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Literary, But Not Too Literary; Joyous, But Not Jazzy:

Triad Magazine, Antipodean Modernity and the Middlebrow

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Antipodean Modernity

My title comes from an editorial in the Sydney monthly, the Triad, from July 1924. It represents one in a series of attempts by the magazine’s editors to redefine their magazine in a way that was adequate to the changed cultural circumstances in which they found themselves in the mid-1920s—surrounded on all sides by the new cultures of modernity, confronting the rapid turnover of isms that had yet to find enduring institutional form as modernism, and attempting to find a place in a cultural field that appeared newly segmented into high, low, and middlebrow strata, at exactly the moment the term “middlebrow” gained wide currency in the English-speaking world. The editors sought an editorial platform, an audience, and a set of contents that were, in one of the phrases of the era, “neither highbrow nor lowbrow.”
this task proved near-impossible for the magazine in any permanent form has a good deal to tell us about the print culture of this key transitional moment and the state of what I will call “antipodean modernity.”

Studies of modernism and modernity in Australia have been transformed over the last decade in ways that manifest the “spatial” and “vertical” expansion of the new modernist studies as defined by Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz. This transformation, however, has been driven as much by internal pressures on the cultural modeling of nation and modernity as by external influence. The “transnational turn” has been especially influential in reconfiguring Australian cultures and hence in reconfiguring Australia’s relation to international modernity across a wide range of fields: popular theater and live entertainment, cinema, radio and jazz, photography, craft and fine arts, architecture and design, advertising, fashion and consumption. The ground has shifted from high modernism alone to the more complex and entangled spheres of technological, media, and “vernacular” modernisms, reframing modernism as “a powerful domain within a particular modernity,” here in its specific Australian time and place.

Australian literature has also been subject to the transnational turn, but, with only a small number of exceptions, studies of print culture and especially the critical role of periodicals in relation to modernity have lagged some distance behind. The focus has been on a small number of publications including the weekly Bulletin—especially in its first two decades from 1880, when it managed to combine elements of the new journalism with a serious commitment to the nation, the public, and cultural life—and on the little magazines, particularly the spectacularly antimodernist Vision (1923–24) or the heroically modernist Angry Penguins (1940–46). Studies of Australian modernity have also given increased attention to Home (1920–42), a magazine dedicated to the dissemination of modern taste in fashion, design, and the decorative arts. But a great deal of the archive remains unexplored. The Triad itself is largely forgotten, despite having been the only long-term periodical in Australia across the first three decades of the twentieth century dedicated primarily to literature, theater, and the other arts.
Earlier approaches to modernism in Australia took their bearings from the “Greenwich Meridian” of European and Anglo-American high modernism, or from a nationalist perspective tracing the evolution of a distinctive Australian culture that would be at once local, modern, and mature.\(^7\) Indeed, the two perspectives were often complementary, giving rise to a long history of pronouncements on the nation’s incipient modernity: the signs of modernity were gathering but had not yet, not quite, been consolidated; or alternatively, the latest successful artist or artifact was proof that the nation had finally made it. In effect, both perspectives inscribe the model of center and margin, metropolis and province, so that the history of modernism in Australia unavoidably became a story of lack and lag. The fact that Australia was a long way away, itself a very partial geography, routinely blurred into the idea that it was a long way behind. Geographical distance was translated into cultural belatedness.

By contrast, the newer studies of modernity discover Australia’s contemporaneity with the modernity of cultures elsewhere, its thorough implication in modernity’s international networks of exchange, its “self-modernizing” capacities. As Jill Julius Matthews writes in her study of 1920s Sydney: “Rather than the last station on the line, a backwater ten years behind Europe and America as some both at the time and since have asserted, Sydney was a busy port of call in the ceaseless international ebb and flow of commerce and ideas that underpinned cosmopolitan modernity” (Matthews, Dance Hall & Picture Palace, 8). Engaged in this commerce, Australians forged identities “as modern Australians and modern citizens of the world” (1). Such arguments shift the time-space coordinates for understanding local or provincial modernities—antipodean \(\text{[End Page 246]}\) modernities—even as they give more weight to just what the local or provincial might mean in a transnational framing. If Australia was provincial, there is little reason to assume it was more so than most of Britain, America, or Europe (and given Australia’s high levels of urbanization, some reason for assuming otherwise); and to discover Sydney’s or Melbourne’s modernity is to discover in turn the “provincialism”—the localness rather than universality—of Paris, New York, and London. Against the assumption that “modernity is first invented in the metropolitan center and then exported to the colonial peripheries—which are always, by definition, belated”—the new approaches reconfigure “the cultural landscape of empire or the world system as a set of interdependent sites, as
a network of relations rather than a one-way transfer of culture and authority” (Dixon, *Photography*, xxiii–xiv). Australia is revealed to be not simply the passive, belated recipient of cultural imports, but an active participant in the global diffusion of popular—and unpopular—modernities. Even the imperial connection, seen merely as a constraining or corrupting factor from a cultural nationalist perspective, can be re-envisioned as a vector of modernity, “networking” Australians into the modern world that was in part already their own.

Two further contexts for the present article are modern periodical studies and middlebrow studies. Modern periodical studies have not only established the centrality of magazines in the advancement of modernist movements, but also the need for modernist studies to broaden its focus beyond the explicitly modernist little magazines to a much wider range of periodicals. In early twentieth-century Australia—that is, in a cultural economy that lacked an established book publishing industry and a dense infrastructure of cultural institutions—this aspect of magazine culture is doubly significant. If the *Triad* was the only long-term monthly devoted to the arts, it was anything but a lone voice crying in the wilderness. Australians participated in a busy, crowded print culture of newspapers and magazines, both imported and local, which reached its peak between the wars. Among many others, the *Strand*, the *London Magazine*, and *John O’London’s Weekly* were readily available, alongside American contemporaries such as *Munsey’s*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. As the *Triad* itself shows, one of the “discoveries” in the archive is a much higher degree of familiarity with contemporary American culture in Australia than previous histories allow. The proliferation of competing publications in the 1920s exerted increasing pressure on the *Triad*’s editors to claim their space in the magazine market and to define the nature of the public they addressed.

The local industry was dominated by general commercial magazines: “general” in the sense that they covered, variously, public affairs, social news, fashion, celebrity gossip, the arts, books, and entertainment; “commercial’ not only in the sense that they expected to survive through advertising and sales, but also in the way they located culture and entertainment together in what was at once a public domain and a marketplace (Carter, “The Conditions of Fame,” 173–84). The *Triad* claimed to cover “Pictures, Books, Life, People, Places”; although focused on the arts and performance, it behaved as and competed with the general commercial papers as “A
Monthly Journal devoted to Entertaining the Public and to the Arts in so far as they contribute to the Art [End Page 247] of Living.”11 Like them, its contents were heterogeneous, multivocal, and thoroughly attuned to the contemporary. These characteristics were effects of the magazines’ periodicity as weeklies or monthlies and of their relations to the market—the market for contributors as well as for readers. Almost regardless of editorial attitudes towards the modern, the magazines were predisposed towards the contemporary, engaged with their own relation to the present, obliged to be current. In this light, what becomes significant is less their position on modernism than their position within modernity, and recognizing this enables us to read the modernity of artifacts that are partly or wholly resistant to modernism but engaged, nonetheless, with their own contemporaneity, as is the case for the Triad.

