

Introduction

English periodical publications, along with such other exciting social innovations as political parties and the postal service, appeared in the seventeenth century and were consolidated and institutionalized in the eighteenth. From a very few serials, the number rose upon the overthrow of the Star Chamber in 1641 to an immediate 59 or more in 1642.¹ Responding to the application and withdrawal of repressive measures first by the Puritan government and then by Charles II, the numbers fluctuated; and then they showed a steady increase beginning in the late seventeenth century, swelling further after a few decades of the eighteenth with the rise of the provincial press. Throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century, as the population of England and Wales grew from about 5.5 million in 1700 to almost 9 million in 1801,² the reading audience, accompanying the expansion of business and urbanization, apparently grew even faster. The number of professional writers flooded Pope with dunces and kept rising, and as a result the periodicals proliferated. According to Richmond P. Bond, when the *Spectator** appeared in 1711, there were 66 periodicals in Great Britain, and by the end of the century the number was 265. Most of these, of course, were short-lived, so that the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* needs over a hundred large, double-columned, small-print pages to list the British periodicals of 1660–1800; Bond's introduction to his *Contemporaries of the Tatler and Spectator* mentions a hundred or so competitors from April 1709 to 6 December 1712, very few surviving long. And in the provinces, according to Roy Wiles, we can add 150 newspapers, most with brief runs, for the first sixty years of the century.³

The effect of political nervousness on the development of periodicals did not end with the seventeenth century. Under pressure from Queen Anne and her government, Parliament passed the Stamp Act of 1712, causing some publications to fold and others to raise prices (like the *Spectator*) or to change their size and specifications (like Defoe's *Review**). Reporting on Steele's practice,

Rae Blanchard explains a major consequence of this Act, which for some years allowed "publications larger than a single sheet but less than book size . . . to be classed as pamphlets, the only tax payable for these being at the rate of two shillings for every sheet in a single copy regardless of the number of copies printed for the edition." Steele's response was to turn his weeklies, *Town-Talk* and *Chit-Chat*, into twelve-page quarto pamphlets "at a much lower tax rate and hence less cost."⁴

Other political controls, like the prohibition against printing parliamentary debates—intensely interesting in a time when political institutions were being defined—were in turn circumvented, as with Johnson's famous "Debates in the Senate of Lilliput" for the *Gentleman's Magazine** and the competitive "Journal of the Proceedings and Debates in the Political Club" in the *London Magazine*.* Indeed, a valuable study of the subject concludes that "few prosecutions for seditious libel were successful in the eighteenth century";⁵ but this conclusion needs to be qualified by a sense of how many raids occurred, how many printing establishments were put in disarray, how many members of the book trade were arrested, summoned to court, or efficiently intimidated into conformity to feed the Walpole government's fears of Jacobite conspiracies or Pitt's nervousness about the French. In *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England*, Donald Thomas, surveying the subject from the abolition of precensorship by licensing in 1695 (largely because the book trade had grown too big to be censored this way), cites in our period arrests of printers for Jacobite publication; for involvement in internal political battles, usually on the grounds of defaming Parliament; for Wilkes and *North Briton* number 45; for the anti-government Junius letters; and for irreligion, obscenity, and support of the American and French revolutions.

One by-product of political danger in publication may well have been the prevailing anonymity of periodical writings—most famously exemplified as late as 1769 by Junius, whose identity is still debated—though there were surely other reasons for the anonymity as well. Early in the eighteenth century snobbery, in some writers' minds, may have dictated that gentlemen did not write for money or even for an indiscriminated audience. With time, economic motives may also have disposed prolific writers (like Defoe) and exploitative booksellers (like Griffiths, as his employee Goldsmith saw him, or Gardner, who tied Smart to a ninety-nine-year contract for his *Universal Visiter**) to maintain authorial anonymity. As one result, biographers, historians, and critics of eighteenth-century writers often find themselves wandering the mazes of attribution.⁶

Figures for circulation and the size of the reading public for the periodicals are harder to determine than dangerous political issues, though enough scattered information exists to give us a sense of them. In a government document placed in 1704 or 1705 by internal evidence, James R. Sutherland found an estimate of the number of copies of daily, weekly, and two- or three-times-weekly papers in London, which assumes an aggregate of about 44,000 copies

a week spread over nine different publications. Political weeklies tended to have the widest distribution, particularly during heated disputes. According to Sutherland, the owner of the weekly *London Journal* claimed a circulation of 15,000 by 1722, perhaps exaggerating only slightly, and *Mist's Journal* and the durable, influential *Craftsman** sold around 10,000 copies a week in the 1720s and 1730s.⁷ As for newspapers and other periodicals, although total sales grew as the number increased through the century, individual circulations were still relatively small. Even in the midst of the controversy over Junius, whose papers it was running, the *Public Advertiser* in 1769 averaged under 3,500 a day. Among literary periodicals, Altick's estimates are plausible: the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1746, about 3,000; the *London Magazine* in 1769, 4,000; in 1797: *Monthly Magazine** (see RA) and *Monthly Review*,* 5,000 each; *Gentleman's Magazine*, 4,550; *British Critic** (see RA) and *Critical Review*,* 3,500 each; *European Magazine*,* 3,250; *Universal Magazine*,* 1,750.⁸ According to Donald Bond, the stunningly successful *Spectator* printed somewhere between 3,000 and 4,000 per issue in the second year of publication, with some issues running much higher. On the basis of the records of Strahan's printing house, Lewis M. Knapp says that the *Monthly Review* moved from 1,000 copies in May 1749 to 3,000 by July 1767. Throughout the period, editions of books ran to about 1,000 copies.⁹

