

‘WHAT WE MIGHT EXPECT –
If the Highbrow Weeklies Advertized
like the Patent Foods’: *Time and Tide*,
Advertising, and the
‘Battle of the Brows’

Catherine Clay

This essay examines both the advertising content and a discourse about commercial culture in the feminist weekly periodical *Time and Tide*.¹ Taking a cue from Sean Latham and Robert Scholes’s emphasis on advertising as ‘a vital, even crucial part of the material culture that is the focus of the ‘new periodical studies’, I consider in particular *Time and Tide*’s status as a commodity as well as a cultural object in order to tell a wider story about the relationship between women, feminism and the public sphere in Britain between the two world wars.² Launched on 14 May 1920 *Time and Tide* began as an overtly feminist review of politics and the arts, directed and staffed entirely by women, and later evolved into a less woman-focused, more general audience journal, establishing a position among the leading political weeklies in Britain. As will be shown below, *Time and Tide* relied on women and the existence of a feminist counterpublic sphere to build its early readership base. But in an era still prejudiced against women’s involvement in politics, *Time and Tide* was forced to compromise its overt identification with female and feminist cultures in order to secure its reputation for serious political journalism. In June 1938 the journal’s founder and editor, Lady Margaret Rhondda, revealed in a private letter to Virginia Woolf:

The general public is convinced that what women have to say on public affairs cannot have any real weight, so that if one uses many women’s names ones circulation & –again– ones advertising are affected. I go through the paper every week taking out women’s names and references

Modernist Cultures 6.1 (2011): 60–95

DOI: 10.3366/mod.2011.0005

© Edinburgh University Press

www.eupjournals.com/mod

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'

to matters especially concerning women because if I left them in it would soon kill the paper. But it is maddening.³

This revelatory evidence is a stark reminder of the 'relationship of compromise' lying at the heart of most modern magazines.⁴ Magazines are always commercial as well as aesthetic and/or political enterprises, and as Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde remind us in their introduction to *Design and the Modern Magazine*, the success of a magazine is largely dependent on its 'ability to conform to the needs of both advertisers and readers'.⁵ Retaining editorial control over *Time and Tide* until her death in 1958 Lady Rhondda undoubtedly made her mark on the character and development of the journal, but she was inevitably also constrained by the economic relationships of the periodical marketplace.

Changes in *Time and Tide*'s advertising content over a sixteen-year period tell a story of both compromise and canny moves as the journal negotiated and re-negotiated its position in Britain's periodical marketplace. If advertising at first appeared to pose a risk to the journal's attainment of 'high' status and to its 'political radicalism', *Time and Tide* later found ways to turn its increased reliance on advertising to its advantage, both to attract new audiences and to shape female identities in line with its feminist agenda.⁶ The 'materialist turn' in modernist studies has shown that the art/commerce divide constructed in modernist discourse obscures modernism's more complex and productive relationship with commercial culture and the marketplace. As Paige Reynolds usefully summarises, scholarly assertions that modernism was 'either indifferent or hostile to mass culture' have been replaced by more nuanced accounts that demonstrate the ways in which 'modernists employed the practices of commercial advertising in their aesthetic production or [...] aggressively marketed their wares'.⁷ In the history of feminist periodical publishing too, scholars have explored the rich relationship between the women's suffrage movement and commercial culture.⁸ In concert with both modernist and feminist periodical publishing, *Time and Tide* built useful business relationships with advertisers and exploited modern advertising techniques.

In what follows I analyse *Time and Tide*'s advertising content as one of the periodical codes that, as Mark Morrisson argues, 'contribute to a reader's horizon of expectations for a magazine,' and consider the interventions the journal made in contemporary discourses about advertising and commercial culture.⁹ First, I survey a number of promotional tactics used by *Time and Tide* to build

its feminist and female readership base, and examine a difficulty that emerged in reconciling its increased reliance on female-targeted commodity advertising with its feminist identity. Second, I analyse the role advertising played in *Time and Tide*'s 'literary turn' in 1928, and assess the journal's navigation of the 'battle of the brows' that intensified in the following decade. A key argument I wish to make is that while *Time and Tide* ultimately loosened its identification with the 'feminine middlebrow', as attacks on a feminised mass culture intensified in the mid-1930s, its movement into a more 'masculine' sphere of 'high' political journalism represents a significant re-shaping of women's identities that was consistent with its early feminist agenda.

Feminism and print culture: advertising across the high/low divide, 1920–1930

Time and Tide was founded following a period of expansion in feminist periodical publishing during the early years of the twentieth century.¹⁰ In many ways a legatee of the women's suffrage press, *Time and Tide* also marks a departure from the partisan papers of the women's movement.¹¹ As Michelle Tusan has convincingly argued, '*Time and Tide* looked to transform women's press advocacy from a space of political propaganda into an arena of intellectual public discourse for the newly enfranchised female reader'.¹² The journal's primary target group was a new class of professional women which has been seen to be the most visible sign of female modernity in Britain between the wars.¹³ Broadly addressing this new female professional constituency, *Time and Tide* promoted itself in advertisements as 'The Modern Weekly for the Modern Woman' and its discourse of professionalism distinguished it from the discourse of consumption which characterised another major genre of women's periodical: the mass-market women's magazine.¹⁴ The advertising content in *Time and Tide*'s first issue is an important indication of the periodical's early resistance to the feminised economy of the commercial marketplace. The majority of advertisements were for cultural products, for example, books and theatre announcements, and there is no sign of advertising for women's fashions and domestic products which occupied so much space in the popular mass-market women's magazines. Conceptualising itself as a 'High Class Women's Weekly' *Time and Tide* defined itself against a degraded popular press in which the tradition of segregating advertisements from editorial copy had been eroded, and prided itself on the fact that in its own pages 'there is no searching among a maze of advertisements

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'

for the end of every article'.¹⁵ Subsequent issues do reveal some concessions to commercial advertisers. Advertisements for 'Salutaris Table Waters', 'Genasprin' and later 'Knight's Castile Soap' began to appear frequently in the journal's pages, though its editors were at pains to reassure readers that they had 'definitely decided to insert no advertisement unless we are satisfied as to the good faith of the advertiser and the article'.¹⁶ In fact, a substantive amount of this commercial advertising was placed by companies of which *Time and Tide*'s founder, Lady Margaret Rhondda, was a director.¹⁷ An astute businesswoman, it is quite possible that Lady Rhondda used her position to attract advertisers by offering preferential rates, but there is no evidence to confirm this. We do know that she heavily subsidised *Time and Tide* from the beginning, and without a doubt it was her patronage which sustained the journal's early attempt to operate outside the economy of the commercial marketplace.¹⁸

Time and Tide thus worked to distance itself from the popular mass market for women's journalism, but as a new experiment in feminist publishing it trod a difficult path in its attempt to reach beyond a female readership. In an article on the origins of the journal *Time and Tide*'s editor, Helen Archdale, explained that its founders aimed to create 'a paper which would appeal equally to men and women, but whose direction should be in the hands of women'. She then went on to say that: 'While it is no part of the paper's policy to cater only for women, it is felt that by reason of its unique Board and Staff it should appeal more directly to women for support'.¹⁹ In commercial terms, it would appear that *Time and Tide*'s directors were very aware that as a general-audience paper directed and staffed entirely by women this was a risky business, and that in order to succeed it would have to draw on an already existing feminist counterpublic sphere to build its readership base. As early as August 1920 *Time and Tide* decided to 'make a more definite appeal to women—be more frankly feminist than we have yet been,' and this was accompanied by an engagement with commercial culture that was more canny than resistant.²⁰ In November of this year *Time and Tide* began to discuss a 'Women's Programme', a platform of ideas which would form the basis of the Six Point Group, a leading feminist organisation of the interwar years.²¹ Ostensibly *Time and Tide* served as the official organ of the Six Point Group, publicising the Group's activities in its pages and issuing special supplements on its campaigns. But as Mark Morrisson writes in relation to the suffrage press, 'causes like "votes for women" were marketable products,' and the formation of the Six Point Group appears to have provided *Time and Tide* with an identifiable cause

Modernist Cultures

to 'sell' to potential feminist audiences.²² Other promotional tactics continued a tradition of feminist engagement with commercial culture, including the selling of 'feminist collectibles' to increase both publicity and revenue: from August 1922 the journal advertised a *Time and Tide* fountain pen, and in late 1923 it carried advertisements for a Six Point Group Calendar.²³ In line with Helen Archdale's assertion that 'Women have a special responsibility for the development of *Time and Tide*' readers were also urged to use the paper's advertising columns, and encouraged to make use of its annual Christmas Gift Subscription form.²⁴

Time and Tide thus adopted a range of modern publicity techniques to build its readership base, indicating a more complex relationship with commercial culture than its pronounced antipathy towards the mass marketplace suggests. This complexity is foregrounded in 'a special TIME AND TIDE PUBLICITY WEEK' which ran from 31 October to 7 November 1924.²⁵ In the weeks leading up to the special publicity issue, *Time and Tide* made fresh appeals to readers to help increase its circulation. One notice read: 'If EVERY reader of "Time and Tide" would secure one new permanent subscriber during TIME AND TIDE PUBLICITY WEEK [...] we should DOUBLE our circulation in ONE WEEK. Only YOU can make this possible'.²⁶ Another announced: 'TWELVE particular ways in which Readers can actively help in making TIME AND TIDE more widely known'.²⁷ In an unsigned leading article printed in the publicity week issue itself *Time and Tide* explained that:

It is hardly necessary to point out that a journal of this sort is largely dependent, for its influence and prosperity, on the mouth-to-mouth type of advertisement – the actual and personal recommendation of those who are its readers. The public to which it appeals is by no means a small one; but it is a public not easy to reach by advertisement because not attracted by 'stunts' of the sensational type. Those who are responsible for the conduct of TIME AND TIDE hope that their record is good enough to justify an appeal to their present readers for that personal advertisement which is the surest proof of appreciation and the steadiest way to success.²⁸

Positioning itself in opposition to mainstream print media and its 'sensational' advertising tactics, *Time and Tide*'s proclaimed reliance on 'mouth-to-mouth type of advertisement' participates in contemporary constructions of a high/low divide. This apparent preference for cultivating a direct relationship with readers over mass-market strategies can also be seen in an event organised in association with

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

the special publicity week: a tea party to which readers were invited to hear 'short speeches on the history and aims of the paper' given by members of the Board, and 'to praise or to blame and make suggestions' for the paper's development.²⁹ However, at the same time the article's insistence on 'personal advertisement' in fact functions as a kind of commodity advertisement for the journal's select status, an effect that receives further reinforcement in the capitalisation of TIME AND TIDE, and in the use of borders and white space in the advance publicity week notices which, like the format of the mass-advertising poster, work to grab readers' attention. The concept of holding a special publicity week to promote the journal is of course itself a canny advertising device. According to an item printed in *Time and Tide* the following week the week was a great success, resulting in an increase of direct subscribers, as well as fresh orders for the paper from newsagents all over the country.³⁰

Just as modernists used modern advertising techniques to market their wares, so *Time and Tide* exploited practices of commercial advertising even as it continued to construct a position for itself outside a feminised mass commodity culture. In another parallel with modernist texts, *Time and Tide* also contains material that deliberately works to destabilise the separation of high and low spheres. An early example of this is a serial feature which ran for twenty-six weeks from 2 October 1925. Contributed by one of *Time and Tide*'s regular staff writers, and 'Dedicated to all our Friends and Helpers', the 'TIME AND TIDE ALPHABET' (Figure 1) was designed to sustain the journal's direct relationship with its readers, issuing renewed appeals with each letter of the alphabet to help in making *Time and Tide* more widely known.³¹ Particularly interesting, however, is the feature's straddling of the supposed art/commerce divide in a way that is reminiscent of modernists' use of the 'aesthetics of advertising'.³² Two examples discussed by Mark Morrisson in his chapter on 'Marketing British Modernism' in *The Public Face of Modernism* are particularly relevant here. The first, 'The Magic Carpet' by Allen Upward, which appeared in a 1914 issue of the *Egoist*, combines the poetics of Imagism with the visual markers of an advertising poster. The second, a page from Wyndham Lewis's *Enemy of the Stars* published in *Blast*, also fuses the advertising poster with forms of 'high' art, this time elements of a stage direction.³³ Both items are strange, hybrid texts which, in Morrisson's words, 'destabilize the high-low opposition'.³⁴ The 'TIME AND TIDE ALPHABET' works in similar ways. Adopting the typography and layout of an advertising poster, and always appearing in *Time and Tide*'s advertising space (the first item in the series was

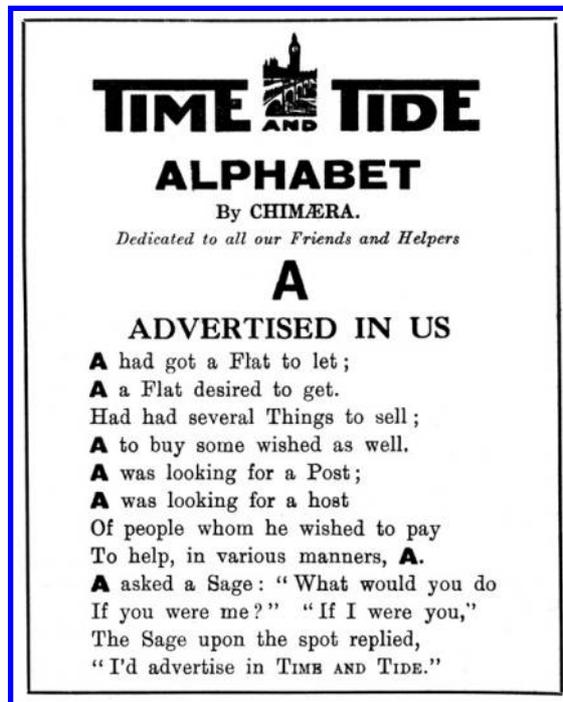


Fig. 1. 'Time and Tide Alphabet', 2 October 1925, p. 969.

placed alongside advertisements for Salutaris Table Waters, French Coffee, and a variety of travel services) the feature mixes verse-forms with forms of commercial culture in a deliberate blurring of these oppositional spheres. In October 1926 *Time and Tide* announced that it was sending a collected and illustrated edition of the series to all regular subscribers since December 1923, a further disruption of the art/commerce divide in this migration from ephemeral journalism to collectable book.³⁵

The conflation of art and advertising in this feature thus foregrounds intersections between *Time and Tide* and modernist cultures. It also anticipates a new relationship *Time and Tide* entered into with advertisers through the format and cover design of the magazine from the mid-1920s onwards. In the last issue of 1926, an item in the Review of the Week announced that: 'Next week, TIME AND TIDE will appear in a NEW FORM. The sheet will be longer and narrower [...] while the paper on which it is printed will have a better finish'. Significantly, the new format was designed to benefit 'both readers and advertisers' (emphasis added):

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

The surface finish of the new paper will enable us to reproduce not only the pen-and-ink drawings which we use at present, but also half-tone blocks and pencil drawings; and we, therefore, hope in the future to offer our readers a certain variety in the matter of illustrations, *and to our advertisers a wider scope for their advertisements* (emphasis added).³⁶

This material change in the production of *Time and Tide* inaugurated a key development later in 1927, the packaging of the journal from July of this year in an advertising wrapper. Comprising four separately numbered sheets, this wrapper carried large full- and half-page display advertisements as well as classified ads.³⁷ The adoption of an advertising wrapper significantly increased the number of advertisements *Time and Tide* was able to carry per issue. From July 1927 advertising content in the inside pages ran to around four-and-a-half pages per issue, roughly a 4% increase (from 15% to 19%) on earlier years. But when the advertising wrapper is included, the percentage of advertising to total number of pages printed more than doubles (eight to eight-and-a-half pages or 35%). Crucially, however, since the wrapper was designed to be discarded advertising revenue could be increased without seriously compromising *Time and Tide's* status as a high-class weekly review. Inside the advertising wrapper, the front page of *Time and Tide* retained its usual 'look' (albeit a 'longer and narrower' one) except for one more significant change: the removal of the single commodity advertisement that had regularly appeared on the front page since April 1923.³⁸ The inside front cover thus purified *Time and Tide's* image where the serious editorial matter really began, re-positioning the journal on the right side of the high/low divide despite the increased advertisement carried by its outer wrapper.

Time and Tide's significant decision to increase the volume of advertisements admitted to its pages can be read in the context of changes in the world of magazine publishing, in particular what Mark Morrisson describes as an 'important shift in the basis of profitability from subscription income to advertising revenues'.³⁹ A Publisher's Report dating from February 1928 suggests that towards the end of its first decade *Time and Tide* was struggling to increase its subscription base.⁴⁰ It also records a range of additional measures taken by the journal in 1927 to increase its circulation, including a 'continuous round of visits' to Bookstall Managers and Agents in Cambridge, Oxford, London, and the Home Counties, and a publicity drive in northern towns and Scotland. *Time and Tide's* push beyond its existing circle of readers, and via intermediaries including bookstall managers and agents, is a clear indication of the journal's wider engagement with

Modernist Cultures

the commercial marketplace. Evidence indicates that this promotional work produced positive results; figures in the same report, detailing orders and returns from W. H. Smith, Wyman's and John Menzie's in the years 1926 and 1927, reveal 'an increase of sales all round,' and a financial report dated February 1931 shows that income from sales overtook income from subscriptions in the period 1929–1930.⁴¹ It is quite probable that the presence of a new member of *Time and Tide's* Board of Directors encouraged the journal to adopt more vigorous marketing strategies. Marion Jean Lyon, advertising manager of *Punch* and president of the Women's Advertising Society founded in 1923, became one of *Time and Tide's* directors at some point in the mid-1920s.⁴² Indeed, the 1931 report also reveals *Time and Tide's* substantial growth in advertising income; in both 1929 and 1930 advertising revenue exceeded revenue from subscriptions and sales combined.⁴³ It thus appears that by the beginning of the 1930s commercial advertising had replaced a direct relationship with readers as the more effective means to increase *Time and Tide's* circulation, and that a need for 'increased advertisements' would remain central to the journal's operations in the coming years.⁴⁴ At one level this concession to the commercial marketplace is a reminder of *Time and Tide's* status as a commodity as well as a cultural product, and the 'relationship of compromise' at the heart of modern magazine publishing.⁴⁵ But *Time and Tide's* new relationship with advertisers may not have been entirely reluctant. As Alice Staveley notes, 'advertising and public relations were becoming increasingly attractive career options for young women in the 1930s,' and it is possible that *Time and Tide* entered into these new business arrangements with the more positive recognition that advertising represented an important professional field for women.⁴⁶

