BRINGING BOOKS TO THE PUBLIC:
BRITISH INTELLECTUAL WEEKLY PERIODICALS, 1918-1939

by

M. Elizabeth Dickens

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Department of English

University of Toronto

© Copyright by M. Elizabeth Dickens 2010
Abstract

BRINGING BOOKS TO THE PUBLIC: BRITISH INTELLECTUAL WEEKLY PERIODICALS, 1918-1939

M. Elizabeth Dickens
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English and Collaborative Program in Book History and Print Culture
University of Toronto
2010

My dissertation investigates the role of intellectual weekly periodicals such as the Nation and Athenaeum and the New Statesman as mediators between the book trade and the audience for so-called serious books. The weeklies offer a productive lens through which to examine the labels commonly applied to early twentieth-century intellectual culture. The rise of a mass reading public and the proliferation of print in this period necessitated cultural labels with a sorting function: books, periodicals, and people were designated as "highbrow," "middlebrow," "modernist," "Georgian," "Bloomsbury."

Through an analysis of the intellectual weeklies, a periodical genre explicitly devoted to the appraisal of intellectual culture, I argue for a critical revaluation of cultural labels as they were used in the early twentieth century and as they have been adopted in later scholarship.

Using quantitative methodologies influenced by book history, Chapter One argues that the weeklies' literary content was characterized by the periodicals' reciprocal relationship with the book trade: publishers were the weeklies' most significant advertisers, and the weeklies, in turn, communicated information about new books to their book-interested readers. Through an analysis of two series of articles published in the Nation and Athenaeum in the mid-1920s, Chapter Two considers the weeklies' negotiation of their dual roles as forums for public debate about intellectual culture and
advertising partners with the book trade. Chapter Three analyzes the book review itself, which found its evaluative function called into question as the number of books and periodicals multiplied rapidly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapter Four examines the vituperative discourse directed at the intellectual weeklies by the Cambridge quarterly Scrutiny. These attacks reveal not only Scrutiny's disappointment with the specific weeklies of its day but also the paramount cultural responsibility it ascribed to the intellectual weeklies as a genre. By considering the intellectual weeklies' relationships with the book trade, the book-buying public, reviewing, and other intellectual periodicals, my dissertation emphasizes the importance of the intellectual weeklies within the cultural field of interwar Britain and argues for a reconsideration of their role in the production and labeling of intellectual culture during this period.
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the University of Toronto, whose financial support, in the form of a University of Toronto Fellowship and a Thesis Completion Grant, has made this research possible.

My intellectual and personal debts are many, beginning with my exceptional committee. My supervisor, Melba Cuddy-Keane, has been a supportive, dedicated, and endlessly patient ally at every step of this project, and I am tremendously grateful to her. Heather Jackson's unfailing sense of when to encourage and when to challenge has gotten me through some of the most difficult moments of this degree, and I owe her more than I think she realizes. Time after time, Heather Murray has pushed me to think through half-formed and inadequately-explained ideas, and this dissertation is immeasurably stronger thanks to her careful reading. Don Moggridge's knowledge of Keynes, economics, and early twentieth-century British publishing has enhanced this project and spared me some blunders, and I am grateful to him not only for his presence on my committee but also for modeling successful interdisciplinary work. I appreciate John Baird's thorough comments on my dissertation, as well as his thought-provoking questions at my defense. I was very fortunate that Ann Ardis agreed to serve as my external examiner; her insightful, encouraging, and challenging comments and questions, both in her written report and at the defense, will be key as I look to develop this project further.

In addition to my committee, various other faculty members have provided invaluable insight and inspiration along the way. Eight years ago, in my first semester as a graduate student, Michael Suarez introduced me to book history and effectively changed the direction of my intellectual pursuits; I am grateful to him for that, as well as
for his consistent encouragement in the years since. It was in Patricia Fleming's class that I first began to think about the function of book reviews in the marketing of books. Much of chapters three and four would have been impossible without Dan White's class on review periodicals. I am also indebted to the staff of the University of Toronto libraries, especially at Victoria University's E. J. Pratt Library special collections.

I have presented parts of this project at meetings of SHARP, the Modernist Studies Association, and the annual Virginia Woolf Conference, and I've benefitted greatly from the feedback and conversations that have ensued, in particular from John Baxendale, Patrick Collier, Jeanne Dubino, Elizabeth Wilson Gordon, Joan Shelley Rubin, Alice Staveley, and Melissa Sullivan.

My friends, inside and outside the academy, have provided encouragement, commiseration, and joy over the course of my graduate studies and especially my dissertation writing. Thanks in particular to Claire Battershill, Meredith Braun, Hazel Brewer, Piers Brown, Rebecca Saalbach Bryant, Kim Fairbrother Canton, Fiona Coll, Sarah Copland, Yuri Cowan, Marybeth Curtin, Darryl Domingo, Lindsey Eckert, Erin Ellerbeck, Rose Evans, Kayla Gassmann, Dan Harney, Chris Hicklin, Katie Larson, Eli MacLaren, Scott McLaren, Alexandra Peat, Leah Richards, Lauren Puccio Scavuzzo, Emily Simmons, Rebecca Tierney-Hynes, and Ira Wells.

There are three friends without whom I would not want to imagine the past six years. Kelly Minerva, Rohanna Green, and Sascha Fishman have been there to celebrate the best days and to make the worst days bearable, and I couldn't ask for better friends.

My family has been amazingly encouraging every step of the way. Many thanks to my aunt, Pam Pilcher, my grandmother, Mary Jane Dickens, and my sisters, Anna
Dickens and Abigail Dickens Beale, for loving me even when they may have suspected I was crazy. This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Owen and Jenny Dickens, whose unwavering love and support has given me the freedom to choose this path.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: &quot;Permanent Books&quot;: The Intellectual Weeklies' Relationship with the Book Trade</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Buy Books for a Good Cause: The <em>Nation and Athenaeum</em> and the Rhetoric of Book Trade Cooperation</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: &quot;The measure of new books&quot;: Book Reviewing and the Assignment of Cultural Value</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Guarding the Guardians: <em>Scrapity</em>'s Attacks on the Intellectual Weeklies</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Consulted</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Tables

1. Reviews in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, October 1926  
   - Page 54

2. Reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement*, October 1926  
   - Page 55
List of Figures

1. Number of Advertisements per Type of Advertiser, Nation and Athenaeum, October 1924 60
2. Advertising Revenue per Type of Advertisement, Nation and Athenaeum, October 1924 60
3. Number of Advertisements per Type of Advertiser, Times Literary Supplement, October 1926 63
4. Advertising Revenue per Type of Advertiser, Times Literary Supplement, October 1926 63
5. Advertisement for Methuen, Nation and Athenaeum, 13 October 1923 65
6. Advertisement for Martin Secker, Nation and Athenaeum, 20 October 1923 66
7. Advertisement for the Hogarth Press, Nation and Athenaeum, 22 October 1927 67
8. Advertisement for Harper and Brothers, Times Literary Supplement, 14 October 1926 68
9. Advertisements for Hutchinson, Nation and Athenaeum, 8 October 1927 69
10. Advertisements for Medici Society and Cassell, Nation and Athenaeum, 13 October 1923 70
11. Comparison of New October 1926 Books, as listed by the Times Literary Supplement and The Bookseller 80
Introduction

As usual the 'pick of the publishing season,' a selection of the most interesting books appearing in the publishers' spring lists, will be found as a supplement to *The Nation* in this the second week of the month of March. The selection is extremely catholic, for I try to include everything which has any claim to be of interest.

—Leonard Woolf, "The Promise of Spring," *Nation and Athenaeum* (1927)

In a 2006 article in *PMLA*, Sean Latham and Robert Scholes call attention to what they describe as "a new area for scholarship in the humanities and the more humanistic social sciences: periodical studies" (517). The newness of this field may be subject to some debate—Romantic and Victorian periodical studies, for instance, have both been thriving for decades—but as Latham and Scholes point out, increasing numbers of digital archives of periodicals and a rise in the prominence of print culture studies within the humanities more broadly have contributed to periodical studies' recent growth and increasing visibility (517). Specifically, scholarship on the periodicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the field in which both Latham and Scholes primarily work, has burgeoned in the past ten or fifteen years. It is within this context of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodical studies that I situate this dissertation on the intellectual weekly periodicals of interwar Britain. The expansive growth in modernist periodical studies falls under a wider umbrella of a recent material historicist trend in modernist studies, which foregrounds attention to economics, marketing, and the physical form of books and periodicals.\(^1\) The past decade has seen the appearance of dozens of scholarly monographs and articles on late nineteenth- and early

---

\(^1\) Among a number of possible examples of recent scholarship focused on the material and economic aspects of modernist literature, see Dettmar and Watt; Willison, Gould, and Chernaik; Wexler; Rainey; and Bornstein.
twentieth-century periodicals. In addition to the work of individual scholars, there are two major collaborative research initiatives in the field: Brown University and the University of Tulsa's Modernist Journals Project, which has published digital editions of a number of important modernist periodicals, and De Montfort University and the University of Sussex's Modernist Magazines Project, which has led to the recent publication of the first volume of The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, edited by Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker. Recent meetings of the Modernist Studies Association have included multiple panels on periodicals, and the recently announced Journal of Modern Periodical Studies indicates that the field has attained the critical mass required to support its own journal.

The terminological slippage in the previous paragraph—modernist periodicals, modern periodicals, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodicals—points to a problem not only with definition but also with focus and orientation within the growing field. Of the three terms, there is no denying that "late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodicals" is a mouthful; clearly a more concise adjective would be useful if there were one that adequately and unambiguously described the period in question. I am not certain, however, that there is such an adjective, at least for my purposes. "Modern" is tempting because it carries fewer connotations of a particular aesthetic style than "modernist," but for many scholars it indicates not the period of time between roughly 1880 and 1945 but rather the entire post-medieval period in the West. In a sense, all periodicals are modern periodicals, and indeed, the periodical is arguably a

---

2 Again, among many examples, see Morrisson; Harding; Churchill; Ardis, "Dialogics"; and Brooker and Thacker, Oxford History.
quintessentially modern form. "Modernist" has the advantage of greater specificity, but it may err on the side of too much specificity.

Debate about the definition of modernism(s) has been a central element in modernist studies during recent years. In their appraisal of the new modernist studies, Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz observe, "were one seeking a single word to sum up transformations in modernist literary scholarship over the past decade or two, one could do worse than light on expansion" (737, emphasis in original). Much of the expansionist and revisionist work that has dominated recent modernist studies has called attention to the variety of modernisms, both within Europe and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and beyond those geographical and temporal boundaries. In this work, "modernism" is often pluralized and extended to include writers and texts outside the traditional modernist canon. There is a great deal of value in the move to define modernism as inclusively as possible, but there are associated risks, as well. The traditional modernist canon—as well as its aesthetic priorities—continues to cast a long shadow, not only in prioritizing which writers receive the most scholarly attention but also in determining the criteria through which new writers, works, and movements are brought into the expanded canon. As long as the word "modernism" connotes formally experimental art and literature, as it still strongly does, especially for scholars working outside the new modernist studies, it risks distorting the relationships between various forms of cultural production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In order to foreground the complex interplay of ideas, movements, and forms of cultural production in the period, scholars such as Rita Felski and Ann Ardis have argued for the retention of a narrowed definition of modernism, in which the term refers
explicitly and specifically to the works it continues to imply: formally experimental works of art and literature (Felski 25; Ardis, *Modernism* 4). The value of narrowing the definition is not to defy the inclusive impulses of the new modernist studies; rather, by positing modernism as one of a number of cultural and artistic movements in the period and questioning its claim to centrality, scholars like Felski and Ardis hope to draw attention to a wide and dynamic range of texts and movements of this period that may or may not have had anything to do with experimental imaginative literature and art. It is in this spirit that I agree with Felski and Ardis and prefer to use "modernism" and "modernist" narrowly. I am interested not in an aesthetic style but in a historical period: that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, specifically in Britain. The periodicals I focus on contained work by modernist writers, and they reviewed modernist fiction and poetry; predominantly, however, their concerns were not with imaginative literature, modernist or otherwise, at all. Instead of thinking of them in reference to modernism, then, I prefer to approach them on their own terms. Thus, mouthful or not, I locate my work on the intellectual weeklies within the field of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodical studies.

These definitional distinctions are important because of the way definitions shape our interpretive lenses. Within the recent growth of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodical studies, the majority of the work has focused on modernist periodicals. Modernist little magazines have received a great deal of scholarly attention, from early

---

3 Felski calls for the retention of "modernism" to designate texts with "formally self-conscious, experimental, antimimetic features [...] while simultaneously questioning the assumption that such texts are necessarily the most important or representative works of the modern period" specifically in reference to her work on feminism (25). Ardis then takes this principle out of the specific context of feminist and gender studies and argues for its wider applicability for studying the interactions of a variety of cultural movements and ideas (4-8).
bibliographical work to more recent revaluations. There has also been work on periodicals not explicitly associated with modernism that nevertheless focuses those periodicals through a modernist lens, such as Patrick Collier's study of modernist reactions to daily newspapers, or the inclusion, in the spirit of the new modernist studies, of periodicals such as the *London Mercury* and *Life and Letters* in Brooker and Thacker's history of modernist magazines. In their introduction, Brooker and Thacker specify their modernist focus: their project "is not about periodical culture per se, but about how modernism emerged in particular forms of periodical and how modernism itself impelled into being certain, very diverse, types of publication" (*Oxford History* 11). The overwhelming number of periodicals published during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries determines that individual projects can look at no more than a fraction of the whole: the entire periodical field is too vast for a single career, much less a single monograph (Brooker and Thacker's volume, the first of three, is nearly 1000 pages long). For scholarship taking place within a literary studies dominated by modernism, modernism is a logical focalizing lens. All of this work on periodicals and modernism is excellent, and it contributes necessary pieces to our understanding of the periodical field of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period in which modernism was a prominent though not, I would argue, a dominant feature. Nevertheless, I wonder how our vision of the periodical field would change if, instead of focusing on periodicals and modernism, we shifted our interpretive lens to "periodicals per se" and found criteria other than modernism to define the boundaries of our scholarship.

Increasingly, there are efforts to do this. In the introduction to their edited volume on *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880-1940*, Ardis and Collier call for "a more 'thickly'
historical (and therefore less conventionally literary) orientation" toward the periodical
culture of the period (4), and they include in their volume several essays (including their
own) that either bypass the modernist interpretive lens altogether or call its
representativeness into question. Conferences are usually helpful barometers for the
direction of new research, and thus it is encouraging that of the nineteen papers on
periodicals presented at the 2009 meeting of the Modernist Studies Association, at least
twelve addressed periodicals and/or topics that are not conventionally modernist
("Conference Program"). In their article in Ardis and Collier's volume, Lucy Delap and
Maria DiCenzo point out that modernist studies' move into periodical studies is an
interdisciplinary move "into the wider arena of press and periodical history," and this
interdisciplinarity has methodological implications (49). Delap and DiCenzo use their
work on the cultural history of feminist periodicals of the early twentieth century to
suggest that "the how/why of modernism […] are not the best questions to ask (not the
best lens through which to look) if what you are interested in are under-explored issues,
genres, artifacts, new media forms, and patterns of circulation" (50). I agree and would
add that even familiar and culturally privileged periodicals may benefit from being
studied through a new lens. By way of example and as a transition to the intellectual
weeklies themselves, I will call attention to the framing of two articles on intellectual
weeklies—periodicals often not conventionally modernist—that appear, included under
the modernist umbrella, in the Brooker and Thacker volume. In his article on the
Athenaeum under John Middleton Murry's editorship, Michael Whitworth calls attention
to that periodical's eclectic group of contributors and contrasts this eclecticism with the
implied homogeneity of journals connected to "particular modernist factions" (372).
Heterogeneity of content and contributors is also what Ardis foregrounds in her discussion of the *New Age* in the same volume: "Unlike the modernist 'little magazines' with whom it shared so many contributors," Ardis argues, the *New Age* published experimental work "*and* subjected it to intense criticism" (224). Periodicals like the *Athenaeum* and the *New Age* are exceptions if the rule refers to periodicals with relatively monologic content, and in a volume dedicated to modernist periodicals, however expansively defined, these weeklies stand out as somewhat different, despite their array of canonically modernist contributors. Arguably, however, an early twentieth-century periodical was as likely to be eclectic, diverse, and dialogic in its content and contributors as it was to be thesis-driven or centred around a particular artistic or intellectual group. If periodicals like *Blast*, the *Egoist*, and *Rhythm* are used to establish a benchmark for what a modernist periodical looks like, periodicals like the *New Age* and the *Athenaeum* stand out as different or exceptional. But if the benchmark is the *New Age* itself, other intellectual weeklies emerge as its periodical peers, and we can recognize *Blast* and *Rhythm* as periodicals that aimed at different goals.

The complexity and diversity that Whitworth and Ardis point to within their respective periodicals is key if we want to find ways truly to decentre modernism from our discussions of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodicals. As Margaret Beetham has pointed out, periodicals are an inherently heterogenous form; even the most uniform of periodicals are comprised of different kinds of material written (or drawn or photographed) by different creators (24). The periodicals of the early twentieth century were no exception. There was considerable heterogeneity even within the so-called little magazines, as most scholars who write on them have shown. But the intellectual weekly
review periodicals—periodicals such as the New Age and the Athenaeum, as well as the periodicals most centrally concerned in my own project, the Nation and Athenaeum, the New Statesman, and the Times Literary Supplement—were, as a genre, considerably more heterogenous, eclectic, and dialogic than the little magazines.

The impulse to point to a particular periodical as an exception to an expected modernist rule may be rooted in an initial surprise at the complexity and perhaps messiness of the periodical. In another of her articles on early twentieth-century periodicals, Ardis describes her students' reactions to time spent in the periodical archive. Her students, she says, "are astute readers of publishers' advertisements in the Yellow Book and Blast," but they are "far less comfortable [...] with the bibliographic codes of the Clarion," which upends "distinctions that [the students] tend to assume are categorical rather than historical." The periodical's blurring of "fact and fiction, art and commerce, and between a magazine's advertising and non-advertising materials," Ardis observes, "surprise and confuse" the students ("Staging" 33). Many readers, I suspect, feel the surprise and confusion of Ardis's students when carefully reading an early twentieth-century periodical for the first time. Although Ardis attributes her students' reactions to the "deliberate obfuscations" of expected categories in the Clarion ("Staging" 33), many of the unconscious assumptions that informed the editorial choices of an early twentieth-century periodical—choices not at all intended to obfuscate and which were likely unremarkable to the early twentieth-century reader—may thwart the expectations of the early twenty-first-century reader. If we do not expect a periodical both to endorse and to criticize experimental modernist work, or if we do not expect to find Virginia Woolf and Frank Swinnerton moving in the same periodical networks (Whitworth 373),
then the *New Age* and Murry's *Athenaeum* may surprise and confuse us. But if we
decentre modernism and instead expect eclectic networks of contributors and dialogic
content, then the *New Age* and Murry's *Athenaeum* appear as representative examples not
of modernist periodicals but of intellectual weekly review periodicals.⁴

Intellectual weekly review periodicals, and specifically these periodicals' literary
pages, are the focus of the current dissertation. The intellectual weeklies occupied a
prominent position in the periodical landscape of early twentieth-century Britain,
publishing political, cultural, and literary commentary, as well as book reviews and
publishers' advertisements. These periodicals are frequently referenced by scholars
working on the many significant authors (modernist and otherwise) and political
commentators who published in their pages. Additionally, there have been studies of
individual weeklies, including Ardis's two articles and a book chapter on the *New Age*,
Whitworth's article on Murry's *Athenaeum*, two books on *The New Statesman*, and one on
the *Times Literary Supplement*.⁵ Nevertheless, there has not yet been a consideration of
the intellectual weekly as a genre, a gap that this project proposes to begin, at any rate, to
explore.

The genesis of this project was an interest in Bloomsbury connections to the
*Nation and Athenaeum* during the 1920s, when the periodical was owned by J. Maynard
Keynes and when Leonard Woolf served as its literary editor. As I began to read issues of

---

⁴ Admittedly, both the *New Age* and the *Athenaeum* under Murry's editorship are particularly shining
examples of the intellectual weekly review periodical, especially as concerns their attention to imaginative
literature. Nevertheless, they are not atypical examples of the genre, as I hope the remainder of this project
demonstrates.

⁵ For Ardis's work on the *New Age*, see *Modernism* 143-72, "Dialogics," and "Democracy and Modernism."
On the *Athenaeum* under Murry, see Whitworth. Among the histories of the *New Statesman* and the *Times
Literary Supplement*, neither Hyams's study of the *New Statesman* nor May's of the *Times Literary
Supplement* is particularly scholarly. Smith's work on the *New Statesman* includes much more scholarly
analysis, but he focuses on the *New Statesman*'s political content rather than on its literary content.
the periodical, however, I experienced some of the surprise and confusion that Ardis
describes in her students. The familiar names of Woolf (both Leonard and Virginia, who
was also a regular contributor), Keynes, Bell, and Strachey were frequently in evidence,
but they were joined, and indeed outnumbered, by the names of countless writers I had
never heard of, as well as those of writers I had understood to be members of some
opposing literary faction. The eclectic group of contributors to the Nation and Athenaeum
in the 1920s quickly forced me to reevaluate my idea that this was a "Bloomsbury"
periodical. I was forced to reevaluate the similarly narrow modernist lens with which I had
initially approached the periodical as I read the Nation and Athenaeum's book reviews.
There, I discovered the occasional review of a modernist novel or poetry collection, but
these were few and far between. The majority of the reviews were not of imaginative
literature at all, and among the fiction and poetry (and very rarely drama) reviewed, much
of it was not particularly modernist. Any study that focused on the Nation and
Athenaeum's attitudes toward contemporary imaginative literature alone or on the reviews
written by well-known writers of imaginative literature—both familiar enough tactics in
existing studies of these periodicals—would leave out the majority of what the periodical
reviewed.6 Because I wanted to concentrate my own study on the full breadth of the

Nation and Athenaeum's literary pages (and those of other intellectual weeklies), I

6 This approach to the weeklies' book reviewing is indeed familiar. May's discussion of review content in
his study of the Times Literary Supplement, for example, is largely comprised of identifying well-known
reviewers and evaluating how accurately the periodical initially appraised works that went on to be long-
lived. Similarly, Smith spends much of the section of his book devoted to the New Statesman's literary
pages to enumerating which canonically modernist works the New Statesman did and did not favourably
review (196-207). Although neither the Times Literary Supplement nor the New Statesman (nor any other
intellectual weekly) predominantly reviewed imaginative literature, both May and Smith, through their
choices informed by a traditional modernist lens, manage to give the impression that the book reviews in
their respective periodicals were interested primarily in the emergence of modernism. Even more generally
balanced approaches to the literary sides of intellectual weeklies have disproportionately emphasized
experimental modernism: in their introduction to the Modernist Journals Project's edition of the New Age,
for instance, Scholes and staff emphasize the contributions of writers like Hulme, Pound, and Mansfield
over the arguably equally important contributions of writers like Bennett and Shaw.
determined that modernism was not a particularly useful category for my purposes. Instead, I propose a different focalizing lens through which to examine the literary content of the intellectual weeklies: the central literary relationship of these periodicals was not with imaginative literature, modernist or otherwise, but with all manner of books.

The intellectual weeklies of the interwar period typically contained both political and literary commentary: the front half, in most cases, was devoted to politics and the back half to book reviews and publishers’ advertisements. In the middle where the two sections met, there was often overlap in the form of featured articles about aspects of the literary scene or the book trade. The weeklies occasionally published short poems or very rarely short fiction, but their goal was not to publish imaginative literature but rather to discuss books of all kinds. A full consideration of the genre would require analysis of the relationship between the political and literary content of the weeklies. At present, for reasons of space and focus, I have concentrated primarily on the literary sides.

Examination of the literary content of the interwar intellectual weeklies reveals a close relationship between these periodicals and the book trade. The intellectual weeklies served as mediators between the book trade and the readers, borrowers, and especially buyers of books. Publishers provided the weeklies with the most significant portion of their advertising revenue, and in return, the distinctive book review content of the weeklies communicated information about new books to the book-interested public and specifically targeted prospective book-buyers, as opposed to book-borrowers. Most fundamentally, this dissertation argues that in order to understand the weeklies, we must consider how they and the book trade functioned together, for this relationship

---

7 The *Times Literary Supplement* is an exception to this format, as is the *Athenaeum*: neither published much political content.
illuminates not only the goals of the intellectual weeklies, at least in their book-related content, but also the complexities the weeklies were forced to negotiate in order to accomplish those goals.

In order to think about the relationship between the book trade and the weekly review periodicals, it is helpful to draw methodological connections between book trade studies and periodical studies. Franco Moretti has recently given quantitative analysis of literary data wider currency in literary studies, with his advocacy of using abstract models, such as graphs, for representing aspects of the "collective system" of the literary field that cannot be grasped through attention to individual works (4). It is worth noting, however, that Moretti gleans all of his data and examples in his chapter on graphs from book historians. The kind of quantitative work that Moretti describes already has a rich tradition in book history, particularly within enumerative bibliography and the history of the book trade. The quantitative work that I undertake on the intellectual weeklies is inspired principally by historians of the book trade. I extend these quantitative methodologies to the study of periodicals, in part because I agree with Moretti that looking at data gathered into an abstract model may help us notice patterns that would not be visible otherwise, and in part because I want to forge a methodological connection between book trade studies and periodical studies. This project argues that the book trade and the intellectual weeklies are deeply intertwined in early twentieth-century Britain. It is important, therefore, not only to connect the two objects of study but also to connect the ways in which we study them.

Quantitative data are not ends in themselves; they still, after all, need to be analyzed and interpreted. But as Moretti suggests, quantitative data can be particularly
helpful in showing patterns. In the case of my quantitative enumeration of the book-related content of the weeklies, these patterns, as I demonstrate at length in Chapter One, reveal that neither modernism specifically, nor imaginative literature more broadly, was of central concern in the intellectual weeklies. To look at them through a modernist lens, then, may be distorting. The most prominent British publishers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries typically aimed for variety and balance in the books they published. In his study of late-Victorian publishing, N. N. Feltes distinguishes between "list" publishers, or those concerned with the long-term benefits of a varied and distinguished collection of copyrights, and "enterprising" or "entrepreneurial" publishers, by which terms he describes publishers concerned primarily with the short-term benefits of publishing bestsellers (Literary Capital 18-19). Mary Hammond and Alexis Weedon, however, both complicate Feltes' distinction by pointing out that the two publishing strategies often coexisted in the same firm (Hammond 14; Weedon, Victorian Publishing 89-90). Weedon notes that for late-Victorian publishers, success was dependent on a balance of financial and cultural capital; publishers' lists "were often a blend of authoritative and prestigious works, works of lasting value which had backlisted, collectable works sometimes published in series, and more ephemeral fast-sellers" (Victorian Publishing 89-90). This kind of publishing eclecticism was no less important for publishers of the early twentieth century. Different firms had slightly different emphases, but for the most part, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British publishing was general, non-specialist publishing of fiction and non-fiction, serious books and popular books, new books and reprints, all adding depth and variety to the publishers' lists. This variety was in turn reflected in the book reviews, literary
supplements, lists of new books, and advertisements in the intellectual weeklies, the periodicals whose role it was to keep a finger on the pulse of the book trade and both to represent and evaluate the trade.

Nevertheless, I do not want to suggest that this emphasis on the generality and eclecticism of book publishing made the intellectual weeklies broadly representative of the reading habits and tastes of all British readers. The intellectual weeklies occupied a particular position of cultural authority within the periodical field of the early twentieth century, and that position was a crucial aspect of their meaning, as a genre. This position was particular, but it was simultaneously inexact, because it was relative to a cultural field too vast to understand in its entirety. During the final decades of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth, Britain experienced a dramatic rise in the production of print, both books and periodicals. Because so many contemporary accounts dwelled on this volume of print production, and because some later scholarship has misestimated the number of books and especially periodicals that were published in the early twentieth century, it is important to lay out the specifics of this production, at least as far as is possible. Simon Eliot's work on British publishing from 1800-1919 demonstrates that there was undoubtedly a steep and consistent rise in the number of titles published between about 1860 and 1913, followed by a marked decrease during the war and a rapid recovery to near pre-war levels by 1919 (7-15). Although the trends are easy enough to track, Eliot points out that we can only estimate exact figures. The trade magazine Publishers' Circular professed to count all new titles each year, but when Eliot compares the Publishers’ Circular figures with the British Museum Copyright Receipt Registers (the records of the required copyright deposit of each new book to the British Museum),
he concludes that *Publishers' Circular* was "seriously under-counting by the 1890s" (107). For 1919, the last year for which Eliot records statistics, *Publishers' Circular* reported 8,622 new editions published, whereas the British Museum's annual report counted 13,060 (116). The upward trend persisted through the 1920s. The *Nation and Athenaeum*, for instance, reported with gloom that according to *Publishers' Circular*, 13,202 books were published in 1925, representing an increase from the previous record of 12,706 in 1924 (Omicron 496). As I mention throughout the dissertation, objections that these numbers represented "too many" new books were ubiquitous during the period. This deluge of new books (flood imagery is common in these complaints), commentators believed, threatened the intellectual weeklies' ability simply to keep pace, much less to evaluate the book trade's output.

Periodicals, too, were proliferating at a rapid rate during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and here, exact figures are even more difficult to calculate. Peter Keating admits that determining the number of periodicals published during the Victorian period is "largely a matter of conjecture" but nevertheless estimates a total of between 25,000 and 50,000 (34). Both Joseph McAleer and Patrick Collier have used Keating's figures to suggest that an estimated 50,000 periodicals were published in Britain "by 1900" (McAleer 25; Collier, *Modernism* 18), and then Ardis and Collier have used the figure to further claim that "in 1922 [...], more than 50,000 periodicals were published in Great Britain" (1, emphasis in original). Although to readers in 1922 confronting an overwhelming periodical field it may have felt as though there were 50,000 periodicals to sort through, this figure is surely too high to describe currently published periodical titles in the 1920s. The figure may also, however, be too low by at
least half to describe what Keating intended it to describe: the total number of periodical titles published throughout the Victorian period. Recent estimates from John North, editor of the ongoing *Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals, 1800-1900*, suggest that not 50,000 but 125,000 separate periodical titles may have been published during the nineteenth century ("Overview"). Yet North's figure does little to clarify how many periodicals were being currently published in 1900. The 125,000 estimate includes all periodicals published throughout the nineteenth century; presumably there were not 125,000 periodicals published at any one time, in 1900 or earlier. Keating cites figures from the *Newspaper Press Directory* that, although they are most likely incomplete, nevertheless indicate that the number of titles published in any given year was a fraction of the total for the period (34). Eliot provides these *Newspaper Press Directory* data in greater detail. From him we discover the most relevant figure for estimating the number of periodical titles in the early twentieth century: in 1903, the last year the *Newspaper Press Directory* kept these statistics, there were a total of 4943 periodical titles published (2412 "Journals," or newspapers, and 2531 "Magazines") (S. Eliot 148). Even accounting for the likelihood that the *Newspaper Press Directory* was not exhaustive, the number of currently-published titles in 1900 was certainly nowhere near 50,000.

Further into the twentieth century, estimates are even more difficult to pin down: there seem not to have been thorough contemporary attempts to enumerate periodical

---

8 Keating and North's time periods do not entirely coincide. The subject of Keating's book as a whole is the English novel between 1875 and 1914, but his figures on periodicals refer to the 1966 Volume 1 of *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900* and to the 1976 print edition of *The Waterloo Directory of Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900* (Keating 462 n84). In the updated online edition of *The Waterloo Directory* (2001), the time period reaches back to include 1800-23, as well, and North gives the estimated total as 125,000. Those additional 24 years likely account for some portion of the 75,000-title discrepancy, but not all of it. Rather, the figure Keating cites has been outdated as further work uncovering and enumerating nineteenth-century titles has occurred.
titles, and the bibliographic work of projects like *The Wellesley Index* and *The Waterloo Directory* that underpin Victorian periodical studies does not yet exist for the early twentieth century. Eliot's British Museum copyright deposit data, however, indicate that at least by 1919, the number of currently-published periodical titles most likely remained well below 50,000. The British Museum Annual Reports recorded the number of "parts" deposited, where parts are defined as "separate numbers of periodical publications, and of serial works in progress" (qtd. in S. Eliot 165). Eliot notes that by the early twentieth century these parts did not include newspapers (165). In 1919, the last year for which Eliot provides data, there were 49,118 parts deposited in the British Museum (S. Eliot 116). These were separate *issues* of periodicals (and possibly also serial parts, though separate serial publication of fiction was rare by that date) rather than separate titles. If all parts represented issues of monthly periodicals, the number of separate titles would be 4093. We have no way of knowing how periodically the parts were published; surely they were not all monthlies, and the percentage of weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies would affect the total number of titles, as would the inclusion of the daily newspapers left out of the British Museum statistic. Nevertheless, the number of periodical titles published in 1919 seems likely to be much closer to 5,000 than to 50,000.

Regardless of the exact number of book or periodical titles published in the early twentieth century, the cultural field was overwhelmingly vast. In practical terms of choosing reading material and having the time to read it, the difference between 8,000 and 13,000 books is negligible, and 5,000 periodicals are scarcely more manageable than 50,000. In the wake of the mass-production of print, there was a particularly urgent demand for labels with sorting functions: readers looked for shorthand methods of
identifying and categorizing books and periodicals. These categories were not simply
groupings according to reading preferences, somehow devoid of cultural and social
significance. Nor was the need to sort and label reading material a new notion in the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Frank Donoghue points out in his work on
book reviewing in the eighteenth century, the understanding of reading "as a symbol of
one's place in the cultural spectrum" occurs when "reading itself has been commodified.
The beginnings of book reviewing mark the advent of this development, for they indicate
that not just the books but the ways of reading them have become so numerous and so
varied that someone (the reviewers) must regulate them" (48). By the early twentieth
century, when print was the predominant form of cultural production, this symbolic
commodification of reading that Donoghue identifies as nascent in the eighteenth century
had reached its zenith. Negotiating the complex and value-laden print landscape was not
merely a matter of attending to the advice of reviewers—particularly because, as
Donoghue notes, the notion that reviewers could effectively sort and regulate the field of
reading was already an "impossible hope" at reviewing's birth (48)—but also of
recognizing review periodicals as participants in the cultural field in their own right. The
intellectual weeklies professed to sort, label, and evaluate the deluge of print production;
they both assigned and interpreted the complex symbolic values of reading (or in their
own terms, drew attention to those new books and occasionally periodicals they thought
might interest their readers). But the weeklies' own position—intellectual rather than
popular, weeklies rather than dailies, monthlies, or quarterlies—influenced their use and
interpretation of cultural labels. In order to understand that position (and to understand
the ways it was often an inexact position), it is important to consider both the cultural authority and the periodical format of the intellectual weeklies.

My indebtedness to the work of Pierre Bourdieu will no doubt be apparent by this point. Bourdieu's notion of the field of cultural production, the space in which valuations of cultural products are worked out, influenced by countless complex interactions between the products themselves and the social conditions of their production and reception, is a helpful model for conceiving of the relational system of book and periodical culture in early twentieth-century Britain ("Field" 30). Bourdieu specifically defines the field of literary cultural production as "the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer," or in other words, "the power to consecrate producers or products" ("Field" 42). This negotiation of cultural authority rarely happens more explicitly than in intellectual review periodicals, weekly and otherwise, in which the consecration of producers and products is the expressed goal. As useful as Bourdieu's formulation is, however, it runs the risk of being too rigid and deterministic of a system. The irreducible complexity of the system ought to allow for individual agency to be among the myriad factors with the ability to influence the whole, yet Bourdieu is skeptical, at best, about the role of conscious, human action. I accept that the social conditions of cultural production and reception—conditions including but not limited to social class, gender, and factors Bourdieu distinguishes as social, cultural, and economic capital—strongly influence taste and perceptions of cultural authority, but I would stop short of concluding that social conditions entirely determine relationships within the field of cultural production.
For a model that retains the emphasis on complex relationships between cultural agents that I find so useful in Bourdieu yet includes within those relationships the possibility of human agency, I turn to Stefan Collini's work on the figure of the intellectual. Collini rejects Bourdieu's model, arguing that it risks "importing too narrowly economistic notions of 'competition' and 'positional strategy' into areas of activity better understood in their own terms" (Absent Minds 57). The cultural authority of an individual intellectual, Collini argues, is the outcome of "the intersection of four elements or dimensions" on "a grid of coordinates"; these elements combine aspects of the intellectual's own actions and achievements, and the perception of the intellectual's reputation by groups of the public (Absent Minds 52). Collini does not propose a broadly applicable theoretical model but rather a model specific to his particular topic of the role of intellectuals in twentieth-century Britain: in short, when he claims he wants to describe his topic on its own terms, he means it. Nevertheless, the specific model Collini proposes might usefully be broadened, particularly in a discussion of intellectual periodicals in twentieth-century Britain, the context of which is similar enough to Collini's own. Collini specifies four particular intersecting elements that produce the cultural authority of an individual, but the elements and their number might vary if the model were adapted to describe the cultural authority of, say, a periodical rather than a person. If part of a periodical's overall cultural authority derives from the individual cultural authority of its contributors, as well as the cultural authority of the figures spoken of with approval or disapproval within its pages, there is thus a potential for exponential multiplication of the dimensions in the grid. Collini also stresses that position within this grid is always changing and dependent upon changes in the constituent elements: "the question of how
far any specific figure at any one time instantiates the intersection of these four
dimensions of the role will always be a matter of degree: being classed as 'an intellectual'
is not governed by a simple on/off switch" (*Absent Minds* 52). Again, the concept may be
adapted to a periodical. Collini's formulation is similar to Bourdieu's, both in the visual
metaphor—a multi-dimensional grid versus a multi-dimensional field—and in the
governing idea of complex relationships between social and cultural elements that
contribute to an overall perception of authority. But instead of Bourdieu's deterministic
struggle between forces, Collini envisions a "two-way relationship between speaker and
publics" (*Absent Minds* 57). If we attempt to move this formulation out of Collini's
specific context and apply it instead as a model for the authority of a wider variety of
cultural products, the relationships quickly become more complex than "two-way"; still,
the introduction of human agents with volition into the system of relational elements
allows for a certain messiness and ambiguity that is missing from Bourdieu's more rigid
system and that is particularly helpful when discussing periodicals that were themselves
often messy and ambiguous.

In Collini's formulation, then, the cultural authority of a periodical derives from
the intersection of relationships between the actions of the periodical—that is, the content
it publishes, including advertisements, the cultural authority of the contributors it
employs, the price, the typography, the frequency of publication, etc.—and the perception
of that periodical by groups of the public, both its inscribed audience and anyone else
who is aware of it. Because cultural authority is relational, it is also relative: different
periodicals will occupy positions of higher or lower cultural authority depending on the
positions and perceptions of readers. For some early twentieth-century readers, for
instance, the *New Statesman* held high cultural authority; for others, that authority came from the *Daily Mail*. These relationships strongly influenced early twentieth-century assessments of the intellectual weeklies, and if we are to arrive at understandings of them nearly one hundred years later, we must also keep in mind the complexity of the periodicals' relationships. In Chapter Three, for instance, I discuss Frank Swinnerton's perception that the intellectual weeklies were the haunts of elitist, coterie reviewing. Swinnerton's view may be contrasted with that of the contributors to *Scrutiny* who, as I explain in Chapter Four, proclaimed the same intellectual weeklies to be no more discriminate in their critical standards than more popular organs. These differing assessments have as much, if not more, to do with Swinnerton and the *Scrutiny* contributors as with the content of the intellectual weeklies themselves, and they highlight the role that varying personal perspectives can play in the evaluation of a periodical's cultural authority and, by extension, in the assignment of cultural labels and values.

Review periodicals of all kinds, regardless of level of cultural authority or frequency of publication, helped explicitly to assign and interpret the cultural values associated with particular reading material, and as reading material themselves, they, too, occupied specific positions of cultural authority. Nevertheless, these positions were inexact, subject to the constantly shifting relationships in the field or grid. This inexactness manifested itself in the labels that proliferated around the reading material of this period: labels introduced to order the growing volume of print but which often lacked clear referents. "Georgian," for instance, often referred to the formally traditional poetry of the *Georgian Poetry* anthologies, yet it was also the term adopted by Virginia Woolf in
"Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" to describe the formally experimental work of writers like Joyce, Eliot, and Lawrence (and by implication Woolf herself) in contrast to the "Edwardian" Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy (320). Another prevalent but increasingly indeterminate label was "Bloomsbury," which, Collini notes, "was used and misused so widely that it almost ceased to have any determinate historical referent" (Absent Minds 113). Other inexact yet ubiquitous labels were "modernist," "highbrow," "middlebrow," and "intellectual." Labels such as these were used by writers in the early twentieth century to sort and identify the cultural authority of products and their producers.

Because of their slipperiness, we should be careful how we import these labels into our own context and scholarship. Bourdieu remarks upon the difficulty of reconstructing "the vast amount of information which is linked to membership of a field and which all contemporaries immediately invest in their reading of works" ("Field" 31-32). These cultural labels all carried particular connotations in 1920 that may be largely lost in 2010. Moreover, even in 1920, labels carried a variety of often-conflicting connotations depending on who was doing the labelling.

