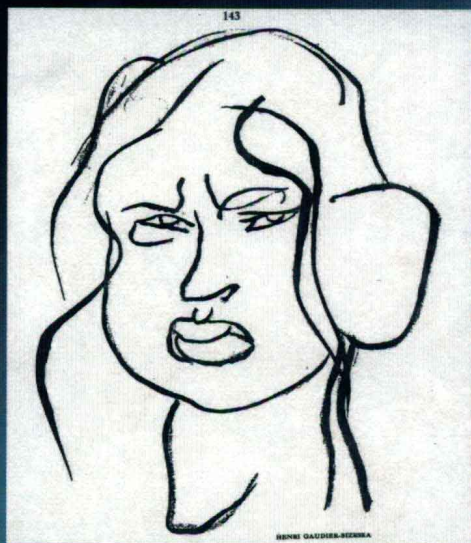


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MODERNISM,  
MAGAZINES, AND THE  
BRITISH AVANT-GARDE  
READING *RHYTHM*, 1910–1914



*Faith Binckes*

OXFORD ENGLISH MONOGRAPHS

# Modernism, Magazines, and the British Avant-Garde

FAITH BINCKES



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*For Dennis Henry Binckes, 1924–2006*

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Despite my efforts, some copyright holders remained untraced, or had not replied to correspondence at the time this book went to press. If you hold or administer rights for materials published here, please contact the publisher. Any errors or omissions will be corrected in subsequent editions.

Aside from these are the numerous professional and personal debts I have accumulated. The first word has to go to Peter McDonald, a truly exemplary doctoral supervisor, whose ideas have at many points not only informed, but positively transformed, mine. Bernard Richards, Christopher Butler, and Jon Stallworthy all contributed at key points in the very early stages of my graduate work. Chris Bristow and Anne Fernihough were the most influential tutors of my undergraduate years, without whom it is unlikely I would have pursued an academic career. Ted Bishop, Cathy Clay, Adam McKible, and Suzanne Churchill all added to my thinking on periodical culture, while my examiners

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# Introduction

## Little Magazines: Modernism in Miniature?

In April 1968, the *Times Literary Supplement* ran a special feature prompted, it announced, by a 'curious new publishing enterprise—the reprinting of little magazines':

About two hundred British and American magazines are now expensively available in bound facsimile editions, and there are more to come. Many, it would have been more charitable to forget, and only the most voracious academic machine will be able to assimilate them. But the few really important ones make sense of the whole venture, and in this week's TLS we feature special articles on some of these.<sup>1</sup>

Of the dozen or so 'really important ones', nine were allotted a 'special article': *Poetry* (Chicago), the *Enemy*, the *Criterion*, the *Savoy*, the *Fugitive*, the *Little Review*, the *New Age*, and *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review*. The latter entry was written by the young Malcolm Bradbury, who argued that 'though there are other contenders for the title, there is a good case for recording *Rhythm*—later to become the *Blue Review*—as the first English little magazine'.<sup>2</sup>

Bradbury's account outlined some of the most salient facts about the magazines, which can be briefly added to here. *Rhythm* had first been published in the summer of 1911, by John Middleton Murry

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to 'The Little Magazine', *Times Literary Supplement*, 25 April 1968, 421.

<sup>2</sup> M. Bradbury, 'Rhythm and the Blue Review', *ibid.* 423. He continued: 'Rhythm thus became the first of a number of new, semi-modernistic magazines that were to link together literature and art as forms of expression which not only could illuminate and influence each other, but which had a common aesthetic basis—and essential common principle, energy, or force...' Bradbury maintained this position, including an account of *Rhythm* in his and James McFarlane's *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890–1930* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), 187.

