In short, the psychoanalytic clinic has been a most suggestive and provocative source of literary experiment. Despite several attempts to make Freud and Marx companion revolutionists, their influence has been in all but a few cases diverse; the appeals have been to different kinds of aesthetic temperament. Marx has challenged for the most part the social conscience of the artist—has made him self-conscious and a little embarrassed about his claims to uniqueness in a world demanding selfless co-operation. Freud has suggested a means of insuring the individualism of the artist.

More than anything else, the artist has been frightened by the imminent loss of his aesthetic prerogatives. The old issue of art versus propaganda has recurred many times in the last few years. The writers who grew up in the twenties are a bit surprised and not a little displeased by the appeals of Van Wyck Brooks for a “primary literature”; they see in them a revival of the “trimmed lamp” days, when the artist bowed down reverently before the sanctity of sweetness and light. They prefer to have their attitudes punctuated by irreverence and revolt. Principally, they regard any kind of conformity with suspicion, even that accorded to the “new society” which Marxist doctrine promises. Thus the interest in psychoanalysis gave a few writers of the thirties some distraction from Marxist preoccupations.

It is natural enough that avant-garde literature should have its own sponsors and apologists. Criticism in the little magazines is a very lively part of their history. In many cases, it is a defense of the literature published in this month’s issue, or an anticipation of what will probably be published in next month’s issue. It is generally an appraisal of work in the making or just recently completed. More than that, avant-garde criticism is an explanation by the artists themselves of what they are doing, or contemplating. We can expect as little unity or pattern in this kind of criticism as we have found in experimental writing. The appearance, in transition, of essays in “examination” of Joyce’s “Work in Progress” before that work had been completed is certainly an excellent example of the way avant-garde criticism works. While much of conservative criticism looks to the past (the recent or classical past) for guidance, and strives for a unity in its critical system, criticism in the little magazines is more inclined to look upon the immediate present, or to search the future for critical perceptions. These are the general differences; and, in a sense, they remove advance guard criticism from the danger of its being incorporated into any academic history of criticism.

Much of the literary criticism of the little magazines is to be found in their editorial columns; indeed, the idea of an editorial accompaniment to literature in the making is an interesting innovation in the history of criticism. We may be quite sure that a study of avant-garde criticism will have to take seriously into account the variety of editorial statements, manifestoes, and proclamations which form so interesting a part of little magazine history. We have not so much to determine the accuracy of critical appraisal of past literature as we have to judge
the relationship between critical pronouncement and literary product. The editorial may speak positively of a new literary development, but that development is not always evident in the pages of the magazine. On the other hand, the editorial often acts in the role of critical guide to a group of reader-sightseers, who wish to know what is happening in strange new lands and are grateful for any Baedeker supplement their editors may supply.

It is possible to suggest several types of criticism in the little magazines: there are the editorial “barkers” who announce the wonders to be found inside the tent and assure you that they are worth your patience and interest. There are editor-critics who have founded their magazines for the purpose of telling their readers that the world is going this way or that, and that a new literature must be found to celebrate tendencies or to hasten the advent of a new dispensation. A third type of critical attitude we may call the eclectic—an attitude which exhibits a smiling generosity to many types of literary novelty but remains discreetly noncommittal about their eventual worth. Finally, there is the magazine which is made in the editor’s own image (and often at his own expense), designed to accommodate his own writings and the writings of those select and fortunate few who may agree with him sufficiently to supply appendix and footnote to the text.

Above all, criticism in the little magazines has been a vigorous defense of what was happening in avant-garde writing. We have our own critical guides on the way, and have abandoned the thought of waiting for time to offer a lovely perspective or for scholar-critics to furnish a historical summary or a scientific classification. Further, avant-gardist criticism has been vitally interested in the formal aspects of literature. Though there are many efforts to apply historical and biographical instruments of interpretation to literature, the predominating note has been indicated by formal analysis and explication. This is probably due to the presence of many men who have acted in the dual role of artist-critic. The idea that an artist is best equipped to explain his own work may not always lead to satisfactory results; but it has certainly succeeded in giving the world more statements and announcements of purpose than has ever been the case in previous literary history.

One other interesting service is performed by criticism in the little magazines: here we discover the writers of our time actually growing; critical statements by them are very important as sections of their intellectual autobiographies. Next to the formal innovations which avant-gardists have forced upon our attention, the most interesting fact about these magazines is their glimpses and insights into the intellectual career and the psychological constitution of their contributors. The important members of the avant-garde have been very generous in this matter. If Emerson and Thoreau had had a way of publishing their daily observations, the remarks in their journals, they would have enjoyed a privilege similar to that possessed by modern writers. There are two fashions in which these daily speculations have found their way to publication: a magazine like The Adelphi or The Criterion has published regularly these observations, and the files of those magazines furnish a running account of the points of view of their principal intellectual sponsors; on the other hand, little magazines, anxious for the fame and backing of an avant-gardist who has already had his apprenticeship, are often glad to print anything which he is gracious enough to send them. The remarks of Ezra Pound on all aspects of civilization, the arts, and the soul are scattered in a hundred little magazines; William Carlos Williams, Norman Macleod, Henry Miller, and other advance guard celebrities also make numerous appearances in a variety of little magazines.

Before we examine a few of the little magazines devoted specifically or largely to critical matters, we might look briefly at some representative editorial statements. These do not so much give an orderly outline of avant-garde criticism as they furnish an insight into editorial temperament. The first of them is by Harriet Monroe and demonstrates her editorial acumen, her steady but studied willingness to give new writing its day and to clear the way of conservative impediments to its reception. “The world which laughs at the experimenter in verse,” says Miss Monroe in the second issue of Poetry, “walks negligently through our streets, and goes seriously, even reverently, to the annual exhibitions in our cities, examining hundreds of pictures and statues without expecting even the prize-winners to be masterpieces.”

Quite without great critical significance, but representative of the editorial ambitions of many minor little magazines is this announcement in the first issue of The Minaret: “We are not Cubists, Futurists, or Imagists. We do not pretend to stand for the past or future, but for the present. We have a single aim, and that is to produce a magazine that we hope will appeal to those who are fond of good literature. In a word, we are Americans interested in the literature of our own country, but we believe that by publishing in this magazine, in the

1 “The Open Door,” Poetry, 1, 63 (November 1912).
future, translations of the modern French and German poets, we are enriching our own literature."
More aggressive, and certainly more in keeping with little magazine editorial manners, is this announcement by William Carlos Williams in the first issue of the earlier Contact:
The magazine, says Williams, is "issued in the conviction that art which attains is indigenous of experience and relations, and that the artist works to express perceptions rather than to attain standards of achievement; however much information and past art may have served to clarify his perceptions and sophisticate his comprehensions, there will be no standard by which his work shall be adjudged. . . . We are here because of our faith in the existence of native artists who are capable of having, comprehending and recording extraordinary experience."