Some of the most contentious labels of the interwar period—and most strongly tied to books and periodicals—were the "brows": "highbrow," "lowbrow," and "middlebrow." During the interwar period, when the so-called "battle of the brows" was at its height, "highbrow" and "middlebrow" were often defined in terms of books and periodicals. For instance, in Fiction and the Reading Public (1932), the work that Melba Cuddy-Keane notes was "probably the first to undertake a serious categorization of brow

---

9 See Scholes for an evaluation of slippery labels, or in Scholes's own words, "terminology that seems to make clear distinctions where clear distinctions cannot—and should not—be made" (xi), through a specifically modernist lens. Scholes traces both the generation of some of these indistinct terms and their perpetuation in later scholarship.
levels" (21), Q. D. Leavis confidently labels both periodicals and novelists according to brow and in turn uses the characteristics of the periodicals and novels to clarify the characteristics of their respective brow levels. What it meant to be highbrow, middlebrow, or lowbrow, however, was never as straightforward as Leavis implies. Collini compares definitions of the three terms from the OED "Supplement" of 1933 and discovers a great deal of inconsistency in the usage of terms supposedly referring to variations on the same idea:

the blending of social and cultural classifications, the confusion of intellectual interests with intellectual capacity, the ambiguity in the two senses of 'superior', the unsteadiness between 'being', 'claiming to be', and 'regarded as being'—in all these respects the definitions faithfully mirrored the welter of attitudes caught up in this new terminology. (Absent Minds 112)

The terms were extremely fraught. "Highbrow" and "middlebrow," in particular, could be words of pride or of insult, depending on the self-identification of speaker and audience, a slipperiness that reinforces the relativity of positions of cultural authority. Despite (or because of) their charged connotations, the "brows" were probably the predominant terms of cultural classification during the interwar period. Consequently, they are somewhat unavoidable when doing research on periodicals of the interwar period, and I have used them on occasion in this project, though not, I hope, without recognition of their complex range of meanings.

---

10 For discussions of the positive and negative associations of "highbrow" and "middlebrow," depending on the position of the highbrow or middlebrow writer concerned, see Cuddy-Keane on Virginia Woolf's "Middlebrow" and the debates between J. B. Priestley and Harold Nicolson that occasioned Woolf's essay (22-33). Baxendale discusses the same set of events from Priestley's perspective (13-25).
I could, perhaps, have chosen "highbrow" as my adjective of choice to describe the cultural authority of the weekly review periodicals I am examining here; a number of contemporary commentators did label them, or at least some of them, as highbrow, and the *Nation and Athenaeum* was fond of applying the label to itself. Instead, I have chosen "intellectual," a term that, as Collini illustrates, is hardly neutral (though it is less fraught as an adjective than as a noun), yet which nevertheless best describes the content, aims, and implied audience of these periodicals. While a somewhat less relevant term in the interwar period itself, "intellectual" is free of much of the baggage that "highbrow" carries. And unlike "modernist," which, no matter how much we expand the field, continues to connote imaginative literature, "intellectual" can describe a wide range of periodical content. In short, "intellectual" best conveys the eclecticism of these periodicals' subject matter as well as their fairly high degree of cultural authority.

These periodicals were "intellectual," and they were "weekly"; the second adjective is also important. Collini points to the importance of the "variety of weekly, monthly, or quarterly publications that fall in the space between books on the one side and newspapers on the other," because "the history of public debate in Britain since at least the early nineteenth century can be written in terms of the changing fortunes of different types of periodicals" (*Absent Minds* 54). Elsewhere, he describes periodical journalism as "the intellectual's natural habitat" (*Absent Minds* 435). Although periodical journalism may be particularly well-suited to intellectual activity, it is important to emphasize that publications which are neither books nor newspapers do not share homogenous cultural authority. There are weekly, monthly, and even quarterly periodicals at all levels of cultural authority. A converse tendency is the grouping
together of weekly, monthly, and quarterly publications within a particular level of cultural authority. Patrick Collier, for instance, contrasts "the intellectual weekly, monthly, and quarterly journals" with "the press," by which he means daily newspapers (Modernism 11). Certainly intellectual weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies often shared concerns and contributors with one another, but it is also important to recognize differences between intellectual periodicals that were related to their publication frequency.

Monthlies and quarterlies may justifiably be categorized together—and in fact, both the Criterion and the Adelphi, two of the more important intellectual periodicals of the interwar period, were among the periodicals that shifted between monthly and quarterly publication for financial reasons. Weeklies, however, are unique in many ways from both daily newspapers and monthly or quarterly publications. Monthlies and quarterlies generally have more space available to them for longer and (presumably) more considered articles, but their publication schedule prevents them from being as topical as publications that appear more frequently. Dailies, on the other hand, are extremely topical but for that topicality sacrifice time and frequently space. In the weeklies, the two meet: the publication schedule allows for topicality but also for more space and typically more specialization than the dailies.11 In the early twentieth century, the weekly format was particularly well-suited for book reviewing. The pace of book publishing by the early twentieth century was such that a monthly or quarterly (unless it were a trade journal such as Publishers’ Circular or the Bookseller) could not keep up:

11 Many of the daily newspapers also took advantage of the weekly format by issuing weekly supplements or augmented editions on Sundays, in which they could take additional time and space for their content. Notably, the book review sections of daily papers often appeared once a week, emphasizing the idea that a weekly publication schedule was particularly suited to book news during this time period.
monthlies and quarterlies often touted the selectivity of their reviews because they could make no claims to representativeness. But neither was there a need for book news on a daily basis, and the daily newspapers that kept up with books (as newspapers increasingly did during this period) typically only published their book review columns once a week. There were dailies, weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies at all levels of cultural authority; my interest is in the intellectual weeklies.

Because I hope to highlight the various ways that the intellectual weeklies participated in a wide intellectual and economic network of book and periodical production, the organizing principles underlying this dissertation are thematic. Rather than focusing chapters on individual periodicals or even writers, as I might have done, I have instead focused my chapters on different aspects of the weeklies' relationships in order to emphasize the ways in which these periodicals actively and willingly engaged with interwar print culture. The intellectual weeklies enjoyed a distinct relationship with the book trade; Chapter One charts the nature of that relationship. Employing quantitative methodologies influenced by historians of the book trade, I have analyzed book-related content (reviews, advertisements, and notices of new books) of the Nation and Athenaeum and the Times Literary Supplement according to genre, publisher, and, in the case of book reviews, word count. My findings indicate that the intellectual weeklies were most concerned with what Times Literary Supplement editor Bruce Richmond described as "books to buy, permanent books" (qtd. in May 68). Indeed, the perception (accurate or not) by book publishers that the weeklies reached an audience of potential buyers of new books, as distinct from readers more generally, contributed to the positioning of the intellectual weeklies as organs with high cultural authority. "Permanent
"books" were generally not works of imaginative literature, formally experimental or otherwise, but rather so-called serious books: works of history, biography, politics, science, or economics, to name some of the most frequently-reviewed and -advertised categories. Although the literary halves of weeklies such as the *Nation* and the *New Statesman* and the entirety of the *Times Literary Supplement* were comprised of both book reviews and publishers' advertisements, I have found no correlation between the frequency of a given publisher's advertising and the frequency of reviews of that firm's books. Rather, the weeklies and the book publishers enjoyed a broadly reciprocal relationship, in which publishers' advertising contributed substantially to the weeklies' revenue and the weeklies, in turn, communicated information about new books to their readers, a public of potential book-buyers.

Chapter Two examines two series of articles published in the *Nation* and *Athenaeum* in the mid-1920s, both of which staged debates about the economic viability of serious books, attempted to educate the periodical readership about the book trade, and participated in a cooperative book marketing campaign to convince readers to buy more books. The sometimes contradictory nature of these three goals highlighted the complex balancing act that the intellectual weeklies often had to perform as they negotiated the ideological demands of their role as forums for discussion about cultural issues with the

---

12 Partial exceptions to the rule that imaginative literature was seen as ephemeral were works that had withstood the test of time. New editions of the "classics" of English literature, however, could fall into two categories: substantial and worthwhile new editions that interested the weeklies, and the seemingly endless cheap reprint series that typically did not. Under the former category, for instance, was an unsigned 1926 *New Statesman* review of Ernest de Selincourt's parallel edition of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. The reviewer emphasizes the permanence of the edition, noting that the book "will prove not a mere exercise of a moment but a possession for ever" (Review of Wordsworth's *Prelude* 270). In the *Nation* and *Athenaeum* during the same year, Leonard Woolf, observed of reprints that "there must be a very large and continuous demand for these old books, serious books not at all easy to read, in every form and at every price" ("Publishers" 148). Nevertheless, when the weeklies reviewed reprints, they were typically only expensive editions with claims either to elegance or scholarship (the de Selincourt Wordsworth, for instance, published by Clarendon, was priced at 25s.).
commercial demands of their relationship with the book trade. These articles manifest the
tensions in what Mark Hampton describes as the educational ideal of journalism, as well
as the tensions inherent in books themselves, as objects that are at once commodities and
vessels of art and ideas. These articles were part of a dialogue about the economics of the
book trade that continued over the space of three years, beginning in the periodical, then
moving to book publication in the form of Stanley Unwin's *The Truth about Publishing*,
then back to the *Nation and Athenaeum*, and finally to a second book. The book trade in
the 1920s was organized around cooperative agreements between publishers and
booksellers, and the rhetoric of the *Nation and Athenaeum* articles invites periodical
readers to join as cooperative partners in the book trade—by buying more books.

Chapter Three turns to the book review itself, which came under particular fire in
the interwar period. As the number of both books and periodicals multiplied rapidly in
the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the evaluative function of the book
review was called into question: how effectively and accurately could reviewers be
expected to assign value to the ever-increasing quantities of new books? The book review
has always been a hybrid genre, part evaluation and part advertisement, and many of the
concerns raised by early twentieth-century commentators are in fact as old as book
reviewing itself. The discourse surrounding the efficacy of reviews is also a discourse
about distinctions in cultural authority. Participants in this discourse often held that sharp
differences existed between the authority of the literary evaluation in different sorts of
periodicals. I examine this perception of difference through a comparison of Virginia
Woolf and Frank Swinnerton's writing on reviewing. However, a reading of the
reviewing of Arnold Bennett and Desmond MacCarthy demonstrates that the difference
between two reviewers with different levels of cultural authority could as easily inhere in
the paratextual elements of the periodicals in which the reviews were published as in the
textual content of the reviews themselves. Bennett the popular, middlebrow novelist and
MacCarthy the Bloomsbury, highbrow critic were in fact quite similar book reviewers,
and their journalism networks overlapped substantially. This case study indicates that the
cultural labels of this period, largely derived from the evaluation of books by reviewers in
periodicals, were far slipperier than is often attested.

My final chapter examines the intellectual weeklies from the outside, through the
lens of the quarterly periodical Scrutiny, which devoted much of its energy during the
1930s to evaluating the efficacy of literary journalism. The contributors to Scrutiny were
among the few people, in the interwar period or since, to think about the intellectual
weeklies as a genre with a specific role to fulfill. Scrutiny's frequent and vehement
attacks on the weeklies reveal not only its disappointment with the specific weeklies of its
day but also the paramount cultural responsibility it ascribed to the intellectual weekly
periodical as a genre. The intellectual weeklies, according to Scrutiny, had a vital role: to
guide the intellectual public, in its widest definition, toward the highest standards of
literary taste and judgment, fifty-two times a year. By Scrutiny's standards, the weeklies
failed: they were too embroiled in the commercial activities of the book trade and not
distinguished enough from the popular press in their literary judgments. From a position
of "guarding the guardians," Scrutiny launched a series of brutal critiques at the weeklies
that ultimately demonstrated Scrutiny's own failure to understand the weeklies' actual role
in relation to the book trade and to the wider field of literary journalism, thus somewhat
inadvertently highlighting the complex balancing act that the weeklies were asked to perform as they negotiated their various interests.

One of the key points in the present study, a point that *Scrutiny* failed to grasp, is that the intellectual weeklies were explicitly interested—as opposed to disinterested—periodicals. I use "interest" and "interested" in two senses throughout this dissertation. More generically, the periodicals are interested in particular topics or ideas in the sense that these topics or ideas are relevant to the goals or concerns of the periodicals. More specifically, at times I use "interest" as the opposite of "disinterest"; that is, to indicate that the various goals and concerns of the periodicals—economic, political, social, and ideological—affect the content.¹³ Though the concept of disinterestedness dates to Kant, its use in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literary criticism had a more immediate direct influence in Matthew Arnold. Much early twentieth-century theorizing of literary criticism followed Arnold's claim that criticism ought to pursue "the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind" ("Function" 36). Arguably, truly disinterested criticism is impossible under all circumstances; it was certainly impossible in the intellectual weeklies. Their literary pages in particular required a delicate negotiation of the demands of their commercial relationship with the book trade, the demands of interpersonal relationships within the periodical networks of London literary journalism, and the ideological demands of maintaining an intellectual or critical position in the periodical field. I argue that we do not get an adequate picture of the intellectual weeklies if we do not think of them in terms of their interests, their interestedness, and the relationship between the two.

¹³ There is a great deal of overlap between these two senses of the word, and I find the potential ambiguity in this overlap productive.
The intellectual weeklies played a key role in the production, description, and evaluation of intellectual culture in early twentieth-century Britain. These periodicals were concerned with books: their prices, their publishers, their numbers, their value, and their variety. It was the job of the intellectual weeklies to talk about books and the ideas contained in them: that is, to analyze the production of intellectual culture. This function was made possible, during the interwar years, by a close relationship with the book trade, and any consideration of the weeklies as a genre without attention to that relationship would be incomplete. Nevertheless, the relationship between the weeklies and the book trade created tensions between the material demands of publishing periodicals and selling books and the intellectual and cultural demands of promoting ideas irrespective of those ideas’ commercial value. Or perhaps more accurately, the relationship between the intellectual weeklies and the book trade foregrounded the tensions already inherent in books and periodicals, which are simultaneously commodities and vessels of art, knowledge, and culture.
Chapter One:
"Permanent Books": The Intellectual Weeklies' Relationship with the Book Trade

If publishers did not advertise, literary papers—such as this journal for example—could not afford to pay either their reviewers or their printers. There is in practice no connection whatever, as Mr. Unwin recognises, between the amount of money a particular publisher spends in a given journal and the amount of editorial attention his books receive, because competent literary editors tend to be very independent persons who usually decline even to listen to the representations of the 'business manager.' And to such independence publishers as a rule by no means object; they do not wish to buy favourable criticism, since such criticism would be worth very little. The fact, however, remains that if publishers did not advertise there would be very few reviews of books published anywhere.

—"The Responsibility of the Publisher," New Statesman (1926)

Despite the long tradition of book trade studies and the recent expansive growth of periodical studies, work on the book trade and on periodicals has rarely focused on their complex interaction and mutual dependence. Yet these print phenomena have often worked together, providing content, ideas, and promotion for each other. This relationship is particularly marked in the British book and periodical culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period during which both media underwent multiple and significant organizational changes. During the period between the two world wars, the book trade developed a particularly close relationship with intellectual weekly review periodicals, and these periodicals became not only the vehicles through which the trade advertised to its customers but also forums for discussing all aspects of books and book-buying. Review periodicals had long served as mediators between the book trade and their customers, through reviewing new books and publishing book trade advertisements. In the print-saturated early twentieth century, publishers could not hope to advertise broadly on their meagre publicity budgets; consequently, they focused their attention on the periodicals they believed targeted their ideal audience: not simply readers
but book-buyers. A clientele of perceived book-buyers combined with attention to books and a frequent publication schedule gave the intellectual weeklies such as the *New Statesman*, the *Nation and Athenaeum* (combined in 1931 to form the *New Statesman and Nation*), the *Spectator*, and the *Times Literary Supplement* particularly close relationships with the book trade. The weeklies contained a wealth of information about new books, and particularly about the sort of book that intellectuals and the book trade believed to be most in jeopardy in the 1920s and 1930s: the "serious" book.

The years between the two world wars have been glossed over in recent studies of the British book trade in the twentieth century, but the book trade was a popular topic of discussion during these years, and there are a number of contemporary accounts of the industry, including Stanley Unwin's *The Truth About Publishing* (1926) and Frank Swinnerton's *Authors and the Book Trade* (1932). Publishers in particular were often prominent public figures and publishing houses influential institutions, and the middle decades of the twentieth century saw a spate of biographies and autobiographies of publishers as well as histories of individual firms which covered the period of time under consideration. 14 General histories of the British book trade, such as John Feather's, have had too broad a scope to pay close attention to the interwar years: Feather devotes part of a chapter to the state of the industry during and after World War I and another chapter to Allen Lane and Penguin Books, nineteen pages in all (195-213). In 1982, Ian Norrie's revision and enlargement of Frank Mumby's *Publishing and Bookselling* covered the period from 1870-1970 fairly thoroughly. But Norrie's approach is encyclopedic rather than analytic: he spends much of his time listing imprints and providing biographical

---

14 Among many examples see Attenborough, Hodges, Flower, Nowell-Smith, Lambert and Ratcliffe, and Howard.
trivia about their associated publishers. More recently, Simon Eliot and Alexis Weedon have both applied their more quantitative approaches to the book trade of the nineteenth century but have ended their studies in 1919 and 1916, respectively. Picking up after the period under consideration, Valerie Holman examines the book trade during World War II. The years between the wars, however, have yet to receive extended analysis from a recent historian of the book trade.

The interwar years were a period of transition for the book trade. Particularly during the 1920s, the industry was preoccupied with its growing pains—a trade and a reading public that had outgrown the organizational structures of the nineteenth century but not yet found adequate alternatives. The 1930s were more innovative, as Allen Lane launched Penguin, and the National Book Council and Associated Booksellers introduced Book Tokens to encourage book-buying, yet paperbacks and widespread book-buying were still in their infancies before the Second World War. The 1920s and 1930s were decades of anxiety in the book trade, when publishers and booksellers recognized the need to change their business practices but had not yet discovered how best to do so.

Most publishers in Britain at that time were general publishers; their lists were eclectic and wide-ranging, combining popular novels, biographies, travel books, and reprints of classics with more intellectual or serious works of history, politics, art, archaeology, and theology. Some amount of prestige was associated with the breadth of a list, but eclectic publishing was also considered to be sound business sense, not only because the proverbial eggs spread over many baskets but also because a diverse list ideally balanced ephemeral bestsellers with long-term investment properties. This business model, however, was developed before the rise of mass print culture; by the 1920s and 1930s,
publishers recognized that the growth of book sales and their own profits were not commensurate with the growth of the reading public. During these years, the problems of the book trade occupied a relatively prominent place in public discourse, particularly in the intellectual press; concerns about the producing and selling of books intersected with discussions of their contents' merits, and commentators repeatedly raised questions about the responsibilities of the book trade and the public to one another and to the nation.

To understand the anxieties facing the British book trade in the years following World War I, it is necessary to examine the developments in the second half of the nineteenth century that persisted as trade and book-consumption practices and habits into the twentieth century. An 1852 court ruling upheld the principle of free trade in books: booksellers were free to discount, underselling their competitors as much as they wished (Feltes, Modes 19-20). By the end of the century, competitive discounting had led to a crisis in bookselling: as booksellers shaved off more of their profit to provide the best price to their customers, increasingly few of them could remain in business (Feather 144-49). The solution, in the 1890s, came in the form of the Net Book Agreement. Led by publisher Frederick Macmillan, publishers and booksellers formed professional associations (the Publishers Association and the Associated Booksellers, respectively), and agreed to institute net pricing for books: reasonable, publisher-fixed prices below which new net books could not be sold. Net books would not be provided to booksellers who refused to sign the Net Book Agreement (Kingsford 5). The Net Book Agreement, which went into effect on January 1, 1900, was the foundation on which relations within the book trade in the early twentieth century were built. The Publishers Association and the Associated Booksellers remained strong and ensured that the book trade operated
cooperatively. Questions of book prices and of the health of the overall industry were seen as collective concerns, to be dealt with by the industry as a whole.

The second nineteenth-century book trade development that had lasting ramifications on the book trade in the early twentieth century was the prominence of the for-profit circulating library. The impact of these libraries, the chief of which was Mudie's, upon the Victorian book trade has been well-documented. The circulating libraries of the nineteenth century used their influence to dictate the price and format of new books, particularly fiction; faced with few other affordable means of acquiring new books, readers became habitual book-borrowers rather than book-buyers. The power of the circulating libraries was waning by the late nineteenth century, and some accounts discount their influence following the end of the three-decker novel and the rise of net books in the 1890s (Griest 213-24, Feltes, *Modes* 77). Nevertheless, even with their power diminished, the circulating libraries of the early twentieth century, combined with the increasingly successful rate-supported public libraries, continued to exert influence over the economics of the book trade and the habits of readers. In a 1927 article in the *Nation and Athenaeum* about the price of books, J. M. Keynes pointed out that around half of the sales of the average new book, exceptional bestsellers aside, went to libraries (*"Are Books"* 787). An article by Michael Sadleir later in the same *Nation and Athenaeum* series further argued that the interests of the circulating libraries were often in conflict with the interests of publishers, booksellers, and authors. Sadleir also pointed out that publishers, knowing the general public will not buy copies of particular kinds of books and that "the Libraries will buy in advance virtually the same quantity of copies whether a book be priced at fifteen shillings, at eighteen shillings, or at a guinea, is

---

15 See, for instance, Griest, Feltes *Modes of Production*, and Feather.
tempted to price his book as highly as he dare" ("Ambiguities II" 10). There was some evidence that a sizeable percentage of readers were borrowers almost exclusively, rather than occasionally: a 1920s questionnaire sent to booksellers who also maintained circulating libraries found that only 23% of book-borrowers were also book-buyers (Kingsford 100). The libraries were particularly dominant in the distribution of fiction. On the eve of the Second World War, popular novels comprised 67% of the books sold to circulating libraries and approximately 90% of what the libraries loaned (Holman 6). That 90% represented a substantial number of books: according to 1939 estimates by the Publishers' Association, subscribers to the four principal London circulating libraries, W. H. Smith and Son, Boots, Harrods, and The Times Book Club, had approximately 1 million volumes out on loan at any given time (Holman 6). The readers of these millions of books garnered for publishers a fraction of the profit they would have produced had they bought rather than borrowed their books.

Popular fiction was coded as ephemeral and closely associated with the libraries, whereas book-buying was more strongly associated with so-called serious books: mostly non-fiction books on a wide range of subjects. The number of fiction titles steadily increased throughout the early twentieth century, and they comprised the majority of many people's non-periodical reading material: Q. D. Leavis complained in 1932 that "for most people 'a book' means a novel" (6). Nevertheless, as late as 1939, only 10% of the books in print were works of fiction (Holman 6). The other 90% included staples, such as Bibles and textbooks, but also the diverse category of "general literature" where the lasting, purchase-worthy books were thought to reside. During the interwar years, the book trade turned "buy more books" into something of a mantra, as I elaborate in Chapter
Two. Rather than aiming to convince circulating library patrons to buy their millions of volumes of popular fiction, however, the book trade continued to direct the majority of its marketing, especially during the 1920s, at its core book-buying customers: middle-class readers of serious books. The book trade attempted to reach these customers through the intellectual weeklies. With circulations averaging between 7,000 and 25,000, these weeklies enjoyed a fraction of the audience of even the unpopular dailies, yet a high percentage of this audience were, advertising publishers believed, potential book-buyers.

As I mention in the Introduction, the intellectual weeklies had varied content: the *Nation and Athenaeum, New Statesman,* and *Spectator* were all political and literary periodicals, including political and cultural commentary alongside discussion of a range of new books. The *Times Literary Supplement* limited its content to books, but it discussed books on every possible subject. The potentially wide-ranging appeal of the weeklies' subject matter, however, was balanced by the educated and middle-class tone the periodicals adopted. It is impossible to know, except in individual cases, who the actual readers of these periodicals were, but the implied audience inscribed by the editors and contributors was well-educated and middle- to upper middle-class. Margaret Beetham argues that one of the ways periodicals maintain consistency in the face of their own open and polyvocal form is through positioning a consistent implied reader through "all aspects of the periodical: price, content, form and tone" (28). A periodical's inscription of and interaction with its audience is fluid: the periodical and the audience help create each other. In the case of the weeklies, their audience, and the book trade, each party helped serve the other in a mutually beneficial relationship. The audiences were presumably interested in books, so the periodicals published book-related material
and the book trade concentrated its advertising there. Yet because of this content, the periodicals attracted book-loving readers and inscribed their audiences as book-interested. This close relationship between periodical, audience, and the book trade was specific to the weeklies in this period.

The weekly review periodicals were not the only publications that reviewed and discussed new books and featured publishers' advertisements, but I argue that it was with these periodicals that book publishers enjoyed the most productive relationship. Among other intellectual periodicals, the monthlies and quarterlies were only peripherally concerned with the business and full variety of the book trade. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the most important review periodicals, from the early Monthly and Critical to the famous Edinburgh and Quarterly to the major mid-Victorian reviews such as the Nineteenth Century, were published monthly or quarterly. Many of these periodicals continued to be published and to be influential in the early twentieth century, but their emphases had shifted away from the book trade. In their early twentieth-century incarnations, publications like the Edinburgh Review and the Fortnightly Review (actually a monthly) had become reviews of general culture more than reviews of new books. Although they did publish the occasional book review and carried a few notices of new publications, periodicals that gave attention to a small handful of books every month or quarter could hardly be considered to have a finger on the pulse of the ever-expanding book industry. Within the growing field of early twentieth-century periodical studies,

---

16 In some respects, the periodicals with which publishers and booksellers were most closely concerned were in fact not the weeklies but the two book trade periodicals, the Publishers' Circular and the Bookseller. These monthly trade organs were one of the primary ways members of the trade communicated with one another. But these were largely intra-trade periodicals with few readers among the general public. My interest is in the book trade's efforts to communicate with their customers, and for that task they used the weekly review periodicals.
literary monthlies and quarterlies have received substantial attention: not only the little magazines but also critical reviews such as the *Criterion*, the *Calendar of Letters*, and the *Adelphi*. These periodicals, too, reviewed and discussed new books, but for reasons of space, frequency of publication, and selective interests, they made no effort to be comprehensive. These periodicals were particularly concerned with imaginative literature and with literary criticism, and they played important roles in the cultural and critical discussions of the interwar years; nevertheless, they were not the periodicals of greatest interest to book publishers.

The periodicals that drew the most attention in contemporary discussion were the daily newspapers. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a shift in journalism from newspapers focused on political opinion to newspapers featuring human interest stories, advertising, and "news" (Hampton 36-9). Beginning with the *Daily Mail*, the first halfpenny daily newspaper, which attained a circulation of 1 million by the end of the nineteenth century, daily newspapers reached previously unimagined levels of popularity. Mark Hampton notes that during the interwar years, the combined sales of national dailies "grew from 3.1 million in 1918 to 4.7 million in 1926 and to 10.6 million in 1939" (39). With such circulations, daily newspapers were a particularly valuable and competitive advertising market. Yet for most book publishers, regular advertising in the dailies was not a worthwhile investment. Book publishers during this time period operated on a slim profit margin and had limited funds available for advertising. The cost of advertising in all periodicals, but especially in the high-circulation dailies, was skyrocketing. In *The Truth About Publishing* (1926), Stanley Unwin notes that the price of a six-inch advertisement in the *Daily Mail*—the size required "to make any display"—
is £48, nearly the entire advertisement budget for many books (49). An ad of the same size in the *Times Literary Supplement*, on the other hand, cost only £9. The *Daily Mail* in 1926 had over a million readers, but the majority of those readers were not, the publishers believed, potential book-buyers. Despite the high circulations of the daily newspapers, publishers felt that their advertising budget was better spent on less costly advertisements in weekly periodicals, publications whose audience was more likely to consist of book-buyers. In his narrative of book reviewing in the early twentieth century, Frank Swinnerton claims that the rise of "star reviewers" like Arnold Bennett in the daily newspapers brought increased publishers' advertising to the dailies (Reviewing 32). Yet this increase, if it existed at all, seems only to have been slight. For instance, during the height of Bennett's popularity as the star reviewer for the *Evening Standard* (and the highest-paid book reviewer in the country), there were generally no more than two or three publishers' advertisements in that paper per week, and Hutchinson was the only publisher advertising regularly (*Evening Standard*). Rather than advertising in the *Evening Standard* itself, or in one of the other dailies, publishers were more likely to lift a choice Bennett quote to use in their advertising in the weeklies or the most intellectual Sunday papers (Mylett xxiv).

Publishers concentrated their limited advertising budgets on reaching not just readers but potential book-buyers, a group that that they identified as the audience of the intellectual weeklies. Why the readers of the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Nation and Athenaeum* were considered potential book-buyers and the readers of the *Daily Mail* were not has to do with the relative positions of cultural authority occupied by intellectual weeklies and mass-market dailies. Patrick Collier's work on what he describes as the
"crisis in journalism" in the early twentieth century is helpful here (Modernism 11). Concern about the readers of the Daily Mail and other mass-market dailies was, Collier contends, "the cultural issue occupying most British intellectuals" during the 1920s (Modernism 11). Collier notes that the intellectual weeklies, including the Nation and Athenaeum, the New Statesman, and the Spectator, were the sources of many of these critiques (Modernism 11). That British intellectuals were using the platform of the intellectual weekly press to direct criticism at the daily press indicates the perceived cultural authority of each of these periodical formats, as well as their perceived audiences. Collier suggests that discussions of the press were a way "of talking about the social function, if any, of literature in modern society" (Modernism 6). I argue that the context of these discussions—the intellectual weeklies with their close relationship to the book trade—adds further complexity to the issue. By "literature," Collier seems to refer primarily to contemporary imaginative literature and, given his focus on writers like Woolf, Joyce, and Eliot, specifically to modernist imaginative literature. But the intellectual review periodicals, the forums for these discussions of the press, were not concerned with "literature" in that narrow sense but rather with books. The hierarchy of books as they figured in these periodicals primarily elevated not avant-garde poetry and experimental fiction, or even poetry and fiction of any kind, but "serious books": non-fiction, intellectual, or scholarly books. To expand Collier's argument, then, discussions about daily newspapers in the weekly or monthly periodical press were not simply about "the social function, if any, of literature in modern society" but about the social function of books—especially serious books, seen as material vessels of intellectual culture—in modern society and of the economic viability of the trade which produced them.
The audience for attacks on the daily press was also the target audience of book publishers. This relationship may not be causal, but the confluence suggests an implicit association between books, and specifically book-buying, and skepticism towards mass culture. Here I return to the idea, crucial to marketing and discussion of books in the intellectual weeklies, that only certain kinds of books were meant to be bought by individuals and only certain kinds of individuals bought them. Although inexpensive books, chiefly reprints, had played a significant role in the British book market (and in the libraries of individuals of all classes and incomes) since the late eighteenth century, discussions of books and book-buying centred around new books. In his 1938 analysis of the post-World War I book trade, Harold Raymond suggests that approximately four-fifths of the average author's remuneration comes from the sales of the full-priced first edition, compared with only one-fifth from subsequent reprints (25). Raymond goes on to argue that "the stability of our trade and a reasonable remuneration for author, publisher, and bookseller can only be preserved by maintaining a fairly high initial price for general literature and avoiding too rapid and too steep a reduction in price in a subsequent cheap edition" (27). Sales of new books were crucial to the trade's financial success. Despite this desire for sales, however, the book trade persisted in old assumptions about which sorts of books were suitable for buying. Because of the strong association of fiction with the circulating library, combined with lingering skepticism over the intellectual value of novels, most fiction in the interwar years continued to be viewed as ephemeral. When contributors to the Nation and Athenaeum enjoined readers to buy more books, they took for granted that "new novels" were the exception (Ibbetson 753). If for Times Literary Supplement editor Bruce Richmond the "permanent books" were "books for the study,
books to buy," these are contrasted with "lending library books, the book of the moment" (qtd. in May 68). Recall, too, that "general literature," in Raymond's terms—that is, the mix of genres contributing to the vital balance and variety of the publishers' lists—constituted a noteworthy majority of the books published (Holman 6). Mirroring the concerns of publishers, the intellectual weeklies were decidedly eclectic in their representation of new books while nevertheless showing a distinct preference for "permanent" books: the individual, the intellectual, and the expensive, rather than the mass and ephemeral.

The readers of the weeklies—readers of invectives against the daily press, among other things—were presumed to be not only interested in serious books but also wealthy enough to buy them. Most new books were not inexpensive commodities: few new books aside from new editions of out of copyright works sold for under 7s. 6d., and works of history, politics, or theology were often priced at between 10s. and a guinea. Many of the buyers of serious books, as well as of fiction, were libraries, and many readers of all kinds of books acquired their reading material from libraries (and librarians, in turn, comprised an important group of readers of the weeklies, particularly the *Times Literary Supplement*). But the book trade could not sustain itself through library sales alone, and their advertising efforts in the weeklies were focused upon inducing private citizens to buy books. The libraries provided most readers access to most books, and increasing numbers of cheap reprint series allowed readers with modest incomes to own books. But the new first edition of a book remained an industry staple, and in this sense, book-buying remained a notably middle- and upper-class activity. It is the economic

---

17 Middle-class people during the interwar years earned £250 per year or more and comprised approximately 12.5% of the population (Glynn and Oxborrow 47). A new book priced at 7s. 6d. would
associations of book-buying as much as anything else that inscribe the audience of periodicals such as the *Nation and Athenaeum* or the *Times Literary Supplement* as middle-class. The weeklies themselves were not prohibitively expensive (6d. apiece for the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *New Statesman*; 3d. for the *Times Literary Supplement*), but their ads convey a belief, at least on the part of the advertisers, in a fairly wealthy audience: motor cars, valet services, and serious books.

Publishers were the most important group of advertisers in periodicals like the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *Times Literary Supplement*, but the advertisements were merely one aspect of the mutually beneficial relationship between the book trade and the weekly review periodicals. The weeklies dedicated much, or in the case of the *Times Literary Supplement*, all of their content to the reviewing and discussion of new books, and in doing so, they attracted many readers particularly interested in books. Unlike some of the reviews and magazines of the nineteenth century which were owned by book publishers and were occasionally accused (justifiably) of using reviews to promote the books of the periodical's publisher, the intellectual weeklies of the early twentieth century were independent organs. They prided themselves on their disinterested approach to reviewing, and in turn, the reviews carried greater weight with publishers and readers (Unwin, *The Truth about Publishing* 250). Publishers advertised in the weeklies not because advertising money bought positive reviews but because the lack of direct relationship between advertising and reviews gave heightened prestige to the reviews.

---

have represented about 9% of the weekly income of someone earning £250/year. £250 was the bottom threshold of the middle-class income bracket. A perhaps more familiar figure is £500/year, the income that Virginia Woolf famously posited as necessary (along with a room of her own) for a woman to write fiction or poetry (*A Room 105*). £500/year, incidentally, was also Leonard Woolf's base salary as literary editor of the *Nation and Athenaeum* when he began in that position in 1923 (he was also paid standard contributor's rates for major articles, bringing the total to closer to £600/year). Hubert Henderson, the editor-in-chief, earned £1000/year (*Keynes Papers* NS/2/1). With its up-market advertising, the *Nation and Athenaeum* constructed its audience as similarly upper-middle-class.
The weeklies were able to maintain such close relationships with the book trade in part because of their publication schedule. The pace of book publishing by the 1920s and 1930s was such that scores of new books appeared each week.\textsuperscript{18} Even a weekly periodical could scarcely keep up, and a monthly or quarterly review could expect to cover only a fraction of the publications most relevant to their readers. In the weeklies, there was not space to review all new books, but a high percentage of the "serious books" were at least listed; the \textit{Times Literary Supplement} kept a running book list on a weekly basis, whereas the \textit{Nation and Athenaeum} and the \textit{New Statesman} tended to save up book lists for their seasonal book supplements.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, various kinds of quantitative analysis have been integral in book history. In a recent article surveying the value of quantification for the discipline of book history, Alexis Weedon discusses a wide range of quantitative work on the production of books, from her own sophisticated statistical analysis of the nineteenth-century British book trade, to the work of archiving reading acts in the Reading Experience Database, to the use of Geographical Information Software to track book distribution geographically ("The Uses of Quantification"). Despite the growing prominence of quantitative methods in book and reading studies, however, quantification has not been widely applied to periodical studies, and particularly not to periodical studies of the early twentieth century. I propose to extend to the intellectual weekly review periodicals of the 1920s quantitative methods more commonly applied to studies of the book trade, thereby methodologically connecting what have typically been seen as

\textsuperscript{18} As I mentioned in the Introduction, \textit{Publishers' Circular} was reporting approximately 12,000-13,000 new editions published per year in the mid-1920s, but Simon Eliot has argued that these figures are likely too low (107). These figures suggest an average of between 200-300 new books per week, though book publishing was not evenly distributed throughout the year but rather concentrated around spring and autumn peaks. March, October and November were the heaviest publication months.
separate fields of inquiry. These periodicals, I argue, were intricately tied to the book trade, and our manner of studying them should reflect this connection. Only through an examination of the number and vast range of titles and imprints represented in the periodicals, the number of words published each week in book reviews, and the amount of money publishers spent to advertise in these periodicals, does the scale of the interdependence between these two entities come into relief. This quantitative analysis is not an end in itself but rather a way of highlighting patterns within a great deal of book-related information in these periodicals in order to draw conclusions about those patterns.

The quantitative information I have gathered and will analyze in this chapter pertains to the advertisements, lists of new books, and book reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Nation and Athenaeum*, augmented with some material from the *New Statesman*. I have chosen to focus on the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Nation and Athenaeum* as a point of contrast. The two periodicals had distinct formats and catered to different, though overlapping, audiences. The *Times Literary Supplement*, edited from 1902-37 by Bruce Richmond, contained only book-related information, predominantly book reviews and lists of newly published books. The *Times Literary Supplement* made an effort to be, if not exhaustive in its survey of new books, at least widely representative. Appearing in its pages in the 1920s were reviews of now-forgotten popular novels; scores of works of history, biography, and politics; and specialist academic publications with limited popular appeal, such as a highly specialized book of marine biology ("Angler-Fishes" 721). These general and non-"literary" books far outnumber the works of now-canonical imaginative literature that were also reviewed in the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Richmond retrospectively described the periodical between 1906
and 1926 as catering to both popular and intellectual audiences (qtd. in May 68).

Although it did regularly review popular novels, and Q. D. Leavis used it to define "middlebrow" attitudes to fiction (20), the Times Literary Supplement's range signalled its concern with representing potential buyers of "serious" books. For the most part, the Times Literary Supplement did not contain articles unrelated to books; the lead article was not always a review per se, but it was nearly always on a broadly literary topic. Whatever their book preferences, the readers of the Times Literary Supplement in the interwar years received from that periodical no more and no less than information about new books.

The Nation and Athenaeum, on the other hand, was a political and literary weekly sympathetic to the Liberal party. The first half of each issue was devoted to political and cultural commentary, and the second half to book reviews. Instead of keeping a running list of new books as did the Times Literary Supplement, the Nation and Athenaeum published quarterly literary supplements that prioritized selectivity over exhaustiveness. The Nation and Athenaeum was formed in 1921 with the amalgamation of the Liberal (though at that point Labour-leaning) Nation with the literary Athenaeum; with its Athenaeum heritage, the Nation and Athenaeum was at least in theory, and frequently if not always in practice, among the most book-focused of the political/literary weeklies. In 1923, after complaints that longtime editor H. W. Massingham's increasingly left-leaning political views no longer accorded with the periodical's Liberal platform, the Nation and Athenaeum came under the control of J. Maynard Keynes, who appointed fellow Liberal economist Hubert Henderson as the editor. Leonard Woolf, though a Labour supporter and former contributor to the Nation and Athenaeum under Massingham, became the
literary editor, a position he held for most of the remainder of the 1920s (L. Woolf, *Downhill* 96-8). The circulation of the *Nation and Athenaeum* in the 1920s was less than half that of the *Times Literary Supplement*, and its readers were presumably drawn from a narrower political cross-section and not necessarily all interested in books. \(^{19}\)

Nevertheless, the *Nation and Athenaeum*, like its fellow literary/political weeklies the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator*, maintained a close relationship with the book trade. Because its format included flexibility that the format of the *Times Literary Supplement* did not, the *Nation and Athenaeum* frequently published not only book reviews and publishers' advertisements, but also articles about books, reading, and the book trade. In this way it featured prominently in the public discourse about books and the book trade that was common during the 1920s, and it was viewed as an appropriate forum for such discussion in part because of the prominent part reviews and publishers' advertising played in its regular weekly content.

For my quantitative study of the relationship between the weekly review periodicals and the book trade, I have collected data about the book reviews, advertisements, and other book-related material in the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. I focused on the month of October, the height of the autumn publishing season and the beginning of the Christmas sales season; this choice allows me to discuss the *Nation and Athenaeum*’s autumn literary supplements, which included one of that periodical’s two annual book lists. October represented one of the most important

---

\(^{19}\) The *Times Literary Supplement* published its circulation figures periodically. Circulation was in the mid-to upper-20,000 range throughout the 1920s, and the issue of October 7, 1926 declares, "The Average Net Sale of the *Times Literary Supplement* now exceeds 29,000 Copies Weekly" (661). The *Nation and Athenaeum* did not publish its circulation figures, but records in the *Keynes Papers* indicate an average gross circulation of around 8,000 throughout the 1920s, and a net circulation (subtracting free, voucher, and returned copies) of between 6,000 and 7,000 (NS/4/1-2). The difference in price of the two periodicals—the *Times Literary Supplement* was 3d. weekly and the *Nation and Athenaeum* 6d.—no doubt played some role in the disparity between their circulations, as, presumably, did the differences in content.
times of the year for the relationship between the book trade and the weekly review periodicals; the interdependence between the two existed all year long but reached a particular climax during that month. For October issues during the mid-1920s, I have recorded the size, location, price, and frequency of all paid advertisements in the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. I have also examined the lists of new books, compiled weekly in the *Times Literary Supplement* and in the autumn literary supplement of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, noting the number of books listed and the imprints and genres represented. In Chapter Three I discuss concerns surrounding the quality of reviews, but here I am concerned with their number, length, and subjects. I have documented the title, author, genre, publisher, and price of each book reviewed, along with the length and nature of the review (i.e., favourable, unfavourable, mixed, or neutral), the number of books dispatched per review, and, in the case of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, the name of the reviewer, if known. All of these data demonstrate the incredible amount and variety of books appearing in the weeklies in the years following World War I.