and M. T. H. Sadler, at that point still undergraduates at Oxford. The magazine had been inspired by the trips to Paris Murry had made from 1910, which, he later claimed, gave him insight into a cosmopolitan 'republic of art' very different from the scene either in London, or in Oxford.<sup>3</sup> During these visits he encountered two pivotal contributors to the magazine. The first, and most significant, was the Scottish artist J. D. Fergusson, who was to act as *Rhythm's* Art Editor until December 1912. He brought with him his friend and fellow Scot S. J. Peploe, and the American artist Anne Estelle Rice, at that point his partner. In addition to these were pupils and colleagues at the Parisian Académie de la Palette, who completed *Rhythm's* core group of illustrators—André Dunoyer de Segonzac, Jessica Dismorr, and Marguerite Thompson. At the time of its publication, *Rhythm* was viewed by many as Britain's foremost organ of Post-Impressionism, and the Rhythmists as Britain's best hope for contributing to and reshaping the movement.<sup>4</sup> Alongside these regular contributors, *Rhythm* published a range of artwork throughout its run. It was the first magazine in Britain to print an image by Picasso—albeit not a Cubist image—in addition to which reproductions by André Derain, Auguste Herbin, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, and Natalia Gontcharova also appeared.<sup>5</sup> This international

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Murry, in J. Lehmann (ed.), *Coming to London* (London: Phoenix House, 1957), 106.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most visible evidence of this in recent years, in England at least, were the two high-profile exhibitions: the Barbican's 'Modern Art in Britain, 1910–1914', held in 1997, and the joint Royal Academy and National Gallery of Scotland exhibition 'The Scottish Colourists, 1900–1930' that took place in 2000. The former, and Anna Gruetzner Robins's accompanying catalogue *Modern Art in Britain 1910–1914* (London: The Barbican in association with Merrell Holberton, 1997), contains biographical information on all the Rhythmists apart from Thompson, and is a particularly helpful, and inspiring, resource. The most recent study of Thompson's early career can be found in Jessica Nicoll's *Harmonies and Contrasts: The Art of Marguerite and William Zorach* (Portland, Me.: Portland Museum of Art, 2001). More generally, see entry for 'The Rhythm Group' in I. Chilvers (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth Century Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 515; also L. Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects: British Art in the Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 106–11.

<sup>5</sup> Gaudier-Brzeska's association with *Rhythm*, and with Murry and Mansfield, ended stormily, as personality clashes spilled over into arguments about money. See J. Carswell, *Lives and Letters: A. R. Orage, Katherine Mansfield, Beatrice Hastings, John Middleton Murry, S. S. Kotliansky, 1906–1957* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 78. Early on in this association, it appears that it was Fergusson who piqued Gaudier-Brzeska's interest: 'There is a good movement among the Scots. I know two of them, Peploe and Ferguson [*sic*] ... Ferguson [*sic*] even publishes an art review in English and French, very often it includes some of his drawings.' He adds, 'The text is edited by a certain Murray [*sic*] and most of the time it is very stupid.' Letter to Dr Uhlemayr, 18 June 1912, see R. Cole, *Gaudier-Brzeska: Artist and Myth* (Bristol: Sansom, 1995), 40.

orientation continued until the penultimate number, in February 1913, although Fergusson's official role as Art Editor had concluded in the previous November, and the contributions from other Rhythmists were dwindling. From this point onwards, the magazine started to usher in a new group of younger artists, predominantly from the Slade. Their graphic work became the signature of the *Blue Review*, which ran between May and July 1913, the final number of *Rhythm* having appeared in March.

Bradbury also notes Murry's second Parisian contact, the writer and little magazine editor Francis Carco. Their literary reputations ultimately evolved in entirely different directions, Carco making something of a career of his mythologizing accounts of pre-war Montmartre.<sup>6</sup> But when he and Murry first encountered one another they had much in common. Both were a similar age, both were ambitious and passionate about literature, and both had come a long way from the worlds in which they had been brought up.<sup>7</sup> Though only 24, Carco was already something of a veteran of Parisian *petites revues*. With Tristan Derème, he also headed the 'Fantaisistes', a group of young writers breaking into the early twentieth-century French literary scene. The Fantaisistes not only published their poetry in *Rhythm*, it allowed Carco and Derème the opportunity to conduct a survey of this scene, in a regular 'Lettre de France' and 'Lettre de Paris'. These articles supplemented Murry's briefer reviews of French literary magazines, and ran until December 1912. Bradbury pointed out the parallel between it and F. S. Flint's account of French literature in the *Poetry Review*. However, he could also have mentioned that the latter was actually advertised in *Rhythm*, too, as the magazine had connections with the *Poetry Review*'s editor, Harold Monro.<sup>8</sup>

