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Article

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Poetry Bookshop Broadsides and Mass-Market Modernism

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This article examines the cheaply mass-produced modernist poetry broadsides produced by Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop. It argues that these broadsides represented a dynamic—and remarkably successful—forgotten intervention into modern poetry publication, one which brought early modernist poetry into the homes and lives of ordinary readers. Neither antiquarian replicas nor limited-edition collectibles, the Poetry Bookshop broadsides, which flourished from 1913 to 1936, offer a new dimension to critical understandings of how modernist poetry circulated. The brightly coloured, cheap 'Rhyme Sheets' sold in their thousands, revealing an institution of modernist poetry deliberately seeking mass readership while also illuminating the complex temporal allegiances of early modernist aesthetics. At its close, the article offers a close reading of Ezra Pound's Poetry Bookshop broadside 'An Immorality', to show how this distinctive print context could alter the experience of reading modernist poetry in the 1920s and 1930s.

Today, the modernist broadside sounds like an anachronism, even an oxymoron. Modernist poetry publication is more readily associated with small fine print presses and limited-edition productions—the antithesis of the cheap, popular poetry that circulated in broadsides from the advent of printing to the end of the nineteenth century. Yet the broadside not only survived but flourished in the early decades of poetic modernism, largely through the efforts of Harold Monro's Poetry Bookshop. Beginning in the early years of the twentieth century and ending with the bookshop's closure in 1936, this article traces the efflorescence of the bookshop's remarkably popular, cheap modern poetry broadsides. Rather than focusing on refined 'art' or collector-orientated versions, it recovers a strand of modernist broadside production which was much closer in function to the traditional broadside: inexpensive, mass produced and intended for the widest possible public. Poetry Bookshop broadsides saw a range of modern and modernist poets and artists published at low prices and in high numbers, including Ezra Pound, Paul Nash and the Sitwells. Examining the bookshop's broadside paradigm of poetry publication reveals a deliberately different material textual strategy from the exclusive publishing practices that Monro, and poetic modernism at large, are more usually associated with. More importantly still, it illuminates a forgotten way through which many ordinary readers encountered poetic modernism.

The Poetry Bookshop's contribution to poetic modernism is most often attributed to its anthologies, specifically the best-selling *Georgian Poetry* series (1912–1922) and its

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revolutionary follow-up *Des Imagistes* (1914), as well as its periodicals, *Poetry and Drama* (1913–1915) and *The Chapbook* (1919–1925). But a bookshop advertisement from the 1930s paints a different picture of the shop's priorities. It announces: 'The Poetry Bookshop publishes Chapbooks, Rhyme Sheets and Broadsides, Ballads and Songs, with coloured decorations; also Anthologies and occasional Books of Verse'.[1] Anthologies and books of verse come at the end of this litany of wares; in prime position we see the chapbooks, rhyme sheets and broadsides that sold in their thousands during the shop's heyday. Despite this prominent position in the Poetry Bookshop's advertisements, the rich field of scholarship on modernist print culture has paid relatively little attention to the modernist broadside. The Poetry Bookshop productions were only one prominent example of modernist broadside publication: other modernist revivals positioned their broadsides as political interventions, faux-folk ephemera or collectible artefacts. The neglect of these products by scholars may be due to their tendency to publish reprints, as well as their intended ephemerality. Lise Jaillant has highlighted the bias in print studies towards first appearances, a blind spot intensified by critical assumptions that 'the lowest value would be assigned to the most ephemeral forms'—a perception which, as we will see, Monro sought to subvert.[2] Added to these obstacles is the complicating fact that the modernist broadside often blurred the boundaries between broadside and periodical, and so has sometimes been absorbed into discussions of the latter, more established, print category.[3] Monro, however, always saw the two as distinct, calling broadsides 'something between the periodical and the collected volume', and their material properties and modes of circulation also differentiate them from his periodical productions.[4]

While the Poetry Bookshop's importance as a site for the circulation of modernist poetry has rarely been underestimated, critical neglect of products like these broadsides has occluded the radical popularizing strand of the bookshop's project that motivated them. The early success of its middlebrow *Georgian Poetry* anthologies and the periodical turn in modernist studies have overshadowed these later, more idiosyncratic publishing activities. Bartholomew Brinkman's recent chapter is representative in positioning the bookshop as contributing to two well-established narratives about modernism and commerce: on the one hand, Aaron Jaffe's outline of the emerging modernist culture of the celebrity writer and their 'imprimatur', and on the other Lawrence Rainey's argument regarding literary modernism's early reliance on coterie audiences and structures of private patronage that would be eliminated by the Great Depression.[5] Mark Morrisson's incisive essay on the Poetry Bookshop's politics of audience gestures to the bookshop's goal of getting poetry out of the study and before an audience, but its focus on the periodicals and poetry readings rather than the broadsides leaves it with a narrower view of the classist paradigm promoted through those two channels.[6]

[1] Pamphlet titled 'Broadsides Rhyme Sheets Nursey Sheets Songs with Music'. As preserved in London, British Library (BL), Add MS 57757, 51v.

[2] In *Cheap Modernism: Expanding Markets, Publishers' Series and the Avant-Garde* (Edinburgh, 2018), 2. Faye Hammill and Mark Hussey, *Modernism's Print Cultures* (London, 2016), 17. Hammill and Hussey's survey gives studies of labour card poetry and greeting cards as the only examples of modernist ephemera which have received some critical attention.

[3] For example, Patrick Collier's study of Monro's publishing experiments of the 1910s gives an outline of his broadsides project, but suggests they 'culminated in' *The Chapbook*, the periodical-cum-anthology which his chapter centres on. Patrick Collier, *Modern Print Artefacts: Textual Materiality and Literary Value in British Print Culture, 1890-1930s* (Edinburgh, 2016), 190.

[4] As cited in Joy Grant, *Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop* (Berkeley, 1967), 109.

[5] In Bartholomew Brinkman, '"A Place Known to the World as Devonshire Street": Modernism, Commercialism and the Poetry Bookshop', in Huw Edwin Osborne (ed.), *The Rise of the Modernist Bookshop: Books and the Commerce of Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London, 2019), 113–30; see Lawrence S. Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, 1998); Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge, 2010).

[6] Mark S. Morrisson, 'Performing the Pure Voice: Elocution, Verse Recitation, and Modernist Poetry in Prewar London', *Modernism/Modernity*, 3 (1996), 25–50.

Other recent work, like Robyn Jakeman's and Patrick Collier's, is more alive to the complexities and contradictions of the bookshop's multifarious publishing activities, from Monro's general audience anthologies to his embrace of the Futurist avant-garde.[7] The broadsides shed further light on both of these tendencies, recalibrating the bookshop's relationship to the reading public while also illuminating the distinctive antiquarian avant-gardism that characterized Monro's attitude towards modern literary culture.

If we take the Poetry Bookshop broadsides into account, a different picture of Monro's founding intention of 'creating a link between poetry and the public' emerges.[8] For Monro, the broadsides represented as active an intervention into literary culture as his anthologies or little magazines. Specifically, the broadside offered a way to integrate modern poetry into the lives of a wide range of readers by placing its more palatable examples alongside a familiar canon of traditional poetic works. These publications correspondingly reveal a much more ambivalent relationship to both high and low culture than the bookshop is usually thought to hold, one which reiterates the nuanced navigation that critics like David Chinitz have observed in other areas of literary modernism.[9] Contemporary scholarship has moved past the stark high low divide once theorized by Andreas Huyssen and polemically pursued by John Carey, but these inexpensive, popular publications add a new dimension to our understanding of how modernist poetry circulated among the public.[10] Neither high, middle nor lowbrow, they show a prominent modernist poetry publisher designing products to appeal to wider audiences through brightly coloured, decorative images and relatively accessible verse selections—hoping all the while that they would kindle broader interest in his more challenging wares.