The focus of the book-related content in both periodicals was the book reviews themselves. In Chapter Three I address the discourse surrounding the role and efficacy of book reviewing during this period. Here I am interested in describing the more quantitative aspects of the reviews: the length of the reviews, the number and types of books discussed, and the range of imprints represented. The contrast between the two periodicals’ focus is quickly evident when we examine the book reviews. The *Nation and

---

All *Times Literary Supplement* reviews during this period were unsigned. Although the electronic *Times Literary Supplement Centenary Archive* has used the marked files of the *Times Literary Supplement* to identify the reviewers, I am chiefly interested in the information the periodicals chose to publish for their readers. I have, therefore, chosen not to include the identities of anonymous *Times Literary Supplement* reviewers in my data.
Athenaeum included book reviews as one of a number of regular weekly features. The reviews were important but always secondary to the periodical's political commentary. The political commentary occupied the front half of the Nation and Athenaeum, and the book reviews, interspersed with advertisements, occupied the back half. The Times Literary Supplement, on the other hand, was almost entirely comprised of book reviews. The long (approximately 5000 words) lead article was sometimes a review of a recent book and sometimes an essay on a more general literary topic; most of the remainder of the approximately twenty pages of text, in four closely-printed columns, were book reviews. In October of 1926, the Nation and Athenaeum reviewed an average of 17 books each week and spent an average of 540 words per book. In contrast, during the same month the Times Literary Supplement reviewed an average of 42 books per week in an average of 1340 words apiece.21

Both periodicals made an effort to review books in a wide range of genres. Because the Nation and Athenaeum did not have the book review space to include full genre distribution each week, the periodical had a tendency to highlight a particular genre each week. Although works of economics, poetry, theology, and biography were also reviewed on October 30, 1926, the week's theme was clearly history, with seven historical books reviewed. Similarly, the previous week, October 23, saw a higher than usual number of biographical books reviewed: eight titles in a total of 3400 words. The Times Literary Supplement, on the other hand, had space for broader coverage, and each issue typically featured books on a full range of subjects. The reviews in the October 14, 1926 issue are fairly evenly distributed among books on anthropology, archaeology, art,

21 Book review word counts for both periodicals are estimates. One column of text in the NA contains approximately 600 words, and one column of text in the Times Literary Supplement contains approximately 1000 words. I have used these figures as my basis for calculating word counts.
biography, essays and criticism, fiction, history, philosophy, poetry, politics, religion, sport, and travel; it is a typical issue. In both periodicals there is a correlation between the perceived seriousness of a genre and the amount of book review space devoted to its books. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate the number of books across the spectrum of genres reviewed in both periodicals during October 1926. Despite the disparity in the space accorded to reviewing in each periodical—the *Times Literary Supplement* uses many more words to review many more books—several key patterns are common to both. In both periodicals, there were more titles reviewed in fiction than in any other category, but fiction contained one of the lowest words/book ratios. In October 1926, the *Nation and Athenaeum* spent approximately 178 words reviewing each novel—only 33% of the average words/book ratio. Similarly, the *Times Literary Supplement*'s average of 539 words/novel that month represents just over 40% of the overall average. The *Nation and Athenaeum*'s standard practice for reviewing fiction was to devote a review of around 600-1200 words to between five and ten titles. The reviewer (most often Edwin Muir in the mid-1920s) sometimes devoted as much as half the review to the best of the group, with the less favoured books receiving as little as three or four sentences of attention. The *Times Literary Supplement* devoted around 3000 words each week to "New Novels," and unlike the *Nation and Athenaeum*'s practice of varying the number of titles and giving more attention to better books, the *Times Literary Supplement* chose six novels each week and divided the column fairly evenly among them. There were more novels published each month than in any other single generic category, so it is understandable

---

22 I take the generic categories from the book lists published in each periodical (and because of this, they differ somewhat in terminology, for instance, between the *Nation and Athenaeum*'s "Sailing" and the *Times Literary Supplement*'s "Nautical"). Neither periodical, however, regularly classified the reviewed books by genre, so the generic distinctions are my own best estimations based on the reviews themselves.
that the periodicals reviewed more fiction titles than those of any other genre. The scant amount of space devoted to each of these titles, however, demonstrates the relative importance of fiction to the goals of the intellectual weeklies: novels were ephemeral books of the circulating library, whereas the intellectual weeklies constructed their audiences as buyers of permanent books.

Table 1
Reviews in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, October 1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of Books Reviewed</th>
<th>Number of Words</th>
<th>Ratio of Words per Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antiques</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and Architecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography, Memoirs, Letters</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9540</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2520</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4800</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5100</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1320</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprint</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>435</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2  
Reviews in the *Times Literary Supplement*, October 1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Number of Books Reviewed</th>
<th>Number of Words</th>
<th>Ratio of Words per Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anthropology</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Archaeology</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architecture</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2550</td>
<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biography, Memoirs, Letters</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28,160</td>
<td>1224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biology</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bookbinding</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drama</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3080</td>
<td>1540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economics</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6500</td>
<td>2167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essays</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fiction</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>17,250</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Folklore</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geology</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24,345</td>
<td>1014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medicine</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1330</td>
<td>1330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Military</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nautical</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naval</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3910</td>
<td>1303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>1333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poetry</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6500</td>
<td>812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politics</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6580</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychology</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publishing</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>1250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9250</td>
<td>1321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reprint</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>1750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sociology</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sport</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3160</td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topography</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel</strong></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7250</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preference for seriousness persisted in the words/book ratios of other genres.

Non-fiction books were far less likely to be grouped together in a single review and
usually share a review only when they were thematically similar, such as the three books on the French Revolution that the *Nation and Athenaeum* reviewed together on October 30, 1926 or the two books on the rise of fascism in Italy that shared a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* two days later. In the *Times Literary Supplement* in October 1926, genres whose words/book ratio most exceeded the average were military books, reprints, and the clear leader, economics. Meanwhile, genres with the lowest ratios, in addition to fiction, were topography, miscellaneous, music, biology, and sport; of these, only biology seems a particularly "serious" category. Two more literary genres did receive more substantial attention in the *Times Literary Supplement* that month: drama and literature (a category that other periodicals often called "criticism"). Because the *Nation and Athenaeum* had less book reviewing space, their generic distribution was typically less regular than that of the *Times Literary Supplement*. For instance, in what I might like to claim as evidence of the close relationship between the intellectual weeklies but which in fact is merely a coincidence, the genre with the highest words/book ratio in the *Nation and Athenaeum* in October 1926 is publishing: Leonard Woolf devoted all 1200 words of his regular "World of Books" column on October 30, 1926 to reviewing Stanley Unwin's *The Truth about Publishing* ("Publishers" 148). Of the more regularly represented genres, however, translation, politics, and economics had words/book ratios that most exceed the average, and the genres with the lowest ratios, in addition to fiction, were sailing, reprints, and with a ratio of only 150 words/book, poetry. The poetry figure reflects a trend that had been the subject of debate within the *Nation and Athenaeum* some months earlier, in January of 1926. Barrington Gates, a poet whose work had been reviewed in the *Nation and Athenaeum* by Robert Graves, wrote to complain about "the
response which many of the critical weeklies make nowadays to the books of verse with
which they are no doubt inundated." The weeklies, he complains, hold "periodic exhibits
of minor poetry in job lots of from five to ten, at about two inches of print per poet," a
practice that satisfies neither poet, nor publisher, nor potential poetry reader (492).
Literary editor Leonard Woolf responded to Gates in a column confirming that the
weeklies were indeed inundated with poetry, most of it mediocre, which they had little
space to review. Woolf's insincerely proposed solution is "a fifteen-year moratorium on
poetry" to counteract the current inflation ("A Moratorium" 682). Ten months later, the
Nation and Athenaeum continued to allot only 150 words/book of poetry in its reviews.

Although I describe the content of reviews more thoroughly in Chapter Three, I
will speak briefly about typical reviewing styles at this juncture. The reviews in both the
Nation and Athenaeum and the Times Literary Supplement were quite varied in their
styles. Some reviewers spoke clearly in favour or in disfavour of the book(s) they
reviewed, but many did not. One theory of book reviewing that held influence,
particularly in the Times Literary Supplement, suggested that a review should refrain
from offering an opinion but instead should merely give an accurate summary of the
book's contents (without giving away the ending, if it were a novel—though reviewers
were not always careful to avoid "spoilers"), leaving readers with the information to
decide whether the book interested them. Still other reviewers, especially experts
reviewing scholarly books, preferred to use the review as an occasion to write their own
essays on the topic rather than engage extensively with the book under review.

In addition to reviewing books on a wide range of subjects, both periodicals also
gave attention to the books of the full spectrum of publishers. During the first four issues
of October 1926, the *Nation and Athenaeum* reviewed books with 35 different imprints.\(^{23}\) In the same period, the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewed books from 79 different imprints, many of them non-British. Neither periodical devoted undue notice to any particular imprint. In the *Nation and Athenaeum*, Constable and Heinemann each saw five books reviewed in the first four weeks of October 1926, and several other imprints had three or four books reviewed. The numbers were higher in the *Times Literary Supplement*, but the even distribution was similar: nine Heinemann books in October 1926, seven Macmillan, six each for Allen and Unwin, Constable, Kegan Paul, Methuen, Milford, and Seeley, Service. These figures demonstrate the division of power in the book trade of this period. The publishing industry had grown considerably in the previous hundred years, with scores of firms doing business in London alone during the interwar period. But the industry had not yet consolidated into conglomerates, so most firms published under only one imprint, which was typically also the firm's name. Although there were a handful of companies larger and more powerful than the rest, there was no single dominant firm, and many publishers regularly produced books worth reviewing.

Paid advertising from publishers constituted a major source of revenue for both the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *Times Literary Supplement*. In the *Nation and Athenaeum*, publishers were the most frequent advertisers, but they were not the only merchants who bought advertising space: an average issue of the *Nation and Athenaeum* in the 1920s includes a wide assortment of advertisements for products and organizations as varied as Player's cigarettes, Rowntree's Motoring Chocolate, the Royal National Life-

---

\(^{23}\) The *Nation and Athenaeum* was published on Saturdays and the *Times Literary Supplement* on Thursdays. There were five Saturdays in October 1926 but only four Thursdays; consequently, I'm using only the first four issues of the *Nation and Athenaeum* in that month for purposes of the present comparison.
Boat Institution, and Efascaphone wireless sets. Nevertheless, the publishers were predominant: during the *Nation and Athenaeum*‘s four October 1924 issues, for instance, more than half of the total advertisements (excluding classified ads) were for publishers (see Fig. 1). In addition to the 69 publishers' advertisements that month, 23 more advertise booksellers, magazines, or other book-related products and merchants; only 41 of the 133 advertisements could be considered non-literary. When we consider not only the number of ads but also their size—and consequently price—the predominance of the publishers becomes even more pronounced. The *Nation and Athenaeum* advertising rates in the 1920s, printed on the back page of each issue, were as follows: a full-page ad sold for £16, a half-page for £8, a quarter-page for £4, an eighth-page for £2, and ads smaller than an eighth-page for 15s. per inch of a single column. In October 1924, all of the full-page ads were for publishers, as were 40 of the 51 half-page ads. Publishers' advertisements constituted around 60% of the *Nation and Athenaeum*‘s advertising revenue for October 1924: £533 out of £893 total advertising revenue. The next-highest paying group of advertisers were tobacco merchants; tobacco ads brought in £34 of advertising revenue in October 1924 (see Fig. 2). The *Nation and Athenaeum* does not give its rates for classified ads, though it contains at least one page of them each week during this period. I have estimated the total combined cost of a page of classified ads at £16, the same as a full page of advertising by a single advertiser. Calculated this way, classified ads brought in £128 during October 1924. Because of the inherent variety of such advertisements, however, I would argue that they do not constitute a single type of merchant or product.
Fig. 1. Number of Advertisements per Type of Advertiser, *Nation and Athenaeum*, October 1924.

Fig. 2. Advertising Revenue per Type of Advertisement, *Nation and Athenaeum*, October 1924.
the most dominant single advertising group; the other £396 of the April 1924 advertising revenue came from a much wider range of merchants and also included at least one page of classified or miscellaneous ads each week. Intellectual weeklies were not particularly profitable organs; the *Nation and Athenaeum*, for instance, operated at a loss throughout the 1920s (as much as £6485 in 1921, though the loss had been cut to between £200 and £300 during the decade's final three years) (*Keynes Papers* NS/2/23). The *New Statesman and Nation*, amalgamated in 1931, finally showed a profit for the first time in 1933-34 (*Keynes Papers* NS/5/49). Not only were the weeklies often unprofitable, they, unlike the daily newspapers of this period, relied heavily on circulation revenue. In 1924, for instance, the *Nation and Athenaeum* earned 61% of its revenue from circulation and only 39% from advertising (*Keynes Papers* NS/2/23). By 1928, however, advertising had increased while circulations held steady, and the two sources contributed approximately equivalent revenue (*Keynes Papers* NS/2/23). Although circulation revenue was generally the higher figure, advertising was always crucial, and publishers were the most influential group of advertisers. Even accounting for lower figures during months in which there was not a literary supplement drawing extra advertisements, it is fair to conclude that publishers were among the most significant financiers of an intellectual weekly like the *Nation and Athenaeum*.

The *Times Literary Supplement* is a larger format periodical than the *Nation and Athenaeum*, measuring 12 in. x 18 in., compared with the *Nation and Athenaeum's* 9 in. x 13 in. Whereas the *Nation and Athenaeum* sold advertising by the page, the *Times Literary Supplement* 's rates, as published in each issue, were calculated by the column inch: 30s. per inch of a column (of which there are four per page), prorated to a total of
£25 per 16.5 in. column. Advertising was, therefore, more expensive in the *Times Literary Supplement* for the amount of space, but perhaps a better investment considering that the circulation was more than double that of the *Nation and Athenaeum* during the 1920s. With its exclusively book-related content, the *Times Literary Supplement* attracted almost exclusively book-related advertisements, the vast majority from publishers.

During the four weeks of October 1926, the *Times Literary Supplement* published 214 total advertisements costing approximately £2398; all but ten of the advertisements were for publishers, booksellers, or other periodicals, and of those ten, only two (for tobacco) were completely unrelated to books or journalism. Publishers constituted an even higher percentage of the advertising yield in the *Times Literary Supplement* than they did in the *Nation and Athenaeum*. In October 1926, 157 of the 214 advertisements were for publishers. They also tended to buy larger ads than booksellers (who more typically placed a standard two- or three-inch ad each week), making them overwhelmingly the biggest spenders among *Times Literary Supplement* advertisers: £2152 3s., or 90%, of the October 1926 advertising revenue came from publishers (see Figs. 3 and 4). This distribution of book-related advertisement reflects the organization of the trade. Books were typically advertised individually, by imprint. There was little need for booksellers or libraries to advertise extensively: booksellers and for-profit libraries could be expected to have similar stocks and to order anything a customer desired if it were not in stock.

Because of the Net Book Agreement, all booksellers offered books at the same price. Publishers designed their advertising schemes around the assumption that most readers, at least of the more serious books most advertised in the weeklies, went to their bookseller or library to ask for specific, individual books rather than to browse.
Fig. 3. Number of Advertisements per Type of Advertiser, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 1926.

Fig. 4. Advertising Revenue per Type of Advertiser, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 1926.
Most of the publishers' advertisements contained lists of books in some form. Standard information for a book included the title, author, format, occasionally binding information, the presence and number of illustrations, if applicable, and the net price of the book. Many ads also included some kind of description of books' contents, whether the publisher's own summary or excerpts from favourable book reviews. The large and traditional ads for major houses could contain two dozen books or more, divided by genre; such ads presumed the reader of the *Nation and Athenaeum* or the *Times Literary Supplement* would read the advertisements carefully (see Fig. 5). Other publishers, perhaps with less faith in readers' patience, aimed to be more eye-catching in their ad design. Martin Secker took a thematic approach in a 1923 advertisement highlighting one of the firm's star authors, D. H. Lawrence (136, see Fig. 6). Smaller and cheaper ads allowed publishers the flexibility of more specialized advertising: a Hogarth Press ad in the *Nation and Athenaeum* in 1927, for instance, used its quarter-page space to advertise only the press's three autumn novels (131, see Fig. 7). Because so many publishers used similar advertising techniques, those that diverged from standard practice were noteworthy. A Harper and Brothers ad in the *Times Literary Supplement* on October 14, 1926 provided only the title and publication date of a new book: "*The Human Adventure* / To be published on October 28" (691, see Fig. 8). The paucity of the information, particularly in contrast to the standard ads full of details and blurbs, presumably piqued the reader's curiosity about what this book is. Hutchinson employed one of the more eye-catching advertising schemes in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, opting for multiple quarter-page spaces in the same issue rather than one larger ad. These quarter-page ads were formatted identically and usually contained two or three titles; the ads were placed in the
Fig. 5. Advertisement for Methuen, Nation and Athenæum, 13 October 1923.
Works by
D. H. Lawrence
published by Martin Secker

Kangaroo

"A fine, rich book... He exercises here with beautiful ease his power of making his characters come alive under his hands, and the whole is delightful." THE TIMES. 75. 6d.

The Lost Girl

"The novel... is firm in drawing, light and witty in texture, charmingly fresh in style and atmosphere. It is a brilliant book." THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN. 75. 6d.

Women in Love

"Women in love is a word of genius. It contains characters which are masterpieces of pure creation." THE NEW STATESMAN.

Aaron's Rod

"Aaron's rod is the most important thing that has happened to English literature since the war." THE NATION.

The Ladybird

"In the Ladybird he has collected three examples of his workmanship, and each of them separately is a masterpiece." THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE. 75. 6d.

Sea and Sardinia

"The book is a masterpiece of its kind, and its eight illustrations in colour by Jen Job are hardly less happy than the text." THE SOUTHWAY TIMES.

New Poems

Birds, Beasts and Flowers (Thirdy) 60. 6d.

Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious

"He has re-awakened us in his own way to the marvelously flowering riches of life." THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.

Fantasia of the Unconscious

"The sort of medicine that is good for a world enervated by too much sentimentality, and muddled by too many false ideals." THE OUTLOOK.

New Publications

The Heretic of Secco

Phoenix

Love's Cruelty: Poems

Days and Nights

Letters from a Distance

Poems

Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt

The Adelphi Edition of the Works of Jane Austen, including Lady Susan and The Watson, and with an Introduction by Frank Swinnerton. 35. 6d.

Number Five John Street Adelphi

Fig. 6. Advertisement for Martin Secker, Nation and Athenaeum, 20 October 1923
Fig. 7. Advertisement for the Hogarth Press, Nation and Athenæum, 22 October 1927.

THE HOGARTH PRESS is publishing only three works of fiction this season, and all of them have already been recognised as remarkable. They are:

MR. BALCONY, by C. H. B. Kitchin.
I SPEAK OF AFRICA, by William Plomer.
THE MAN WITH SIX SENSES, by M. Jaeger.

The whole of the first page of T. P.'s Weekly was given up to a review of MR. BALCONY by Mr. William Gerhardi, and Mr. Hartley devoted over two columns of the Saturday Review to it the same week. The book, says Mr. Gerhardi, "is a search for reality in life." "What a relief," says Mr. Hartley, "to find that Mr. Kitchin, an up-to-date and what is tiresomely called 'important' writer, never flinches for a moment from being amusing, if the mood takes him... Mr. Kitchin's work, at once intricate and passionate, promises him a very brilliant future." Mr. Edwin Muir in his page in The Nation makes I SPEAK OF AFRICA the principal book of the week. It is one of the rare books, he says, which is good rather than merely meritorious, and Mr. Plomer "writes so well as to make even Mr. Montague's accomplished prose seem second-rate." THE MAN WITH SIX SENSES headed the novels reviewed in the Times Literary Supplement, receives high praise from the Manchester Guardian, and is called an "outstanding novel" by the Northern Echo.
Fig. 8. Advertisement for Harper and Brothers, *Times Literary Supplement*, 14 October 1926
Fig. 9. Advertisements for Hutchinson, *Nation and Athenaeum*, 8 October 1927.
Fig. 10. Advertisements for Medici Society and Cassell, Nation and Athenaeum 13 October 1923.
same position, the upper right-hand corner of the recto side of successive pages, a positioning designed to cause the reader to do a double-take on the second ad and possibly flip back to the previous page (29, 31, see Fig. 9). The juxtaposition of advertisements often highlights the breadth of the weeklies' audience, at least as perceived by the periodicals' advertisers. Whether or not the contrast was intentional, a 1923 issue of the *Nation and Athenaeum* published a half-page ad for the Medici Society, a fine art press, next to an ad for Cassell that highlighted their popular fiction (101, see Fig. 10). The audience of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, it is implied, would be interested in a finely printed edition of Swinburne, as well as in Hall Caine's latest bestseller.

The publishers' advertisements in both periodicals came from a wide range of publishers. In its four October 1924 issues, for example, the *Nation and Athenaeum* published ads for 54 different imprints, only ten of which advertise more than once during that time period. Small publishers like the Chelsea Publishing Company or the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) bought eighth-page ads for only £2 each, whereas a major house like Fisher Unwin bought full- and half-page ads in two different weeks, spending £24 for the month on advertising in a single periodical. The publishers' advertisements in the *Times Literary Supplement* were similarly wide-ranging. In the four issues of October 1926, 74 different imprints, most representing separate firms, were advertised in its pages. Many publishers advertised every week, with some of the larger houses, such as Constable and Harper Brothers, placing multiple ads in a single issue. Despite its steeper advertising rates, the *Times Literary Supplement* attracted the business of smaller firms, as well: The Pear Tree Press, The Pleiad, and Cambridge publisher/bookseller W. Heffer appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement* ads during
October 1926 alongside the venerable Longmans and Macmillan, and the now-famous Hogarth Press and Faber and Gwyer (later Faber and Faber). Whereas the *Times Literary Supplement* published approximately the same number of advertisements each week—around 40 per week in October 1926—the *Nation and Athenaeum* showed a sharp increase in the amount of publisher advertising in the *Nation and Athenaeum* during the second week of October, the week of the autumn literary supplement. Not only was the supplement itself half comprised of advertising, but the accompanying regular issue devoted additional pages to publisher advertising during that week. On October 4, 18, and 25, 1924, the *Nation and Athenaeum* received £52, £94, and £40 of revenue, respectively, from publishers. In contrast, on October 11, 1924, the week of the literary supplement, the *Nation and Athenaeum* published 42 different publishers' advertisements worth £380.

The relationship between the *Nation and Athenaeum*'s literary supplements, which contained extra reviews and lists of recommended books, and the extra advertising they elicited from publishers is indicative of the mutually beneficial relationship between the book trade and the weeklies. For the political/literary periodicals like the *Nation and Athenaeum*, publishing a literary supplement brought in additional advertising revenue; for the publishers, a weekly periodical's literary supplement was a worthwhile place to target advertising because its readers were extremely likely to be potential customers. The efficacy of the relationship between the two parties depended upon the critical independence of the periodicals. The *Nation and Athenaeum* and its fellow weeklies were independent reviews; although they were often frank about their biases—political, economic, and literary—they were not in the pocket of particular publishers. The *Times Literary Supplement* was owned by *The Times*, but had no direct affiliation with any book
publisher. The periodicals attempted to represent all worthy books in its reviews and book lists, regardless of publisher, and frequency of advertising gained publishers no particular advantage in terms of the number of their books reviewed or mentioned in the lists of books. An interesting example of the lack of correlation between an imprint's advertising and its representation (or lack thereof) in the book lists is the case of Hutchinson and the Nation and Athenaeum. In October 1924, Hutchinson bought no advertising space in the Nation and Athenaeum, yet in the selection of new books listed in the literary supplement, it was tied for second most-recommended imprint, with 29 titles in "The Pick of the Publishing Season" list. Two years later, the firm had adopted their aforementioned multiple ad marketing technique, and were the biggest advertiser of any kind over the five Nation and Athenaeum issues published in October 1926: they bought nine different ads worth a total of £36. Yet in the October 1926 "Pick of the Publishing Season" list in the literary supplement, only five Hutchinson books were recommended. The number of Hutchinson books reviewed in the Nation and Athenaeum during those months seems to have little correlation to either the amount of advertising or the number of books that appear on the supplement's book list: one Hutchinson book was reviewed in October 1924, and two were reviewed in October 1926. Instead of being influenced by the amount of advertising money Hutchinson paid the Nation and Athenaeum, the periodical's indirect advertising of the firm through the reviews and the book list appears to have been based solely on the perceived merits of the books themselves. The periodicals' independence was in the best interests of the publishers, as they recognized. Stanley Unwin, discussing reviews in The Truth about Publishing, points out that
"opinions that can be bought carry little weight," and suggests that "wise publishers" should be grateful for this arrangement of affairs (250).

The *Nation and Athenaeum* published four literary supplements per year during the 1920s, timed to coincide with the peaks of the publishing seasons. The supplements that appeared in March and in October were the longest. They appeared at the same time as the publishers' spring and fall lists and contained, alongside the extra publishers' advertising, a long list of selected books from the publishers' lists. The other literary supplements, in June and December, were shorter, and instead of book lists they contained additional book reviews; the December supplements concentrated on gift books, children's books, and other material thought to be particularly suited to the Christmas season. Other political/literary weeklies, such as the *New Statesman*, followed a similar format. Perhaps the most significant of the four supplements was October's: Christmas was always good for the book trade, and there was a relatively slim October-November window for new books to appear at best advantage for the Christmas season. There were new books every week of the year and a peak in the spring, but autumn was the most important season for the book trade. Consequently, the lists of books in the October supplement of the weekly review periodicals were particularly significant. The October supplements contained lists of books (title, author, imprint, and net price), arranged by genre. The *Nation and Athenaeum* called its list "The Pick of the Publishing Season," and between 1923 and 1925 appended this note to the beginning of the list: "The following is a selection of the more interesting books appearing in the Publishers' Autumn Lists, grouped under different subject headings, and arranged under the alphabetical order of the Publishers' names" (13 October 1923, 83; 11 October 1924, 75;
10 October 1925, 79). The Nation and Athenaeum reviewed approximately a dozen books in an average week, often with an additional four or five mini-reviews in the "Books in Brief" section, yet the supplement lists contained hundreds of titles published under scores of imprints. On October 10, 1925, the "Pick of the Publishing Season" included 774 titles divided into 24 genre headings and representing 108 different imprints.

Just as the spectrum of publishers advertising in the Nation and Athenaeum was broad, the firms whose books appeared in the supplement lists were similarly wide-ranging. Naturally, large firms with more titles on their lists found their imprints appearing more frequently in the lists, but small and/or new publishers were not neglected. Among the most-recommended imprints in the Nation and Athenaeum in October 1925 were the long-established houses of Macmillan, Heinemann, Cassell, and the Oxford University Press, but also newer publishers such as Jonathan Cape (est. 1921) and Allen and Unwin (est. 1914). Although it is impossible to determine from the information in the periodicals what percentage of a publisher's total new books are recommended in the supplement list, it is likely that small but distinguished publishers, such as the Nonesuch Press or the Golden Cockerel Press, saw a high percentage of their total lists recommended. In his dual role as publisher and literary editor, the Nation and Athenaeum's Leonard Woolf no doubt had to take care not to appear biased towards his own Hogarth Press books. In October 1925, for instance, the Nation and Athenaeum included five Hogarth Press books in "The Pick of the Publishing Season," whereas the equivalent New Statesman list of the same week, compiled by the Woolfs' friend, New

---

25 Inexplicably, this note disappeared after 1925, and although the books in each category usually (but not always) remained grouped by imprint, the imprints were no longer listed alphabetically.
Statesman literary editor Desmond MacCarthy, recommended 15 Hogarth Press books—Hogarth's entire autumn list.26

This example of the Hogarth Press books highlights a particular feature of the supplement lists in periodicals such as the Nation and Athenaeum and the New Statesman: these periodicals openly presented the lists as a selection by an individual. The lists were the result of the literary editor perusing the publishers' autumn lists and noting the books that seemed promising. Discussions of the process often foregrounded the impossibility of making any manner of critical selection in the face of what was simultaneously too little and too much information. There were too many new books on the publishers' lists, many of them not yet in print, for the editors to learn much about any of them. Leonard Woolf begins the October 11, 1924 column in which he discusses his "Pick of the Publishing Season" with the following observation: "I do not believe anyone would disagree with the statement that too many books are published, if he had done what I have done during the last week or two—read carefully through all the publishers' announcement lists and marked those books which should be given a place in our Supplement" ("Harvest" 54). The fruit of Woolf's labour was a supplement list containing 916 titles in 21 genres, gleaned from the announcement lists of 109 different imprints. The remainder of his column includes a more selective list of books he finds "above the average in interest," though this list of a list of a list still contains many more books than will actually be reviewed in the periodical. Of this select list, and of the larger "Pick of

26 I have cross-checked the Hogarth Press books in the 1925 New Statesman supplement list with J. Howard Woolmer's A Checklist of the Hogarth Press, 1917-1946 to determine that MacCarthy most likely recommends the entire Hogarth Press autumn list, including pamphlets. Some titles on MacCarthy's list were not published until 1926, but presumably the Hogarth Press advertised them in the autumn of 1925. Only one pamphlet that Woolmer records as published in October 1925, Herbert Read's In Retreat, does not appear in the New Statesman supplement list.
the Publishing Season" by implication, Woolf disclaims, "Naturally such a selection is biased by one's personal tastes, and my list will omit many books that other people would rightly include" ("Harvest" 54). In Desmond MacCarthy's equivalent column in the *New Statesman* of the same week, he describes his selection method as "rapid guess-work" done in the short space of time between receiving the "avalanche" of publishers' announcements and his *New Statesman* deadline. He offers the inevitable conclusion about a list compiled this way: "It is possible that the very best book of the season is not even mentioned here; it is extremely probable that other books more interesting and important than many named here have been overlooked" ("The Autumn List" xviii). As I explain at greater length in Chapters Two and Three, anxieties about the number of books being published and the ability of book-lovers to keep up with them, much less critically assess them, were particularly high during these decades. The question of whether too many books were being published was not only a persistent theme in periodical discussions of the book trade but also the subject of a broadcast Leonard and Virginia Woolf gave for the BBC in 1927, entitled "Are Too Many Books Written and Published?" The number of books published was a relevant factor in discussions about the economic viability of book publishing—especially the publishing of serious books—as I demonstrate in Chapter Two, as well as in discussions about the evaluation of books, as I argue in Chapter Three.

Whereas the *Nation and Athenaeum* published quarterly literary supplements, the *Times Literary Supplement* was itself a literary supplement, originally included with *The Times* once a week and from 1914 a separate publication to be bought independently of the daily paper. As such, it had no need to jettison lists of new publications into special,
semi-annual features but instead included them at the end of each issue in several pages of "New Books and Reprints." Unlike the Nation and Athenaeum and New Statesman literary editors' penchant for explaining their selection processes to their readers, Bruce Richmond and his fellow Times Literary Supplement writers remained anonymous and impersonal in the pages of their periodical. The question of editorial voice is among the most significant differences between the Times Literary Supplement and its political/literary hybrid competitors. Whereas periodicals like the Nation and Athenaeum and the New Statesman actively fostered dialogue among the periodical's own writers and between the periodical and its readers, the Times Literary Supplement maintained a far more authoritative editorial voice. The Times Literary Supplement often behaved as though it presented merely neutral information rather than ideas and opinions. The periodical's correspondence columns frequently published disagreements and debates, but these overwhelmingly concerned points of fact—most often expert readers correcting reviewers' errors—rather than ideology. Yet there were active editorial choices at work in the Times Literary Supplement even if the agency was masked (indeed, the decision to mask the editorial voice was itself an active editorial decision). We see an example of such a decision in the principles of selection underlying the "New Books and Reprints" column.

"New Books and Reprints" commented neither on its exhaustiveness nor its selectivity: there was no indication whether the list comprised all the new books of the week, or what kind of selection had taken place if it did not. In practice the column was

---

27 In addition to the "New Books and Reprints" section, in which books were simply listed, often with very brief reviews, the Times Literary Supplement also published announcements of forthcoming books of interest. These appeared in small paragraphs scattered throughout the issue. The man responsible for collecting and writing the announcements during the 1920s was Frank Arthur Mumby, author of a seminal work on the history of the book trade in Britain.
quite thorough but not exhaustive, and the exclusions are somewhat telling. During October of 1926, 805 books were listed in the *Times Literary Supplement*'s "New Books and Reprints" sections. Comparatively, the list from the trade journal *The Bookseller* covering the same period of time (October 1926, published in the November 1926 issue of *The Bookseller*, a monthly) contained 1127 titles; *The Bookseller*'s list does claim to be exhaustive ("Publications of the Month"). Both the *Times Literary Supplement* and *The Bookseller* broke down their lists by genre; a comparison of these reveals some of the *Times Literary Supplement*'s selectivity. Whereas the number of books listed in categories such as Military, Politics, and Religion and Theology were more or less equivalent between the two publications, the *Times Literary Supplement* listed fewer than half the number of fiction titles *The Bookseller* lists. Fiction was overwhelmingly the most popular publishing genre at the time, and it remained the most populous genre in the *Times Literary Supplement* list—149 titles listed in October 1926, an average of 35-40 per week—but the scale of the disparity between the number of new fiction titles versus the number of new titles in most other genres was elided in the *Times Literary Supplement*'s list (see Fig. 11). As with the choice to devote fewer review words to works of fiction, and these often in shared reviews, the representation of fiction titles in the book list indicates, though less obviously than in the reviews, the *Times Literary Supplement*'s bias toward and focus on serious or "permanent" books.

---

28 The lists in *The Bookseller* and the *Times Literary Supplement* do not match precisely; not only are there books absent from the *Times Literary Supplement*’s selection, but there are also books which appear in the *Times Literary Supplement*’s list that do not appear in *The Bookseller*’s. The disparity can be accounted for primarily by publication date: whereas *The Bookseller* published a retrospective list of the books that were published the previous month, the *Times Literary Supplement* attempted to keep a running weekly count. Missed books sometimes appeared in a later week’s *Times Literary Supplement* list, regardless of the month of publication. The *Times Literary Supplement* might also occasionally list books prematurely when publication was delayed for some reason subsequent to the book being announced.
Through all aspects of their book-related content, the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *Times Literary Supplement* enjoyed a complex and mutually beneficial relationship with the book trade. By mapping the extent of this relationship with the kinds of quantitative analysis I have used in this chapter, I am able to move beyond general impressions about the periodicals and their contents to see concrete patterns of reviewing and advertising practices. These patterns demonstrate the intellectual weeklies' marked emphasis on a general range of books, rather than on imaginative literature; indeed, fiction, with its perceived ephemerality and association with circulating libraries, typically received only cursory attention from these periodicals. The intellectual weeklies' book-related content in part reflects the concerns and interests of the publishers.
themselves: their business model depended on an eclectic list, with profits coming not only from the library and cheap reprint markets but also from individual purchasers of new books. These individual book-buyers were predominantly middle-class readers of serious books, a group seen as largely coterminous with the audience of the intellectual weeklies. The book-related content also contributes to the periodicals’ inscription of their audience as middle-class and well-educated, which in turn identifies the periodicals’ level of cultural authority: these periodicals are "intellectual" in part because of their promotion of serious books. The quantitative data in this chapter also provide a frame of reference for the arguments of my subsequent chapters. In Chapter Two I examine two series of articles that highlight the potential tensions between the Nation and Athenaeum's commitment to public debate and its commercial relationship with the book trade. The injunctions in these articles to buy more books carry an added resonance when we consider how dependent the weeklies were on publishers' advertising. Concerns about the purpose and critical effectiveness of book reviews, which I discuss in Chapter Three, must be considered alongside knowledge of the amount of space devoted to reviews of various kinds of books. Chapter Three also emphasizes the extent to which a periodical's paratextual elements, such as whether its advertisers were publishers or soap manufacturers, for instance, influenced the way its reviewing was perceived. In Chapter Four I analyze Scrutiny's complaints that the intellectual weeklies were too closely connected with the book trade to engage in effective criticism. In light of the context provided in this chapter, part of Scrutiny's claim was clearly accurate—the intellectual weeklies were indeed intertwined with the book trade—but we can also see that Scrutiny failed to understand both the role and the economic reality of the intellectual weeklies if
it expects them to be otherwise. The relationship between the book trade and the intellectual weeklies should be kept under consideration during any discussion of books, periodicals, or criticism during this period. The interwar years in Britain were full of debates about the viability of intellectual culture. These were not disembodied ideological debates; rather, they had material contexts, and often enough these contexts were the pages of intellectual weekly periodicals, amidst the advertisements, reviews, and lists of new books.
Chapter Two:
Buy Books for a Good Cause: The Nation and Athenaeum and the Rhetoric of Book Trade Cooperation

Heaven knows (and the Manager) that the circulation of The Nation is small enough; yet there are very few books indeed which even approach it in circulation. How many authors are there in England who can reckon on earning from their books about £500 a year on the average? Very, very few. I fancy that the compositors may do better out of the business on the whole than any of the other factors of production.

Now all of this is profoundly unsatisfactory. It means that the power of ideas in this country, expressed otherwise than through the popular Press, is negligible. Where does the fault lie?

For a long time I was in the habit of maintaining that the fault lay with the publishers. I have become convinced that they are not the guilty ones. The fault lies, first and foremost, with the Public—with their wrong psychology towards book-buying, their small expenditure, their mean and tricky ways where a Book, the noblest of man's works, is concerned.

—J. M. Keynes, "Are Books Too Dear?" Nation and Athenaeum (1927)

The best way of distributing books must be the way which readers of books find most convenient. Circumstances differ with all of us, some of us want more books, some less, but let us all go on buying exactly the number of books we need for our work and enjoy for our pleasure, and ignore alike these earnest puritans who want us to turn unnecessary book-buying into a religious duty, and these interested advertisers who want to create a fictitious need which will lighten our purses and line theirs.

—Elizabeth Drew, Letter, Nation and Athenaeum (1927)

In the decade following the First World War, members of the British book trade took stock of their industry in light of the growth of the book trade and the reading public during the preceding thirty years. The organization of the trade and the book-acquisition habits of readers continued to reflect patterns established in a smaller population, and during the 1920s publishers and booksellers sought ways to reform their businesses to achieve greater efficiency and profit. The key thread running throughout the ensuing discussions was cooperation: in order to bring about a more successful book trade, the various constituent elements would need to work together. The objective was not merely
increased profit, though economic success was undeniably a primary goal of the cooperation campaign. Success, however, was also to be measured in the less quantifiable terms of an educated and book-loving nation, and it was often in these latter terms that the idea of book trade cooperation was presented to the British public. The initial cooperative impulse came from within the trade, calling for alliances between publishers and booksellers, as well as authors, alliances which resulted in the formation of groups like the Society of Bookmen and the National Book Council. The publishers and booksellers recognized their own success as dependent upon the cooperation not only of each other but also of their customers. In the mid-1920s members of the book trade undertook to invite the reading, and particularly the book-buying, public into voluntary and active cooperation with publishers and booksellers in order to bring about a healthier book trade. These efforts took a variety of forms, but among the most visible was the use of the existing forum for mediation between the book trade and the book-interested public—the intellectual weekly review periodicals—as a site of discussion about book trade health and economics.

The intellectual weeklies were a logical venue in which to host dialogue about the health of the book trade because, as I argued in Chapter One, they already maintained a close relationship with the book trade and devoted a significant portion of their pages to book reviews and publishers' advertisements. Thus, when the *Nation and Athenaeum* published two series of articles about the book trade in the mid-1920s, these articles participated in the wider context of that periodical's book-related content. Through the juxtaposition of book reviews and publishers' advertisements, the book pages of the

---

29 The printing, binding, and paper-making trades were generally elided from the cooperative discussions, which focused instead upon the relations between publishers, booksellers, and authors.
intellectual weeklies combined the discussion of books with the marketing of books. The book trade articles took this sometimes uncomfortable marriage of intellectual debate and commerce a step further. The tone of the Nation and Athenaeum's book trade articles was influenced by another characteristic of the intellectual weeklies: their participation in what Mark Hampton describes as the "educational ideal" of journalism (9). In this educational ideal, Hampton argues, "the press was regarded as a powerful agent for improving individuals." This improvement could take the form of attempts to "influence,' 'inform,' or 'elevate' readers, bringing them into possession of certain supposedly established truths," but it in its other, "most idealized version, newspapers were seen as creating an arena for public discussion on the 'questions of the day'" (Hampton 9). Hampton identifies the educational ideal as the dominant mode of understanding the role of journalism between the 1850s and 1880s, after which point it was subordinated, at least in the mainstream, daily press, to the "representational ideal," which held that a newspaper's job was not to "influence readers or public opinion but [reflect] them" (9). This shift from the educational to the representational ideal was not absolute, however, and Hampton observes that the bastions of the educational ideal in the early twentieth century were organs of the left-wing, intellectual press—of which the Nation and Athenaeum is a textbook example (10).  

The Nation and Athenaeum contributors who discussed the book trade in the 1920s, as I show in the forthcoming pages, employed the rhetoric of the educational ideal: they sought not only to educate their readers about the conditions of the book trade  

---

30 Although the Nation and Athenaeum fits Hampton’s model perfectly, it is worth noting that the interplay of the two ideals in the early twentieth century may be more complex than Hampton allows. For instance, Patrick Collier has pointed out that the educational ideal in the early twentieth century is not limited to periodicals of the intellectual left but could also be adapted by periodicals with a popular appeal, such as John O’London’s Weekly (“John O’London’s” 100).
but also to cast those conditions as a "question of the day" worthy of extended public discourse. Arguably, the two facets of the educational ideal may be in conflict with one another. Education with the intention to inform or influence presupposes that the journalist, figured as educator, is in possession of knowledge that the reader, figured as student, does not yet know. Public debate, on the other hand, implies that multiple valid points of view will be aired, and even if the journalists have a particular thesis in mind, the dialogism of the presentation leaves room for disagreement. Hampton notes that in the educational ideal's mid-Victorian heyday, commentators on the press tended to gloss over the potential contradiction in its elements through "confidence that the 'right' opinions—those dignified by the title of 'truth'—would prevail in any open contest" (50). This confidence was particularly characteristic of newspapers in which middle-class journalists constructed their audience as working-class (Hampton 50). By the mid-1920s, however, not only was the confidence that "truth" would prevail harder to maintain, but writers also found the implied audience of the intellectual weeklies—educated and middle-class—more difficult to address in the educating and patronizing tone of mid-Victorian journalism. The tension between the two elements of the educational ideal, then, was pronounced in the Nation and Athenaeum's discussions of the book trade, which emphasized the element of dialogue among multiple points of view yet also maintained a clear editorial position.

