Introduction

The Magazine and World Literature

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Magazines are a privileged instrument of intervention in a changing cultural scene.

Beatriz Sarlo, Una modernidad periférica 21

During the early twentieth century, the world was awash with magazines. Described as “a revolution in print” (MacLeod) spurred by cheap paper and new printing technologies, magazine enterprises regularly burst onto the cultural scene. Writers could choose to publish in not just one but in two or even three at the same time. Whether such magazines were categorised as left, little, radical, cultural, mainstream, popular, or avant-garde (the list could go on), writers could readily leap from one to another without being accused of duplicity or inconsistency. If the “little magazine,” as Eric Bulson puts it, is a “world form,” such worldliness is not just applicable to one type of magazine, but to a diverse repertoire of periodicals, as this special issue on the magazine and world literature shows.1

1 The little magazine has attracted sustained scholarly attention in periodical studies. See, for example, Brooker and Thacker; Churchill and McKible; Hammill and Hussey; Bortolotto et al.
Magazines emphasize novelty and discovery. They combine a sense of contingency with the desire to make an intervention and even, as Beatriz Sarlo puts it, change an entire cultural scene. Indeed, sometimes a magazine’s ambition appears at odds with its puny size or painfully short life: only six issues of the countercultural little magazine *damn you / a magazine of the arts* were published, cyclostyled in 50 copies from Allahabad in 1965, but the editors Arvind Krishna Mehrotra and Amit Rai proudly published their correspondence with the editors of American little magazines (Zecchini 101). In newly independent Maputo, “a crazy, dreaming, schizophrenic group of youths [...] decided, in the midst of a drinking bout, to start the best literary magazine in the world: *Charrua*” (Khosa cited in Helgesson 234). Only eight issues came out, between 1984 and 1986, but they were “decisive for Mozambican literature,” writes Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa (234). At other times, it is a magazine’s systematic programme to inform and educate readers that impresses and astounds (see Mian, Jia, and Orsini in this issue), or the assiduous service of its indefatigable editor. In Calcutta, Ramananda Chatterjee ran the *Modern Review* and the Bangla magazine *Prabāsī* for three and-a-half decades, from 1907 until his death in 1943. At the opposite end of India, Balakrishna Pillai single-handedly ran the Malayalam literary and political tabloid *Kesari* from 1930 “in order to open up the imagination of the Malayalis to a wider world of politics, literature and self-fashioning” (Menon 143).

Constitutionally curious and outward looking, magazines navigate the world with the resources at their disposal. Yet, as Sarlo also reminds us, even the worldliest magazines belong, dialectically, to national literary scenes, inflected by language, location, ideology, and aesthetic orientation. They are subjected to the centripetal pull of national contexts and concerns. Local systems of production and consumption, including editors, authors, artists and printers, make up the thick matrix of magazines enterprises out of which writerly communities are born. As a matter of fact, magazines sometimes crystallize a group. They give name to a trend, to a whole epoch, like *Charrua*, *Proa*, *Martín Fierro* (Helgesson, Novillo-Corvalán in this issue), or to their editor: Pillai is better known as “*Kesari*” Balakrishna Pillai. As such, magazines belong simultaneously to global, national, and local paradigms. They are shaped by the tensions between young and old, conservatives and progressives, aesthetics and politics, tradition and modernity, past and present. Moreover, while we often study individual magazines in a single language, their editors, writers, and readers had before them a panoply of competing periodicals, across more than one language within multilingual societies. Magazines were the prime platforms for starting and carrying literary debates, which were key in maintaining interest and could determine the success or failure of a literary magazine (Mian in this
issue). It therefore pays to consider individual titles within the broader magazine ecology of which they were part (Orsini “Postcolonial Magazine Archive”). Scholarship on national magazine culture or on transnational modernist magazines has conceived of this magazine ecology as a network, of which editors often prided themselves on being members. But sometimes network suggests too close and direct a connection. In such cases, thinking through the notion of a relay emphasizes the absence of a network, and the local agency of editors and translators who re-use and re-accent materials with the resources at hand in order to make their particular, located intervention.