'[T]HE MOST PRIZED OF MODERN BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TREASURES': EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PRECURSORS

Monro was not the first twentieth-century publisher to attempt a revival of the broadside. Understanding his project's relation to its immediate predecessors is useful for appreciating both the pertinence and the distinctiveness of the Poetry Bookshop's endeavour. The traditional folk broadside was still alive in the distant fringes of Britain in the early years of the twentieth century, and it was its Irish remnants that inspired Jack Yeats' publication *A Broadside*, first published by Elkin Matthews as *A Broad Sheet* in London in 1902–1903. Its more sustained existence was as a product of his sisters' Cuala Press, initially from 1908 to 1915, with brief revivals in 1935 and 1937.[11] As Angela Griffith describes, *A Broadside* was unmistakeably a fine press publication which 'epitomised Arts and Crafts bespoke artistry'; by the 1920s, the meticulously hand-coloured issues had become 'art objects' in their own right, collectible rather than ephemeral artefacts which were issued in signed and bound collections and displayed at exhibitions.[12] *A Broadside*'s circulation was limited to 300 copies per month, a fact which was displayed prominently on the front of each number to mark it out as a limited edition with potential appeal for collectors.[13] Prices were correspondingly high:

[7] Robyn Jakeman, '"The Beautiful Future": Harold Monro, F. T. Marinetti, and Early Modernist Poetry in England', *Modernism/Modernity*, 29 (2022), 631–51; Collier, *Modern Print Artefacts*.

[8] Draft prospectus for the Poetry Bookshop, preserved in BL Add MS 57743, 1r.

[9] David Chinitz, *T.S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago, 2003).

[10] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, 1986); John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London, 1992).

[11] The first issue of 'A Broadside' bears the Dun Emer imprint, as the press changed its address and title between June, when that issue was published, and July, when the second number was issued.

[12] Angela Griffith, 'Illustrating the 1935 and 1937 Cuala Press Broadsides', in Charles I Armstrong, Adrian Paterson, and Tom Walker (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to W. B. Yeats and the Arts* (Edinburgh, 2024), 257.

[13] Images of *A Broadside* can be viewed online courtesy of Digital Library @ Villanova University <https://digital.library.villanova.edu/Collection/vudl:2001?recordID=vudl:2201&sid=11556604> accessed 14 May 2025.

readers were encouraged to purchase in subscription rather than as a low-cost one-off, and a year's subscription cost 12 shillings, or one shilling per monthly issue.[14] This subscription model, as well as the fact that each issue was a single sheet folded in half to form four leaves, containing three or four poems, meant it toed a much more liminal ground between the little magazine and the broadside. The verse published was often nationalist in tone—Jack Yeats contributed poems himself under patriotic pseudonyms such as 'Wolfe T. MacGowan' and 'R. E. MacGowan'—and illustrations throughout the 1900s and 1910s were 'consciously derived from traditional balladsheets': simple black and white woodcuts with thick, blunt lines and shading, though the 1930s instantiations would sometimes feature more abstract styles.[15] In their archaic appearance and finely crafted production, these publications were much more visibly akin to the Arts and Crafts reproductions of historic print forms than Monro's modernist broadsides would be.

While *A Broadside* was most likely known to Monro at the Poetry Bookshop, and some contributors, like John Masefield, were published in both series, a closer antecedent was Ralph Hodgson and Claude Lovat Fraser's short-lived 1913 series of broadsides published at their press, At the Sign of the Flying Flame, which the Poetry Bookshop would absorb after its closure. The Flying Flame was a much smaller operation than the Cuala Press. They made use of a printer in St Martin's Lane and designed and distributed their products directly from Lovat Fraser's studio at 45 Roland Gardens in Kensington. However, their collaboration aimed at producing larger quantities of lower cost broadsides than the Yeats' ever did: their first series of broadsides were produced in imprints of around 400 copies per sheet, which increased to 1000 for the second series, indicating that they saw some success upon publication. Much cheaper than *A Broadside*, the Flying Flame broadsides were exactly double the price of the Poetry Bookshop versions, at twopence plain and fourpence for the hand-coloured versions. Flying Flame broadsides mostly feature Hodgson's verse and Lovat Fraser's designs, though Lovat Fraser also occasionally contributed verse, along with other Georgian poets like Walter de la Mare. The poems are consistently rural in setting, and Lovat Fraser's illustrations are correspondingly idyllic, often centring on birds, seasons, archaic figures or picturesque countryside waifs and strays. In layout, they are highly similar to the later Poetry Bookshop versions, which Lovat Fraser would also illustrate and sometimes edit: they comprise a single rectangular sheet with illustrations at the top and bottom and a block of clearly printed verse in the centre, with the producer's information in a smaller print along the bottom. These similarities, and the close working relationships between the three men, make it likely that the designs of the two series were connected despite Monro's claims they developed independently. Indeed, the blocks from several of the Flying Flame broadsides would be reused to create almost identical Poetry Bookshop versions a few years later. Though intended to be cheap and plentiful, the short-lived nature of the press meant that by the 1920s the Flying Flame broadsides had gained the status of relatively valuable collectibles. An effusive eulogy for Lovat Fraser in August 1923 states that 'The original editions [of broadsides] are already among the most prized of modern bibliographical treasures' which, while perhaps not entirely accurate, indicates the degree to which these had been taken up as collectible items.[16] After the bookshop launched its series, broadsides would catch the modernist material imagination

[14] Liam Miller and Michael B. Yeats, *The Dun Emer Press, Later the Cuala Press* (Dublin, 1973), 88.

[15] Hilary Pyle and Jack B. Yeats, *Jack B. Yeats: His Watercolours, Drawings, and Pastels* (Dublin, 1993), 97; see also the discussion of broadsides featuring illustrations of traditional ballad singers in Jenny McCarthy, 'Jack B. Yeats A Broadside: Images of Orality', in Nessa Cronin, Seán Crosson, and John Eastlake (eds), *Anáil an Bhéil Bheo: Orality and Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2009), 87–97.