The tensions within the educational ideal of journalism were further exacerbated by the nature of the topic of these articles: the economic health of the book trade is at once a question of intellectual culture and of business. The debate in the Nation and Athenaeum was largely directed by members of the book trade and, with some notable
exceptions that I will discuss, reached a singular conclusion: for the good of the book trade and the intellectual health of the nation more broadly, readers must buy more books. Frank Swinnerton cynically comments that injunctions to buy more books are "blood-brothers to the cries 'Eat More Fish' and 'Eat More Bananas'" (Authors 127); he is not incorrect, but neither does he give credit to the particular conundrum of selling books. The problem of the book trade in all times is one that Laura J. Miller describes as the "structural ambivalence" of "any enterprise that transgresses the boundary between the incommensurable sacred and the marketable profane" (19). Publishing and bookselling traffic in art and ideas, but they also traffic in pounds, shillings, and pence, just as any other trade. The book trade discussions in the Nation and Athenaeum in the mid-1920s both foregrounded and curiously elided the status of books as simultaneously marketable commodities and vessels of art and ideas. Both the foregrounding and elision are connected to the periodical's participation in Hampton's educational ideal: there was on one hand a move to inform readers of the economic facts underlying the book trade's concerns, yet on the other hand, in order to cast the state of the book trade as an important "question of the day," the Nation and Athenaeum tried to avoid the appearance of a marketing campaign. In order to negotiate these tensions, the periodical contributors chose an emphasis already familiar in its left-leaning pages: economic cooperation.

The rhetoric of cooperation, however well-matched to the Nation and Athenaeum, was in this case imported from the book trade itself. The early twentieth century was a period of retail trade cooperation across many industries. In a 1942 work on the subject of retail trade organizations, Hermann Levy discusses the "quasi-monopolistic" tendencies of trade associations and their protectionist strategies, such as price-maintenance and
membership agreements. Rather than being merely one of a number of trades organized in this way during these years, the book trade, Levy argues, was the cooperative trailblazer. Levy traces the efforts of the book trade to protect and regulate the sale of books—"one of the earliest branded goods" (91)—back to the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (10-11). The form of book trade cooperation that regulated the industry in the interwar years dated from the 1890s, with the formation of the Associated Booksellers and the Publishers Association for the purpose of establishing the Net Book Agreement. The Net Book Agreement, which went into effect on January 1, 1900, was the benchmark in British publishing history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It marked the beginning of a new chapter of relations within the trade, a strong reinforcement of the belief in trade cooperation that would continue to be strengthened in subsequent decades. Yet the book trade and the reading public grew dramatically in the years between the 1890s and the 1920s, and analyses of the trade in the 1920s often found it inefficient and unhealthy. The cure, many publishers and booksellers believed, lay in building on the cooperative foundations of the Net Book Agreement in order to accommodate this growth and create a more successful industry.

In 1927, a committee formed to evaluate the status of the British book trade determined that between 1890 and 1926, there had been a 150% increase in the number of book publishers and a 123% increase in the number of books published; the size of the British reading public was also estimated to have grown by more than 120% in the same time period (Kingsford 99). Despite this growth, the organization of the trade was relatively unchanged from the late nineteenth century. As I pointed out in Chapter One, the majority of books in the United Kingdom were issued by relatively small, London-
based firms, most of which featured eclectic lists. Libraries, both free and for-profit, remained an important influence in the market, helping to keep book prices high and edition sizes small, even as the number of imprints and titles increased. Complaints about the book trade in the 1920s had two primary themes: that too many books were being published, and that the prices of books were too high. The book trade had always been a business that dealt in details, and discerning book-lovers were expected to follow the trade carefully; by the early twentieth century, however, following the trade carefully meant paying attention not only to dozens of respectable imprints but also to the thousands of new titles advertised individually each year. And few but the wealthiest of readers could afford to buy many of the new books that interested them; instead, they turned to the libraries, habitual book-borrowers rather than book-buyers. Despite steady increases in the number of readers, book-borrowing habits kept edition sizes small—between 1,000 and 2,500 for most new books—and book prices relatively high. A consistent thread running through periodical discussions of the book trade in the 1920s is the idea, often supported with quantitative evidence, that books would become cheaper and the book trade's margin more comfortable only when larger editions could be printed (Keynes "Are Books" 786-8). Larger editions are only economical, however, when there is demand for them, a demand difficult to create when each library copy serves multiple readers. The solution, as the book trade saw it, was to turn the British reading public into book-buyers rather than book-borrowers, a goal they hoped to achieve through the rhetoric of cooperation.

The Publishers Association and the Associated Booksellers continued to function actively throughout the early decades of the twentieth century, but their primary goal was
to defend and maintain the Net Book Agreement rather than to initiate new schemes. After World War I, as it became increasingly clear that the industry was not growing with the market, members of the book trade who believed in cooperation as the means to growth began to establish new organizations for which cooperation, rather than the protection of individual groups' interests, was the explicit aim (Kingsford 73). In 1921, author Hugh Walpole invited a number of authors, publishers, booksellers, and others involved in the book trade to form the Society of Bookmen, an organization designed to address the common interests of these groups. One of the earliest ideas proposed by the Bookmen was one of cooperative book publicity: the advertisement of books in general (as a separate endeavour from the advertisement of particular books by individual firms), many felt, was bound to be beneficial to all whose livelihood depended upon their sales. The scheme was not brought to fruition until late 1924, when a committee formed of two delegates apiece from the Associated Booksellers, the Society of Authors, the Society of Bookmen, the Publishers Association, and the Publishers’ Circle (a sub-group of the Publishers Association) established the National Book Council, funded by equal donations from the five aforementioned organizations (Norrie, *Sixty Precarious Years* 16).

The purpose of the National Book Council was to promote books and reading throughout Britain, and this purpose began with the immediate aim of cooperative publicity of books. The Council encouraged authors to publish, without remuneration, pieces of journalism lauding the benefits of books and reading. Clergy were asked to recommend books to their congregations, as were leaders of social and political groups to their members (Norrie, *Sixty Precarious Years* 17). The motivations of the National Book
Council were complex, as were the motivations behind cooperative book advertising more generally. The Council was criticized for its vested interest in the financial success of the book trade: although an independent organization, its members and funding came from people who profited from the sale of books (Norrie, *Sixty Precarious Years* 19). The members of the book trade who supported various forms of cooperative publicity, including but not limited to the operations of the National Book Council, rarely denied their financial interest in the scheme, but neither were their motivations entirely financial. Many of these publishers, authors, and booksellers believed in the wider cultural benefit of books; moreover, they felt that the economic health of the trade and the intellectual health of the nation were mutually constitutive.

Publishers and booksellers were interested in selling more of any book they published or stocked, but some books, such as popular novels or celebrity biographies, were steadily profitable, especially through library sales. The concern about book-buying instead centered around the economic viability of "serious books": works of science, history, philosophy, etc., which were seldom if ever bestsellers. These serious books contributed to the diversity of a publisher's list and paid dividends in cultural capital, if not always in economic. Additionally, although fiction was the most populous single genre, all of the other genres combined vastly outnumbered the novels: publishers needed those books, or at least some of them, to be profitable. Most members of the book trade, as well as intellectuals more generally, agreed that these serious books were the books of the highest intellectual quality and as such deserved to be published. Yet the demand for such books was rarely high enough for the publications to make much money, despite the fact that many people assumed that these were the sort of books most worth buying. As I
explained in Chapter One, the book trade and the intellectual weeklies often operated under the assumption that books such as popular novels were ephemeral, books to be borrowed, and others were considered to be more permanent. Because book-buying was associated with serious books, the cooperative appeals of the 1920s—particularly those published in periodicals such as the Nation and Athenaeum, which showed bias toward permanent books in its reviewing and advertising—often explicitly addressed the need to support serious books. Intellectual idealists, both inside and outside the book trade, believed that the more serious books were promoted, the more readers would come to prefer intellectual reading material to popular novels, and the more books readers would buy because they now preferred the sort of books worth investing in. Under such circumstances, they believed, both the book trade and the culture as a whole benefited. Eventually, many of these books would be taken up by academic publishing, which has prioritized cultural and intellectual capital over economic capital. But in the 1920s, general publishers and booksellers were trying to retain scholarly books, in addition to a variety of non-fiction books aimed at a general readership, as a money-making enterprise. To do so, they felt they must work together to convince the public to buy more of these books.

The problems besetting the book trade in general and the production of serious books in particular were the themes of two series of articles published in the Nation and Athenaeum, in 1924 and 1927, respectively. These articles contributed to the efforts of the book trade in the mid-1920s to bring the state of the trade into public discourse and to engage readers in cooperative support of the book trade by encouraging them to buy more books. These were not the only articles about the book trade that appeared in the
periodical press during these years, but they were among the most important, primarily because of the relationship of these articles to publisher Stanley Unwin's book *The Truth About Publishing* (1926). In Chapter One I discussed some of the differences between a periodical like the *Times Literary Supplement*, which presented a great deal of book-related information in the form of reviews, announcements, lists, and advertisements but did not reflect on that information or invite dialogue about it, and a periodical like the *Nation and Athenaeum*, which not only presented information about books but also fostered debate about them. The *Nation and Athenaeum* represented books not only as dynamic participants in social and cultural debate but also as objects that have a material and economic context which is itself subject to debate. This perspective allowed the periodical to publish book reviews and advertisements and also to be a forum where the relationship between the book trade and the reading public could be examined. Because the *Nation and Athenaeum*’s audience was already perceived to be comprised of a higher than average percentage of readers and particularly book-buyers, the writers of the book trade articles of the mid-1920s (most of them employed in some fashion by the book trade) could employ a particular rhetoric that attempted to balance the marketing of books with dialogue about the value of intellectual culture. The earlier articles were largely educational, putting faith in the reader’s desire to help the book trade financially once he or she fully understands the economic situation. By 1927, the appeals had grown more forceful, calling on readers to view book-buying as a civic or even moral duty. All of the articles, regardless of the aspect of Hampton's educational ideal they most emphasized, operated on the assumption that the *Nation and Athenaeum*’s audience and the book trade shared a common interest in the promotion of a healthy book industry. The periodical's
readers were not cast as book trade customers but as partners in a cooperative scheme, identified as such by their subscription to the *Nation and Athenaeum*. Because of its economic relationship with the book trade and its intellectual priorities, the *Nation and Athenaeum* itself was strongly interested in the economic fortunes of serious books. These two priorities—economic and intellectual—coincided in the book trade articles.

The *Nation and Athenaeum* contributors did not disguise a marketing scheme as discussion of a pertinent intellectual issue; rather, the articles were simultaneously *both* a marketing scheme and discussion of a pertinent intellectual issue.

The first set of articles I wish to highlight appeared in the *Nation and Athenaeum* between May and December of 1924. These articles were not designated as a series, and they appeared under several auspices, some as featured articles and others as part of regular columns. The articles are topically connected, and some of them reference each other, but they do not coalesce into any kind of whole until publisher Stanley Unwin, author of the final two articles in the set, positions himself deliberately in response to the discourse on the book trade in the prior articles. Unwin was the most important voice of book trade cooperation during the 1920s, and these articles are significant steps in establishing his authority, particularly outside the trade. The emphases and conclusions of all these articles, Unwin's and those he responds to, vary according to author, yet their respective tones are consistently explanatory or educational. Their purpose is to demystify the book trade for the readers of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, with the implication that once in possession of all the facts, readers will agree with the advised course of action, whether that action is to take a more discerning interest in publishers'
imprints, to be more accepting of the price of books, or to buy books instead of borrow them.

The first of the articles to which Unwin responds, "The Publisher and the Public" by Michael Sadleir, appeared on May 17, 1924. Sadleir, a director of Constable as well as a writer and bibliographer, comes to the defense of publishers against the tradition of demonizing them as exploitative. Like the practitioners of any trade, publishers can be unscrupulous or honourable; too often, Sadleir argues, they are assumed to be the former merely because they make a living selling books. That is, too often publishers are associated with the negative connotations of profiting from the sale of art or knowledge. The more positive connotation, Sadleir implies, is that publishers are responsible for negotiating the tensions between books as commodities and books as objects with cultural value. Some negotiate these tensions well; others do so badly. The duty of the reader is to learn to discern between good publishers and bad: the imprint "is an indication of quality, a signpost along the tangled paths of modern letters" (Sadleir, "The Publisher" 203). The reader is asked to become an active and informed consumer of books. Sadleir posits active and discerning book consumption as the remedy for the very condition that makes such a task so formidable. "The over-production of books to-day," he writes, "is undeniable," but the solution is not for readers to throw up their hands in the face of the overwhelming numbers. Rather, Sadleir believes, when a reader is well-informed about which publishers produce books "sympathetic" to the reader's own "mentality," he or she will choose those books, and demand for unfavourable books will decrease (203). The publishers may be collectively the most to blame for the overproduction of books, but "only the public can effect a cure" (203). By framing the
problem in this way, Sadleir calls upon readers to participate as active members of the book industry, rather than merely as passive consumers. Sadleir does not deny that discerning book consumption requires effort, but such effort benefits the trade, which in turn benefits society as a whole.

Sadleir's article passed without immediate comment or response in the *Nation and Athenaeum*. Then in late August of 1924, the periodical published another article about the book trade, a review of Sir Frederick Macmillan's book about the Net Book Agreement, in which Leonard Woolf used Macmillan's book as an opportunity to comment on the state of the trade more generally. Apart from the topic, which was common enough, Woolf's review appears to be unconnected to Sadleir's article; the review was the August 30th "World of Books" column, a 1200-word book review that Woolf, as literary editor, wrote weekly. Woolf lauds the Net Book Agreement as a great improvement over the system that preceded it, declaring,

> Intellectually nothing can be more disastrous to a nation than an uneconomic system of book-making or book-selling, for in time it must make it almost impossible, under a competitive and capitalistic system, to produce the better-class book, particularly the 'serious book' which always has a limited public. ("The Making of Books" 667)

This statement acts as a rhetorical turning point in the review, establishing not only the idea that the Net Book Agreement had improved the previous uneconomic book trade, but also looking forward to the rest of the review, in which Woolf criticizes the contemporary trade for its own unhealthiness. He argues that his role as a literary editor places him in a unique position to "[see] most of the game," and under such authority he
diagnoses the usual suspects as the two chief afflictions of the book trade:
"overproduction and excessive price" (667).  

Woolf blames publishers for overproduction; too many books are published which should not have been, not only novels but also "serious books." He further places blame specifically at the feet of those publishers who will publish books on commission (i.e., at the author's expense, with the author taking all the profits, if there are any) when they know the books will not sell and probably should not be published (667). Whereas Sadleir urges readers to take a more active interest in their book consumption, Woolf questions whether it is possible to do so: "There is such a spate of worthless books issued" on certain subjects that "if you are a reader with an interest in that subject, you cannot keep pace with the supply, and, if a good book happens to be written and published, it is a mere chance whether it is not overwhelmed and submerged in this torrent which is not read or worth reading" (667). Woolf also complains about the inflated prices of books since the war, but he does not assign blame for that to any particular party; rather, the costs have increased to such an extent that publishers must raise prices to remain solvent. The effect of the increased cost of producing books is that publishers can only lower prices if they can sell large editions. This is all well for popular books, Woolf observes, but "the serious work, which could never be a popular success" suffers because their prices are necessarily raised beyond the reach of "the ordinary person" (667). Presumably this sort of book is important to the readers of the Nation and

---

31 It is noteworthy that Woolf declines to mention another of his occupations: that of publisher. In 1924 the Hogarth Press was still in its youth and had not yet attained the notoriety that it would even three or four years later; Woolf's publishing experience did not yet hold the authority of recognized expertise. But Woolf also wore his various occupational hats carefully, sometimes cultivating the grassroots and amateur aspects of the Hogarth Press and other times presenting himself as a professional and mainstream publisher. In his role as literary editor it often behooved him to downplay or ignore his role as a publisher, lest he highlight the potential conflict of interest holding the two jobs simultaneously might present.
Athenaeum—or so the periodical constructs its audience—and thus Woolf is able to take for granted that the price and availability of serious books is a cultural topic of concern for the periodical.

On September 27, 1924, the Nation and Athenaeum published "The Common-sense of the Book Trade" by J. D. Beresford, an article that references Woolf's review a month earlier but has a wider scope than might an article that was only responding to the review. Beresford's goal is to remove from the book trade any rarefied associations with art or the sacred and to place it soundly into the world of business and economics: "the selling of literature—by which I intend printed matter in book form and not solely the writings of the immortals—is just as dependent on the laws of supply and demand as the selling of Manchester goods" (775). Beresford is certainly aware of what Laura Miller would later call the book trade's "structural ambivalence," for he takes great delight in flouting it. But like Swinnerton, with his comparison of "Buy More Books" and "Eat More Bananas" (Authors 127), Beresford does not appear to be much troubled by this ambivalence himself. Publishers and booksellers are businesspeople aiming to make a profit, and the booms and depressions of the book trade are "consequent not so much upon the quality of the goods as upon whether the general conditions are such as influence the public to spend or save" (775). Beresford is straightforward in his portrayal of the book trade as a business like any other, and he goes so far as to expose the cooperative advertising goals of the Society of Bookmen to the Nation and Athenaeum readers. He does not name the Society of Bookmen, but he describes his participation in the "active and admirably intentioned little society, which counted among its fifty or sixty members representatives of nearly all branches of the book trade." The Bookmen came
together to discuss the state of the trade and look for remedies, and the "one conclusion to which we all could subscribe [...] was to make, or tempt, or educate the public to buy More Books" (775). Like Sadleir, Beresford looks to the public as the potential cure to the ills of the book trade: more readers must become book-buyers if the trade is to grow healthily. Beresford presents this conclusion as though it were shocking information, "truly revolting" to "the literary man in his study" (775). Beresford overdramatizes for effect, but in 1924, the injunction to buy more books was just beginning. Within the next two or three years, it would become a commonplace, and with its repetitions, especially in the pages of the Nation and Athenaeum, the phrase's likeness to "Eat More Bananas" would be increasingly subordinated to the idea that book-buying was an important social and cultural question in need of public debate.

The most significant of the book trade articles published in the Nation and Athenaeum during 1924 were Stanley Unwin's "The Price of Books" and "The Over-Production of Books," published November 22 and December 6, respectively. In them, he echoes Sadleir's call to discerning book consumption, he responds directly to Woolf's complaints about prices and overproduction, and he addresses publishing as a business, not in the rhetorically sensational manner of Beresford, but with the authority and illustrative examples of a person whose business is publishing. Unwin, director of George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., was at the forefront of nearly all the efforts at book trade cooperation during the 1920s. He was one of the members of the Society of Bookmen who advocated most strongly for the National Book Council, and when the latter organization was established, he donated it an office in his building. He was instrumental in encouraging the members of the Publishers Association to look beyond the confines of
the Net Book Agreement to other beneficial methods of cooperation. Unwin was the son of a printer, but he moved into publishing as a young man when he went to work for his uncle, publisher T. Fisher Unwin. Stanley Unwin spent considerable time on the Continent, and particularly in Germany, learning the operations of the book trade there; he was impressed by the organization of the German book trade and became convinced that Britain could adopt similarly effective strategies through cooperation. In 1914, after a break with his uncle, Stanley Unwin bought the assets of the bankrupt publisher George Allen and formed George Allen and Unwin. In 1924, when he published these articles in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, Unwin was not yet widely thought of as one of London's most prominent publishers, but these articles were arguably the first step toward the event that propelled him into public view, the 1926 publication of his book *The Truth about Publishing*. *The Truth about Publishing*, a guide to book publishing that Unwin dedicated “To Those of my Fellow Publishers who Believe in Co-operation,” established Unwin as the public face and expert voice of British publishing. But we find the germ of *The Truth about Publishing* in these 1924 articles, both of which were reprinted as the third chapter of the book. Unwin steps into the *Nation and Athenaeum* conversation armed with figures and lists drawn from his personal experience of the publishing industry. His tone is authoritative and educational; he seeks less to persuade his readers to action than to explain the complexities of the business that they may not have considered or been aware of. This mode of argumentation participates in the first aspect of the educational ideal and implies that once readers are presented with all of the facts, they will reasonably come to agree with Unwin's conclusions.
Unwin addresses the two points that Woolf in his article had identified as the chief afflictions of the publishing industry—high prices and overproduction—and argues that neither is as substantial a problem as is commonly believed, and that members of the book trade are not to blame for either condition. In "The Price of Books," Unwin suggests that rather than being unduly expensive, books are in fact relatively cheaper than they were before the war; the net prices of books have not risen commensurate with the cost of materials, production, and distribution (294). He demonstrates his thesis by outlining the factors contributing to the price of a book. Of "the ordinary run of new books of which a first edition of from 1,000 to 2,500 copies is printed," a group which excludes "reprints, the big sellers, and educational books," there are three fairly equivalent factors that contribute to the published price:

1. The actual cost of manufacturing, *i.e.*, paper, printing, and binding.; 2. The cost of distribution, *i.e.*, booksellers' discounts and travellers' commissions.; 3. The balance, which has to cover: (a) advertising; (b) the author's remuneration; (c) the publisher's working expenses; (d) the publisher's profit. (294)

The cost of manufacture had risen sharply since the war, between double and triple the pre-war cost, on average, depending on edition sizes. Under the second category, booksellers, themselves facing increased expenses in the post-war inflation, increasingly demanded a 33 1/3 percent discount on all orders. Travellers' commissions and wholesalers' discounts were in excess of that one-third of the published price. Unwin is careful not to blame booksellers for asking increased discounts, but he does point it out as a key factor in the overall price of books (294). Additionally, he cites the increased cost
of advertising as contributing to the overall price of books; it takes nearly £50, or the entire advertising budget of many books, to "make any display" in a paper such as the Daily Mail. Only through excluding the daily papers, Unwin argues, is it possible to accomplish much with a meagre advertising budget (294). Hence the importance of the weeklies in the advertising of books: an advertisement in the Nation and Athenaeum was likely to target a much higher percentage of potential customers, and particularly book-buyers, for the average book than an advertisement in the Daily Mail. Unwin is almost emphatically neutral in this article, carefully outlining the factors that contribute to the price of books without casting blame or offering a remedy. His explicit point is that the books of the 1920s were relatively cheaper than their pre-war counterparts; the implication is that people should stop complaining about the price of books.

Unwin's sequel article, "The Over-Production of Books," appeared in the Nation and Athenaeum on December 6, 1924; surely not coincidentally, this was also the week of the periodical's Christmas Book Supplement. As he did with the facts of publication costs in "The Price of Books," Unwin proposes to examine "the facts upon which this cry of overproduction rests" (359). Just as in his first article he concluded that books were relatively inexpensive, in "The Over-Production of Books" he argues that overproduction is not the problem it is lamented to be. "The Over-Production of Books," however, does not retain the neutrality that Unwin used in his first article. Instead, he comes to a definite conclusion and call to action, one to which both articles together had been leading: readers must buy more books. Unwin opens the article with figures from Publishers' Circular demonstrating that there were fewer books published in the five years after the war than in the five years leading up to it: the numbers do not support the cry of
overproduction (359-60). Woolf had argued that publishing books on commission was largely to blame for overproduction, and Unwin counters that argument, defending commission publication as a practice. He concedes that most of the "really unwanted books" are published on commission, but so are many worthwhile books, including "many learned works of research which would never be made available for future students if they had to wait for a publisher willing to finance their publication on their commercial merits" (360). The "publications which have no intrinsic merit, which show no promise, and for which there is no demand" are identifiable not by whether they are published on commission (though the financing of a book is rarely made public) but by the quality of the publisher (360). Here Unwin echoes Sadleir's argument: it is the responsibility of the book consumer to be discerning about imprints. Unwin points out that of these most worthless books, few are circulated in the first place: literary editors and booksellers recognize their lack of quality and decline to review or stock them. The process of weeding them out may be onerous to the editor or bookseller, but their existence is of no consequence to most readers or to the financial state of the trade (360).

Unwin also questions which books one would excise from the annual publishing lists: the best books, in the opinions of most intellectuals, are not the most popular books. Should publication worthiness depend upon demand, as capitalism would dictate, or upon merit, which does not always follow the laws of the marketplace? Unwin suggests that people have a tendency to impose their own reading tastes upon the book trade, to the exclusion of the tastes of others, a habit he dislikes: "Many of us have never succeeded in reading a book on relativity from cover to cover; more have never attempted the feat; but is that any reason why those who want books on relativity, or on any other subject under
the sun, should not have them?” (360). Here Unwin appears to argue for publishing catholicity: publishers should not attempt to arbitrate taste but instead to provide the public with what it wants. His example, however, is calculated to appeal not to the popular audience typically invoked with the phrase "what the public wants" but to the readers of serious books: those who appreciated the need for books on relativity, even if they preferred not to read them.\textsuperscript{32} If publishers were to publish fewer books, Unwin suggests, the cuts would come not from popular fiction, which typically not only pays for itself but also earns a profit, but from the more financially unstable serious books. Thus, Unwin begins to pave the way for his conclusion: readers of the Nation and Athenaeum, to whom serious books are presumably important, should not complain about overproduction but instead buy more of the books they want to see saved.

Unwin concludes "The Over-Production of Books" with a diagnosis of the true problem facing the book trade: "insufficient sales" (360). Unwin laments that "Most people have not yet learned to regard books as a necessity. They will beg them, they will borrow them, they will do everything, in fact, but buy them" (360). This injunction to buy more books is the conclusion to which both articles have been directed. The problem is not, Unwin argues, the price of books, for people think nothing of spending equivalent sums for theatre tickets or gramophone records. Besides, as he argued in "The Price of Books," books are as inexpensive as they can be; the problem is one of habit rather than cost. Despite initially using middle-class examples with middle-class prices attached—8s. 6d. apiece for gramophone records, or 12s. 6d. theatre stalls—Unwin stops short of

\textsuperscript{32} "What the public wants" was a ubiquitous catch-phrase associated with early twentieth-century print culture, and with popular journalism in particular. It was related to the representational ideal of the press, in which journalism’s role was figured as reflecting public desires rather than shaping them (Hampton 9). For a discussion of the cultural connotations of the phrase "what the public wants," see Collier, Modernism 17-23.
berating the presumably middle-class readers of the *Nation and Athenaeum* and instead calls upon them to "[encourage] the new reading public that is growing up around us" (360). Unwin's rhetorical style implies that his readers, once acquainted with the facts of book trade economics, will agree with his conclusion; consequently he glosses over the book-buying habits of the middle classes and instead co-opts those readers into the book trade's educational project. He transitions from the poor book-buying habits of British readers to the necessity of encouraging the new reading public by declaring, "That more and better books are not read we are all in some measure responsible" (360). The Society of Bookmen, Unwin explains, is working to form an association to encourage the love of books (what would become the National Book Council, still in the early stages of planning in late 1924), but it is also the responsibility of readers to help stimulate the trade. Based on Unwin's information, a reasonable reader is meant to conclude that the book trade alone cannot save itself, for it is not overproducing books and is selling them as cheaply as possible. The solution instead lies with readers joining in as cooperative partners in the trade by becoming more discerning consumers, and primarily by buying instead of borrowing books.

Unwin's expert and educating discourse about the book trade reached its zenith in *The Truth about Publishing* (1926), a book aimed at prospective authors and the general public in an endeavour to demystify the process of book publishing. Unwin takes book publication in more or less chronological order, explaining the process and highlighting the various costs. The two articles from the *Nation and Athenaeum*, as I have indicated, are reprinted as chapter three of the book (43-58). Unwin spends considerable time discussing his two favourite topics: the value of book trade cooperation, and the
importance of British ties to publishing abroad. He includes a long chapter on the
German book trade, which he argues best embodies the effectiveness of cooperation
(222-40). *The Truth about Publishing* enjoyed both immediate and lasting success. In his
autobiography, Unwin recalls his surprise that the book "was immediately accepted as a
kind of 'Publishers' Bible' (Jonathan Cape's phrase) and to my great satisfaction it was
immediately translated into German and adopted as a text-book" (*The Truth about a
Publisher* 200). The book solidified Unwin's status not only as one of Britain's most
influential publishers but also as something of a guru in matters of the book trade. *The
Truth about Publishing* does not paint a picture of a terribly unhealthy book trade and
contains few of the calls to action so common in periodical discussions of the topic.
Unwin encourages cooperative action, including increased book-buying on the part of
readers, but the book's goal is to explicate the publishing process so that those not
involved in the trade can understand it. On the whole, Unwin's book stays clear of the
polemical, focusing instead on cultivating understanding of, and subsequently sympathy
with, the work of publishers.

*The Truth about Publishing* was widely and favourably reviewed, including
reviews of quite substantial length in the *New Statesman*, the *Times Literary Supplement*,
and the *Nation and Athenaeum*, where Leonard Woolf dedicated a "World of Books"
column to it.\(^{33}\) The reviews in other intellectual weeklies indicate that this concern with
the economics of the book trade was not unique to the *Nation and Athenaeum*. The *New
Statesman* review, in particular, moves beyond merely summarizing or evaluating
Unwin's book to adding further information to augment Unwin's assessment of the

\(^{33}\) For these three reviews, see "The Responsibility of the Publisher" vii-viii, "About Publishing" 710; L.
situation facing the book trade. The New Statesman reviewer stresses the relationship between the book trade and the intellectual weeklies. Unwin notes in his book that favourable reviews in "the Times Literary Supplement, the Spectator, the New Statesman, or the Nation" have often successfully launched books (247). The New Statesman reviewer, unsurprisingly, picks up on this remark and augments it by explaining that reviewing in the intellectual weeklies is made possible by publishers' advertising: although the weeklies fiercely maintain their critical independence and publishers do not want to buy favourable reviews, the reviewer concedes, "the fact, however, remains that if publishers did not advertise there would be very few reviews of books published anywhere" ("The Responsibility" vii). Reviews such as this one brought the discussion of the book trade and its economic relationship with the weeklies back into the pages of the weeklies themselves, a move that heralded the more extended periodical discussion that occurred in the Nation and Athenaeum during 1927.

In declining to issue a strong call to action from its readers, The Truth about Publishing differs from the Nation and Athenaeum articles that helped inspire it, as well as from the series in the same periodical that followed Unwin's book. Published between February and May 1927 in the Nation and Athenaeum and entitled "Books and the Public," this series featured articles by publishers, booksellers, and others with interest in the book trade. Unwin, who was among the contributors, recalled in his autobiography that the genesis of the series was a dinner hosted by J. Maynard Keynes, proprietor of the Nation and Athenaeum, and attended by Unwin, Hubert Henderson, and Leonard Woolf, the latter two the Nation and Athenaeum's editor in chief and literary editor, respectively. Unwin claims the idea for a series grew out of a correspondence he and Keynes had about
book production costs, in which Unwin "said how important I felt it was to secure a better understanding on the part of the public and authors and book-buyers in particular of the basis on which prices of books have to be calculated" (*The Truth about a Publisher* 206). Keynes evidently agreed and responded with the dinner and the subsequent periodical series. Although Unwin's account does not explicitly connect "Books and the Public" to *The Truth about Publishing*, the concerns and goals of both were closely connected; additionally, the opening article of the series refers extensively to Unwin's recent book as authoritative ([Henderson] 714-5). The "Books and the Public" articles raised many of the same economic concerns that were featured in the 1924 articles and in Unwin's book—publishers' low profit margin, the necessity of the current (high) book prices based on current sales figures, the dubious effectiveness of advertising—but the series engaged its readers far more forcefully than *The Truth about Publishing* or even the 1924 *Nation and Athenaeum* articles. In contrast to Unwin's more neutrally educating tone, many of the "Books and the Public" contributors aimed instead to persuade readers, for the benefit of the nation's intellectual health, to buy more books. The argument that Unwin made briefly at the end of "The Over-Production of Books" became the dominant theme of the 1927 articles. In contrast to the 1924 articles, "Books and the Public" was planned and demarcated as a series, and as such it takes full advantage of its periodical form. It used its multiple contributors to offer multiple points of view, the contributors deliberately speaking to one another. Alongside the expert contributors, the periodical also published a number of letters to the editor discussing the articles, several of them strongly dissenting from the dominant conclusions of the contributors.
The initial article of the series, entitled "Books and the Public" and unsigned but written by Hubert Henderson, appeared on February 26, 1927. This article set the tone of the debate, and the subsequent two articles framed their arguments similarly: Henderson, Peter Ibbetson, and J. M. Keynes all argue that the book trade is in economic trouble, and that the solution to the problem is for the public to buy more books. The three articles are not identical in focus or technique, but all presuppose that the production of books, particularly "serious books," is necessary for the maintenance of intellectual culture and that the public has a social and even moral duty to support the book trade. Henderson relies heavily on *The Truth about Publishing* in his article; consequently his argument is substantially similar to Unwin's. Publishers, Henderson declares, following Unwin, are trying to accomplish a great deal on a slim profit margin and are finding it increasingly difficult to publish books without a wide popularity, into which category most serious books would fall. Henderson also adopts Unwin's conclusions: the remedy for the book trade is to adopt cooperative advertising in order to induce the public to buy more books (715). Unlike Unwin, however, Henderson emphasizes this conclusion in strong terms. Not buying books "is both an absurd and an anti-social convention," Henderson claims, and people should be encouraged to buy books through an appeal to their "sense of an obligation to support a good cause" (715).

The moralizing language Henderson employs becomes even more forceful in the articles that follow his. Whereas Unwin, in both "The Over-Production of Books" and *The Truth about Publishing*, had glossed over middle-class book consumption and advocated encouraging the reading habit among the more newly literate, Peter Ibbetson turns his focus expressly to the middle class. Ibbetson's "quarrel" is with the "great
section of the middle class which does read and value books" but which is "not paying their way," instead "sponging on writers and publishers" (753). Ibbetson echoes Henderson exactly by calling the habit of not buying books "anti-social" and "absurd," and to those adjectives he adds the yet stronger "immoral." "It is the plain duty of every reader," Ibbetson argues, "to pay his fair share of the cost of producing books" (753). Ibbetson makes his argument anecdotally—he is a self-identified book-buyer and has not suffered financially from the habit—but Keynes's article in the subsequent issue relies instead upon Unwin's brand of expert educating, with, in Keynes's case, accompanying quantitative evidence to back his conclusions. Keynes focuses on the price of books, and by giving figures for average edition sizes for different types of books at various prices, concludes not only that publishers could not easily reduce the prices of books but that, for the many books whose primary buyers are libraries, it would be unwise to attempt such a thing. When public and circulating libraries constituted guaranteed sales at whatever price, and the book-buying habits of the general public were erratic at best, it paid publishers to set prices to reap as much profit as possible from the former group of customers ("Are Books" 787). Despite his reliance upon the soundness of his figures, Keynes does not refrain from the strong, moralizing language of Henderson and Ibbetson. He casts blame for the unhealthiness of the book trade squarely upon the shoulders of "the Public—with their wrong psychology towards book-buying, their small expenditure, their mean and tricky ways where a Book, the noblest of man's works, is concerned" ("Are Books" 786-7).

Unlike the articles of 1924, which highlighted the business side of the book trade, the opening articles of the "Books and the Public" series de-emphasized the rhetoric of
business in favour of the language of civic duty and even morality. The 1924 articles and
*The Truth about Publishing*, with their emphasis on educating their readers about the
economics of the trade, represented a kind of first wave of attempts to involve book
consumers in cooperation for the health of the trade. These articles and Unwin's book
were framed in terms similar to periodical discussions of any industry (and the *Nation
and Athenaeum*, with economists as owner and editor, published a number of these):
experts laid out facts and drew conclusions from the facts. In the 1927 "Books and the
Public" articles, however, the *Nation and Athenaeum* contributors drew more strongly on
the second aspect that Hampton identifies as characteristic of the educational ideal: the
book trade is cast as a pressing "question of the day," with wide-reaching social, cultural,
and moral implications that must be subject to public debate in the periodical. The
impulse to explain book trade economics remained in the second series, as Keynes's
article demonstrates, but in at least the opening articles of "Books and the Public," the
rhetoric of business is subordinated to the rhetoric of societal health. The second-wave
articles also more strongly manifest the ambivalence of the book trade itself: the
perceived inherent conflict between profit-seeking, capitalist enterprise and the
conservation of the nation's intellectual wealth. The first three articles of "Books and the
Public" emphasize the latter, employing the socialist language of cooperation to persuade
the readers of the *Nation and Athenaeum*—those believed to be educated enough to
appreciate books and wealthy enough to buy them—to support the book trade for the
greater good.

Not all of the "Books and the Public" contributors subscribed to the basic thesis or
high moral tones of Henderson, Ibbetson, and Keynes. Most notable is publisher and
bookseller Basil Blackwell's article of April 23, 1927, "Mass Suggestion and the Book Trade," in which he argues that publishers and booksellers should adopt the advertising techniques of cigarette and whisky manufacturers and market books as a general desirable commodity, rather than focusing advertising on individual books. Blackwell advocates cooperative advertising and lauds the principles behind the National Book Council, but the direction he proposes that such cooperation should take could not be further from the kind of cooperation that Keynes and Ibbetson encourage as they attempt to persuade readers to join publishers and booksellers as cooperative partners. Instead, Blackwell argues for cooperation from publishers and booksellers only, to be employed in pursuit of "modern salesmanship […] by means of mass-suggestion" (73). The problem with the members of the book trade, Blackwell suggests, is that "we still expect people to buy books for the sake of reading them," and to that end they focus their advertising on literary periodicals, where the reading public may be reached. "But," he continues, "the purchasing power of that public is not sufficient to keep the Book Trade fully solvent." Instead, the trade should devote considerable funds and energy to "a cooperative campaign suggesting to the masses the necessity of books in the mass." Such a campaign might focus "on the respectability of books in the home" (73, emphasis in original). Additionally, the book trade need not be alarmed if "books were bought by the square yard. If the present generation bought them for show, their children might well learn to open them" (73). It is unclear how seriously we are to take Blackwell's argument: most likely he exaggerates for shock value, and it is possible to read the article as a satire on the idea of mass-marketing books. Nevertheless, the article serves a similar function in the series regardless of Blackwell's sincerity in articulating this position. His insistence
upon the book trade as a capitalist venture balances the ambivalence of some of the other contributors, and the point he raises about the limited purchasing power of those who "buy books for the sake of reading them" is valid. As distasteful as the idea of books by the yard may be to readers, and perhaps also to Blackwell himself, he is not incorrect about the plausibility of the marketing strategy.

Whether he intended it sincerely or satirically, Blackwell posits a credible solution to the book trade's economic trouble. In doing so, he contributes resoundingly to the polyvocality of the series. This polyvocality is precisely what periodicals do best. Multiple contributors enable debate and dialogue and the side by side publication of contrasting points of view. The ability to present the question of the book trade in this manner is especially helpful. No single contributor to either series of articles fully articulates the tension that truly makes the book trade and the economic viability of serious books worth discussing as a "question of the day": the book trade is both a business and a good cause. The juxtaposition of an article like Keynes's with an article like Blackwell's, however, balances the claims that each writer makes and presents the issue in its full complexity, in a way that only a polyvocal form like a periodical can do. The polyvocality within "Books and the Public" also highlights the tension within the goals of journalism's educational ideal. The more educating contributors to the discussion, such as Keynes, Ibbetson, and Unwin, presented facts in the service of a thesis: because of the economic realities of the book trade, readers who appreciate serious books should buy more of them. When placed into dialogue with Blackwell's article, that thesis becomes one of multiple possible conclusions to be drawn from the economic facts. Public debate is a laudable goal, but it does not necessarily lead to consensus. Even
though Blackwell's article may be read entirely as satire designed to reinforce the initial thesis of the series through presenting the alternative as ridiculous, satire is not the only possible legitimate reading of the article (indeed, I read Blackwell as largely sincere). By presenting an alternate argument, Blackwell highlights the reality that a "question of the day" like the economic health of the book trade is likely to inspire multiple, perhaps conflicting, interpretations.

"Books and the Public" does not feature consensus among its paid contributors, and among the readers whose letters to the editor were published in reaction to the series, many also strongly dissent from the series' main thesis. A periodical that invites no response from its readers or that declines to publish any dissenting reader response may maintain the illusion that its efforts to educate and persuade its audience are successful. The *Nation and Athenaeum*, however, prioritized debate, even when that debate conflicted with its efforts also to enact the first part of the educational ideal. Perhaps the most interesting letter, and certainly the one that best highlights the extent to which even a book-loving reader of the *Nation and Athenaeum* might decline to be influenced, informed, or elevated into buying books, is Elizabeth Drew's, published April 2. Drew begins by identifying herself as a reader and writer, someone who earns her living "by talking about books" (921). Yet despite her enjoyment of books, she has no desire to own them and characterizes them merely as objects to clutter already-crowded rooms. Rather than agreeing with Keynes that books are "the noblest of man's works," Drew views books as entertaining and informative commodities, which readers ought to be free to buy, borrow, or ignore, just as they might anything else: "By all means let those unfortunate people who suffer from the acquisitive faculty, collect books or Chinese tear
bottles or anything else they want to do, but let them stop taking up a superior attitude towards those of us who prefer furnishing our minds and not our houses with books” (921-2). Similarly, Drew feels no social obligation to support authors (and by extension publishers), even though she herself earns her living through writing. Authors, she argues, do not write “to serve the public in any way, so I really do not know why we should expect the public to support us” (922). Drew refuses to give credence to the position of Henderson, Ibbetson, and Keynes that literary culture exists at least in part to serve the public good. Instead, she accepts the commercialization of literature and contends that publishers should acknowledge the capitalist principles that govern their business, like any other, and take responsibility for marketing their products without resorting to the rhetoric of book-buying as a good cause. The values underlying her argument are strongly individualistic, in contrast to the cooperative appeals of the contributors. Drew’s letter is something of an anomaly in the “Books and the Public” series; not all the contributors and letter-writers agree with Ibbetson and Keynes, but none is as iconoclastic in dissent as Drew. Nevertheless, Drew’s letter reveals a lack of ideological consensus among the book-interested readers of the Nation and Athenaeum, which not only highlights why these articles were seen as necessary marketing rather than preaching to the converted but also casts doubt on the effectiveness of the cooperative marketing strategy. Drew declines to participate in the cooperative marketing strategy promoted by most of the articles: she does not agree that she should buy more books for the greater good. Yet she does join the dialogue itself. The “Books and the Public” articles were trying simultaneously to educate readers about book trade economics, promote debate about the book trade, and sell more books. Drew’s contribution to the
debate exposes the potential contradictions that lay in the balancing act the *Nation and Athenaeum* was performing.

