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Howard Cox & Simon Mowatt, *Revolutions from Grub Street: a history of magazine publishing in Britain.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. pp. xii+263, ISBN 9780199601639 Hbk £35)

Magazines have not been well served by historians. Despite the political, social, cultural and economic significance of the UK magazine industry – worth around £4.88 billion in 2010, more than the three times the value of the UK's recorded music market, and over £1 billion more than its film industry – overview histories are conspicuous by their absence. David Reed's valuable *The Popular Magazine in Britain and the United States* (1997) restricts its focus to the boom years of 1880 to 1960, while other long-range studies concentrate on specific genres, particularly the women's magazine, or the most famous and notable titles. Accounts of major publishing firms have often seen magazines as subsidiary to prestige newspaper holdings. *Revolutions from Grub Street* is, therefore, a very welcome addition to the literature, and it fills the sizeable gap with considerable authority. Cox and Mowatt sure-footedly lead the reader from the miscellanies of the late seventeenth century, such as the *Athenian Gazette* and the *Gentleman's Journal*, right up to the latest digital magazines, designed for tablets and smartphones. The authors combine their extensive research into (often sadly depleted) business archives with an impressive knowledge of company reports, trade journals and the fragmented academic literature to produce a history full of facts, figures and rich detail. This volume will surely be a much-consulted reference work for scholars in the area for years to come.

Faced with such an expansive topic, Cox and Mowatt inevitably confine their attention to certain areas (explained in 'A Note on the Scope of the Study' which is offered as an afterword, but which is better read first). The main focus is on consumer magazines, rather than news publications or the business press, and the 'primary level of analysis' is the publishing firm and its commercial strategy. The authors examine the identification of market opportunities, the attempts to build economies of scale, the management of labour relations, and the integration of new technologies; there is very little about the content or design of the magazines themselves, and even less about readers and their relationships with different titles. The book is organised around eight chronological chapters. The first races through to the mid-nineteenth century, and the second examines the well-worn topic of the 'new journalism' and its pioneers, such as Newnes, Northcliffe and Pearson. The meat is in the twentieth century: it is here that the source material provides the detail necessary for a more substantive investigation. This is structured around a 'rise and fall' narrative, exploring the growth and rationalization of the leading firms, culminating in the near-monopoly position achieved by the International Publishing Corporation (IPC) in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by the disruption of the sector from the 1980s by new technologies, the weakening of the print unions and changing working practices. IPC, dubbed the 'Ministry of Magazines', found itself increasingly weighed down by internal bureaucracies and poor labour relations, while smaller and nimbler rivals exploited the desktop publishing revolution. 'How can six people put together 124 pages of *Golf Monthly* each month but it takes fifty-six people for the 124 pages of *Women's Realm*?' (p. 138) asked an exasperated IPC insider in 1990. Well-resourced European firms, such as Hachette and Grüner + Jahr, as well as small start-ups like Wagadon and Future, altered the dynamics of the sector in the 1980s and 1990s, adopting new retailing and distribution practices or identifying new niche markets. A too-enthusiastic embrace of new technologies could be risky, though: many firms suffered badly in the dot-com crash at the end of the century. The authors retell these trials and tribulations in an admirably balanced and even-handed manner.

The main frustration with *Revolutions from Grub Street* is that the narrative structure rather constrains the analysis. There is only a brief Preface to introduce the book, and no Conclusion at all; it is left to the reader to tease out the key themes and make comparisons across the period. As a result, the various 'revolutions' of the title are not identified and scrutinised as clearly as they might have been, and broader points about the structure and operation of the market are either not made or remain submerged. The text itself is also rather dense, full of names, dates and acronyms which

may deter readers wishing to dip in and out. This is not to downplay, however, the authors' fine achievement in marshalling such a wide array of material and providing the first proper history of the UK's magazine sector. Anyone interested in the history of publishing, print culture or the media will find much of value here. Perhaps we could have a second edition with a proper Introduction and Conclusion?

University of Sheffield ADRIAN BINGHAM