Anglo-American scholarship tends to reproduce the market distinction between avant-garde little magazines and large-scale commercial magazines with mass distribution – magazines which paid illustrious authors well while trafficking mostly in popular genres and advertisements. If Eric Bulson writes, “No little magazines, no modernism: it’s as simple as that” (1), for Sarah Whitehead, Edith Wharton learnt to “subvert” the strict requirements of commercial magazines (“Breaking the Frame”), and engaged with the burgeoning magazine industry with a “cautious mix of distaste and attraction” (49). But in many parts of the world where magazines were the main platforms for writers and sources of reading material, such hard and fast distinctions do not always hold, as the next section shows. In fact, the essays in this issue discuss a wide range of magazines in terms of production and material form. Some were lavishly illustrated (Orsini); others made careful use of images (Mian, Jia, Novillo-Corvalán), or were soberly devoid of them (Billiani). And since scholarship on literary magazines has tended to focus on avant-garde “little” magazines (Bulson, Nerlekar), our essays privilege other kinds of middle- and large-scale magazines, published by state enterprises (Jia in this issue) or backed by publishers and industrial groups (Billiani, Orsini in this issue).

1 Magazines “High” and “Low”

Uruguayan critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal fondly reminisces about the days when readers could simultaneously spot a Borges story, essay, or review in the cultural magazine Sur (South; Buenos Aires 1931–1992) and in the mass-market magazine El Hogar: Ilustración semanal argentina para la mujer, la casa y el niño (Home: Argentine illustrated weekly for the lady, home and child; Buenos Aires 1904–1961) (287–88). As the subtitle indicates, the fashion weekly had been marketed as a stylish, à la mode publication targeting, albeit not exclusively, a female readership. In the 1930s, Borges held regular columns in both, yet did not deem it necessary to significantly alter his writings for their differ-
ent readerships. For example, he did not consider James Joyce – the foremost high modernist – too experimental for El Hogar, even if he held serious reservations about the herculean efforts the notoriously difficult Finnegans Wake (1939) demanded from its readers (Novillo-Corvalán). It was perfectly fine, he thought, launching a pioneering review of Finnegans Wake in the glossy and gossipy pages of El Hogar, squeezed between advertisements of beauty products and luxury confection. This is how, then, his review of the Wake, entitled “El último libro de Joyce” (Joyce’s Last Book) cropped up in the “Libros y Autores Extranjeros” (Foreign Books and Authors) fortnightly column of El Hogar exactly on 16 June 1939 (Bloomsday). Where Joyce famously prophesied that the book’s enigmas and puzzles would guarantee his immortality by “[keeping] the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant” (Ellmann 521), Borges was rather thinking of the general Argentine reader, not mythical professors. Admittedly, El Hogar had literary aspirations and enjoyed introducing experimental modernist works to its rich and eclectic female audience, whose readers included none other than Sur’s ambitious founder-editor, the feminist Victoria Ocampo. Predictably, it did not take long for another review of Finnegans Wake, this time entitled “Joyce y los neologismos” (Joyce and the Neologisms) to pop up in Sur, written by the unstoppable Borges, and published in November 1939. Ironically, Ocampo’s modernist magazine was playing catch up with its trailblazing mass-culture counterpart.

If Sur conferred on Borges cultural prestige (à la Bourdieu), El Hogar handily helped pay the bills, while also giving a massive boost to his rising cultural capital since, as Rodríguez Monegal shows, publishing in more magazines (no matter which) translated into greater cultural visibility. Clearly, even the seemingly aloof “ivory-tower” Borges dynamically engaged with mass culture, unsettling the so-called boundary between “high” and “low.” In fact, this example of a “journalistic” Borges refracted through the prism of print culture reveals the artificiality of such division. Rather than polarised domains – the so-called “Great Divide” (Huyssen) – the case of Borges’ knotted twin reviews of Finnegans Wake in Argentine magazines exposes fascinating overlaps, encounters, and interconnections, showing that high/low culture happily coexisted in 1930s Buenos Aires. Because, as Mark Morrison notes, writers “still saw their work as something distinctly ‘aesthetic’ but challenged aesthetic autonomy’s tendency to isolate this experience and strip it of social significance” (7).

