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## American Little Magazines of the 1920s and 1930s – An Introduction

Simon G. Bernabas, Ph.D.

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### Introduction

The purpose of this article is to give a brief introduction to American little magazines of the 1920's and 30s. In the broadest sense, most literary periodicals, including the literary/critical quarterly, are little magazines. Yet scholars who have made comprehensive studies of small magazines have assigned a more important and exalted status to the literary quarterly.

### Little Magazines and Books

Little magazines play an important role in representing the literary-cultural characteristics of an age. True, books do reflect these peculiarities but quite often ideas enunciated in books find their early expression in magazines. Similarly, the creative expressions of an age come out through the pages of journals before they are collected and published in books. So it may be said that literary magazines published in any period can provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the creative and critical peculiarities of that time span. If this is true, the unique historical relevance of the

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American magazines published in the nineteen twenties and thirties cannot be overlooked, especially because they should contain the literary and artistic reflections of two of the momentous decades in the socio-cultural saga of that country. As it is well-known, if the twenties were characterized by the glitter of prosperity, the next decade, marked by poverty and desperation, exposed the corruption that underlay the American boom. The events of the decades should naturally receive the attention of the magazines of the time.

### **Aim**

It is not easy for anyone to attempt a comprehensive study of the contents of all the little magazines published in America in the twenties and thirties and to estimate their roles in charting the history of the two decades. It should be added, however, that historical studies of major journals of the decades are available. The histories of T.S. Eliot's *Criterion* and the *New Republic* are two cases in point. This paper attempts to fulfill the modest objective of presenting a sketchy introduction to the little magazine movement that began in America around 1910 and extended till the end of the thirties.

While sketching the history of the movement during this period, an attempt has been made to list some of the important magazines published in the twenties and the thirties. In addition to this, various aspects pertaining to the production and circulation of small magazines are explained. Other aspects discussed include the function of these magazines, the roles of their editors, the problems they face during their publication and some of the prime causes of their suspension.

### **History and definitions**

Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn Ulrich, in their widely acclaimed book *The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography* (1946:3), trace the origins of the term 'little magazine' to the years of World War I. They say that the adjective 'little' in the term does not signify the size or the contents of the magazines; nor does the epithet indicate the fact that little magazines generally do not pay their contributors. "What the word designated above everything else" is, Hoffman and his co-authors say, "a limited group of intelligent readers." The writers go

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on to say that “the word ‘little’ is vague and even unfairly derogatory.” The adjective, according to another writer, is applicable only to the “subscription lists” of the magazine (Anon: 424).

According to Paul Bixler (1946:553), a little magazine is meant for “a coterie or for an ‘in’ group or for its editors and contributors.” In his essay, “The Little Magazines: Portrait of an Age”, Frederick Hoffman (1943:3) has offered a clearer explanation of the meaning of the adjective ‘little’ in little magazines. He says: “They are ‘little’ because they enjoyed a limited circulation, were constantly handicapped by financial crisis and varying forms of indebtedness, relieved occasionally by the beneficence of a sympathizer who had money in his pockets.” In Edward J. O’Brien’s opinion (1933:21), the average little magazine has a circulation of anything from five hundred to thousand copies.

There are writers who feel that the phrase ‘avante-garde’ would have been a better substitute for ‘little’, but somehow the replacement has not taken place. ‘Avant-garde’, according to John Tebbel and Mary Zuckerman (1991:217), describes “the character of many of the personalities involved with the magazines.” These people include Ezra Pound, TS Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Norman Macleod, Eugene Jolas and many others. They “considered themselves leaders of Avante-garde, rebelling against conventional ways of writing and advocating unorthodox literary theories.”

### **The Definition of ‘Little’**

Even though the origins, implications and suitability of the term ‘little’ have been explained, no attempt has been made so far in this article to define the two-word phrase ‘little magazine’. In fact, there is no dearth of definitions. When Felix Pollack (1978:49) was asked to define it briefly, he said: “If I would have to put it into one sentence, I would say that a magazine is much more than a small magazine that would like to be big.” Obviously, this definition is a little vague. Reed Whittermore’s definition (1963:5) is clearer. For him, “a little magazine is a serious magazine or a serious magazine is a little magazine.”