[16] John Drinkwater and Albert Rutherston, 'The Art of Claud Lovat Fraser', *Cassell's Weekly*, 29 August 1923, Book of the Week, 743–44 (744).

in several other places, often spearheaded by figures connected with the Poetry Bookshop. Arundel del Re, a close friend of Monro's and business associate of the bookshop, produced at least one broadside featuring Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell while owner of the Chelsea Book Club, and Vachel Lindsay, who performed at the bookshop, printed examples of his own in the US.[17]

POETRY BOOKSHOP RHYME SHEETS AND NEW BROADSIDES

The ambivalent relationship of the Poetry Bookshop broadsides to their collectible antecedents can be felt in Monro's 1926 reflection on the launch of the Poetry Bookshop rhyme sheets. Discussing the Flying Flame broadsides, and noting, as the critic above did, that 'to-day good specimens have increased value', he immediately seeks to distance the Poetry Bookshop efforts:

> Personally I conceived somewhat the same idea independently in 1911, and I also invented the expression 'Rhyme Sheet,' [...] the Rhyme Sheets which I began to issue regularly in increasing quantities soon caught the public taste, and after a while were selling in tens of thousands and became identified with the idea of the Poetry Bookshop.[18]

The key details of the Poetry Bookshop's Rhyme Sheet project are staked out here: their importance to the very 'idea of the Poetry Bookshop', the significant numbers in which they sold, their increasing orientation towards 'public taste', and Monro's desire to avoid framing these as faddish antiquarian productions by giving them the new, more direct name of 'Rhyme Sheet'. Though he claims to have had the idea as early as 1911, which would place it before the Flying Flame productions, the first series of Poetry Bookshop Rhyme Sheets were published from 1913 to 1917 and kept in print at least into the 1920s. There were 12 numbers, or individual sheets, issued in this original series, which ranged from anonymous lyrics to familiar classics by William Blake and Abraham Cowley, as well as contemporary Poetry Bookshop staples like Walter de la Mare, John Drinkwater, Thomas Sturge Moore and Monro himself. The series contents were not rigidly fixed: in line with Monro's belief that their success should be measured by their popularity, unpopular sheets were substituted for other poems in later impressions. In this spirit the first series' original number 7, Frank Sidgwick's 'A Christmas Legend', perhaps deemed too seasonally specific, was replaced by a new number 7, Jane and Ann Taylor's 'The Vulgar Little Lady', by 1917. Different colouring, size and kind of paper were common between impressions, unsurprisingly for a series in print for more than two decades, and while the original sheets were hand-coloured the bookshop soon shifted to colour printing, which was much less time-consuming. The dimensions of the first series sheets remained relatively consistent, at between 21 and 23 inches tall, and eight to nine inches wide—small enough to be folded up and stowed away easily but big enough to make an impact when hung on a wall.

The poems' illustrations were central to the broadsides' decorative function. For the first series, these were largely done by Lovat Fraser and Charles Winzer, a Polish-born Post-Impressionist. This original series was supplemented after the war by a second series, also called Rhyme Sheets, published between 1919 and 1923, and a little smaller than the first series, at around 14 by 7 inches. These coloured sheets were priced at 4d, which, adjusting for wartime inflation, was still roughly equivalent to the cost of the coloured sheets of the first

[17] For a discussion of one of Lindsay's broadsides, see Ben Lyle Bedard, 'Material Sites of Modernism' (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Buffalo, 2010), 99–101.

[18] In 'The Revival of the Broadside', *The Town Crier* (December 1926), 282. Preserved in BL Add MS 83375 [unfoliated].

series when launched in 1913.[19] The second series featured 25 numbers, drawing again from a range of historical poets and Poetry Bookshop regulars, with a slightly greater emphasis on early modern poets, including Thomas Campion, Michael Drayton and John Fletcher.[20] While Lovat Fraser still illustrated most of this second series of broadsides, and Winzer contributed one illustration, they were joined by John Nash, the landscape painter and brother of Paul Nash; Philip Hagreen, a member of the Arts and Crafts community at Ditchling where the series' printers were also based; and James Guthrie, one of the Glasgow Boys, introducing a more heterogenous aesthetic. The third and final coherent series was the 'New Broadsides', published between 1923 and 1931 (Fig. 1). Also costing 4d each on first publication, this series was slightly larger, at around 17 by 7 inches, and though no more expensive the Poetry Bookshop did advertise art paper portfolios to hold the series in 1925. This final series of New Broadsides is most relevant to literary modernism, as it published several avant-garde poets alongside the mixture of historical and Georgian poets seen in the previous series: Pound, Sacheverell Sitwell, Walt Whitman, Robert Graves, Osbert Sitwell and Sylvia Townsend Warner each contribute a poem, alongside Alexander Pope, Monro, Robert Herrick, Blake, de la Mare and others, to form a total of 23 numbers. The artistic choices are more experimental than the previous series too: Lovat Fraser continues to feature, as do John Nash and his brother Paul, but we also see one illustration from David Jones and two from the American graphic artist Edward McKnight Kauffer. Outside of these three series, the Poetry Bookshop also published occasional miscellaneous broadsides, such as John Masefield's *Cargoes* and a couple of illustrated poems by John Elroy Flecker.

After the first series, which experimented with more text and more illustrations, the visual layout of the Poetry Bookshop's Rhyme Sheets settled into a pattern which remained relatively consistent across the three series.[21] Truly avant-garde print productions of the period often adopted experimental layouts which marked them out as radical at first glance, as in the unconventional spacing with which Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* (1918) attempted to break up the tyranny of mechanical daily reading, or the heterogenous mass print fonts and liberal use of capitalization that characterized *Blast* (1914–1915).[22] By contrast, these broadsides adopted conventional, left-aligned, lineated layouts and simple serif typefaces which prioritized clarity from a distance. In their overall layout they resemble simplified versions of the sparser nineteenth-century broadsides that Monro would collect in 1920 as number 15 of *The Chapbook*. The minimalistic design leaves wide margins of blank space on the page, a feature which Brinkman identifies with publications looking to distinguish themselves from newspaper poetry and 'the clamour of mass advertising'.[23] In terms of the selection of poets and poems, Monro in 1926 reflected that after his initial lack of discrimination, 'I have found that Broadsides which are connected in some way with the act of living, that is eating, drinking, sleeping, seeing, talking, loving, are usually most popular; and death, generally speaking, is not at all a popular subject however wittily or gracefully referred to'.[24] Accordingly, the broadsides included poems like Sturge Moore's 'Beautiful Meals' or Cowley's 'Drinking', and place-based poems also proliferate: the rural represented by de la

[19] As calculated using: <www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> accessed 14 May 2025.

[20] For a full list of all the Poetry Bookshop publications and details, including the Rhyme Sheet and New Broadsides, consult J. Howard Woolmer, *The Poetry Bookshop, 1912-1935: A Bibliography* (Revere, PA, 1988).

[21] There is the occasional deviation from this format, for example, Sitwell's 'The Parrot' in the New Broadside series, which integrates the illustration into and around the body of the verse.

[22] For discussions of these pointedly innovative typographic practices, see Johanna Drucker, 'Typographic Manipulation of the Poetic Text in the Early Twentieth Century Avant- Garde', *Visible Language*, 25 (1991), 231–56, esp. 232; also Daniel Matore, *The Graphics of Verse: Experimental Typography in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[23] Brinkman, 'Modernism, Commercialism and the Poetry Bookshop', 8.

[24] 'The Revival of the Broadside', *The Town Crier*.

THE NEW BROADSIDE

A MEDITATION FOR HIS MISTRESS

You are a Tulip seen to-day,
But (Dearest) of so short a stay;
That where you grew, scarce man can say.

You are a lovely July-flower,
Yet one rude wind, or ruffling shower,
Will force you hence (and in an houre).

You are a sparkling Rose i' th' bud,
Yet lost, ere that chast flesh and blood
Can shew where you or grew, or stood.

You are a full-spread faire-set Vine,
And can with tendrils love intwine,
Yet dry'd, ere you distill your Wine.

You are like Balme inclosèd (well)
In Amber, or some Chrystall shell,
Yet lost ere you transfuse your smell.

You are a dainty Violet,
Yet wither'd, ere you can be set
Within the Virgins Coronet.