El Hogar was, in fact, no less cosmopolitan than its coterie counterparts. Take, as another example, the publication of Tagore. In 1927, Ocampo gave a talk on the German philosopher Hermann Keyserling to a packed room at the “Los Amigos del Arte” association (founded in Buenos Aires, 1924). Critic Nicolás Coronado greeted the lecture favourably in the November 1927 issue of El
Hogar, praising Ocampo for introducing Keyserling’s “Eastern” thought to the eager Argentine public ahead of his forthcoming lecture tour. Ocampo had read Keyserling through the prism of Tagore, connecting these somewhat incompatible figures by way of India. Keyserling hero-worshipped Tagore, though his attentions and adulation greatly irritated the Bengali poet (Dutta and Robinson 235). Thus, Ocampo was able to use Keyserling as a springboard for exploring one of her pet obsessions: Tagorean aesthetics.

Three years earlier, when an ill and tired Tagore had arrived in Buenos Aires aboard the transatlantic ship Andes, Ocampo had enthusiastically stepped up and invited the poet to convalesce at San Isidro, a peaceful suburb of Buenos Aires overlooking the Río de la Plata. (Tagore was on his way to Peru, as the nation’s guest of honour to commemorate the centennial of independence, but never made it due to poor health). A delighted Tagore accepted right away, marking the start of a lifelong friendship and mutual advocacy with Ocampo. For Tagore, Argentina was a place of physical and spiritual healing and aesthetic renovation, while for Ocampo Tagore was an early mentor, auspiciously connected to her future magazine Sur, which was itself inspired by Tagore’s notion of vishva-sahitya, the union of the local and the global, India and the world, and a model for global interconnectedness. Sur would dedicate a special issue to Indian literature in July–August 1959.

Going back to El Hogar, Ocampo’s Keyserling lecture provided the preamble for including work by Tagore in the same issue. The editorial logic was clear. The Argentine reading public would have instantly associated the outspoken, aristocratic Victoria Ocampo with her beloved Bengali protégé and former guest. The magazine published a haunting tale by Tagore, “Mi señor, el niño” (“My Lord, the Baby”), chronicling the trials and tribulations of a servant’s life and his spoilt child-master through the themes of loss, sacrifice, and parenthood. An eye-catching Orientalist illustration by O. Roland in the middle of the page, depicting the final scene when Raicharan implores Anukul’s forgiveness, provided the centrepiece. The story pushed El Hogar’s geographical frame beyond its Eurocentric remit, and it provides an early example of Indo-Argentine dialogues.

2 Magazines and Translation

This example takes us to translation. Tagore’s story was jointly translated by Spanish laureate Juan Ramón Jiménez and Zenobia Camprubí de Jiménez, a husband-wife collaboration that began with a translation of The Crescent Moon (1913) and quickly evolved into one of the most productive translation ven-
tures of Tagore’s work, powerfully shaping his transmission in the Hispanic world. Lawrence Venuti writes, “cannot be conceptualised apart from translation” (180). In presenting their translations of Tagore, the Jiménezes unashamedly brought to the fore the spectre of indirect translation. Their exquisite Andalusian-inflected Spanish translations were based on mediating English versions – undertaken by Tagore with the assistance of C. F. Andrews and many others – which they saw as a necessity, even if Juan Ramón “was frustrated that he could not hear the Bengali” (Dutta and Robinson 255), no doubt understanding the challenges, as well as the opportunities, the loss and gain, that the arduous task presented (Rodríguez 217–18). In so doing, the couple debunked indirect translation as the bogeyman of world literature, emphasising its importance when it comes to “the dissemination of literatures of non-major cultures, or in less-spoken cultures” (Li 182). Certainly, many of the magazines discussed in this special issue used indirect translation to enter distant world-literary spaces, complexly unravelling meaning through an intricate palimpsest of multiple textual layers, negotiating sameness and difference by shifting the translation to new contexts, true Benjaminian “afterlives.”