Perhaps the best definition of the term has been given in Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich's book (1946:2): "A little magazine is a magazine designed to print artistic work which for reasons of commercial expediency is not acceptable to the money-minded periodicals or press."

### **Little Magazines' Service**

Hoffman's definition and a figurative definition of another writer (Munson: 1937:3) indicate that little magazines generally publish genuine creations of budding writers. Well-established magazines may not accept their contributions. Perhaps the most important service of little magazines, especially during the American modernist period, has been their relentless effort to promote the writings of new talented writers. Of course, many mediocre writers also got themselves published in them. About the contribution of last century's magazines, we read in the book by Hoffman and his friends (1946:1):

But one feature of twentieth century literary history must be noted; hundreds of writers have achieved-publication-- almost irrespective of their claims to merit or the significance of what they had to say. Since 1912 many of these persons have been published in the scores of literary magazines which have appeared and disappeared to the accompaniment of various forms of pretension, clamor and editorial oratory.

## Magazines for Promoting Writers

The list of writers who have attained fame through little magazines is too long. They include James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens and a host of others. Ezra Pound (1930:704), the doyen of literary Journalism, says: “There are plenty of people over forty who are willing to acknowledge that Mr. Joyce, Mr. Eliot, and the rest appeared... ten or fifteen years ago in small and allegedly eccentric magazines....”

In 1927, launching a magazine of his own, the *Exile*, Pound (1927:88) wrote: “In 1917 I presented a certain program of authors; in starting this new review I intend to present, or at least to examine the possibility of presenting an equally interesting line up.” What Roland E. Wolsely (1952:381) says about little magazine’s role in promoting literature, criticism and new writers and their works is also worth quoting:

Literary magazines have started movements, erected critical standards and founded schools of criticism, introduced new writers, maintained the following of older ones, and provided an outlet for work not marketable to the public through general or consumer magazines.

In fact one of the aims of these magazines of the early decades of the twentieth century was to set new writers against the middle generation American writers like Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather (Marianne Moore, 1951:23). About eighty per cent of the post-1912 writers were introduced to the literary world by little magazines.

### Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry*

The year 1912 is significant in the history of American literary journalism. It was in that year Harriet Monroe started her magazine, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. Although the beginnings of a renaissance in the founding American little magazines could be traced back to 1910, it was the

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launching of *Poetry* that formerly inaugurated the revival. This is not to say that little magazines (commercial magazines are excluded) did not exist before 1910. Historians of literary journalism treat the *Dial* (1840-1844), edited by Margaret Fuller and Ralph Waldo Emerson, as the parent version of American little magazines. Even though contributors to the magazine included HD Thoreau, William Channing, Theodore Parker and Emerson himself, its circulation never went beyond three hundred copies. It was truly a little magazine. The magazine that followed the *Dial* was Henry Clapp's *Saturday Press*, published between 1858 and 1866. Then there was no significant little magazine in America till the 1890's. In that decade, however, three magazines flourished briefly: *Chicago Chap Book*, *Lark* and *M'lle New York*. Again, there was an interval until 1910. Ezra Pound (1930:689) has qualified these pre-1910 little magazines as "better magazines" although he complained that they "had failed lamentably and even offensively to maintain intellectual life."

Miss Monroe's starting a little magazine for poetry was indeed a historic event because in those days poetry was not treated as a branch of literary art. By 1919, in her own magazine, she wrote about a renaissance that was going on in America then. Indirectly she patted herself for bringing about the revival. That year the Pulitzer Prize for poetry went to Carl Sandburg and Margaret Widdemer, both of whom were contributors to Miss Monroe's magazine. Monroe (1919:262-63) pointed out that when John Pulitzer died in 1911, he had not mentioned poetry in his will even though he had set apart some money "for everything else under the sun." Miss Monroe (1919:262) adds that at the time of Pulitzer's death "poetry was so negligible and neglected that he did not recognize its existence as a modern art."