Further important introductions took place in London. In December 1911, Murry began to correspond with Katherine Mansfield.<sup>9</sup> Soon

<sup>6</sup> A selection of which are: *De Montmartre au Quartier Latin* (1927); *Mémoires d'une autre vie* (1934); *Montmartre à vingt ans* (1938); *À voix basse* (1938); *Bohème d'artiste* (1940).

<sup>7</sup> For Murry, this was suburban Peckham. For Carco, born of Corsican parents, it was first the Pacific colony of Nouméa, then various French cities, predominantly in the south. Both had fathers in the civil service. C. Mortléier, 'The French Connection: Francis Carco', in R. Robinson (ed.), *Katherine Mansfield: In from the Margin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 138–9.

<sup>8</sup> This appeared on the inside back cover of *R* 2/3 (7) (August 1912).

<sup>9</sup> Murry, *Between Two Worlds: An Autobiography* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1935), 184. Hereafter Murry, *BTW*.

afterwards, she sent him 'The Woman at the Store', which he published in *Rhythm's* issue for Spring 1912. His enthusiasm for her work, and their burgeoning relationship, led to her assuming the role of sole assistant editor on *Rhythm* in July 1912, a move not unconnected to the fact that her publisher, Charles Granville, had taken responsibility for the magazine. This shift also marked the end of Sadleir's involvement with the publication, and Mansfield's temporary break with another periodical to which she and Murry were connected, the *New Age*. Rupert Brooke had heard about *Rhythm* in early 1912, if not before, and became actively involved from at least October 1912. By January 1913 he understood himself to be at the organizational centre of the publication. In March 1913 D. H. Lawrence also began to publish in *Rhythm*, continuing this association on to the *Blue Review*. These, for Bradbury, were the most conspicuous literary contributors. But behind the scenes, the financial and publishing networks that supported the magazines created further connections. Patrons included Michael Ernest Sadler, Holbrook Jackson, and Edward Marsh. *Rhythm's* publishers were not only the maverick Granville's Stephen Swift and Company, but a very young Martin Secker. Bradbury felt that *Rhythm* caught a moment before 'the various movements became schismatic—Georgians vying with Imagists and Vorticists'.<sup>10</sup> As such, he concluded, it 'marked a path for the new, movement-orientated, avant-garde, aesthetically-reforming type of paper we particularly associate with the establishment of modernism in England—the little magazine'.<sup>11</sup>

Bradbury's short account of *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* was in many ways characteristic of the manner in which they have been discussed. It was acknowledged that *Rhythm* was important as an organ of Post-Impressionism, and was an early vehicle for Murry, Mansfield, Lawrence, Fergusson, Rice, and Gaudier-Brzeska. Bradbury was unusually tolerant of the presence of the Georgian poets—such as Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, W. H. Davies, and John Drinkwater—in the later numbers of *Rhythm* and throughout the *Blue Review*.<sup>12</sup> However, a sense of qualification ran throughout the article. *Rhythm* is designated 'modernistic' or even 'semi-modernistic', Mansfield and Lawrence were described as 'passionate semi-Georgians'. Having quoted some of Murry's *Rhythm*

<sup>10</sup> Bradbury, 'Rhythm and the Blue Review', 424.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 423–4.