This perspective also suggests one way of understanding the “historical middlebrow.”12 While certain middlebrow practices can be linked to nineteenth-century projects for the “democratizing of reading,” the key point for understanding the emergence of the middlebrow between the wars, both rhetorically and institutionally, is its relation to modernism.13 The calibration of tastes or texts on a scale of high to low has a much longer history. But the novel concept of the middlebrow, of a distinct middle range between higher and lower taste cultures, depended on something new: the simultaneous presence of high modernism, on one side, and the new media and technologies of “mass-commercial culture,” on the other.14 These twin pressures shaped the space of the middlebrow, not as “everything in between” but as a set of shifting relations to the modern, a key function of the distinctively modern commercial magazines that emerged in this period.15 If one register of the middlebrow was an aspiration towards the classics or “great books,” another was organized more overtly around attitudes to modernity—to modernism but also to keeping up with the “best of the new books.” This was certainly the dominant register in the commercial periodicals, attuned as they were to the books of the week and the month and to their readers’ current aspirations, even where tastes were conservative.

My interest here is in offering a microhistory of the Triad’s understanding of its antipodean position and of its complex mediation of modernity, while also taking it as a limit case for understanding the emergence of middlebrow culture in Australia. I
focus on a key moment in the mid-1920s when the magazine’s editors felt compelled to redefine the nature of their publication and hence of their audience. What had previously been an untroubled, if aggressively inclusive, address—to the intelligent, the interested public, but with little sense that these capacities were socially restricted—suddenly becomes troubled by the specter of antagonistic cultures and segmented audiences. The magazine cannot escape the language of brows, even as it seeks to resist its implications. And while a simpler form of antimodernism offered one kind of resolution, it never solved for long the problem of how the magazine might bring together its aspirations to both high culture and wide appeal, and to the modernity it sought on both sides. It became increasingly middlebrow, almost despite itself, as the print economy and cultural vocabulary in which it operated were transformed. [End Page 248]

The Antiprovincial Imagination

The Triad was launched in New Zealand in April 1893 by the Australian-born Charles Nalder Baeyertz. The “triad” to which its title refers was at first “Music, Science and Art.” Literature was soon added, and then, by 1912, a new formulation proclaimed the magazine’s seriousness as a journal devoted to “Literary, Pictorial, Musical and Dramatic Art.” Baeyertz’s specialty was witty and uncompromising music criticism, the mainstay of the magazine during its first decade. He once wrote of the world-famous Australian soprano Nellie Melba that her tone was as “liquid as a crystal snow-fed brook—and as cold” (quoted in Woods, Facing the Music, 130). Music reviewing might today seem an implausibly narrow platform on which to launch a general magazine of arts and culture, but live music and theater were then the main forms of public entertainment and cultural participation. Opera and orchestral music were not yet fully “sacralized,” in Lawrence Levine’s sense of the term, but belonged still to the world of popular commercial entertainment even as they invoked sublime Art or social prestige. Stars such as Melba or Caruso were among the earliest of international celebrities, in Australasia no less than in Europe or America; and Australia and New Zealand were on the international circuits that sent celebrity performers across the globe, many traveling via Pacific routes from San Francisco to Sydney.
In its prime, from 1900 to the early 1920s, the *Triad* represented a remarkable and sustained act of the antiprovincial imagination, not in the sense that it was projected into some cosmopolitan no-space but rather that it imagined that its own locales—Wellington, Dunedin, Sydney, or the bush—might share the contemporaneity of cultures elsewhere; that its local readers deserved the best criticism and the most up-to-date news of culture from around the world; and that it was *their* culture, not merely something imported. Baeyertz wrote most of the magazine in its first decade and a half, supplementing his own words with manifold clippings from English, European, and American papers. The practice was a common one, but it could have significance beyond mere space filling. In Baeyertz's hands, it placed the *Triad*'s readers in the midst of contemporary news and opinion about music, art, and science from across the globe.

The magazine's cultural ambitions were broadened when Baeyertz was joined, in 1908, by Frank Morton, English-born but with experience as a journalist in Singapore, India, and Australia. Morton wrote most of the copy over the next decade and a half. His interests were literary rather than musical, but he wrote with extraordinary verve and prodigality about almost anything—Manly Beach, modernist poetry, fish, French literature, American morals, sex, nudity, olive oil, headaches, women's ankles, and more. He also published too much of his own poetry, often long excursions into *vers libre*. Neither Morton nor Baeyertz was interested in supporting a national literature, certainly not on the model of the “bush legend” then being promoted as Australia's own. As Morton put it, “I cannot exuberate about Horse” (Woods, *Facing the Music*, 115).

From the start, the *Triad* was conceived as commercial and Australasian: “This magazine, in common with all magazines, is made to *sell*.21 Baeyertz was an entrepreneurial owner-editor, a species that thrived in the 1890s but became much rarer [End Page 249] by the late twenties as larger print empires emerged. As his biographer has written, he had much in common with “the latest generation of American magazine editors for whom publication was a business enterprise inspired by the editor’s personal vision, but driven by what would sell” (Woods, *Facing the Music*, 51). In the journalistic and theatrical milieu in which the magazine was pitched, there was no necessary contradiction between these commercial goals and Baeyertz's aspiration “to preach the gospel of culture to the widest possible
audience” (53). While the market could always cheapen culture, for Baeyertz and Morton it was in the public, commercial sphere, rather than in any separate aesthetic domain, that culture was to be found. It is this robust, journalistic, and public sense of culture that comes increasingly under stress in the decade following the end of World War I.

While the bulk of the *Triad*'s subscribers were initially from New Zealand, by the early years of the new century the magazine had a substantial circulation in Australia. In 1915, Baeyertz relocated to Sydney, which offered a larger public, a wider pool of potential advertisers, and cheaper printing costs. Nonetheless, a separate New Zealand edition was maintained—the magazine referred to itself as “The National Journal of Australia and New Zealand”—although the New Zealand connection faded in the mid-1920s as what had been a shared print culture across the two territories began to dissipate. By the end of the war, the *Triad* offered a substantial sixty pages for sixpence, full of topical essays, entertaining features, news of the arts, and reviews of music, theater, fine art, cinema, and books. One of Morton’s heroes was American critic, editor, and satirist H. L. Mencken, “the most eminent of all American critics,” and through Morton’s domination of its pages the magazine waged a relentless and entertainingly excessive Menckenesque campaign against puritanism, propriety, and intellectual or artistic dishonesty. In Morton’s own words: “I hate, loathe, fear, detest, and execrate all forms of intolerance, nasty-mindedness, prudishness (the same thing), uncharitableness, sedition, irreverence, mawkishness, jealousy, suspicion, malevolence, and cant. I am not afraid of the Justice of God, or of Beauty, or of Sex, or of Life.” The *Triad* delighted in assuring its readers they would be shocked by its frankness and audacity: “You are interested in the *Triad* because it often makes you jump and stutter. . . . You pay for what we want to say, and not for what you want to say. . . . Given beauty and a pure intent, it is no more afraid of a naked girl than it is of a naked iceberg or the naked truth.” If these attitudes had their roots in 1890s bohemianism, they could still sound daringly modern in the new century.

