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Modernisms and Big Magazines—On the Streets and in the Pages

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Abstract

During the rise of periodical studies, little magazines garnered perhaps an inordinate amount of attention and credit as the incubators and promulgators of modernism. More recent scholarship, however, is correcting and enlarging our understanding of the connections between modernist practices and a print culture that was, in fact, dominated by mass-circulation periodicals. Not only did major figures of American modernism look to high-profile, mass-circulation periodicals as venues for their work as well as opportunities for “economic patronage” but such magazines also became major points of dissemination of the names, attributes, and debates of modernism. Big magazines are multivalent and multi-leveled, and they often embed modernism into larger cultural contexts, which can create productive dialogues and surprising relationships. This seminar will focus on American “big” magazines and their roles and relationships to modernity and modernism.

We are particularly interested in exploring how our understanding of modernism as a predominantly urban and metropolitan phenomenon has been shaped in and through magazines. As an agora reverberating all the triumphs and tragedies of modern life, mainstream magazines were a crucial site of inspiration and critical reflection for modernist art and criticism. By tracing their collaboration to the mainstream periodical press, we are interested in exploring the circulation and transformation of social conditions—such as anonymity, impersonality and community—into cultural phenomena and artistic or theoretical representations.

We encourage a broad range of approaches to this topic, including discussions of: previously overlooked mass-circulation magazines; innovations in methodologies; connections between American modernism and print culture; material practices in the production, sale, and distribution of magazines; connections between print culture and developments in “other” modernisms; contestations between liberation and/or resistance movements and mass culture; how such magazines trouble the traditional idea of coterie modernism; the ways in which mass-circulation magazines present modernisms in new and under-scrutinized ways; the relationships between “big magazines” and regional modernisms; etc.

Biography - Adam McKible

Adam McKible is Associate Professor of English at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He is the author of *The Space and Place of Modernism: The Russian Revolution, Little Magazines, and New York*, and he edited and introduced Edward Christopher Williams’s, *When Washington Was in Vogue*, a previously lost novel of the Harlem Renaissance. He is also co-editor of a special issue of *Modernism/modernity* devoted to the Harlem Renaissance and of the collection, *Little Magazines and Modernism: New Approaches*. His essays appear in a number of books and journals, including *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, *Teaching the Harlem Renaissance: Course Design and Classroom Strategies*, *The Black Press*, *African American Review*, *American Periodicals*, *Modernism/modernity*, and various dictionaries and encyclopedias. His current project is tentatively titled *Jim Crow Modernism, George Horace Lorimer, and the Saturday Evening Post*.

Topics

- Avant-Garde
- Cultural Studies
- Global/Transnational Modernisms
- Media/technology
- Poetry and poetics
- Politics
- Race
- Gender/Sexuality
- Visual Culture