Miss Monroe had to face many challenges when she founded *Poetry*. They were severe during the first seven years. One of them was the birth of other new magazines but she and her colleagues welcomed it "on the principle of more the merrier-- for the field is large and no one magazine can gather all the harvest." (Ibid, 263) The supercilious attitude of the new magazines to *Poetry* was another challenge. A more serious threat was the scorn of the so called poetry critics. They believed that they were "quite competent to denounce all the poets of this century."

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(Ibid, 265) Despite these challenges, she diligently nurtured her magazine maintaining a tolerant and optimistic attitude to others (Ibid, 264-65).

Miss Monroe had an eclectic taste. Consequently, her selection of poems included both good and bad ones. But this does not mean that she was careless. Rather, according to Horace Gregory (1937:198), she could see “a definite relationship of the verse to the time in which it was written, either in the career of a given poet or in the movement represented.” One of her criteria of selection was that a poem should be interesting. Right from the beginning she had decided that she and her fellow editors should “keep free of entangling alliances with any single class or school.”(Whittermore, 1963:8). This decision was a consequence of her mixed taste. Similarly, she was not much concerned about the European or international critical principles. Whittermore believes that *Poetry* has had a long life because Miss Monroe set the trend of publishing a lot of ordinary budding poets. This indicated that it lacked snobbishness. Despite his objections to her poetic ideas and editorial policies, Pound had only good things to say about Miss Monroe when she died after editing her magazine for nearly twenty five years:

During the twenty four years of editorship  
perhaps three periodicals made a brilliant record,  
perhaps five periodicals, but they were all under the  
sod in the autumn of 1936, and no other publication  
[except *Poetry*] has existed in America where any writer  
of poetry could more honorably place his writings.  
This was true in 1911. It is true as  
I write this. (H.Gregory, 1937:199)

Miss Monroe’s magazine encouraged many to launch their own little magazines. Thus, just a year after the founding of *Poetry*, Alfred Kreymborg started his monthly *Glebe*. However, he had to suspend it the next year. Again, in 1914 itself, he founded *Others*, a magazine for poetry (Hoffman, et al, 1946:44-51). The aim of starting this, says Charles Allen (1944:420), was “to experiment with new structures and free verse rhythms and...other radical experiments.” Kreymborg thought that through *Others*, the “relatively unknown poets [such as Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams] might become more widely accepted.”

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But this magazine also met with premature death. In 1921, with the help of Harold Loeb, Kreymborg founded *Broom*. Again, in 1927, he helped the launching of the *American Caravan*. Another important personal magazine was Margaret Anderson's *Little Review*, which was started in 1914. This list of magazines, launched under the influence of *Poetry*, could be extended further. Although the renaissance in the little magazine movement began in America in 1912, nobody can say for sure how many magazines have come and gone since then. In the early 1960's the University of Wisconsin had 716 titles in its Marvin Sukov Collection.

### **American Magazines of the Twenties**

In American history, the twenties is generally treated as a decade of rebellion, a decade of the 'lost generation.' The revolt, according to Malcolm Cowley (1947:5, 35), found a reflection in the little magazines of the period. They stood apart from the main currents of American life and printed writers of rebellious factions. Further, they were "almost aggressively non-political" and "informal." One of the striking features of the magazines of the twenties was that they did not have any serious connection with the academic world, especially with universities and colleges. This meant that the small magazines were not funded by or published from such institutions.