You are the Queen all flowers among,
But die you must (faire Maide) ere long,
As He, the maker of this Song.

POEM BY ROBERT HERRICK
DECORATIONS BY JACK DRONSFIELD

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP, 38 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, W.C.1

No. 15

Curwen Press

Fig. 1. Robert Herrick's 'A Meditation for His Mistress', illustrated by John Dronsfield. Poetry Bookshop New Broadsides, no. 15.

Mare's 'The Huntsmen' and Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Windy Nights', the urban by Shane Leslie's 'Fleet Street', and the domestic by poems like Sacheverell Sitwell's 'The Parrot' or Drinkwater's 'For a Guest Room'. The content, then, encompasses but is not limited to the rural idylls of the Flying Fame broadsides, looking to a range of contexts apposite to modern and urban life.

Characteristically for Monro, these thematic resonances are easier to perceive than any pronounced trends of period or movement. Like their historic counterpart, which Oscar Cox Jensen describes as 'Composed any time from three centuries ago to earlier that morning, their lyrics written by Shakespeare, Dickens, or the penniless balladmonger John Morgan, by the anonymous bard of antiquity or the equally unknown Grub Street hack', each series of Poetry Bookshop broadsides offered an eclectic mixture of time periods, authors—including the anonymous—and reputations.[25] One key difference to the traditional broadside is that these texts are all visibly poetic, usually literary, texts: despite their varied styles they favour traditional forms, especially rhyme, and many are composed in lines of four feet or fewer. They also tend to be shorter lyrics rather than the lengthy narrative verses of the traditional broadsides, especially in the later series, where poems rarely extend over 20 lines. Certain favourite authors—Blake especially—recur often enough to remind us that Monro was taking the opportunity to construct his own canon of modern poetry, one which extended laterally, including the Georgian poets alongside radical free verse poets like the Sitwells or Pound, as well as chronologically, looking back especially to early modern lyricists like Herrick and Campion and eighteenth-century satirists like Pope and Dryden.

It was the Poetry Bookshop's pricing and distribution models for these broadsides which distinguished them most clearly from other early twentieth-century broadside projects. Despite their visual similarity to the Flying Fame productions, the first series of Rhyme Sheets were priced at a penny plain, tuppence coloured, though the uncoloured broadsides were eventually discontinued, as they were not considered so decorative.[26] In 1913, a penny was a symbolically low price: the cost of posting a letter, a penny tram ticket, or a pint of milk. In choosing to set the price so low, and in producing the broadsides in such high numbers (each impression was a thousand), Monro was pricing the publications for the broad audience which they found over the ensuing decades. In 1926, sales of the broadsides reached over 20,000 annually, and popular individual numbers, such as Drinkwater's 'For A Guest Room' entered into at least eight impressions.[27] The Poetry Bookshop account books show that daily sales of these broadsides were consistently high, mostly of either one or two at a time, but on occasion a customer might buy the complete series, or three or four of the same number.[28] Such sales patterns suggest that they were mostly consumed singly but also sometimes as a series or distributed as gifts. This level of readership is comparable to that which Jaillant outlines as the audience for interwar cheap modernist novel reprints: 'thousands of readers—much less than a mass-market readership, but much more than the small coteries that had read texts by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and others in their original context of publication'.[29] But Jaillant's study focuses on the reprinted novel: the relative smallness of the readership of modern poetry volumes (Monro himself outlined three classes of poetry editions in 1913, one which sells 100–200, one which sells around 450, and a third which will sell in the thousands) makes these

[25] Oskar Cox Jensen, *The Ballad-Singer in Georgian and Victorian London* (Cambridge, 2021), 4.
[26] Woolmer, *The Poetry Bookshop, 1912-1935*, 109.
[27] 'The Poetry Bookshop', *Publisher's Circular & Booksellers' Record*, 3 July 1926. The impression number is printed on the bottom of the rhyme sheets.
[28] A number of these account books are held in the British Library; see for example, BL Add MS 57763.
[29] Lise Jaillant, *Cheap Modernism*, 1.

figures especially significant, on a par with the record-breaking first volume of *Georgian Poetry*, which sold 15,000 copies.[30]

'[W]E ARE ON THE EVE OF A RETURN TO THE POPULAR BROADSIDE & CHAPBOOK': THE BROADSIDE AS MODERN PUBLISHING PARADIGM

These best-selling products represented more than just a successful venture for Monro. To him, they provided a new principle of publishing which had the potential to transform the way modern poetry was produced, circulated and consumed. As a poet, publisher and bookseller, he was more attuned than most to the growing sense of a crisis in poetry publication. The swift expansion of the reading public due to the educational reforms of the end of the nineteenth century put pressure on 'high cultural' literary forms, chief among them poetry, to expand their readership or be outflanked by the rapidly multiplying mass print market, while the institutionalization of English studies had begun its bifurcation of audiences into a broad swathe of general readers and a narrow circle of literary professionals. Monro attributed his specific malaise to 'the tyranny of the machine': the need for the printing press to be kept busy independent of the public's liking or need for the poetry it produced.[31] This formulation points to his own concern for public engagement with the poetry that was published, but he was also sensitive to the more general modernist threat of commerce encroaching on art, arguing that 'Many publishers […] have lost their sense of responsibility and their discrimination and have become mere book merchants'.[32] The decline from responsible and discriminating publisher to 'mere book merchants' is particularly poignant for Monro given that he was both, and a poet besides: contemporary reports often depict him as toeing a somewhat unstable line between poetry and commerce.[33] Like other modernist poets, he believed that a revolution in the material production of literature could rectify this crisis of the overproduction of poor quality literature. However, he pointedly resists the more familiar modernist solution, namely a demonization of the masses and corresponding retreat into coterie audiences and small-scale production.

Instead, he proposed the broadside, a form premised on a close link between poetry and the public. In 1912, he declared that 'Poets and publishers are nearly all in favour of cheaper production; we are on the eve of a return to the popular Broadside & Chapbook', positioning the inexpensively mass-producible publications as a paradigm for the future of modern poetry.[34] The broadside held the promise of expanding the audience for modern poetry beyond the coterie, beyond even the single reader who makes the choice to purchase the poem: in 1926 Monro admires how the broadside 'serves the purpose of honouring any fine poem by placing it in the widest and most conspicuous manner before the public'.[35] As well as this material accessibility, Monro realized that the poems themselves would need to appeal more instantly to the reader than those published in books. He deliberately selected the shorter, simpler lyrics of poets with more complex oeuvres for the Rhyme Sheets, arguing that 'We believe that the reading aloud which will be done from these sheets will send hearers to the books in which

[30] *The Melbourne Herald*, March 1913, as preserved in BL Add MS 57766; Collier, *Modern Print Artefacts*, 201.

[31] Harold Monro, 'Letters from England XVI: Over Production of Books', *The Rising Generation* (15 July 1931), 272.

[32] These comments are taken from the notes for a speech on 'Unnecessary Books' that Monro gave at the Double Crown dinner in 1931, and which the above article is based on. 'Unnecessary Books', UCLA, Folder 'F. Prose Essays, Lectures. n.p., n.d. Typescript', 9.

[33] As for example in the title of a feature on Monro, 'The Poet as Worker, Shopman and Rhapsodist'. Preserved in BL Add MS 83377, 23. Labelled as from *World's Work* (March 1913) but not present in indicated source.

