
Lise Jaillant’s edited collection *Publishing Modernist Fiction and Poetry* brings together twelve essays on a range of twentieth-century publishing houses – from B. W. Huebsch to Jonathan Cape subsidiary Cape Goliard – and their role as publishers of modernist and late modernist literature. The particular ‘gap’ in existing scholarship the collection seeks to address is the comparative dearth of critical literature on modernist book publishing, an area which Jaillant suggests has long been neglected in favor of periodical publications. While the achievements of modernist print culture scholars in the area of periodicals should not be minimized, it is true that significantly less research has been done on modernist publishing houses and that a ‘book publishing’ equivalent to the excellent *Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines* still seems like a distant dream. In the absence of just such a comprehensive history, researchers of modernist book culture who have hitherto had to painstakingly piece together information on various imprints from obscure anecdotes in publishers’ memoirs and fragmentary business papers in geographically dispersed archives will welcome the twelve concise and informative essays in this collection.

The list of publishers covered in the collection’s three chronologically ordered sections ‘Pioneers’, ‘Fine Books’ and ‘Publishing Modernism after the Second World War’ contains many familiar names – Huebsch, Knopf, Faber & Faber, etc. – as well as some less familiar ones. In the first category, Claire Battershill’s chapter on the Hogarth Press and Joshua Kotin’s contribution on Shakespeare and Company stand out as particularly insightful, fresh treatments of two well-known modernist publishing outfits in the light of recent archival research. In the latter category, Mercedes Aguirre’s essay on the Hours Press provides us with a long-overdue account of Nancy Cunard’s printing venture as a significant ‘bridge between French-based avant-garde circles and Anglophone writers and audiences’ (136). As a collection of short portraits of the various Anglo-American book publishers associated with modernist literature from the 1910s to the 1960s, *Publishing Modernist Fiction and Poetry* is a unique and useful resource for researchers and students interested in the material history of modernism.
Beyond providing a historical overview, however, the collection also raises important theoretical questions about the emerging field of scholarship that seeks to incorporate insights from book and publishing history into a critical consideration of modernist literary culture. Conceding that ‘[u]nlike Victorianists, modernist scholars seldom go to book history conferences’ and ‘seldom try to share [their] research with members of SHARP […] and other organisations,’ (3) Jaillant indicates that the two spheres of scholarly endeavour are not as well integrated as they could be. Despite some highly successful crossover initiatives such as the Modernist Archives Publishing Project, it seems that much remains to be done to ‘[bridge] the gap between modernism and book history’ (3-4). For researchers who (like myself) work on the intersection between the two disciplines, the question of what scholars of literary modernism can learn from book studies researchers - and vice versa - is a crucial one.

‘Canonical modernist texts did not appear in isolation, safely preserved from the contamination of mainstream culture,’ (3) writes Jaillant in her introduction, and the essays collected in *Publishing Modernist Fiction and Poetry* demonstrate that a book studies approach can offer scholars of modernism access to this broader picture. By adopting a historical perspective which re-inserts modernist texts into the contemporary mess of competing literary voices and commercial interests, we can gain a better understanding of the decisions, negotiations and value-judgements that led to the popularisation of modernist literature on the one hand and its canonisation on the other. Greg Barnhisel’s chapter on publisher James Laughlin and his New Directions imprint does a particularly excellent job at investigating the modernist canon not as a fact but as a process. Examining how Laughlin’s targeted use of paratextual material served to ‘bleach the political radicalism out of modernism, and particularly out of Pound, by framing the poetry’s accomplishments primarily in formal terms,’ Barnhisel presents a convincing case for the key role this publisher’s navigation of the book market played in modernist canon formation.

Not all essays in the collection are as successful at striking the balance between book historical analysis and cultural criticism. As scholars of modernist book history, we are interested in understanding what motivates the publishers of modernist literature, including their commercial motivations. However, our enquiry must not end there. If we investigate the marketing of a modernist novel or poetry collection as a commercial product, our questioning
should never stop at ‘how?’ but must always extend to ‘why?’ or ‘what does this mean for the text and its function within the wider cultural arena?’ Some contributions to the collection which are concerned more specifically with the sale and marketing of modernist literature at times omit this additional step, resulting in discussions of the modernist book as a commodity that can be somewhat lacking in critical depth.

By contrast, Matthew Sperling’s chapter on Jonathan Cape subsidiary Cape Goliard, founded as a ‘little press within a major publishing house,’ (quoted in Jaillant, 236) provides a perceptive account of how the interests of avant-garde poetry and the exigencies of trade publishing may clash. Confronted with yet another delay in the publication of his Kitchen Poems and worried that, if issued too late, his work might lose its ‘polemic & topical relevance,’ Cape Goliard author J. H. Prynne wrote a seething letter to the managing director of Cape, stating: ‘I am afraid that I remain entirely unconvinced over the need for a five month production delay in the printing of what is a mere pamphlet and which could be run off by a hardworking printer in seven days flat’ (quoted in Jaillant, 242). The primary instigator and director of the Cape Goliard imprint, Nathaniel Tarn, also became increasingly disillusioned with the fact that ‘all the reasons for setting up a little press in the first place are being sacrificed to the considerations which govern big-publishing,’ and, quoting poet-printer Tom Raworth, he eventually arrived at the following conclusion regarding his little-press big-publishing experiment: ‘lamb and tiger do not mix’ (quoted in Jaillaint, 245).

Modernist studies and book history do mix, as Publishing Modernist Fiction and Poetry shows – but the success of the mix depends on careful choices regarding the investigative questions pursued and the framing of the results of our interdisciplinary research.

Evi Heinz*, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität (WWU) Münster

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