Successful provincial periodicals sold in comparable numbers. In the first two decades of the century, the provincial weeklies issued only one or two hundred copies each, according to G. A. Cranfield, but by the late 1730s the *Newcastle Journal* claimed a circulation of almost 2,000 a week. By mid-century, the metropolitan monthlies, particularly the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *London Magazine*, circulated extensively in the provinces, sometimes reprinting issues for that purpose. Moreover, Roy M. Wiles writes that many country newspapers then sold 1,000 copies a week and some even 2,000, so that altogether, in the latter part of the century, "the weekly provincial newspapers reached tens of thousands of homes." Examining the *Weekly Magazine, or Edinburgh Amusement*'s* account book, Robert Hay Carnie showed that its circulation was as high as 3,000 copies a week in 1776.¹⁰

The readers of these periodicals were evidently not poor. Usual prices, reflecting the cost or evasion of the Stamp Act, were two and one-half pence for a newspaper (raised as high as six pence by Stamp Acts in the last quarter of the century) and six pence for a monthly miscellany;¹¹ variations, like the higher price of Robert Lloyd's *St. James's Magazine** or the lower one of John Hill's *British Magazine*,* were likely to be noticed in prefaces. Clearly, at a time when Johnson estimated that it was possible to "support nature" on six pounds a year (*Life*, 20 July 1763) and Goldsmith congratulated his brother on having "retired early to Happiness and Obscurity, with an income of forty pounds a Year" (Dedication to the *Traveller*), craftsmen and laborers did not earn enough to buy periodicals. Those who could afford to read them must have been primarily the families of merchants and gentry. The audience was

also, as John Dunton and Peter Anthony Motteux realized as early as the 1690s, significantly and increasingly feminine.¹²

Competing to mirror and feed this audience, polemic, political, educational, and simply mercenary booksellers and writers offered a burgeoning range of periodicals, many of them literary in our retrospective view. If that view is to accommodate the variety of current scholarly interest, it will need to include among "literary periodicals" in the eighteenth century those publications that appeared at regular intervals and employed writers now regarded as literary figures, like the *True Patriot*;* or that normally used literary material, like the *Gentleman's Magazine*; or that contributed to the development of literary genres, such as satire or the essay, like the *Universal Spectator*;* or to the literary canon, like the *Universal Chronicle** (which ran Johnson's *Idler* pieces); or that significantly affected literary history, like the *Critical Review*; or that assumed significant literary functions, like the *Grub-Street Journal*;* or that constituted important historical documents and thereby were at least tangentially literary, like the *Craftsman*. And to all these we may add some publications, like *Common Sense*,* that occasionally though not regularly fulfilled some of these functions.

Amid this lush wilderness, a number of scholars have preferred to trace single paths, with Robert L. Haig's *Gazetteer* (1960) providing a pattern for thorough study of a periodical publication as it worked its way through the changes in society. Within the confines of an encyclopedic guide, the profiles in *British Literary Magazines* are in Haig's tradition. Also reflected in this guide is a development analogous to the focus on individual periodicals: the study of individual journalists, whose careers we can see as exemplary of life in the new profession. Providing maps for all scholars, the surveyors for our time have been Walter James Graham in *The Beginnings of English Literary Periodicals* (1926) and *English Literary Periodicals* (1930) and Richmond P. Bond in a variety of writings, most immediately for our purposes his superb introduction to *Studies in the Early English Periodical* (1957) and his brief but authoritative *Growth and Change in the English Press* (1969). Aside from Graham's excursions along small spurs into theater, poetry, and humor, Graham and Bond agree on three high roads: the reviewing or critical periodical, the miscellany, and the periodical essay.

Adopting Graham's categories and generally relying on his studies, we may begin by summarizing the history of the reviewing periodical, which is usually traced to Denis de Sallo's *Journal des Scavans* (1665–1753). Providing largely abstracts or summaries of books intended for learned readers, it was supplemented as a source for English learned journals and reviews by the *Mémoires pour l'Histoire des Sciences et des Beaux Arts*, usually referred to by its place of publication as the *Memoirs of Trevoux* (1701–1774). Other strains that led to the reviewing journal were the periodical publications of book catalogues,

beginning with the *Mercurius Librarius* (1668), and Dunton's *Athenian Mercury*, which relied on questions and answers "to satisfy in a popular way the general desire for knowledge."¹³ Among the notable reviewing journals were Andrew Reid's *Present State of the Republick of Letters** (1728–1736) and its successor, the *History of the Works of the Learned** (1737–1743); the most important reviewing journals in the eighteenth century were the *Monthly Review*, beginning in 1749, and the *Critical Review*, which competed with it from 1756. The early reviewing journals, like the specialized learned journals, were for scholarly readers primarily, but the mid-century reviews attempted to satisfy readers across the spectrum of interests from crime through agriculture and fiction to Hebrew linguistics and modifications on Newton's theories.