[34] 'The Younger Poets', UCLA, Folder U 'The Younger Poets. n.p., n.d. Holograph. Article', 5.

[35] In Monro, 'The Revival of the Broadside', *The Town Crier*, 282.

other work of the same author may be found'.[36] This orally inflected percolation from the accessible broadside to more challenging poetry books counters accounts of modernism which see it as a movement that deliberately cultivated difficulty in order to exclude less educated readers.[37] Instead, we see a modernist poet, publisher and editor not only attuned to the degrees of difficulty involved in reading contemporary poetry, but willing to manipulate those degrees so as to broaden the audience for modern poets. As Joy Grant attests, the sheets' colourful illustrations and decorative applications 'took the humbug out of poetry-reading'.[38]

However, this accessibility was tempered with a degree of reticence. Monro warned that 'It is not the slightest good to imagine [poetry] a panacea or to attempt to popularise it indiscriminately', seeking rather 'those who are eager for [poetry] but to whom it has been [...] completely inaccessible'.[39] Though admitting that not everyone can be equally receptive to poetry, Monro is staunch in his faith that a significant section of the 'mass' reading population, those who had not received privileged educations, are nonetheless eager for it, indicating receptivity more than hostility towards the newly large reading public. It is this discriminatingly populist publishing paradigm that he outlined when he gave voice to his vision for the Rhyme Sheets upon their launch in 1913:

> I am going to print what I call rhyme sheets. On these will appear new poems. They will be sold at a penny at the bookstalls. We have hopes of selling thousands and thousands. Several poets are at one with me in this attempt to revive the popular ballad sheet. [...] Please understand that these rhyme sheets are not going to be beautifully produced. They are not for the collector. They are to be done on inexpensive paper, just good enough to be shoved into the pocket and kept long enough for the poems to be stored in the memory.[40]

From the outset, then, the Rhyme Sheets were set up in direct opposition to Rainey's 'economic circuit of patronage, collecting, speculation, and investment', offering a starkly different way of navigating the nexus of commerce and art that Monro found himself grappling with.[41] The object of the Poetry Bookshop broadside is testament to this distinctive negotiation of art and commerce. Their material properties—cheaply printed on low quality paper in unlimited impressions according to demand—contrast with both their content, which featured well-known contemporary poets alongside traditional and canonical poems, and their design, which adopted the wide margins and bespoke illustrations from prominent artists more usual in expensive literary productions. Initial responses to the publications were alive to the contradictions these manoeuvres entailed. One article recalls how previous modern broadsides, perhaps thinking of the Yeats' series, distinguished their fares from low cultural forms through their careful production: 'The decoration, or cut, the good paper, the separate sheet, these would be the recommendations of the verse, so that it would be treasured instead of being tossed aside with the occasional poetry appearing in the daily papers'.[42] The Poetry Bookshop productions, on the other hand, are to be 'Treasured, says Mr. Munro [sic], but not by the collector. It is in order to dodge that hated patron that the Broadside must be sold in unlimited editions at the cheapest rates', an attempt the critic predicts will have 'no

[36] 'The Poet as Worker, Shopman and Rhapsodist', BL Add MS 83377, 23.

[37] Accounts such as Richard Poirier, 'The Difficulties of Modernism and the Modernism of Difficulty', *Humanities in Society*, 1 (1978), 271–82; Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, 2001); Leonard Peter Diepeveen, *The Difficulties of Modernism* (New York, 2003).

[38] Grant, *Harold Monro and the Poetry Bookshop*, 112.

[39] Monro, 'The Poetry Bookshop: A Year's Experience And Result', *Daily Citizen* (31 January 1914), 4.

[40] 'The Poet as Worker, Shopman and Rhapsodist', BL Add MS 83377, 23.

[41] Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, 3.

[42] 'Art Notes' (6 September 1912). Preserved in BL Add MS 57766, 1726.

vogue'.[43] The critic's comparison to newspaper poetry is cutting, but he misses the mark when predicting a lack of demand for Monro's formula of 'good poetry […] with cheap production': his initial hopes of selling thousands were exceeded on an annual basis by the 1920s.[44]

A year after the Rhyme Sheet's launch, Monro expanded on why he had sought to unhinge material from literary value in this way:

> Among the greatest advantages of this form of literature are its portability and its negligibleness as printed matter per se. A penny or two penny Broadside, a sixpenny Chapbook, may be treated with the same disrespect as a theatre or concert programme. A Broadside may be hung on the wall or carried in the pocket for a fortnight, then thrown aside or passed on when its contents have been assimilated and enjoyed or committed to memory. It serves well to accentuate the eternal nature of the spirit of poetry, the mortal existence of its base servants– print and paper.[45]

For Monro, what matters about the broadside is not its own material existence, but rather the ways in which that material existence can enable poetry to enter the everyday lives of its readers. Unlike the editions de luxe that represent the better-known material strategy of poetic modernism, these broadsides are intended to be ephemeral, virtually insignificant in their material existence. In Monro's formula, the 'disrespect' paid to these 'base servants' of print and paper can only emphasize the contrastingly transcendent 'eternal nature of the spirit' of the art. Correspondingly, in a June 1913 issue of *Poetry and Drama*, Monro skewers the 'limited editions' sold by young gentlemen with long hair, velvet coats and baggy trousers at 'extremely high prices', which 'it would be an impertinence (the young gentleman himself will agree with us) for the public to soil with its fingers'.[46] To adopt Jerome McGann's distinction, for Monro the value of the poem's linguistic coding, or content, is neither independent of nor premised on its bibliographic coding, but more radically construed in opposition to the value conferred by its material existence, if that material existence prevents its integration into the lives of its readers.[47] It is this formulation that informs the comments he made in an interview in 1926:

> One is often asked the uses of the modern Broadside and Rhyme Sheet […] I know that during the War any number of W. A. A. C.'s and W.R.E.N.'s would buy them as temporary covering for the wall papers of their billets, and I also know of a lady who bought many dozens entirely to paper a week-end cottage. They are to be recommended for hanging almost anywhere, schoolroom, pantry, garret, bathroom. They may temporarily brighten any wall where pictures are not wanted, particularly such as those of damp passages, and they are so cheap that when they suffer from damp or dirt they can be replaced.[48]

The applications Monro envisions for these publications are deliberately, comically low: papering the loo, or absorbing damp, but offer prime examples of how poetry can enliven a life. His choice of armed forces as the exemplary audience is especially striking given that the bookshop was a focal point for war poets, and some broadsides featured war artists, underlining the

43 'Art Notes' (6 September 1912). Preserved in BL Add MS 57766, 1726.

44 As Monro explained the broadsides in a letter to Amy Lowell; cited in Grant, *The Poetry Bookshop*, 108–9.

45 Monro, 'The Poetry Bookshop: A Year's Experience And Result', *Daily Citizen,* 4.

46 Monro, 'Poetry and the Public', *Poetry and Drama*, 1 (1913), 126. Collier describes many instances where modernist poets and publishers did explicitly value books to the extent that they were not read, as Monro suggests. *Modern Print Artefacts,* 16.