The artists who exiled themselves to the Greenwich Village founded a number of magazines, many of which died with just one issue. However, some serious modernist magazines like the *Dial*, published in the twenties by Scofield Thayer and James Watson Jr., also existed. Quite a few of the little magazines of the decade were devoted to poetry. In 1919, in Miss Monroe's *Poetry*, Richard Aldington (1919:267-68) listed the ideal qualities of the typical poem of the twenties. He wanted it to be "aristocratic", emphasizing freedom and equality. The new poetry had to "be the expression of distinguished minds in a distinguished manner." Further, Aldington wished the poetry of the decade to be human, competent, individualistic and sincere. He also hoped that the new poetry would "develop along the lines which it has taken in the past few years."

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In the twenties, little magazines were a blessing for the “esthetically unemployable” young men whose lives were shaped by the First World War. Some of them were poets who did not seem to belong to the lost generation. As Hoffman (1943:4) says, “These young writers were not so much the ‘lost generation’ as they were a generation yet unborn, enjoying a most amazingly vigorous pre-natal life. They were to inaugurate that immensely stimulating period of American and English letters known simply as ‘the twenties.’ ” Julian Friend (M.Moore,1951: 12), himself a participant in the First World War, liked to qualify the writers of the twenties (including himself) as members of “ ‘ the found generation’ since we coolly and arrogantly assumed the task of leading literary expression towards something new and vital.”

### **American Magazines of the Thirties**

In terms of their contents, the little magazines of the thirties differed from those of the twenties and the former’s number increased considerably in the decade. According to Robert Cantwell (1934:295), until 1932 there were only a dozen magazines in the US. But between 1932 and 1934, their number was anywhere between fifty and a hundred. It was difficult to give the exact number: “It is hard to place the figure more accurately than that, for the number is constantly changing-- a good many disappear after an issue or two, and new ones are started.”

The thirties being the Red decade, many of the American magazines carried revolutionary contents. This is not to say that there were no non-partisan little magazines. Cantwell says that the magazines of the decade ranged from the old fashioned art-for-art’s sake journals to overtly reactionary periodicals. However, these varied publications had certain common features. Cantwell goes on: “...in most of them the emphasis is on prose, on the short story; there is little poetry, of which only a fraction is memorable; their critical contributions, except for those in the revolutionary magazines, are negligible. A good part of their fiction is of the sort that is usually called promising....”

The major leftist magazines of the decade included *Blast*, the *Anvil*, the *Monthly Review*, the *New Quarterly*, the *Partisan Review*, *Left Front*, the [New] *Masses* and *Left Review*. Many writers of this period have praised these periodicals. Thus, while reviewing four such magazines in 1934, Waldo Teague (1934:61) said: “All of them are slim ... but within their limited space appear more advanced contributions to revolutionary fiction and poetry than have appeared in any American magazine for a long time.”

It is unwise, however, to think that the magazines published during 1912-1930 were not revolutionary. They, too, had a distinctly radical function to perform. According to Hoffman, the magazine of this period brought to fame the revolutionary ideas of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, Frederick Nietzsche and Karl Marx. Even though the ideas of these thinkers were available in their books, Hoffman (1943:3) says, “it is only through reading the pages of the little magazines that one gains a real understanding of the *manner* in which these ideas were assimilated and reshaped to meet the requirements of our own age.”

### **Little Magazines versus Commercial Magazines**

In Hoffman’s definition of the little magazine, one finds a distinction being suggested between the literary magazine and the “money minded”/commercial magazines. Commercial magazines are slow to acknowledge new writers and their innovative writings. Michael Anania (1998:10) says: “Little magazines have always functioned primarily for writers.... At their best, little magazines draw together groups of writers and, however marginally, find them an audience. In contrast, commercial magazines find audiences and financial support and then, almost incidentally, find their writers.” The latter welcome novices only when they are rejected by standard literary periodicals as ‘useful’ commercial writers. It is observed that only twenty per cent of the post-1912 writers were sponsored or discovered by commercial magazines.