Perhaps this audacity, combined with its cultural ambitions, was why the *Triad* was popular, especially, so it claimed, among young women readers. Its later New Zealand editor, Pat Lawlor, recalled: “While it had a strong ‘snob appeal’ it was widely read even by the average reader. To be up with the *Triad* was to be considered
‘intellectual.’” For magazine historian Frank Greenop, it was “an extremely interesting intellectual magazine which, in spite of its high level, won both circulation and respect, since its writing was so well and simply phrased that it made interesting reading to a wide circle of literate readers who were neither highly educated or enthusiasts for art.” In its own words, the Triad had “a modest belief” that its readers were “a little above the average” ("Obiter Dicta," 9). There are no reliable circulation figures, but Greenop estimated the magazine had a circulation of 3,000 when it came to Australia and more than 23,000 when it became the New Triad in August 1927 (Greenop, History of Magazine Publishing, 236, 238). By this late stage it was already in terminal decline. In February 1920, Baeyertz claimed a monthly readership of 100,000, a very large number in the Australian context (Woods, Facing the Music, 195). If this figure is unlikely, the Triad certainly spoke like a magazine with a wide public, claiming subscribers in “high schools, universities, theological colleges, academies of dramatic art, convents, legislative assemblies, municipal offices, banks, boxing saloons, theaters, vicarages, shipping offices, and in all the various kinds of business establishments and private houses.” It did have readers across Australasia and the Pacific Islands, in England, and in the United States—from Ezra Pound to Mary Pickford. In April 1922, the magazine featured a photograph of the Hollywood star reading the Triad and a letter from her claiming that she never missed an issue (Carter, “The Conditions of Fame,” 170–72).

The Old Triad and the New

For the present argument, the story begins in December 1923 with Morton’s unexpected death. Without his dominating presence, the magazine was forced to redefine itself, to restate its cultural ambitions, in a rapidly changing cultural economy. In August 1924, Baeyertz appointed Sydney journalist and playwright L. L. Woolacott as the Triad’s associate editor. Baeyertz and Woolacott shared editorial responsibilities, but Woolacott’s role almost certainly increased over time. Already a contributor for more than a decade, he shared many of Morton’s ideals and mannerisms, including his vitalist language and celebration of Mencken.

Despite this continuity, it had evidently become more difficult by this time to position the magazine in the field of culture and in the marketplace, for this now meant taking a position in relation to disparate readerships and antagonistic “high”
and “low” cultures. While the *Triad's* pages still contained a generous sense of the kinds of books, music, and theater that deserved notice, the assumption of a single, heterogeneous public culture, which had previously underwritten the magazine, was increasingly under stress. Different editorial strategies were required: to connect two or more unequal realms which had been driven apart; to claim a space in between high and low cultures; or to resist that space by asserting a position outside the cultural hierarchies. The *Triad* experimented with all three options.

In May 1925, for example, the new editorial team announced that “virtually a new *Triad*” had appeared. In order to define the new pitch they drew, perhaps inevitably, on the language of brows: The Old *Triad*, rightly or wrongly, was dubbed High-brow. The New *Triad* is neither High-brow nor Low-brow. It is Broad-brow. That’s not a compromise. It’s a challenge: a challenge to the few who still imagine that the *Triad* appeals exclusively to literary and artistic coteries.  

The “old” *Triad* had indeed set high critical standards and challenged its readers, quoting extensively in French for example, and it managed to do so without defensiveness, [End Page 251] with an ironic, performative sense of its own “snobbery.” By contrast, the first task for the “new” *Triad* was to assure readers, especially new readers, that it would not be highbrow.

Although the word “highbrow” was current well before 1925, in important ways it is anachronistically applied to the *Triad* in its earlier manifestations. Morton wrote from a world of professional, largely freelance journalism where there was a great deal of crossover between journalistic and literary writing, with commercial magazines the vehicle for their commingling. Sketches, essays, criticism, stories, editorials, and verse existed within the same field and for much the same audiences, rather than there being an autonomous literary sphere, except for the rarest examples of genuine Art.  
The vital qualities of intelligence, honesty, vigor, and freedom could be discovered—and practiced—across a wide variety of genres, styles, and occasions, high and low. In a single issue, the *Triad* could review a book of golfing reminiscences; a study of Bolshevism; General Sir John Monash’s book on the French campaigns; new volumes of English and Australian poetry; Louis Calvert’s *Problems of the Actor*; and a mixture of English, American, and Norwegian novels, from a cowboy romance to works of “delicate literary craftsmanship,” by authors as diverse as Louis Joseph
Vance, Johan Bojer, Meg Villars, Marmaduke Pickthall, Charles Alden Seltzer, and Joseph Hergesheimer. It delighted in such promiscuity. While never populist or demotic, the *Triad* had a generous sense of its readers’ interests and capacities, a quality it shared with other general commercial magazines, but which it pursued more actively in the literary field.

In short, under Morton’s hand the cultural world the magazine comprehended did not admit the hierarchical segmentation of tastes and publics that his successors had to negotiate. The terms “highbrow” and “lowbrow” were not used in the magazine during Morton’s tenure. This is not to say that cultural segmentation was absent or that Morton had no scale of values. He delighted in ridiculing trash and celebrating Beauty. But the magazine’s cultural world, at this stage, was not organized around a hierarchy of antagonistic tastes. Nor did it disconnect culture and entertainment. Cinema was reviewed in much the same way as theater, not as “low” to “high” but distributed across the full range of tastes and qualities. If the magazine’s standards were high, it expected to find them in the cultural marketplace, in the commercial theater and cinema, in journalism and contemporary fiction, no less than in the classics. Morton’s cultural authority was formed and performed *in* the marketplace not against it, although art might also be the vehicle for a vitalist transcendence of the crassly commercial.

This sense of a public field of writing was challenged by the divisive powers of modernism. While Morton could not appreciate the formal experimentation of post-impressionism or avant-garde literature, his vitalist aesthetic and robust sense of the literary marketplace meant that his attitudes did not congeal into the programmatic antimodernism of other Australian magazines (Carter, *Always Almost Modern*, 45–66, 81–111). Through the influence of local artist and author Norman Lindsay, and of Nietzsche behind Lindsay, vitalism was a major influence in Australia between the wars, sustaining a critique of Victorian prurience and modernity in the name of Life, Beauty, and “Vision,” the title of Lindsay’s manifesto-driven magazine. Modernity was [End Page 252] the very opposite of the vital spirit great art embodied, through its utilitarianism and rationalism, on the one hand, and its decadence and primitivism, as represented by modernism, on the other. But as Humphrey McQueen has argued, the very antimodernism of *Vision* made it “up-to-date in a way that almost no other local publication had managed” as it “scoured the cultural presses of
the world in search of decadence to attack” (McQueen, *Black Swan of Trespass*, 19).