47 In Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton University Press, 1991).

48 Harold Monro, 'The Revival of the Broadside', *Town Crier*, 282.

assimilation of poem and audience that Monro aimed at. Anecdotes about the broadsides that survive tend to be from writers and intellectuals rather than the ordinary people Monro envisioned, but they show that the broadsides were integrated into quotidian environments as he imagined: William Plomer remembers papering his bedroom with them while a schoolboy at Rugby, and Sylvia Townsend Warner recalled in 1952 how 'we tacked them on our walls, above our beds and our baths'.[49]

Monro's belief that the degree to which a poem can be absorbed into everyday life is more important than its worth as an item is inflected by his socialism, but it also reflects the Poetry Bookshop doctrine that the true form of poetry was spoken words, rather than words on the page.[50] If a poem's ideal form was the oral, expensive print trappings could not augment its value, a belief which underwrote these attempts to forge an alternative tradition of modernist print culture. In a period which profited from the 'golden age' of American book collecting, Monro was not above resorting to fine press productions on occasions when the bookshop's ever-perilous finances stood in need of a boost, but his disdain for the phenomena as more than an occasional money-raiser is clear.[51] Instead, his vision for modern poetry publication centred on orality, with the cheap, decorative print of the broadside as its handmaiden; a combination which seems antithetical only to those unfamiliar with the similarly dual oral and visual appeal of the traditional broadside. It is this mixture of an earnest sense of the oral 'spirit of poetry' with an espousing of cheap print that distinguished Monro's project from other avant-garde print movements. If Dada could be branded by Walter Benjamin, himself a keen collector, as an artistic movement which sought the 'relentless destruction of the aura of their creations', Monro sought a radical compromise, one which attempted to distribute that 'aura' more widely through the methods of mechanical reproduction.[52]

Despite this reservation, the broadsides' attempt to redraw the boundaries between high and low culture did owe much to Monro's strong sympathies with the avant-garde. At one point, Monro attributes inspiration for the broadsides directly to the Futurists, who were known for their own provocative campaigns in cheap print.[53] In the first issue of *Poetry and Drama*, he writes:

> We admire, with whole hearts, the spirit of fun and recklessness in the Italian movement. Produced and rendered in such a spirit, poetry automatically regains something of its popular appeal. [....] We desire to see a public created that may read verse as it now reads its newspapers; [...] The minstrel and the ballad-monger then represented our modern [Viscount] Northcliffe; Broadside and Chap-book, the modern newspaper. [...] we look for the establishment in the future of a new kind of Broadside and Chap-book for the circulation of the best poetry, with a clearly defined scope, and aims that shall be in no danger of overlapping those of the newspapers and magazines. [...] they should reproduce *only* verse of an obviously high standard[54] [emphasis original]

The distinction that Melba Cuddy-Keane describes between 'massification as an approach and the large number, or mass in another sense, of ordinary readers', and which accounts like

[49] As cited in Penelope Fitzgerald, 'Introduction', *The Poetry Bookshop: A Bibliography*, ed. Woolmer, xxxi.
[50] A professed socialist, as a young man, Monro had co-founded a socialist-utopian community called 'The Samurai', after H. G. Wells' *A Modern Utopia* (1905).
[51] Though Shaddy refers to American collectors, the Anglo-American book trade was often at the centre of their activities. Robert Alan Shaddy, *Books and Book Collecting in America, 1890-1930* (Lewiston, 2000). For more information on Monro's fine print productions, see Collier's discussion of him in *Modern Print Artefacts*, Chapter 4.
[52] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, tr. H. Zohn (London, 1973), 225.
[53] Most famously the publication of their manifesto in *Le Figaro* in February 1909.
[54] Monro, 'Broadsides and Chapbooks', *Poetry and Drama*, 1 (1913), 265.

Carey's omit, is crucial to understanding the project Monro outlines here.[55] In his desire that the public read verse as it then read newspapers, Monro presents Northcliffe's empire—a bête noire for the high-brow modernists of Carey's account—as an ambivalent ideal. Monro explicitly wishes for a Northcliffian 'mass' readership even as he rejects the 'massified' content of his papers in his stipulation that the scope of his project 'shall be in no danger of overlapping those of the newspapers and magazines'. He then emphasizes this Arnoldian urge to 'correct' the contents of the newspaper in his insistence that he will publish 'only' the best, a distancing reiterated in the satirization of the newspaper poet throughout his periodicals.[56] But the 'popular appeal' that Marinetti desired for poetry compels Monro too, and the compound of high and low so explicit in futurist doctrine equally underlies these broadsides. For Rainey, hostility to mass culture furnishes the possibility for drawing a firm distinction between modernism and the avant-garde. Whereas modernism reaffirms the boundaries of traditional art, the avant-garde 'attempts to subvert art's autonomy, its artificial separation from life, and its institutionalization as "high art"'.[57] These broadsides complicate both this straightforward opposition between modernism and mass culture and boundaries between modernism and the avant-garde at all: there were even plans afoot to feature Marinetti in one of the Poetry Bookshop Rhyme Sheets.[58] In other words, if, as Rainey points out, Marinetti charged a shilling for his performances at the same time as tickets for Pound's private poetry readings cost 10s 6d, both were willing to be featured in a 1 penny broadside.[59]

To achieve their distinctive compromise between oral poetic aura and mass production, the Poetry Bookshop broadsides visibly distinguished themselves from avant-garde print projects, most prominently through their navigation of past and future. Daniel Matore describes the anxiety among modernist typographical experimentalists that their emphasis on the visual 'opens up verse to foreign cultures of print: to signage, commerce, and advertising', an anxiety that, as we have seen, the Poetry Bookshop broadsides were also vulnerable to.[60] Monro, the consummate periodical editor, was especially aware of the gulf that needed to be maintained between 'newspaper verse' and that of his little magazines. To defend it, he forged a compound of contemporary and traditional references which amounted to a kind of backward-facing futurism, looking to the past to transform the literature of the future. He makes this clear from his announcement of the broadsides in the first issue of *Poetry and Drama*, arguing that, in comparison to the Futurists, 'our present hope lies rather in circulation than innovation. [...] The transplantation of poetry into the study is a modern development surely not to be tolerated'.[61] In his distinction of 'circulation' from 'innovation', Monro encapsulates his commitment to publishing 'high' literary verse in low media forms, a compromise between tradition and innovation reflected in the publications' revival of an archaic form to publish canonical lyrics alongside contemporary, often radical poets. The deliberateness of this anachronism is stressed in two issues of *The Chapbook*, Monro's third and final little magazine, which he named to complement the broadsides. Two numbers, published a year apart in September 1919 and 1920, and both edited by Lovat Fraser, expand on the distinctive compound of antiquarianism and modernity that Monro emphasized in the broadsides. The first offers a series of 'Poems Newly Decorated', a selection of new and old poems illustrated by contemporary illustrators similar to those published in broadsides, while the second, devoted

[55] Melba Cuddy-Keane, *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 2003), 3.
[56] For example, in *The Poetry Review*, 1 (1912), 485.
[57] Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, 2.
[58] See Jakeman, 'The Beautiful Future', 631–51.
[59] See Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, Chapter 2.
[60] Matore, *The Graphics of Verse*, 13.
[61] Monro, 'Broadsides and Chapbooks', *Poetry and Drama*, 1 (1913), 265.

to 'Old Broadside Ballads', reprints a series of older examples in roughly chronological order. The older broadsides span a wide range of formats and appearances, but the example of the single column, minimalist format of an early nineteenth-century example closely chimes with the format Lovat Fraser chose for his own broadsides. The issue ends with the telling indictment: 'Let the reader also make a mental comparison with the examples here given with the twopenny novelette and the "song Album" of to-day and draw his own conclusions'.[62] This characteristic move to transform the degradation of contemporary mass culture through the mass culture of the past is that which defines the Poetry Bookshop broadsides, and the artefacts of these strangely medial publications—periodical collections of broadsides present and past—sketch their own links between modern forms of cheap print and these traditional versions.