In the mid-century reviews, not only was there a significant shift, from presenting scholarly material largely through introduction and abstract, to providing evaluative essays on general works combining abstract and commentary; the idea of timeliness, of covering a number and variety of works quickly, became important as well. In May 1749 the *Monthly Review's* advertisement for its first volume indicates the mid-century attitude that was to be dominant for a good while:

When 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; to acquaint the public that a summary review of the productions of the press as they occur to notice, was perhaps never more necessary than now, would be superfluous and vain.

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; an account, in short, which should, in virtue of its candour, and justness of distinction, obtain authority enough for its representations to be serviceable to such as would choose to have some idea of a book before they lay out their money or time on it. This is the view and aim of the present undertaking; and as it must necessarily stand or fall by the merit of the execution, on that we rest the issue, without offering to prepossess the public in its favour.

In the preface to its first bound volume (for January–June 1756), the *Critical Review* added the element of competition in time, a borrowing from newspaper canons supported by a keen sense of fashion; its moving spirit was, after all, the same Smollett whose recent *Peregrine Pickle* had kept alive the continuously current scandal of Lady Vane. Its reviewers "value[d] themselves upon having reviewed every material performance, immediately after its first appearance, without reserving productions for a dearth of articles, and then raising them, like stale carcases from oblivion, after they have been blown upon by

every minor critic, and the curiosity of the public is gorged even to satiety."

Undertaking universal reviewing under the spur of competition had its drawbacks, as when the *Critical* reviewers were faced by *The Genuine Memoirs of the late celebrated Jenny D—gl—s, alias McCole*: "The necessity the reviewers are under of perusing a variety of such stupid unmeaning productions is one of the most disagreeable taxes which they pay to the public" (12:158); or by the *Life* of John Taylor, the peripatetic "Ophthalmiator," a "history . . . which, by a series of uninteresting facts, ridiculous stories, long winded periods, and crude and trite reflections, he has contrived to spin out into three tedious volumes, which few, beside the unfortunate reviewers, will perhaps ever take the pains to go through" (13:139–40). Sometimes, as in the *Monthly Review* of February 1767, when dealing with a putative French cook book, the reviewers confessed total defeat: "Sir Isaac Newton *himself* would not have been able to review this book" (36:159).

A second significant category of the English literary periodical is the essay serial or periodical essay, which we all know well from Steele's *Tatler** and *Spectator*. Recent studies, summarized in the fine editions of the past few decades, provide us with information on Steele's predecessors (Graham had already noted Ned Ward's *London Spy*,* 1698–1700), and Richmond Bond's introduction to *Contemporaries of the Tatler and Spectator* adds to our awareness of how much competition Steele soon faced. The devices he and Addison brought together or invented—the persona, the names, the club, and the subject divisions—became invaluable to all their successors, not only to such professed by-blows as the *Universal Spectator* or the *Female Spectator*.* John Hill pretended to be a whole Cyclopedian Society in his *British Magazine*, and any miscellany's purported "society of gentlemen" echoes the departments of the *Tatler* or the *Spectator*'s Club. Aaron Hill's *Prompter*,* Johnson's *Rambler** and *Idler*,* Hawkesworth's *Adventurer*,* Goldsmith's *Chinese Letters*, John Hill's *Inspector*, Colman and Thornton's *Connoisseur*,* Chesterfield's *World*,* and all the many lesser series continue their influence whether as separate publications or as single features among others in newspapers and magazine miscellanies, a method of presentation that Bond considers the leading innovation of eighteenth-century periodicals.¹⁴ Furthermore, like the essay serials in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, later successful serials were often published in book form, either volume by volume as completed or after the run of the serial. Such book publication developed as one way for the single-feature serial, like Johnson's *Idler* essays or Goldsmith's *Chinese Letters* (transformed into the *Citizen of the World* when collected), to extend its influence and earnings.

For the miscellany, the most important form from the point of view of later popularity, Peter Anthony Motteux's *Gentleman's Journal*, beginning January 1692 and lasting for thirty-three numbers into 1694, can serve as prototype. Although, as Graham notes, Motteux modeled his periodical on the French *Mercure Galant* in providing court news and gossip for fashionable people, he added a variety of features from other sources and his own sense of the market.

In Graham's words, Motteux offered "news, foreign and domestic, history, philosophy, questions and answers, letters, poetry, music, translations, items of the learned world, 'novels,' essays, fables, and book notices. Even woodcuts were not omitted." Bond points out an additional notable element, the unifying effect of each issue's purporting to be a letter to a gentleman in the country—a form in itself dependent on the postal improvements after the Restoration and echoed in a great many contemporary essays, brief series, and portions of novels.¹⁵ The letter from a distance—Yorkshire, Paris, the Sublime Porte, the American "plantations," or a ship of the line in battle—was of course the medium for imported news and for burlesque of such news throughout the century.