<sup>12</sup> 'In fact, these new Georgian poets undoubtedly seemed for the paper a significant part of the new modernistic, optimistic art that *Rhythm* looked toward.' Ibid. 424.

editorials at length, Bradbury determined that the magazine 'thus committed itself explicitly, and by intention, to an optimistic, revolutionary spirit'. Yet, he found it too 'vague', not 'schismatic' enough, to qualify as properly 'modernist' in the same way as, say, *BLAST* in 1914. Finally, in ending on a somewhat dramatic note that anticipated the coming of 'the little magazine', Bradbury appeared to undermine his initial point that *Rhythm* was a little magazine, and 'characteristically "little"', no less.<sup>13</sup>

This troubling liminality was what first suggested *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* as a point of entry into the relationship between 'modernism' in Britain and the periodical culture in which little magazines circulate. Both magazines presented particular problems of definition. Bradbury's outline of them was haunted by what they weren't, quite, or by what followed them, or by an existing template of modernism and of properly modernist journals. This reading is not without validity. Staying within its parameters, one can still use periodicals to add important details currently missing from accounts of this notoriously mercurial movement, or movements. However, as a reader, the more one engages with periodicals, the more questions arise concerning the foundations upon which this template rests. For instance, do even 'movement-orientated' periodicals support existing ideas of literary and artistic 'movements', or do they alter them? Do periodicals, even little magazines, respect existing concepts of modernist periodicity? How are we to read editorial statements of 'intention', especially in composite texts? Were *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* really just a bit too early to be modernist, and therefore to engage in the competitive, 'schismatic' world of the 'aesthetically reforming' little magazines, or were they more revealing of the role magazines played in the competitive relationships from which the dominant concepts of modernism emerged?

Making *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* the focus of this book, then, is motivated by a desire to address these sorts of issues. In doing so, I also hope to put the magazines firmly back on the British artistic and literary map. As this is a full-length study, the latter can be achieved in part by building out from the several shorter descriptions already in circulation—notably the concise but highly accurate account included in Anthony Alpers's second biography of Katherine Mansfield—and by

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 423.

bringing together perspectives dispersed across scholarship from several disciplines.<sup>14</sup> More significantly, I hope to achieve the former by putting the map onto the magazines, and using *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* to read across a series of dialogues at work within the periodical field in the years immediately preceding the First World War. In doing so, the aim is to demonstrate why periodicals are so crucial to an understanding of the field at the time, as well as to explore some ways in which their study might be approached. Aside from the first chapter, this does not produce a strictly chronological narrative, but one that attempts to keep pace with the relational form of periodical culture itself. From time to time, as the reader will note, this structure gives way to more linear accounts of certain figures who have now all but vanished from the modernist horizon, such as Jackson, the art critic Frank Rutter, or the author and drama critic Gilbert Cannan. There is also, generally speaking, a privileging of positioning over critical judgements of content. This is designed to address a Bourdieuan interest in negotiation and self-construction, and to attend to Marilyn Butler's reminder that literary and artistic canons—'what we choose to call interesting'—should be open to ongoing reappraisal.<sup>15</sup> This caveat is particularly relevant when dealing with periodicals, because they themselves can play such a prominent role in the canonizing process.

The example of the 1968 *Times Literary Supplement* is a good demonstration of the way in which such a process can operate. From an enormous, transatlantic, field, about two hundred magazines have been already been selected by a variety of publishers. Thus removed from their original context, further status has been conveyed by the fact that they have effectively been turned into books, bound in expensive 'facsimile editions' more suitable for collectors and libraries. From these reproduced, repackaged survivors, the *Times Literary Supplement*—itself a taste-making periodical that can be found bound in volumes in

<sup>14</sup> A. Alpers, *The Life of Katherine Mansfield*, 2nd, rev. edn. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), 130–61. This study uses the 1982 Oxford University Press paperback, to which all page numbers refer. Various other accounts are cited throughout this study, although Peter Brooker's chapter on *Rhythm*, the *Blue Review*, and the *Signature* was yet to be published at the time of this book going to press.