A hostile review of the Flying Flame broadsides which, as we have seen, were republished by the Poetry Bookshop, aptly captures the discomfort these new-old publications could provoke:

> The lyrics and ballads themselves which are published in this form are not in the least reminiscent of any period but our own, and Mr. Lovat Fraser's sketches, though old-fashioned by Futurist and Cubist standards, are certainly not archaic […] A comparison with the work of the Kelmscott Press would be quite irrelevant. Morris's illuminations are a triumph […] of the most elaborate resources of modern craft. […] If they desired to do the thing thoroughly, why not– to use a vulgarism– have 'gone the whole hog,' and made the printing of these single sheets […] and the style and composition of the verses, as antiquarian as the format? As it is, they have not succeeded more than the furniture dealer who appends a 1913 label to an imitation Chippendale.[63]

The unsettling compound of new and old represented by these broadsides—the fact that though the illustrations and the verse are firmly rooted in the present moment, the format and production are so obstinately 'primitive'—is branded as fraudulent by this reviewer, an obvious and ugly anachronism. The Poetry Bookshop broadsides would go on to push this deliberate anachronism further, actually employing Futurist and Cubist references alongside more traditional illustrations in the framing and production of their sheets to amplify this apparently awkward fusion of past and present. This reviewer also rejects the distinction of these ephemeral, cheaply mass-produced broadsides from the 'elaborate resources' and fine craft of William Morris' Kelmscott Press, but the relationship to Arts and Crafts was both closer and more complicated than he suspects. Poetry Bookshop broadsides would in time be printed by the Curwen Press, a Sussex-based press directly descended from the Arts and Crafts movement, but which championed a distinctively modern aesthetic, employing artists like Eric Ravilious, and which was known especially for its publicity materials, including for the London Underground. Accordingly, the Poetry Bookshop productions retained woodcut illustrations and used heavy 'old-style' serif Arts and Crafts-esque typefaces (including, for the New Broadsides, Morris' own Golden Type, the plainest of the three typefaces he designed for Kelmscott), but omitted the ornate decorations, illuminations and Gothic borders of the Kelmscott Press in favour of blank space and clean lines. Importantly, the bookshop broadsides also championed the techniques of mass production that the Kelmscott opposed, negotiating a much more ambivalent negotiation of new and old than that effected by Morris and

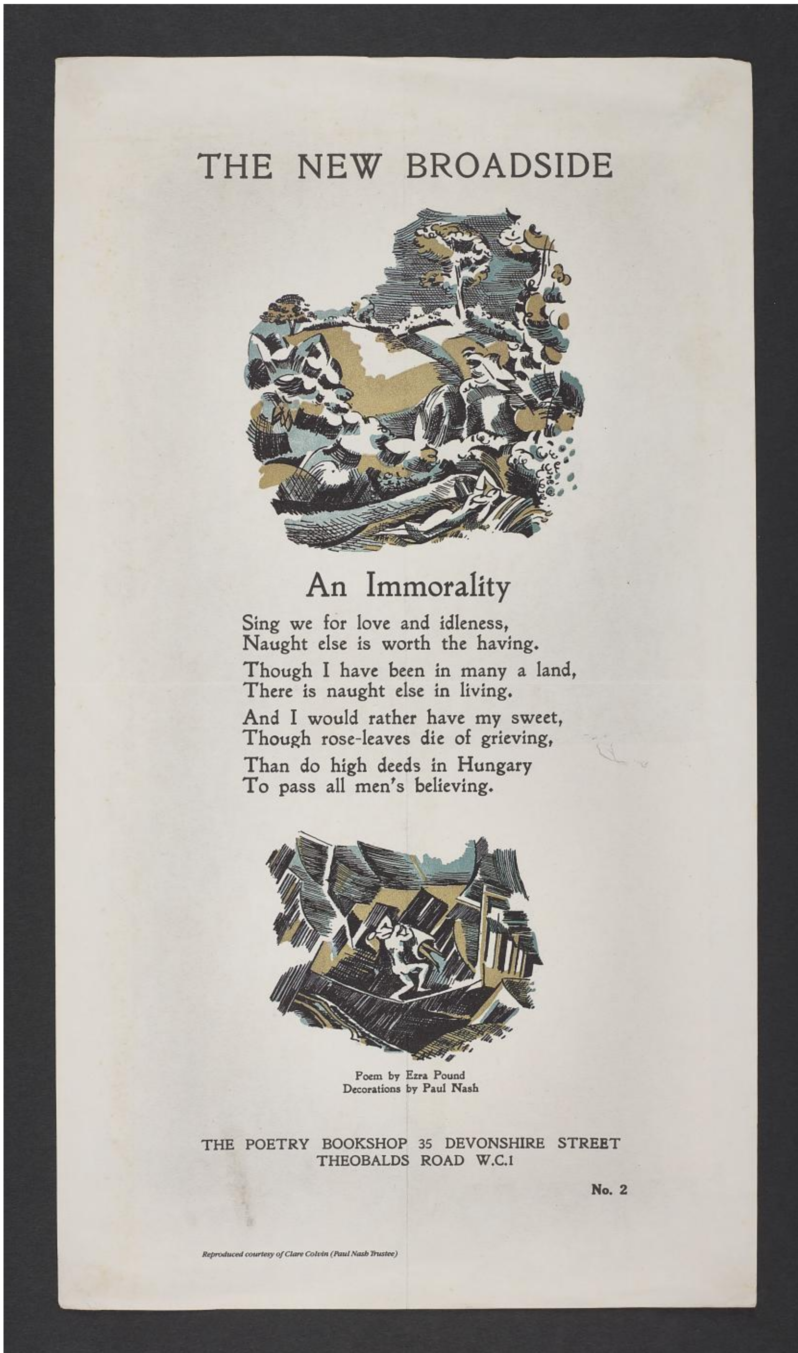
[62] Lovat Fraser, *The Chapbook*, 15 (1920), 24.
[63] 'Broadsides, Chapbooks, and Garlands', *The Athenaeum* (3 January 1914), 10.

his colleagues. Though distasteful to the 1914 reviewer, this negotiation proved palatable to a much broader audience than that usually imagined for modernist poetry. In parallel to how Amy Lowell's compound of radical and traditional aesthetics (e.g. the Morris-esque illustrations of her Imagist anthologies) could produce 'the tremendous middlebrow enthusiasm free verse elicited, an enthusiasm remarkable for what was, its champions believed, an avant-garde form', it is the heterogeneity of these publications, their avant-garde *and* traditional allegiances, that allowed them to flourish and find larger audiences for some modernist poetry.[64]