One sure consequence of *Time and Tide's* increased reliance on advertising, however, was that the journal could no longer maintain its distance from the feminised world of the commodity marketplace. Margaret Beetham's important study of women's magazines shows that from the late nineteenth century 'women's periodicals presented a particularly lucrative outlet for advertisers'; women were the primary consumers so advertisers had to reach women, and *Time and Tide* offered a very attractive group of middle-class women to advertisers marketing a wide range of commodity products.⁴⁷ Among the products most frequently advertised in *Time and Tide* from the mid-1920s onwards were British brand-name fabrics 'Viyella' and 'Japshan Silk'. But the biggest advertiser of all was London's department store Debenham & Freebody, a leading retailer in the women's fashion market. Debenham & Freebody had been buying advertising space

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'

in *Time and Tide* at various intervals since April 1922. But one outcome of *Time and Tide's* publicity week in 1924 appears to have been a strengthening of this relationship: from 17 October 1924 *Time and Tide* carried a full-page display advertisement for Debenham & Freebody virtually every week. This department store alone must have significantly swelled *Time and Tide's* advertising revenue; Marshall & Snelgrove and Harvey Nicholls (both recently acquired by Debenham & Freebody, in 1919 and 1920 respectively) also bought up full-page display advertising space in these years.⁴⁸ After *Time and Tide's* adoption of an advertising wrapper, a single issue might carry a full-page display advertisement for each of these stores.⁴⁹ These advertisements did not completely displace the feminist advertising carried by *Time and Tide*. The journal continued to carry advertisements for the Six Point Group, and for feminist publications including the *International Women's Suffrage News*, the American feminist weekly *Equal Rights*, and the *Woman Engineer*. But as *Time and Tide's* reliance on commercial advertising increased, the contradiction between its principled feminist opposition to dominant discourses of the feminine and the feminine-coded advertising it regularly carried in its pages became more pronounced.

The constraints of this position surfaced in a fascinating discourse about advertising in other sections of the journal. For example, on 10 February 1928 the pseudonymous author of *Time and Tide's* regular 'In the Tideway' column devoted the whole feature to the subject of advertising. Turning a feminist critical eye on advertisements in the newspaper and periodical press, one item smoulders with indignation at blatant sexism in the advertising industry, another uses irony to subvert the advertiser's message and appropriate it for feminism:

*A perfectly good feminist advertisement begins: Women shouldn't crawl! (We always knew they shouldn't). Just standing upright, pass the nozzle of the Electrolux cleaner right under the big bureau and the strong suction gets out every atom of dirt.*⁵⁰

Typically *Time and Tide* did not carry advertisements for domestic appliances such as Electrolux cleaners. But a third item in the same column could be read as a self-reflexive comment upon the contents of *Time and Tide* itself:

When you've just been reading all this about sex equality and what not, you come suddenly up against an advertisement which cries out "fashion says, be feminine!" And of course, we have to do what fashion says, haven't we?

Modernist Cultures

The rhetorical question here invites a reply in the negative, offering readers a position of resistance to the dictates of the fashion industry. In an item printed in the same column in a later issue, this resistance to dominant discourses of the feminine is enacted further with reference to a letter received by one of *Time and Tide*'s directors:

“Dear Madam,
Spring is with us, and we feel therefore that your thoughts are turning towards our soft furnishing department.”
We had to confess that until the arrival of her letter, our thoughts had not turned in that direction.⁵¹

Soft furnishings followed women's fashions as the most heavily marketed product in *Time and Tide* by the London department stores. Here, the witty rebuff implies that *Time and Tide*'s directors are thinking about much more important subjects than the private world of home-making, the sphere to which women were traditionally confined.

Time and Tide's feminist critique of advertising took a fascinating turn in the placement of two advertisements in an issue published in May 1930 (Figure 2). At the top of the page the Japshan Silk advertisement produces an allure of feminine distinction. Promoted in part for its 'practical[ity]' in text that explains the merits of a silk that is 'washable' and 'colourfast', the symbolic grounding of the product in such qualities as status and glamour provides the larger part of its appeal.⁵² The visual image of the woman in an expensive classical dress-suit, further adorned with a chic hat, clutch-bag and fur stole, signifies material wealth, while the outline of the male figure behind implies the completion of emotional happiness in a marital union symbolised by the pair of swans. In contrast, the advertisement for a women decorators' firm sets in motion an entirely different model of femininity to the glamorised heteronormative model above. Here, text occupies a minimal amount of the advertising space which is dominated by a striking photograph of seven women decorators taking a tea-break. The image contains multiple symbols of both female and sapphic modernities: the 'mannish' overalls worn by the women, the cropped haircuts, and the cigarette in the mouth of the only woman who looks directly at the camera in what might be read as a defiant gaze. Furthermore, the female comradeship of an all-female company is suggestive of the associative pleasures of work and friendship shared by the staff of *Time and Tide*. Indeed, the photograph's representation of modern women workers entering fields of employment traditionally occupied by men is its most important aspect. Significantly, *Time and Tide* regularly carried advertisements in

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*



Fig. 2. Advertising spread, 2 May 1930, p. 577.

this period for 'Women's Pioneer Housing', an organization formed in 1920 'to provide small self-contained flats or unfurnished rooms for women workers'.⁵³ The women decorators' advertisement thus works with *Time and Tide's* internal feminist discourse about the independent, professional working woman, and offers to its imagined external readership a critique of traditional femininity represented in the Japshan Silk advertisement above it.

Time and Tide's feminist discourse about advertising goes some way to subverting dominant discourses of the feminine encoded in many of the advertisements carried in its pages. However, changes in *Time and Tide's* advertising content from the beginning of the 1930s suggest that advertisements for fashion, soft furnishings and other feminine-coded products began to be viewed as a liability as the journal moved into its second decade. As we have seen, from its inception *Time and Tide* aimed to reach beyond a community of women readers, and while it engaged directly with a feminist counterpublic sphere to build its readership base, towards the end of its first decade the journal took new measures to broaden its appeal. These measures include its fashioning of a more

Modernist Cultures

literary identity following the journal's expansion in October 1928. In the next section I examine the ways in which changes in *Time and Tide*'s advertising content in the 1930s worked to alter readers' 'horizon of expectations' for the journal, and show that *Time and Tide*'s more overt orientation towards modernist cultures placed it at the heart of the 'battle of the brows' in a struggle to secure its cultural legitimacy and authority.

Women writers and the 'Book World': *Time and Tide* and Promotional Culture, 1929 to 1936

Following the full enfranchisement of women in 1928 *Time and Tide* adopted a number of strategies to extend its reach beyond a strictly feminist readership and to move out of the 'women's paper' category.⁵⁴ During the 1930s the journal evolved into a less woman-focused, more general-audience review and, while still directed by women, began to attract more male contributors. A comparison of two advertising wrappers from 1929 and 1930 (Figures 3 and 4) illustrates the ways in which *Time and Tide* began to re-fashion the journal for a male as well as female readership at the turn of the decade. Figure 3 shows the front page of the wrapper surrounding a special bumper number published on 22 February 1929. Featuring George Bernard Shaw as its star contributor, the issue was planned following an editorial decision 'to change the slant of the paper a bit, to give it a rather broader base,' and according to Lady Rhondda this issue 'put *Time and Tide* on the map'.⁵⁵ The advertising wrapper, however, still targets a female audience: the large 'Viyella' advertisement unequivocally codes the periodical for a female consumer, as does the London Editorial College advertisement at the bottom of the page which, with its invitation to 'Read What Women Say', is directed at female readers. On the front inside page of the wrapper a full-page display advertisement for Waring's fabrics maintains this discourse of the feminine, as does the full-page display advertisement for 'The Gas Light and Coke Company' on the back page of the wrapper which depicts a male gas serviceman addressing a 'housewife heroine,' Fiona Hackney's term for an archetypal figure of the period in popular women's magazines'.⁵⁶ Clearly, while *Time and Tide* was adopting strategies in this period to broaden its readership base, as a commodity product it was still being packaged for women readers. By 1930, however, *Time and Tide* had effected a subtle change in the way it presented itself on the newsstand and bookstall. The issue for 3 January 1930 carried on the front *inside* page of its advertising

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'



Fig. 3. Front cover, 22 February 1929.

wrapper a full-page display advertisement for Marshall & Snelgrove, thus maintaining *Time and Tide's* link with the London department stores and their feminine discourse of fashion and fabrics. But on the front cover page of the wrapper (Figure 4) a large advertisement for London's Marie Curie Hospital replaces the *Viyella* advertisement which had appeared regularly on the front cover since August 1927. Arguably, the Marie Curie advertisement still encodes the periodical as feminine, given the association of women with the caring professions. But, like the Cadbury's advertisement below it, it does admit more possibility than '*Viyella*' for a male reader. Disarticulating the woman reader from dominant discourses of the feminine, this more gender-neutral advertising also offers *Time and Tide* to a potentially broader audience.