Such magazines, Hoffman and his co-authors (1946:3) say, have not done anything “to initiate the new literary groups.” Their only ‘positive’ feature is that “they have ultimately accepted any

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author, no matter how experimental, after he has been talked about for a period of years--sometimes a good many years.” Commercial magazines are generally considered as rear guard magazines

Big and commercial magazines are controlled by advertisers. The advertisers can accept or reject items received at the magazine’s office. While big magazines flourish with the backing of their advertisers, little magazines carry “no advertising or only a minimal amount.” (M Olson, 1978:37-38).

It is true that big magazines sometimes publish “good stuff, but it is safe stuff. It is the stuff that is already recognized as good. “Little magazines, on the other hand, may often publish trash which is detestable to the big ones. However, “there’s always the chance that something exciting will happen in little magazines that cannot happen in big.”

### **Production and Publication**

The production and publication of little magazines is a profitless endeavor. Obviously, therefore, their production cannot involve a lot of money. Sometimes, they receive the financial assistance of patrons. However, seeking the support of patrons does not always contribute to a magazine’s healthy existence.

Gorham B. Munson (1937:3-4), an experienced editor of little magazines, feels that quite often patrons have a power complex which forces the editor to accept their conditions. Obviously, this exertion of work can affect the independence of the magazine: “For if the little review is not free, it is nothing, and freedom is polluted at the source if money is to exert an influence on editorial policy. Unconditional patronage is the *sine quanon* of the only kind of success open to the little magazine. . . .” However, it is difficult to find such patrons who have no conditions to set forth. Relying on his own experience, Munson says that a little magazine can be launched with just twenty dollars. In order to continue its publication the editor needs “Real Credit”, by which

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Munson means “determination – grit – guts.” Munson’s advice to prospective editors is: “If you want a little review of your own, launch it. You will not be able to see your way ahead, but you have voluntarily assumed responsibilities. You have made a draft on your Real Credit which is your pluck-- and you will acquire somehow what you require.” If a magazine has to be published without much cost, then the editor has to do most of the work involved in its publication.

Munson advises editors not to mimeograph their magazines because mimeographing will engender “resistance in the reader; he cannot escape the feeling that he is perusing an amateurish makeshift.” What Munson suggests, instead, is to buy a cheap printer and use cheap paper. The defect of this cheapness can be overcome with neatness of format and readability of the text. The page should not look cramped. Munson cites *Little Review* as an example for an inexpensively and neatly produced magazine.

## **Functions**

Little magazines have certain useful functions to perform. The most basic and obvious roles are: One, it is generally through little magazines that new writers rebel against traditional modes of literary expressions and introduce new techniques and practices. Two, they boldly familiarize the literary world with those writings which will be rejected by cheap brash commercial magazines. Apart from these two, there are other functions as well. All literary traditions have gone through fresh movements. The complex history of these movements could be found in little magazines.

A movement before it gains acceptance has to brave criticisms and look for sympathies. The history of such mixed evaluations is generally found in little magazines. In a way it is the magazines which determine the ultimate success and failure of literary movements. John Crowe Ransom (1946:551) says: “Many of the shifts of literature prove to have been misguided, and have to be painfully and almost completely retraced after their initial frenzy, and it is as much to the credit of the little magazines to have resisted these as to have gone along with happier movements.”

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Morton D. Zabel (1929:332-33) also has described the role of little magazines in tracing “the ebb and the flow of ideas and literary manner.” He has pointed out how they help in arranging literary history into periods: “Without them the annals of literature would be duller, and certainly more difficult to compile.”

### **Editor’s Role**

The functions of little magazines just listed suggest very well the importance and difficult responsibilities of their editors. Magazines can lose their direction if editors are not carefully innovative and adventurous. In fact, the editor of and contributors to little magazines share certain common attitudes. They bear within themselves a sense of dissatisfaction which forces them to consider the literary world and publishers of their times boring, ridiculous and even nonsensical; they may be contemptuous of the whole publishing world. The contributor who is an aspirant after fame may even revolt against all kinds of orthodox taste, and argue that the general attitude to literature should change and be more liberal. Sometimes he will insist “that publication should not depend upon the whimsy of conventional tastes and choices.”(Hoffman, et al: 4) Many of these assertions of the contributors can be the editors’ as well.