Morton likewise kept his readers informed about new developments in England and the United States, especially in modern poetry, and while he attacked vorticism and imagism in his most vigorously excessive manner, he welcomed new vitalist energies wherever he could find them.

On one side, for Morton, the “arid spinsters of Chicago” represented by Harriet Monroe’s *Poetry* wrote in “kinky breakneck angularities and lines cut into lengths as though by a blunt axe”; *Blast* provoked a “six-page tirade” entitled “Impudence and Idiocy,” to which Pound responded (Woods, *Facing the Music*, 166). But on the other side, in certain forms of modernist and near-modernist writing, Morton found signs of the frankness, beauty, or passion he sought in all art. Storm Jameson was praised as “profoundly intellectual,” her fiction as a “clean revolt against all the beastliness of the heavy respectables.” Synge’s *Playboy of the Western World* took as its theme the “primeval blood-lust” beneath civilization, and treated it with “rare grace and dignity.” There was something definite to praise, too, in Carl Sandburg, Aldous Huxley, Wilfred Owen, and even the Sitwells and their journal *Wheels*:

Miss Iris Tree grows on us. She is all apulse with feeling and independent to the marrow. She knows the effect she wants, and she goes for it. In common with the other youngsters of this pack she is bound by no rules and tied to no conventions of literary craftsmanship . . . . It is enlivening, this determination to take whatever form or formlessness of verse one is personally inclined to. So long as it is verse, of course.

(Morton, “More Wheels from Oxford,” 33)

Edith Sitwell’s verse showed “exotic and savage moods.” Morton also came to respect Monroe—the *Triad* exchanged subscriptions with *Poetry*—and to praise Pound, especially the latter’s *Cathay* poems: “Apart from the Vorticists, his own work is often golden with a singular delight. Some of his versions of small poems from the Chinese are perfect gems in their kind, and often his ripe learning makes us humble.” Pound, in fact, had earlier praised the *Triad* in the *Little Review* as being “more alert to, and [having] better criticism of, contemporary French publications than any American periodical.”
Other Triad critics were also open to the new. Woolacott celebrated Strindberg for his “abnormal genius” and “merciless exploitation of his own eroticism”: “to read Strindberg is to become educated in the methods of the psychoanalysts; and to be unaware of those methods is nowadays nothing less than a calamity.”

A. L. Kelly, the magazine’s sophisticated music critic, applauded Australian modernist composer Roy Agnew, although he played “nothing but the compositions of the Futurists, the Vorticists, and the Post-Parabolists.” Agnew’s own compositions were “in no key and every key” but were “pure music . . . coloured with daring and resource in a quite modern way.”

Morton’s obsession with vers libre is suggestive of his position on the cusp of the modernist break with late nineteenth-century and Edwardian aesthetics. Vers libre was new, and yet not so new as the modern isms. It could express “passionate sincerity” and “shining purpose”—terms Morton used for poets in the Wheels anthologies—but free verse, when it was verse, was also a traditional form, obeying rules of rhythm and meter. Otherwise it was “merely a bastard shapelessness of affectation begot by snivelling incapacity on a pose of literary Americanism.”

“Americanism” was itself a productive obsession for Morton. America embodied the best and worst of modernity. It remained “the one great Puritan country,” the home of “sex hypocrisy,” yet it also held the “promise of revolt”: “American achievements in the arts and sciences will startle the world. God send that the awakening may be soon!” Despite being too modern at times, “modern almost to the point of lunatic extravagance,” Mencken’s attacks on “theologians, professors, editorial-writers, right-thinkers, and reformers,” even the “delicate brutality” of his language, were Morton’s own (Morton, “Discite Justitiam,” 32; “Mencken,” 8). The Triad also paid close attention to the new crop of American novelists, both the new realism of Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, and Floyd Dell, and the sophisticated decadence of James Branch Cabell, Joseph Hergesheimer, and Ben Hecht. Morton responded to their sense of aesthetic superiority no less than to their campaigns against provincialism and puritanism. Hergesheimer was in the “front rank of contemporary writers,” getting to the “inner motive power of man” (“A Few Books,” 38). Hecht’s Erik Dorn was “not food for babes”—and that was a good thing. With such writers, American fiction showed “a steadily increasing upward tendency.”
In these ways, Morton’s *Triad* was sharply attuned to its own situation within modernity, even in its antimodernism, but its sense of a shared public space of writing represented an older journalistic habitus largely outside the structuring language of brows and the institutional transformations that had brought that language into being. Morton had his own high values, but these could be found right across the field of culture. His critiques of modernism were never about its highbrow nature, and his vitalist aesthetic meant there was no space in his writing world for a middlebrow disposition.47

Neither Tripe, nor Caviare

It is unclear to what extent the unsettled identity of the new *Triad* was the result of editorial limitations, financial and management difficulties, or changes in the periodical marketplace.48 Whatever the immediate causes, they manifested themselves in the magazine in shifting reiterations of its sense of its audience, market pitch, and cultural range that registered the unavoidable force of the highbrow-lowlbrow discourse and the space of available reactions to modernism and mass culture it entailed. From December 1923 until its demise in July 1927, the *Triad*’s new platform was defined and then redefined as if the matter could never quite be resolved. There are corresponding shifts in its contents and often a disjunction between contents and platform. [End Page 254]

The December 1923 edition announced “The *Triad*’s Widening Appeal.” It included new fashion and celebrity features from London, Paris, and New York, a serialized detective tale from the American author Arthur B. Reeve, and an “enthralling story” by another American, Lee Foster Hartman. Under the heading “New Features of Popular Appeal,” Baeyertz claimed the changes were simply a matter of adding new material for new readers. But there was also a new defensiveness in his explanation. The editorial’s twists and turns as it seeks to reconcile old with new requires quoting at length:

> With this issue the *Triad* sets out to cut a wider swath. In the essentials of character and ideal the magazine will remain as it has been, but new pages and new features of popular appeal will be added . . . [W]hile holding on to our
special public, while remaining perfectly loyal and constant to the tens of thousands of good people who have come down the years with us, we must still consider the new arrivals in the family.

There are features essential to a magazine of the class of the *Triad* that inevitably have no appeal outside a restricted class of enthusiasts and intelligentszia [*sic*] . . . criticisms of music for example. So that, while keeping faith with readers who like to read criticisms of music, we must consider also the thousands of new subscribers who could hardly be persuaded to read musical criticism even for a fee.

