



## Book Reviews

***Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction.* Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. Pp. ix + 340. \$40.00 (cloth).**

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It is impossible not to admire this book, or to find fault with the way in which it carries out the aims that its authors state so clearly in their preface. It is, explicitly and self-consciously, an introduction to the way in which modernism impacted upon, and was shaped by, periodical culture. Its target audience is made up of those who are in some way new to the material, whether students or scholars. The book is closely associated with the Modernist Journals Project, a fact spelled out to the uninitiated relatively early (3) but signalled to the more seasoned reader immediately by way of the Gaudier-Brzeska image on its cover, familiar from the earliest days of the *MJP*. For this reason, it is important to note that the title of the book avoids the obvious echo, steering clear of the designation “modernist magazines” and inviting the reader to consider a more expansive interaction with a wider field.

The book has another important agenda, albeit one less apparent from the title. It sets out to emphasize and to explore Ezra Pound’s role as producer, mediator, and critic of modernist periodicals, as a “pioneer in this field” (vii). Scholes and Wulfman place this ambition at the top of their list of aims, asserting that “quite simply, he had more to do with our present understanding of modernism than any other individual”, and, as such, he will be “a thread that runs through” their various considerations (viii). However, when faced with the unenviable if oddly inevitable task of having to define what they mean by “modernism,” the authors are careful not to quote Pound. Instead, they opt for modernism as “a response to the social and cultural conditions of modernity and to previous modes of art and literature” (vii). The book is finely balanced in many ways, but one of its most delicately managed maneuvers is this use of Pound, who operates as a focal point for Scholes and Wulfman’s study but is never allowed to limit its scope. For instance, the book opens with a chapter devoted to Pound, the title of which proclaims him to be the “Founder of Modern Periodical Studies.” But it is hard not to hear an echo of the tone Pound himself deploys in his invocation of

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640 “Papa Flaubert” (1) on the same page—not quite questioning the assertion, but ensuring some reflection in its note of provocative assent. In chapter two, “Modernity and the Rise of Modernism: A Review,” Scholes and Wulfman are more explicit. Here, Pound is invoked to support the necessity of examining a “full range” of responses to modernity, “including those not thought to be quintessentially ‘modernist’” (26).

A similarly delicate balance governs the tone of *Modernism in the Magazines* as a whole. There is no doubt that the book is the product of exactly the extended, scholarly investigation it is designed to encourage in its readers. It includes detailed readings but also generous quantities of information. That first chapter includes tables enumerating Pound’s activities as a contributor to, and an editor of, magazines over a twenty year period. But, for all the scholarliness, the critical address remains unwaveringly accessible, even informal. In some studies this might seem strategic—the favorite professor, with the easy intellectual authority, can be particularly persuasive and difficult to contradict. But Scholes and Wulfman counteract this impression with an insistence that readers should be curious, adventurous, and independent in their research. As the preface states: “[w]e are trying to open the way for others, rather than to close it down” (ix). This opening up is as apparent in the structure of the book as it is in the content. Before presenting those tables of information, attention is drawn to biographical, bibliographical, and digital resources in which readers can look things up for themselves. Scholes and Wulfman include a chapter titled “How To Study a Modern Magazine,” which presents an eight-point list of key elements as the “basis for an assignment” and then deploys a number of the *New Age* as an example (146). However, this chapter is placed not at the beginning of the study, which would have emphasized its didactic function, but around the middle (chapter six). The implied reference to Pound’s subversively pedagogical *How To Read*, should also dissuade us from undue obedience. The overall impression is of a flexible framework, capable of keeping pace with the highly relational world of periodicals as media.

Within this framework, Scholes and Wulfman seek to draw out and “to amplify a single strand” (26) from the complex weave and definition and counter-definition that characterizes modernist studies. As such, the second chapter, “Modernity and the Rise of Modernism: a review” almost puns on the notion of the “review” as it surveys the relationship between the “demographic, economic, and technological developments that produced the modern world” (26) and a raft of diverse periodical texts. Several pointers to the direction of the later chapters are incorporated—notably a discussion of advertising in early periodicals such as the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*; and the impact of archival practices that stripped out material that was considered extraneous and irrelevant. This chapter closes with one of the crisp, passionate statements that typify the book, reminding readers of the work still to be done in assessing the “dynamic and complex” relationship between magazines, modernism, and modernity (43). From the perspective of this reader, this work begins in earnest in chapter three, “Rethinking Modernist Magazines: From Genres to Database.” Here, Scholes and Wulfman present a thorough, clear, and subtle account of the definitional issues at work (or play) within the study of periodical texts, opening with a comparative study of previous attempts to map the field and some brief but attentive readings of individual terms (noting the different associations of “magazine” and “journal” for instance, and the way in which such associations might shift or blur over time). There are some particularly interesting insights into decisions made by the editors of standard reference works—notably Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich’s *The Little Magazine: a History and a Bibliography*—regarding what to include. There is a wealth of information on circulation, price, and the necessary perils of trying to codify “content.” Scholes and Wulfman even consider the etymological origins of the list (67), listing being an activity that informs both the “genre” and the “database.” The chapter closes with an optimistic discussion of the potential offered by digitized periodical texts, as the authors imagine a more minute analysis, a “pixelation,” replacing the more “murderous dissection” enacted by division according to genre (72). This chapter also connects thematically with