Another pertinent example, both of indirect translation and of the porous boundaries between high/low culture, is the Uruguayan writer Horacio Quiroga (1878–1937). It is well known that Quiroga enjoyed boasting about the earnings he made from publishing his macabre short stories in El Hogar and in Caras y Caretas (Faces and Masks; Buenos Aires, 1898–1941). The latter was a trendy mass-market weekly known for its striking cartoons, political satire, and a large section devoted to gossip (Fleming 85–86). These stories were incredibly popular and attracted huge audiences, paying the magazine healthy dividends, further increased by advertising revenues, and earning cash-strapped Quiroga a respectable income from literature. However, this did not prevent Quiroga from also writing radical pieces for the anarchist magazine Insurrexit (1920–21, Novillo-Corvalán in this issue), cleverly surfing different readerships, coterie and mainstream.

Three decades later, Borges’ and Quiroga’s short stories resurface, translated into Hindi via intermediary English translations, in the story magazine Naï Kahāniyān (New Short Stories) under the editorship of the modernist-realist writer Kamleshwar (Orsini in this issue). Thanks to the centrifugal forces of world literature, a large Hindi reading public gains access to two of Latin Amer-

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2 In total, the couple translated 25 books by Tagore, including poetry, theatre, short stories, and aphorisms, which were collected in Obra escojida (1965), with a preface by Ortega y Gasset. The English version of “My Lord, The Baby” was originally published in Tagore, The Hungry Stones, and Other Stories (1916).
ica’s acclaimed masters of the short story. Inevitably, this raises questions of canonicity. Unlike Borges—“a lonely canonical” (Thomsen 44)—Quiroga gained little international recognition beyond Latin America, and even in his homeland and neighbouring Argentina his reputation gradually faded away in the years preceding his tragic death when, sick with cancer, he took his own life in a Buenos Aires hospital in 1937. Therefore, by publishing Quiroga alongside Borges, Kamleshwar is not only remapping world literature from India and the global South—prioritising the literatures of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in post-independence India—but also giving visibility to an unjustly semi-forgotten figure who has been relegated to the “shadow canon” (Damrosch 45), not least when compared with the meteoric rise of the “hypercanonical” Borges (45).

Meanwhile, it is worth asking at this stage: how did El Hogar’s readers react to Tagore’s short story “My Lord, The Baby,” especially if we understand Indo-Latin American relations as reciprocal and bidirectional? Curiously, one of the most fascinating responses came, in fact, from Quiroga himself, illustrating south-south, periphery-to-periphery relations through the medium of the magazine. In a striking example of affinity and difference, in the story “El hijo” (1928, The Son), Quiroga reworked Tagore’s tragic and twisted tale of arrested parenthood in his own unique and idiosyncratic way. Quiroga shifted Tagore’s riverine landscape on the banks of the Padma River to Argentina’s northern rainforest, along the Paraná River, which flows down into the Río de la Plata estuary. The motif of parenthood and the unexplained and untimely death of a child is explored fatalistically, not allegorically; the lost child is not reborn, as in Tagore, but swallowed up by the jungle, a common trope in the Latin American regional novel (as in José Eustasio Rivera’s La vorágine, 1924; The Vortex). Although both Tagore’s and Quiroga’s stories end in defeat and neglect, the father-servant protagonists resign themselves to the tragic loss of their beloved children, whether literally or symbolically. Finally, and perhaps not coincidentally, Quiroga’s “The Son” resurfaced in the “Third World special issue” (Tīsrī duniyā viśeṣāṅk) of yet another Hindi story magazine, Sārikā (January 1973), also edited by Kamleshwar, establishing further intersecting patterns between Hindi magazines and their Latin American counterparts (Orsini in this issue).

Quiroga’s self-declared “commodification,” as noted earlier, exemplifies the growing professionalization of the twentieth-century writer, at a time when literary patronage was on the wane and “new strategies of reputation building—involving theatricality, spectacle, publicity, and novel modes of cultural marketing and media manipulation” suddenly emerged (Rainey 4). In Lahore, for example, the savvy editor Tajwar Najibabadi employed effective tactics to reach an aspirational Urdu public by wowing new readers with a gorgeously pro-
duced magazine: *Adabī dunyā* (Cultural/Literary World). The magazine, which in size and get-up surpassed all other Urdu magazines, was sold at kiosks in railway stations. Consumption was thus equated with modernity, speed, and the rise of a new reader. For Tajwar, culture and technology went hand in hand.

