tale with a light touch but all the same it highlights the serious economic and cultural plight of the ‘little magazine’: at once dogged by the costs of production, haunted by the threat of censorship, at loggerheads with more conventional publications, and at war with the philistinism of a prevailing business culture.

The beginning of this or other stories of other magazines would tell us why editors and sponsors embarked on this perilous course. They felt, of course, that they would make a difference; that a fight ‘for purely aesthetic motives’ or for ‘a new sort of literature’, as Cowley puts it, was worth the struggle, the quarrels, and penury. Magazines of this combative type—which Cyril Connolly termed ‘dynamic’ (directed ‘like a commando course’ against ‘the enemy position’)—shared this cultural ambition with the manifesto of which they were often also the vehicle, ‘analogue or extension’.² Richard Ellmann once commented that ‘Literary movements pass their infancy in inarticulate disaffection, but mature when they

¹ Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), 188.

² Cyril Connolly, ‘Little Magazines’, [1960] in *The Evening Colonnade* (London: David Bruce and Watson, 1973), 414; Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, ‘Movements, Magazines and Manifestoes: The Succession from Naturalism’, in *idem* (eds), *Modernism, 1890–1930* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 192–205, esp. 203.