Gorham B. Munson (1937:4) believes that the editor of a typical magazine should perform the duties of office boy, typist, file clerk, book keeper, advertising manager, business manager, art director, sub-editor, collector of revenue, and editor. No matter whether the magazine belongs to a single person or a group, a “one-man control of the editorial policy is always the best.”

The editors sometimes show an urgency to fulfill their mission in their magazines. The mission is the expression of their own personalities and ideas. They feel the urgency because of the knowledge that their magazines could be short-lived. Consequently, their ideas find immediate expression in their editorials. An editorial can be generous, expressing the mutually shared views with the editor and his ‘kindred spirit’ or, it can also be a piece that sparks off serious

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discussions. It can be a pronouncement of some political or literary school which uses a magazine as its voice. Some editorials bear the stamp of their authors' spirit of freedom and their desire to be frank and shocking; they may also reveal the editors' eagerness to contradict what is unpleasantly traditional and reflect their impetuous but intense desire to subvert the literary assumptions of their times.

While the editor's standards are ultimate, Munson (1937:4) says, he should not interfere with the contributors' freedom to choose their own means to attain their standards. "The editor of a little review" freedom, he asserts, "never edits or rewrites his contributor's work. For the editor of a little magazine censorship does not exist." Julian Friend also means more or less the same when he says that "editors do not create literature, they try with what light they possess to give the best available material a hearing." (M Moore, 1951:17).

### **Types of Little Magazines**

Scholars engaged in the study of literary journalism have classified little magazines under different heads. The classifications vary from scholar to scholar (RA Wolseley: 1950; J Tebbel and Zuckerman: 1991). While some categorizations are too narrow, others are usefully broad. However, a perfect grouping is not always possible because the features of various types can overlap. Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich have classified little magazines under six categories. Their illustrative examples are American magazines of the few first decades of the last century.

The first type of little magazines is poetry magazines. As their name indicates they are magazines whose content is poetry. Magazines like *Poetry*, the *Poetry Journal*, *Contemporary Verse*, the *Fugitive* and the *Measure* are examples of early 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry magazines.

The second variety of little magazines comprises leftist magazines. The socialist journal called *Masses* was the first important American magazine to express the literary feelings and ideas of the left wing writers. It played an important role in shaping the proletarian spirit of many writers

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of the thirties. Other chief leftist journals included the *Liberator* and the *Partisan Review*. Many short-lived magazines like the *Anvil*, *Blast*, the *Monthly Review*, *Left Front* and the *Windsor Quarterly* also had leftist leanings.

Regional magazines constitute the third class of little magazines. Until 1915 the literary activists of American Midwest had been controlled and directed by the publishing house of the east. Thus the artist of the Midwest had either to propagate the pre-conceived notions about his region or to caricature it for the amusement of the east. But in 1915 John T. Frederick started a magazine called *Midland* from Iowa and it faithfully voiced the artist's feelings about the Midwest. The journal's interest in the distinct cultural identity of the region led to the publication of similar magazines in the same region and also in the South West and the Far West. The names of such magazines as the *Frontier*, the *Texas Review*, the *Southwest Review* and the *Prairie Schooner* may be remembered in this context.

The fourth kind of little magazines is named experimental or advance guard journals. These magazines have outnumbered the others over the years. Their interest in experimentalism was responsible for the introduction of such literary movements as Imagism, Dadaism and Surrealism. These periodicals encouraged technically radical writers who broke away from conventional realism or naturalism. Of the many magazines of this kind, the following are some of the important ones: the *Little Review*, *Broom*, *Secession*, the *Reviewer*, the *Double Dealer*, *This Quarter* and *Transition*.

The fifth type of little magazines, critical magazines, mainly focuses on criticism and reviews. However, a small part of them will contain fiction and poetry. Three magazines-- the *Dial*, the *Hound and Horn* and the *Symposium*-- form a representative group of critical journals. In the twenties and thirties, critics like T.S. Eliot, J.C Ransom, R.P. Blackmur, Allen Tate, Yvor Winters and many others were regular contributors to critical magazines. Eliot had his own critical review, the *Criterion*.