One editorial attitude which is frequently demonstrated in the little magazines is an invitation to "the best new writing," regardless of its popularity or its standing in conventional literary circles. This policy is announced in dozens of little magazines. In a sense it argues no policy at all, but it encourages the publication of unknowns who might otherwise not see the light of print. Such is the avowed attitude of The Double Dealer, which, says its editors, "is entering upon its career with no policy whatever but that of printing the very best material it can procure, regardless of popular appeal, moral or immoral standards, conventional or unconventional technique, new theme or old." Sometimes this attitude is merely amiably generous; at other times it is a shrewd recognition of the need for respecting an artist's individuality and for not interfering with his work—certainly an attitude important to the history of little magazines. Ernest J. Walsh's This Quarter believed substantially in this "hands off" policy; and the poetry magazine The Measure practiced it in an interesting way by changing its editors each quarter. As if to underline this policy, Maxwell Anderson, The Measure's first editor, speaks of the poet's individuality: "Good work is not the product of a school, not a mere blend, but the output of a keen, egotistical, independent intelligence backed by an extraordinary surcharge of emotion. . . . Without a distinct, fighting individuality the poet is indeed lost."

Again we find the policy of noninterference with contributors announced in Vincent Starrett's The Wave, which, says Starrett, does not believe in imposing rules upon writers. "Excellence of form and adequacy of treatment, therefore, are the only tests, and even these tentative 'rules' are not inelastic. In short, we shall print what pleases us, hoping that it will please you."
Policy for many of these magazines resides in the literature printed in their pages; it is "a living, dynamic thing," says Edwin Seaver in 1924. "It is the spirit of the magazine, not a label. It is constantly changing, constantly renewing itself."

Implicit in all of these comments is the desire to avoid the sins of the commercial magazines, to make available the pages of little magazines to their writers with as little interference as possible. It is not mere generous passivity which governs these editorial statements; these magazines do not want to publish anything, regardless of worth, but they certainly refuse to stand in the way of work which is interesting and valuable but contrary to conservative demands. One of the ideas governing editorial sentiment in the little magazines is the assumption that the general reading public is not always anxious to receive new and strange writing; the public wants "hardware, tinsel, and cheese—classified goods," says The Pilgrim's Almanach. "If your way of expressing yourself fails to fall in line with the classified requirements of the business—out you go!"

But these quotations suggest only one kind of critical attitude—one central to the service a little magazine performs in literary history, it is true; but not exclusive or unique. The ardent, positive editorial usage to which such vigorous exponents of their ideas as Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound put their magazines affords an insight into another type. Lewis' several magazines—Blast, The Enemy, Tyro—existed mainly for the purpose of allowing their editor to expound and expand his own points of view. So also were the "one-man" magazines of Michael Monahan and Guido Bruno, in the second decade of the century. In other words, little magazines may well announce, not so much a policy as a personality; and the critical importance of this type of magazine can be measured in terms of the qualities and defects of that personality. When Lewis speaks of The Enemy as sponsoring "merely a person; a solitary outlaw," he is accepting the critical responsibility as well as enjoying the prerogatives of single sponsorship. Similarly, Pound's editorial statements in The Exile are to be judged in terms of person and not of school. The privilege and the responsibility are both his.

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* Editorial, The Minaret, 1, cover (November 1915).
* Editorial, Contact, 5, 1 (December 1920).
* Editorial, The Double Dealer, 1, 83 (March 1921).
* Editorial, The Wave, 1, 42 (January 1922).
* "'Why 1924?" The Exile, 1, 33 (July 1924).
But criticism in the little magazines is not to be found exclusively in their editorials. The critical articles which supplement original writing are usually comments upon them, announcements of new critical principles by which the new writing might be judged, or a searching into such fragments of past literature which might be said, by accident or by cultural coincidence, to have afforded a haphazard precedent for contemporary experiment. In the little magazines avowedly interested in criticism itself, two characteristics may be noted: an interest in formal aesthetic questions and in careful, close aesthetic analysis; and a concern over cultural synthesis, usually based upon principles derived from a study of the arts. These two tendencies are often observed together in one magazine. The habit of minute analysis of literature would seem at first glance to argue a retreat from larger and more important issues, with which literature should be linked, in the opinion of many critics. But these critics seem to overlook the fact that intensive analysis of literature may not be an “escapist” device at all. Certainly the critical interest in formal analysis, exclusive of biographic or moral influences, has a purpose quite other than that of escaping responsibility or making literature an idle preoccupation for cultural aristocrats. There are two motives for this kind of analysis: to free literature from its minor position as being mere decoration for large, loose moral and social generalizations; and to consider literary language, poetic language in particular, from the point of view of its being a new way of organizing experience—in short, another kind of knowledge. Literary criticism of this sort comes close to being an appendix to epistemology; but its preoccupation with problems of knowing ought not to surprise us, for we have always recognized in poetry a certain daring exercise of the imagination, which distinguishes itself from the reason by its habits and its product as well. The “poetic way of saying,” as I. A. Richards has abundantly proved, demands an appreciation of paradox and ambiguity, characteristics of language which are generally avoided by logicians and monists alike.

Certain criticism, therefore, has confined itself to the examination of literature as a way of knowing, a form of intellectual and imagina
tive organization of experience, whose results are richly different from those of other modes. This critical manner does not argue an aristocracy of taste or an exclusiveness of manner, but a fresh view of literature—or, rather, a view so very obvious that it has been overlooked in the scramble for more “vital” and more dubious justifications for literature. Much of the critical discussion associated with this development has gone on in magazines only incidentally related to little magazine history: such “fellow travelers” of avant-gardism as The Kenyon Review, The Southern Review, and The Sewanee Review. The interest has been taken up by the academic mind, as Alfred Kazin has charged. But it is the academic mind with a difference. Most of the university men who discuss “the new criticism” have been or are poets who are interested in their art from a theoretical point of view as well; their connection with universities is not to be condemned but applauded.

The general development of avant-garde criticism can be described in some such way as this: first of all, the editorial sponsors of avant-garde literature are jealous of the distinction which a writer possesses and anxious that he retain his independence of popular taste and of any rigid controls over his expression. The little magazines act, therefore, as a means of encouragement, and their policy is generously and bravely eclectic. Exceptions to this generalization occur in the “one-man” magazines, in magazines partially or totally committed to political or social doctrines, and in magazines whose aims are cultural synthesis rather than aesthetic freedom. Such was the state of avant-gardism in the twenties. In the thirties there are three types of critical attitude; ordinarily each of them is immediately obvious, both in the editorial pages and in the contributions themselves. The first of these represents a partial or total submission to Marxist political doctrine. We have already examined the effect of this point of view upon its followers. The second is marked by a preoccupation with literary form and by an attempt to establish a modern aesthetic—chiefly in the nature of poetic theory to accompany poetic practice. The third and last of these critical developments is an outgrowth of the critical eclecticism of the twenties, but it is also an expansion of it: it is marked by a broad (and not always a discriminating) tolerance of avant-garde materials, wherever they may be found, an attempt to evaluate these materials pari passu, and an interest in such European developments in literature as seem generally to be in sympathy with avant-gardist aims. The character of this eclecticism is different from that of the twenties in at least this respect: it is less interested in novelty for its own sake, less enthusiastic about unknowns, more selective and more anxious to find the “classics” of avant-gardism (the paradox in this last phrase is unavoidable; the critical eclectics of the thirties were interested in “monuments” of contemporary literature) and to publish them. In the remaining pages of this chapter, we shall look at several critical and eclectic magazines close up, as a means of elaborating upon what we have said.
The Dial is an ancient and honorable name in American magazine annals. A group headed by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Margaret Fuller established the first Dial in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1840. It was a critical magazine that never drew over three hundred subscribers. In the best little magazine style, it fought for a spiritual rather than a commercial ideal, preferring to die in 1844 rather than sacrifice its transcendental philosophy. Dial No. 1 was the father of the American little magazine.