“Star-writers are born,” Beatriz Sarlo suggests, surely evoking the happier days when the young Quiroga was the darling of the media: “The new journalism and the new literature are interlinked by multiple nexuses, enabling the rise of a modern variant of the professional writer” (21). Similarly, the point magazine scholars Faye Hammill and Karen Leick raise regarding the emergence, within the Anglosphere, of a “new class of writers [Hemingway, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald] making a respectable income while creating a public image” (196) is, as we have seen, equally pertinent to writers in Latin America, South Asia, and elsewhere, whether magazines made profits, operated at a loss, or simply managed to break even.

Not just “star-writers,” though. Editors and critics also arose as important trendsetters and cultural producers, as all the essays of this special issue attest. The influential Italian critic Emilio Cecchi championed the work of Katherine Mansfield – then a little-known New Zealand “colonial” outsider – in Italy’s magazine *Il Convegno* (Billiani); the idealistic young editors of *Insurrexit* rocked and transformed the Buenos Aires cultural scene (Novillo-Corvalán); the editorial team of academics at the forefront of *Shijie Wenxue* brought Asian, African, and Latin American literature to a curious Chinese readership (Jia); Kamleshwar’s “spectacular” special issues in *Sārikā* and *Naī Kahāniyān* carried a vision of world literature from the global South (Orsini); and, as noted above, the poet-editor Tajwar Najibabad fashioned the first luxury Urdu magazine in Lahore (Mian).

### 3 Magazines and World Literature

The magazine, then, this special issue argues, is an ideal form for world literature, with its own technologies and affordances (Levine). It complements and piggybacks on other forms of bibliomigrancy, like book publishing and libraries (Mani), and in many cases surpasses or replaces them for readers, for example when translations in magazines do not appear side by side in book form. Magazines help shape ideas of the world, whether through their geographical orientation and extension, by projecting tastes, concerns, and values as universal or current, or by exposing readers to new trends and ideas. Magazines are so important for world literature because, as the essays in this issue show, they offer an agile, attractive, and supple medium to inform, educate or de-
provincialise readers and writers. Especially in periods of enhanced political internationalism, as in the early twentieth century or in the decades of the Cold War and decolonization, magazines responded to the political curiosity of readers with stories and poems either from or about the locales and cultures in question. In turn, the increased circulation of literature and magazines allowed editors to pick and choose texts to (re)translate from other books and magazines (what Isabel Hofmeyr has called “cut-and-paste”), sometimes acknowledging their sources, more often without doing so. As a result, the world-literary education offered by magazines supplemented, and often far exceeded, that of national or colonial education curricula. The same is true today of online magazines like *Words Without Borders, World Literature Today*, or *Asymptote*, which however do not work in the same way as (im)material objects. For all their worthy efforts at making the plurality of world literatures visible and their worldwide availability, online magazines seem to make less of a mark on the literary scene than print magazines did, in their various contexts, which is why today we are going back to print journals and their historical impact.

Magazines deserve to be studied as part of world literature as instances of crucial literary activism, but also because they usefully expand the focus on the novel and on the circulation of printed books (Mani). In the absence of well-stocked public libraries, book imports and deep pockets, in many parts of the world magazines have been the *only* way for readers to learn about world literature. In some cases, political orientation determines the geographical and stylistic selection of texts, but even when we expect this to be the case, magazines have the power to surprise us with broader or more varied coverage (Jia in this issue). One of the great pleasures of working with magazines is the contrasting thrill of recognition and surprise.