It is the same in regard to other features. There are large numbers of people—educators, professional men, students, and the rest—who like the *Triad* as it is, and who mutter disgustedly at all talk of changing it. . . .

There is no reason why any of these people of good taste should be alarmed. The *Triad* will be what the *Triad* has been . . . with some added pages. In addition to the smart and accomplished girls who have been our champions and candid friends, there are the other smart girls who think that life is all a rag, and serious reading all a swot. We want to bring all the smart women into the fold. . . .

Then there is fiction. The *Triad* is going to run connected stories, not necessarily serials, by successful novelists in England and America. We are beginning right-off with some brilliant detective yarns written by a first-seller of the United States in that class. (It is surprising to find how many intellectual people like to read detective stories for relaxation and amusement.) . . .

The Old Guard needn’t be afraid that we are going to publish anything by Miss Ethel M. Dell or the late Charles Garvice, or that we are going to neglect Australian writers and Australian themes.

It will be the old *Triad* still, but the old *Triad* broadening its view and going about more.49
The editorial’s language is marked at every turn by the sense of a split between two taste cultures, even as it claims merely to be “broadening its view”: on one hand, there are the people of “good taste,” the professional men, the “smart and accomplished girls,” and the “intelligentszia” (the unusual spelling reflects the relative novelty of the term in English usage); on the other, the lovers of “first-selling” fiction and all the “other smart girls.” The conceit of the smart girls is a response to that key marker of 1920s modernity, the broadening of cultural consumption beyond the settled store of cultural capital to the “modern girls” from the middle and working classes. This was the new audience the Triad sought to reach, for its transformations were not just about popularizing the magazine but also modernizing it. [End Page 255]

The February 1924 Triad risked cheap popularity even further with the first installment of a serial by the English novelist Gilbert Frankau. Frankau is now commonly recognized as one of the key middlebrow novelists of the 1920s, but the Triad serial “The Fantastic Adventures of Randolph Blow, Airman” is generic adventure-romance. The following month the cover proclaimed “Eight Hours of Fascinating Reading.” Perhaps uncertain of their direction or their public, the editors invited “constructive criticisms” from their readers, very few of whom the editors later report, perhaps with some satisfaction, liked the new serials. As one reader alert to the magazine’s divided ambitions put it:

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Increased circulation should mean increased literary value, not a hotch-potch wherein keen criticism of music and books rubs shoulders with sensational thrillers [and] hints on women’s fashions . . . [The] infliction of Gilbert Frankau on a people whose imagination is already drugged by an army of best-sellers is a fiendish tragedy. . . . Don’t write for the masses, write at them.
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(“Two Competitions in Criticism,” 18)

The last sentence was worthy of Morton himself, and the letter earned the author a guinea. Another acute reader noted the incongruity of a photograph of “William Butler Yeats looking at us ponderously and soulfully from a nest of Detective Stories!” Some wanted more poetry and less “trashy novel stuff”; others wanted better stories “of the breathless action and human interest types, of which the public
never tires”; some wanted more criticism, others less (“Criticisms and Suggestions,” 50). While all assumed the *Triad*'s status as a quality paper, the range of views reflected the magazine’s own ambivalence about its position in the print marketplace. On the very same page as the letters, and writing *at* its audience, the magazine welcomed a new play from America as “very modern” and “expressionistic” (in quotation marks in the original): “It all sounds very queer; but the queer thing of today is inevitably tomorrow’s commonplace. Selah!”

Peter Kirkpatrick has argued that the *Triad* “gradually turned into a Jazz Age publication, aiming to be fashionable but succeeding only in becoming facile” (Kirkpatrick, *Sea Coast of Bohemia*, 106). The comment certainly has a point, but it is less than fair to the editors’ serious ambitions and the range of contents. In July 1924, in the editorial from which my title is drawn, Baeyertz attempted yet another definition of the magazine’s character, admitting that it was in “a transition stage.” While his language retains traces of the older “public” address, it also approaches a rhetoric we may well call middlebrow: “The *Triad* stands by its policy of trying to be literary, but not too literary; honest, but not too bluntly honest; entertaining, but not too consciously funny; instructive, but not pedantic; joyous, but not jazzy.” The exclusionary phrases “not too literary” and “not jazzy” are key, the former indicating highbrow taste, the latter popular modernity; “jazz” functions as the shorthand for all the new forms of popular culture and the new fashions and behavior that accompanied them, not least among “smart girls.” There was clearly pressure from within or without for the magazine to become a popular monthly of entertaining reading rather than a journal devoted to the arts for a more delimited and self-defining readership. If it risked being perceived as lowbrow in the search for popularity, the risk of being perceived as highbrow was registered as even more threatening.

The *Triad*'s position is asserted in new terms again in May 1925, in the claim to be broadbrow quoted earlier: “The New *Triad* is neither High-brow nor Low-brow. It is Broad-brow.” The concept is an interesting one, as its confident assertion of breadth and manly wholesomeness is shadowed by a more defensive sense of being somehow somewhere in between. Its deployment predates J. B. Priestley’s widely influential use of the term from February 1926, at the height of the “battle of the brows” in British book culture. To claim the broadbrow was to resist the very idea of
a division of culture into mutually antagonistic highbrow and lowbrow domains, but increasingly such breadth had to be defined against these two antagonists: in the magazine's terms, as intelligent but not too intellectual, artistic but not too arty, literary but not too literary; but also, at the same time, popular but not merely fashionable, accessible but not cheap, joyous but not jazzy. The public won’t stand for tripe, the editorial continues, but neither does it care for caviar “except in very small portions”: “The Triad menu henceforth is neither tripe, nor caviare, but a properly-balanced diet, from soup to sweets.”

The same issue featured an essay on highbrows, almost certainly by the editor. There are two “modern sins,” the essay claimed, stupidity and exclusiveness—the lowbrow and the highbrow sins—but as exclusiveness is stupidity there is really only one modern sin. The greatest artists, by contrast, “have always successfully appealed to their own generation” (“Peter and the Highbrows,” 3). The argument is used for an oddly aggressive, if self-mocking attack on “the old Triadites, who want the Triad to remain what it has been for the last thirty-three thousand years” (3). The excessive rhetoric, of course, is a trademark but perhaps here it indicates the strain of asserting the new against the old:

What the Triad has been is a matter of history—a journal that, rightly or wrongly, has tried to hold up “the banner of the ideal” in matters artistic. But all old Triadites know very well who first used the phrase “the banner of the ideal.” It was Ibsen’s greatest rogue. The ideal, in every department of life—letters, music, morals, painting, sculpture, acting—has always been the watchword of the shirkers, the parasites, the suckers.

Henceforth, the Triad stands, not for the ideal, but for life. . . .