In the year 1880 a Chicago publisher, Francis F. Browne, revived the name Dial, and until 1916 there was published in Chicago a sedate, critical fortnightly review which insisted that it was the legitimate son of Emerson’s Dial; it reviewed books promptly and often competently, but it lacked the imagination and fire of the transcendental periodical. Not until Martyn Johnson became president and owner of the magazine in 1916 was there a change from an academic and imitative monthly to a serious critical review. After a period during which C. J. Masseck was editor, Johnson hit upon George Bernard Donlin for the job. Donlin assembled a progressive staff and a list of contributing editors that included Conrad Aiken, Randolph Bourne, Padraic Colum, Van Wyck Brooks, and John Macy. The magazine was moved from Chicago to New York where, late in 1918, it was again revamped under the editorial leadership of Donlin, Harold Stearns, Scofield Thayer, Clarence Britten, John Dewey, Thorstein Veblen, and Helen Marot. Under them The Dial became an organ of liberal opinion, in direct competition with The Nation and The New Republic. With a contributors’ list that included Harold J. Laski, Charles Beard, Robert Morris Lovett, and Gilbert Seldes, it was soon being distributed to over ten thousand persons. But by 1919 the periodical was in trouble; quarrels among members of the staff and financial difficulties bedeviled Johnson, who, after exhausting himself by dining out with people from whom he vainly tried to solicit money in exchange for Dial stock, was glad to sell out to Scofield Thayer and Dr. J. S. Watson, Jr.

The Martyn Johnson Dial had sponsored the sort of criticism that was advanced by The Seven Arts group. It was a liberal criticism, a criticism that diligently explored the American literary heritage, ancient and contemporary, for its ideas, attitudes, and philosophies. It was not criticism of literature from an aesthetic or technical approach at all, but simply an estimate of American thought as revealed in literature.

The purpose was to examine the national literary accumulation, to estimate it from a liberal point of view, to suggest what should be retained and what should be discarded. In short, the purpose was to discover the foundation on which to construct the American future. This critical approach, represented by the early writings of such men as Waldo Frank, Van Wyck Brooks, and Randolph Bourne, was both valuable and necessary, and its aim of liberalizing and humanizing the American outlook was largely accomplished. But the approach did not add much to our comprehension of art as such, of the qualities that distinguish art from abstract expository discourse. This criticism made little attempt to explain either the nature of the artistic structure or the value of such a structure to the human mind as a satisfying and meaningful experience. The methods and aims of this insurgent group of Americanizers, though they were to be frequently announced throughout the twenties and early thirties in Mencken’s American Mercury, by 1920 had already become unpopular with certain younger critics. These younger men were to find the new Dial of Watson and Thayer much more congenial to their concept of the proper function of a literary critic than the older Dial had been.

The critics who gravitated to the new Dial did not care to think of literature as primarily valuable for its expression of ideas or philosophies, though they were willing to admit that such might be one of its associate functions. They believed that art is satisfying and meaningful primarily as form, as a concrete and vivid organization of experience. They conceived it to be their main responsibility, therefore, to discover and clarify the texture and structure of a work—to indicate its artistic form. This method of close textual reading had long been popular in France, where it was first stated and to an extent practiced by both Taine and Sainte-Beuve. Remy de Gourmont had elaborated the method of detailed explication, and it was he more than anyone else who inspired both Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, the first American practitioners of the French approach.

Both Pound and Eliot printed much of their early criticism in The Dial. They, along with Kenneth Burke, Yvor Winters, and several other only slightly less brilliant men, introduced a new criticism to America—a criticism of learning and insight, and a criticism that kept a close eye on the organization of the work under discussion. Today, looking back upon the nine years of Dial activity, one might say that America learned from The Dial critics more about the artistic process...
and more about the value of art as experience than it had learned during our entire previous history.

Though The Dial's criticism stressed the analysis of technique and structure, it did not travel as far toward a detailed and extended structural examination as did the work of the later "new critics" of literature. Nor were The Dial writers as sternly objective as the structuralists of the next decade. For frequently The Dial group insisted on asserting their personal responses to the artistic work, and in some cases, as with Marianne Moore and Charles K. Trueblood, the personal response became heavily subjective and impressionistic—became more a revelation of personal taste and sensibilities than an objective analysis of form. To the extent that The Dial critics gave reign to their subjective responses they were impressionists; to the extent that their impressionism was circumscribed by comments on form and technique they were objectivists. Perhaps the typical Dial critic is best seen as a member of a transitional group that stands halfway between the Huneker type of intelligent impressionist and the objective analyst who later developed and practiced his method in the pages of The Hound and Horn and The Southern Review.

One other point about The Dial's criticism remains to be noted, and it is a point that should be stressed in reference to The Hound and Horn, The Symposium, and many of the critical little magazines of the thirties and forties. That is, their intense concern with all forms of experimentalism, and their willingness to explore beyond our national boundaries in search of it. The Dial and most of our critical reviews that followed it exhibited a generous and discriminating international and cosmopolitan outlook, a fact that sets them in radical opposition to the main body of nineteenth and early twentieth century American criticism.

III

According to Dr. Watson, The Dial might have steered quite a different course, had it not been for Randolph Bourne's death. "When Thayer first laid plans for the magazine it was his intention, in which I concurred, to divide the magazine into two sections, literary and political. As his political editor he selected Randolph Bourne, for whom he felt great admiration. Bourne agreed to take full charge of this department. However Bourne's death in the second winter of the influenza epidemic put an end to the scheme. Certainly there were other authorities in this field, but none was quite what Thayer wanted. When we finally obtained control of the Dial some months later we agreed to limit ourselves to literary, artistic, and philosophical matter." Yet it happened that one of the most distinguished critical reviews of our time made its initial appearance in January 1920, published from New York.

Scofield Thayer and Dr. Watson were wealthy and had a keen interest in and understanding of what was happening in American and European letters. They were both determined to print a magazine for writers and art rather than for circulation and advertising, both of which they might easily have obtained. For the circulation leaped from the 8,000 of the Johnson Dial to around 18,000 during the first four years of the Watson-Thayer regime. But as the circulation grew larger, the yearly deficit increased, reaching $50,000 during two of these years. Advertising might have been solicited, but it was apparent, as Dr. Watson points out, that that would have interfered with the magazine's proper function. Though advertisements were accepted, they were not regarded as a sustaining source of income. And so the circulation was allowed to fall to its natural level, varying between two and four thousand during the last five years.