The series ends on May 21, 1927 with the most positive and well-rounded of the articles, "The Condition of the Book Trade" by Nottingham bookseller Henry B. Saxton. Saxton agrees with Keynes that books could not be cheaper unless buying increased substantially, but instead of focusing on those who do not buy books, he turns his attention to those who do buy the "very many thousands of books" sold each year (210). Saxton identifies eight distinct groups of book-buyers, including libraries, teachers and students, professionals needing technical books, and buyers of seasonal and gift books. Only one of these groups is comprised of "the genuine booklover with his real literary sense." Saxton calls this kind of book-buyer "the heart of bookselling," yet he does not pretend that all, or even most, book-buyers do or should fall into this category (210). Saxton strikes something of a middle ground between Keynes and Ibbetson's language of social duty and Drew's staunch individualism: he advocates thinking of ways to sell more books on a broad scale, but he also emphasizes the individuality of book-buyers' needs and tastes. He concludes his article—and also the series itself—with the most positive perspective of any of the contributors on the trade as a whole. The cooperation between the Associated Booksellers and the Publishers Association is good for the trade, and he lauds the work of the National Book Council. Saxton also praises the attention to books given in the periodical press: not only do the "serious weeklies" such as the *Nation and Athenaeum* emphasize books and reviewing, but the presumably less serious *John O’ London’s Weekly* and *T. P.’s Weekly* provide valuable service to the trade because they help "the average man to select and enjoy intelligently" (211). The book trade that Saxton...
describes is not unhealthy or at risk of insolvency; rather, Saxton focuses on what he sees as positive trends, some of them the direct result of the trade's cooperative efforts.

If the decision to end the series with Saxton's positive and balanced article was an intentional editorial move, the decision was not replicated in the book version of *Books and the Public*, published later in 1927 by the Hogarth Press. The book arranges the articles thematically rather than by their chronological appearance in the *Nation and Athenaeum*. The articles focusing on the economics of publishing come first: Henderson's and Keynes's and Unwin's, as well as Michael Sadleir's two articles on literary agents and circulating libraries. Next are Leonard Woolf's and Blackwell's articles on advertising, followed by the three articles that most directly address book-buying and -selling: Ibbetson's, Saxton's, and Charles Young's. The book collection *Books and the Public* ends not with Saxton's catalogue of the variety of book-buyers but with Jeffery E. Jeffery's contribution "The Printed Word," which had been the third from last article in the periodical series, published April 30. Jeffery advocates collective publicity of books, especially the work of the National Book Council, and ends with an appeal to readers to buy more books. Whereas the periodical series follows a trajectory from the similar arguments of Henderson, Ibbetson, and Keynes, through the variety of voices expressing different points of view, and ends with Saxton's positive vision of multi-faceted book-buyers, the book version arranges the articles so that the series comes full circle, ending as it began, with the injunction to buy more books. Additionally, the book version of the series does not reproduce the letters to the editor, many of which contribute richly to the debate in the periodical. Blackwell's scheme for mass-advertising books remains to contrast with the views of the other contributors, but the book version does not preserve
Drew's sharp dissent, or R. McKean Cant's reminder that most struggling businesses do not place the onus upon the public but try to fix the problem themselves. The book publication mutes the polyvocality of the series' periodical incarnation, and in consequence is much more a book with a thesis: Blackwell notwithstanding, the message of *Books and the Public* is that the readers must buy more books for the good of the book trade and intellectual culture.

The awareness that books are at once vessels of ideas and commodities subject to the rules of the marketplace led members of the book trade in the 1920s to seek a marketing approach that attempted to balance the multiple sides of the industry. Instead of adopting advertising techniques common to other industries, the book trade in the 1920s extended its efforts at cooperation within the trade to the public, inviting readers to support the trade financially by buying more books. This marketing scheme, through the efforts of the National Book Council, took a number of forms, but the mediation of periodicals like the *Nation and Athenaeum* was significant, particularly because these intellectual weeklies were already adept at traversing the ground between the book trade and an important segment of its customers. We have come, by the early twenty-first century, to be suspicious of marketing disguised as something else. With that in mind, it is important to reiterate that the two series of articles that I have analyzed here were not marketing disguised as discussion of the book trade; rather, they were *both* marketing and discussion of the book trade. The way that these articles wear both hats simultaneously, often uneasily, highlights the ambivalence surrounding the publishing and selling of books. If the book trade is a "good cause," as Henderson suggests it is, the rhetoric of duty and morality is not inappropriate. If, on the other hand, it is a business, its customers
should be allowed to treat it as such, with no obligation toward it beyond payment for
services rendered. Yet the book trade was and is widely believed to be both a "good
cause" and a business, and the Nation and Athenaeum book trade articles conflate the two
in a way that foregrounds these tensions. The articles also foreground the tensions within
the educational ideal of journalism, between the impulse to educate and persuade readers
to agree with a particular thesis and the impulse to stage polyvocal debate about pressing
political, social, and cultural questions. In a forum of open debate, after all, it is always
possible that a reader might respond like Elizabeth Drew.

Ultimately, the appeals within the intellectual press for readers to buy more
serious books for a "good cause" dwindled, as the book trade increasingly accepted what
Blackwell had pointed out, satirically or not, in his "Books and the Public" article: the
book-interested readers of intellectual weeklies were not a market "sufficient to keep the
Book Trade fully solvent" (73). Cooperation within the trade continued—the Net Book
Agreement, after all, was not abolished until 1988—but during the 1930s, various
schemes, including book clubs, Victor Gollancz's large-scale book advertising, and Allen
Lane's Penguin paperbacks, began to shift the trade's expectations about what sort of
books might be bought by individuals and what sort of individuals might buy them.
Throughout the 1930s, many of these schemes were quite controversial within the book
trade, largely because they threatened to upset the careful balance achieved through
cooperation (Holman 7-8). As Valerie Holman demonstrates throughout her work on the
book trade during World War II, however, the war effectively turned borrowers of all
sorts of books into book-buyers. The reading public began to buy more books, but they
did so not out of a sense of moral or social obligation but because the book trade made
book-buying more affordable and desirable. Additionally, the books bought were not predominantly the serious books of the cooperative appeals but the popular works that had formerly found their readers in the circulating libraries and whose sales, at least in some cases, helped to finance the unprofitable serious books on their publishers' lists. With these shifts, the close relationship between the book trade and the intellectual weeklies became less important, at least to the book trade, and appeals to the buyers of serious books were no longer necessary. Intellectual periodicals have not ever stopped discussing questions about the economic ramifications of the book trade, as anyone who has followed recent debates about e-books, for instance, will be aware. But without the unique relationship between the intellectual weeklies and the book trade itself that existed in the 1920s, their successors have manifested less of the tension between the goals of public debate and the goals of selling books. The intellectual weeklies' relationship with the book trade gave them a specific economic interest in its fortunes. This interestedness informed the weeklies' book-related content. At the same time, these periodicals' intellectual and cultural priorities also informed their book-related content and led them to encourage dialogue and the open exchange of ideas. Thus, the Nation and Athenaeum in the mid-1920s found itself negotiating a position between acting as a forum for discussion about the book trade and the economic viability of intellectual culture on one hand, and cooperating as a book trade partner in a marketing scheme on the other.
Chapter Three:
"The measure of new books": Book Reviewing and the Assignment of Cultural Value

How have the conditions of critical reviewing altered? Well, the kinds of books to be published have changed, as well as their numbers. Whereas novels were then comparatively few, they are now many. Books of memoirs appeal, perhaps to as many readers as they did in the eighteen-forties; but they do not appeal to as many people as a new novel by Mr Brett Young. Poetry, in one of its fluctuations, has ceased for the moment—for the moment only—to be considered important. Above all, library subscribers would take little heed of an article by Sainte-Beuve. They would think it far inferior to one by Mr Clifton Fadiman. Living at a speed so much higher than their fellows of the past, they have lost their palate.

—Frank Swinnerton, *The Reviewing and Criticism of Books* (1939)

In the above-quoted passage, Frank Swinnerton addresses one of the most popular themes in interwar British literary journalism: the problems surrounding the reviewing of books. Particularly in the political/literary weeklies such as the *Nation and Athenaeum* and the *New Statesman*, references to the state of reviewing, complaints about the difficulties of reviewing or the effectiveness of reviews, and discussions about what makes a good review appeared every few weeks. Commentators also published books and pamphlets on the subject, such as Swinnerton's above-quoted *The Reviewing and Criticism of Books*, Wayne Gard's *Book Reviewing* (1927), and Virginia Woolf's "Reviewing" (1939). The topic was addressed so frequently that the arguments took on a familiar outline: so many books were published that it was nearly impossible to sort through them in a way that allowed meaningful judgments. Instead, overworked reviewers dispatched mediocre books in a few hundred words of lukewarm praise; even in the intellectual weeklies, according to reviewers and literary editors, the conditions of reviewing scarcely allowed for better. A prominent theme of these discussions was the sense that book reviewing in the twentieth century had changed, breaking with a more
successful nineteenth-century reviewing tradition. Commentators such as Virginia Woolf and Frank Swinnerton praised the time and space accorded to nineteenth-century reviewers and bemoaned the lack of both in their contemporary reviewing scene (V. Woolf, "Reviewing" 206-7; Swinnerton, Reviewing 17-18). On one level, Woolf and Swinnerton were correct: the multiplicity of book titles and the financial exigencies of periodical publication by the 1920s and 1930s created a different reviewing environment than had been the case 100 or even 50 years previously. But at the heart of interwar discussions of book reviewing was a conflict as old as book reviewing itself: what is the purpose of a book review, and for whom is it written?

British book reviewing in the modern sense was born with Ralph Griffiths' founding of the *Monthly Review* in 1749. The *Monthly* had antecedents, both French and English, dating to the latter half of the seventeenth century, but these journals, such as *Journal des Scavans* (Paris and Amsterdam, 1665-1743) and *History of the Works of the Learned* (London, 1737-43), dealt primarily with scholarly works directed at specialized audiences (Forster 172). Griffiths, in contrast, aimed his periodical at a general audience and proposed to discuss a wide range of books. A bookseller himself, Griffiths was acutely aware of the review periodical as a potential force in the literary marketplace. Antonia Forster identifies the *Monthly Review* as "a new element [in] the relationship between authors, booksellers and the reading public" and gives Griffiths credit for ushering in "the modern age of bookselling" (172). If the latter claim is unnecessarily sweeping (there is no question that bookselling changed substantially during the latter half of the eighteenth century, but numerous factors, including but in no way limited to
the advent of book reviewing, contributed to these changes), the *Monthly Review* and its rival, Tobias Smollett's *Critical Review* (1755), were indeed watershed publications. The exact role of a book review was little clearer in the 1750s than it was in the 1930s, and from their inception, review periodicals were forced continuously to negotiate the potentially conflicting interests of all concerned parties. Reviewers, authors, book trade professionals (publishers and booksellers), readers of the periodical, and potential readers and buyers of books all had and continue to have a stake—sometimes overlapping, but just as often incompatible with one another—in the content of a book review.

Book reviews have always ostensibly been marketed to readers, a by no means homogenous designation that must at minimum distinguish between the reader of the periodical publishing the review and the potential buyer or borrower of the book under review. It is quite difficult—indeed, impossible in the vast majority of cases—to recover the actual readers in either of these senses. Who read the reviews at any time period? Why did these readers do so? Was there a causal relationship between reading a review and obtaining (or declining to obtain) the book discussed? There may be anecdotes to answer these questions in individual cases or to add nuance to prevailing stereotypes about audience homogeneity, but for the most part we are forced to discuss the idea of the reader and/or book-buyer and/or library patron as constructed by reviewers, periodical editors, and book trade professionals. The most common construction, from the inaugural issue of the *Monthly Review* through to the discussions of reviewing in the 1920s and '30s, was that of the reader overwhelmed by rapidly increasing numbers of books. In response to this imagined reader, the book review is offered as a useful tool. In the advertisement for first issue of the *Monthly Review*, Griffiths notes, "the abuse of title-
pages is obviously come to such a pass, that few readers care to take in a book, any more than a servant, without a recommendation," and offers his publication as a solution to the problem: "The cure then for this general complaint is evidently, and only, to be found in a periodical work, whose sole object should be to give a compendious account of those productions of the press, as they come out, that are worth notice." Such an account would "be serviceable to such as would choose to have some idea of a book before they lay out their money or time on it" (qtd. in Forster 172-23). 190 years later, Leonard Woolf defines the role of the book review in remarkably similar terms: a review should "give readers a description of the book and an estimate of its quality in order that he [sic] may know whether or not it is the kind of book which he may want to read" ("Note to 'Reviewing'" 216). 34

Such a project was easier described than enacted. In its earliest issues, the *Monthly Review* proposed not to offer opinions in favour or against the books it reviewed, but rather to describe the content and to extract key passages. 35 This vision of reviewing was also the foundation upon which the *Analytical Review* was launched in 1788 (Forster 180), and even in the early twentieth century the summary and extract method of reviewing made appearances. But despite Griffiths' claim in his inaugural issue that "we shall not, in the language of critics, pretend to describe, in terms of the art, the beauties or

34 How to choose one's reading material from a superfluity of choices was, as I've attempted to show, a question of concern from at least the mid-eighteenth century. Nevertheless, in the wake of the Education Act of 1870 and the accompanying sharp rise in the numbers of books and periodicals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, apprehensions about the sorting and evaluation of reading material had become particularly acute by the interwar years. See Cuddy-Keane 59-62.

35 The question of extracts in reviews was a contentious one. Reviewers claimed that readers needed extracts to get a sense of the book (and because reviewers were paid the same for extracts as they were for original content, they, too, benefited from their inclusion), but authors and booksellers complained that too many extracts hurt book sales. Even if favourably disposed toward a book, readers might feel they had gotten an adequate sense of it after reading the highlights in a review (Forster 180-81). For a discussion of the shifts in copyright and intellectual property in eighteenth-century Britain and their effects on the book trade and on readers, see St. Clair.
imperfections [...] of the production before us" (qtd. in Forster 174), the *Monthly Review*, as well as nearly every subsequent periodical to review books, proceeded to do exactly that. When Smollett launched the *Critical Review* as a competitor to the *Monthly*, he used criticism as his marketing strategy: in what would become a familiar argument in the manifestoes of new periodicals, Smollett decried the *Monthly's* commercial interests (Griffiths was simultaneously the editor of the *Monthly* and a bookseller) and proposed his own periodical as one that would be faithful to "the noble Art of Criticism" (qtd. in Forster 176). Nevertheless, in practice, Forster points out, "the *Critical's* approach to the business in fact differed very little from that laid down by the *Monthly Review*" (176).

In her well-known narrative of the history of book reviewing, Virginia Woolf locates a shift in the understanding of criticism and reviewing at the end of the eighteenth century: "The critic—let Dr. Johnson represent him—dealt with the past and with principles; the reviewer took the measure of new books as they fell from the press" ("Reviewing" 205). Conceptually, Woolf's distinction is fairly accurate; the aforementioned comments by Griffiths and Smollett recognize book reviewing and criticism as activities with separate aims. Yet Griffiths and Smollett both employ the terms to highlight an idealized distinction that did not necessarily reflect their practices: Griffiths initially claimed not to aim for criticism, but his periodical practiced it anyway, while Smollett adopted the term "criticism" for his periodical but in practice published content very similar to Griffiths'. Whether that content is best described as "reviewing" or "criticism" is a hazy issue at best. In the nineteenth century, the terms became even more conflated. Laurel Brake goes so far as to suggest that review/Reviewer and criticism/critic were interchangeable in mid-Victorian Britain and emphasizes that many of the great
nineteenth-century British "critics"—from Coleridge to Matthew Arnold to Leslie Stephen—were journalists (Subjugated Knowledges 2-3). Nineteenth-century review periodicals, argue Kyriaki Hadjiafxendi and John Plunkett, "reinvented the form of the review so that it became an extended discussion on literary, political, social, and historical issues" (34). Thus, Woolf's claim that reviewing and criticism are separate spheres is overly sharp (and, I will argue, knowingly so), a characterization of a conceptual distinction that was not borne out by the practice of literary journalism in Johnson's time or her own. Reviewers have consistently "[taken] the measure of new books as they fell from the press," but that, their primary job description, has not prevented many of them from also "[dealing] with the past and with principles." Woolf's own book reviewing career, in fact, reveals her as among the most critical of reviewers. For instance, in the three reviews she wrote in 1920 of Constance Hill's biography of Mary Russell Mitford, Woolf quickly (and unfavourably) dispatches the book under review and then spends her remaining space discussing theories of biography. These reviews were then revised and republished as "Outlines: 1. Miss Mitford" in the first volume of The Common Reader (1925), further blurring the distinction between "reviewing" and "criticism." Woolf's distinction between criticism and reviewing in "Reviewing," particularly in light of her own critical and reviewing practice, serves to highlight practical overlap as much as theoretical difference between the two terms.

Despite the prevalence of reviews that doubled as criticism (or vice versa) and a general tendency to conflate the two terms in casual journalistic usage, most

---

commentators on reviewing in the early twentieth century were eager to reinforce Woolf's conceptual distinction between the two practices. "Criticism" had become the valued term in the hierarchy, associated not only "with the past and with principles," but perhaps above all with the ideal of disinterestedness. The currency of this ideal in the early twentieth century owed much, as I indicated in the Introduction, to Matthew Arnold's description of critical disinterestedness in "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1864). Arnold describes a criticism ideally free of "the practical view of things" and able instead to follow "the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches" ("Function" 37). In a similar vein, Woolf claims that one of the advantages of the one-on-one, writer-reviewer consultation model that she proposes in "Reviewing" is the replacement of the current conditions of reviewing with "fearless and disinterested discussion" (214). The best kind of critical discourse, Woolf suggests, should be located outside the interests (and conflicts of interest) in which reviewing has always been mired. Yet as I will go on to argue, Woolf's proposal in "Reviewing" is deliberately fantastic and satirical, more concerned with exposing the interestedness of reviewing as an enterprise than with advocating a viable alternative. Arnold, too, formulated his ideal of disinterested criticism in the context of a critical reality that was anything but disinterested. He complains that "our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of the mind the second" ("Function" 37). Although Arnold appears to be genuinely hopeful that critical reform might be possible, his ideal was incompatible with the realities of periodical publication that characterized the
criticism and book reviewing in his own time, as well as the periods both before and after his.  

Reviewing's relationship to the financial interests of book and periodical publishers has always detracted from any pretenses the enterprise has had to disinterested criticism. Forster points out that review material was first used in book advertising in 1750, only one year after the founding of the *Monthly Review* (175), and the *Critical Review*'s standard invective against its rival was to highlight Griffiths' other job as a bookseller (the fact that Smollett, as an author of books, also had a vested financial interest, albeit on a smaller and more personal scale, in the sale of books and fortunes of booksellers, went uncommented upon). In some ways, the direct ties between reviewing and the book trade had been severed by the early twentieth century: review periodicals were rarely published by book publishers by that period, eradicating the common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century practice of a periodical puffing its own publisher's books. Nevertheless, as I pointed out in Chapter One, there remained a strong, broadly reciprocal relationship between the book trade and review periodicals, particularly the weeklies, and no one reading the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *New Statesman* could fail to notice the pages of publishers' advertisements interleaved with the reviews. Because of the complexities of the relationship between the book trade and the weeklies and because of the tension inherent in books and periodicals themselves, as both commodities and objects with artistic and intellectual value, the difference between

---

37 Arnold claims that an organ of disinterested reviewing existed in his own time in the form of France's *Revue des Deux Mondes* and that the problem of interested critical journalism was England's specifically ("Function" 37). Arguably, however, this positioning participates in what Collini describes as a long history of British intellectuals looking elsewhere, and especially to France, for intellectual models (*Absent Minds* 69-89). For Arnold, the *Revue des Deux Mondes* may truly have been a superior critical journal, but it is also possible that it served his rhetorical purpose simply by being French. In *Scrutiny*'s attacks on the intellectual weeklies, the subject of Chapter Four of this dissertation, the American *New Republic* serves a similar rhetorical function.
advertising material and critical material in the weeklies was not always easy to discern.

The *Nation and Athenæum* book trade articles that I discussed in Chapter Two, for instance, constituted both a debate about the economic viability of serious books and a marketing scheme on behalf of the book trade.

In addition to economic interestedness, reviewing is also wrapped up in the reputational interest of authors, reviewers, and editors. In *Authors and the Book Trade* (1932), Frank Swinnerton fantasizes about an ideal group of "critical reviewers," isolated from the rest of the book trade (121-23). In training such reviewers, Swinnerton claims:

Never, in any circumstances, would I allow any of my students to go to a literary lunch, tea, or dinner-party. I would not allow them to lunch with publishers, or to accept presents from publishers of books new or old. I would not allow them at any time whatever to receive letters from authors or invitations from authors to discuss difficult points in reviews. And finally, if any one of them showed signs of wishing to become an author, I would instantly dismiss him from the critical classes. (122)

Swinnerton interchanges the terms "reviewer" and "critic" throughout this passage, a slippage paradigmatic of his professed goal of critically disinterested reviewers of new books. Yet Swinnerton's ideal is as fantastic as all utopias: the reviewers of his time very often were authors and were friends with authors; they were publishers' readers, friends with publishers, or occasionally, as in the case of Virginia and Leonard Woolf, publishers themselves. Swinnerton himself was a reviewer, a popular novelist, and a sometime publisher's reader. He clearly recognizes that his fantasy is just that—the end of the passage is particularly exaggerated for humour—but with it Swinnerton highlights the
real difficulty and complexity, and I would argue the real fascination, of reviewing: its interestedness.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine the function of and problems surrounding interwar reviewing through an analysis of the reviewing commentary of Virginia and Leonard Woolf and Frank Swinnerton and the reviewing practices of Arnold Bennett and Desmond MacCarthy. These figures, all prominent early twentieth-century reviewers, were largely perceived, both during their lifetimes and since, as occupying positions in two separate and even opposing intellectual and cultural camps: the Woolfs and MacCarthy as Bloomsbury highbrows, and Bennett and Swinnerton as popular middlebrows. There were, as I shall discuss, valid bases for these distinctions, but an examination of these writers' relationship to reviewing reveals differences more acute in perception than in practice. Virginia Woolf and Frank Swinnerton make a compelling case study in interwar reviewing commentary: both were well-known novelists who not only reviewed regularly, but also discussed reviewing. Both published notable essays on reviewing in the autumn of 1939: Woolf's "Reviewing" and Swinnerton's *The Reviewing and Criticism of Books*, which reiterates and expands upon his similar discussion in his 1932 *Authors and the Book Trade*.38 In his analysis of these reviewing commentaries, Patrick Collier emphasizes the differences between Woolf and Swinnerton's approaches to reviewing. Certainly there are some key points of contrast in their perspectives and attitudes, but I will argue that juxtaposing these texts also highlights the similar ways that

38 There is no internal evidence that either Woolf or Swinnerton was responding to the other's essay, but both were published around the same time. J. Howard Woolmer gives the publication date of Woolf's pamphlet as November 1939 (159). I have been unable to locate an exact publication date for Swinnerton's, but it would also have been in the autumn: the note at the beginning of the book says that Swinnerton had written it as the Ninth Dent Memorial Lecture and submitted the manuscript for publication but was unable to deliver the lecture because of the outbreak of the war (Swinnerton, *Reviewing* 5-6).
Woolf and Swinnerton recognize and respond to the inherent interestedness of book reviewing. Following the discussion of Woolf and Swinnerton, I move to a discussion of the reviewing practices of Arnold Bennett and Desmond MacCarthy. In his reviewing treatises, Swinnerton distinguishes between "star" and "coterie" reviewing methods in interwar Britain. This distinction is meaningful insofar as it reflects Swinnerton's perspective within the literary networks of those years, but an analysis of Bennett and MacCarthy demonstrates the extent to which these sharply delineated categories blur when subjected to scrutiny. The blurring of these categories demonstrates the extent to which it was not only, and perhaps not primarily, the words of the book reviews themselves but also the connotations of all the surrounding material—the advertisements, the non-book-related content, the names of the reviewers and other contributors—that contributed to the labelling of periodicals, and the books reviewed in them, as "highbrow" or "middlebrow," "intellectual" or "popular." Book reviewing was economically and socially interested, and it was also responsible, in large part, for the assignment of cultural value; its interestedness cannot be separated from that responsibility.

Collier's recent treatment of interwar book reviewing in *Modernism on Fleet Street* provides a succinct discussion of the problems surrounding reviewing during these years. Collier notes that "book reviewing was the most visible site of mediation between readers and writers, and it was widely held to be failing in its obligations to help the readers navigate an overcrowded literary marketplace" (*Modernism* 72). I would expand Collier's list of parties involved in this mediation to include members of the book trade, in addition to readers and writers. Collier, following many early twentieth-century
commentators, locates the problems with reviewing in two main, related factors: the proliferation of books and the proliferation of reviews.\textsuperscript{39} In particular, he focuses on the emergence of book review sections in daily newspapers, a shift which, particularly by the 1930s, provided book reviews to a wide, general audience, rather than the specifically book-interested audience of the specialized literary publications that had dominated the reviewing market in the past. This expansion, both in sheer numbers and in the demographics being reached, led many writers and reviewers to fear "critical anarchy" in literary journalism (Collier, \textit{Modernism} 72-3). As he examines the commentaries on reviewing by Woolf and Swinnerton, Collier focuses his analysis on the writers' respective locations "in the intertwined hierarchies of class and literary prestige," arguing that "Woolf, an essayist and reviewer for the more prestigious weeklies and monthlies, blames the crisis in reviewing largely on the newspapers, while Swinnerton, a longtime newspaper reviewer, stridently attacks cliquishness in the kinds of journals and professional communities with which Woolf was associated" (\textit{Modernism} 83-84).

Collier's reading of "Reviewing" and \textit{The Reviewing and Criticism of Books} focuses on these contrasts and on the ways Woolf's and Swinnerton's differences in perspective were manifested through their negotiation of categories such as private and public, and amateur and professional (\textit{Modernism} 84-95).

Collier is correct to locate some of the conflict between journalistic factions in class difference; his reading of Harold Nicolson's "class-bound antagonism to the wage-

\textsuperscript{39} Even as early in the period as 1890, the reviewing field was so crowded that W. T. Stead saw a market for a \textit{Review of Reviews}. In the inaugural issue, Stead proclaims, "Of the making of magazines there is no end. There are already more periodicals than any one can find time to read. That is why I have to-day added another to the list. For the new comer is not a rival, but rather an index and a guide to all those already in existence. In the mighty maze of modern periodical literature, the busy man wanders confused, not knowing exactly where to find the precise article that he requires, and often, after losing all his scanty time in the search, he departs unsatisfied. It is the object of the \textit{Review of Reviews} to supply a clue to that maze in the shape of a readable compendium of all the best articles in the magazines and reviews" (14).
work of journalism" compared with "Swinnerton's equally class-bound perception of public-school chumminess among London's literary coteries" is convincing (Modernism 84-85). The key word in that sentence, however, is "perception," and it is important to emphasize the difference between journalistic hierarchies as perceived by a commentator such as Swinnerton (or Nicolson or Woolf, all influenced, though not controlled, by their respective class and gender positions) and the archival record of interwar book reviewing itself. Collier recognizes the complexity of the relationship between class and journalistic forms, but some of his distinctions are overly sharp. As Collier points out, Swinnerton, in Authors and the Book Trade and The Reviewing and Criticism of Books, does distinguish between "star" and "coterie" reviewing, largely blaming the latter for the problems he sees in reviewing. Nevertheless, the opposite is not true of Woolf's essay. Woolf uses Nicolson, a daily newspaper reviewer, as her example of a typical reviewer, though, as Collier notes, Nicolson was not particularly typical (Modernism 84). But the complaints Woolf attributes to Nicolson are the commonplace grievances of reviewers in both daily and weekly forums; Collier's observation that Nicolson's remarks are in fact a paraphrase of the middlebrow novelist Storm Jameson emphasizes, rather than undermines, the complaint's participation in a common script about the problems of reviewing (Modernism 84). And Woolf herself claims she is discussing reviewers of "the great political dailies and weeklies" (208, emphasis added), thereby complicating Collier's claim that she "blames the crisis in reviewing largely on the newspapers" (Modernism 83).

---

40 For similar complaints, see, among many possible examples, [MacCarthy], "The Autumn List" xviii; L. Woolf, "A Moratorium for Poetry" 682; Kennedy 740; and Bennett, The Evening Standard Years 332-34.
Thus, the distinction Collier draws between reviewing in the newspapers and reviewing in "the more prestigious weeklies and monthlies" requires more nuance. Monthly and quarterly periodicals, by the early twentieth century, were not primarily book reviewing organs. Most of the intellectual monthlies and quarterlies did publish reviews, but these tended to be highly selective, focusing on only a handful of books likely to be of greatest interest to their readers. Weeklies, on the other hand, were better poised to keep up with the pace of book publishing. Considering that many daily newspapers published book reviews only one day a week, the reviewing frequency in the dailies and weeklies was often identical. Reviews in the weeklies, particularly of fiction (the explicit subject of Woolf's essay and implicit subject of Swinnerton's), often looked quite similar to reviews in the dailies. As I pointed out in Chapter One, in October of 1926, the Nation and Athenaeum, under the literary editorship of Leonard Woolf, devoted an average of only 178 words to each novel it reviewed; although the selection of novels reviewed may have differed in the dailies, daily newspapers could scarcely have been less thorough in their evaluations. The key difference between reviews in a popular daily and an intellectual weekly was not in frequency of publication or thoroughness of evaluation but rather the titles themselves, with the former typically reviewing more popular novels than the latter.

With the exception of the Times Literary Supplement (which continued at this time to publish anonymous reviews), intellectual weeklies tended to share other similarities with the reviewing habits of daily newspapers, as well. The weeklies tended to organize their reviews around a single authority, usually the literary editor, who, if not always a "star" of Arnold Bennett's calibre, nevertheless fulfilled many of the roles
Swinnerton attaches to the "star reviewers" of the dailies (Authors 115). The weeklies also tended to have a regular fiction reviewer who signed his or her reviews each week. Sometimes this person was a relatively well-known novelist, but even when the fiction reviewer lacked widespread fame, he or she was at least a familiar name to readers of the periodical. Finally, despite regular charges that the weeklies were the domains of cliques and coteries, careful examination of the writers and reviewers involved reveals surprising overlap of figures and networks far more often than it reveals cliquishness. There is no question that differences between a weekly such as the New Statesman and a daily such as the Evening Standard were keenly felt, and indeed, the two publications were markedly different in many ways: the New Statesman's conservative typography, dense articles about politics and economics, and up-market advertisements for books and motor cars were a marked contrast to the Evening Standard's photographs, gossip columns, and more plentiful advertisements for soaps and food products. But on the subject of books, and particularly reviews of fiction, the periodicals were more alike than one might expect; they were, in fact, far more alike than the New Statesman and the Fortnightly Review, a monthly that Collier includes in his representative list of organs of "serious reviewing," a list that lumps together such disparate categories as "little magazines to larger weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies" (81). What I find most compelling about the discussions of reviewing during the 1920s and '30s is not that there were such differences between reviewing in the dailies and reviewing in the weeklies. Rather, the true fascination is the perception of a difference far greater than actually existed.

41 I should note that I do not intend the Evening Standard as a representative daily newspaper; indeed, daily newspapers in this period were so varied that a single representative example would be impossible. I use the Evening Standard as a case study throughout this chapter because of Arnold Bennett's connection with that paper. As a middlebrow London daily aimed at a middle-class audience, it can be usefully contrasted with the intellectual weeklies, of which my chief example in this chapter is the New Statesman.
While recognizing the validity of many of the differences between Woolf and Swinnerton that Collier discusses, I want to shift focus away from those differences to look instead at the way they, as well as Leonard Woolf, highlight the complex interestedness of reviewing and the extent to which book reviewing is embedded within the commercial enterprise of the book trade. Despite their different positions within the interwar literary networks and within the interwar class structure in general, Woolf and Swinnerton shared similar views about what was at stake in the enterprise of reviewing, as well as similar rhetorical strategies in expressing those views. Early in "Reviewing," Woolf separates the reviewer from the critic, apparently delineating distinct, clearly-defined tasks for the two. But as I discussed above, Woolf's own reviewing practice belies any neat separation, and through the remainder of her essay, her emphasis is on the overlap in practice between goals that are discrete in theory. She describes the "complex task" of the reviewer "partly to inform the public, partly to criticize the book, and partly to advertise its existence" (205). This recognition of the reviewer's multifaceted role continues in the next section of the essay as Woolf considers the effect of what she diagnoses as "the decline and fall of reviewing" on all concerned parties: the author, the reader, and the publisher (206-7). As if the potentially conflicting interests of three parties were not complex enough, Woolf later brings the interests of the reviewer to bear on the discussion, as well (208-9). In addition to these four groups, the periodical publishing the reviews must be considered as a separate interested party. The book review's fundamental problem is its attempt to be all things to all people, perhaps to the satisfaction of none.
Woolf argues that by 1939, book reviews had failed all the interested parties: a superfluity of short, often contradictory reviews resulted in authors, readers, and publishers alike dismissing reviews as having any relevance to reputation, book purchases, or advertising. Woolf herself occupied a position in nearly all groups with something at stake in reviewing: she was an author, a reviewer, a reader, and a publisher. In her proposed solution to the problems of the current reviewing system, however, she places her emphasis on the interests of authors. In "Reviewing," Woolf proposes, with a good deal of humour and only moderate seriousness, a complete overhauling of the reviewing system. Just as Swinnerton's comically utopian fantasy of disinterested reviewers, discussed above, serves to highlight the interestedness of reviewing, Woolf's proposal to separate out the various functions of the book review exposes the extent to which reviews try to fulfill too many purposes at once. In neither Woolf's nor Swinnerton's case is the proposed solution to be taken seriously; rather, in true satiric fashion, the extremity of the remedies points a finger at the problems of the current system. For the utilitarian needs of readers and publishers, Woolf proposes "the Gutter and Stamp system": reviews need only contain a short summary gutted from the book and a stamp signifying approval or disapproval. With such a system, "the library public will be told what it wishes to know—whether the book is the kind of book to order from the library; and the publisher will collect asterisks and daggers instead of going to the pains to copy out alternate phrases of praise and abuse in which neither he nor the public has any faith. Each will perhaps save a little time and a little money" (209). The more striking and, given the comparative amount of space she spends on it, more important part of Woolf's proposed revision to the reviewing system is her suggestion that reviewers
"abolish themselves or what relic remains of them, as reviewers, and resurrect themselves as doctors" (212). The humour of Woolf's language here is strikingly similar to Swinnerton's suggestion of a school for disinterested reviewers, an indication that both writers are more concerned with diagnosing problems with the current system than proposing sincere solutions. Under Woolf's reviewer-as-physician proposal, the author, who in her emphasis is the party most concerned in the act of reviewing, would benefit from one-on-one consultation with a reviewer, who could charge a doctor's fee for his or her services. Such a system, Woolf argues, would also benefit the reviewers, who, saved from the need "to cater in that little space for many different interests" (209), could address themselves to one purpose and one audience only: the author.

Virginia Woolf's "Reviewing" was not published as her essay alone, but as an essay with an appended note by Leonard Woolf. In the note, Leonard Woolf disagrees with some of the ideas in his wife's essay, in particular with her emphasis on reviews' relevance to authors. Collier suggests that Leonard's note originated in alarm over Virginia's essay and was intended to mitigate her attacks on contemporary reviewing (Modernism 215, n4). Melba Cuddy-Keane, however, reads the juxtaposition of the Woolfs' commentaries on reviewing as a characteristic move designed to foster debate, in line with their BBC broadcast "Are Too Many Books Written and Published?" (1927) and with Virginia's habitual style of dialogic essay writing (65-6). As I have argued elsewhere, Leonard's essays, even when they appear to argue a straightforward and monologic line of thought, do so for the purpose of stimulating debate (Dickens "Circulating Ideas"). Thus, I am inclined to agree with Cuddy-Keane and to read Virginia's essay and Leonard's corresponding note as complementary pieces of a dialogue
that together draw attention to the full complexity of book reviewing as an enterprise. Leonard's note frames book reviewing in light of the economic exigencies of the book trade and the utilitarian needs of readers. In his narrative, the eighteenth-century shift away from a patronage-based system toward a more commercial book trade necessitated the sorting function of reviewing. The purpose of reviewing is, in Leonard's note, uncomplicated: "it is to give to readers a description of the book and an estimate of its quality in order that he [sic] may know whether or not it is the kind of book which he may want to read" (216). Leonard appears to agree with Virginia by drawing a firm distinction between reviewing and criticism, but he follows this distinction with the assertion that because reviewers are not critics, "in 999 cases out of 1,000 [they have] nothing to say to the author" but instead address readers only (216). This dialogue uses the juxtaposition of divergent views to highlight precisely the issues at stake in reviewing: by each arguing on behalf of one member of the intended audience for a book review, Leonard and Virginia together highlight the internal tensions that have made the writing of reviews so problematic.

If we were to judge on the strength of the note to "Reviewing" alone, Leonard Woolf's view of book reviewing seems to be that of a process with a narrow, utilitarian focus. His approach serves the general purpose of Virginia's proposed "Gutter and Stamp system," but Leonard argues that reviewing is not "easy and mechanical" but in fact "a highly-skilled profession" (216). The note does not convey nearly as nuanced and complex a view of reviewing as does the essay to which it is appended, but Leonard's views on book reviewing published elsewhere reveal a wider assessment of the situation. During his tenure as literary editor of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, Leonard repeatedly
referenced the conditions of reviewing, but rarely more thoroughly and explicitly than in his "World of Books" column of November 26, 1927, in which he reviewed a book on book reviewing by American journalism professor Wayne Gard ("The Art of Reviewing Books" 320). Leonard agrees with Gard (and the American editors Gard cites) that the goals of a good review are twofold: "the first is that the review should give a clear account of what is in the book; the second is that it should give a clear account of what, in the reviewer's opinion, are the book's merits and defects" (320). The chief obstacle to good reviewing, as Leonard diagnoses it in this review, is the complaint, familiar to any regular reader of his "World of Books" columns, that periodicals publishing reviews are deluged with too many books.42 "The Art of Reviewing Books" ends with a perspective on reviewing that appears to contradict the straightforward description of reviewing's function that we find in the note to "Reviewing." In the 1927 review, Leonard notes that according to Gard's book, a good American review "is rather a pedestrian affair. It should be strictly useful, not ornamental." Leonard then observes that British reviews are also moving in a utilitarian direction and regrets the tendency:

You may hear authors say, quite truly, that to-day there is in the ordinary press no serious literary criticism, no serious criticism of historical or political books. Most authors would agree that they often get very flattering reviews and often very unflattering, but practically never a review which really discusses the book and its subject intelligently. The reason is that the function of the reviewer is gradually being limited, at the

---

42 It is worth noting that this review appeared just a few months after the Woolfs' BBC broadcast "Are Too Many Books Written and Published?" See L. and V. Woolf 235-44 and Cuddy-Keane 64-7.
best, to advising people what book to put on their library list and, at the worst, to providing quotations for publishers' advertisements. (320)

The substance of this review more closely resembles Virginia's "Reviewing" than Leonard's appended note. "The Art of Reviewing Books" suggests that Leonard fully recognizes the complexity of the book review's relation to its multiple audiences and that the note to "Reviewing" may most appropriately be read as a devil's advocate response, not intended to shut down the discussion provoked by Virginia's essay but rather to add to its intricacy.

One specific way in which Leonard's note adds nuance to the discussion of reviewing is through his foregrounding of the economic underpinnings of reviewing. Virginia acknowledges a number of the parties with some vested interest in book reviewing, but she neglects an important one: the periodicals that publish reviews. In his note, Leonard points out that criticism, as distinct from reviewing, does not attract subscribers: "the monthly or quarterly which hopes to print literary criticism and pay is doomed to disappointment. Most of them have therefore tried to butter the bread of criticism with reviewing. But the public which wants reviewing will not pay 2s. 6d., 3s. 6d., or 5s. for it monthly or quarterly when they can get it just as good in the dailies and weeklies" (217). This statement draws attention to several key distinctions between periodicals. Monthly and quarterly periodicals are recognized as devoted to criticism, whereas reviewing is the primary purview of the daily and weekly newspapers. Rather than a differentiation on the basis of presumed intellectual quality, the separation is economic: weekly and daily papers, those which publish many reviews, are more affordable than the monthlies or quarterlies. What Leonard does not mention here is the
role that advertising plays in these prices. As I explained in Chapter One, advertising from publishers constituted a significant portion of the revenue of the intellectual weeklies. There was no direct relationship between advertising money and favourable reviews, but a broadly reciprocal relationship existed between the weeklies and the publishers: publishers advertised, and consequently, the periodicals were able to continue publishing reviews. The daily newspapers had a less direct relationship with publisher advertising, but as I shall discuss below, there was, according to Swinnerton, still a clear cause and effect relationship between publisher advertising and reviews in daily newspapers. And of course advertising revenue, not circulation revenue, financed the daily papers. Monthlies and quarterlies, however, tended to exist in a more precarious financial situation, often far more dependent upon revenue from circulation and/or from patrons, rather than from advertising. Presumably any monthly or quarterly that introduced reviewing in order "to butter the bread of criticism" did so not, as Leonard suggests, to increase circulation, but rather in hopes of attracting more publishers as advertisers. For the daily and weekly periodicals that regularly published reviews, publisher advertising was key: the system of reviewing, however flawed it might have been, kept the weeklies, in particular, afloat. When Virginia proposes, at the end of "Reviewing," that the "Gutter and Stamp system" would save space that periodicals could devote to "unsigned and uncommercial literature—upon essays, upon criticism," she has reached the essay's most idealistic dream (214). Periodicals that devoted their energy to reviewing did so largely because reviewing operated as part of the complex economic system of the book trade; removing the economic ties to the book trade through
abolishing reviewing would cripple many periodicals' ability to publish anything at all, least of all "uncommercial literature."