Over subsequent issues *Time and Tide* maintained the more gender-neutral character of its new cover image. No more feminine-coded advertisements appeared on the front page of the wrapper which was occupied instead by advertisements for a range of products and services aimed at both male and female intelligent and cultured

Modernist Cultures

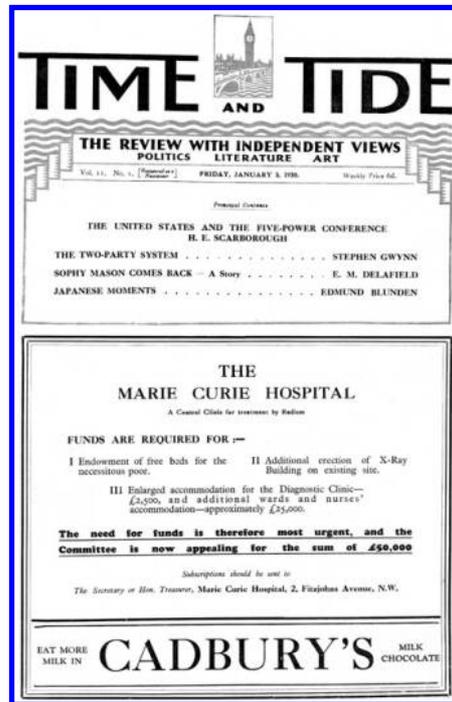


Fig. 4. Front cover, 3 January 1930.

readers. These included advertisements for cultural institutions such as theatres, publishers and bookshops, financial services, British Petroleum Company (BP), and the Remington Typewriter. On the inside front page of the wrapper *Time and Tide* continued to carry advertisements for fashions and soft furnishings marketed by London's department stores and, on 31 January 1930, an advertisement for the women's magazine *Good Housekeeping*. On the inside pages of the journal itself too advertisers continued to target female consumers. However, as *Time and Tide* approached the middle of this decade the internal advertising space as well as the wrapper began to effect a more even gender balance as advertisements directly addressed to men began to appear alongside advertisements addressed to women. For example, in April 1934 an advertisement for Parke-Davis Shaving Cream was placed above a publisher's advertisement announcing 'Two Books for Women', a juxtaposition that also neatly reverses the mind/body dualism that valorises male intellect and female beauty.⁵⁷ Sun Life Assurance Company was another advertiser that regularly addressed male readers in *Time and Tide*'s advertising pages in the

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

mid-1930s. The text at the top of one advertisement reads 'Said he'd never marry!' and, alongside the smiling face of a twenty-five year old man, the narrative explains the merits of the company's "Bachelor" Plan'.⁵⁸ This advertisement is also interesting for the information it contains about the kind of male audiences *Time and Tide* was seen to be reaching: young, unmarried men, recent university graduates perhaps. In March the same year another insurance company, The Secondary Technical and University Teachers' Insurance Society (STUTIS), advertised a special 'sickness insurance' scheme 'for university men and women'.⁵⁹ The changes *Time and Tide* made to its cover image thus played an important role in altering the 'horizon of expectations' for the journal among readers *and advertisers*, opening up and re-defining *Time and Tide* for a broader audience composed of men as well as women.

Another very significant change was the huge increase of advertisements for books following *Time and Tide's* 'literary turn' in October 1928, when the journal expanded (from 24 to 32 pages) in order to deal 'as fully as possible with all aspects of current affairs, *and especially with books and literary subjects*' (my emphasis).⁶⁰ *Time and Tide's* adoption of a more literary focus was one strategy by which it constructed a more 'highbrow' identity. An established genre in feminist periodical publishing, the literary review offered *Time and Tide* another way to differentiate itself from the popular women's magazine market, and over the next few years advertisements for books came to replace advertisements for women's fashion, soft-furnishings and other feminine-coded products.⁶¹ Initially *Time and Tide's* 'literary turn' maintained a female and feminist focus. In its longer review essays as well as the publication of original creative work, it harnessed some of the most famous signatures in 'female modernism', namely Edith Sitwell, Rebecca West, and Virginia Woolf.⁶² During the 1930s *Time and Tide* also attracted male modernists to its pages, including three of the 'Men of 1914': T. S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound.⁶³ These contributors indicate *Time and Tide's* increased orientation towards modernist cultures as it moved into its second decade. Yet the journal remained most closely identified with a larger number of so-called 'middlebrow' women writers, novelists like E. M. Delafield and Winifred Holtby (both regular staff writers on *Time and Tide*) who owned a dominant share of the literary marketplace between the wars. As Rosa Maria Bracco has shown, it was during the 1930s that the prestige of middlebrow fiction grew; in response, the work of intellectual literary critics in this decade 'served mainly to emphasise the antagonism between middlebrow and highbrow, a contention in

Modernist Cultures

which everybody seemed to be taking sides'.⁶⁴ Thus, while *Time and Tide's* more literary emphasis worked to raise its own cultural status (and to shed its association with the world of advertising carried by mass-market women's magazines), it also placed the journal at the heart of 'the battle of the brows' in which the middlebrow eventually lost out to the dominant cultural forces of modernism.

A number of features dating from 1932 to 1935 indicate the ways in which *Time and Tide* positioned itself to wage this battle during the first half of this decade. First, a leading article carried by *Time and Tide* in February 1932 reveals the journal's editorial alignment with the forces of 'high' literary culture. The article concerns a current controversy over the Book Society, and addresses the chief criticism made against it, namely that 'literary merit [...] has not always been given its due weight'.⁶⁵ Presenting readers with the Society's Selections since January 1930, the leader-writer commended the Society's choices in some titles, disagreed with others where more 'important' books might have been chosen instead, and asserted that:

In other months it is obvious that the committee has been driven into the by-ways in search of a choice; and we think it might well consider the desirability of protecting its own prestige and maintaining the necessary standard by refusing to make a choice at all.⁶⁶

Time and Tide's language here is very redolent of the discourses of high modernism, and of a Leavisite obsession with defending literary standards. The Book Society was a thoroughly 'middlebrow' institution, part of what Bracco describes as 'a virtual industry [...] around middlebrow fiction, with Book of the Month Clubs, and with reviewing and advertising geared towards the wider distribution of these novels'.⁶⁷ Far more measured in tone than the reactionary language of some intellectual literary critics, *Time and Tide's* implication that the Society was guilty of promoting sub-standard books bears a strong resemblance nevertheless to the views expressed by Q. D. Leavis in *Fiction and the Reading Public* published the same year.⁶⁸ At the root of Leavis's anxieties was the growth of the advertising industry and, as Jennifer Wicke summarises, its power 'to turn groups—in actual fact, whole classes, including the middle class—away from high culture'.⁶⁹ *Time and Tide's* leader concluded:

The value of advertisement, and the influence of popular taste, are both apparent in the lists we have given; and we think that, in the interests of many distinguished writers and publishers, this should be recognized.⁷⁰

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

With this appeal for transparency, rather than outright condemnation, *Time and Tide* positioned itself nonetheless as serving the interests of high culture.

In another unsigned item printed the following month, this time on the subject of 'The Book Trade', *Time and Tide* rearticulated a highbrow antipathy to advertising and commercial culture:

The fact is that certain publishers are becoming just a shade over-enterprising in their methods. Lord Northcliffe was accused in his day of building a factory in Bohemia. Certain modern publishers seem to be inclined to adapt to the profession of publishing the organizing methods of Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Trust.⁷¹

The reference to Lord Northcliffe, press baron and founder of the *Daily Mail*, is characteristic of numerous claims in the 1920s and 1930s that, in Patrick Collier's words, 'Northcliffe and his imitators had transformed journalism from a profession to a branch of commerce'.⁷² Extending the analogy to book publishing, with reference to one of the world's most controversial business empires, *Time and Tide* joins forces once again with the mounting tide of criticism against publishers' increasingly aggressive marketing practices in this decade. A cartoon printed in *Time and Tide* in May 1934 reiterates a highbrow disdain for the advertising methods used in the contemporary world of book publishing. Under the title 'When Authors Advertise' six spoofs of advertising matter satirise the conceits of booksellers' puffery, and position the reader to view advertising in the book world as having a cheapening and degrading influence upon the nation's literature.⁷³ However, an article published in *Time and Tide* one year later foregrounds the emergence of a more subtle engagement with 'The World of Advertisement'.⁷⁴ Contributed by one of *Time and Tide*'s most famous 'middlebrow' authors, E. M. Delafield, the article pronounces a highbrow antipathy towards advertising, positioning the reader as someone who 'resent[s]' and is 'infuriated' by the encroachment of advertising upon everyday life. But it also represents a highly intelligent and witty reflection on 'the singular brand of psychology implicit in some of these advertisements' that both acknowledges the increasingly sophisticated techniques used by the advertising industry to persuade consumers to desire a product, and exposes the industry's version of human psychology as inauthentic, just another 'brand'.⁷⁵ Crucially, the article dismantles the linking of femininity and consumption in certain narratives of modernity which as Judy Giles explains (following Rita Felski) cast women as 'duped and exploited "masses" [...] impelled by irrational desire into an ever-spiralling



Fig. 5. 'What We Might Expect', 13 April 1935, p. 535.

cycle of consumption'.⁷⁶ Through its own sophisticated engagement with commercial culture, the article recasts women as intelligent and informed readers of advertising: not passive consumers, but capable of critical reflection upon it.