The first vastly successful miscellany, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, founded by Edward Cave in January 1731 and lasting practically forever, owed a good many of the features it developed to the *Gentleman's Journal*. Introducing as his original claim to the attention of readers the abridgment of material from other (weekly or daily) publications—the basis for the term *magazine*, or storehouse—Cave also provided the variety of Motteux (including summaries of news and lists of births, deaths, and promotions) as well as the assumed editorial persona (muted to a mere pseudonym, Sylvanus Urban) and the putative letters to the editor of the serial essays. With time, he introduced such innovations as parliamentary debates and made appropriate changes in the proportions of literature, science, politics, society, biography, and so on as intellectual fashion demanded. As London grew and with it the reading public, the number of available writers, the range of usable subjects, and the number of competitors, Cave and his imitators moved from abridging borrowed material to almost wholly providing their own. Because of its receptiveness to journalistic ideas from the past and present—its adaptability—the miscellany as exemplified in the *Gentleman's* (and its rival from 1732, the *London Magazine*) became the basic form of popular literary periodical.

From mid-century these miscellanies featured proportionately less politics and religion and more illustrations, fiction, periodical essays, and chitchat. More biographical sketches occur as well—such as a series on current literary notables intermittently in the *London Magazine* of the 1770s, in which readers could find Burke ("The British Cicero") and the historian Catherine Macaulay "in the Character of a Roman Matron lamenting the lost Liberties of Rome, from an Original Painting of Miss Read" in 1770, and Goldsmith and Johnson (in a remarkably ugly likeness) in 1773. Toward the end of the century, Graham notes that the most successful miscellanies had moved a long way toward mindless entertainment, the durable *European Magazine* (1782–1825) having been "made to trim its sails between the serious and frothy, so as to please, if possible, all sorts of readers."¹⁶ But this kind of material was pretty much what John Hill had offered in his *British Magazine* of the late 1740s, and what surely the *Ladies Magazine** of that time and a variety of 1760s magazines like the *Court Magazine** or *Town and Country*,* and even—if we soften the

“frothy” to “fashionable”—the *Gentleman's Magazine* or *London* or *Universal* had been doing. As early as *Lloyd's Evening Post* for 8–10 February 1762, Goldsmith's “Specimen of a Magazine” assumes frivolity enough:

We Essayists, who are allowed but one subject at a time, are by no means so fortunate as the Writers of Magazines, who write upon several. If a Magaziner be dull upon the Spanish War, he soon has us up again with the Ghost in Cock-lane; if the Reader begins to doze upon that, he is quickly roused by an Eastern Tale; Tales prepare us for Poetry, and Poetry for the Meteorological History of the Weather. The Reader, like the Sailor's Horse, when he begins to tire, has at least the comfortable refreshment of having the spur changed.¹⁷

To provide all this variety, mid-century London teemed with magazines and magazine writers, including most of the names that were or would become notable in literature. Any offhand list would include Johnson, Goldsmith, Smollett, Smart, and Chatterton among the major figures; Colman, Thornton, Kelly, Murphy, Akenside, Kenrick, Hill, Haywood, and Hawkesworth on the next level (in the judgment of posterity); and genteel amateurs like Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, and Boswell. Even if the others we remember did not write for the miscellanies, they were all connected at least with the journalistic world. Fielding, Richardson, Burke, Churchill, and Wilkes were involved with other forms—usually political—of periodical publications, as were their predecessors Defoe, Swift, Addison, and Steele. Sterne, rarely in London and therefore not available for magazine writing, was (along with Churchill) lionized by miscellanies, frequently reprinted, parodied, or echoed. Even Gray, hating the vulgarity of the miscellanies, was forced to rush publication of the *Elegy* when a magazine threatened to print it, and experienced the mingled mortification and pleasure of knowing that it was everywhere reprinted.

As might be expected in a society undergoing great, expansive changes (toward the urban, commercial, secular, imperial, even industrial), and as is shown by the flexibility of their forms, the periodicals were involved in intense interaction, competing for readers and at times for writers. As early as the 1690s, entrepreneurs like John Dunton learned to elbow the competition that success incurred, to invade contiguous periodical territories, and to buy up competitors.¹⁸ Most prefaces to bound volumes of periodicals, like those in John Hill's *British Magazine* and Johnson's 1738 preface to the *Gentleman's*, boast of the magazine's unique competitive success with the public. All through the period, these prefaces and other editorial machinery equate virtue with satisfying perfectly the taste of the day—for us, retrospectively, with fulfilling what we ask of social history—and never more purely than in the *London Magazine's* 1771 preface:

It is not we but the publick that have made the alterations in the London Magazine. We are in a great measure passive, and act as instruments in the hands of the nation. If it calls for divinity, we give divinity; if it requires politicks, we publish politicks. If love-stories be the mode, we become historians of gallantry; and if antiquities be the fashion, we commence antiquarians. In short, as far as virtue and decorum will permit, we are whatever our readers please. Keeping a publick store-house we must fill it with commodities, for which there is a demand.