Shifting from the Woolfs' discussion of the conditions of interwar reviewing to that of Frank Swinnerton, we find a rather different diagnosis of the problems of reviewing, but a complementary understanding of reviewing's complex relationship to the literary marketplace. Swinnerton wrote at length about reviewing in his 1932 book Authors and the Book Trade and again a few years later in The Reviewing and Criticism of Books (1939); in each of these texts he gives a similar narrative of reviewing in the early twentieth century. His first discussion of reviewing comes in the midst of a primer on all aspects of the book trade, and there is no suggestion in the 1932 book that reviewing is in its practice anything other than a commercial activity embedded in the economics of the book trade. It is in this book that Swinnerton describes his ideal world of disinterested critical reviewers, but as I suggested above, the clearly fantastic nature of the proposal, not to mention its context in a book about the interrelationships between all aspects of the book trade, including reviewing, serves to highlight the inherent interestedness of reviewing as an enterprise. By 1939, Swinnerton was acknowledging the overlap between reviewing and criticism, while still drawing much the same distinction Woolf did between the goals of the two activities. He opens The Reviewing and Criticism of Books (originally written as a lecture) with a reflection on his chosen title:

You will notice that in choosing a title for this lecture I made a distinction between criticism and reviewing. This was because I believe that while a reviewer may be a critic and his criticism a review there are differences
between what a man will write as his first word and what he will write as
his last word upon any given book or author. Whereas reviewing is, on the
whole, an immediate and provisional estimate of performance, criticism,
in the words of Arthur Symons, 'is a valuation of forces.' (7)

Swinnerton's explanation recognizes both the separation between reviewing and criticism
that had existed in theory, if not often in practice, since the eighteenth century, and the
reality that the line between critics and reviewers is always a blurred one at best.

Swinnerton's narrative of the twentieth-century history of reviewing, though in
places oversimplified or exaggerated for his own rhetorical purposes, emphasizes the
interdependence, regrettable in Swinnerton's view, of reviewing and the book trade and
particularly recognizes the role of publishers' advertising in the financing of periodical
book review sections. In both *Authors and the Book Trade* and *The Reviewing and
Criticism of Books*, Swinnerton, like Virginia Woolf, highlights an idealized past of fewer
books and longer, more thoughtful reviews, before departing from Woolf by tracing the
reviewing habits of daily versus weekly periodicals in the twentieth century and
distinguishing between "star" and "coterie" reviewing trends. Like Woolf, Swinnerton
laments the lost leisure enjoyed by nineteenth-century reviewers: "There were fewer
books. There were fewer critics and periodicals. And there was more time in every
department of life for consideration" (*Reviewing* 16). By the early twentieth century,
however, the conditions of the book trade, the reading public, and the periodical press
had all undergone significant changes, and with them, inevitably, reviewing changed.
Despite Swinnerton's affection for the ideal of the disinterested reviewer, as seen in his
proposed satirically utopian training method, his understanding of the development of
reviewing in the twentieth century is entirely dependent upon causal factors from the book trade.

One of the great fulcrums on which reviewing turns is the publisher's advertisement. As I pointed out in Chapter One, there was a broadly reciprocal relationship between the intellectual weeklies and the book trade: publishers advertised heavily in the intellectual weeklies, and as a result of the revenue, these periodicals for book-interested readers could afford to publish many reviews. In Swinnerton's narrative, the publishers' advertisements gave the weeklies their power in the first place. In *Authors and the Book Trade*, Swinnerton argues that advertising operates as an important part of the complex network that is the book trade, but that it has little direct benefit to the sale of books; publishers advertise themselves more than their individual titles, and the advertisements serve primarily to create the atmosphere in which books are discussed and to reinforce existing "talk" of a book (*Authors* 84-5). In the late nineteenth century and very early twentieth century, he argues, daily newspapers—he gives the examples of the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Daily News*—regularly reviewed books, and publishers regularly advertised in them (*Reviewing* 29). As daily newspapers became increasingly popular and advertising rates increased, publishers, operating on a notoriously slim profit margin and with a product more difficult to advertise than more uniform commodities like soap or tobacco, could no longer afford to advertise in the dailies. In consequence, Swinnerton argues, "there arose a horrid notion that advertisements were in some degree a payment for reviews, reviews [in the daily papers] became smaller and fewer" and "the weekly critical journals reaped the harvest" (*Authors* 114). As a result of these factors in
advertising and reviewing, the relationship between the weeklies and the publishers was largely as I described it in Chapter One.

Swinnerton's narrative becomes somewhat more dubious in its factual basis, if no less interesting as a story, when he locates Arnold Bennett's 1926 appointment as weekly book columnist for the *Evening Standard* as the great watershed event in interwar reviewing. By 1939, Swinnerton went so far as to declare that "apart from the introduction of big business into publishing by Victor Gollancz, the advent of Arnold Bennett as a star reviewer did more to change the aspect of the book world than any other post-War event. The whole system of book-reviewing underwent an overhaul" (*Reviewing* 29). From the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, the importance of Gollancz and Bennett, though both significant figures, to the interwar book trade pales in comparison with that of Allen Lane, but Swinnerton can be forgiven for not recognizing the full potential of *Penguin Books* in 1939. His estimation (perhaps overestimation) of Bennett was, no doubt, coloured by the relationship between the two men: Swinnerton was a great admirer of Bennett, the two were close friends, and Swinnerton became Bennett's biographer. Nevertheless, Bennett deserved the reputation he had at the *Evening Standard* as the most powerful reviewer in Britain, able to influence the sales of books he discussed to an unmatched degree. Bennett's biographer Reginald Pound notes that Bennett was "almost unique" among reviewers in his ability to effect an immediate response from readers and book-buyers. The most commonly cited example of Bennett's power is his review of Lion Feuchtwanger's *Jew Süss*, a previously little-noted German novel that became a bestseller on the strength of Bennett's review, but Pound points out that Bennett's influence extended to all kinds of books: "An article
by him on a book about a system of physical exercising for the corpulent sent a queue of middle-aged men and women to the publishers' premises the next morning" (322-23).

Swinnerton uses the example of Bennett to set up a dichotomy between the "star" reviewing adopted by the daily newspapers following Bennett's success as the original "star reviewer," and the "coterie" reviewing of intellectual and critical periodicals (he does not specify titles, but the intellectual weeklies seem to be the chief target, and neither are the critical monthlies and quarterlies exempt from the charges of coterie influence). Star reviewing, according to Swinnerton, is that by a well-known figure, usually a popular novelist, in a daily newspaper. The star's fame attracts readers and turns the review into "news" for the paper, which in turn influences the sale of books and the willingness of publishers to advertise in the daily papers (Reviewing 31-2).

Despite Bennett's influence as the Evening Standard's chief reviewer, there seems to have been little substantial or immediate shift in publishers' advertising practices as a result of his popularity. During October of 1928, the height of the autumn publishing season in a year in which Bennett was at the height of his reviewing influence and popularity, Hutchinson was the only publisher to advertise regularly in the Evening Standard. There were, in fact, very few publishers' advertisements in the Evening Standard throughout 1928, and those publishers that did advertise bought small ads only and, with the exception of Hutchinson, did not advertise regularly. In his introduction to Bennett's collected Evening Standard reviews, Andrew Mylett cites an anecdote from Eric Hiscock, an editorial assistant on the Evening Standard who was responsible for delivering Bennett's review copy. Publishers, Hiscock claimed, would telephone him on Monday afternoons to find out what Bennett was reviewing that week. If he were
reviewing one of their books, perhaps they would advertise in the *Evening Standard*, "but what they wanted to do more than anything else was to lift a handsome quote from the *Standard* to include in their advertisements in more bookish organs (qtd. in Mylett xxiv). Bennett's popularity did not bring substantial advertising revenue to the *Evening Standard* during his tenure; instead, publishers culled his reviews for blurbs to use in their ads in the Sunday papers and intellectual weeklies, in the latter of which the advertising continued in much the same fashion as I described in Chapter One. What made Bennett worth the £300 per month that the *Evening Standard* paid him, making him the highest-paid book reviewer in England (Mylett xxii), was not a sudden influx of advertising from publishers but rather the attention that Bennett's own popularity brought to the paper. Mylett points out that "the articles were in fact so successful that the *Standard*'s circulation, incredibly, rose on book review day" and cites Desmond MacCarthy as among the people who confessed to buying the *Evening Standard* only on Thursdays, in order to read Bennett's column (xxiii). Bennett, Swinnerton suggests, "made books news" (*Reviewing* 31).

Unlike Woolf and Swinnerton, who both saw the book review, and particularly the book review of the early twentieth century, as failing, in greater or lesser degrees, to do its job satisfactorily, Bennett himself saw reviewing as improving. Swinnerton celebrated Bennett's achievement in "[making] books news," yet as we have seen, Swinnerton continued to regret the speed and brevity of current reviewing and also to imagine an ideal world in which reviewers could be completely disinterested. Bennett, however, looked back, near the end of his life, on his reviewing career and concluded that
reviewing "has changed for the better" since his journalistic start in the 1890s. In 1930, Bennett writes, reviewing

is better informed and better written (because editors are more keen in their search for reviewers): it gets itself more talked about, is better paid, and is more punctual than of old. I can recall the spacious age when a review would appear six months or even twelve months after the publication of the book. And no one seemed to perceive anything odd in this majestic dilatoriness. The publication of a book was not news then.

To-day it is news. (The Evening Standard Years 392)43

Bennett did not trouble himself with whether reviews could or should be criticism, or with reviews' efforts to meet the often contradictory needs of various interested groups. Bennett not only recognized reviewing's complicity in the economics of the book trade, he embraced it and intentionally wielded his reviewing as a force in the trade. Early in his stint writing for the Evening Standard he claimed that "the first duty of a reviewer is to be interesting. Let him be knowledgeable if he can; let him be just if he cares; let him have taste if God has so willed. Everything helps. But unless he is interesting he is a failure with his public. A reviewer must be a journalist before he is a reviewer" (The Evening Standard Years 17). Bennett's goal was less to assess particular books, though he did so effectively (if not always in ways that history has affirmed), and more to provoke interest in books, generally.

43 I will be citing Bennett's Evening Standard reviews from Andrew Mylett's complete, collected edition (Arnold Bennett: The Evening Standard Years, 'Books and Persons' 1926-1931, Ed. Andrew Mylett, London: Chatto and Windus, 1974). I would prefer to cite the originals, but as far as I have been able to ascertain, the only North American holding of the newspaper in the relevant years is for 1928 only. I have looked at this microfilm but have been unable to see other years. Fortunately, Mylett includes the full text and dates of all the reviews.
Bennett's first *Evening Standard* review, on 18 November 1926, was entitled "The Price of Novels Must Come Down," and much like the articles in the *Nation and Athenaeum* discussed in Chapter Two, it deals with the economics of the book trade and advocates the work of the National Book Council (*The Evening Standard Years* 1-2). This article was the first iteration of a theme that would recur throughout the four-plus years of his *Evening Standard* column. Bennett regularly used his reviews to discuss the state of the book trade (most Januaries, for instance, he wrote a complaint about too many books having been published the year before), to keep his audience apprised of new innovations (he consistently promoted the National Book Council and discussed Gollancz's experiment of publishing new, full-length novels in paper covers for 3s.), and to offer advice to the trade itself (an experiment of weighing books on his kitchen scales led him to conclude that non-fiction should be issued in smaller and lighter formats). In particular, Bennett fixed upon the matter of most economic importance to the book trade—the sale of new books—and recognized that this was the matter that he as a reviewer had the most power to influence. He complained regularly about the tendency of some reviewers to spend their time on new editions of old books and instead claimed that "new novels (with the latest ideas about the latest life) are more important than old ones, just as new newspapers are more important than old ones" (*The Evening Standard Years* 2). Although Bennett's tone and style were sometimes quite different from the book trade commentators in the intellectual weeklies, his message remained the same: buy new books. Bennett's success reviewing for the *Evening Standard* may, as Swinnerton

---

44 In Bennett's *Evening Standard* review of 14 July 1927, he directly engages the "Books and the Public" series ongoing at that time in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, drawing attention to the discussion itself and particularly to a letter to the editor from Birendrinath Gupta to the *Nation and Athenaeum* about the book trade in India. See Bennett, *The Evening Standard Years* 65-66 and Gupta 441.
suggests, have been primarily a matter of Bennett's individual talent, star power, and personality. Or, as I shall suggest below, it may also have had much to do with the marriage of a particular style of reviewing (itself not at all new) to the forum of a mass-market, middlebrow daily newspaper. Additionally, I would suggest that Bennett's achievement was accomplished in part through his recognition and embracing of the interestedness of the book review. Bennett, unlike Woolf or even his champion, Swinnerton, did not worry that book reviews had too many parties to satisfy, or that the conditions of contemporary reviewing ruined the possibility for thoughtful criticism; instead, he reviewed with the aim of raising awareness—and hopefully also sales—of new books, and in this goal he was more successful than most.

In his narrative of early twentieth-century reviewing, Swinnerton contrasts the Bennett-influenced star reviewing system, which he admits has faults but generally approves, with what he describes as the coterie reviewing of the critical periodicals—by implication the intellectual weeklies and monthlies. He has nothing but scorn for the groups he designates as coteries. Swinnerton describes coterie reviewing as "ardent propaganda for a particular set or that of systematic belittlement of authors outside the set" and condemns it as "the worst kind of reviewing" (Reviewing 34). Certainly Swinnerton perceived a strong divide between daily newspaper reviewing and the reviewing in the weeklies and monthlies, a perception that, according to Collier, can be attributed to Swinnerton's experiences as a newspaper reviewer himself (Modernism 84). Arguably, however, the differences Swinnerton describes inhered not in the reviews themselves but in the cultural associations surrounding both reviewers and periodicals. Reviews with strikingly similar text carried different significance depending on whether
they were published in the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *Daily News*, on whether they were signed "Woolf" or "Swinnerton." Swinnerton's mentions of Desmond MacCarthy in *Authors and the Book Trade* and *The Reviewing and Criticism of Books* demonstrate, perhaps unwittingly, this distinction. In the former book, published in 1932, MacCarthy, along with Harold Nicolson (who had taken over Bennett's *Evening Standard* column the year before, following the latter's death) and Vita Sackville-West, is one of the "Bloomsbury highbrows" dominating book reviewing on the BBC; Swinnerton criticizes their "attitude to literature" as "largely eccentric" and regrets their influence (*Authors* 130). Yet in 1939, MacCarthy appears in *The Reviewing and Criticism of Books* as a star reviewer for the *Sunday Times*, and in this role he meets with Swinnerton's enthusiastic approval:

> When writers bewail the fact that we have no contemporary Sainte-Beuve, they either forget Mr MacCarthy or intend that some invidious comparison should be drawn; but as far as I know there is at present nobody except Mr MacCarthy who continues a tradition so valuable in its unhasting commentary on a single new book at a time and its effort to reconcile criticism with hebdomadal journalism. (*Reviewing* 21)

The examples of MacCarthy and of Bennett himself, as well as of Nicolson (whom Collier discusses at some length) and countless other literary journalists of the period, demonstrate that what were often perceived as sharp distinctions between coteries, between periodical formats and prices, and between "brows" tend to break down upon close scrutiny. Distinctions blur, and often inhere not in the texts of the reviews themselves, but in their paratexts: in whether a periodical advertised soap or books, in
whether it had 10,000 subscribers or 1,000,000, in whether a reviewer had a reputation, deserved or not, as a "highbrow" or a "lowbrow." Although the textual content of book reviews was among the elements that contributed to a periodical's position of cultural authority, it was merely one of many such elements. In the remainder of the chapter, I will compare the reviewing practices of Arnold Bennett and Desmond MacCarthy, two of the most prominent interwar reviewers, in order to interrogate Swinnerton's alleged dichotomy between coterie and star reviewers. Bennett, of course, was Swinnerton's paradigmatic star reviewer, deservedly so, whereas MacCarthy, strongly connected with Bloomsbury, was among the best-known and most respected reviewers in the more intellectual reviewing forums. In each case, however, these descriptions are far too simplistic, emphasizing difference in two reviewers who in fact had a great deal in common.

Desmond MacCarthy is among the names that consistently appear on lists of Bloomsbury figures, no matter how these lists are drawn.45 He was a Cambridge Apostle and a lifelong friend of the Woolfs, Maynard Keynes, and Lytton Strachey. In his journalistic career he was associated with some of the most intellectual or "serious" organs of the mainstream press: the New Statesman, the BBC, and the Sunday Times. In her recent article on MacCarthy's editorship of Life and Letters, Jane Goldman describes him as a "Bloomsbury acolyte" (428). Goldman points to MacCarthy's various disagreements with Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey as evidence that "Bloomsbury

---

45 The question of who constituted "Bloomsbury" is vexed. Lists of "members" vary, depending on who enumerated them and what era they describe. See, for instance, L. Woolf, Beginning Again 21-2 and Downhill All the Way 114; Bell, Vol. 1 123, 167, 176-77, and Vol. 2 83, 90; and Rosenbaum, Victorian Bloomsbury 1-7. In many ways "Bloomsbury" is among the slipperiest of the slippery labels of this period. The only thing it accurately describes, other than a neighbourhood, is a flexibly-defined group of friends. These friends by no means had homogenous views on art, literature, or politics, and the tendency, then as now, to lump them together as a "group" serves to obscure the significant differences in their views.
itself cannot be understood as monolithic in its politics or aesthetics, and that, indeed, it thrived on dissent and disagreement" (435). However, she undermines this suggestion of vital dialogue by clearly siding with Woolf and concluding that *Life and Letters*' "modernist credentials" were "restricted by its Victorian format" and the "reactionary" gender politics of MacCarthy (451). The impression Goldman gives is not of complex intellectual dialogue between friends, but of a MacCarthy who does not quite live up to his Bloomsbury reputation. Todd Avery is more inclusive of MacCarthy, though his view of Bloomsbury is more problematically monolithic than Goldman's. Avery speaks of the "Bloomsbury Group" and names MacCarthy as a "core [member]" (*Radio Modernism* 33), and he reads MacCarthy's 1932-33 BBC broadcasts on "The Art of Reading" as an "expression of G. E. Moore's pervasive influence on Bloomsbury" (67). In Avery's account, MacCarthy is a representative Bloomsburian, Cambridge Apostle, and disciple of Moore.

If the enduring image of MacCarthy is that of a Bloomsbury insider, Arnold Bennett, thanks in large part to Virginia Woolf's "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," has often been remembered as something of an anti-modernist, a slightly antiquated figure whose best work clung to outmoded realism and whose less accomplished work was too popular (Hammond 175).\(^46\) He was Swinnerton's paradigmatic star reviewer in a popular daily newspaper and described himself at one point as a "low-brow" (*The Evening Standard* Years 327). Not surprisingly, however, this image of Bennett is an oversimplification that breaks down under more careful scrutiny of his career. Although

\(^{46}\) Mary Hammond acknowledges the prevalent tendency "to write [Bennett] out of literary history" as a result of Woolf's condemnation of him (175), but she goes on to argue, as I shall also do, for a more nuanced assessment of Bennett's standing in the literary field, taking into account his tendency to straddle the border between the popular and the intellectual. See Hammond 173-91.
Bennett himself conducted few of the formal experiments in his own writing that
classified so much of the imaginative literature of the early twentieth century, he was
a lifelong champion of much experimental writing. He found himself persistently baffled
by Woolf and much of Eliot, yet he was enthusiastic in his praise for Lawrence, Edith
Sitwell, and Joyce. His review of *Ulysses* in *Outlook* (a sympathetic assessment for which
Joyce thanked him) was, as Mylett points out, headline news, "boldly advertised on
posters proclaiming 'Arnold Bennett on *Ulysses*’—'the first time,' [Bennett] wrote, 'I have
ever seen a review as the chief item on a poster’" (Mylett xvii, emphasis in original).

Bennett's journalism was yet more wide-ranging than his taste in fiction and
poetry, and throughout his journalistic career he worked for a number of periodicals
whose interests, level of intellectual prowess, and place in the periodical pecking order
were allegedly contradictory. Bennett cut his journalistic teeth in the 1890s working in an
editorial capacity for a weekly called *Woman* (an organ aimed at a popular and not
particularly progressive or feminist audience: its motto was "Forward but not too fast")
(Drabble 56). His breakthrough success as a journalist, however, came not in a popular
periodical or in a daily newspaper, but in an intellectual weekly: between 1908 and 1911
Bennett wrote a column entitled "Books and Persons" for the *New Age* under the
pseudonym "Jacob Tonson." Thanks to the work of the Modernist Journals Project, which
has made the *New Age* under A. R. Orage's editorship available in an online digital
edition, the *New Age* has enjoyed renewed scholarly attention of late, predominantly in
the form of two recent articles and a book chapter on the journal by Ann Ardis. In
*Modernism and Cultural Conflict*, Ardis questions the Modernist Journals Project’s
billing of the *New Age* as a modernist periodical (144), and in each of her subsequent
articles on the periodical, she emphasizes ways in which the New Age is an exception to the paradigm that constructs the little magazine as the normative modernist periodical format. Ardis's work on the New Age has helpfully highlighted the ways in which the cornerstone of the Modernist Journals Project fails to conform to any easy definition of a "modernist journal." I hope, however, that future work on the New Age will compare it not only with more conventionally modernist journals, but also with its true periodical peers, the intellectual weeklies. Interestingly, in only one of her discussions on the New Age does Ardis mention Bennett's connection to the periodical at all, and then only in passing ("Dialogics" 417). Even the introduction to the periodical on the Modernist Journals Project's website glosses over Bennett's role as the periodical's most important and influential literary journalist between 1908 and 1911 (Scholes and staff). Yet during those years Bennett's column was the most popular feature of the periodical; Orage, who ordinarily could not afford to pay his contributors, was so eager to keep Bennett that he began paying him a guinea per week for the reviews (Mylett xv).

The intellectual weekly with which Bennett had a much longer and more intimate, if less well-known, relationship was the New Statesman, into which, as a member of the board of directors, he invested a considerable sum of his own money over the years, in addition to the large amount of unpaid writing he contributed to the journal (most notably through his columns as "Sardonyx" during the latter years of the First World War). During the war, Bennett also offered regular support, advice, and assistance to J. C. Squire, who edited the New Statesman while editor Clifford Sharp was away fighting

---

47 I think the Modernist Journals Project's inclusion of the New Age is a great strength; it helps to demonstrate the great variety of literary periodicals in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, I agree with Ardis that its inclusion raises questions about what is and is not a "modernist journal," a definitional quagmire that the Modernist Journals Project manages to elide in its introductory material to the journal. See Scholes and staff.
(Smith 89-100). For much of the 'teens and nearly all of the 'twenties, then, both Bennett and MacCarthy were closely connected to the same intellectual weekly. Nevertheless, it was the well-known (the identity of "Jacob Tonson" was no secret) if relatively short-lived "Books and Persons" review column for the New Age, rather than the decade and a half of unremunerated behind-the-scenes work for the New Statesman that provided the keynote for Bennett's career as a literary journalist, and it was this column—under the same title—that Beaverbrook asked Bennett to revive in the Evening Standard during the autumn of 1926. It is noteworthy that the event Swinnerton identifies as the watershed moment in interwar book reviewing—Bennett's column in a popular daily newspaper—was actually a sequel to a series of pre-war reviewing in an intellectual (and lately claimed as modernist) weekly periodical.

Bennett's two "Books and Persons" columns are an excellent example of the importance of the material context of a text and the paratextual elements surrounding it: the New Age reviews are not strikingly different from the Evening Standard reviews of twenty years later, yet the series meant differently, due to the different roles and positions of the New Age and the Evening Standard, as well as to the twenty year gap itself. Both series are a mix of reviewing in the strictest sense, more informal notices of new books, and discussions of the book trade as an industry (covering matters like the price of books, the operation of circulating libraries, and the poor marketing of books to those not already habituated to be interested in them). In contrast to the imposing editorial "we" of

---

48 The most striking difference between the New Age "Books and Persons" and its Evening Standard counterpart is one of tone and confidence: Bennett is certainly confident enough in his writing and his judgments in the New Age, but writing under his own name and with his considerably-increased fame in the Evening Standard he has a marked devil-may-care attitude toward his opinions. The Arnold Bennett of the Evening Standard need not convince anyone to agree with him; he merely offers his opinion. As Jacob Tonson, he is more earnest. Otherwise, however, his literary preferences and the sort of topics he chooses to write about remain remarkably consistent overall.
the nineteenth century, Bennett's tone, both in the *New Age* and in the *Evening Standard* is informal: he uses "I"; speaks out of his own experience as a reader, author, and reviewer; and occasionally addresses his audience directly in the second person. These are the qualities that Swinnerton admires in the star reviewing system: "what [the star reviewer] says, unless it is tamely benign, must be his genuine opinion, given light and fire by his own personality. He cannot drone for a dreary column full of quotations from a work he is supposed to be reviewing" (*Authors* 119). What Swinnerton's narrative of book reviewing elides, however, is the strong link that exactly this sort of regular column had to the intellectual weeklies, those organs he lumps into the scorned category of coterie reviewing. The link is Bennett himself, as well as other writers—such as Leonard Woolf in the *Nation and Athenaeum*, J. C. Squire and then Desmond MacCarthy in the *New Statesman*—who wrote weekly book review columns, signed either under their own names or under well-known pseudonyms.

As I noted in Chapter One, the political/literary weeklies such as the *New Statesman* devoted approximately half of each issue to book reviews. The reviews covered books on all subjects and favoured, in terms of length and position of importance, "serious" non-fiction books, though a number of novels—even popular ones—were also reviewed each week. Some of the reviews were signed, and certain names recur, particularly within the same genre: Edwin Muir, for instance, was the regular fiction reviewer in the *Nation and Athenaeum* throughout much of the mid-1920s. Nevertheless, some of the reviews in each issue were unsigned, and for every name made familiar through its regular appearance, there were others that occurred infrequently enough to impart little authority or familiarity. Offseting the effects of a number of
anonymous or semi-anonymous reviews, however, was the regular literature column, generally written by the literary editor of the periodical. Each week, readers of the weeklies were greeted by a column that was part-book review, part-discussion of the book trade and the literary world, and entirely an effort to interest readers in books in general ("Books in General" was, in fact, the title of the column in the New Statesman).

In short, these were exactly the sort of columns Bennett wrote in the New Age and the Evening Standard. The literary editors of the weeklies were not often the "stars" that Bennett was, in terms of widespread fame and popularity, but they were among the most familiar figures within the individual periodicals (particularly since the editors in chief of the intellectual weeklies rarely signed articles, whereas the literary editor typically did sign the weekly book column, even if pseudonymously) and within the world of London literary journalism more broadly. Of the interwar literary editors/weekly book columnists of the intellectual weeklies, Desmond MacCarthy at the New Statesman was the most well-known and influential. MacCarthy had been the New Statesman's drama critic since the paper's founding in 1913; in 1920 he took over the literary editorship from J. C. Squire, and in doing so also took over "Books in General," which he wrote under the pseudonym "Affable Hawk." The name was presumably a variation on Squire's "Books in General" pseudonym, "Solomon Eagle," but MacCarthy's moniker admirably described the goal of the regular literary critic/reviewer: to write familiarly and agreeably about books, but with an incisive authority and judgment that readers could trust. MacCarthy resigned the literary editorship of the New Statesman in 1928 but continued to write "Books in General" until June of 1929, a run of nearly a decade (Cecil 213). Though he never reached the heights of popularity and influence enjoyed by Bennett at the Evening
Standard, MacCarthy's "Books in General" columns were a success by the standards of the weeklies.

Bennett and MacCarthy, then, had remarkably similar roles as regular reviewers. They also had remarkably similar styles: the qualities that made Bennett famous as a literary journalist were just as affably hawkish as those that distinguished MacCarthy. Both authors followed a flexible and loosely organized format in their columns: occasionally they discussed a single book, more regularly a handful of books on a similar theme, but there were also frequent columns with few discernible organizational principles behind the selection of books for review, other than that they were all books the columnist happened to be looking into that week. Bennett's Evening Standard column of March 22, 1928, for instance, ranges from George Moore to Ibsen to Gide, with the unifying thread only "books which you never forget" (The Evening Standard Years 138-40). MacCarthy, two years earlier, had taken the impressionistic style of book reviewing even further, experimenting in the spring of 1926 with writing "Books in General" like a diary. The column in which he announces the experiment also demonstrates the informal and witty tone that is characteristic of MacCarthy's writing: "Woke early and to my dismal situation; I am sick of filling this page week after week. My readers can skip it whenever they like—I have no commiseration for them. I must have a change. Resolved to turn this page for a week or two at any rate into a diary. Reminded myself that a diary must be very bright—and sighed" (Affable Hawk, 20 March 1926 711). The familiarity with his readers and ability to joke about his weekly task of writing the column that MacCarthy shows here is characteristic of the regular reviewer; they are the same qualities that made Bennett a success, both in the New Age and in the Evening Standard,
and they have less to do with star power, or with the column's publication in a popular or intellectual paper, than with conformity to a particular genre of writing: the regular book column.

Bennett and MacCarthy likewise frequently touched on similar topics in their columns, in part as a result of the generic expectations of the column, and in part because, despite their appearances as belonging to different literary circles—the popular novelist and the Bloomsbury intellectual—they shared some similar tastes. A regular feature of both columns was discourse not only about specific, usually newly published, books, but also about the state of the book trade as an industry. Commentary (and complaint) about the number of books being published and mediation between the publishing industry and the book-interested public was part of the job description for the regular weekly book columnist, and both Bennett and MacCarthy wrote about these subjects frequently. The role of the weeklies, and of a column like Bennett's in a daily newspaper, was to keep a finger on the pulse of the book trade and on the various discussions about books going on in other realms of the periodical press. Bennett calls attention in the spring of 1927 to the appearance of Wyndham Lewis's quarterly The Enemy; his appreciation of Lewis is mixed (Lewis "has considerable gifts, with a slightly amateurish technique. But he is always going and never arriving"), but Bennett nevertheless welcomes the arrival of a new periodical "of literary distinction" and praises it alongside the Criterion and the Calendar (The Evening Standard Years 44-45). MacCarthy, too, regularly called approving attention to the Criterion and the Calendar. MacCarthy's discussions of these quarterlies made it clear that he considered their goals to be rather different from those of the New Statesman, thereby drawing a distinction between the intellectual quarterly, with
its aim of serious criticism, and the intellectual weekly, with its close ties to the book trade and its interest in raising awareness about books. The Calendar, MacCarthy writes, "is an organ for the young, and therefore should be read not only by them but by those of their elders who want to understand recent tendencies in literature"; his tone throughout the column places him, and by extension his implied readers, in the group of outsiders "who want to understand recent tendencies in literature" rather than in the Calendar's own implied audience (Affable Hawk, 23 July 1927 480).

This attitude of distanced respect also characterized both Bennett and MacCarthy's reactions to much of the experimental imaginative literature of the interwar years. Both reviewers expressed a range of reactions to the various poets and novelists who have come to be canonized as modernist. Bennett, for instance, praised Joyce and Proust but persistently failed to understand Woolf. MacCarthy lauded, though with certain reservations, Woolf and Eliot, but in 1926 complained that Joyce wrote "intricate pitch-dark rigmaroles" (Affable Hawk, 6 February 1926 516). Neither of them could see anything at all in Stein, and both, interestingly, claimed to be given pause when they read Stein praised by poets such as Eliot and Edith Sitwell. Bennett confesses, "When I think of what Edith Sitwell thinks of Gertrude Stein, the horrid thought arises in me: 'I may be wrong about Gertrude Stein.' Then I read bits of Gertrude Stein and am reassured" (The Evening Standard Years 132). The humour at Stein's expense does little, perhaps, to redeem Bennett in the eyes of Stein's admirers, but the interesting observation is not that Bennett disliked and/or did not understand Stein, but that he did like and respect the poetry and the judgment of Sitwell, whose experiments with poetic language were not much less radical than Stein's. MacCarthy, similarly, presents the problem of Stein as a
conflict between his own judgment ("Miss Stein sprang, like Minerva, fully armed from that part of the human brain which is usually inaudible in waking life, yet can sometimes be overheard jabbering nonsense to itself") and that of other poets he respects: Eliot and Sitwell (Affable Hawk, 6 February 1926 516). Both use the term "modernist" to refer, without much approval, to poets like Stein and Laura Riding (Affable Hawk, 13 February 1926 547; Bennett, The Evening Standard Years 131-33). Neither Bennett nor MacCarthy was himself a particularly experimental writer and neither was a wholehearted enthusiast of experimental writing, yet both used their positions to praise a good deal of work that struck them, and continues to strike us, as modernist, as well as a good deal of work that fit firmly within existing literary traditions. These are not contradictions but rather an indication that these reviewers were not interested in canon-formation or in literary criticism as it has been undertaken by English departments, but in a wide range of books, and in introducing potential readers to those books. Though this is increasingly less true as the field expands its boundaries, the traditional emphasis of academic English studies on imaginative literature broadly, and, in studies of this time period, on experimental imaginative literature more specifically, has sometimes obscured the rich and complex range of book-related discussion actually occurring in the early twentieth-century press. Similarly, the pigeon-holing of figures like Bennett and MacCarthy into roles like "star reviewer" or "Bloomsbury critic" masks the extent to which they had extraordinarily similar concerns.

There were, of course, some content-related differences between Bennett's reviewing and MacCarthy's. Bennett, for instance, was adamant in his championing of new books; he rarely spent time reviewing new editions of older books and criticized
reviewers who did so (The Evening Standard Years 391). MacCarthy, on the other hand, regarded interesting new editions of old books as worth noting, and he often mentioned his own re-reading of old favourites (of Robinson Crusoe MacCarthy says, "I am almost as fond of that book as the butler in The Moonstone" [Affable Hawk, 20 March 1926 711]). The more notable difference between Bennett's "Books and Persons" (especially the Evening Standard version of that column) and MacCarthy's "Books in General" was the amount of notice each writer afforded to fiction. Bennett by no means wrote only about novels, but he did so predominantly; a novelist himself, fiction was presumably his area of expertise, and he professed it was also his preferred genre to read. MacCarthy, on the other hand, ranged more broadly in his column, touching at times upon fiction, but writing more regularly about biographies, histories, poetry, and books of criticism. This differing emphasis on fiction was likely also the result of the periodicals in which the columnists wrote: the New Statesman had a regular fiction review in addition to MacCarthy's column, so the most popular genre was discussed whether MacCarthy did so or not, whereas Bennett, as The Evening Standard's sole book reviewer, needed to attend himself to his readers' interest in new fiction. More importantly, the amount of space given to fiction was a significant marker of each periodical's level of cultural authority. The intellectual weeklies, as I argue in Chapter One, had an interest in promoting serious books rather than novels, which were thought to be ephemeral, and they marked their intellectual status in part through devoting space and attention to the full range of genres—and more space and attention to the more intellectual genres—rather than concentrating on imaginative literature. The Evening Standard, on the other hand, marked
its status as a popular newspaper with broad, middlebrow appeal in part through hiring a popular novelist to review popular fiction.

The amount of attention given to fiction in "Books and Persons" and "Books in General" is the most significant textual difference in these otherwise quite similar series, yet it is indicative of the real difference between Bennett and MacCarthy's columns: the implied audiences of the periodicals in which they published. The *Evening Standard* was a popular daily newspaper aimed predominantly at the middle class; it was full of human interest stories, gossip columns, and advertisements for products like soap, clothing, and patent medicines. The *New Statesman*, on the other hand, inscribed its readers as politically active, intellectual socialists, interested in economics, world affairs, and reading; its dominant advertisers were publishers, and its readers were potential buyers of serious books. The collected volumes of Bennett's and MacCarthy's review essays show few differences, but to read them in their original contexts, the differences—not in the texts but in the paratexts—become clear. Bennett was not a "star" or MacCarthy a "coterie" reviewer primarily because of what they wrote; rather, they were perceived as such, by Swinnerton and no doubt by others as well, because of the size and demographics of the audiences they addressed, because the column of the former was framed by photographs and soap ads and the column of the latter by dense political articles and publishers' ads. Book reviewers, as well as the books they reviewed, were labeled according to their paratexts more than their texts, as the symbolic values of "Arnold Bennett" or "New Statesman" were loaded with meanings far beyond the scope of the words published under the name of the former or in the pages of the latter (these valuations also elided the fact that Bennett himself was on the board of the *New*
Statesman and had published extensively in its pages). These labels and distinctions were entirely characteristic of discussions of early twentieth century intellectual culture, but it is important to return to the periodical record in order to recognize the complex and blurry reality of overlapping networks that is obscured by overly sharp divisions—in the early twentieth century and occasionally persisting into more recent scholarship—between categories like "modernist" and "popular" or "highbrow" and "middlebrow."

The book review, as developed by Griffiths and Smollett in the eighteenth century, was designed to serve a sorting function: the book-interested public wanted new publications organized and labeled. By the twentieth century, the superfluity of printed material had rendered the sorting function of the review periodical more desirable yet harder to perform than ever before. Periodicals reviewing books were responsible for assigning value to cultural production; this process of valuation in light of the mass-production of print resulted in the impulse to assign the shorthand labels that are so characteristic of this period. Authors, books, and periodicals were designated "highbrow," "lowbrow," or "middlebrow"; they were "modern" or "modernist" or "Georgian" or "Edwardian" or "coterie" or "Bloomsbury." In many cases, these labels indicated genuine differences of artistic form or literary preference. Nevertheless, as I have shown in my discussion of Woolf, Swinnerton, MacCarthy, and Bennett, the differences were often not as sharply-defined as contemporary perception and later scholarly tradition would have them. Frequently, the perception of difference is stronger than any formal or textual distinction. These strongly perceived distinctions, such as Swinnerton's dichotomy between star and coterie reviewers, are not negligible. We would err if we suggested that there were no appreciable differences between the Evening Standard and the New
Statesman, for instance. But the differences often inhered not in the published words and judgments of reviewers and other contributors but in the overall cultural authority of the periodicals. Positions of cultural authority, however, are relational, and relationships are never disinterested. Reviewing was enmeshed in commercial relationships with the book trade and in personal relationships among journalists, authors, and publishers. A periodical's cultural authority—and consequently the value of its reviews and literary judgments—also depended upon the relationships of individual readers to it. Swinnerton, for instance, saw coteries and elitism in the intellectual weeklies, not because the words MacCarthy wrote in the New Statesman were so different from those that Bennett wrote in the Evening Standard but because MacCarthy was known for his Bloomsbury friendships and because the New Statesman itself, from its conservative typography and dense political articles to its up-market advertising and its emphasis on serious books, designated its implied audience as upper-middle-class and intellectual. In contrast, as I will argue in the next chapter, the contributors to Scrutiny, writing from a different cultural position and using different criteria, found the intellectual weeklies to be insufficiently elite and discriminating in their reviewing. These examples demonstrate the slipperiness of the periodical field in this period and should encourage caution in any efforts to pin any periodical—intellectual weekly or otherwise—down with any particular label.
Chapter Four:
Guarding the Guardians: Scrutiny's Attacks on the Intellectual Weeklies

The function (in England unfulfilled) of a weekly review should be to rally, mobilize and inform an intelligent, educated, morally responsible and politically enlightened public. Even if they had a conception of function approximate to this, our present weeklies could produce in the rest of the paper not the slightest active support of the values appealed to in the political third of each number. 'There are too many people taking this ridiculous age seriously. It is time somebody showed up both it and them.' That sounds like Beachcomber of the Daily Express: actually it was in a recent Spectator that this invitation to irresponsibility appeared. Mr. J. B. Morton was writing without apparent irony.

—Denys Thompson, "Prospectus for a Weekly," Scrutiny (1933)

During the early 1930s, one consideration of the intellectual weeklies and their role in the contemporary journalistic scene came from another corner of the intellectual press: the Cambridge quarterly Scrutiny. Scrutiny's commentary on the intellectual weeklies is noteworthy for the way in which it addresses the weeklies as a genre. The Scrutiny contributors were, in fact, some of the few writers, in the early twentieth century or since, to discuss the intellectual weeklies as a specific periodical genre. Scrutiny had particular expectations for the role of an intellectual weekly, and during its first handful of issues, Scrutiny repeatedly returned to the intellectual weeklies, evaluating how well periodicals like the New Statesman lived up to Scrutiny's expectations. Read by tens of thousands of people, fifty-two times a year, the weeklies, felt Scrutiny's contributors, were unmatched in their potential to guide the critical judgments of the intellectual minority at its widest. The intellectual weeklies of the early 1930s, however, did not meet Scrutiny's standards for critical journalism and consequently found themselves the recipients of a series of vehement attacks from Scrutiny's contributors. These attacks indicate not only Scrutiny's disappointment with specific intellectual weeklies but also the
paramount cultural responsibility it ascribed to the intellectual weekly periodical as a genre. This chapter looks at the intellectual weeklies from the outside, through the eyes of Scrutiny, and it analyzes Scrutiny's own outsider position in the field of interwar critical periodicals, as well as the role Scrutiny's position played in its perception of the cultural authority of the weeklies. An outside position can lend perspective, and there are some senses in which Scrutiny was unique in its ability to recognize and articulate some of the dynamics of the weeklies because of its distance from the world of London critical journalism. In other ways, however, Scrutiny's distance blinded its contributors to the economic exigencies of running a weekly periodical, and to the recognition that the weeklies' relationship with the book trade and with the wider journalistic scene were characteristic of the weeklies' role and position, rather than, as Scrutiny claimed, factors that compromised the intellectual weeklies' ability to publish effective criticism.