Two more features, printed in *Time and Tide* in April and May 1935, further demonstrate *Time and Tide's* critical resistance to Leavisite constructions of 'middlebrow' readers as passive dupes of commercial culture. The first, a cartoon modelled on the comic-book format, appeared in a Literary Double Number issued on 13 April 1935 (Figure 5). The second blends elements of the cartoon (notably the thought-bubble) with the iconography of modern advertising; this feature appeared in a special University Supplement issued on 25 May 1935 (Figure 6). The visual and narrative pleasures of these texts largely derive from the ways in which they play with readers' expectations for the magazine, and deliberately mess around with high and low spheres. Both features work to assert *Time and Tide's* highbrow identity by repudiating mass-market commodity culture (the point is that the 'highbrow weeklies' do *not* advertise like the patent

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'



Fig. 6. 'What We Might Expect', 25 May 1935, p. 765.

foods or the soap firms). At the same time, this move is in effect a kind of advertisement for *Time and Tide*'s advanced status: indeed, the framing text 'WHAT WE MIGHT EXPECT' functions like an advertising strapline. Both also construct the highbrow in opposition to the most feminine of lowbrow forms, romance, but not without involving the reader in a playful immersion in this staple of popular women's magazines.⁷⁷ The placement of these features in a special Literary Number and a University Supplement is significant. *Time and Tide*'s disavowal of a feminised mass commodity culture becomes a vehicle for self-promotion within the very networks and institutions that secured modernism's cultural dominance. At the same time I want to suggest that these texts, and Figure 5 in particular, have something else to communicate to their large female 'middlebrow' readership. Both carry the initials of Phoebe Fenwick Gaye, Lady Rhondda's assistant editor, and a writer of historical novels and (later) poetry, biography and gardening books.⁷⁸ Working in the shadow of *Time and Tide*'s more famous personalities (such as E. M. Delafield), Gaye points to what Alice Staveley describes as an untold

Modernist Cultures

'procession of women behind the scenes' in early twentieth-century publishing history: 'competent professional women' who worked as secretaries, sub-editors, advertising and publicity managers, whose professional labours have received 'scant critical notice'.⁷⁹ Significantly, the protagonist of the comic-book cartoon (Figure 5) is an urban female professional (she is identified as such in the scenes 'on the train' and 'at the office'). These young professional women were part of Britain's expanding reading public, consumers of newspapers, magazines and 'middlebrow' fiction, and, importantly, a primary target group for *Time and Tide* (which is displayed prominently in the protagonist's hands in the central frame). The cartoon thus also advertises *Time and Tide* to a class of middlebrow readers who occupy a differentiated position between high and low spheres. What further interests me about the central frame of this cartoon, however, is the element of threat it contains: the male figure of large, overbearing stature and rather frightening teeth, looks more like a villain than a suitor. Might this scene not also register the threat posed to *Time and Tide* by male literary elites as the 'middlebrow' came under attack?

In June an article entitled 'The Yellow Peril in Publishing' generated a fresh debate on the effects of commodity culture on the state of English literature. It opens in an elegiac mode, on the dying symbols of English national culture where literature is perceived 'by all the symptoms to be enduring its final agony,' and continues:

Consider the Narcissistic orgies of publishers on the covers of new books, the hysteria—a kinder word than mendacity—of the Sunday paper book advertisements, the Pippa Passes optimism of reviewers. What right have we to mock the tooth paste advertisements tastefully sandwiched among the Liebestraums and Rhapsodies in Blue of foreign broadcasting programmes? Better corrupt good dental propaganda by bad music than commercialise and cheapen the lovely heritage of our country's literature.⁸⁰

Here are identified two aspects of the contemporary crisis in book publishing: the conditions of book reviewing which, as Collier discusses, 'was widely held to be failing in its obligations to help the readers navigate an overcrowded literary marketplace'; and the increasingly aggressive methods that publishers used to sell their books, including book blurbs and large display advertisements.⁸¹ Rather than enunciating *Time and Tide's* own position, however, it appears that the piece was deliberately staged as a stunt to promote controversy and debate. The article is signed 'Callimachus', the name of the ancient Greek scholar and creator of the first library catalogue,

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

the *Pinakes* (tables), based on the Library of Alexandria. The choice of pseudonym signifies both specialist classical knowledge identified with high culture, and familiarity with the popular circulating libraries which rose to prominence between the wars. From this 'middlebrow' standpoint the pseudonymous author ventriloquises the language of crisis and pessimism that characterised contemporary discourses.⁸² The 'Yellow Peril' of the title is also significant. A deliberate echo of late nineteenth-century nationalist and xenophobic discourses, it presents for critical examination the idea, central to the literary critical tradition developed through Arnold, Eliot and Leavis, that 'Literature' defines English culture and represents a humanising force against the deleterious effects of mass civilisation.⁸³ The implication of the excerpt quoted is that the contamination of literature by commodity culture threatens the foundations of civilisation itself (music does not carry the same cultural value).

Time and Tide's mimicry of the 'contamination anxiety' present in some contemporary responses to commodity culture contains another important cultural reference: the publishing house of Victor Gollancz, whose books were published in yellow covers. Widely recognised as 'an advertiser *nonpareil*,' Gollancz established a reputation for his eye-catching typographical dust jacket designs, and for his experiments with different types and borders in the full-page advertisements he splashed across the Sunday newspapers (itself an innovation for its time).⁸⁴ Gollancz's methods drew much criticism from some quarters in the Book World, and *Time and Tide's* closing lines at the end of 'The Yellow Peril in Publishing' article confirm that the journal was making a deliberate intervention in this controversy:

It is the business of those who really care for the honour of England and the glory of English literature to find in the high explosive force of austerity and truth the proper weapon against the absurd and dangerous delusion of the Ramp. As a contribution to the cause of sincerity, TIME AND TIDE is opening a competition in Blurbs, and we should like to refer all readers willing to help to page 846.

Turning to this page we find the following item under the heading 'The Blurb of the Month':

The Editor of TIME AND TIDE offers a prize of 10s. for the best Blurb of the month. For the purposes of this competition, blurbs include all printed rhapsodies on book-jackets or in publishers' advertisements, or reviews. Readers who have been cajoled by these sources of misinformation into spending money or time on worthless books are

Modernist Cultures

cordially invited to relieve their feelings by putting their own opinion of any of those works into the nutshell of 40 words.⁸⁵

This competition ran for three months and attracted a number of competitors whose witty entries were printed in *Time and Tide*'s pages.⁸⁶ As a comic strategy characteristic of the middlebrow, the 'Blurb of the Month' competition uses humour to diffuse the mounting 'hysteria' in the Book World about publishers' modern advertising methods.

'The Yellow Peril in Publishing' generated a heated debate in *Time and Tide*'s correspondence columns, with some responses reinforcing a defensive line against the commercialisation of literature. In the words of one reader: 'the selling of books is, after all, rather a different business from selling soap or furniture'.⁸⁷ The correspondence closed, however, with a letter written by one of *Time and Tide*'s directors and regular contributors, Winifred Holtby, which defends the new 'business methods' of the publishing industry. Identifying the expansion of the market for books as a positive development, she writes:

Mr. Victor Gollancz and a small number of publishers in this country and America developed a new technique of publishing to suit the requirements of our new appetite for printed matter. Is this really such a misfortune? [...] For myself I am delighted to be able to acquire Guides about Everything for the sum of 5s. Nor do I regret having my attention attracted by large-type advertisements to books which will interest me, in the Sunday papers.⁸⁸

Holtby's letter represents a challenge to the exclusionary practices of intellectual literary elites intent on preserving 'literature' for the few.⁸⁹ It also registers the value of advertisement for 'middlebrow' women writers whose sales and prestige were boosted by publishers' advertising methods. Her defence of Gollancz is also significant in the light of *Time and Tide*'s own promotional strategies which may well have been inspired by Gollancz's innovations. For example, the 1930 advertising wrapper discussed earlier (Figure 4) makes a striking departure in the new artwork and layout contained in the masthead where the journal's tag-line, 'The Review with Independent Views', is built into a structure that resembles contemporary art-deco architecture, and the more regularised and streamlined 'waves' separating the tag-line and title reflect the influence of modern design. Another innovation was the introduction of eye-catching red covers for special issues; from February 1935 the journal went permanently into red covers. Figure 7 is an advertisement for Naomi Mitchison's controversial novel *We Have Been Warned*, which was placed at the



Fig. 7. In-house advertisement, 27 April 1935, p. 630.

bottom of one of *Time and Tide*'s book review pages on 27 April 1935. With no reference to publisher or bookseller (another advertisement for the book was placed by Constable the following week), it is clearly an in-house advertisement for one of *Time and Tide*'s own contributors, and bears a strong imprint of Gollancz's designs.⁹⁰

Holtby's letter was published on 27 July, just three days before a new publishing event revolutionised the book trade: the launch of Penguin Books.⁹¹ Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei argue that Penguin Books 'gave greater visibility to the middlebrow,' and calculate that up until the end of 1938 one-third of books published in Penguin's orange-cover fiction series were by 'popular women novelists, including Phyllis Bottome, Susan Ertz, Stella Gibbons, Ethel Mannin, E. Arnot Robertson, Vita Sackville-West, Beatrice Kean Seymour, Angela Thirkell, Sylvia Townsend Warner and E. H. Young'.⁹² Many of these writers were contributors to *Time and Tide*, and it was with these and other so-called 'middlebrow' authors that the journal remained most closely identified despite its increased orientation towards modernist cultures in this decade.⁹³ As a journal which played a key role in the reception and promotion of 'middlebrow' women writers, it would thus appear that *Time and Tide* was carefully re-positioning itself on the subject of advertising and commercial culture as attacks on the middlebrow rose to a height in the mid-1930s.

However, changes in *Time and Tide*'s cover image in late 1935 indicate that during the course of this year the journal sought to alter its readers' 'horizon of expectations' once again. From July 1935 the content of the front advertising wrapper alternated between advertisements for financial products and advertisements for books. In October 1935 *Time and Tide* issued a special Insurance and Finance

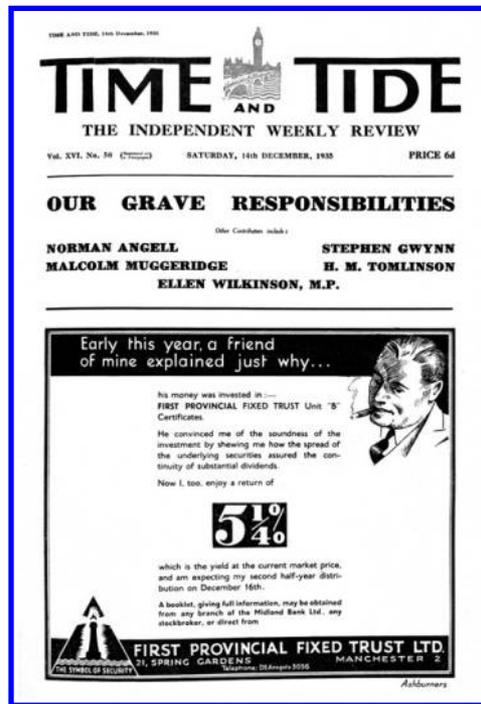


Fig. 8. Front cover, 14 December 1935.