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The last variety of little magazines is eclectic magazines. The 'eclectics' support and publish creations representing all literary currents but generally they contain "straight, realistic writing" with "more or less conventional structural patterns". They may be treated as the spiritual descendants of commercial magazines like the *Smart Set* and the *Seven Arts*. The eclectics' connection with university campuses is well-known and "they often reflect the tastes and preoccupations of the universe community in which they originate."(Hoffman, et al: 9) Magazines like *American Prefaces* (University of Iowa) and *Diogenes* (University of Wisconsin) are examples of eclectics.

### **Death of Magazines: Causes**

Although little magazines perform some daring and vital literary and critical functions, their existence and success in the face of odds have always been precarious. Most literary periodicals have a short life. Some of them die with the publication of a single issue. Sometimes magazines die a natural death, but sometimes they are 'killed'. In short, the publisher of a non-funded magazine can be sure of one thing: his magazine will be short-lived (of course, there are exceptions). The mushrooming of all journals, however, makes up of many premature deaths. One cannot say that the fated collapse of little magazines is avertable. Many factors are involved in their discontinuation.

One of the frequent causes is the lack of money. Thus, for instance, Kreymborg's *Others* and many others' magazines were suspended because of inadequate finance. Many leading writers of the past have made desperate efforts to keep magazines alive. Thus, Kreymborg, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams are considered as "the patron saints of the little magazine movement."(C Allen 1944: 418)

A second reason is the weakening of editors' initial interest. The enthusiasm they show at the time of founding their magazines can wane as time passes on; they become lazy. The loss of the novelty of ideas which magazines like to express may be cited as a third reason. As Morton

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Zabel (1929: 333) says, “It is very easy for a periodical to assist in the establishment of new ideas to such a degree as to make these ideas, and at the same time itself, conventional, and these processes usually result in its undoing.” The editors and contributors’ tendency to ignore the ordinary and legitimate demands of the publishing world can also cause the death of a magazine. Similarly, contributors can sometimes contribute to the discontinuation of periodicals. Since they do not receive any remuneration for their toil, they may withdraw their support, especially when they have won a name for themselves. A reason that Roland E. Wolseley (1950: 65,70) mentions is that little magazines “are established by inexperienced magazinists.” Consequently, magazines’ excessive interest in their freedom and experimentation can prove fatal:

But the magazines, being free in spirit if not independent financially, often gives room to freakish ideas and to ridiculous experimentation. Or so it seems to those who may not understand streams-of-consciousness short stories, surrealist drawings, and automatic (guided by the sub-conscious mind) writing. Poor works also creep in under the guise of experiment; this ,however, is one of the prices of freedom.

Readers will not take too long to identify the good from the bad. The identification of poor stuff can cause the death of a magazine.

Sometimes editors feel that their magazines have fulfilled the aims for which they had been launched. And then it is not difficult for the editors to kill them. Frustration and exhaustion can also prompt editors to allow magazines to die. Michael Anania (1990: 10) says that editors feel the sense of accomplishment if they are working “for magazines with a closely defined literary point of view and a tightly knit group of writers.” There are other factors, too, which can bring about the death of the magazines. John Crowe Ransom (1946: 551) feels that magazines could be suspended if they have nothing important to do. He does not think their discontinuation would have any adverse impact. He adds: “For even the good little magazines do not live long, and we

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are quite habituated to the fact. When the editorial impulse is spent it seems altogether a mistaken piety to try to ‘keep the magazine alive’, as if there were a virtue in their business.”

## Conclusion

Little magazines continue to play most of the roles described above. In the recent years their number has been on the rise and many of them judiciously introduce new writers and their works to the literary world. With literature and criticism becoming more and more specialized, the relevance of little magazines is widely recognized.

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