In his 1962 retrospective article on Scrutiny, F. R. Leavis begins by calling the critical quarterly review "a product, the triumphant justifying achievement, of the [Cambridge] English Tripos" ("A Retrospect" 1). Although Leavis goes on in his reflections to call Scrutiny an "outlaws' enterprise" run by people who, at the journal's founding in 1932, had only tenuous institutional connections to Cambridge English (1-2), he nevertheless emphasizes Scrutiny's life in and links with Cambridge. The journal's editors and contributors were predominantly graduates of Cambridge English, and Scrutiny was always published from Cambridge. Following Leavis's own emphasis on Scrutiny's Cambridge roots, the habit of discussing the journal in relation to the academic study of English in universities persists in narratives of the development of literary criticism. In his influential Literary Theory: An Introduction (1983), Terry Eagleton
repeatedly uses "Scrutiny" as a shorthand to refer to the movement, helmed by Leavis at Cambridge, aimed at "fashioning English as a serious discipline" (27). Carol Atherton's more recent *Defining Literary Criticism* (2005) resists Eagleton's wholesale conflation of the journal with its associated academic movement, yet Atherton, too, refers to *Scrutiny* only in terms of its connection to Cambridge and the academic study of English (147-48).

Nevertheless, *Scrutiny* was not in any clear sense a university journal. When it first appeared, *Scrutiny* was the result of a group of students meeting unofficially at the home of F. R. and Q. D. Leavis, both of whom at this time were only marginally employed by the university. F. R. Leavis had lost his salaried lectureship in 1931 and was forced to put together bits of part-time teaching; Q. D. Leavis was the breadwinner of the two, supporting them on the Amy Mary Preston Read research scholarship she earned on the strength of her Ph.D. dissertation, but she was not doing any university teaching and would lose all official university affiliation after her scholarship expired (MacKillop 127-32). As Francis Mulhern points out, despite the academic associations that *Scrutiny*'s, and F. R. Leavis's, subsequent reputations foregrounded, when *Scrutiny* was founded, its editors and contributors saw themselves in opposition to those in power in the Cambridge English Tripos (33). Leavis's biographer Ian MacKillop traces in detail the always fractious relationship Leavis had with Cambridge English. MacKillop suggests that Leavis's and the *Scrutiny* group's sense of being outsiders in Cambridge contributed to the "mixed provenance of *Scrutiny*" (14). Cambridge English was undeniably one branch of *Scrutiny*'s family tree, but it was only one branch. The other intellectual context for *Scrutiny* was not the academy but rather the world of London literary journalism. *Scrutiny* occupied an occasionally ambiguous middle position, "half in and half out of
both literary world and university" (MacKillop 14). A full understanding of the journal, and especially its self-positioning, demands a suspension of Leavis's claim that *Scrutiny* "was essentially Cambridge's achievement" ("A Retrospect" 1) and a reclamation of the literary journalism side of *Scrutiny* s heritage.

*Scrutiny* s relationship to the academic and journalistic worlds in which (and in opposition to which) it emerged can perhaps best be understood through contextualizing "criticism" with respect to both the academic study of English and literary journalism. Members of early twenty-first-century English departments must remember that literary criticism is now seen as the purview of academic English studies largely because F. R. Leavis made it so. In the early 1930s, however, the scene was quite different. In her discussion of the rise of English studies, Atherton suggests that English proves an exception to T. W. Heyck's argument that academic disciplines professionalized in the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century, Atherton says, "professional historians were adopting 'scientific' norms of both epistemology and methodology," whereas in academic English studies there were instead many "tensions and inconsistencies [...] in both philosophy and practice" that existed well into the twentieth century, decades after English became an academic discipline (23). In both the newer universities where English was first institutionalized and at Oxford, Atherton argues, early English teachers seemed not to "possess a concept of literary criticism that we would recognise today. Instead, what they seem to have been dealing with was literary knowledge"(47-48). Curricula emphasized historical and biographical information, philology, and bibliography and textual criticism. Early Cambridge English, under Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, differed somewhat in that it was more receptive to criticism than other English
departments of its time: "key verbs in the Cambridge exam papers include 'examine', 'estimate', 'contrast', 'criticize' and 'discuss', all with their suggestions of rational debate, and their explicit invitation of students' own judgements" (Atherton 50). Nevertheless, this early Cambridge English that trained F. R. Leavis differed considerably from the Cambridge English that he would develop throughout his own career. Early Cambridge English was inclined toward critical judgment within the broader and more important context of literary knowledge. Leavis, along with I. A. Richards, built upon this foundation to emphasize close reading and critical evaluation of texts as the central purpose of academic English studies. In the 1930s, when Scrutiny was launched, this project was scarcely underway. At that time, "criticism" was only beginning to be considered the purview of academic English studies, and the work of English departments, including Cambridge's, was still widely assumed to consist of the amassing of literary knowledge. When Leavis himself looked back on the founding of Scrutiny from his vantage in 1962—not to mention when someone like Eagleton looked back on it two decades later—the Leavisian critical revolution in academic English studies had already occurred. Scrutiny appeared to be the achievement of Cambridge English because although the founders of Scrutiny were academic outsiders in 1932, they did not remain so. At the moment of Scrutiny's founding, however, this outcome was hardly inevitable. Literary criticism in the 1930s did not have its primary home in English departments but in the literary periodicals of intellectual London journalism. Because Scrutiny was concerned with criticism, it was concerned with literary journalism at least as much as it was concerned with the study of English in universities.
Much of the recent scholarship on *Scrutiny* has indeed emphasized its relationship to the literary journalism of its day. In addition to MacKillop's insistence on *Scrutiny* as an academic/literary journalistic hybrid, Jason Harding's work on the *Criterion* identifies *Scrutiny* as one of the key interlocutors in the *Criterion*'s periodical network (J. Harding 64 ff.). In his article in the first volume of *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, Sean Matthews analyzes *Scrutiny* primarily as a periodical, and he pays particular attention to *Scrutiny*’s self-positioning within the field of early twentieth-century British critical journalism. Both Harding and Matthews focus on *Scrutiny*’s relationship with the periodicals to which it was most similar: quarterlies or monthlies concerned primarily with literary criticism, such as T. S. Eliot’s *Criterion* and John Middleton Murry's *Adelphi* (J. Harding 70-71; Matthews 833). Matthews highlights *Scrutiny*’s explicit indebtedness to the *Calendar of Modern Letters* and also suggests that *Scrutiny*’s blue covers may have been intended to invoke not just Cambridge University but also Ford Madox Ford's pre-war *English Review* (833). All of these critical periodicals were certainly members of *Scrutiny*’s "periodical network" (to adopt the term Harding uses in his study of the *Criterion*). *Scrutiny* saw itself as an inheritor of the *Calendar* and as a co-participant with the *Criterion* in the attempt to establish standards of literary journalism, and there are repeated articles in which *Scrutiny* compares itself to the *Criterion*. But particularly during its first two years, *Scrutiny* focused at least as much attention on intellectual weeklies like the *New Statesman and Nation* as it did on critical quarterlies like the *Criterion*. Between 1932 and 1934, the majority of *Scrutiny*’s short "Comments" essays in the "Comments and Reviews" section concerned weekly literary journalism.\footnote{\textit{Scrutiny}’s concern with metropolitan literary journalism, including the intellectual weeklies, was} Additionally, several full-length articles in *Scrutiny*’s early issues discussed
the weeklies in greater detail. Looking back on his journal's run, Leavis saw *Scrutiny* in dialogue with (and often in opposition to) "the modish literary world, that reflected in *The New Statesman and Nation, The Times Literary Supplement* and *The Criterion*" ("A Retrospect" 10). In Leavis's own evaluation, then, the *Criterion* and the weeklies were part of the same world, and *Scrutiny* stood outside this world. 50 *Scrutiny* launched a persistent critique of the intellectual weeklies during the early to mid-1930s, the tenor of which was similar to its likewise persistent critique of the *Criterion*: these periodicals had a reputation for quality criticism that they did not always deserve. In failing to maintain the critical standards fitting an intellectual periodical, journals like the *New Statesman* and the *Criterion*, according to *Scrutiny*, contributed to the problems plaguing intellectual culture, rather than occupying their rightful place as part of the solution.

The high standards *Scrutiny* expected from London literary journalism reflected a concern for an audience larger than *Scrutiny*'s own. *Scrutiny*'s discussions of intellectual journalism and of the weeklies in particular rely upon two implied audiences: that of *Scrutiny* itself and that of wider literary journalism. *Scrutiny* contributors at times figure both groups as the intellectual minority that is so strongly associated with F. R. Leavis, but the two audiences are not coterminous, and the dissonances between them can be confusing and problematic. Leavis's formulation of the minority comes from his 1930 pamphlet *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*, in which he argues that the mass production and standardization of modern life have devastated traditional high culture. The "plight of culture in general," Leavis claims, is that "the distinctions and dividing

---

50 In actual fact, the lines that *Scrutiny* drew around literary journalism in the 1930s were typically sharper than Leavis, looking back on several decades, generalizes in 1962; in the '30s, for instance, the *Criterion* and the *Times Literary Supplement* did not occupy the same sphere.
lines have blurred away, the boundaries are gone" (18). Leavis imagines a past, unified culture in which cultural distinctions and values were widely accepted. As a result of mass culture, Leavis believes, this idealized unified culture has disappeared and instead of general agreement about cultural value, there is an increasingly sharp divide between the minority capable of a "discerning appreciation of art and literature" and of "endorsing [...] first-hand judgment by genuine personal response" and the majority of the population who recognize no cultural distinctions (3-4). It is the minority's responsibility to "keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition," he argues. "Upon them depend the implicit standards that order the finer living of an age, the sense that this is worth more than this, this rather than that is the direction in which to go, that the centre is here rather than there" (4-5). This preservation of tradition and exercise of judgment has always been the role of a minority of the total population, Leavis claims, but in the twentieth century the minority is increasingly embattled in light of the overwhelming nature of mass culture. Exactly who constitutes this minority for Scrutiny, however, can be unclear. Scrutiny's own implied audience, as we shall see, is framed as readers already sympathetic to the journal's cause: Scrutiny's tone is largely one of preaching to the already converted. But in their discussion of other intellectual journalism, Scrutiny contributors suggest that there is a larger potential minority than Scrutiny's own audience. This potential minority could be reached through mainstream intellectual journalism, and particularly through the intellectual weeklies, if only those periodicals would work to cultivate it.

The two works that served as intellectual precursors to Scrutiny, F. R. Leavis's aforementioned Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture and Q. D. Leavis's Fiction and
the Reading Public (1932), were primarily interested in distinguishing the intellectual minority in its widest sense from mass culture, and as a result, in those books both Leavises generally praise intellectual journalism. In Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture, F. R. Leavis describes an embattled intellectual minority, whose cultural influence has been diminished by the rise of mass culture. Among the effects and symptoms of this situation is a dearth of effective critical journalism: the Criterion and the New Adelphi are "almost alone" among "serious critical organs," and "for the hope of intelligent reviewing we are left (apart from the Criterion and the New Adelphi) to the Nation and Athenaeum and the New Statesman, and they, of course, have no room for any but short articles" (19). F. R. Leavis thus praises this handful of intellectual quarterlies and weeklies; they do not have enough help, he implies, but they nonetheless contribute positively to the maintenance of minority culture in the face of the common enemy, mass culture, with its standardization of values and scorn of intellectual culture. Q. D. Leavis's Fiction and the Reading Public (1932) uses a different technique to argue a similar thesis. On the basis of survey and observation data on the fiction-reading public, Q. D. Leavis finds a chasm dividing the readers of popular fiction from the minority of readers who appreciate highbrow fiction. Q. D. Leavis employs the terms "highbrow," "middlebrow," and "lowbrow," and just as her husband in Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture lauds what intellectual journalism he was able to name, she speaks approvingly of the highbrow, both in fiction and journalism: in the former category she praises writers like Woolf, Joyce, and Lawrence, and in the latter the Criterion and the Nation and Athenaeum (20, 61). Fiction and the Reading Public is brutally critical of mass culture, particularly as manifested in popular fiction, but the highbrow minority is not the focus of
her discussion, and it emerges unscathed. This positioning no doubt helped Q. D. Leavis's reception in the critical organs of that minority. Whereas *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* was a pamphlet with relatively small circulation, *Fiction and the Reading Public* was recognized as a groundbreaking survey and so garnered quite a bit of attention among the intellectual press. MacKillop notes that the book was "received well and taken seriously even by its critics," with favourable reviews in, among other organs, the *New Statesman and Nation* and by Eliot himself in the *Criterion* (141). The conclusions of both *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* and *Fiction and the Reading Public* were easy enough for the intellectual press to agree with; lamenting the quality of contemporary mass culture was, after all, a favourite pastime of intellectual journalists. But when the Leavises and their collaborators joined the ranks of the critical press with *Scrutiny*, they were no longer satisfied with criticizing only popular culture. Instead, they focused their attack on members of the minority, on the perceived guardians of culture who were failing to live up to their responsibilities—and this group very much included the world of London critical journalism.

The first issue of *Scrutiny* appeared in May 1932, and it began, according to the fashion, with a manifesto stating its goals and justifying its reasons for existence. This manifesto also established *Scrutiny*'s preaching to the converted tone and its ambivalent-to-hostile attitude toward London literary journalism. Editors L. C. Knights and Donald Culver launch their new journal with the complaint that "the age is illiterate with periodicals," a formulation that succinctly describes one of the key problems that *Scrutiny* will seek to counteract: it is, the editors admit, "an addition to the swarm" of periodicals,
but it will fill a crucial and currently unfulfilled role ([Knights and Culver] 2). By the beginning of the third paragraph, Knights and Culver have located Scrutiny's audience as "those who are aware of the situation" that plagues contemporary critical journalism (2). Later, the editors describe this implied audience in greater detail: Scrutiny is aimed at the "small minority for whom the arts are something more than a luxury product, who believe, in fact, that they are 'the store-house of recorded values,' and, in consequence, that there is a necessary relationship between the quality of the individual's response to art and his general fitness for a humane existence" (5). Knights and Culver give as examples of such individuals university graduates who have been "swallowed up by secondary and public schools" as well as "others besides schoolmasters" (5). The problem, the editors argue, "is not that such persons form a minority, but that they are scattered and unorganized"; the primary purpose of Scrutiny is to bring together and organize this group of like-minded people (5). By itself, this description of a minority audience would not have raised alarms within the world of intellectual journalism; indeed, most readers of the New Statesman and Nation, not to mention the Criterion, would likely have felt themselves included under the umbrella of such a minority. If the periodicals contributing to cultural illiteracy were only those aimed at a mass audience, and if the "small minority" were wide enough to include anyone who did not self-identify with that mass audience, Scrutiny would have established itself as another voice contributing to the familiar argument that popular journalism posed a threat to intellectual

---

51 Scrutiny is strongly associated with F. R. Leavis's editorship, but Leavis did not assume editorial responsibilities until the third issue, in December 1932, when he and Denys Thompson joined original editors Knights and Culver on the editorial board. "Scrutiny: A Manifesto" has occasionally been credited as Leavis's (see, for instance, Collier, Modernism 28), but there is no reason to believe that he, rather than Knights and Culver, "The Editors" to whom the "Manifesto" is attributed in the Table of Contents, wrote it. Jason Harding, however, does suggest that Leavis "carefully proof-read Knights and Culver's editorial manifesto" (70).
culture. Yet the rest of the "Manifesto" makes clear that Scrutiny's critique is not only—indeed, not even primarily—aimed at the easy target of the popular press. Rather, this newcomer takes as its object of scrutiny the intellectual press, and if the criticism of the intellectual press is mild in the "Manifesto" itself, subsequent articles in Scrutiny do not hold back from full-scale attack on London literary journalism.

One of Scrutiny's great keywords is established as Knights and Culver use the word "standards" four times in the opening three paragraphs of the "Manifesto" (2). "Standards in the arts" are what Scrutiny professes, and by implication, these standards are also what the bulk of periodicals, those which contribute to the general cultural illiteracy, lack (2). The problem with the British periodical field is as follows: because of "the general dissolution of standards," Knights and Culver remark, "during the last two decades no serious critical journal has been able to survive in the form in which it was conceived; and how many have been able to survive in any form?" (2). Two failed critical journals are lamented in the "Manifesto." The Calendar of Letters, the short-lived monthly from the mid-1920s, from whose "Scrutinies" section Scrutiny's own name derived, is perhaps the most logical recently failed critical journal for Knights and Culver to highlight, and indeed, it is the first they mention. Perhaps more surprisingly, Knights and Culver also eulogize the "euphemistic extinction" (that is, its amalgamation with the New Statesman) of "the Nation, itself the grave of the Athenaeum" (2). The third English periodical mentioned in the "Manifesto"—albeit in a footnote—is the Criterion. Knights and Culver respectfully acknowledge Eliot's quarterly as "still the most serious as it is the most intelligent of our journals," but add that the Criterion's "high price, a certain

52 For a discussion of the ubiquity of this argument during the early twentieth century, see Collier, Modernism 11-37.
tendency to substitute solemnity for seriousness, and, during the last two years, a narrowing of its interests, prevent it from influencing more than a small proportion of the reading public" (3).

The Calendar and the Criterion, a monthly and (mostly) quarterly, respectively, are journals similar to Scrutiny itself, both focusing on literature and/or literary criticism, and it makes sense for Knights and Culver to position Scrutiny, in the "Manifesto," as inheritor to the former and competitor to the latter. The appearance of the Nation and Athenaeum among this list of "serious critical journal[s]" is more surprising, for both the priorities and the format of the Nation and Athenaeum were markedly different from those of Scrutiny. The Nation and Athenaeum was a weekly journal as much if not more concerned with politics and economics as with literature. Its book-related pages, as I argued in Chapter One, were focused on the reviewing of an eclectic range of serious books rather than on the exacting standards of literary criticism on which Scrutiny insisted, and its close ties to publishers' advertising and its reviewing habits were nearly indistinguishable from those that Scrutiny criticized in other weeklies. Moreover, during the 1920s, the Nation and Athenaeum was strongly associated in the public consciousness with Bloomsbury, with whom Scrutiny had notorious disputes. Despite these dissonances between the aims of the Nation and Athenaeum and Scrutiny, the former serves a specific rhetorical purpose in the "Manifesto" of the latter. Particularly during the first few years of its existence, Scrutiny made a repeated appeal for a weekly periodical with strong critical standards. The American New Republic was regularly held up as a model.

53 Scrutiny, despite charging 2s. 6d. per issue, compared with the Criterion's 7s. 6d., did not reach a larger proportion of the reading public: both periodicals had circulations of 750-1000 in the 1930s (J. Harding 71). Yet as we shall see, Scrutiny's discussion of the weeklies suggests that it entertained hopes, however unrealistic, of influencing a larger audience.
(including in the "Manifesto"), but the idea that such a journal had already existed in Britain was also appealing. The rhetorical advantage of the *New Republic* was its distance; much like Matthew Arnold held up the *Revue des Deux Mondes* as his paradigmatic critical in part because it was French, *Scrutiny* lauded the *New Republic* in part because it was American. The rhetorical advantage of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, the intellectual weekly proposed as the British model for a weekly that achieved real critical standards, was also distance: because the *Nation and Athenaeum* no longer existed in 1932, it could more easily be idealised. The presence of the *Nation and Athenaeum* in the "Manifesto" signaled that the intellectual weeklies would be a genre of concern to *Scrutiny*.

Aside from the rhetorical advantage gained by the *Nation and Athenaeum*’s demise, why Knights and Culver chose to highlight the *Nation and Athenaeum* specifically, rather than, for instance, a weekly like the *New Age* or the *New Statesman* in their early heydays remains somewhat baffling, particularly considering the Bloomsbury connections, Perhaps, however, the *Nation and Athenaeum* still enjoyed the strongest literary pedigree among its peers. Literary criticism in the *New Age*, after all, was strongly associated with Arnold Bennett, and the *New Statesman*’s first literary editor was J. C. Squire, both of whom were *Scrutiny* bywords for "dissolution of standards."

Conversely, the *Athenaeum*, even in its "grave" of the *Nation*, recalled the nineteenth-century tradition of literary journalism, culminating in John Middleton Murry's much-admired stint editing the *Athenaeum* shortly before its amalgamation with the *Nation*. Although the *Nation and Athenaeum* of the 1920s was associated with Bloomsbury, at the

---

54 MacKillop notes that F. R. Leavis was strongly influenced by Murry's *Athenaeum* during his undergraduate days after the war (50).
literary helm of the journal was the Bloomsbury figure most likely to be positively acclaimed by *Scrutiny* contributors, Leonard Woolf. Q. D. Leavis, for instance, uses a review by Leonard Woolf in the *Nation and Athenaeum* to define (with approbation) highbrow critical taste (280), and in a 1933 issue of *Scrutiny*, an article of Leonard Woolf's is described as appearing "in solitary excellence" in the *New Statesman and Nation* (Thompson, "Prospectus" 251). I have suggested elsewhere that Leonard Woolf's propensity to express his opinion firmly helped to characterize the *Nation and Athenaeum* under his literary editorship (Dickens "Circulating Ideas"); perhaps it was this tendency toward clear and unapologetic judgment that drew the admiration of the Leavises and their fellow *Scrutiny* contributors.

*Scrutiny*'s relationship to other "serious critical journal[s]," both failed and ongoing, is one key theme taken up in the "Manifesto" and continued as *Scrutiny* progressed; another related theme is the relationship of literary journalism to critical authority. In the absence of sufficient existing journals offering serious standards in criticism, *Scrutiny* proposes itself. "We take it as axiomatic," write Knights and Culver, "that concern for standards of living implies concern for standards in the arts" (2). At stake were not mere literary judgments, but rather the "movement of modern civilization," which for the *Scrutiny* contributors was inexorably bound to the movement of literature and literary criticism (3). This formulation suggests that Knights and Culver, and along with them, *Scrutiny* in general, recognize a certain interestedness of literary criticism: criticism does not, for *Scrutiny*, exist in a vacuum or for its own sake but instead is interested in no less than the "movement of modern civilization." Crucially, however, for *Scrutiny* the direction of influence should only move one way. Literary
criticism is primary; standards of living and wider cultural valuations should be approached through literary criticism and influenced by it. The idea that criticism might be influenced by interests in the marketplace, in personal relationships, or in politics is unacceptable to *Scrutiny*. Because criticism itself is the influencing factor, strong critical journalism is necessary to arbitrate literary (and consequently cultural) taste in a society that has fragmented into multiple, competing publics: "to-day there are anti-highbrow publics and 'modernist' publics, but there is no public of Common Readers with whom the critic can rejoice to concur," lament the editors. "He cannot leave his standards to look after themselves" ([Knights and Culver] 4). In the absence of Johnson's common reader as a benchmark for critical taste, critical standards can come only from the critics themselves. But which critics may be trusted? This is the heart of the problem of early twentieth-century critical journalism as *Scrutiny* diagnoses it: there are too many pretenders to the title of "critic" and too few recognizable standards for critical authority. In an allusion to Julien Benda's *La trahison des clercs* (1927), Knights and Culver note, "We have long been told that *les clercs* have betrayed their function. It would be more true to say that their voice cannot be heard above the confused noises made by the self-appointed sponsors of civilization" (6). *Scrutiny* proposes to be the voice of *les clercs* who have not betrayed their function, but another part of its mission is to point out as false and to criticize those who lack sound authority for critical judgments: that is, those who allow their interests and entanglements to influence their judgments rather than issuing judgments that properly influence culture. In taking up this role, *Scrutiny* turned its attention away from the familiar targets of mass culture and toward the guardians of high culture that were failing in their duties.
The contributors to *Scrutiny* were in no way anti-journalism. Complaints about the reality of critical journalism stemmed from a belief in an ideal that places journalism in high esteem. This ideal figures the journalist as *le clerc* in Benda's sense of an intellectual authority figure, preserving the continuity of traditional standards and guiding readers' judgments. As I have previously noted, Mark Hampton has argued that by the early twentieth century British journalism had largely shifted from an educational ideal, in which journalism's purpose was to guide readers with authority, to a representational ideal, in which journalism aimed to provide "what the public wants" (9). When *Scrutiny* contributors spoke of critical journalism, however, they did so not only firmly within the framework of Hampton's educational ideal but specifically in the first sense of the educational ideal, with an emphasis on influencing and informing readers, rather than in Hampton's second sense of creating a forum for public debate (9). According to *Scrutiny*, critical journalism ought to bolster, guide, and mobilize the minority, but, its contributors complained, the preeminent critics and periodicals lacked sufficient standards for the authority they wielded. Journalistic cultural authority, in *Scrutiny*'s view, was not relational but rather accountable to outside standards—standards which had formerly been widely countenanced but had, by the early twentieth century, largely disappeared. In this chapter I introduce the term "critical authority," derived from *Scrutiny*'s own discussions about the proper authority for criticism, to designate *Scrutiny*'s idea of a fixed, non-relative authority for criticism accountable to outside standards. The alleged disappearance of these standards—and the consequences of this disappearance for

---

55 The *Nation and Athenaeum*, I argued in Chapter Two, embraced both senses of Hampton's educational ideal, even when those senses were at odds, and most other intellectual weeklies did likewise. These slight differences between the intellectual weeklies' and *Scrutiny*'s respective beliefs about what journalism ought to do are at the heart of the conflict between them.
critical journalism—is behind most of Scrutiny's critiques of contemporary literary journalism, especially in the intellectual weeklies.

F. R. Leavis most explicitly lays out Scrutiny's goals for journalism in an article in the second issue, entitled "What's Wrong with Criticism?" "What's Wrong with Criticism?" begins with a list of three books—Poetry and the Criticism of Life by H. W. Garrod, Variety of Ways by Bonamy Dobrée, and Criticism by Desmond MacCarthy—that Leavis claims inspired the titular question. The first two he dismisses in fairly short order; they are specialist, academic studies and not likely to have a large enough impact to be worth sustained criticism. Here we are reminded of the hierarchy of criticism in 1932: academia was not yet the site of literary criticism, and the adjectives "academic" and "scholarly" carried negative connotations for Leavis, suggesting the accumulation of literary knowledge rather than the application of literary judgment. Journalism, on the other hand, was the principal location of literary criticism, and to be a literary journalist was a high calling for Leavis because journalism had such power to influence the population. Garrod and Dobrée's books are irrelevant because they are academic. MacCarthy, on the other hand, "really raises the issues [of critical standards]" because he "is not a professor of poetry or a scholar or a specialist, but a professional critic, a journalist" (133). This is approving language; for Leavis, "journalist" is not an insult but, at least ideally, a term of praise. In the hands of "a professional critic, a journalist" like MacCarthy, "criticism undertakes its essential function of keeping an educated body of taste and opinion alive to the age, of testing, nourishing and refining the currency of contemporary culture" (133). If Leavis and his fellow Scrutiny contributors thought less of journalists, perhaps they would cast less scorn at the journalists who fall short of the
mark. But because the ideal journalist holds one of the most important roles in society, flawed journalists, and the flawed journals for which they write, frequently find themselves on the receiving end of Scrutiny's attacks. By 1932, MacCarthy was generally agreed to be the most distinguished and well-respected literary journalist in the mainstream press; in "What's Wrong with Criticism?" Leavis laments that even Britain's best literary journalist is so inadequate.

MacCarthy's Criticism, which republished selections of his journalism, does not, according to Leavis, "give evidence of any subtlety of first-hand judgment" (133). This conclusion indicates what Leavis sees as criticism's goal: "first-hand judgment" about a text. This sort of critical judgment is, he believes, the responsibility of intellectual literary journalism. By these standards, MacCarthy, whose critical style was one of appreciation rather than judgment, did not meet expectations. After a perusal of the essays collected in Criticism, presumably the best of MacCarthy's critical journalism, Leavis concludes, "Mr. MacCarthy, then, is not an original critic; he is the journalist-middleman of cultivated talk" (134). The term of praise, "journalist," becomes the epithet "journalist-middleman" when MacCarthy falls short of his critical responsibilities. Yet the real problem Leavis sees is not the lack of critical intelligence or originality in MacCarthy's reviews, but rather the fact that despite not writing with intelligence and originality, MacCarthy still enjoys a reputation as London's preeminent literary journalist: "In the serious pursuit of his function he enjoys something like a lonely eminence. Who else is there? In a healthy state we should have at least twenty journalist-critics of his quality, whereas if we look round we can see only the confrérie of the weeklies and the Sunday papers" (134). MacCarthy, claims Leavis, is not a great critic, yet he is still a better critic than most of
his peers in the intellectual press. Moreover, most readers seem not to be able to tell the
difference between MacCarthy and this less talented "confrérie," much less between
MacCarthy and truly skilled literary criticism (134). That most of the reviewing in "our
more elegant weeklies" is done by journalists less talented by MacCarthy and that the
opinion of the weeklies "does appear to be taken seriously by such educated class as we
have" strikes at the heart of what, in Leavis's mind, is wrong with criticism (134). Here
we have an example of Scrutiny's habit of distinguishing between its own audience and
the audience of mainstream intellectual journalism. "Such an educated class as we have"
does not describe Scrutiny's own implied audience of insiders, those already inclined to
agree with Leavis. Rather, this "educated class," MacCarthy's audience, is a larger group
consisting of those who ought to be capable of, in Leavis's words from Mass Civilisation
and Minority Culture, "endorsing […] first-hand judgment by genuine personal response"
(4), but who need the guidance of strong literary critics before they will be able to do so.
The implied audience of mainstream intellectual journalism is an intellectual minority
more potential than actual, in Scrutiny's formulation. It is an audience many times larger
than Scrutiny's own, yet because it already consists of people self-identified as educated
and book-interested, it shares, at least in theory, many of the values Scrutiny attributes to
the intellectual minority. Leavis's distinction between his own audience and the audience
of someone like MacCarthy also accounts for the lack of what we might identify as good
criticism in Leavis's own writing here. Leavis rarely uses specific examples of
MacCarthy's shortcomings, of what, exactly, a better critic might be expected to do
differently, or indeed, of anything else. Scrutiny's famous standards are nearly always left
unspecified because Scrutiny's audience is constructed as already knowing what these standards are.

"What's Wrong with Criticism?" was one of an important series of articles that F. R. Leavis published in the early issues of Scrutiny. These articles served to establish Scrutiny's aggressively critical stance toward British institutions of intellectual culture. In his biography of Leavis, MacKillop describes a writing project of Leavis's that was originally conceived as a Criterion pamphlet, at the request of Eliot. The pamphlet was provisionally titled "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" ["Who will guard the guardians?"] and was conceived as a kind of sequel to Mass Civilization and Minority Culture: "Mass Civilization and Minority Culture focused on the mass; Leavis now turned to the guardians of culture, asking who kept guard over them" (MacKillop 186). The material Leavis wrote for this pamphlet was never published by the Criterion; MacKillop suggests, probably correctly, that Leavis's open scorn for many in the higher echelons of literary journalism rendered the pamphlet unacceptable to Eliot. Although Eliot had "warmly praised Fiction and the Reading Public in a review that mocked middlebrow notables," F. R. Leavis's targets in the proposed "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" pamphlet were not all safely middlebrow (MacKillop 187). Eliot's position in the literary community would not allow him publicly to approve Leavis's "comprehensive contempt": Eliot, after all, "was employed by Faber and Faber to edit a journal that needed many contributors. He would alienate them if he went in for such crushing surveys" as Leavis's (188). "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" did not appear as a Criterion pamphlet, but much of the material was repackaged into a series of essays published in the first four issues of Scrutiny: "The Literary Mind" (May 1932), "What's Wrong with Criticism?" (September
1932), "Under Which King, Bezonian?" (December 1932), and "Restatements for Critics" (March 1933). The latter two essays are more political in nature, and "Under Which King, Bezonian?", in particular, articulates Scrutiny's response to Marxism. The first two essays, however, constitute a strong part of Scrutiny's initial attack on the state of contemporary literary journalism and the authority with which it was conducted.

In Chapter Three I argued that many of the differences between critics, periodicals, and their associated brow levels of the 1920s and 1930s were less actual than perceived: there was, for instance, more overlap between Arnold Bennett and Desmond MacCarthy than many of their readers seemed to appreciate. Leavis, however, was not among the readers who perceived more difference than existed. Rather, he, and Scrutiny more broadly, sought to illuminate the extent to which many of these distinctions—between intellectual and popular journalism, for instance—failed to be supported by the text of the journalism. The lack of critical standards in contemporary literary journalism led to what was to Leavis an untenable situation, in which critical authority was granted to whoever chose to assume it and maintained through popular opinion, as well as through the various paratextual elements that designated certain periodicals and journalists as intellectual or popular. Leavis's essays "The Literary Mind" and "What's Wrong with Criticism?", which appeared in the first and second issues of Scrutiny, respectively, sought to illuminate this problem. "The Literary Mind" argues for the application of intelligence to the study and criticism of literature. Intelligent reading,

MacKillop argues that all four essays "can be given the collective title 'Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?'" (186), but I question whether "Restatements for Critics" contains much material originally designed for the Criterion pamphlet. In contrast to its three predecessors, "Restatements" responds directly to attacks on Scrutiny and is consequently more closely tied to its specific Scrutiny context. As the title indicates, the essay restates some of the arguments from the previous essays, particularly "Under Which King, Bezonian?", but most of the new ideas in the essay are topical and could not have been part of Leavis's conception of the Criterion pamphlet over a year previously.
Leavis argues, will lead to improved standards, judgments, and distinctions in literary criticism, all of which he sees as sorely lacking in the contemporary critical scene. "The Literary Mind" is in some ways a review—unfavourable—of the book of the same title by Max Eastman. Leavis begins his second paragraph with one of his favourite rhetorical techniques: the dropping of names with the expectation that these names will speak for themselves, at least to Leavis's implied audience of like-minded readers. Eastman clearly does not know what he is talking about because, Leavis argues, anyone "who proposes to discuss a 'classical movement' led by 'Allen Tate, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Ivor Winters, Edith Sitwell, Robert Graves, Laura Riding' convicts himself" of critical "looseness" (20). Eastman's problem begins with his lack of critical standards and continues when the standards that do assert themselves are faulty. Leavis scorns Eastman's preference of Edith Sitwell's poetry to T. S. Eliot's with the observation that Arnold Bennett, whose name is dropped without explanation to signify a lack of critical standards, shared the same preference (20). To share the taste of Bennett, Leavis implies, is to betray a lack of intelligence in criticism.

Bennett was a familiar highbrow target, so it is not at all surprising to find Leavis using his name as a keyword for lack of standards, and it is similarly unsurprising to find the names of J. B. Priestley and Hugh Walpole subsequently added to it (21). Yet Leavis separates himself from the usual rhetoric of intellectual literary journalism by including a fourth name as a touchstone: that of Harold Nicolson. Nicolson, despite serving as Bennett's successor at the Evening Standard, occupied, at least in popular perception, a

---

57 Eastman was an American known as much for his socialism as for his writing, and he often combined the two; he was, for instance, the editor of the left-wing, American little magazine The Masses during the First World War. Leavis mentions Eastman's nationality in passing, before turning to the English examples on which he spends most of the essay, but he completely elides Eastman's politics in his discussion.
different sphere in the journalistic world than did Bennett, Priestley, or Walpole. The husband of Vita Sackville-West, Nicolson was connected to the upper classes and to Bloomsbury. When the first issue of Scrutiny was published in the spring of 1932, Nicolson's controversy with the BBC—a controversy that emphasized Nicolson's reputation as an advocate for modernist literature—was still fresh in the public mind.

Nicolson had been commissioned by the BBC to give a series of talks on "The New Spirit in Literature," but his attempt, in late 1931, to praise Ulysses and Lady Chatterley's Lover was censored by the BBC, leading to the resignation of talks director Hilda Matheson and to widespread furor, particularly in the intellectual weeklies (Avery 47-49). Nicolson, then, was enjoying a reputation as censored advocate of Joyce and Lawrence (two writers whom Leavis also admired), yet in "The Literary Mind," Leavis uses Nicolson, as well as the segment of the press that supported him, as bywords for the low level of British literary standards: "here in England Mr. Eliot's poetry is explained over the wireless by Mr. Harold Nicolson, and our most intelligent weekly is, where literary criticism is concerned, a stronghold of anti-highbrow prejudice" (21). Leavis is not content to criticize Bennett, Priestley, and Walpole; rather, he implies that there is no difference between the standards of those champions of middlebrow populism and perceived guardians of culture like Nicolson and the intellectual weeklies. In 1932, Leavis writes, criticism has lost its connection to literary tradition, and with that rupture, authority-granting standards have also been lost. Instead, "there is now no centre and no authority, so that Mr. Eastman, Mr. Nicolson, Mr. Priestley or Mr. Walpole can assume authority without being in the eyes of the world ridiculous" (21). Leavis finds the influence

---

58 Leavis does not identify "our most intelligent weekly," and given the formulation of Scrutiny's criticism of the weeklies elsewhere, it is likely that the ambiguity is meant to imply a certain sameness to the intellectual weeklies.
wielded by Priestley and Walpole to be problematic, but more worrisome to him is the popularly perceived difference between those writers and someone like Nicolson, when in Leavis's eyes they all contribute equally to the dissolution of critical standards.

Leavis's grouping together of these disparate names—the middlebrow novelists Walpole and Priestley, the upper-class and highbrow Nicolson, and the socialist Eastman—appears to betray no stronger sense of distinction than the grouping of names for which he criticizes Eastman. Arguably, however, this is Leavis's point: in what really matters, at least to Leavis—the substance of critical judgment—these apparently different writers are all alike. The differences between them are all external to the texts of their criticism. Nevertheless, if Leavis does intend to place the emphasis on the text itself, rather than on external markers of class, politics, and brow level, he does not make this clear. As usual, he is notoriously vague about what exactly constitutes high critical standards. Leavis's rhetoric (as well as that of his fellow Scrutiny contributors) suggests that these standards should be self-evident to the true minority. Like a partisan pundit, Leavis drops code words—Bennett, Priestley, Eastman, Nicolson—and expects his audience to respond accordingly.

Leavis's criticism of Eastman and Nicolson in "The Literary Mind" was mild compared with the widespread skewering of the London literary scene in that essay's sequel, "What's Wrong with Criticism?" If MacKillop is correct about Eliot's motivations for declining to publish the proposed "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" as a Criterion pamphlet, the material that became "What's Wrong with Criticism?" was surely what offended Eliot's sense of editorial caution. The essay in fact contains a slight on Eliot himself. In his catalogue of institutions that might be expected to uphold critical
standards yet nevertheless fail to do so, Leavis devotes attention to the Royal Society of Literature. Once again, Leavis allows name-dropping to speak for itself as he implies his argument: with such a wide-ranging membership, the Royal Society of Literature cannot be expected to represent serious standards in criticism. Leavis quotes the Society’s mandate to "focus its prestige" by 'adding to itself under a rigorous system of election a majority of the most distinguished writers of the time' and then mocks its idea of "distinguished writers" by naming some of its members: Laurence Binyon, Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater, G. K. Chesterton, Hugh Walpole, Clemence Dane. The last two, in particular, betray that "the worst is true and the hope [that the Royal Society of Literature might maintain critical standards] was foolish. For Mr. Walpole and Miss Dane are two-fifths of the Book Society, Ltd." (140). The section on the Royal Society of Literature ends with what appears to be a compliment to Eliot yet may also be read as castigation of Eliot's choice of associates. Leavis registers his "astonishment" to discover that Eliot is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and wonders how Eliot could feel at home there. "Nor," Leavis continues, "can his presence in such company tend to reverse our conclusion as to the influence of the Society on standards" (141). It is no wonder that Eliot declined to publish the essay under the auspices of the Criterion.

Another of Leavis's targets in "What's Wrong with Criticism?"—a guardian of culture not guarding to Leavis's standards—is the BBC, and under this heading he augments and nuances his critique of Nicolson from "The Literary Mind." Leavis begins by acknowledging some of the BBC efforts that have benefited culture, but then submits Nicolson's "notorious" "New Spirit in Literature" talks as evidence of "how little [the BBC] can be expected to reverse the process we have been contemplating, to educate in
the sense of promulgating standards" (143). Nicolson's talks were "notorious" in the public discourse because of the scandal they provoked, but the scandal, Leavis argues, was not the real problem. In fact, Nicolson might deserve some praise for the talks, for they were "at least a challenge to Book Society values" (143). But for Leavis, at least in the early years of Scrutiny, literary judgment is black and white: either one utterly denounces everything associated with "Book Society values" or one might as well throw in completely with the Bennetts and Priestleys of the world. Nicolson's offense was so grave because he had the potential to achieve exacting critical judgment and did not. Leavis admits that Nicolson's previous books of criticism "are the work of a cultivated man of some talent" (144). But rather than forcefully holding his ground in the "New Spirit in Literature" talks, Nicolson conceded to the likes of Walpole and Priestley. Leavis quotes a passage from the Listener's reprint of one of Nicolson's talks, in which Nicolson praises Walpole and Priestley's contributions to literature and asks, "'What, then, is the gulf that separates Mr. Walpole and me in literary matters?'" Leavis responds with "What indeed?" (144). The gulf between Nicolson, attempting to praise Joyce and Lawrence on the wireless, and the populists Walpole and Priestley was more perceived than actual, argue both Nicolson and Leavis, though from opposite sides. Nicolson offers this fact as a sign of positive good will; for Leavis it is symptomatic of the modern critical crisis. In Leavis's view, Nicolson, "even if he had been qualified to explain Mr. Eliot and Mr. Joyce and Mrs. Woolf," lost any potential critical authority he might have deserved when he engaged Walpole in the debate: "For debate at Mr. Walpole's level could have no place in a serious discussion of modern literature, and there could be no

---

59 About a month after the publication of "What's Wrong with Criticism?" Nicolson and Priestley emphasized the supposed gulf between their respective brows with further BBC talks in which Nicolson mounted a highbrow rebuttal to Priestley's defense of the lowbrow (Cuddy-Keane 16).
serious discussion of modern literature that should not be an implicit condemnation of Mr. Walpole and Mr. Priestley" (144). Leavis ends his BBC discussion by absolving Nicolson, at least in part, and condemning the BBC itself. Nicolson's "real excuse" for the poor quality of his talks is the "tropical profusion of topics and vocabularies and the absence of a cultural grammar and syntax" on the BBC and in its periodical, the Listener: in such an environment, "what chance had [Nicolson]?" (144). The BBC, with its unparalleled potential to uphold standards in cultural value, instead conforms to popular taste.