<sup>15</sup> 'The definition of literature, what we choose to call interesting, should not be exclusive... a hierarchy or canon of great works is no more beyond question than a tradition.' M. Butler, 'Against Tradition: The Case for a Particularized Historical Method', in J. McGann (ed.), *Historical Studies and Literary Criticism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 44.

libraries and collections—has thinned the field still further, publishing articles that ‘make sense of the whole venture’. Clearly, however, the resulting sense-making list could be repeated with numerous variations. It is curious that the *Yellow Book* is not more prominent, for instance, as it must be the most often cited inspiration for later little magazine ventures. *BLAST*, generally viewed as the definitive English avant-garde little magazine of early modernism, is also missing. Like the *Yellow Book*, it was published by John Lane, and even carried an advertisement for its predecessor in its inside cover. Then there’s the *Egoist*, with its pioneering publication of ‘The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man’. And should the *New Age* really be included? Should either it, or Eliot’s *Criterion*, be considered a little magazine? What about other publications with less apparent periodicity, such as the early twentieth-century *Venture*?<sup>16</sup> And why not consider more esoteric magazines, such as *Form*? Described by a typically caustic Lawrence as ‘rather foolishly phallic’,<sup>17</sup> the latter was another Lane publication, with both the *Yellow Book*, and *BLAST*, advertised inside its back cover.<sup>18</sup> I could go on, of course—and it is because of this that the *TLS*’s selection is valuable as a paradigm. Yes, it names and endorses *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review*. But it does so within a context that raises questions about interpretation, about selectivity, about the pragmatics of publishing, and the decisions made by editors as well by authors. This book will argue that magazines do indeed offer an unrivalled resource through which to ‘make sense’ of the modernist enterprise. However, it will also argue that this is due to the insights they provide into the ‘cultural conflicts’—the dialogues, designations, and contingencies—through which a certain outline of

<sup>16</sup> *The Venture: An Annual of Art and Literature* was edited by Laurence Housman and Somerset Maugham, and ran between 1903 and 1905. The first number included contributions by John Masefield, Thomas Hardy, Havelock Ellis, Violet Hunt, and Francis Thompson. Its graphics were provided by Lucien Pissarro, Edward Gordon Craig, and Charles Shannon, who also designed the cover. In 1905, it reprinted an *Arrangement in Brown and Gold* by Whistler, and contained literary contributions from Arthur Symons, Alice Meynell, Florence Farr, Edward Thomas, and James Joyce. Images came from Augustus John, William Orpen, and Frank Brangwyn.

<sup>17</sup> *Collected Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, ii: 1913–1916, ed. G. T. Zytaruk and J. T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 400, letter to Ernest Collings, [22?] September 1915. Lawrence was referring to the artwork.

<sup>18</sup> *Form: A Quarterly of the Arts* was first published by John Lane in April 1916, and carried adverts for both the *Yellow Book*, and *BLAST* inside its back cover. Edited, and largely illustrated, by Austin Osman Spare, its first number featured work by Yeats, De La Mare, W. H. Davies, and Laurence Binyon.

modernism was shaped, rather than their ability to re-present our existing image of the 'movement' 'in miniature'.<sup>19</sup>

The competitive nature of such conflicts, the struggle between certain periodicals to become not only one of the 'really important ones' but also to occupy territory from which one has the power to 'make sense' the surrounding field, will be explored on a number of levels throughout this study. However, the most consistent antagonist of both *Rhythm* and the *Blue Review* was the *New Age*. This is a publication that puts Genette's theory of transtextuality through a kind of particle acceleration and, now that it is available electronically as well as in print form, has a double claim to hypertextuality.<sup>20</sup> Open any number and it is immediately obvious why the paper was so renowned for the quality and pungency of the debates it generated. The pages bristle with reviews and summaries, opinion and counter-opinion. When suitably opposing parties could not be organized, it simply used its own journalists, who, under a variety of pseudonyms, wrote against one another and occasionally against themselves.<sup>21</sup> For this reason it is undeniably a key site for recognizing the dialogic formulations at work within early modernism in Britain. Its editor at the time of *Rhythm*'s publication was A. R. Orage, an almost legendary figure with whom the identity of the paper is often conflated. But this editorial prominence has, in its

<sup>19</sup> The term 'cultural conflict' is drawn from Ann Ardis's eponymous study, which contains, in particular, an excellent chapter on the issues at stake in considering the *New Age* as a 'modernist' journal. See *Modernism and Cultural Conflict, 1880–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 143–72. 'Modernism in miniature' is taken from Shari and Bernard Benstock's earlier article on modernist little magazines, 'The Role of Little Magazines in the Emergence of Modernism', *Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin*, 20/4 (Winter 1991), 72.

