

***Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms.*** Edited by Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. xi + 259 pp. \$80.00 cloth.

***Print for Victory: Book Publishing in England 1939-1945.*** By Valerie Holman. London: British Library, 2008. Distributed in U.S. by University of Chicago Press. xii + 292 pp. £30 cloth, \$39.95 cloth.

Valerie Holman's masterful history of English book publishing in World War II is the result of years of research in thirty separate archives spread across three continents. *Print for Victory* examines the peculiar pressures of war upon the "dual personality" of books as "repositories of knowledge" and "as physical objects" (247), and the way that dual personality was understood by publishers and government officials to be an agent of change. After reading *Print for Victory*, readers will agree that books did, in fact, "lead to victory" (4). Holman concludes her account with this quotation from Francis Meynell's introduction to the 1945 Oxford University Press book, *Printing Today*: "Printing is the great recorder. . . . The files survive, the evidence is available and the story is made history; printing has the last word" (249). Meynell's comment celebrates the survival of a material object threatened by the near collapse of book publishing in wartime England and the massive destruction of books in both England and Europe. *Print for Victory* invites us to consider two historical fronts on which the book has, in the last one hundred years, had to do battle: the overt subject of her study, the home front of World War II England, and the ghostly, implied front shadowing its reception, our twenty-first century drive towards a paperless world. *Print for Victory*, like all scholarly books and journals published today, is itself an embattled book. All the more reason to attend to its compelling story and statistics, even as its many charts, numbers, and acronyms (the book begins with a listing of thirty-nine abbreviations) might dissuade literary critics, design and art historians, and other cultural critics from pursuing it. This would be a tremendous loss to the study of the space between, since history—honest to God history—is possibly the discipline least well represented in the pages of this and other interdisciplinary journals on the period and the one from which cultural and literary scholars have most to learn.

Holman's story of a medium threatened with extinction due to too little paper, too few book binders, too many government agents and agencies, and—ironically—too many markets—sets up a stark contrast with the print cultures described in Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier's *Transatlantic Print Culture*. Although Ardis and Collier's period of 1880-1940 backs nicely against Holman's 1939-1945 period and suggests that these two books might work as studies of cultural continuity, the Ardis-Collier collection's focus on emerging, rather than disappearing, media emphasizes the divide between early and mid-twentieth century cultures, peacetime and wartime institutions, American and British democracies, and periodical and book publishing. I mention such divides not to further consolidate old academic categories and practices that Ardis and Collier seek to destabilize,

but to emphasize the difficulty of any project that announces, as Ardis and Collier's does, that its goal is disciplinary border crossing. In the case of *Transatlantic Print Culture*, the contributors nobly seek "collaboration and dialogue between: nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars; historians and literary scholars; and scholars of American and British literature and culture" (3). The result is an exuberant and ambitious study, full of well-crafted essays that engage readers with analyses of under-studied publications (for instance Ann Ardis on *Crisis* and the *New Age*, Lucy Delap and Maria DiCenzo on the *Woman Rebel* and the *Forerunner*), overlooked heroines (Barbara Green on suffragette journalist Evelyn Sharp), hidden genres (Leonard Diepeveen on the clipping archive), and unanticipated relationships (Jean Marie Lutes on Henry James and Nellie Bly). Read as a whole, the volume achieves most of its goals, most of the time. However, read in tandem with Holman's study, the volume seems to fall short of its goal of presenting thoroughly historically contextualized arguments. This suggests that the complexities of transatlantic study will demand yet more elbow grease on the part of revisionist scholars. . . and more historical monographs.