Focusing on magazines as a medium that is part of the message helps us paying attention to how individual magazines *do* world literature, and to the specific affordances and constraints of the magazine form. As the essays in this issue show, magazines present several affordances to world literature by offering visibility and familiarity through “thick” and “thin” coverage. Thick coverage may include translations with informative paratexts (Yan), detailed studies or survey articles on a writer or a literary tradition (Billiani, Novillo-Corvalán), maps or images to orient and offer visual clues and props for readers (Orsini, Mian), and even pieces written in response, as in the *Adabī dunyā* issue on Dante that Mian analyzes. Thin coverage includes snippets of information about authors, books published, the contents of other magazines, and other literary news like prizes and events. Thin coverage is important because it creates familiarity and name-recognition in readers even when texts and translations are unavailable. Columns of literary news evoke a literary world abuzz with
happenings and the promise of exciting reads. They collapse distances and stitch together a literary world in which the here and elsewhere appear as a seamless continuum, as Laetitia Zecchini has shown in the case of the Indian P.E.N. magazine. Finally, thin coverage makes visible the “cut-and-paste” relays on which editors relied, and the networks of which they were or felt themselves to be part. Billiani’s essay in this issue shows the European networks of Italian magazine editors in the interwar period, but also the Eurocentric limits of their imagination of world literature, at a time when Urdu editors and translators were actively looking to Asian literatures (Orsini “World literature, Indian views”). The coverage of world literature in Shijie Wenxue (World Literature, 1959) suggests a similar emphasis on European and American writing as representing modern literature, but the thin coverage of Indian literature – Jia’s essay argues – still produced a sense of familiarity, and the snippets of literary news and occasional translations accompanied by careful paratexts would have conveyed to the interested reader the vitality and multilingual range of contemporary Indian literary writing.

Magazines operate under constraints of manpower (for example, the availability of translators), funding, time, and volume of pages. Although, particularly in the nineteenth century, periodicals were a prime platform for serialized novels (Stein and Wiele), they were the main engine of the success of the short story and other short forms. Indeed, magazines made shortness an aesthetic challenge (Scheiding), and generated specific subgenres like flash fiction (laghukatha in Hindi). Page constraint produced other forms, too. When Kamleshwar wanted to increase the coverage of world stories in his special issues of Sārikā, to resorted to abridgements (Orsini in this issue), which can be considered a specific textual mode produced by the magazine form. The magazine’s emphasis on timeliness and novelty may mean that even older authors and texts are presented as contemporary, as when Horacio Quiroga appeared as a postcolonial author, or the pre-World War II Hungarian writer Zsigmond Móricz (d. 1942) as a writer from the Socialist Bloc (Orsini “Literary Activism”).

The essays in this issue ask, what kind of experience of world literature do periodicals create? Does the form of the periodical, its reliance on short textual genres and on fragmentary, occasional, token offerings produce a different experience of world literature from more systematic forms, like the book series, the anthology, or the syllabus? The first, obvious, answer is that magazines produce a more contingent canon. Even when the intent is of presenting the canonical greats of world literature, this is not the only world literature
magazines offer. In fact, they often combine different visions of world literature, sometimes even within the same issue. Orsini shows, for example, that the special Third World issues of Sārikā envisaged world literature as primarily contemporary Asian, African, and Latin American writing, and so did Kamleshwar’s column “Today’s Story: Shared Experiences.” By contrast, Sārikā’s special issue on the history of the story (January 1970) was more canonical, and so was the column “What is the Story? From the Masters’ View,” which included only Western writers and critics like Flaubert, Chekhov, Dostoevsky, Camus, Sartre, A. Huxley, Kerouac, Faulkner, D.H. Lawrence, Mailer, and Colin Wilson (Orsini “Literary Activism”). Moreover, unlike the systematic arrangement of historical anthologies, magazines thrive on mixing and interspersing texts to generate novelty and variety. Magazines offer a palimpsest of temporalities, but even when older texts and authors are selected, the emphasis is on the contemporary and on literature in the making, making writers and readers part of a shared, and exciting, world-building enterprise. We hope the essays in this special issue stimulate fresh scholarship on magazines and world literature, acting as a springboard for new global visions and orientations, especially in non-European parts of the world, as part of an expansive, multiform and transnational literary and cultural history of periodicals.

Works Cited