[Its pages will be intelligent, not exclusive (or stupid); human, not airily superhuman; frankly fallible, not hypocritically infallible; indecently decent, not decently indecent.
The repeated rhetorical form (“X but not Y”; “X but not too X”) suggest the work of positioning the editors had to perform, calibrating the magazine’s range between two kinds of excess, staking a claim but also drawing a line. The strategy would appear to be perfectly middlebrow in asserting that intelligence, value, and humanity need not imply exclusivity, that wide appeal need not mean cheapness or the wrong sort of indecency, and that being modern need not entail “ultramodernism.” Perhaps only Woolacott’s avoidance of the genteel makes it more—or less—than middlebrow. [End Page 257]

Australian in Sentiment, Cosmopolitan in Outlook

When announcing his ownership of the magazine in August 1926, Woolacott declared yet another new beginning: “The attempt to compete with overseas publications is here and now abandoned.” There would be no more syndicated fiction. Instead, Woolacott declared, “The Triad will be Australian in sentiment and cosmopolitan in outlook” (Australian but not too Australian perhaps). These terms offered one way of managing the magazine’s situation within modernity. “Cosmopolitan” can be taken as signaling the magazine’s aspiration towards engagement with the arts in their contemporary forms and a rejection of the merely fashionable; but it was a redefinition accompanied, and to a degree driven, by an increasingly overt antimodernism.

From mid-1925, the Triad’s contents were organized into departments, matching other contemporary commercial magazines: Special Articles, Stories, Poetry, Competitions, Criticism. While these sections or similar remained in place, increasing prominence was given to local short stories. Characteristically, the Triad aimed to be a story magazine whose stories were not too “magaziney,” one of the editor’s preferred terms for rejection. He even offered a definition: “Magaziney: An adjective applied to literary products manufactured for the sole purpose of securing a cheque from a damfool editor.” “Our pet abominations,” he wrote, “are the English magazine short story, and the story that fails to annoy, shock, or delight the majority.” Something of Woolacott’s aspirations can be seen in the magazine’s “answers to correspondents” column, which rejected literary snobbery, tripe, and respectability in equal measure:
Priceless example of intellectual snobbery. . . . Send your strong silent man to a girl’s penny magazine . . . Although you are definitely out of the ruck of “arty” writers, you are not yet quite free from respectable literary traditions. . . . Re-write the conventional beginning and send to England . . . Just a stupid bit of literary snobbery. . . . Very dramatic. So are a thousand other yarns for tripe magazines. . . . Both prime specimens of tripe. Easily placed elsewhere.63

Or, from the June number: “That sort of piffle is fit only for the Piffling Monthly that accepts such stuff. Send it there, and spend the cheque on the technical book entitled, ‘How to Prepare Piffle for Payment.’”64

Despite its ambitions, many of the Triad stories were themselves more than a little magaziney, with a preponderance of melodramatic plots and loaded endings (“Behind the Book,” 54). Where they differ from more conventional magazine fare is in their willingness to explore sexual desire, adultery, promiscuity, and the oppressiveness of respectable marriage. Most have a more-or-less conventional resolution—the coming baby that reignites buried love, the crisis that brings the modern woman back into the fold—but a few turn the trick ending to opposite effect. Nona Burns’s ironically titled story “This Respectable Suburbanism” closes with the almost-fallen, ready-to-be-redeemed fiancée discovering her lover’s affair with her oldest friend.65 Still, one can understand Woolacott’s enthusiasm on receiving stories by a major writer, Vance Palmer. Palmer’s “Johnny” was accompanied by the excited header: “This is a real [End Page 258] Australian Story! Written by an Australian who knows Australia, the history of Johnny will appeal to everyone, from the psychologist in search of material, to the ordinary reader who wants only an absorbing yarn.”66 As Roger Osborne suggests, “this promotion indicates Woolacott’s awareness of the range of readers his magazine could serve, placing Palmer’s story in both light and more serious moods” (“Behind the Book,” 55). But it may also indicate his awareness of the split field of culture into which he was pitching both story and magazine.

The same range is present in the expanded book reviews. Woolacott often gave himself a page with the middlebrow title “A Book for Everybody,” although his choices were scarcely for all tastes (Mencken’s Prejudices, a Floyd Dell novel). His title was less about finding books everybody could enjoy than about identifying diverse
books for diverse tastes. Stefan Zweig, Sinclair Lewis, E. M. Forster and other literary novelists are given brief but serious critical attention alongside a generous selection of the new popular books of the month, praised by different reviewers with recommendations for a particular class of reader. Horace Vachell’s *Watling’s for Worth* offered “a love affair as wholesome as the sunlight . . . there are no erotic triangles in it; no moanings about matrimony; no preaching of new economic doctrines.” Ward Muir’s *Jones in Paris* was an “eminently readable and literarily valuable novel. Very strongly recommended, for modern readers who have reached their twenties.” A typical “Books” department from December 1925 comprising brief unsigned reviews, suggesting they were all by the editor, welcomed a book of comic stories by G. K. Chesterton (“a jesting genius”); a new work by A. S. M. Hutchinson, author of the scandalous *If Winter Comes* (1921), “an extraordinary book for a writer of best sellers”; a tale of South Africa, “strongly recommended for ladies going on a railway journey”; and the work of a scientific popularizer, praised for having “the power to interest broadbrows as well as highbrows.” Under the heading “A Musical Broadbrow,” Woolacott uses a book by the BBC’s music broadcaster, Percy Scholes, to reflect again upon his editorial policy: “‘Highbrow’ music is more satisfying in the long run, than lowbrow stuff can ever be. Surely here is a lesson, dear brethren, not only for Broadcasting Companies, but for Publishers of Books and Proprietors of Periodicals. Give the public good stuff, *and nothing else*, and they will quickly grow to like it in preference to garbage” (“Books,” 69).

Brief notices of other novels show the same generous range and narrow restrictions:
This is the *Triad* at its most middlebrow: welcoming conventional popular fiction, even if its conventions were absurd, as long as it was “readable”; welcoming the modern novel, even if it were risqué, as long as it was “wholesome”; but drawing the line at other kinds of modernity, the social or sexual “problem novel.”

**Highbrow Antagonists**

While the magazine carefully or casually distances itself from the literary lowbrow, the highbrow emerges as chief antagonist: “*the Triad should appeal not to the poseurs, the artistic nobodies, the self-appointed intelligentsia of Australia*, but to the YOUTH of Australia.”

From early 1925, the magazine’s pages were peppered with references to highbrows, almost exclusively negative, even as the editors themselves claimed to speak for “the thoughtful minority.” Two highbrow-mocking cartoons are reproduced from *Punch*, highbrows are satirized in a playscript, and “highbrow bores” are linked to “ultra modernism.” Elsewhere, Noël Coward’s plays are praised against the strictures of “sniffish intellectuals,” while a reviewer’s “philistine soul” searches in vain for the “profound highbrow significance” in a selection of contemporary short stories where the writers are “so polished, sophisticated and erudite in their art that their products are insipid.” Other contributors carried enough of Morton’s sense of the journalistic public sphere to contrast the highbrow to

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*Following Anne.* By K.R.G. Browne. No modern problems. Sir Michael Fairlie succeeds to his title and a peck of trouble before he follows Anne to the Altar. A good yarn.