Few persons know much about Dr. Watson. He is a shy, retiring man, who, through his generosity, has had a considerable part in the encouragement of modern literature. He was more than president of the magazine. Scofield Thayer officially edited The Dial until early in 1925, and Marianne Moore thereafter; but Watson actually was a co-editor from beginning to end, though Miss Moore took much of the responsibility after April 1925. Born in 1894, Watson graduated from Harvard in 1916, after which he obtained an M.D. He became an editorial reader for the Browne Dial in 1910. In 1918 he joined with Thayer to support James Joyce and The Little Review in their exciting fight with the censor over the right to print Ulysses. He appeared anonymously or under the pseudonym of "W. C. Blum" in The Dial, writing astute book reviews, translating A Season in Hell, or discussing Rimbaud "with a quietness amounting to scandal." Until 1924 Watson and Thayer, along with their professional managing editors and

10 The Dial was a periodical of distinguished, if not elaborate, appearance, usually of about 100 well printed and well designed pages, decorously clad in a tan coverpiece, and selling for $5.00 a year.
able secretaries, Eleanor Minne and Sophia Wittenberg (who later married Lewis Mumford), conducted much of the magazine’s business: reading manuscripts, conferring with contributors, overseeing the burdensome mechanical details connected with the make-up and printing. In 1925 Watson moved to Rochester, New York, where he has since lived, working at medicine and experimenting with motion pictures, at least three of which, The Fall of the House of Usher, Lot in Sodom, and Highlights and Shadows, have elicited much favorable comment.13

Even less of Thayer is known than of Watson. During the past ten years Thayer has become a half-legendary memory around New York; everyone who knew him has a private version of his personality and it is next to impossible to estimate the truth from the contradictory reports. He was born apparently in 1890 and graduated from Harvard in 1912 (dates not verified). As we have seen, he helped to reorganize the Johnson Dial into a magazine of liberal opinion, and he shared with Dr. Watson much of the responsibility during the first four years of the later review. He contributed book reviews, a few critical articles, and some estimable verse (which in 1925 was about to be published in book form but unfortunately never appeared) to his periodical;11 and he provided the exciting German color reproductions of the magazine’s frontispieces, which “in themselves justify Hugo von Hofmannsthal’s feeling that The Dial was ‘just the contrary of blasté and rountiner.’”12 Thayer suffered a nervous and physical breakdown in 1925 and has never completely recovered.13

Marianne Moore has honored Watson and Thayer with a gracious tribute in her charming reminiscences of The Dial that appeared recently in Life and Letters Today.14 She says: “Above all, for an aesthetically inflexible morality against ‘the nearly good enough’; for non-exploiting helpfulness to art and the artist, for living their own doctrine that ‘the love of letters knows no frontiers,’ Scofield Thayer and Dr. Watson stand foremost....”15

Marianne Moore was the real editor from April 1925 until the end, according to Dr. Watson. According to Miss Moore, Dr. Watson was

13 This information has been provided in letters from J. S. Watson (May 25, 1943) and Marianne Moore (August 16, 1939) to Charles Allen (unpublished).
17 Part I in the December 1940 issue, pp. 175-83; Part II in the January 1941 issue, pp. 3-9.
18 Ibid., Part II, p. 8.

the real editor, though he was in Rochester most of the time. The reader can decide for himself whom he wishes to call editor. Several persons who were associated with the magazine share our opinion that Miss Moore was the actual editor, though Watson certainly helped in passing judgment on the manuscripts. After graduating from Bryn Mawr, Miss Moore taught in the Carlisle Indian School and later was an assistant in the New York Public Library. Alfred Kreymborg was her first American discoverer and sponsored her verse in his Globe and Others. By the early twenties she had firmly established herself as a leader of the younger generation of experimental poets. She received The Dial Award in 1924, and a few months later was persuaded to join the magazine. She agreed with the “understanding that she was to be in the office only in the mornings.”18

These three, Watson, Thayer, and Miss Moore, were the main pilots of The Dial. They were assisted editorially, in the following order, by Stewart Mitchell, Gilbert Seldes, Alyse Gregory (who married Llewelyn Powys), Kenneth Burke (who in 1927 followed Paul Rosenfeld as Dial music critic), and Ellen Thayer (Scofield’s cousin), all of whom worked at one time or another in the capacity of managing or assistant editor. Seldes and Burke were on several occasions in sole charge of the magazine.

Miss Moore has told us a little about the atmosphere in which these people worked. “There was for us of the staff a constant atmosphere of excited triumph—interiorly, whatever the impression outside; and from Editor or Publisher a natural firewofk of little parenthetic wit too good to print—implying that effusius is not chary of surplus.”19 These pleasant exchanges took place in the Greenwich Village Dial home, which Miss Moore describes for us: “I think of the compacted pleasantness of those days at 152 West 13th Street, and the three story brick building with carpeted stairs, fireplace and white mantelpiece rooms, business office in the first storey front parlour, and of the plain gold-leaf block letters, The Dial, on the windows to the right of the brown stone steps leading to the front door.”20 Outside on the street the flower-crier and the fish peddler sang their wares. Of the fish man Kenneth Burke remarked: “I think if he stopped to sell a fish my heart would skip a beat.”21

The Dial announced itself as a magazine interested in the best of

20 Ibid., pp. 175-76.
21 Ibid., p. 176.
European and American art, experimental and conventional. That was the pronouncement, and it has been unreservedly accepted by several commentators. The Dial, like Broom, was experimentalist, despite work from the pens of Thomas Mann, Maxim Gorki, Gerhardt Hauptmann, Bertrand Russell and George Saintsbury (who would send his criticism only to The Dial among American magazines), none of whom were particularly conventional, for that matter. That the review had its definite inclination, that it did not really believe in the diffuse eclecticism it preached is not difficult to prove.

For there were The Dial Awards, given once a year from 1921 to 1929, to the American writers whom Watson and Thayer believed to be making significant contributions to our literature. These awards, not to be thought of as prizes such as the yearly competitive Poetry prizes, were given “to afford the recipient an opportunity to do what he wishes and out of that to enrich and develop his work.” Of course the awards were given to those writers who most nearly expressed the philosophy and aesthetics of the editors. We can look at the complete list and see what kind of experimentation pleased The Dial: for 1921 Sherwood Anderson, for 1922 T. S. Eliot, for 1923 Van Wyck Brooks, for 1924 Marianne Moore, for 1925 E. E. Cummings, for 1926 William Carlos Williams, for 1927 Ezra Pound, and for 1928 Kenneth Burke. There is a remarkable consistency of selection indicated here. These persons were all experimentalists, and most of them either were Others contributors or might easily have been. If this is not proof enough of the magazine’s literary predilections, one can convince himself further by leafing through the volumes and noticing the great amount of space given to experimentalists other than the ones just mentioned, space given to writers such as Malcolm Cowley, Glenway Wescott, Conrad Aiken, Hart Crane, Yvor Winters, Jean Toomer, Paul Valéry, and Waldo Frank, to name only a few.

Of course the experimentalists did not completely dominate the periodical. One need only remember the appearances of such men as George Moore, Ivan Bunin, Anatole France, Logan Pearsall Smith, Gerhardt Hauptmann, and George Santayana—all of whom followed more conservative literary traditions than the main body of contributors. It was the printing of these more established men that aroused the ire of the editors of other experimental little magazines. The Hound and Horn editors in 1927 saw a betraying of the cause and accused The Dial of being old and tired. Undoubtedly the tone of the magazine did become more conservative with age, but until the end it was safely in the advance guard ranks.

We have mentioned in passing a few of the writers from whom the periodical secured its material. Let us glance a little more closely at the actual contents. The magazine knew what it wished to do from the very beginning; it knew the writing it wanted and actively sought its writers, paying at the rate of 2 cents a word for prose, $20 a page for verse. Though the contributors were not always the same, a surprisingly large number who published in the first year published in the years that followed.

The Dial was primarily a critical review, and the proportion of criticism to poetry and fiction rarely varied, with over three-quarters of every issue devoted to critical essays, book reviews, art, music, and theater commentary. The remaining quarter was given to stories, poems, and art reproduction. An analysis of any one year, therefore, will afford a fairly accurate insight into the history of the magazine.