Supplement, and from 2 November to 14 December 1935 a large advertisement for 'First Provincial Fixed Trust Ltd' appeared on the front page of *Time and Tide's* advertising wrapper every week. These financial advertisements completed *Time and Tide's* move out of the women's paper category, their masculine-coding reinforced by the head-and-shoulders drawing of a man in the top-right corner (Figure 8). Dismantling the journal's identification with the 'feminine middlebrow', *Time and Tide's* cover image explicitly addresses a male rather than a female reader. This change was also effected on the inside pages of the journal. By 1936 advertisements for the London department stores, which had formerly dominated the journal's advertising space, had completely disappeared.

For a journal still directed and largely staffed by women, this change in periodical code marks an extraordinary development from *Time and Tide's* early female and feminist identity, and poses considerable interpretive challenges. Did advertisers of feminine-coded products finally withdraw on the basis that *Time and Tide* was no longer seen to have a large female readership? Or did *Time and Tide*

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'

deliberately seek new advertisers in order to de-feminise the paper and complete its move out of the women's paper category? Given the strategies *Time and Tide* was adopting from 1928 to broaden its appeal beyond a feminist and female readership, I favour the latter interpretation. But rather than reading this in terms of a weakening of *Time and Tide's* feminism, we may instead consider the re-packaging of this journal as a strategic response to the difficulties faced by a female-run weekly review in a world still hostile to women's participation in the political sphere (revealed in Lady Rhondda's letter to Woolf quoted in the introduction to this essay). In October 1935 *Time and Tide* announced that it was going to adopt 'a sociological outlook and this particularly, in its book section'.⁹⁴ Part of what appears to have been a deliberate attempt to loosen the journal's identification with the 'feminine middlebrow,' this 'sociological turn' also worked to secure *Time and Tide's* reputation as a 'high' serious political review with a broad male and female readership. In this context, the 'masculine look' produced by *Time and Tide's* front-advertising-wrapper content in late 1935 worked to position the journal within mainstream political culture, disguising the fact that women still occupied key editorial and staff positions.⁹⁵ Moreover, this re-branding of the journal may even represent a canny opportunism to reach a 'political highbrow' sphere that existed independently from literary modernism. *Time and Tide's* sociological turn can be read in the context of a broad politicization of art and literature in this decade, and an increased interest in and demand for non-fiction in the 1930s.⁹⁶ In May 1936 Victor Gollancz created the Left Book Club, 'the first politically orientated book club' in England; several more political book clubs sprang up towards the end of the decade.⁹⁷ *Time and Tide* can thus be seen to be harnessing this 'political highbrow' market in contemporary book publishing in order to secure its position as one of Britain's leading weekly reviews.

Time and Tide's manoeuvre into this high sphere of political periodical publishing has wider implications for our understanding of women's identities in the interwar era. With the changes *Time and Tide* made to its cover-image in late 1935, it may look as though the journal had moved away from its feminist and female readership. But I would argue that what *Time and Tide* was actually doing was re-fashioning an image of the modern woman in terms of her economic power as professional worker, rather than domestic consumer, in the context of middle-class women's large-scale professionalisation in this period. An advertising spread from an issue published in March 1935 illustrates the ways in which *Time and Tide* had been working to

Modernist Cultures

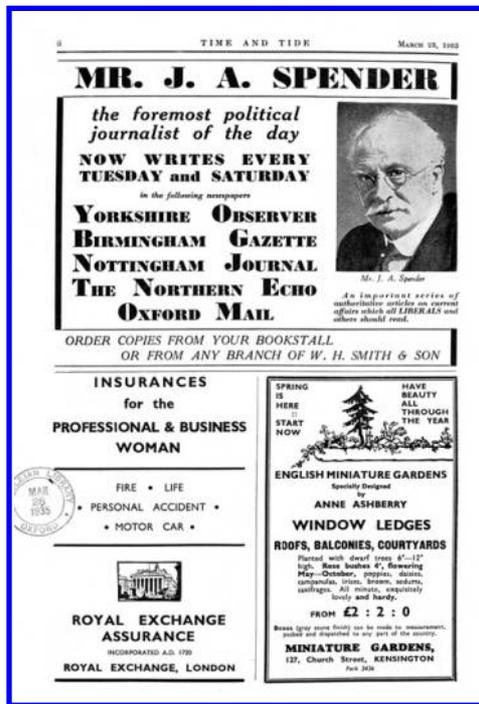


Fig. 9. Advertising spread, 23 March 1935, p. ii.

re-define women's roles and identities in advance of the journal's re-branding later in the year (Figure 9). At the bottom left of this page, the advertisement for Royal Exchange Assurance specifically addresses women readers in its promotion of 'Insurances for the Professional & Business Woman' and is a testament to women's increased economic independence. The advertisement for 'English Miniature Gardens' to the right of it sustains a link with the feminine middlebrow, but also marks a shift from women's gardening requirements in the family home, to their needs as professional and business women maintaining 'window ledges, roofs, balconies and courtyards' in the newly designed accommodation for single working women that expanded between the wars. At the top of the page, an advertisement promoting Mr. J. A. Spender, tagged as 'the foremost political journalist of the day', reinforces *Time and Tide's* identification with serious political journalism, a sphere which *Time and Tide* played a key role in enabling women to inhabit.⁹⁸ Significantly, in January 1936 the overt male encodings in *Time and Tide's* late 1935 cover-image were removed: the front cover still carries an advertisement for financial services, but

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

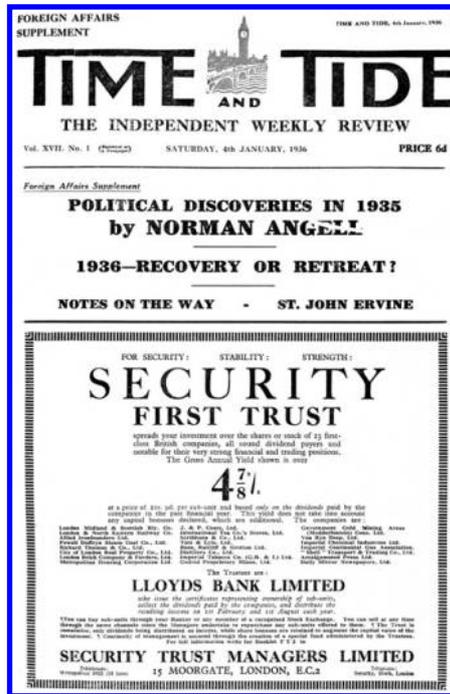


Fig. 10. Front cover, 4 January 1936.

without the male head-and-shoulders image (Figure 10). Given the ways in which *Time and Tide*'s advertising worked with other elements of the journal to offer new identities to women, it may be imputed that, in the replacement of advertising targeted at women consumers with advertising traditionally targeted at men, the journal had not abandoned its female readership, but completed its aim to address women as equal subjects alongside their fellow male citizens.

Coda

I want to conclude by presenting two verses printed in *Time and Tide*'s correspondence columns in 1937. The first is called 'The Plaint of the Middlebrow Novelist' and bears the initials of *Time and Tide*'s former assistant editor, Phoebe Fenwick Gaye. It reads as follows:

I've written my dozens of novels
 I've signed autographs by the score
 (and my portrait in oils and my photo at Foyles)

Modernist Cultures

— and I've spoken at Harrods at four;
The money is never a problem
I sell like the proverbial hot cake;
And the libraries fight for each word that I write,
Yet I have this incurable ache:—

Refrain

I wanna be known as a Highbrow.
I want my prestige to go up;
I don't want romance—I want Mr. Gollancz
And a par in the dear old *Lit. Sup.*
To hell with my library public;
To hell with a cheaper edition;
A sentence or two in a weekly review
Remains my unswerving ambition.
OH!—
I wanna turn into a Classic
—I'm as good as the next on the list—
I want *some* indication, from the *Statesman and Nation*
That I—as an author—exist.
To hell with the Book of the Month club;
And my serial rights in Cathay—
I wanna be known as a Highbrow
*And I don't care what Hutchinsons say!*⁹⁹

The second, 'A Reply to the "Middlebrow Novelist"', appeared a few weeks later with a note which explains: 'Having read with interest the "Plaint of the Middlebrow Novelist" in your issue of March 27th, I submit in reply, a plaint from a highbrow'. The verse is signed 'D. M'. and reads as follows:

I've finished the task of a decade;
I'm published by Victor Gollancz;
Intellectual fighters and scholars and writers
Are sending me letters of thanks.
I'm reviewed in *The Statesman and Nation*
And critics of weight and repute
In many a column, portentous and solemn,
Accord me their courteous salute.
I am "accurate," "moderate," "lucid";
I write with "a sober restraint";
I'm "important"—I am—and I don't give a damn,
For this is my bitter complaint:

Refrain

I want to write glam'rous romances,
Appeal to the heart, not the brain,

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

Explore human passion; become a new fashion;
Be read by the girl in the train.
I want the reviewers to clamour
That I can't be sufficiently praised,
And Compton Mackenzie to swear, in a frenzy,
He's staggered, astonished, amazed.