<sup>20</sup> 'Transtextuality' is a unifying but flexible term that seeks to articulate 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts'. Hypertextuality refers to either a direct commentary or a transformative process by which one textual form relates to another. G. Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1–10. The availability of the *New Age* on-line, as the keystone of Brown University's 'Modernist Journals Project' has enormously enhanced its accessibility and usefulness as a research tool, as well as providing another example of the 'different' ways of reading enabled by periodicals. See <http://www.modjourn.brown.edu>.

<sup>21</sup> For instance, Alpers notes that the controversy that broke out on the letters pages of the *New Age* as a result of Mansfield's 'German Pension' stories was generated by two members of the *New Age* staff, Hastings and J. M. Kennedy, writing against one another pseudonymously. *Katherine Mansfield* (1980), 113–14. Lucy Delap has analysed Hastings's adoption of contradictory positions in the *New Age*'s debate on 'feminism', in 'Feminist and Anti-Feminist Encounters in Edwardian England', *Historical Research*, 78/201 (August 2005), 393–4.



turn, eclipsed other important voices and interpretations. As staff writer Beatrice Hastings observed in her controversial and revisionist account *The Old 'New Age': Orage and Others*, there was always far more to the *New Age* than its editor.<sup>22</sup> But even if Orage's centrality is accepted, it was a position he had been encouraged to assume by his original partner on the *New Age*—none other than Holbrook Jackson. In early 1908, after Jackson had resigned from his editorial role on the paper, Orage wrote to him outlining some of the difficulties he had encountered when trying to shape this position:

it concerns the making of the N.A. my personal organ: a task which has been difficult lately for the simple reason that I had nothing to say that I could not the next minute unsay. However, I've got my mind pretty clear at last; & shall take your hint to write down my conclusions for reference & guidance.<sup>23</sup>

Ultimately, whether or not it should be seen as the result of editorial clarity, the *New Age's* profound investment in controversy, its way of both saying and unsaying, was to become the life and breath of the paper. It shared numerous connections with *Rhythm*, but similarly fierce rivalries, and these aggressive patterns of self-definition ranged over a whole series of issues with which this book is concerned. These were not

<sup>22</sup> Hastings always insisted upon the central role she—and other regular writers, such as Kennedy and A. E. Randall—had played in the *New Age*: 'nearly all the contributors were living what they wrote, and it was that that gave the "New Age" its tang and its reputation.' She also countered a raft of, in her opinion, 'superiority-cadging' assertions made either by Orage, or on his behalf, and maintained that she had helped both to support the paper financially, and to edit it. *The Old New Age: Orage and Others*, Blue Moon pamphlet no. 13 (London: Blue Moon Press, 1936), 23, 33. Her claims were hotly contested by Orage supporter and fellow *New Age* contributor Paul Selver. Selver's memoir contains a point by point refutation of the claims of *The Old 'New Age'*. See *Orage and the New Age Circle: Reminiscences and Reflections* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), 90–8. On the other hand, Hugh MacDiarmid, who also wrote for the *New Age*, and edited it in the 1920s, strongly disagreed with Selver. He evidently enjoyed Hastings's debunking of a figure in the English literary establishment, but maintained, 'I think too that there is justice in Mrs. Hastings' claim that she did far more than Orage himself to encourage new writers. That Orage should take credit for the brilliance of the paper he edited is natural enough, but it is undoubtedly the case that certain of the regular contributors should have shared that credit to a far greater extent . . .' See *The Company I've Kept* (London: Hutchinson, 1966), 272–4. Pound remembered Hastings as 'a bitch' who 'interfered with all the decent authors, and generally vulgarised the paper', thus supporting both sides of the argument. Pound to Margaret Anderson, 28 February 1918. *Pound/The Little Review: The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence*, ed. Thomas L. Scott and Melvin J. Friedman, assisted by Jackson R. Bryer (New York: New Directions Books, 1988), 200.

<sup>23</sup> Orage to Jackson, undated [end of April 1908]. MS letter, A. R. Orage Papers, [TEXAS].