*Print for Victory* is a superbly organized monograph, divided into four roughly chronological chapters, all focused on the book trade in England but all integrally tied to World War II-era economic, ideological, material, and political exchanges among English publishers and overseas booksellers, readers, and government administrators. Those interested in transnational print culture should pay close attention to Holman's chapters on "Readers Overseas" and "Publishing for Peace," both of which examine relationships between the already strained English book trade and various "new reading publics" around the world, including transatlantic readerships in the U.S., Canada, and Latin America, but also those across the Channel and beyond the Horn in India, Australia, and Africa. She makes the everyday people comprising these abstractly conceived markets come alive: in addition to working-class readers in Britain, they were British soldiers posted overseas; troops, civilians, and school children in British colonies and commonwealth nations; British patients at home and abroad; British prisoners of war; and by 1943, the intellectually-starved survivors of the war in liberated Europe, including Germans. Holman begins her book with a chapter detailing the history of scarcity in Britain in the first years of the war—scarcity of materials needed to construct books (most notably paper, which before the war had been made from esparto grass from "enemy territory" in French North Africa and during the war was tightly rationed), scarcity of man and woman power (1/3 of all employees in the British book industry were called up into the forces, including editors, bookbinders, and 50% of printers), and scarcity of real estate (on the night of 29 December 1940 alone, seventeen publishing firms, their warehouses, equipment, records, and stock, were

totally destroyed by German bombing of Paternoster Row). She concludes her book with an analysis of the very different postwar challenges confronting book publishers and the readers they depended on: “[B]y 1944, most [publishers] had participated in the paperback revolution, and instead of worrying about selling books on a tight profit margin, they were wondering what would happen to a profession which had an unprecedented number of readers and was making astonishing profits but could not replenish its stocks” (237).

What were the titles in those stocks that millions of unsatisfied readers wanted to read? Even Holman doesn’t know the answer to that question. All she knows is what people *did* read, given constrained choices imposed by rationing and central control. Analyzing the contents of an article titled “What the celebrities read in a black-out” that appeared in a trade journal in the first year of the war, Holman notes, “It was a selection which set the pattern for readers throughout the War: self-improvement [*Mathematics for the Million*], the classics [Dickens, Austen, Kipling, Charlotte Bronte], detective fiction [any] and extremely long novels [*War and Peace*]” (26). Three years later, in a climate of even deeper scarcity, Mass Observation determined by survey that the most important factor participants mentioned as influencing their choice of book was “its suitability for reading in bed” (53).

That any imaginative literature was produced at all in the war was due to the realization early on by government officials (including, crucially, Winston Churchill), that books freely written, freely published, and distributed in a free market were necessary to the civilization for which the British were fighting. But the same government officials had to grapple with the challenge posed by the equally important realization that for the nation to survive, books and ideas had to be regulated. A practical consequence of this second realization, with potentially disastrous effects for the private book trade, was that government agencies had first claim to paper reserves. The complex, sometimes scary history of relations between the government and publishers as they worked out the implications of national supply and security policies is the subject of Holman’s second, most important chapter. Here we learn about the extent of Ministry of Information involvement with the wartime “free” press. Holman cites two MoI memoranda from 1940 that, more clearly than anything else in the agency’s murky archives, document its intentions and activity related to propaganda and book publishing. The first proposes a general axiom that “The best book propaganda of all is the selling of books on their merits”; the second, that “interest in [the] propaganda value [of MoI-supplied material] should not blind the Ministry to the chance of selling it profitably, possibly after competition between publishers for it, particularly as a publisher is more likely to push the sales of a book he has paid for than of a book he is paid to publish” (101). In other words,

the MoI would seek to conceal its propaganda interests and involvement in book publishing by selling its materials to commercial book publishers who would pay for the privilege of acquiring, publicizing, and distributing their books. Orwell and others would have us believe that the MoI was sneaky, labyrinthine, and ruthless. Holman teaches us that it could also be effective and efficient, run by men who kept a sharp eye on profits as well as propaganda.