We may select 1920 for a sampling, beginning with criticism and reviewing. In 1920, as in later years, the editors were determined to print intelligent, critical analyses of living or recent writers and artists; and so we find such essays as Charles K. Trueblood’s on Edith Wharton; Arthur Symons’ study of Thomas Hardy; E. E. Cummings on Gaston Lachaise; and Van Wyck Brooks on Mark Twain’s humor and satire. Besides the essays on specific writers and artists, there were critical explorations of such broad literary and aesthetic subjects as “The Structure of Chinese Poetry,” by John Gould Fletcher; “Introducing Modern Art,” by Henry McBride; “Modern Poetry,” by Maxwell Bodenheim. Books, hundreds of them, were reviewed, always competently, often brilliantly, by such writers as Robert Morriss Lovett, Henry McBride, Conrad Aiken, Babette Deutsch, Charles K. Trueblood, E. E. Cummings, Louis Untermeyer, Gilbert Seldes, Deems Taylor, Lincoln MacVeagh (who established the Dial Press, which had no direct connection with the periodical), and Paul Rosenfeld.

During the first year about forty poems were printed, the usual average for the following years. They were written by people who were frequently published later: Evelyn Scott, Conrad Aiken, Maxwell Bodenheim, Alfred Kreymborg, Marianne Moore, E. E. Cummings, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, Witter Bynner, Elizabeth J. Coatsworth, Djuana Barnes, and Carl Sandburg.

The stories, as always, were few. There were “Crumbled Blossoms,” by Arthur Schnitzler; “The Door of the Trap” and “The Triumph of

As many reproductions of line drawings, paintings, water colors, and sculptures were offered as there were poems. We find the work of Charles Demuth, E. E. Cummings, Charles Burchfield, Gaston Lachaise, Boardman Robinson, and many others reproduced for 1920.

Miss Moore has observed that The Dial was “never embarrassed by an over-abundance of able fiction.” Sherwood Anderson, D. H. Lawrence, Kenneth Burke, Jean Toomer, A. E. Coppard, Konrad Bercovici, Manuel Komroff, Katherine Mansfield, Albert Halper, Louis Zukofsky, and Llewelyn Powys were the fictionalists who appeared most frequently. D. H. Lawrence found that The Dial was the only English or American periodical consistently enthusiastic about his work, and many of his stories and poems appeared between 1921 and 1929. Noteworthy in 1924 was Thomas Mann’s Death in Venice. Edward J. O’Brien judged 100 per cent of the 125 stories printed in the magazine to be distinctive.


Many reproductions of modern painting, drawing, and sculpture were presented, especially the work of Gaston Lachaise, Burchfield, John Marin, Rockwell Kent, Picasso, David Edstrom, Giorgio de Chirico, Henri Rousseau, Archipenko, Georg Kolbe, Matisse, Brancusi, Andre Derain, Carl Hofer, Mailol, Epstein, Mestrovic, Adolph Dehn, Marie Laurencin, Paul Manship, E. E. Cummings, and Modigliani. Not only were reproductions printed, mostly in black and white, a few in color, but the review carried a discriminating monthly art commentary, written by Henry McBride. In addition, there were many articles on the fine arts by Thomas Craven, Paul Rosenfeld, and other critics. The Dial certainly served modern art well, with more knowledge and taste than any other little magazine of its day.

The fighting, alert book review section was also the best of its time; it was led by such people as Gilbert Seldes, Malcolm Cowley, Marianne Moore, Lisle Bell, Paul Rosenfield, Kenneth Burke, Henry McBride, George Saintsbury, T. S. Eliot, Robert Morss Lovett, Philip Littell, John Cowper Powys, Llewelyn Powys, Dr. Watson, and Scofield Thayer. Some of the reviews by these people were unsigned, particularly many of those by Bell, Moore, Thayer, and Watson. More than once the sharp honesty of the criticism vexed a publisher or author, as is indicated by the following sentences from a letter of reply that Kenneth Burke wrote to an irate advertising manager who had complained of a tardy and unfavorable notice. “Why not give The Dial credit. As you have said, under our silence the book went through five editions. Now that we have spoken there may never be a sixth. . . We are, you might say, reviewing a reprint—a courtesy not all gazettes will afford you.”

There is no possibility of giving an adequate description of the number of excellent critical essays. A few names and titles must suffice. There were Thomas Mann, with his famous essay on “Tolstoy”; T. S. Eliot on “Marianne Moore,” and “Ulysses, Order and Myth”; Paul Rosenfeld on “Randolph Bourne”; John Cournos on “Chekhov and Gorky”; Van Wyck Brooks on “Henry James”; Logan Pearse Smith on “Sainst-Beuve”; George Saintsbury on “Abelard and Heloise”; and Kenneth Burke—many times—with magic pieces such as “Realism and Idealism,” “Engineering with Words,” “Psychology and Form,” “The Correspondence of Flaubert,” and an essay on Gertrude Stein. A listing of even the most outstanding articles would cover several pages.

The last issue of the review carried a short, cryptic sentence announcing that the magazine could not get along without contributors. This was not the reason for the end, however. By 1929 Watson was absent from New York for months at a time. Editorial consultations were difficult, and “what had begun as a spontaneously delightful plotting in the interest of art and artists, was becoming mere faithfulness to responsibility.”

The Dial was one of the most important of the American experimental reviews. It represented more material than any other magazine, and to a greater number of readers; therefore, its leavening influence was far greater than that of its nearest competitor. The periodical, because of its financial stability and the self-effacing character of its editors, traveled serenely through its nine years, unattended by the flashy excitement that accompanied such magazines as Secessions, Broom, and The Little Review. The Dial’s story is one of accomplishing.

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29 Letter, Moore to Allen, July 2, 1941 (unpublished).
ment and value, and we must not forget that the review helped secure the reputations of many experimentalists by giving them early and frequent publication. Among these were Sherwood Anderson, Albert Halper, Jean Toomer, Glenway Wescott, Kenneth Burke, Evelyn Scott, E. E. Cummings, George Dillon, S. Foster Damon, Louis Zukofsky, Yvor Winters, Witter Bynner, and Elizabeth J. Coatsworth. Louis Zukofsky and Albert Halper were the only discoveries, an unimpressive record that is accounted for by the magazine’s policy of discouraging unsolicited manuscripts.

To further a cosmopolitan literary outlook, to fight the spiritual inertia and insularity that characterized most of America, and above all to establish a new method of literary criticism—this was the goal and the achievement of one of the best advance guard critical magazines that ever existed in America.

IV

The Hound and Horn rode an exciting hunt between 1927 and 1934 in search of a new criticism. The magazine was born September 1927, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as a “Harvard Miscellany,” financed by a wealthy young undergraduate, Lincoln Kirstein. Associated with Kirstein as editors were R. P. Blackmur, Bernard Bandler II, Varian Fry, and A. Hyatt Mayor. In 1929 the subtitle was dropped, with the apologetic explanation that it “misrepresented” what the review was trying to do. The fact that Harvard men had contributed most of the material was “largely accidental.”

Accidental or inevitable, during the first two years The Hound and Horn showed a strong Harvard influence. It presented photographs and reproductions of alma mater’s undistinguished decorative sculpture; it declared that it was serving as a “point of contact between Harvard and the contemporary outside world”; it announced an intention of publishing critical dissertations on Harvard’s literary great: T. S. Eliot, Irving Babbitt, George Santayana, Henry James, E. E. Cummings, Conrad Aiken, and Henry Adams. Several of these were published and are excellent. Yet even in this early period, despite the surrounding college atmosphere, it carried itself with an urbane air, patterning its conduct after The Dial and Eliot’s Criterion. The reviews of books, magazines, and the arts were excellent. Critical articles of acuteness found a

major place, and the young Harvard undergraduate editors managed to strengthen an important critical direction by seeing the advantages of a criticism devoted to close structural and textual examination.