As I have already indicated, the primary target of "What's Wrong with Criticism?" was intellectual literary journalism as represented by Desmond MacCarthy. In singling out MacCarthy, Leavis also singled out the intellectual weeklies, a distinction that would continue throughout the early issues of Scrutiny. MacCarthy made his reputation reviewing for a weekly that Scrutiny was particularly prone to attack, the New Statesman, where he was literary editor through much of the 1920s. By 1932, however, MacCarthy was editing the monthly Life and Letters and writing the book review column for the Sunday Times, while the intellectual weeklies, the New Statesman in particular, had lost some of their former literary eminence. I have already mentioned Knights and Culver's eulogizing of the Nation and Athenaeum in their Scrutiny "Manifesto." With the amalgamation of the Nation and Athenaeum and the New Statesman in 1931, the number of intellectual weeklies had been reduced by one. The Times Literary Supplement is dismissed in Knights and Culver's "Manifesto" with a parenthetical "(where at one time it was possible to find criticism)"—with the implication that criticism might no longer be found there (4). The two best contenders for intellectual weeklies that might command
some respect from Scrutiny in the early 1930s were the Spectator and the New Statesman and Nation; because both were seen to have enough merit not to be dismissed out of hand, both were subject to regular critique. The Spectator fared better. Although the Spectator generally put less effort into its literary pages than the New Statesman or the Nation and Athenaeum had during the 1920s, never enjoying a prominent literary editor like MacCarthy or Leonard Woolf, its unassuming consistency was enough, by 1933, to earn it the praise of Q. D. Leavis. "The Spectator's claim to be the best English weekly must (so far as literary standards are concerned) be admitted," she writes, though she goes on to compare it unfavourably with its American counterparts ("Our Serious Weeklies" 182). The New Statesman and Nation came under more consistent attack from Scrutiny, perhaps because its literary reputation, built on MacCarthy's shoulders, with the even stronger reputation of the Nation and Athenaeum adopted in, was the strongest among the weeklies. With a great reputation came, the Scrutiny contributors felt, great responsibility, and the New Statesman and Nation of the early 1930s was not living up to its responsibilities. The level and nature of criticism that Scrutiny expected from the weeklies was, as we shall see, impractical and unrealistic, but its complaints about the New Statesman and Nation's lack of focus and authority were not entirely unfounded. Adrian Smith notes that between the end of MacCarthy's tenure as literary editor in 1928 and the beginning of Raymond Mortimer's in 1935, the New Statesman literary pages were "rudderless," looked after by a series of short-term editors more concerned with the day to day aspects of putting copy together than with shaping a coherent critical voice (186-88). Nevertheless, Scrutiny's critiques did not focus on the New Statesman and Nation's specific editorial shortcomings but rather located the intellectual weeklies'
failings in the very relationships that define the intellectual weeklies as a genre.

According to *Scrutiny*, the intellectual weeklies' critical standards were compromised by the weeklies' problematic entanglements with the interpersonal networks of wider London literary journalism and by their commercial relationship with the book trade.

One of the most sustained of these critiques on the intellectual weeklies is Denys Thompson's December 1933 article "Prospectus for a Weekly." Thompson begins his article by recounting the familiar narrative of superior nineteenth-century literary journalism declining into its early twentieth-century counterpart, in which "commercial conditions" have "murder[ed]" Britain's "enlightened periodicals" (249). Instead of offering a positive milieu for criticism, as, Thompson argues, it did in the nineteenth century, the literary journalism of the twentieth century is dominated by "literary wage-earners" in the model of Pound's fictional Mr. Nixon (widely presumed to be based on Arnold Bennett), and journalism itself is reduced to "machine-tending" (249). The weeklies are not altogether hopeless: Thompson admits that "one or two" contain "acceptable political comment" (249). Nevertheless, the back halves of these journals, the literary sections, have suffered, and, Thompson claims, "some observers suggest that the debility which has ended their literary criticism has spread to their political comment, and certainly one can hardly trust the guidance of the papers whose star reviewers could not see through Churchill's *World Crisis* or a Wellsian conception of happiness" (249-50).

Thompson's point is that the political and literary sections of a weekly must be connected; publishing good political commentary alone is insufficient because "politics need sufficient ends before they can command support" (250). These "ends"—the cultural priorities of the periodical—are to be found in its literary pages. For Thompson, then, the
literary pages comprise the more important half of the periodical. A relatively common claim of literary magazines in this period, as we see from a number of the articles in Brooker and Thacker's *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, was that literary criticism should be disengaged from politics. *Scrutiny*'s claim, instead, is that politics should be interested in literary criticism. Thompson does not explicitly accuse the intellectual weeklies of having their literary judgment compromised by too much political interestedness, but he certainly finds the balance unfavourable.⁶⁰

Thompson then goes on explicitly to articulate what a good weekly periodical ought to do: "The function (in England unfulfilled) of a weekly review should be to rally, mobilize and inform an intelligent, educated, morally responsible and politically enlightened public" (250). This formulation is remarkably similar to *Scrutiny*'s conception of its own function, though *Scrutiny* de-emphasizes politics. The ideal intellectual weekly, then, would share *Scrutiny*'s priorities of upholding critical standards and mobilizing the intellectual minority that shares its values, yet it would do so once a week, rather than once every three months, and it would, presumably, command a larger audience.⁶¹ Thompson's verbs are key: a good periodical ought to "rally, mobilize and inform." This set of priorities informs *Scrutiny*'s own "preaching to the converted" tone. *Scrutiny* does not particularly endeavour to invite dialogue, to argue, or even to persuade; rather, it aims to give a vocabulary to those who already agree with its exacting opinions.

In employing these words to describe the ideal function of a weekly periodical,

⁶⁰*Scrutiny*'s relationship to politics is outside the scope of this chapter, but a number of scholars have discussed *Scrutiny*'s negotiations with politics, especially Marxism. Francis Mulhern's book-length study of *Scrutiny*, for instance, examines the periodical through a Marxist lens and foregrounds *Scrutiny*'s lack of emphasis on politics (a lack of emphasis that Mulhern himself finds somewhat problematic).

⁶¹*Scrutiny* in the early 1930s had a circulation of around 750 (J. Harding 71), whereas the *New Statesman and Nation* had a circulation of slightly over 15,000 in May 1932, the month that *Scrutiny* first appeared. Until its incorporation of the *Week-End Review* in 1934, when circulation figures rose, the *New Statesman and Nation*'s circulation held fairly steady at 15,000 during the early 1930s (*Keynes Papers NS/4/3*).
Thompson suggests that the problem with the present weeklies is as much one of tone as of content. What Thompson seems to desire is a weekly that will employ *Scrutiny*'s cultural keywords and uncompromising vitriol, fifty-two times a year.

Thompson's "Prospectus for a Weekly" is not a solitary example of *Scrutiny* critiquing British weekly periodicals; rather, this is a regular theme, especially in the early 1930s, occurring most frequently in the "Comments and Reviews" section of *Scrutiny*. The "Reviews" portion of "Comments and Reviews" is self-explanatory: it contains reviews of relevant new books that interest *Scrutiny*. The book reviews are one of the few places in which the journal establishes concrete examples of its own standards, rather than criticizing the lack of standards in others and expecting its audience both to follow and agree. *Scrutiny*’s book reviews frequently consist of the same negative rhetoric that we find in its articles, the most famous example of which, perhaps, is Q. D. Leavis's scathing review of Virginia Woolf’s *Three Guineas*, "Caterpillars of the Commonwealth, Unite!", published in September 1937. Nevertheless, even when *Scrutiny* criticizes the books it reviews, its selection reveals its priorities. The reviews in the first issue are eclectic, though touching on many of *Scrutiny*’s enduring concerns: the dangers of mass-production, developments in education, and scholarly work in the social sciences. The first issue also demonstrates that the contributors are not above self-promotion: one of the longest reviews is D. W. Harding's (positive, naturally) review of F. R. Leavis's *New Bearings in English Poetry* (D. Harding 87-90). By the second issue, however, the "Reviews" section had come to demonstrate *Scrutiny*'s primary emphasis more strongly: the vast majority of the books reviewed are works of imaginative literature (fiction or poetry, though importantly, not popular fiction) or of literary scholarship or criticism.
This focus on books directly connected to English literature as a developing academic discipline continued, though it was not the exclusive concern of Scrutiny's book reviews. Nevertheless, this selection distinguished Scrutiny from the intellectual weeklies, many of which, as I explain in Chapter One, signalled their position of cultural authority by devoting most of their review space to works other than imaginative literature. This distribution of reviews, as I suggested in Chapter One, prioritized so-called "permanent books"—that is, books they believed readers would be more likely to buy than borrow—because of these books' relationship to cultural prestige and to the economic health of the book trade, the intellectual weeklies' chief advertisers. Scrutiny's book review selections also prioritized serious books, in the sense that even the fiction reviewed is intellectual rather than popular. But for Scrutiny this choice lacked any commercial impetus because Scrutiny has no substantial relationship with the book trade. This commercial disinterest was a point of pride for Scrutiny—though surprisingly, not one on which the contributors dwelled frequently—but it also contributed to its blindness toward the economic realities of the weeklies, a blindness demonstrated in the "Comments" half of "Comments and Reviews."

The "Comments" portion typically consisted of between one and three short articles, sometimes signed and sometimes unsigned, that comment on some topical subject related to Scrutiny's concerns. The majority of these, at least in the 1930s, were responses to contemporary critical journalism, and the "Comments" in six of the first

---

62 Scrutiny did sell advertisements, and most of these were in some way book-related. The Modernist Magazines Project has published a digital copy of the June 1933 issue, and in it are ads for the Cambridge booksellers Heffer's and Bowes & Bowes, for F. R. Leavis's selections from the Calendar, Towards Standards of Criticism, published by Wishart, for the Dutch little magazine Transition, and for S. G. Marshall, the printers of Scrutiny (Scrutiny, Modernist Magazines Project). These are all advertisers with specific or local interests in the periodical or its perceived audience. London publishers did not advertise in Scrutiny with any regularity, and it therefore stood outside of the relationship with the book trade that so characterized the intellectual weeklies.
eight issues of *Scrutiny* addressed the intellectual weeklies, usually to lament that these journals which ought to be guardians of high critical standards were instead barely distinguishable from popular journalism. *Scrutiny* 's first issue, in May 1932, sets the tone with two short, unsigned attacks on the *New Statesman and Nation* 's literary pages. The first, "Selected List of Spring Books," replicates its title from the *New Statesman and Nation* 's March 12, 1932 Spring Book Supplement, which published under that head a list of interesting new books. The *Scrutiny* writer describes the note appended to the *New Statesman* list as "pathetic" and quotes from it the passage which disclaims any attempt at exhaustiveness in its list and expresses the hope that the list contains "those books which are important in themselves, and likely to have a particular appeal" to *New Statesman and Nation* readers (66). Whereas the rhetoric of R. Ellis Roberts, the *New Statesman and Nation* literary editor, contains the usual complaint that too many books are being published, *Scrutiny* does not blame the overproduction of the publishers but rather the lack of selectivity on the part of the *New Statesman and Nation* for the fact that the latter's list "contains 618 titles, of which 148 are fiction" (66). The *Scrutiny* reader, the writer implies, should be appalled at the idea that such a large number of books could be "selected" using any critical standards at all. Reviews, points out the *Scrutiny* writer, are only useful to readers when the journals that publish them have "ascertainable standards of criticism" (66). The *Scrutiny* writer does not explicitly accuse the *New Statesman and Nation* of lacking these standards, but the implication is strong, particularly in light of the subsequent "Comment."

---

63 For more on the nature and function of these lists, refer back to Chapter One of this dissertation.

64 The category of "fiction" would not itself be a problem for *Scrutiny*, which regularly reviewed novels it approved and, by nature of its interest in literature and literary criticism, found good novels among the most worthwhile of books. The problem was not that the *New Statesman and Nation* listed works of fiction but that it listed 148 of them.
Scrutiny's inaugural "Comments and Reviews" section follows "Selected List of Spring Books" with another short, unsigned piece entitled "The State of Reviewing," and it, too, takes the New Statesman and Nation as its target. "The State of Reviewing" responds to an article published in the March 26, 1932 issue of the New Statesman, "An Open Letter to Frank Swinnerton," by R. Ellis Roberts, which in turn responds to Swinnerton's Authors and the Book Trade. The conversation between the three pieces perfectly illustrates Scrutiny's bone of contention with the New Statesman and Nation and its peers. Swinnerton's chapter on reviewing in Authors and the Book Trade, as I explained in Chapter Three, laments the state of contemporary reviewing, in both its "star" and "coterie" manifestations, but ultimately prefers the "star" reviewing of the daily newspapers to the "coterie" reviewing that he associates with the intellectual weeklies. In Chapter Three I argued that the distinctions Swinnerton makes between the reviewing of Arnold Bennett, Swinnerton's quintessential star reviewer, and someone like Desmond MacCarthy in the New Statesman are overly fine; Swinnerton perceived a strong difference in the reviewing of Bennett and MacCarthy because the Evening Standard and the New Statesman were such different journals, but their respective literary columns in fact shared many similarities. Roberts, one of MacCarthy's successors as New Statesman literary editor, makes a similar observation in his "Open Letter" responding to Swinnerton's book. Swinnerton argues that a "propagandist, partial, and mean" coterie system "controls the leading London critical journals," of which the New Statesman and Nation, it is implied, is one (Authors 120). Roberts retaliates with a summary of his own wide experience as a reviewer for a variety of organs, daily and weekly, intellectual and popular, and claims that he has no idea what coterie Swinnerton thinks controls the paper
of which Roberts is literary editor—unless Swinnerton instead does not "count this paper as one of 'the leading London critical journals'" (394). Roberts argues that there is cross-fertilization in the reviewers in the daily and weekly press by listing reviewers for the *News Chronicle* who are also recognized reviewers in the weekly press (394). In a final attempt to tear down Swinnerton's artificial distinctions, Roberts defends MacCarthy from Swinnerton's charge that MacCarthy is a "Bloomsbury highbrow" (*Authors* 130). Roberts claims to dislike the use of "highbrow" as a term of abuse, "but used as abuse, it fits Mr. MacCarthy about as well as it would have fitted Edmund Gosse or Max Beerbohm. Unless you mean by 'Bloomsbury,' 'intelligent,' and by 'highbrow,' 'cultured,' it really is nonsense" (395).

Roberts' efforts to defend Bloomsbury and highbrowism were most likely unconvincing to Swinnerton, and his efforts to expose as arbitrary the distinctions between the intellectual and not-so-intellectual segments of the press won him no approval from the writer of *Scrutiny*'s "The State of Reviewing." That the literary editor of the *New Statesman and Nation* praises MacCarthy, Edmund Gosse (another target of Leavis's in "What's Wrong with Criticism?") and Max Beerbohm in the same breath as "highbrow," and that he lists reviewers like Robert Lynd, Rose Macaulay, D. C. Somervell, Phillip Guedalla, and Winifred Holtby with approval is evidence enough, according to the *Scrutiny* writer, that the *New Statesman and Nation* is failing in its duties as cultural guardian. The *Scrutiny* writer quotes Roberts' list of reviewers and then

---

comments, "Mr. Roberts assumes, with justice or otherwise, that Mr. Swinnerton, and, certainly with justice, that the majority of readers of the New Statesman, will be impressed by this list. What more need be said about the state of reviewing?" (67). Of the names on the list, the Scrutiny writer concedes that E. M. Forster is "a distinguished novelist" (though he or she refrains from comment on Forster's critical talent), "but of the rest, of how many can anything be said except that they are authorities like Mr. Roberts?" (67). This reference to critical authority, following on the heels of the "Manifesto" and Leavis's "The Literary Mind," summons for a third time in this first issue Scrutiny's primary concern with contemporary literary journalism: that undeserving figures with no standards have assumed authority, and the intellectual reading public seems not to know the difference between these false prophets and those with true critical standards. So-called authorities like Roberts represent "the top level in contemporary critical journalism," complains the writer of "The State of Reviewing." "They and their friends control the more intelligent weeklies" (67). The writer goes on to suggest that whether or not one wants to use the word "coterie" to describe this group of leading critical journalists, they nevertheless "exhibit the kind of solidarity innocently exemplified by Mr. Roberts' letter" (67). This so-called "solidarity" seems, in light of Scrutiny's complaints about the weeklies' lack of discrimination, to extend to quite a wide circle of literary journalists. The problem is not that a small group lauds only the work of its friends; rather, the "leading critical journalists" have too many friends, some of whom are bad critics. But friendship—that is, membership in the social network of metropolitan literary journalism—trumps adherence to critical standards, or so the Scrutiny writer claims. Swinnerton, too, complained that friendships compromised the ideal of
disinterested reviewing, but as I argued in Chapter Three, his clearly satirical method of addressing this problem serves primarily to expose how inevitably interested (in friendships, among other things) book reviewing is. The reality of literary journalism, which Swinnerton’s satire recognized and Scrutiny’s earnest indignation did not, was that literary journalists knew not only authors and publishers but also one another. A periodical that appears weekly and prioritizes dialogue, as the intellectual weeklies did, must, for both practical and ideological reasons, rely on a wide range of contributors. Sometimes either practical necessity or the desire for an eclectic mix of contributors conflicted with a desire for uniformly high standards in criticism. The weeklies’ job, as Scrutiny seemed not to recognize, was to negotiate these tensions.

Scrutiny targeted the weeklies once again in its second, September 1932, “Comments and Reviews” section, with an unsigned piece entitled "The Literary Racket." This article once again seeks to point out the shortcomings of the intellectual press and to destroy the illusion that the perceived guardians of culture perform disinterested criticism. The writer begins by noting the monotony and ubiquity of the argument that reviewing is in decline: "everyone," it seems, knows that this is the case (166). Nevertheless, the writer argues, "the cultivated" have a tendency to blame the decline in reviewing on some other sort of periodical than the sort they read, and as a result, "do not realize how completely reviewing has ceased to have anything to do with criticism" (166). While people might believe that "the classy Sunday papers, the dailies and the more hearty weeklies" contain reviewing largely controlled by advertising and "the Literary Racket," the Scrutiny writer argues, these factors have, in the popular imagination, "little bearing on—well, on the only weekly (whichever it is one may have
chosen) that an intelligent person can read" (166). The Scrutiny writer aims to expose the intellectual weeklies' interestedness in the economic and social pressures that have, according to Scrutiny, destroyed the critical function of reviewing. Rather than guarding disinterested criticism, the Scrutiny writer argues, the weeklies have been as complicit in the dissolution of standards as any other segment of the periodical press. The author of "The Literary Racket" is perfectly correct when he or she argues that the intellectual weeklies did not publish disinterested criticism. Putting aside for a moment the question of whether such an approach to criticism is ever possible, it was not even a realistic goal of the intellectual weeklies, whose interestedness was only too apparent and too connected to their primary function. "The Literary Racket" exposes not the interestedness of the intellectual weeklies but rather the incompatibility of Scrutiny's expectations and the weeklies' reality. Scrutiny wanted criticism, "first-hand judgment" about literature, which the writer of "The Literary Racket" does not see in the intellectual weeklies. Scrutiny's critical goal involved, ideally, the impartial selection and judgment of only the very best books. The intellectual weeklies, on the other hand, were committed to encouraging the reading and buying of serious books; the nature of this goal required a greater inclusiveness and breadth of selection, as well as a willing—not only a necessary—engagement with the marketing of books. With these fundamentally different attitudes toward books, Scrutiny and the intellectual weeklies were perhaps bound to clash.

One of the hurdles in the way of serious criticism in the weeklies was the very problem that the literary editors of the weeklies themselves complained about so consistently: the Scrutiny writer concedes that even the most conscientious literary editor
has difficulty "dealing with the sheer bulk of reading-matter that comes to the office for review" (167). Yet whereas the complaints of the literary editors, such as those by Leonard Woolf and Desmond MacCarthy that I mentioned in Chapter One, have an air of overwhelmed defeat to them—the situation is untenable, but what more can be done?—the Scrutiny writer is less willing to allow an untenable situation to continue. The literary editor may simply be a victim of the onslaught of new books, but the other factors influencing reviewing in the intellectual weeklies are, the Scrutiny writer suggests, more pernicious. Another factor is the relationship between publishers and the advertising managers of the intellectual weeklies (167). As I pointed out in Chapter One, the vast majority of the advertising in the intellectual weeklies comes from publishers, a fact that is plainly evident to any reader. In the analysis I did of reviews and publishers' advertisements in the Nation and Athenaeum and the New Statesman during the 1920s, I found no direct relationship between the amount any publisher spent and the number of reviews that publisher received; the charge, occasionally levied directly and strongly implied by the author of "The Literary Racket," that publishers bought reviews, is false. Nevertheless, a strong, broadly reciprocal relationship between book publishers and intellectual weeklies did exist, and this relationship called into question any idea that the weeklies were somehow economically disinterested.

Another impediment to true criticism in the intellectual weeklies, according to the Scrutiny writer, is the sense of "solidarity," of which Roberts and his colleagues were also accused in "The State of Reviewing." The "distinguished critics and authorities, with pretensions to maintain and self-esteem to cherish" protect one another, exert pressure on their colleagues to conform, and (in a phrase that betrays Scrutiny's own sense of
persecution) "fall upon the rash outsider who undertakes to remind the world what serious standards are" (167). If the metropolitan literary world is one of internal self-congratulation that, at least according to Scrutiny, will not abide critique of its own—here, again, are echoes of Eliot's refusal to publish Leavis's proposed Criterion pamphlet—Scrutiny wants no part of it. Just as Scrutiny figured itself as an outsider to Cambridge from within Cambridge, it also positioned itself as a literary periodical that critiqued other literary periodicals from the outside. From this outsider position, it could point to the failings of prevailing critical opinion in the intellectual weeklies, exposing, in "The Literary Racket" "how preponderantly the reviewing" of the intellectual weeklies is nothing more than "oil for the cogs of the publishing machine" (168). Scrutiny's aim was not to offer a solution to the specific problem of reviewing in the weeklies, but rather to raise awareness. The "state of reviewing" might be beyond repair, but the other part of the problem—the fact that "the greater number of clients of the 'higher journalism'" do not realize that they are not reading criticism—was something Scrutiny felt it could fix through an attempt to get the problems with reviewing "fully recognized by those capable of recognizing [them]" (168). If awareness could be raised, the Scrutiny writer concludes, then the first step toward mobilizing "a public […] that will support criticism" would be accomplished (168).

Denys Thompson, author of "Prospectus for a Weekly," takes up the attack on the intellectual weeklies in the "Comments and Reviews" section for March 1932, in an article entitled "Mr. Punch's Political Supplements." Although anyone familiar with Scrutiny's previous issues would not be tempted to believe Thompson's true target is only the anti-highbrow Punch, Thompson nevertheless constructs his argument in such a way
that the first half of it would not have looked out of place in, for instance, the *New Statesman and Nation*. Thompson begins by declaring that "Mr. Leonard Woolf’s useful pamphlet, *Hunting the Highbrow* (Hogarth Press) needs bringing up to date; for the facetious denigration of art and the snarls of the vulgar (when discomforted) are now common in journals with a higher conventional reputation than the *Daily Express*" (384). The journal with a "higher conventional reputation" that Thompson will critique appears, initially, to be *Punch*, favourite target of intellectuals everywhere. Thompson complains about *Punch*’s "capitalizing of complacency, ignorance and irresponsibility by the complacent, ignorant and irresponsible" and references a 1931 article in the *New Statesman and Nation* to help make his case (384). After a thorough excoriating of *Punch*, however, Thompson moves to his real target: he hopes his readers "will agree that the spread of the *Punch* attitude to respectable journals is a sinister development" (385).

The "respectable journal" that Thompson singles out for critique is the *New Statesman and Nation*. Once again, Thompson reiterates *Scrutiny*’s position, sometimes implicit but here explicit, on criticizing the guardians of culture: of those from whom much is expected, much will be required. Thompson acknowledges "a personal debt" to the *New Statesman and Nation* "for its influence in forming a critical habit. It has been and (more likely than any other) may yet be, a valuable journal; and one still accords it a pious but unconfident recommendation" (386). The problem, however, is the journal's failure to live up to its former reputation:

> Except as evidence, and for teaching in school what criticism isn't, its literary side is negligible: the latest intelligent review of poetry was in the funeral number of the *Nation*, February 21, 1931, though an adequate
placing of a best-selling novelist occurs about every six months, ten years too late. With monotonous regularity it is taken in by book-club currency; and one fears, at times, that it is catering for, and hence forming, the kind of taste so adequately described in the essay already quoted from its pages. It is significant that Mr. Wodehouse's publisher finds it a worthwhile paper to advertise in. (386)

The critique is clear and, by this the fourth issue of Scrutiny, already familiar: the New Statesman and Nation ought to be part of the solution, Thompson feels, but instead is part of the problem. The decline of critical standards affects not only periodicals like Punch, which no intellectual expects to have standards in the first place, but also periodicals like the New Statesman and Nation, which do enjoy an undeserved critical reputation. What Thompson does not realize or acknowledge is that the New Statesman and Nation's remit is wide enough to include "book-club currency" and P. G. Wodehouse. These were not the books upon which it devoted the majority of its attention, but neither was the New Statesman and Nation, nor any intellectual weekly, in a position to ignore the existence of bestsellers such as Wodehouse (nor was Herbert Jenkins, Wodehouse's publisher, in a position to ignore the audience of the New Statesman and Nation). There is hope for the New Statesman and Nation, Thompson argues, because "a critical journal which took its responsibilities seriously would command respect and possibly circulation" (387), though Thompson does not point out that "respect and possibly circulation" are far less capable of paying bills than Herbert Jenkins' advertising revenue. Because the New Statesman and Nation has not lived up to its critical potential, Thompson concludes, the situation is
so dire that "the innocent are corrupted" and "our more elegant weeklies' will soon be no more than political supplements to Punch" (387).

As I mentioned above, the literary side of the New Statesman and Nation in the early 1930s, with its revolving door of literary editors, was somewhat in disarray, so Thompson's diagnosis of its decline may be justified to some extent. Nevertheless, the complaints of Thompson and the other Scrutiny writers did not allow for the expressed purposes and economic realities of the weeklies. Scrutiny devoted so much attention to the weeklies because, in part, the weeklies filled a niche and serve a purpose that Scrutiny itself did not and could not. Yet the weeklies' role was not only different from Scrutiny's own, but also different from what Scrutiny wanted of them. An intellectual weekly review might publish what Scrutiny characterized as serious criticism, but it must also inform its readers about a wide variety of new books, maintain a relationship with the book trade, and carry a broad enough appeal to remain at least somewhat financially solvent. The very eclecticism that the Scrutiny contributors abhor was both a hallmark and a specific aim of the intellectual weeklies. The weeklies took seriously their responsibility to represent a range of books to a broadly intellectual public and to serve as a forum for debate and discussion about books and the book trade. As I demonstrated in Chapter Two, these responsibilities often posed potential conflicts that the weeklies were forced to negotiate; these multi-faceted responsibilities also ensured that the weeklies could never endorse a more narrow agenda like Scrutiny's. The intellectual weeklies were also much more expensive undertakings than Scrutiny. Whereas the latter had an entirely volunteer editorial and administrative staff, did not pay its contributors, and appeared only four times a year, the weeklies had to pay contributors and several full-time staff
members, as well as finance weekly publication. The intellectual weeklies were never profitable—most depended heavily on the funding of patrons and stockholders who believed in the periodicals' ideological stances and were consequently willing to help subsidize them—but in order to remain solvent, they had to court advertisers, most of whom were publishers. The writer of "The Literary Racket" complains that reviewing, even in the intellectual weeklies, is "oil for the cogs of the publishing machine" (168), yet as I argued in Chapter Three, book reviews, from the days of the *Monthly* and the *Critical* on, have always been part evaluation and part advertisement. The *Scrutiny* writers were essentially correct in their assessments of the weeklies, yet they either failed to consider that they and the weeklies did not share the same purpose or standards, or more likely, they recognized this difference as proof of the weeklies' shortcomings.

Whereas the weeklies' goal, at least in terms of their literary halves, was to act as a mediator between the book trade and the book-interested public, evaluating and advertising new books, *Scrutiny's* ideal of literary journalism was more authoritative. Intellectual periodicals were guardians of culture, in the view of *Scrutiny's* contributors; when the weeklies failed to proclaim (*Scrutiny's*) standards in criticism to their 15,000 readers, fifty-two times a year, they betrayed their authority. Although *Scrutiny's* concern with bringing genuine criticism detailing first-hand judgments to a broad audience was commendable, they failed both to explain and illustrate what kind of criticism they demanded and to deal with the economic and practical realities of such a task. *Scrutiny's* failure to understand the intellectual weeklies helps to illuminate the complex balancing act that the weeklies engaged in. The weeklies were required to negotiate the demands of their material reality and their various, often conflicting, goals to provide political
commentary, news and reviews of a range of new books, and at least occasionally, even serious criticism to an intellectual but varied audience. Because their task was so complex, especially compared with a smaller-circulation, more monologic quarterly like *Scrutiny*, the weeklies could be difficult to label and categorize—and in turn they reveal the difficulties inherent in trying to pin any periodical down with an unambiguous label.

In *Fiction and the Reading Public*, Q. D. Leavis labels periodicals with confidence. Literary periodicals, she claims, "can be divided on internal evidence into three different levels of reading public," and she notes without qualification that "it will be convenient to call these levels 'highbrow,' 'middlebrow,' and 'lowbrow'" (20). Leavis supports these distinctions with examples of her "internal evidence," such as circulation figures, price, and quality of criticism. Nowhere does she suggest that the differences between the highbrow (praised, and represented by the *Criterion*), the middlebrow (represented by the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *London Mercury*), and the lowbrow (the *Listener, Everyman*, and *John o’ London’s*) are anything but clear and objectively verifiable (20-21). Yet even in her short list of representative examples there is plenty of room for disagreement: was the *Listener* really a popular, lowbrow periodical? Do the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *London Mercury* really belong in the same category? The attempts to label periodicals, their contributors, and their readers, as I argued in Chapter Three, most often demonstrate the relatively arbitrary nature of the labeling. The differences between these periodicals were often more strongly based in perception than in "evidence" from the periodicals themselves. Q. D. Leavis's rhetoric in *Fiction and the Reading Public* required a faith in categories that she surely recognized were at least somewhat loosely defined.
In *Scrutiny*, however, she and her fellow contributors did recognize the arbitrary nature of periodical categories and definitions: Desmond MacCarthy and Harold Nicolson did not deserve to be thought of as highbrow critics, nor the *New Statesman and Nation* as a highbrow journal, because the relevant "internal evidence" did not sufficiently distinguish them from their middlebrow counterparts. For the *Scrutiny* writers, this critical relativism was unacceptable. Their entire project was predicated on a belief in timeless cultural and critical standards. When critical assessment appeared arbitrary or relative, it threatened to undermine those standards and must consequently be attacked. In some ways, the *Scrutiny* contributors were good readers of contemporary literary journalism; they recognized the arbitrariness of labels and distinctions more keenly than many other commentators. In their zeal, however, they risked painting all mainstream journalism with the same brush: if there were few substantial differences between the criticism of Desmond MacCarthy and that of Arnold Bennett, both must be equally useless. *Scrutiny*'s unwillingness to engage in dialogue or to admit much value in anything with which its contributors disagreed was frankly untenable within the journalistic marketplace and social networks. This incompatibility ultimately contributed to *Scrutiny*'s long association not with journalism but with institutionalized English studies, which, following F. R. Leavis's receipt of a Cambridge lectureship in 1936, increasingly developed in the *Scrutiny* group's own image. In the early 1930s, *Scrutiny* saw itself as an outlaw in Cambridge and in literary journalism—criticizing both, alienating both, trying to win over both. Leavis and his allies eventually came to power in Cambridge, but journalism they were never able to conquer. The social and economic realities of journalism were incompatible with what *Scrutiny* expected from it:
intellectual weeklies would never exist solely to "rally, mobilize and inform" a minority whose taste in criticism was up to Scrutiny's standards. Scrutiny's editors and contributors seemed to realize this, and after the first few years, the journal published many fewer critiques of the contemporary intellectual press. Nevertheless, in "Scrutiny: A Retrospect," F. R. Leavis returns to Scrutiny's relationship with "the modish literary world" (10), suggesting that his concern with mainstream literary journalism as a counterpoint to, or perhaps enemy of, Scrutiny never completely evaporated.
Conclusion

In "The Idea of a Literary Review," T. S. Eliot maintains that "above all the literary review [...] must protect its disinterestedness, must avoid the temptation ever to appeal to any social, political or theological prejudices" (4). Arguably, of course, a completely disinterested periodical of any kind is impossible because all texts are products of their material, social, and historical contexts. As Jason Harding demonstrates, the Criterion, the review in which and about which Eliot formulated his definition, was strongly interested in all three of the categories Eliot lists. For Eliot, then, disinterested periodical criticism remained an idealized goal rather than a demonstrable reality, much as it was for Woolf and Swinnerton, and even for Matthew Arnold. The interwar intellectual weeklies were not, by Eliot's definition, good literary reviews, for they were emphatically interested—in the political, the social, and if not so much the theological, then certainly the economic. Yet the question is whether they ever aspired to an ideal of disinterestedness—that which Scrutiny accused them of lacking—or whether they instead recognized and even embraced their interestedness. I have argued throughout this dissertation for the latter. Too often, the recognition of interestedness carries the connotation of an accusation: critics and periodicals may seem hypocritical when their inevitable interestedness belies a claim to disinterestedness. The intellectual weeklies, however, were open about their interestedness: economic, interpersonal, and intellectual. Through appreciating their approach to interestedness, perhaps we can move toward more positive ways of thinking about interestedness in our scholarship, particularly in this period where the interplay between interestedness and disinterestedness characterized so many critics and the periodicals in which they wrote. Even for writers like Eliot, Woolf,
and Swinnerton, who saw disinterestedness, at least in some respects, as a goal, it was nevertheless an ideal to be actively negotiated from a position within the relational cultural field. The intellectual weeklies, because they did not aspire to disinterestedness in the first place, were able to foreground this negotiation of relationships, and they did so primarily through an emphasis on dialogue and the balancing of the various aspects—or interests—of their role.

The eclecticism and dialogism that characterized the intellectual weeklies, perhaps especially in their approaches to books, was partly ideological—the result of a belief in the benefit of public discourse on intellectual, cultural, and political issues—but also partly practical. Practically, the intellectual weeklies had to finance weekly publication and cater to an audience that, despite being largely middle-class and well educated, had a variety of interests (in both senses of the word). These various demands were sometimes contradictory, and keeping the balance between the disparate elements of their role required the weeklies—or rather, their editors and contributors—to negotiate these demands carefully. Book reviews, for instance, needed to be eclectic and representative of both publishers' lists and readers' interests, yet in order to mark the periodicals' position of cultural authority, also selective and intellectual. And they needed to fill their allotted space and no more, on time, fifty-two times a year. Some of these reviews might also function as serious criticism, but a book review's critical function could not prevent it from also fulfilling its other duties. In all of these negotiations we see the weeklies' assignment of value to intellectual culture as a process of working out ideas rather than as the straightforward articulation of fully-formed opinions. Unlike many of the little magazines or small-circulation critical quarterlies like Scrutiny and the
*Criterion*, the intellectual weeklies rarely promoted a homogenous set of aesthetic or critical ideas; rather, they engaged in dialogue about a range of ideas. This dialogue about books, broadly defined, is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the intellectual weeklies' literary pages. The ideas debated in the pages of the weeklies were often complex and incompletely formed, and the labels used to characterize and sort them were just as frequently ambiguous. In this messiness and ambiguity was the process of valuation at work. Ideas were tried, then perhaps rejected or revised or perpetuated. The demands of conflicting ideologies were negotiated, sometimes successfully and sometimes less so.

The role of the intellectual weeklies has been analyzed in terms of individual periodicals, such as the *New Age* and the *New Statesman*, but without the context of the wider genre, we run the risk of thinking of these individual periodicals as exceptional or anomalous, rather than as representatives of a genre that occupied a particular position in the cultural landscape. Consequently, I have focused here not on comparative histories of the *Nation and Athenaeum*, the *New Statesman*, and the *Times Literary Supplement* but on these periodicals' relationships to each other, to the book trade, and to various other elements in the periodical and wider cultural field. I have attempted not only to characterize the genre of the intellectual weekly but also—and more importantly—to situate these periodicals within the publishing system of interwar Britain. From the perspective of book history and print culture studies, my work on the intellectual weeklies joins two subfields that have most often been considered separately: book trade studies and periodical studies. The intellectual weeklies' relationship with the book trade complicates the idea that the two, at least in this particular context, can be neatly
separated. As my analysis of the *Nation and Athenaeum*'s book trade discussions demonstrates, the intellectual weeklies and the book trade were imbricated in both their ideological and economic goals. A thorough appreciation of the intellectual weeklies' literary content, I argue, requires an understanding of the workings not only of interwar periodical networks but also of the interwar book trade and its marketing of serious books.

This study also has implications within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodical studies, particularly as that field is developing in literature departments. The interwar intellectual weeklies ask those of us who are literary scholars to shift our lens away from what English studies has traditionally defined as literature—fiction, poetry, and drama—and especially away from modernist literature as a central or organizing category. Certainly imaginative literature, modernist and otherwise, was an important element in the literary content of the weeklies; it should by no means be ignored or removed from discussions of these periodicals. But as I have shown, the majority of books reviewed and noticed in the intellectual weeklies were works of non-fiction: serious works of history, science, politics, and economics, as well as more ephemeral books on travel or sport. Biography figured prominently in the intellectual weeklies, a fact that has implications for studies of biography during this period. This rich variety of books and ideas in the pages of these periodicals comes into relief as we turn away from the modernist lens and find different ways to examine the interplay and negotiation of ideas and their labels in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodicals. Modernism, the cultural idea that in many ways won the day, was a work in progress, one idea among many, in the pages of the intellectual weeklies. Early twenty-
first-century modernist studies has devoted a great deal of attention to debating, redefining, and reenvisioning the label "modernism." I suggest that the dialogism of the early twentieth-century intellectual weeklies themselves may serve as a helpful model for thinking about our own scholarly dialogue about the implications and viability of the cultural labels we have inherited from this period. The idea that cultural valuation is a shifting and conflicting work in progress, heavily dependent on relationships and interestedness—an idea whose manifestation I have traced in the interwar intellectual weeklies—usefully informs the field of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies as a whole.

In this dissertation I have examined the intellectual weekly periodicals of interwar Britain as a genre whose role was to negotiate the tensions surrounding the valuation of books, and through them, of intellectual culture more broadly. This project, however, represents only a first step in the description and analysis of this genre. Further considerations might include more interwar periodicals, such as the *Spectator* and *Time and Tide*, as well as reach back to encompass earlier intellectual weeklies such as the *New Age* and the *Athenaeum*. There are also questions to be raised about how far the label of "intellectual weekly periodical" might extend: would the higher-circulation yet still book-oriented Sunday papers like the *Observer* or the *Sunday Times* count? And how might the literary concerns of intellectual weeklies be compared and contrasted with those of popular literary weeklies such as *John O'London's Weekly*, periodicals that were also tasked with bringing books to a different public? All of these questions demand further attention and research if the genre of the intellectual weekly is to become a viable focalizing lens for the study of certain early twentieth-century periodicals. Given the
tremendous contemporary influence of these periodicals, however, a more thorough understanding of their roles and their positions within the early twentieth-century cultural field is certainly desirable.

The interwar intellectual weeklies hosted debates about the ideas and products of intellectual culture, while also occupying a particular position that was itself a node in the public debate about intellectual culture. In Stefan Collini’s formulation, cultural authority results from the intersection of various cultural actions—the act of publication, for instance—and the perceptions of those actions. The interestedness of actors and perceivers—in this case, of the periodicals and those who read and commented on them—is therefore of primary importance as we attempt to understand how the intellectual weeklies functioned in the early twentieth-century periodical field. If what is at stake in the cultural field is "the power to consecrate producers or products" (Bourdieu, "Field" 42), this power is negotiated quite explicitly within the book pages of the intellectual weeklies. Because cultural authority is relational, however, it is also in constant flux, and this flux and ambiguity characterizes the intellectual weeklies. Thus, in a conversation that was simultaneously a discussion of the economic viability of intellectual culture and a marketing campaign, Hubert Henderson could argue that book-buying was a "good cause," Basil Blackwell could advocate selling books by the yard, and Elizabeth Drew could defy them both, arguing that people ought to be free to buy books or not, just as they might any other commodity. The intellectual weeklies often had surprisingly varied contributor networks; for instance, during the First World War and through the 1920s, the New Statesman saw J. C. Squire and Arnold Bennett contributing alongside Desmond MacCarthy and other writers associated with Bloomsbury, many of
them writing quite similar types of reviews. From the perspective of Frank Swinnerton, the intellectual weeklies were too elitist; from the perspective of Scrutiny, the same periodicals, or at least their literary judgments, were too popular. The intellectual weeklies were all of these things: elitist, popular, eclectic, dialogic, contradictory, and perhaps most of all, interested.
Works Consulted


Beetham, Margaret. "Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre."


"Chuck It, Smith!" *Scrutiny* 1 (December 1932): 269-270. Print.


Delap, Lucy and Maria DiCenzo. "Transatlantic Print Culture: The Anglo-American Feminist Press and Emerging 'Modernities.'" *Transatlantic Print Culture*, 1880-


*The Keynes Papers: The John Maynard Keynes Papers, King's College Cambridge.*


--- "What's Wrong with Criticism?" *Scrutiny* 1 (September 1932): 132-46. Print.


*Nation and Athenaeum*. October 1923; April 1924; October 1924; October 1925; January-December 1926; January-December 1927. Print.