So eager were the periodicals to make available what seemed to hit the public's taste that they democratically extended to the society at large the aches of plagiarism, which had affected mainly the learned, and of literary copyright. Provincial papers and magazines reprinted pieces from the metropolis, as did the *Rambler* (indicating a far greater popular response to this essay serial than could be inferred from print orders for the originals), and sometimes boasted in prefaces about arrangements to run popular materials like the *London Magazine's* parliamentary reports. Furthermore, individual pieces and serials—among them the *Rambler*, the *Idler*, the *Chinese Letters*, the *World*—were reprinted by the London periodicals themselves, sometimes with credit and sometimes without. Perhaps because they began with largely borrowed essays and had early organized their moral positions, the *Gentleman's* and the *London* always acknowledged their sources, at least within my experience; others varied from acknowledgment to accidental or deliberate plagiarism, as Goldsmith complained in his preface to the collected essays of 1765.¹⁹ From 1758, Dodsley's long-lasting *Annual Register* included an anthology of notable pieces of the year, most of them from periodicals, and from time to time someone produced a parasitic *Magazine of Magazines* or brought together a *Beauties of the Magazines* in book form.

Reflecting the animosities in the society that spawned them, most weeklies and some dailies were founded to do political battle; since much the same people published or wrote the monthlies, and since they tried to please the same customers, these periodicals also tended toward the irritable even when not evidently political. For systematic clarification of the quarrels there are fine individual studies,²⁰ but any microfilm flipper or stroller among rare book shelves, elevated on the heights of two centuries, can spy and enjoy them almost at random. In the *Universal Spectator* of 2 May 1741, for example, a letter writer claims that the *Gentleman's Magazine* has been plagiarizing from the *London Magazine*, in terms suggesting that he has in mind the political debates (and is thus accusing Samuel Johnson). As the *Grub-Street Journal* fought with Budgell's *Bee* and the *Gentleman's* with many of its early sources and competitors, so the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review* battled authors frequently, and each other from the beginning of the *Critical Review* (with an insulting preface) in 1756. In October 1757, for example, the *Monthly* con-

demned the author of *The Occasional Critic: or, the Decrees of the Scotch Tribunal in the Critical Review Rejudged* but granted that he had proved his enemies "erroneous in their judgment, incorrect in their language, and indecent in their animadversions" (17:368). Furthermore,

if we believe, likewise, what his Antagonists say of him and what he retorts upon them, they are alike in many other circumstances. For by their reciprocal defamation, they appear to be Physicians without practice; Authors without learning; Men without decency; Gentlemen without manners; and (notwithstanding he has made some lucky discoveries of their mistakes, yet, if their critical merit is no greater than his, the public will, probably, be ready to add)—Critics without judgment. [17:373]

To cite one returning sideswipe of many, in the November issue of 1758 the *Critical* sneers at a translation which is bad, even in the passages picked for praise by "the old lady, who writes the *Monthly Review*" (6:362).

Besides quarreling with each other, the mid-century reviews from the beginning sallied out at large on the literary tilting grounds. The *Critical Review*, in a belligerent address "To the Public," says that writers are up in arms against the magazine for disturbing them; among the attackers, one is an "inspector" (John Hill), another a Zoius, and "a third declares war against a Scotch adventurer in wit and physic [the editor, Smollett], who hacks at random the reputation of his betters" (1:287). Naturally, writers responded to the goads, sometimes memorably as in Churchill's *Apology. Addressed to the Critical Reviewers* (1761) or Sterne's bow (*Tristram Shandy*, 7:33) to "The Reviewers of My Breeches." Other magazines, like the *London Magazine* in 1770, felt free to join the fight. In that year alone, it attacked the *Monthly Reviewers* for a variety of prejudices, especially against bishops, in nine different places (39:195–96, 246, 291–94, 296, 346, 412–13, 462–64, 509, 605); and in October and December it printed attacks on the *Critical Review* by disgruntled authors. Writing and reviewing were high adventure then, seasoned with brigandage.

When the periodicals behave this way, they provide us with a sort of social history, but it looks at first like merely the social history of literature. Overall, however, as Thomas's roster of the occasions for censorship amply shows, whatever agitated political or moral sensibilities enough to press on the legislators or the police made its splash in the periodicals, from Jacobitism through Wilkes's politics cum pornography to the French Revolution. Already society's Aeolian harp, they often desired to be, and in retrospect inevitably are, a direct window on the time. They undertook to inform their own readers on fashionable life, the theater, the state of arts and sciences, worthy charities, medical and agricultural experiments, economic conditions, sensational crimes, foreign affairs and personalities, and London characters and classes, in the process allowing us to see if not the essential reality of a society then surely what the society over a very wide range of members thought was reality. An essay in

the *Weekly Magazine or Edinburgh Amusement* of 6 December 1770, advocating Method acting, shows us who (Johnson) was worth citing on whom, and how, to score a fashionable point. It may also tell us much about the time's implied changes in attitude (from Johnson's quoted conversation to the writer's opposing tenor) on psychology, morality, and right social action:

If, Sir, said he, Garrick believes himself to be every character that he represents, he is a madman, and ought to be confined. Nay, Sir, he is a villain, and ought to be hanged. If, for instance, he believes himself to be Macbeth, he has committed murder, he is a vile assassin; who, in violation of the laws of hospitality, as well as of other principles, has imbrued his hands in the blood of his king, while he was sleeping under his roof. If, Sir, he has really been that person in his own mind, he has, in his own mind, been as guilty as Macbeth. [10:296]