[End Page 259]
the professional working writer for whom current Australian fiction seems written by “casual amateurs whose writing is a hobby, and who seem to regard Art as something very refined and highbrow, and not to be mixed up with real life.” Woolacott found something similar in expressionism: “merely the newest and frailest vehicle to carry ‘arty’ people who want to dodge hard work.”

Woolacott did defend the highbrow nature of Mencken’s *American Mercury*. The American literati, he reports, had predicted that the *Mercury* wouldn’t last because it was “too highbrow,” yet it had proven itself a “financial and literary success”—Woolacott highlights the order of his adjectives. The result was that “all the highbrow reviews and magazines that cater to the low-browed coteries are howling at Mencken and calling him names for being a success.” The *Little Review* is singled out. “Highbrow” was a term of abuse after all, used to separate Mencken’s high principles and robust commitment to the marketplace from the “low” reactions of the new literary elites.

By the mid-1920s, the highbrow had displaced the puritan as the key figure against which the *Triad’s* claims on culture and life were affirmed, and in this the magazine signals a change that would increasingly define both middlebrow book culture and antimodernism in Australia. Highbrow attitudes were identified not just with pretensions to cultural superiority in general but more specifically with modernism and its pretensions. Highbrowism as such meant faddishness, fraudulence, and oversophistication—all opposed to the frankness, joyousness, and good sense the *Triad* claimed for itself and its readers, interested “middle-class Australians.” The *Little Review*, for example, was merely the “American counterpart of *Blast*, the organ of the vorticists, dadaists and other herds of asses”; its artworks were either “the product of morons” or “the elaborate jokes most probably of young men who began to learn drawing and painting, but who abandoned hard study in favour of a fantastic pose.”

A similar case was argued against modernist literature in an unsigned piece in October 1924. The author is visited by a young friend, a well-known writer of short stories, who announces that he has discovered the secret to “producing literary master-pieces” (“Things Visible,” 6). The model is *Ulysses*, the secret is “Let yourself go” (6). No hard work, no trial and error, “No anything. All great literature comes from
the soul. The subconscious is the store-house of the soul. Therefore all you have to do is unlock the store-house” (6). (A fantastically one-sided reading of James Joyce but symptomatic of the understanding of modernism as the mere outpourings of the subconscious without the “hard work” of literary craft.) An example of the masterpiece is included, then the author notes in shocked italics: “My young friend’s MS already has been accepted for publication in its entirety. Not in the Triad. Be not afraid. But in New York” (6). Ulysses was seen to have started “a new fashion, a new fad in literature,” and this common reading of modernism as characterized by an increasingly frenetic turnover of fads and fashions was especially offensive to the hardworking freelancer, who was indeed becoming something of an endangered species at this time (“Things Visible,” 6; Kirkpatrick, Sea Coast of Bohemia, 116–17). As an antidote, Woolacott published essays by prominent authors, including Mencken, on “How to become a Writer.”

Modernism and best-sellerism thus merged, both symptoms of the one disease, mere fashionability versus the genuinely broad appeal of great art:

All these evanescent literary fashions are the bastard offspring of the desire to escape years of hard work. The lazy person who thinks that to live a literary life would be “simply luverly” doesn’t go far before he (or she) discovers that an effective writer is a work-a-day person who, item by item, has laboriously amassed a stock-in-trade that must be constantly replenished. To use Frank Harris’s phrase, the business imposes a diabolical discipline on its followers. (“Things Visible,” 7)

Instead of appealing lazily to fashion, genuine works of art would accumulate “respectful attention” over time:
The greater the art, the wider the appeal. Do not mistake me. I did not say *popular* appeal. A fashionable production may dazzle the world and be dead as the mastodon before five years have passed. But when a piece of work secures the respectful attention of a few admirers wide apart in education and environment, and year after year its admirers grow in numbers, then you may be sure that another genuine addition has been made to the world’s art.

(7)

Antimodernism is most explicit in June to August 1926, when the magazine presents a hoax feature on nonexistent modernist artist, Stepan Noviak (the foreign name already says a good deal), followed by exposure of the hoax, and the publication of readers’ letters. The point was that while Noviak did not exist, there were hundreds like him in the artistic world: “the Post-impressionists, the Expressionists, the Dadaists—all the host of ‘artists’ who trade in buncombe. These people are either dodgers of hard work or nincompoops who, lacking genuine ability, seek by the methods of charlatanry to persuade the public that their productions are authentic works of art” (Pindaret, “Steven Noviak, Artistic Ass,” 62).

To accompany the article, Woolacott reproduced two Constantin Brancusi sculptures and invited his readers to consider whether they were not “more absurd” than the faked examples published for the original hoax. His faith in his public was sustained by the fact that all his readers, except for some young artists, so he claimed, responded appropriately: “Stepan Noviak . . . is the flashy cheap-jack on the kerbstone of the City of Good Taste. The worthy citizen ignores him, dealing only with the tried and trusted workman, but the City of Good Taste, like every other city, has its mental defectives”; “people like that are either inane snobs or, otherwise, almost too clever for this world. Futurism, cubism, ultramodernism, and any other old -ism, are all very well as another kind of crossword puzzle, but please don’t call it art” (62–63). The highbrow was invoked, still in sneering quotation marks: “the ‘superiah’ person, the person of ‘culchaw,’ the ‘highbrow’ who, looking down from a lofty height, calls his fellow mortals ‘Philistines’” (63). Woolacott’s stunt was about consolidating his audience, reassuring them and himself that the ordinarily intelligent public still held together and that good art was still accessible to the “lover of beauty” without the need for specialist training or superiah culchaw.
“After” Modernism

There is nothing especially original about the *Triad*’s antimodernism—the terms are dully familiar—but by the same token there is little to be gained by simply condemning the magazine for falling short of modernism. This would be writing history from the position of the victors, whereas one of the *Triad*’s claims on our contemporary interest, certainly from an Australasian perspective, is the contemporaneity of its antimodernism. It could be argued that beneath the vitalist enthusiasms of the *Triad*’s editors—the kind that quotes approvingly George Jean Nathan’s claim that “Art is the sex of the imagination”—there lay a conventional late-romantic taste for beauty and sincerity. But it is much more productive to address the magazine’s unresolved engagement with its own “contemporary modern,” with modern styles in art, argument, and personae as they then appeared to participants within contemporary print culture. By the mid-1920s, modernism could be perceived as an emerging movement or series of movements, but also just as often as a *passing* fashion that had already just about had its day. In a manner that is difficult for present-day readers to grasp because of our own relation to the modernist tradition, writers, and editors in the 1920s could understand themselves as living in a period after modernism. Indeed, this is a central point in understanding mainstream responses to modernism at the time. The modernist movements had had valuable effects, many agreed, in eliminating the last vestiges of Victorianism. But what came next? How did the literary tradition renew itself? What came after the avant-garde?

