


Please cite the Published Version

Liggins, Emma  (2021) Book review: Women's periodicals and print culture in Britain, 1918–1939: the interwar period. *History of Retailing and Consumption*, 7 (3). pp. 293-294. ISSN 2373-518X

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/2373518x.2022.2120842>

Publisher: Taylor & Francis

Version: Accepted Version

Downloaded from: <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/631491/>

Usage rights:  [Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

Additional Information: Book review of Women's periodicals and print culture in Britain, 1918–1939: the interwar period edited by Catherine Clay, Maria DiGenzo, Barbara Green, and Fiona Hackney, Edinburgh University Press, 2018, ISBN: 9781474412537

Enquiries:

If you have questions about this document, contact openresearch@mmu.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

Clay, Catherine, Maria DiCenzo, Barbara Green and Fiona Hackney, eds. *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1918-1939: The Interwar Period*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018. 528 pp. ISBN: 978 1474412537. Paper price £150.

The interwar period has been unduly neglected in histories of the periodical, with attention focused on Victorian print culture or modernist 'little magazines'. This important and accessible volume in the Edinburgh History of Women's Periodical Culture in Britain redresses this imbalance by offering a wealth of material on a huge variety of publications from *Vogue* and *Good Housekeeping* to the *Jewish Chronicle*, fascist newspapers, the socialist *New Leader* and privately printed materials such as the Irish Sapphic journal *Urania*. Comprising thirty essays by both new and established scholars, all of which reimagine interwar print culture, the volume sets out to reveal 'the startling complexity of periodicals aimed at women readers and the various notions of the modern woman they suggested' (1).

Grouping papers under five themes, 'Culture and the Modern Woman', 'Styling Modern Life', 'Reimagining Homes, Housewives, and Domesticity', 'Feminist Media and Agendas for Change' and 'Women's Organisations and Communities of Interest', the editorial team provide short introductions to each section which effectively frame recent developments in periodical research in these key areas. Catherine Clay draws on recent ground-breaking work on *Time and Tide* to advance discussions of women's writing and literary criticism in interwar journalism as well as reminding us that women's magazines and modernism were never mutually exclusive. Maria DiCenzo's outlining of the agendas for change is particularly enlightening in the context of 'the pluralisation and diversification of interwar feminist discourses', opposing misleading 'broader assumptions about women's retreat to home and duty after the war' (313). A useful appendix offers supplementary materials on price, editors, dates and, significantly, locations of archives. The challenges of 'mediating the archive' (6) at a time when advances in digital technology may facilitate different kinds of searches but when obscure periodicals are either literally crumbling in libraries or unavailable are at the forefront of this exciting collection of essays, which urges us to pose new questions about periodicals, readers, gender and politics.

The volume pays welcome attention to the developing fashion industry, women's membership of political organisations and to the woman as both consumer and citizen, as readers took up a variety of roles not exclusively orientated around the home and children. There is a welcome emphasis on the visuality of periodicals. Penny Tinkler's analysis of the nascent teenager in *Miss Modern* (1930-1940), a publication with extensive advertising and consumer-related materials, explores the targeting of younger readers at a time when emergent teenage identities were produced by modernity, yet 'youth was slippery' (168). Fiona Hackney offers an elegant discussion of the new visual rhetoric of consumption in domestic monthlies such as *Modern Woman*, in which advertisements, editorials and romantic fiction appealed to readers who 'might imagine themselves differently: modernised and improved' (303). A little-known housewife column with its economic slant in *Labour Woman* is examined by Karen Hunt, who shows how this innovation helped to activate and engage its working-class readers, for whom 'interwar domesticity was neither cosy nor rationalised nor modern' (250). Sarah Lonsdale's chapter on women journalists and their potential challenging of gender barriers, Natalie Bradbury's revealing account of constructions of the co-operative woman in *Woman's Outlook* and Jacqueline R. deVries's survey of feminist writing in religious print media such as the *Catholic Citizen* also show

how women's achievements and aspirations, even though limited by social and gender inequalities, helped to shape political agendas or perpetuate feminist progress.

Whilst the focus on the British context perhaps counters recent impulses in periodical studies towards the transnational, this does not exclude discussion of race, empire and international relations. Natalie Kalich's essay on America's jazz age in British *Vogue*, for example, considers whether the cartoons of African American dancers by Miguel Covarrubias constitute a stereotyping of black culture as 'savage' or an important exposure of transatlantic cultural moments. Rebecca's Roach's reading of lady interviewers and notions of celebrity addresses the impact of the development of the Hollywood film industry on new magazines such as *Film Weekly* and *Picturegoer*, whilst Joyce Goodman examines internationalism, empire and peace in the little-known *Woman Teacher*, with its affiliations with the Women's World Committee against War and Fascism. A little more on connections with Europe or Asia would have added to discussions of global reading communities.

As important scholars working at the forefront of their field, the four editors are ideally placed to offer their expertise and to point to new developments in periodical studies. The volume amply demonstrates the invigoration of interest in this neglected period of women's history, challenging views of 1920s and 1930s journalism as revolving around the housewife and homes fit for heroes. It will be essential reading for scholars of periodicals, feminism and the early twentieth century, capturing the diversity of interwar print culture and paving the way for further research into the periodical landscape and media industry in a time of transition.

Dr Emma Liggins, Manchester Metropolitan University

e.liggins@mmu.ac.uk

Dr Emma Liggins is Reader in English Literature in the Department of English at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her publications include *George Gissing, the Working Woman and Urban Culture* (Ashgate, 2006), *The British Short Story* (with Andrew Maunder & Ruth Robbins) (Palgrave, 2011), *Odd Women? Spinsters, Lesbians and Widows in British Women's Fiction, 1850-1939* (Manchester University Press, 2014) and *The Haunted House in Women's Ghost Stories, 1850-1945: Gender, Space and Modernity* (Palgrave, 2020). She has also published an article on Vernon Lee and the supernatural in *Gothic Studies* (2013). She has a chapter on modernist women's ghost stories in *British Women Short Story Writers: The New Woman to Now* eds. Emma Young and James Bailey (Edinburgh University Press, 2015) and a chapter on 'The Edwardian Supernatural' in *The Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Gothic* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022).