The October-December, 1929, number saw the subtitle “Harvard Miscellany” discontinued. That same month, in outlining their editorial position, the editors agreed that they did not believe in “special dogmas,” such as humanism, surrealism, classicism, America, etc. They further proclaimed that “a sound philosophy will not produce a great work of art and a great work of art is no guarantee that the ideas of the artist are sound. Consequently our standard for judging the arts is technical. We demand only that the given work should be well done. . . . We may feel that certain false ideas mar a work of art and partly defeat the artist’s aim. But a picture, a poem, and a story have their intrinsic value quite apart from their association with theory.” This quotation is significant for an understanding of the review, indicating as it does an admiration for the artistic form itself, which is always the primary concern of the artist—the ethical and philosophical implications, in the nature of the imaginative process, generally being of secondary and often fortuitous consideration. The editors went ahead to announce their intention of seeking criticism designed to “seize the central point of any subject, and [to] discuss that with all the learning, logic and insight it can command.” The thought is not clear in this statement, but it seems to call for that close analysis of structure and texture which the director of the “New Criticism,” John Crowe Ransom, has so insistently advocated, and which The Hound and Horn so insistently practiced. That criticism, of course, is well illustrated by Yvor Winters and R. P. Blackmur, two of The Hound and Horn’s assisting editors and frequent contributors. Both of these men, with the other “new critic” editor, Allen Tate, were influential in setting the magazine’s tone and in obtaining manuscript. This “new criticism,” so brilliantly practiced in recent years by Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, T. S. Eliot, Yvor Winters, and especially R. P. Blackmur, was probably not formulated in the mind of Kirstein as precisely as in the minds of his three associates, Tate, Winters, and Blackmur, but Kirstein was warmly sympathetic with the method of close, objective analysis. The Hound and Horn was the first American periodical to sponsor intensively and knowingly a critical method that has been so genuinely rewarding.

26 “Comment,” The Hound and Horn, iii, 5 (October-December, 1929).
27 “Announcement,” The Hound and Horn, i, 6 (September 1927).
Blackmur, one of the most important modern structural critics, published some of his first work in the review.

"There has been no clique or group of writers definitely connected as a body with the magazine .... There has been little coherent editorial policy as such" 31; these are words taken from the review’s final issue, words fortunately belied as far as criticism is concerned. And, like Broom and The Dial, the magazine also had its fiction and poetic bias, a bias revealed by the choice of authors and material. As one glance through the list of the more important and frequent contributors of poetry and fiction, he notices that most of them would ordinarily be considered experimentalists.

By the fall of 1930 The Hound and Horn had moved both its editorial and executive offices to New York. Lincoln Kirstein, who during the first three years had been the leading activator of the review, now became chief editor, executive, and financial angel. In 1931 he became sole owner and editor, assisted by Allen Tate and Yvor Winters as regional editors. Kirstein was born in Rochester, New York, in 1907, and is the author of a novel Flesh Is Heir, a verse volume Low Ceiling, and several works on theatrical dancing.

Though The Hound and Horn did not discover any noteworthy writers, it assisted generously in establishing the reputations of several authors who have since become well known. Josephine Johnson, Erskine Caldwell, Richard P. Blackmur, Merle Hoylman, Alvah Bessie, Katherine Anne Porter, Francis Fergusson, David Cornel De Jong, Raymond E. F. Larsson, John Brooks Wheelwright, Dudley Pitts, and A. Hyatt Mayor were all befriended by the magazine at a time when they were struggling for recognition. Some of Katherine Anne Porter’s masterly stories that were collected in the 1930 Flowering Judas appeared in such advance guard periodicals as transition and The Hound and Horn. Kay Boyle had published in the little magazines since the time of Broom. Encouragement was given to several others, but they have as yet failed to establish themselves.

Usually less than a quarter of the issue was devoted to poetry and fiction. Criticism and reviewing were the main interests. The Hound and Horn’s Art, Book, and Music Chronicles were equaled only by those in T. S. Eliot’s Criterion. Books were reviewed by A. Hyatt Mayor, Allen Tate, Dudley Pitts, R. P. Blackmur, Yvor Winters, Lincoln Kirstein, John B. Wheelwright, Francis Fergusson, and Marianne

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31 “Comment,” The Hound and Horn, vi, n.p. (July-September, 1934).

Moore. Distinguished critical essays from Blackmur, Winters, Louis Zukofsky, S. Foster Damon, Paul Valéry, Henry Barnard Parkes, Bernard Bandler II, Tate, Francis Fergusson, Donald Davidson, Edmund Wilson, Newton Arvin, Marianne Moore, and Edna Kenton made the quarterly a worthy competitor and successor of The Dial. The “Homage to Henry James” number (Spring 1934), to which many of the magazine’s writers contributed, is indicative of the high critical tone.

The Symposium ought to be mentioned at this point, for it was a periodical whose name is rightly associated with that of The Hound and Horn. Though it never found enough money to pay its contributors or to afford the rich paper and fine printing that always marked The Hound and Horn, The Symposium was nevertheless worthy of its wealthier brother. It published such people as William Phillips, Herbert Read, C. R. Morse (an art critic of high intelligence), Henry Barnard Parkes, Louis Zukofsky, Philip Blair Rice, Cudworth Flint, John Dewey, Kenneth Burke, Justin O’Brien, Robert Cantwell, William Troy, and Austin Warren, all of whom contributed critical essays—essays that generally dealt soundly with established masters of the past rather than with the contemporary artists who interested The Hound and Horn. During its last year The Symposium became more actively interested in the modern scene, even going so far as to make room for poetry and fiction, most of which was not very distinctive. On the whole it was a more conservative, less stimulating periodical than The Hound and Horn.

Both The Hound and Horn and The Symposium took much of their temperament from The Criterion and The Dial, and both of the former, like their two descendants, The Southern Review (1935-42) and The Kenyon Review (1939- ), were designed as outlets for the intense, brilliant, and sometimes mannered critics, of whom Yvor Winters and R. P. Blackmur are fair representatives. After its first two years The Hound and Horn was not nearly so concerned as The Dial had been in general discussion of aesthetics or literary philosophy, as naturally it could not be, since structural analysis is chiefly interested in a particular object.

The Hound and Horn was a beautifully printed review. It measured about ten by six inches and averaged around 150 pages per quarterly issue. Contributions were paid for at the rate of from $3.50 to $5.00 per page for prose, and from $5.00 to $7.00 for poetry. The average circulation, from 2,500 to 3,000 copies, was not high enough to support the
magazine financially, even though the editors went unpaid. The *Hound and Horn* was forced to cease publication at the end of its seventh volume in the fall of 1934.