Besides directly displaying such social reality—almost literally in their prints, which with the passing of decades came closer to contemporary caricature—the periodicals can be turned into guides to less obvious orientations of the times, if we can define their testimony precisely. For example, since for many years the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* were the only magazines reviewing all that appeared, and competed from opposing religious and political positions for the whole educated readership, any consistent criterion for analyzing their contents can be used to indicate the intellectual bent of the educated public.²¹

Exercising their function, the literary periodicals integrated literature into the weave of society through whom and what they printed and through what terms they discussed literature. By their practice and precept, they substantially affected the development of new genres, changes in old ones, and the climate for innovation.²² As the training ground for writers, the periodicals mirrored and quickened the move from romance and the conte to modern fiction, at the very least inuring writers to value news of real people, the informal essay, and the haphazard variety of the miscellany as guides to truth and popularity. Even through such oddities as "The Tristram Shandy, a New Country Dance," the *London Magazine* sheet-music page for May 1761, they registered society's response to literary hits. Not only were the periodicals the places where major writers published, but they are for us essential sources of biographical information through their notices, advertisements, gossip, anecdotes, letters of controversy, reviews, biographical sketches, elegies, memoirs, imitations, and burlesques. Something of Johnson's ambivalent impact on his times surely hits us too when we compare the citation on acting (above) with the jokes about his style, as in this supposed letter to a woman proposing to substitute female for male members of Parliament: "Madam, You may perambulate the whole British dominion, before you reencounter an equal number of males, more irreprehensible, more vivacious, or that can with more facil dexterity investigate the

recondite principles of gubernatorial machinations" (*British Magazine* 7 [January 1766]:30).

Repositories of a whole society's bric-a-brac, the periodicals tantalize any browser with hints that things might fall into place if only the world were a computer with traceable circuits, that the works we know might have arisen in part from shards their authors casually noticed and that we can't seem to put together: salutary reminders that no human moment is orderly enough to be rationally reconstituted. A piece reprinted from *Common Sense* in the *London Magazine* of March 1737, "Of Dress," complaining of the vagaries of fashion and its negation of natural and social distinction, sounds very much as if Goldsmith might have known it, although in what form, in what reprinting, through what accident there is no way of estimating: "Nay, I have seen 'em [the narrator says of women in their seventies] proudly display wither'd Necks, shrivel'd and decay'd like their Marriage-Settlements, and which no Hand, but the cold Hand of Time, had visited these 40 Years" (6:130). Goldsmith's speaker in the *Bee* for 13 October 1759 sees how his equally old cousin's "bosom, that had felt no hand, but the hand of time, these twenty years, rose, suing to be pressed" (*Works* 1:376). In late 1752 the *Monthly Review*'s notice of Jackson's *Chronological Antiquities* quotes a substantial piece on Sanconiatho on the creation of the world, including "Sanconiatho shows, from the oldest Phoenecian records, that the world and mankind had not always existed, as was pretended by some Greek philosophers, Ocellus, Lucanus, Aristotle, and many others both before and after them, and that the formation of them is really no older than the scripture has made them" (7:183-84): the sort of thing Goldsmith has so much fun with in the *Vicar*, including two of the three figures always cited by Jenkinson on the subject.

Since Goldsmith sometimes reworked old themes, such echoes would not surprise scholars, but no one expects to find anticipations of Sterne, the sensational originator, as in "A Story of a Cock and a Bull" in the first volume of the *Literary Magazine*,* in May-June 1756. An aging bull, it goes, has fertilized fifteen hundred cows in his day, but now leaves them lowing and unsatisfied. Put to be baited at the fair, he musters strength to fight off the dogs and is then consoled by a cock who speaks of man's inhumanity. Written by "CS" (Christopher Smart?), this story looks like the basis for the famous ending of *Tristram Shandy*, whose author might have been reminded of it by the sheet music in the *Universal Magazine* of March 1757, for a popular song of a Cock and a Bull, as he might have been spurred to compose an earlier part by a discussion of the relative merits of men and women midwives in the *London Chronicle* of 10 September 1757.

Again and again the wanderer among the periodicals finds strange coincidences, some hinting at plausible connection and some not. When we see a starving Neapolitan crowd rushing on thirty or forty animals at a signal from the king in a review of Samuel Sharpe's *Letters from Italy* in the December 1766 *Monthly Review*, we wonder, would Smollett have read a competitor for

his own travel book and thereby have found inspiration for a grotesque scene at Bath in *Humphry Clinker*? Startled, we notice a *London Magazine* poem of October 1742 entitled "The Vanity of Mortal Things" with the same general point as Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) and a conclusion foreshadowing some of his imagery:

The noblest ornaments the earth can boast,
Vanish like shades, and in a dream are lost.
With tinsel lustre they seduce our eyes,
From the real glories of our native skies;
Give a bright glare, and in a moment die,
Low buried in the dust their honours lie.

[11:513]

Could Johnson, working for the *Gentleman's*, have read the competition carefully, and could the stimulus of this translation "from some Latin Rhimes, in Drexelius de morte, p. 216" (perhaps like the Sharpe item for Smollett) have stayed below consciousness for him to use?

