

**Review: *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms***

**edited by Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier**

**Janet Floyd**

*Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms*

Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier (eds.)

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This volume of essays is the outcome of a symposium held at the University of Delaware in April 2007 that called for ‘scholars working on the next frontier of material and historical research in modernist studies’ to address themselves to new ways of thinking about the ‘Transatlantic print marketplace’ and ‘modernism’s emergence in a public sphere that was, even by 1900, complexly segmented.’ The editors and a number of the contributors to this volume address themselves to this statement of purpose, and especially excavations of relations between Modernism and a range of mainstream, popular and activist periodical culture: New Journalism, women’s magazines, the suffrage press, the popular weeklies and so on. The volume is distinctive in its drawing together of contributors with varying, even disparate, approaches to these relations. Most are literary historians of Modernism or literary and cultural historians of nineteenth- and twentieth-century print culture, but there are also contributors who are engaged with material cultural study, women’s history and feminism. These latter engage with the volume’s focus on Modernism(s) more obliquely.

The volume is organized into three sections. In Part I, ‘History, Culture, and the Public Sphere: Discipline, Theory, Methodology,’ there are two essays by Mark Hampton and Ann Ardis that grapple with the powerful presence of Habermasian debates about the public sphere in work on print culture at the turn of the twentieth century. Hampton discusses how we might uncover New Journalism’s intricate engagements with a new and continuously transforming culture of print operates as part of a public sphere itself in seismic change; both essays, in generating clusters of questions, set rigorous, inspiring agendas for further work on the history of print culture. Lucy Delap and Maria DiCenzo consider what can be learned from tracking radical (in this case feminist) periodicals and their scattered readers on either side of the Atlantic. Finally, Barbara Green explores the

magazine as an object displayed and used in settings of ‘coterie consumption’ using the example of the suffrage magazine (72).

In Part II, ‘The Cultural Work of Print Media: Markets, Institutions, and Audiences,’ contributors explore the debates about civilization and modernity with which elite and mainstream cultures of the period were preoccupied. Francesca Sawaya uses the example of Andrew Carnegie’s sponsorship both of elite figures such as Matthew Arnold and of mainstream journalism as a way to refashion models for understanding the complexity of structures of funding writing during this period. Patrick Collier addresses ‘mixing commerce with literature’ (98), using the popular *John O’London’s Weekly* positioning of the project of the author during the late 1910s and 1920s. Fiona Hackney and Margaret B. Stetz move forward within the volume’s time frame, examining, respectively, women’s magazines’ engagement with the political and social changes of modernity between 1919 and 1939, and ‘the *culture* of print culture’ explored in Christopher Morley’s *Kitty Foyle* (1939) (144).

Part III, ‘Modernism on/in Print Media, Print Media in/on Modernism,’ looks at the engagement with Modernism by journalists in a range of different settings. This section brings together Laurel Brake’s examination of the relationship of W.T. Stead’s New Journalism to Modernist debates, Kirsten MacLeod’s description of the short life of magazines in provincial America that picked up Modernism’s penchant for ‘little magazines,’ and Leonard Diepeveen’s reflection on the content and significance of the dismissive newspaper reviews of Stein’s *Tender Buttons* in the US press. Jean Marie Lutes considers the ‘permanently dislocated’ figure of the female journalist and the ‘increasingly abstract notions of space and time’ expressed in her movement around the world (167, 171). Finally, in Part IV, there is a discussion, by Suzanne W. Churchill, of the pedagogical implications of teaching Modernist periodicals.

One of the strengths of the volume lies in the freshness of the discussions of the relationship between Modernism and mainstream culture produced by focusing on periodicals produced for wide audiences. Several of the essays engage with journalistic and popular responses to Modernist thought and output in methodologically imaginative ways. Those that addressed the reception of new movements furthest from the metropolitan centres of Modernism were perhaps most thought-provoking in this regard. So Diepeveen’s consideration of what happens to our understanding of both mass culture

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and High Modernism when we bring reviews published in mass newspapers into the foreground, was suggestive in its conclusions and in methodological terms; while both MacLeod's and Delap and DiCenzo's essays on the reception of radical magazines far from the metropolitan centre suggested multiple avenues for research.

*Transatlantic Print Culture*, like Mark Hampton and Joel Weiner's recent edited collection of essays, *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850-2000* (2007), asserts a common Anglo-American ground of shared technologies, similarly burgeoning audiences and longstanding cultural links, but while Hampton and Weiner's collection has its centre of gravity in the US and in Americanization, here the weight of the volume rests with subjects, publications and scholarship generated in Britain. It would have been interesting and useful to see more contributors draw American subjects – the yellow press, for example – into relevant discussions, and also to find the very pertinent work on print culture produced by such American scholars such as Richard Ohmann and Matthew Schneirov included alongside British scholars' work.

Having said that, Delap and DiCenzo's essay sharpens familiar discussions of Transatlantic feminism by looking at the journeys made in both directions by particular texts, and Sawaya, too, builds a complex context for the charged cultural relations between the US and Britain. If Anglo-American relations were less central to the essays than the title suggested, there was little that engaged with the 'geomodernisms' (to use Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel's (2005) term) produced by imperialism and globalization. This produced a flavour very much of the turn of the century and earlier, rather than of the period cited in the title. Interestingly, the editors cite as a model Janet Beer and Bridget Bennett's excellent *Special Relationships: Anglo-American Affinities and Antagonisms* (2002), a literary-critical enterprise that focuses on connections between literary texts and the journeys that texts make during the nineteenth century. At the end of the introduction, the editors acknowledge the limits of their 'Atlantic world,' noting the lack of Anglo-Irish 'complications' (8), the whiteness of their volume's preoccupations, the loss to their Transatlantic of Canada and Latin America, all areas that might have both complicated and made clearer the special cultural relationship proposed by the volume.

In the introduction, the editors propose a practice of border crossing, with respect to borders between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, between nations and between different scholarly disciplines. These are already open borders in many fields that the

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editors draw on. Other, trickier borders are in evidence in the volume, however. There is a border between Victorian and Modernist studies here where very different methodologies are in play. There is a border, too, between those contributors who are interested in theorizing periodical culture and those who are not. Most contributors are intensely invested in arguments about Modernism's or Modernisms' relationship with mainstream print culture. Others reject that preoccupation or ignore it completely. These more volatile scholarly frontiers give the volume a crackling vitality that, along with its interest in method and some excellent essays, offers plenty of food for thought.

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