Aside from their intrinsic value as capable though sometimes uneven reviews, *The Hound and Horn* and *The Symposium* helped in suggesting the courses of the maturer *Southern Review* and *Kenyon Review*. The former of these, under the guidance of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, was one of the finest critical periodicals this country has ever known; and John Crowe Ransom's *Kenyon Review* has continued in the vanguard of American criticism. *The Southern Review* was defeated after eight volumes by the woolly intellectual apathy that had made an end of *The Hound and Horn*; and one always fears that the same lassitude will drive *The Kenyon Review* to surrender. One can hope, however, that it will somehow survive, and that, with the help of a rejuvenated *Sewanee Review* (which has found money to run since the ancient year of 1872 and is now edited by Allen Tate), our “new criticism” will be further encouraged to its full development. Intelligent magazines are needed to free us from the exaggerated and often pointless moralistic bondage that has fettered our literary discussion. If the five or six thousand people who should legitimately maintain publications devoted primarily to literature rather than ethics and ideas could bring themselves to concerted action, we might reasonably obtain the exciting reality of an American criticism eclipsing in understanding any insight that has ever appeared in our language. Already we have Cleanth Brooks, R. P. Blackmur, and Yvor Winters, all of extraordinary critical perception.

V

At this writing the large annual volume, *New Directions*, published since 1936 by James Laughlin from his press in Norfolk, Connecticut, is one of the best of the experimental publications upholding the flag that *The Little Review* and *The Dial* carried so bravely. There have been nine volumes, each presenting between three and seven hundred pages, each filled with more material than most little magazines show in twelve issues. *New Directions* is more frankly in search of experimental writing, both American and European, than is any other present-day advance guard venture. Unfortunately less than 50 per cent of the anthology deserves serious consideration as literature.

James Laughlin, a member of the Pittsburgh steel family, gained an early recognition. When he was eighteen he began publishing short stories and poetry in several of the little magazines. He was twenty-two, still a student at Harvard, when he founded the *New Directions Press* in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Since that time, the firm has acquired offices in Norfolk, Connecticut, and in New York City, and its publishing activities have been greatly expanded. Laughlin’s principal editorial assistants are Hubert Creekmore and (quite recently) Robert Lowry.

Besides the annual volumes, there is the *New Directions Press*, which has been publishing the fictional, poetic, and critical volumes of such well known experimenters as William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, and of such young, relatively unknown experimentalists as Delmore Schwartz and Kenneth Patchen. This well financed, experimental press has published over one hundred and forty printed volumes; already it has done more to disseminate and encourage international experimental writing than any former or present-day publisher. If the press can continue for another ten years, or even five, it will undoubtedly be known as one of the most significant literary landmarks of twentieth century America. But the ever-increasing flow of remarkable volumes does not tell the whole story. Laughlin has three other plans in operation.

The first: the notion of “Poets of the Year.” This is a series of 32-page monthly pamphlets, each devoted to the best verse of an important poet. It has now been discontinued.

The second: “The New Classics Series.” The neglected works of recent or living modern authors are reprinted.

The third: “The Makers of Modern Literature Series” offers critical studies of authors, experimental or traditional, who have had a continuing influence upon modern literature.

Let us consider Laughlin’s motivations for his various projects. What we have to say applies both to the anthologies and to the more important projects of the Press. All of his activities, as he cheerfully admits, are essentially little magazine activities, and he is willing to accept the occasional financial risks. Laughlin has not been reticent about expressing himself in *New Directions* editorials and articles.

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23 Letter, Doris R. Levine (Business Manager of *The Hound and Horn*) to Charles Allen, April 25, 1939 (unpublished).


44 Statement, Laughlin to Allen, 1939.
Several times during recent years he has reiterated his purpose—“New Directions has published well over a hundred books,” one statement runs, “Some have been much better than others, but all were the work of writers who deeply believed that writing must remain an art and that it must not be degraded to the level of mass production business.”

Laughlin’s interest in experimentalism is thus frankly an eclectic interest. It is an interest, like The Dial’s and The Hound and Horn’s, that ignores national boundaries, and it is an interest that often makes forays into the nineteenth century. One of the strongest motivations of the New Directions front is the desire to make more widely known the significant experimentalisms of the western world of the past one hundred years. Experimental writing makes up about one-fourth of New Directions publications. Advertising of the experimental great has been carried on by printing the original work of the masters, by encouraging critical estimates of them, and by editorial exhortation urging the world to read them. Often, as in the case of Franz Kafka, all three forms of publicity are used persistently and loudly.

When Laughlin speaks of “the healthy evolution of literature,” he also has in mind the “healthy evolution” of society, for he believes that the new society, a society that will solve the problem of distribution after the fashion of Major Douglas, must be firmly built on language. Thus we are not surprised to find the editor wholeheartedly applauding the work of such semanticists as Richards and Ogden. Laughlin insists that economics, sociology, and psychology are not as competent as they may appear in solving our problems because these sciences are chained to words which no longer have unequivocal meaning. Vague words befog our thinking processes. If we cannot think, we cannot find our way out of the endless forest. And so the function of the literary experimentalist—for example, E. E. Cummings—is to juxtapose words and phrases, to “shock the mind into fresh analyses.” He must help mold a new language; he must help solve our social problems. Experiment with language and we improve the public’s interest in clear and intelligent thinking.

This experimenting with language is closely akin to experimenting with the imagination. In our blind adherence to reason and scientific investigation, we have neglected to search the inner recesses of our beings. We must explore deeper than a mere observation of surface detail will allow us. One other way of enriching the reader’s consciousness of language and literature is that of increasing his awareness of foreign literatures. This New Directions has helped to do: one-third of its publication in recent years has consisted of translation (bilingual) of important foreign language texts.

These are the reasons for New Directions, both the Press and the anthology. But they are both committed to more than a mere accommodation of experiment; in fact, as Laughlin’s recent statements make clear, they are interested in “non-commercial literature,” whether experimental or traditional in form or matter.

From a study of the New Directions annual volumes several observations are possible. First, one notices, as he did with the older American Caravan and as he does with the present-day Twice A Year, a marked variety in the nature of their offerings, and some differences in quality. Laughlin quite legitimately defends the publication of many of his less distinguished pieces on the ground either that they are suggestive or that he is offering encouragement to promising talents. Above all, he argues for integrity in writing, which, he feels strongly, may be weakened by a writer’s submission to various commercial and “journalistic” pressures in American publishing. He is anxious to protect that integrity, at the occasional risk of publishing the work of writers who have not yet achieved maturity, whether in style or mastery of subject.

The volume has gradually put a greater emphasis upon the more radical experimentalisms—and this may be applauded. In the beginning there was much prose that approached in appearance, if not in implication, the domain of objective realism. More and more the editor has sought out fantasy, showing a special friendliness to the imagination which employs dream materials and mechanisms.

Also, one can readily see that the annual has, especially during its first two years, given considerable space to the older, better known experimentalists. Lately less well known names are being printed, and this is all to the good, for the yearly volume ought to be primarily for young and relatively unknown writers. The Press can take care of the more established artists. Several of the newer writers—David Kerner, Kenneth Patchen, Paul Goodman, Weldon Kees, Eudora Welty, Richard Eberhart, Montague O’Reilly, and Delmore Schwartz—have already made great strides. If these and others continue to grow, New Directions will have a sizable group whom it can claim the honor of having helped to establish.

As New Directions has grown older and more secure, its editor has
become increasingly aware of his responsibilities and opportunities. The 1940 volume carried an editorial announcement in which Laughlin squarely faced his record. He believed that he had not been severe enough in demanding that a writer show a sense of literary form. He had published too many writings which could be defended only on the assumption that linguistic and imaginative experiments are justifiable in themselves. He announced that he would demand form, and in form he did not mean "a return to literary corsets, bustles, and buns": he was not calling for plots or "similar horrors." "What I ask is that the parts of a piece of writing be in some way joined together—and the joining need not be logical either—and if possible, that joining contribute something, of itself, to the complete meaning of the whole."