I want a blue band round my middle;
To be the Society's choice,
Yet be told I'm "so chaste" by ladies of taste
Who wouldn't read Lawrence or Joyce.
I want to hear Hollywood calling —
See Garbo obeying my nod —
Ay, this is my dream, for this *succès d'estime*
Is nothing on earth but a cod.¹⁰⁰

These delightful verses are a keen reminder that the periodical text is a 'mixed' genre, both 'open' and 'closed' in its production of meaning, the product of a constantly evolving set of relationships between editors, contributors, advertisers and readers.¹⁰¹ Printed within the journal's letters pages they demonstrate that while editorial decisions may take a publication in one apparently 'closed' direction, readers represent another set of interests and may construct the magazine very differently. The first verse laments the position of the 'middlebrow novelist' and, following *Time and Tide's* own trajectory, enunciates an 'incurable ache' to 'be known as a Highbrow' with a keen awareness that identification with the popular mass market means cultural oblivion in the modernist economy of literary evaluation and judgement. The second verse is the most surprising for the ways in which it neatly flips around the expected values associated with the high and middlebrow spheres: destabilising the desirability of 'highbrow' status its upbeat '*Refrain*' fizzles with the attractions of 'middlebrow' culture with all its passion and glamour. As a pair these verses show that for all *Time and Tide's* editorial manoeuvres to claim a 'highbrow' identity, a debate about the value of 'high' and 'middlebrow' cultures continued within the pages of the journal. Indeed, working as a highly self-reflexive commentary on the blurred boundaries and messy cultural capital of 'highbrow' and 'middlebrow', they may be seen to promote *Time and Tide's* conscious straddling of both these spheres, and its sophisticated relationship to each. Resisting the limitations and closure of one or other of these positions, this periodical may even surprise our own expectations with its endlessly playful and creative depths.

Modernist Cultures

Notes

1. Permission to reproduce images from *Time and Tide* is granted by the Bodleian Library (Shelfmark: N. 22891 c.23). Quotations from the unpublished correspondence of Elizabeth Robins and Rebecca West have been made with the permission of The Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University, and the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa. I am very grateful to Faith Binckes, Fiona Hackney and Joanne Hollows for their generous and helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.
2. Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies', *PMLA* 121: 2 (2006), 517–31 (521).
3. 2 June 1938. Collected in Angela Snaith (ed.) 'The *Three Guineas* Letters,' *Woolf Studies Annual* 6 (2000), pp. 21–22.
4. Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde, *Design and the Modern Magazine* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2007), p. 8.
5. *Ibid.*
6. The editor of one of *Time and Tide*'s nineteenth-century precursors, the *English Woman's Journal*, was convinced that feminist journalism was incompatible with the world of commerce, and refused any concessions to the market. Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine 1800–1914* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996), p. 175.
7. Paige Reynolds, "'Chaos Invading Concept": Blast as a Native Theory of Promotional Culture', *Twentieth Century Literature* 46:2 (2000), 238–68, p. 240.
8. Barbara Green provides a useful summary of this scholarship in 'Feminist Things', in Ann Ardis and Patrick Collier, *Transatlantic Print Culture, 1880–1940: Emerging Media, Emerging Modernisms* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008), 66–79, pp. 66–7.
9. Mark Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences and Reception 1905–1920* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), p. 39.
10. Barbara Green, 'The Feminist Periodical Press: Women, Periodical Studies, and Modernity', *Literature Compass* 6:1 (2009), 191–205, p. 194.
11. Lady Rhondda was active in the women's suffrage movement and many of *Time and Tide*'s early contributors were drawn from suffrage networks.
12. Michelle Elizabeth Tusan, *Women Making News: Gender and Journalism in Modern Britain* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), p. 220.
13. Alice Staveley identifies this 'newly emergent class of professional women' in a fascinating discussion of another genre of interwar women's periodical, the 'woman's professional magazine'. Organs of a variety of women's professional organisations these magazines flourished following the 1919 Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act which opened up the professions to women. 'Teacups and Turbines: Negotiating Modernity in the Interwar Women's Professional Magazine', Paper given at the 10th annual conference of the Modernist Studies Association, Nashville, Tennessee, November 2008. In a recent article Lawrence Rainey also identifies the urban female clerical worker as 'the most visible, everyday representative of the modern woman'. 'From the Fallen Woman to the Fallen Typist, 1908–1922', *English Literature in Transition* 52:3 (2009).
14. The rise of commodity culture is entwined with the history of the popular women's magazine in which advertisers targeted women as consumers. See Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*, 142–54. In a fascinating discussion of popular women's magazines of the interwar period, Fiona Hackney shows that their focus was not wholly domestic, and that the professional working woman was

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'

- also 'a continual presence in their pages'. '“Women are News”: British Women's Magazines 1919–1939', in Ardis and Collier, *Transatlantic Print Culture*, 114–133, p.12.
15. Unpublished letter from Lady Rhondda to another of *Time and Tide's* early directors, Elizabeth Robins, 13 August 1920. Elizabeth Robins Papers, Fales Library & Special Collections, New York University; 'Why You Should Read TIME AND TIDE', 15 August 1924, p. 793.
 16. 'Our Advertisement Columns', *Time and Tide*, 19 November 1920, p. 563.
 17. I am indebted to Angela John for this observation. Among the companies which placed advertisements in *Time and Tide* and of which Lady Rhondda was a director were Sanatogen, Genasprin, Formamint and the British Fire Insurance Company.
 18. According to Lady Rhondda's biographer, Shirley Eoff, when *Time and Tide* was set up as a limited liability company in 1920 Rhondda owned 90 percent of the paper in shares and over the course of her lifetime her private subsidy of the journal amounted to approximately £250,000. Eoff, *Viscountess Rhondda: Equalitarian Feminist* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), p.118, p. 123.
 19. Helen Archdale, 'Why and How', *Time and Tide*, 31 October 1924, p. 1055.
 20. This decision followed a dispiriting report from the paper's financial manager that sales were going down, not up. Unpublished letter from Lady Rhondda to Elizabeth Robins, 13 August 1920. Elizabeth Robins Papers, New York University.
 21. The Six Point Group was founded in February 1921. A 'Review of the Week' item printed in *Time and Tide* the same month confirms that the Programme first outlined on 19 November 1920 'bec[a]me the charter of the Six Point Group'. *Time and Tide*, 25 February 1921, p. 175.
 22. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism*, p. 110.
 23. Barbara Green, 'Feminist Things', p. 67.
 24. Archdale, 'Why and How', p. 1056.
 25. Announcement in the 'Review of the Week', 12 September 1924, p. 879.
 26. Advertisement, 10 October 1924, p. 993.
 27. Advertisement, 17 October 1924, p. 1011. Suggestions included asking for *Time and Tide* at bookstalls and hotels when travelling, recommending and passing old copies of the paper to friends and acquaintances, encouraging 'all and sundry' to use its advertising columns, and prevailing upon the secretarial and managing staff of clubs, medical practices and department stores to order *Time and Tide* for their Lounges, Reading and Waiting Rooms.
 28. 'The Weekly Newspaper', 31 October 1924, p.1049.
 29. A notice in *Time and Tide* announced that this event would take place at the Waldorf Hotel, Kingsway, on November 5th at 4.30 to 6.30 pm. *Time and Tide*, 10 October 1924, p. 984.
 30. 'In the Tideway', *Time and Tide*, 14 November 1924, p. 1125.
 31. The feature was contributed by the feminist and socialist poet and children's writer, Eleanor Farjeon, who had been writing for *Time and Tide* as 'Chimaera' since May 1922. Other items in the series proclaimed 'B Bought Us', 'C Made Her Club Take Us' and finally 'The Zodiac Stands By Us'.
 32. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism*, p. 99.
 33. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism*, pp. 99–100, pp. 126–8.
 34. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism*, p. 100.
 35. 22 October 1926.

Modernist Cultures

36. 31 December 1926, p.1199.
37. The content of the first advertising wrapper was as follows. Page (i): a half-page advertisement for 'Japshan British Pure Silk' and a half-page advertisement for *The Sunday Times*. Page (ii): a full-page advertisement for the upmarket London department store, Harvey Nichols. Page (iii) Classifieds, and notices about *Time and Tide's* weekly competition, contents of the next issue, and its subscription rates. Page (iv): a full-page advertisement for another London department store, Marshall Roberts.
38. These advertisements, which for some time alternated between Fortnum and Mason and Bournville Cocoa, were placed at the bottom of the first column below the table of contents.
39. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism*, p. 87.
40. The report notes that 'direct subscribers have unfortunately remained more or less stationary', and that while the Christmas gift form in 1927 brought in 84 new members, this was 'not quite as many as last year'. Unpublished report, February 1928. Rebecca West Papers, University of Tulsa.
41. In 1929 sales to subscription income was £932.5.10 $\frac{1}{2}$ to £977.14.1. In 1930 sales to subscription income was £1162.3.4 to £989.19.3. Unpublished report, February 1931. Rebecca West Collection, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa.
42. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, p.149.
43. In 1929 the combined income from subscriptions and sales was £1909.19.11 $\frac{1}{2}$; income from advertisements in the same year was £2467.8.8 $\frac{1}{2}$. In 1930 the combined income from subscriptions and sales was £2152.2.7; income from advertisements in the same year was £2544.14.1. Unpublished report, February 1931. Rebecca West Collection, University of Tulsa.
44. Unpublished correspondence reveals that *Time and Tide* faced acute financial crisis in 1931. In a private letter to Rebecca West, Lady Rhondda disclosed that the paper 'has always been run at a very serious loss' and that 'over the past three years [...] the loss has been in the region of £11,000 to £12,000 per annum'. With the Depression severely reducing her private income (much of which was derived from export coal) Rhondda was no longer able to sustain these losses, and the only way to save the paper was 'by increased advertisements or by subsidy'. 1 June 1931, Rebecca West Collection, University of Tulsa.
45. Aynsley and Forde, *Design and the Modern Magazine*, p. 8.
46. Alice Staveley, 'Marketing Virginia Woolf: Women, War, and Public Relations in Three Guineas', *Book History* 12 (2009), 295–339 (307). In an interview in 1924 Lady Rhondda stated that: Advertising 'is just about the only profession in which women have equal chances with men. There is no difference in prospects and salaries, especially in the higher branches. At one time advertisers did not care to deal with women, but that prejudice has almost entirely disappeared'. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, pp. 148–9.
47. Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*, p. 148.
48. The relationship between London's department stores and feminist periodical culture was not new. Mark Morrisson notes that 'enormous revenues were generated for the suffrage cause by advertisements [in the suffrage papers] for London's department stores'. *The Public Face of Modernism*, p. 90.
49. The first issue of 1928 carried a full-page display advertisement for Harvey Nichols in its wrapper, and full-page display advertisements for Debenhams & Freebody