If phenomena like these hint at some orderly psychology of literary influence, others suggest pure accident. Maybe the author met someone or picked up a book from some random shelf? Mr. Woodhouse in *Emma* recalls from his youth a clever riddle beginning "Kitty, a fair but frozen maid," and when we find it as the *London Chronicle*'s "A Riddle" in the issue of 19-21 May 1757 (1:488), we realize again that Jane Austen had a fine sense of period as of everything else. In the *Scots Magazine** of April 1759—when Burns was three months old—we come on extensive quotations from a *Letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland* (21:218-19) detailing the unsanctified behavior at revival meetings, very much in the manner, and with some of the observations, of Burns's "Holy Fair." A review of *Barford Abbey: A Novel* in the *Critical Review* of December 1767 (24:422-30) features a hero named "Lord Darcy, a young nobleman, of about two thousand pounds a year fortune," preparing the world for *Pride and Prejudice* as soon as its author had time to be born and to grow up to write it; another review, of *The History of Eliza Musgrove* in June 1769 (27:452-59), mentions a Lord Hindley and his son, touched with sadistic implications like his future namesake in *Wuthering Heights*.

Sometimes, of course, the scattered items may come together to better effect, to suggest a part of the social context for a writer's interest in a particular matter, a genre, a model, a way of writing or thinking.²³ The *London Magazine*'s "Table Talk. Written in the Year 1747. By Mr. Kidgell of Hertford College," in the June 1764 issue, chit-chat in rhymed tetrameters, could have impressed William Cowper with possibilities for a poem of that title, though he did not write one until much later. The *Scots Magazine*'s "An Evening Walk," September 1755, a nature poem in Thomsonian blank verse; the *Court*

Magazine's March 1763 prose "Meditation on, and in, a Great Chair"; and E. Cooper's "Elbow Chair, a Rhapsody" (reviewed in the *Monthly Review* of October 1765), with its mixture of nature and whatever else came into the poet's mind, all at least indicate a developing context for Cowper's own poetic temper and ambitions in "The Sofa" and the rest of *The Task*. Cowper might have read these pieces elsewhere than in the periodicals, or he may not have known them at all, but we can tell from them that he was writing from and for a world used to such work, fulfilling expectations rather than undertaking a revolution. Similarly, whatever Sterne owed to his childhood in army camps, surely his great novel owed much to its having been largely conceived and written during a war, when magazines (notably the *London Magazine*) had military accounts in every issue and often engraved maps of places in the war news. One would guess that Sterne had beside him as he wrote just such an engraving as the one of a collection of war instruments in the *Literary Magazine's* June-July 1757 issue, perhaps that very one.

Finally, the richest treasure in the periodicals for the student of literature is their provision of a social and intellectual context for eighteenth-century literature. The times, after all, must help shape the imaginations of the artists, contributing not only items for deliberate allusion but the external reality that the artist's imagination uses as part of the material for the art; and the periodicals competed to present this usable reality to their readers. In the periodicals we have not our version of what is important in history, but the farrago of materials that the artists used as they perceived them discretely or in patterns. Reality for the work of art after all is only what comes into the artist's imagination, not what we, pursuing our very different ends, retroactively arrange and define. However we may wish to generalize, for example, about the relations between parents and children in the 1740s, not our version but pieces like those in the *Universal Spectator* or the *Gentleman's Magazine* supplemented Richardson's direct perception of experience when he was writing *Clarissa*; not what we define as social class but what Fielding understood came into *Tom Jones*. Ours is an opinion, more or less justified by our researches and powers of analysis, whereas Harlowe or Western life in the novel is a fact, compared by its author and first readers with the facts they experienced and those they found in the periodicals.

Whether we browse among the periodicals for idle amusement, study them for social history, or use them as contexts for the significant literature that still speaks importantly to us, we have in them an immense storehouse of materials on other times. The only mediation between the phenomena—the things, the acts, the tempers, the fashions and trends and crises—of those times and us is the judgment of periodical writers and managers, whose livelihoods and self-respect depended on sensitivity to the life around them. By the end of the eighteenth century the periodicals had become so bound into the life of England—and the rest of Europe and its colonies—that only the fullest development of cheaper paper and printing, in the next century, could significantly

tighten the integration. From registering a limited though rich range of activities—so limited that we rightly think of the upper-middle-class London spread over the *Spectator* as offering the broadest coverage of life in the first decades—we have moved in the periodicals as in history to the Anacharsis Cloutz convention Melville reminded us of, of everyone and everything from everywhere for everyone. By the end of the eighteenth century English literary periodicals offer, if not the God's plenty Dryden found in Chaucer, at least the ample incoherence of life.