So much for New Directions, the yearly volume. By the end of 1946 the New Directions Press had published around 140 volumes, most of them distinguished, many of them selling for $2.50 or less. Laughlin's good friends, Pound and Williams, appear most frequently. The writing of the latter is still alertly alive and increasingly significant, though much of Pound's work, while interesting and suggestive, appears fragmentary, confused, and, most vexing of all, tinged with a refractory and perverse exhibitionism.

"The New Classics Series" (reprints of moderns who are out of print or difficult to obtain) is one of the most important contributions of the New Directions Press. Significant also is "The Makers of Modern Literature Series." Among the many books in this rapidly growing series are sound and interesting studies of James Joyce, by Harry Levin; Virginia Woolf, by David Daiches; Nikolai Gogol, by Vladimir Nabokov; Garcia Lorca, by Edwin Honig; E. M. Forster, by Lionel Trilling; and E. A. Robinson, by Yvor Winters. Two other projects, begun in 1946, supplement these ventures and will gain in importance in the next few years: "The Modern Readers Series" (new editions of great books that have gone out of print) and the "Selected Writings Series" (one-volume editions, containing representative selections from the work of modern writers).

January 1941 saw the inauguration of "The Poet of the Month Series" (later known as "Poets of the Year"), with twelve attractively designed pamphlets issued annually, pamphlets which include some of the best work of many modern poets, as well as selections from the poetry of the past. The series was discontinued in 1945 because of inflationary printing costs. During its three and one-half years, forty-two numbers were published, each one individually designed and printed by a fine press.

Since the Press serves much the same purpose as do the anthologies, we may regard New Directions as an important and alert sponsor of what can best be called "non-commercial" writing. Both Laughlin and James T. Farrell (the latter's long essay on the future of American writing appeared in New Directions number nine) agree that much needs to be done to resist an increase in commercial temptations for young writers. The publication of "non-commercial" writing by New Directions—and this writing may be traditional as well as experimental in form—serves to encourage the normal development of writers, and thus to fortify them against the desire for easy fame and money. "We have instances," said Laughlin in New Directions nine, "of men like James Joyce who carried on through years of difficulty and never compromised in any way. But how many Joyces may there have been who had not the strength for such an ordeal?"

VI

Thus The Dial, The Hound and Horn, The Symposium, and the New Directions ventures demonstrate advance guard criticism and editorial selection at their best and most interesting. The first three are expressions of critical taste and practice, carrying as they do much of the burden of critical defense and explication of modern literature. The value of Laughlin's various enterprises lies in his intelligent and enthusiastic eclecticism. In a sense, eclecticism argues a policy—a searching for examples in all times and places, of the work which most interests the writers of our own times. It is a kind of cultural exchange, based on an interest in finding a precedent for immediate tastes and a justification for present practices. As a result, literatures of several nations and cultures are brought together, collated, and reshaped.

One of the consequences of international depression in the thirties was to arouse the interest of peoples in one another, and in their several cultures. Thus The Partisan Review has published some of the stories of Franz Kafka, several estimates of his work by Max Brod and others, a long critical essay on Thomas Mann, Eugene Jolas on James Joyce, and Professor Vigneron on Marcel Proust. In fact, if the writers

89 Ibid., p. xiv.
of the late thirties have shown some advance toward a synthesis of literary values, it is suggested in the wider distributions which “foreign” authors have enjoyed, with the help of such cosmopolitans as James Laughlin, Edwin Muir, and Samuel Putnam. Laughlin’s New Directions Press has published Kafka, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and others. Muir’s magazine, The European Quarterly, was published in London in 1934, “to attempt to establish a sympathetic contact between the intellectual life of this country and that of the Continent.” Studies were published of Russian revolutionary literature, of English poetry, of German and French poets; and translations into English were offered of the work of Garcia Lorca, Sergei Esselin, and Søren Kierkegaard. In a sense the attitude toward literature has matured. In the time of Samuel Roth’s Review of Two Worlds, the impression of foreign literatures seemed deliberately casual, the object of translation “to increase the gaiety of nations.” The European Quarterly and Europa are a collection of serious studies and earnest endeavors to reach an international understanding through an appreciation of diverse cultures.

Europa, whose European editor was Samuel Putnam, was produced from New York in the years 1933 and 1934. Its aim was essentially to inform the peoples of America and England of the status of the arts in Continental Europe. Clive Bell reported on French painting, David Ewen on “Music under the Swastika,” William Koslenko on Dostoevski; the Russian theater was given ample attention. And Mussolini reported on Fascism in his country. This generosity toward all elements in European cultural life was not likely to act as an aesthetic dissolvent of political differences. It lacked the motivation of a singleness of purpose, such as was enjoyed by Moscow’s International Literature. The “panoramic view” cannot prove to be anything more than interesting; its inclusiveness has obvious disadvantages.

Another “news letter of the arts,” The Literary World, supplements The European Quarterly as a center of information about international literature. Again it is Joyce, Kafka, and Mann who receive much attention, as well as André Gide and Louis-Ferdinand Celine. The recent interest in Kafka is here acknowledged and abetted by the entire issue of July 1934. Franz Kafka, a Czech writer who died in 1924, left a number of manuscripts which his literary executor, Max Brod, saved from destruction, in a pardonable disobedience of Kafka’s wish. The three novels—The Castle, The Trial, and Amerika—have been more than adequately supplemented by a number of shorter pieces which have appeared from time to time in the little magazines. In general it may be said that Kafka’s posthumous and presumably unwished-for reputation has been the responsibility of the little magazines, which have been more than willing to accept the word of Max Brod and Edwin Muir regarding his importance. The Partisan Review, The Literary World, transition, Twice a Year, and the New Directions annuals and Press have done most to bring this important writer out of seclusion. (Among the commercial publishers, Alfred Knopf has been alert to Kafka’s importance as well, and has published two of his novels.)

“Kafka has fully expressed the modern mentality in its German mood,” said Denis Saurat in The Literary World. It is this earnest desire to assess the aesthetic contribution of European literature that marks an important though minor theme in the thirties. In a sense, it served to supplement and to qualify the enthusiasm for a world revolution. It suggested, not a counterrevolution, but a study of the complexity of the international scene. More than that, it demonstrated that the culture of the twentieth century was coming of age. The appraisal and encouragement of European literatures played a large role in the years immediately preceding the second war of our generation, and it remained strong during the war itself. The complexion of the little magazine may well change in the forties under its influence.

The import of criticism in the little magazines is great for the continuance of avant-gardism. Literary criticism may be either a servant or a master of literary creation. The giants of the critical world who announce in stentorian tones what may and may not be written in a given decade are not always the best companions or guides. The healthful and meritorious service of avant-gardist criticism resides in its defense of new modes, its search for critical justifications of the modern temper, and its cosmopolitan indifference to arbitrary political and geographic limits to creative work. Most important of all, of course, is the presence in critical magazines of authors discussing their own craft and debating the merits and limits of the aesthetic mode. The presence in large number of purely critical and eclectic magazines argues the willingness of the artist to survey his world and to set some sort of estimate upon the bulk and weight of creative activity in the immediate past. For the most part, these critical magazines are characterized by a generous accommodation of a variety of theories and by a desire on the part of the artist to know more about himself.