Time and Tide and the 'Battle of the Brows'

- and Marshall & Snelgrove in its inside pages. This amounted to 35% of the total advertising content (3 of $8\frac{1}{2}$ pages).
50. NORTH WIND, 'In the Tideway', 10 February 1928, p. 135.
 51. NORTH WIND, 'In the Tideway', 27 April 1928, p. 394.
 52. See William Leiss et al, *Social Communication in Advertising: Consumption in the Mediated Marketplace*, 3rd edn. (London: Routledge, 2005) 153–6 for an account of the shift from a 'product-oriented' to 'product symbols' approach in advertising during the interwar years.
 53. Cheryl Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), p.184.
 54. See my essay 'Winifred Holtby, Journalist: Rehabilitating Journalism in the Modernist Ferment', in Lisa Regan (ed.), *Winifred Holtby, "A Woman In Her Time": Critical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), for more discussion of *Time and Tide's* re-branding from 1928.
 55. Lady Rhondda, 'Reminiscences of an Editor', *Time and Tide*, 17 May 1941, p. 398.
 56. 'The Art of Being Modern: Gendered Subjectivities and Popular Women's Magazines in Britain in the 1920s and 1930s', Paper given at a Symposium at Warwick University, 14 July 2010: Beyond the Little Magazine: middlebrow print culture, 'art' literature and the formation of modernist taste in Britain, 1910–45.
 57. 21 April 1934, p. 499.
 58. 23 February 1935, p. 275.
 59. 16 March 1935, p. 28.
 60. Announcement in 'Review of the Week', *Time and Tide*, 5 October 1928, 905. During *Time and Tide's* first decade the introduction of Spring, Autumn and Christmas Book Numbers periodically increased the journal's advertising space for books. But in the 1930s *Time and Tide's* relationship with publishers and booksellers strengthened and from October 1934 the journal issued special Book Numbers every month. The first of these ran to sixty-four pages including a thirty-two page literary supplement; advertising made up 30% of this issue's total content, and 65% of this was advertising placed by publishers and booksellers.
 61. Barbara Green identifies 'literary reviews aimed at feminist readers' as a specific genre within feminist periodical publishing. Green, 'The Feminist Periodical Press', p. 191. Solveig C. Robinson argues that three Victorian women's periodicals, the *English Woman's Journal* (1858–64), *Englishwoman's Review* (1866–1910) and *Victoria Magazine* (1863–80), played a key role in the development of a feminist literary critical tradition. "'Amazed at our success": The Langham Place Editors and the Emergence of a Feminist Critical Tradition', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 29:2 (1996), 159–172.
 62. The signatures of Sitwell and Woolf first appeared in *Time and Tide* in 1928, the year Bonnie Kime Scott identifies as the *annus mirabilis* of female modernism. Scott, *Refiguring Modernism. Vol. 1. The Women of 1928* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1995). West had been a contributor—and director—since the early 1920s. But her contribution of articles in literary criticism from late 1928 played an important role in the journal's 'literary turn'.
 63. James Joyce, the fourth member of the group Lewis famously named the 'Men of 1914', did not contribute to *Time and Tide* at any point during the period under examination here.
 64. Rosa Maria Bracco, *Betwixt and Between: Middlebrow Fiction and English Society in the Twenties and Thirties* (History Department: University of Melbourne, 1990), p. 49.
 65. Anon., 'The Book Society', *Time and Tide*, 13 February 1932, p. 166.

Modernist Cultures

66. Anon., 'The Book Society', p. 167.
67. Bracco, *Betwixt and Between*, p. 48.
68. As Rosa Maria Bracco summarises, Q. D. Leavis viewed such middlebrow apparatus as 'the celebration of the mediocre' and interpreted it as 'the most serious threat ever to the finest tradition in English literature'. Bracco, *Betwixt and Between*, p. 48.
69. Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement and Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 8.
70. Anon., 'The Book Society', p. 167.
71. Review of the Week, *Time and Tide*, 19 March 1932, p. 311.
72. Patrick Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 23.
73. Thomas Derrick, 'When Authors Advertise' [cartoon], *Time and Tide*, 19 May 1934.
74. E. M. Delafield, 'The World of Advertisement', *Time and Tide*, 11 May 1935, pp. 683-4.
75. In scenarios including a mother anxious about her child's unpopularity at school, and an unmarried woman worried about a 'disfiguring' shine on her nose, Delafield exposes the absurdity of advertisers' claims: within a week of taking 'Lilliput Lozenges' the unpopular child is 'being carried shoulder-high by all the other children of her acquaintance, crowned Queen of May, and elected Beauty Queen'; upon applying 'Poudre Crème Caramel' to her nose the unmarried woman finds herself being fought over by seven men at a dance and receiving a proposal of marriage.
76. Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 102.
77. Figure 5 constructs a romance plot in which an insipid 'wallflower', revitalised by a regular diet of weekly reviews, becomes a 'lovely bride', and the narrative pleasure lies in the reader's appreciation of *Time and Tide's* qualities which bring about this transformation. In Figure 6 pleasure is produced in the reversal of attributes assigned to the romantic hero and heroine (brainless male; intelligent female).
78. Gaye was Rhondda's assistant editor from 1931 to 1936. I have not been able to identify the second artist whose initials, S. B., accompany Gaye's in Figure 6.
79. Staveley, 'Marketing Virginia Woolf', p. 306.
80. CALLIMACHUS, 'The Yellow Peril in Publishing', *Time and Tide*, 1 June 1935, 815-6, p. 815.
81. Collier, *Modernism on Fleet Street*, p. 72.
82. See Faye Hammill's definition of the middlebrow as 'a productive and affirmative position for writers who were not wholly aligned with either high modernism or popular culture'. Hammill, *Women, Celebrity, and Literary Culture Between the Wars* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), p. 6.
83. See Peter Widdowson, *Literature* (London: Routledge, 1999) for an account of the process by which 'literature' became synonymous with 'English'.
84. Beverly Schneller, 'Victor Gollancz Limited', in Jonathan Rose & Patricia Anderson, *British Literary Publishing Houses 1881-1965* [Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 112] (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1991), 126-32 (126); Sheila Hodges, *Gollancz: The Story of a Publishing House, 1928-1978* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1978), pp. 29-30.
85. 1 June 1935, p. 846.
86. These were printed on 13 July, 10 August and 14 September 1935.
87. J. T. Arnold, 'The Yellow Peril in Publishing' [correspondence], 8 June 1935, p. 866.

Time and Tide *and the 'Battle of the Brows'*

88. Winifred Holtby, 'The Yellow Peril in Publishing' [correspondence], 27 July 1935, p. 1119.
89. Holtby had pursued this argument more fully in an article published in the *Left Review* earlier the same year. 'Why We Read and Why We Read It', *Left Review* 1:4 (Jan. 1935), 111–4.
90. Sheila Hodges notes that Gollancz's advertisements were striking for their use of 'large, bold, heavy type and much white space'. Hodges, *Gollancz*, p. 26.
91. The first Penguin reprints appeared on 30 July 1935. Bracco, *Betwixt and Between*, p. 75.
92. Chiara Briganti and Kathy Mezei, *Domestic Modernism, the Interwar Novel and E. H. Young* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 2, p. 81.
93. By 1935 Ertz, Gibbons, Mannin, Sackville-West, Warner and Young had all contributed short stories, poems or other pieces to *Time and Tide*; Bottome contributed articles and book reviews from 1937.
94. Anon., 'A New Departure', 12 October 1935, p. 1422.
95. Lady Rhondda maintained editorial control of the journal until her death. Her companion, Theodora Bosanquet, served as literary editor from 1935 to 1943. The historian Cicely Veronica Wedgwood succeeded Bosanquet as literary editor, and contributed much unsigned material to the journal's political pages through the 1940s.
96. Bracco, *Betwixt and Between*, p. 80.
97. Schneller, 'Victor Gollancz Limited', 128; Bracco, *Betwixt and Between*, p. 77.
98. See my discussion of *Time and Tide's* role in the development of Winifred Holtby's career as a political journalist. Clay, 'Winifred Holtby, Journalist'.
99. P. F. G., 'The Complaint of the Middlebrow Novelist', 27 March 1937, p. 406.
100. D. M., 'A Reply to the "Middlebrow Novelist"', 1 May 1937, p. 576. I have not been able to identify the author behind this verse.
101. Margaret Beetham, 'Open and Closed: the Periodical as a Publishing Genre', *Victorian Periodicals Review* 98 (1989), 96–100.