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As we see in the *Triad*, connections between cubism, futurism, Igor Stravinsky, Jacob Epstein, Virginia Woolf, Joyce, Pound, and others were readily available in the Australian 1920s, and an array of antimodernist typologies had already become stock-in-trade. But the notion that the various modern *isms* represented the most significant evolution of western art traditions had scarcely yet been articulated, in Australia or elsewhere. This was especially the case for the world of books and print. The emergence of modernist writing had certainly disturbed the literary field, as evidenced in the battle of the brows, but modernism remained relatively marginal to contemporary print culture. It was *news* in the book world and in journalism, and on occasion it could seem like a threatening contagion or a great hoax cooked up by
the new elites. But for many professional bookmen and women, literary modernism
was a bit of “noise”—an interesting, sometimes challenging, sometimes monstrous,
but almost certainly ephemeral disturbance—at the edges of the book world.

Book papers and commercial arts magazines like the *Triad* could have a strong
investment in the contemporary—their orientation to the market predisposed them
in this direction. But rather than modernism or the avant-garde, contemporary book
culture was defined by the leading writers of the present or immediate past
generation, often controversial figures in their own right. For the *Triad*, this meant
George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, August Strindberg,
Henrik Ibsen, J. M. Synge, John Galsworthy, Anton Chekhov, Leo Tolstoy, Pirandello,
Conrad, Frank Harris, Rose Macaulay, May Sinclair, D. H. Lawrence, or Noël Coward;
and from America, Upton Sinclair, Floyd Dell, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis,
Eugene O’Neill, Maxwell Anderson, and Mencken, of course. These were by no means
reactionary tastes in the contemporary context; in large part they could be described
as “modernizing.” But they could also be mobilized to draw a line before
ultramodernism, understood as highbrow affectation or artistic fraudulence, laziness
or craziness. So the *Triad* sought to be modern—contemporary, cosmopolitan—but
not “too” modern. As such, it shared the modernity of many of its Anglo-American
contemporaries in this transitional period when the historical destiny of the modern
isms remained unclear.

The shifting editorial definitions of the *Triad* across the mid-1920s suggest that
there were increasing pressures pushing the magazine (and much else) into a space
between highbrow and lowbrow, a middlebrow range where wide appeal, literary
quality, entertainment, and intellectual interest could still be imagined together.
Perhaps it is only the magazine’s vitalist “excess”—and the fact that it could neither
resolve its conflicted ambitions nor happily leave them unresolved—that prevents it
from being fully described as middlebrow. The point is less to decide whether the
*Triad* was or was not a middlebrow magazine, but rather to demonstrate how the
segmentation of cultures and tastes became an unavoidable issue for its editors.
Despite its self-conscious positioning outside the highbrow-lowbrow nexus, that
structure increasingly provided the language for its self-understanding. The claim to
stand outside the hierarchy, to be neither highbrow nor lowbrow, was always in
danger of turning into something subtly different, a position in between. Given the
magazine’s own high aspirations, it was the highbrow that came into focus most often as the necessary antagonist. The editors played up and down the register, sometimes asserting that a new Triad had been born, sometimes that nothing essential had changed, and sometimes asserting both at once. More than uncertain editorial policy, this irresolution was a structural condition of the cultural field and the market in which the magazine was situated, a condition of its transition from the print culture of the late nineteenth century to one defined primarily by its antagonistic orientations to the modern and the modernist.

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Notes


6. A wide range of weekly and monthly papers covered books, theater, and the other arts in different degrees, but none made this their primary focus in the manner of the Triad. See Carter, “The Conditions of Fame.”


17. “Science” appeared in the cover or masthead description by February 1910; the phrase “Literature, Pictorial, Musical and Dramatic Art” appeared on the cover in April 1912; by October 1915, the wording had settled into the form: “A Journal Devoted to Literary, Pictorial, Musical and Dramatic Art.” This formula remained in place until November 1923; in December, in the same issue that announced its “broadening appeal,” the magazine introduced the new description: “Pictures, Books, Life, People, Places” (the word order would occasionally change). From October 1923, the magazine began calling itself “The National Magazine of Australia & New Zealand.”


41. A. L. Kelly, “Sydney Music: The Uncompromising Agnew,” *Triad*, July 1922, 58–59, 59. Agnew was advised to get himself overseas as soon as possible, for he “is as ill-placed in this conventional-minded community as a goanna on a glacier.”

42. *Triad*, April 1921, 47–48, 47.


47. While some of Lindsay’s own works could be drawn into the terms of middlebrow appreciation, and while middlebrow and vitalist tastes might sometimes overlap in relation to particular authors or works, the point for the present is that as a philosophy or aesthetic—or more loosely, as practiced in the journalistic context relevant here, as an attitude—vitalism had little in common with middlebrow values. Its notion that there was a vital life force accessible only to an artistic or spiritual elite (or a bohemian fringe) was contrary to middlebrow aspirations to cultural improvement; it was not engaged in the carefully-calibrated responses to modernism characteristic of middlebrow book culture; and its own scales of evaluation shared little with the middlebrow appreciation of “good books” and “good reading.” As the present article suggests, however, the nature of the print marketplace, its pressures and temporalities, meant that vitalist and middlebrow attitudes might very well be found together in the pages of a single publication.

48. Financial difficulties ensued following a libel suit in December 1920. Baeyertz left the *Triad* in October 1925 after thirty-three years, and Woolacott became sole editor. In August 1926, he became sole proprietor, complaining in his editorials about earlier interference by “business interests.” From January 1926, the magazine had been owned by Art in Australia Ltd. Magazine publisher Ernest Watt bought it in March 1927, and in August 1927 launched the *New Triad*, with Watt and poet Hugh McCrae as editors. It lasted only until July 1928. See Woods, *Facing the Music*, 198; and Greenhop, *History of Magazine Publishing*, 238.


51. See Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman*.


55. Baeyertz, “Notes by the Way,” *Triad*, July 1924, 3–7, 3. He introduces Woolacott as his associate and describes the Notes as “inextricably a commingling” of them both.
56. See Judge Beeby, “The World is Jazz-Mad,” Triad, June 1925, 12, 46. Beeby analyzes the jazz era as a "war-product" and reminds novelists that "studies of normal people, or of unusual people of normal instincts, are more interesting than of neurotics, sex maniacs, and mental deficients” (12, 46, 12).


71. “Notes By the Way,” *Triad*, November 1925, 48, emphasis in original.


78. Woolacott writes in “To My Readers”: “*Triad* . . . has always tried to give middle-class Australians what they didn’t know they wanted” (3).


81. Between June 1925 and June 1926, articles include: Mencken’s “Advice to Young Authors”; E. V. Lucas, “Advice to Young Writers”; H. Brighouse, “How to Set About Being a Writer”; George Barrington, “How to be a Successful Freelance (by One)”; Frank Swinnerton, “How to Begin Writing”; Horace Vachell, “How to Become a Writer of Stories”; and Frank Harris, “How to Learn to Write,” plus extracts from Michael Joseph’s *Short Story Writing for Profit*.