chapter eight, “The Hole in the Archive and the Study of Modernist Magazines,” which covers not only the microcosmic elements of digitization, but the macrocosmic considerations of large-scale, long-term, collaborative exercises such as the *Modernist Journals Project*. This is also the most technical section in the study. In it, readers are informed of the specific requirements and challenges of digitization, dispelling (or partially dispelling) any innocent conceptions one may have of it as a sort of non-medium that allows facsimiles to be made available without altering or framing their content.

In between these chapters, Scholes and Wulfman work through the role of visual arts (chapter four), and advertising (chapter five) in modernist magazines, before turning back to questions of methodology in chapter seven, “On Or About December 1910.” Their reading of *Rhythm* in chapter four presents a compelling argument for the significance of the magazine (although I suppose I might be biased), and offers a generous selection of illustrations from *Rhythm* and the *New Age*. The fact that these lithographs, wood-cuts, and line-drawings remain striking even in “drastically reduced format” says much about the importance of print media in the development of visual avant-gardes during this period. But this chapter also provides important information on the networks of artistic friendship and influence in London in the first and second decades of the twentieth century, as well as outlining some of the specific debates between Murry and Huntly Carter in *Rhythm* and the *New Age* respectively. Chapter five, “Modernism’s Other: The Art of Advertising” adds further material to a now well-established case for the importance of advertising discourses to periodical culture. Chapter seven outlines, and analyses, an example of “synchronic” reading (170), slicing a vertical sample from a range of periodical texts published in Britain and America on or about December 1910. As Scholes and Wulfman note (209), this sort of approach has proved productive in several studies of modernism. By pursuing traces picked up by digital search facilities, Scholes and Wulfman demonstrate just how much new material can now be brought into consideration. But this chapter also illuminates how such searches still require enormous amounts of additional research (or, in the case of these particular authors, accumulated knowledge) in order to be meaningful. The book keeps its references to a minimum, with a pretty modest four page bibliography, but it would be fascinating to see how this chapter would look if fully footnoted. Although this sort of scholarly apparatus might detract from the user-friendly approach of the book as a whole, it would emphasize Scholes and Wulfman’s point about the embeddedness of periodicals as media, and would suggest the subtlety with which periodicals can be built into the practice of well-established researchers.

These eight chapters effectively comprise *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction*, the only book we would think we were getting were we to judge by its cover. However, its “Appendix” places Pound firmly back in the frame, reprinting his 1917–1918 series of *New Age* articles “Studies in Contemporary Mentality” in their entirety. Since this occupies around one hundred pages (nearly a third of the text as a whole) Pound is less a “thread” here than an entire Spring/Summer collection, and it is fantastic to have these articles, with their biting assessments of contemporary magazine culture, made so readily accessible. All the same, part of me wondered if there wasn’t something deliberately provocative in reprinting these pieces in this form, thereby removing them from their periodical context and drawing attention to the ongoing dialogue between the magazine and the book. In this respect, I would also have liked Scholes and Wulfman’s opinion on the jacket design of my copy, which reproduces positive assessments of their study as if they were headlines in magazines from the period.

In short, *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction* is entirely successful in realizing its project. This will indeed be a work of enormous value to those beginning to study modernism and periodical texts, as well as to those who have already ventured some way into the territory. There are some missing elements that might have helped those starting out even further. For instance, I would have included a few core “book history” texts in the bibliography, along with a little information on the work currently being undertaken on digitization (Sutherland and

642 Deegan, perhaps), and at least some mention of scholarship on nineteenth-century periodicals. The intention of this book—as it not only demonstrates but explicitly states—is not to give the misleading impression that it has constructed a field from the ground up, or that it has produced a definitive methodology. Rather, it is to inform, to inspire, and to encourage all of us to enter the field and to get our hands dirty.