Notes

1. Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York, 1930), p. 15. Hereafter referred to as Graham, *ELP*.
2. Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800–1900* (Chicago, 1957), p. 30.
3. Richmond P. Bond, *Growth and Change in the Early English Press* (Lawrence, Kans., 1969), p. 4. Richmond P. Bond, ed., *Contemporaries of the "Tatler" and "Spectator,"* Augustan Reprint Society, No. 47 (Los Angeles, 1954), p. i. Roy M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices: Early Provincial Newspapers in England* (Columbus, Ohio, 1965), p. 25.
4. Rae Blanchard, ed., *Richard Steele's Periodical Journalism 1714–16* (Oxford, 1959), p. xxi. For other comments on the effect of this Stamp Act, see Donald Thomas, *A Long Time Burning: The History of Literary Censorship in England* (New York, 1969), p. 37; and Edward A. Bloom, "Neoclassic 'Paper Wars' for a Free Press," *Modern Language Review* 56 (1961):486.
5. Bloom, "Neoclassic 'Paper Wars,'" p. 493.
6. An early beacon among the mazes was Ronald S. Crane, *New Essays by Oliver Goldsmith* (Chicago, 1927). Of immense value has been Benjamin Christie Nangle, *The Monthly Review. First Series 1749–1789. Index of Contributors and Articles* (Oxford, 1934), based on the *Monthly's* editor-publisher Ralph Griffiths's records and his copy marked with identifying initials (the one reproduced in the University Microfilms reprint of that periodical).
7. James R. Sutherland, "The Circulation of Newspapers and Literary Periodicals, 1700–30," *Library* 15 (1934):110–24.
8. Altick, *English Common Reader*, pp. 47, 48, 392.
9. Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator* (Oxford, 1965), p. xxvi; Lewis M. Knapp, "Griffiths's *Monthly Review* as Printed by Strahan," *Notes and Queries* 203 (1958):216–17; Robert D. Harlan, "Some Additional Figures of Distribution of Eighteenth-Century English Books," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 59 (1965):160–70.
10. G. A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper, 1700–1760* (Oxford, 1962), p. 169; Roy M. Wiles, "Middle-Class Literacy in Eighteenth-Century England: Fresh Evidence," in R. F. Brissenden, ed., *Studies in the Eighteenth Century* (Canberra, 1968), pp. 59, 61; Robert Hay Carnie, "Scottish Printers and Booksellers 1668–1775: A Second Supplement (1)," *Studies in Bibliography* 14 (1961):82.
11. Knapp, "Griffiths's *Monthly Review*," p. 217. Calculating the cost of printing at about a penny a copy, and assuming that readers paid a shilling a copy—as they did for monthly numbers of the *Critical Review* in 1756—Knapp thinks the profits were probably good (though he says Smollett complained that not until the sixth year did he

earn enough to justify his early troubles with it). The *Monthly Review* was also advertised as costing a shilling, as in the *London Chronicle* 2 (1757):80. For prices, see Lucyle Werkmeister, *The London Daily Press 1772–1792* (Lincoln, Nebr., 1963), p. 409, and Altick, *English Common Reader*, p. 48. For a model analysis of the elements involved in producing and maintaining a notable periodical, see Richmond P. Bond, "The Tatler": *The Making of a Literary Journal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971).

12. Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women's Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria* (London, 1972), pp. 25–26; Jean E. Hunter, "The Lady's Magazine and the Study of Englishwomen in the Eighteenth Century," in Donovan H. Bond and W. Reynolds McLeod, eds., *Newsletters to Newspapers: Eighteenth-Century Journalism* (Morgantown, W. Va., 1976), pp. 103–17.

13. Graham, *ELP*, p. 38. For the reviewing journals, see also Edward A. Bloom, "Labors of the Learned": Neoclassic Book Reviewing Aims and Techniques," *Studies in Philology* 54 (1957):537–63.

14. Bond, *Growth and Change*, pp. 10–11. Their influence was powerful still at the end of the century, as witness Charles A. Knight, "The Created World of the Edinburgh Periodicals," *Scottish Literary Journal* 6 (1979):20–36.

15. Graham, *ELP*, p. 56; Richmond P. Bond, ed., *Studies in the Early English Periodical* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1957), pp. 20–21.

16. Graham, *ELP*, p. 183.

17. Oliver Goldsmith, *Works*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford, 1966), 3:191.

18. See Stephen Parks, "John Dunton and *The Works of the Learned*," *Library* 23 (1968):13–24.

19. See Roy McKeen Wiles, "The Contemporary Distribution of Johnson's *Rambler*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2 (1968):155–71; Morris Golden, "Contemporary Reprints of Goldsmith's Writings," *Studies in English Literature* 19 (1979):476–91.

20. See, for example, Robert Donald Spector, *English Literary Periodicals and the Climate of Opinion During the Seven Years' War* (The Hague, 1966).

21. See Morris Golden, "A Decade's Bent: Names in the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review*, 1760–1769," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 79 (1976):336–61.

22. See, for example, Claude E. Jones, "Poetry and the *Critical Review*, 1756–1785," *Modern Language Quarterly* 9 (1948):17–36; Claude E. Jones, "Dramatic Criticism in the *Critical Review*, 1756–1783," *Modern Language Quarterly* 20 (1959):133–44; Roger Lonsdale, "Dr. Burney and *The Monthly Review*," *Review of English Studies* 14 (1963):346–58; Morris Golden, "Travel Writing in the *Monthly Review* and *Critical Review*, 1756–1775," *Papers on Language and Literature* 13 (1977):213–23.

23. See Morris Golden, "Life Style and Literary Style: *An Essay on Man*," *Modern Language Studies* 9 (1979):29–36.

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