Part of the allure of Holman's volume is due to its status as historical monograph—its coherence and single vision. It doesn't aspire to collaboration and dialogue and thus need not struggle with the inherent challenges faced by any editors of a collected volume. By contrast, Ardis and Collier have to rely on their readers to construct much of the transatlantic conversations and relationships and history that justify their title, making connections between chapters that are, more often than not, focused more on either American or Anglo figures and media rather than both. Though most of the essays conscientiously take up the vocabulary of transatlantic dialogue or influence, I count only five that put in-depth analysis of transatlantic media relations and history at their core. It's easy to gesture toward "transatlantic influence" and difficult to prove it. This explains in part why I find the following three essays in the volume most worthy of close attention: Francesca Sawaya's "Philanthropy and Transatlantic Print Culture," which examines the transatlantic dialogue between Andrew Carnegie and Matthew Arnold about American gift-giving within the contexts of their debates about American imperialism, the transatlantic exchange of ideas and capital, and elite modernism and mainstream journalism; Laurel Brake's "Journalism and Modernism, Continued: The Case of W. T. Stead," which scrutinizes two of Stead's English annuals and two of his social commentaries in order to show how his advocacy of "the Americanization of the world" emerged in conversation with an "America" defined by its journalism; and Kirsten MacLeod's "The Fine Art of Cheap Print: Turn-of-the-Century American Little Magazines," which shows how a new American genre drew from English Arts and Crafts and Aestheticism, among other European design movements, in the process of intervening in both the "high" cultural revolution in fine printing and the "low" cultural revolution of mass-marketed magazines. Not coincidentally, these three essays lean toward study of the *fin de siècle* or late Victorian years. Anyone doing research on media of this *pre-space* between period benefits from a robust and long-standing investment by Victorianists in analysis of non-literary print media. Looking back over the divide between nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Ardis and Collier suggest that Victorianists may provide the key for scholars who seek to move out of modernist studies into what has been tentatively called "periodical studies."

But where, in this emerging field on emerging media, in the "vast

publishing scene of this period,” do we situate the book (Ardis and Collier 3)? In *Transatlantic Print Culture*, Margaret Stetz’s chapter suggests better than others how we might understand relations between book publishing and journalism. Stetz reads Christopher Morley’s scandalous 1939 novel *Kitty Foyle* and its eponymous heroine as metaphors for or embodiments of a contemporary print culture, suggesting how we might not only cross the divide between Ardis-Collier and Holman, but that between peacetime and wartime cultures, between the men dominating Holman’s study and the many, many women demanding attention in the Ardis-Collier volume. It joins three other chapters in *Transatlantic Print Culture* that deserve special mention here because they focus on print cultures of the “space between period” of 1914-1945: Patrick Collier’s on notions of authorship and *John O’London’s Weekly*, Fiona Hackney’s on British women’s magazines between 1919 and 1939, and Suzanne Churchill’s on her college course on “Modernism in Black and White” that used magazines of the 1920s and 1930s as required texts.

Churchill’s last chapter on “Modernist Periodicals and Pedagogy” is more than worthy of the separate section Ardis and Collier accord it at the end of the volume. Perhaps better than any other chapter, it embodies the collaborative goals of the collection. Dedicated to analysis of two collaborative research projects undertaken by Churchill’s undergraduates at Davidson, one on representations of youth culture in *Crisis* and *Fire!!*, the other on the influence of Japan upon poetic images in *Poetry* and the *New Yorker*, the chapter is itself a collaborative effort. Dickinson lists as co-authors the fourteen students involved, and also cites the work of Davidson colleagues and other contributors to *Transatlantic Print Culture* who have experimented with classes that take modernist periodicals, rather than modernist books, as their objects of study. The result is a practical how-to guide for those intrepid enough to follow Churchill’s lead as well as a theoretical contemplation on the limits of literary-historical periodization, what it means to study or not study modernist “masterpieces,” what constitutes teaching in a course driven by student research. Some might read this chapter as the volume’s concluding cautionary tale. Others will read it as the most exuberant, most ambitious, of the border crossing experiments undertaken by *Transatlantic Print Culture*.

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