'AN IMMORALITY' AS NEW BROADSIDE

The reading experience produced by these broadsides deserves our attention not only because it is so different from the usual setting of the modernist poem, circulated selectively in a little magazine or a small run from a private press, but also because this distinctive context was the way thousands of readers encountered poetic modernism. One example of how these poems could shift their effect in these new publication contexts can be seen in the case of Ezra Pound's 'An Immorality', a poem first published in *Ripostes* in 1912, but republished as no. 2 of the New Broadsides series more than a decade later in 1923. The poem, more a product of Pound's troubadour phase than his Imagist one, consists of four brief, rhymed couplets and tells the archaized tale of a love affair. Formally, aesthetically and thematically it therefore complied with Monro's sense that the broadsides should present the less-challenging elements of a poet's work with the hope that readers would be tempted further into their oeuvre after this introduction. The poem appears in the standard later bookshop broadside layout, its four short stanzas pressed close together, with illustrations bookending it (Fig. 2). The illustrations are by Paul Nash, and both manifest Nash's signature surrealist slant. The top illustration is composed mostly of rounded lines and segments, while the bottom is distinctly cubist, with sharp angles, though the two are tied together by the scenes that they depict, of hilly or mountainous landscapes, and the grey, brown, blue and ochre colour scheme. It is one of the more modern looking broadsides in the series: some other illustrations, like Jack Drummond's stark, Picasso-esque line drawing illustrations of Robert Herrick's 'A Meditation for His Mistress' (Fig. 1), are equally so, but others, such as Alan Rutherston's rural scenes for Monro's 'Forgetfulness', look more like traditional, though brightly coloured, woodcut illustrations. The poem itself is pacifistic, if hedonistic, pitting the lyric charge of 'love and idleness' against the epic value of 'high deeds' and mens' esteem. The reference to 'high deeds in Hungary' in the penultimate line, when written in the early 1910s, pointed towards the incipient conflict that would develop into WWI, a war in the recent past when this broadside was published. The repeated archaism of 'naught' and the simple language, such as 'sweet', 'rose-leaves' and 'many a land', recalls a folktale or nursery rhyme, both forms which Monro had also published in these often childish-looking rhyme sheets. But an ambiguity in Pound's poem complicates these nostalgic trappings. The poem's title, 'An Immorality', ambivalently designates the verse that follows as morally dubious, positioning the speaker's invitation to join them—'Sing we'—in love and idleness as a temptation that perhaps should be resisted. Republished in 1923, 5 years after the end of the war, the poem and its title are poised ambiguously between an endorsement of 1920s hedonism in the wake of the destruction that had passed and a subtle taunt of the naivety which had preferred not to see the war coming. The ambiguity is compounded in the final line, where 'believing' holds the potential of either comprehending these deeds or having faith in them at all.

[64] Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (Princeton, 2010), 164; see also Jeremy Braddock, *Collecting as Modernist Practice* (Baltimore, 2013), Chapter 1.



THE NEW BROADSIDE

An Immorality

Sing we for love and idleness,
Naught else is worth the having.

Though I have been in many a land,
There is naught else in living.

And I would rather have my sweet,
Though rose-leaves die of grieving,

Than do high deeds in Hungary
To pass all men's believing.

Poem by Ezra Pound
Decorations by Paul Nash

THE POETRY BOOKSHOP 35 DEVONSHIRE STREET
THEOBALDS ROAD W.C.1

No. 2

Reproduced courtesy of Clare Colvin (Paul Nash Trustee)

Fig. 2. Ezra Pound, 'The Immorality', illustrated by Paul Nash. Poetry Bookshop New Broadsides, no. 2. Featuring 'An Immorality,' by Ezra Pound, from COLLECTED EARLY POEMS OF EZRA POUND, copyright ©1976 by The Ezra Pound Literary Property Trust. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

In the immediate post-war context, the fact that this hopeful pacifism had failed could not be avoided. Lorraine Janzen Kooistra traces how by the end of the nineteenth-century illustrators had developed their own agency in interpreting the text, rather than strictly transcribing the writer's intent; in the same vein, this Broadside's illustrations amplify rather than resolve the ambiguity of the poem.[65] In 1923, Nash was transitioning from producing the war scenes for which he had first become famous as an official war artist to his richly symbolic, neo-romantic landscapes of the 1930s. His reputation had been cemented by his May 1918 'Void of War' show at the Leicester Gallery in London, where he exhibited iconic war paintings like 'The Mule Track' and 'We Are Making a New World', paintings which focused on the tension between would-be pastoral scenery and the brutal violence erupting on the fronts. In the preface to the exhibition catalogue Arnold Bennett described how Nash had 'found the essentials of [the front]—that is to say, disfigurement, danger, desolation, ruin, chaos—and little figures of men creeping devotedly and tragically over the waste'.[66] A parallel tension characterizes the bottom drawing here, which includes similar creeping human figures: a man carrying a woman away into the hills. In 1923, the two landscape scenes depicted here would therefore have more than anything recalled, with their distinctive fragmentary style and brown, grey and black colour scale, those paintings of ruin and destruction in the trenches. Despite its archaic framing, then, the broadside embeds the poem in the current moment: the first world war visually shadows its rural idyll.

The broadside format also puts pressure on the relationship between reader and poem. An important feature of the historical broadside or ballad was its anonymity, an anonymity deliberately amplified by later collectors like Francis Child, and which developed in opposition to the increasing hegemony of lyric modes of reading. The ballad's traditional foregrounding of the scene of their transmission acted as a key site of their resistance to lyricization: as Meredith McGill summarizes, ballads tend to 'index or foreground the scene of their transmission, whereas lyrics are said to repress it'.[67] Recontextualized into this broadside, a format which Monro deliberately framed as a means to a more oral, communal way of consuming poetry, the negotiation between lyric and collective voices that 'An Immorality' performs becomes more visible. The introductory 'Sing we' invokes a collective oral experience aligned with that Monro imagined for the broadsides, and also foregrounds the act of transmission, preventing the reader from slipping immediately into a lyric identification with a first-person speaker. But this choral refrain fades out into the first-person singular which takes over from the second paragraph, mediating a relationship between the collective, the individual and the silent, apparently judgemental community gestured to in the final line's 'all men's believing'. The individual voice departs from and then is subsumed by the collective, problematizing the stable lyric speaker by shifting their position within the poem. The evasiveness of the speaker is mirrored by the minimization of the poet and illustrator's names in the mise-en-page; both are printed in the smallest font on the broadsides, smaller than the Poetry Bookshop branding beneath it, and all but indiscernible if the broadside were hung upon a wall.[68] If, as Anne Ferry has argued, the anthology contributed to the lyricization of

[65] Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *The Artist as Critic: Bitextuality in Fin-de-Siècle Illustrated Books*, Nineteenth Century Series (Aldershot, 1995), 3.

[66] Arnold Bennett, 'Introduction', in *Void of War Exhibition Catalogue* (London, 1918).

[67] Meredith McGill, 'What Is a Ballad? Reading for Genre, Format, and Medium', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 71 (2016), 161.

[68] Though the Bookshop branding is larger than the poet and illustrator's name it is still relatively minute, to the extent that the Poetry Bookshop broadsides are hardly distinguishable from a distance from the Flying Fame series. For this practical reason, as well as the plain design and heterogenous range of artists used to illustrate the broadsides, I would argue that Aaron Jaffe's concept of the modernist 'imprimatur', or branding of literary products, was also not the driving force of these productions as he argues it is for the Georgian Poetry anthologies. Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity*,

poetry reading by placing all poems out of context, as utterances to be appropriated at will, these broadsides unpick those lyric ways of reading, gesturing towards new poet-reader configurations.[69]

Other elements of Poetry Bookshop practices, from their tendency not to print the names of poets with poems in the pages of their periodicals, to that of darkening the room so that the poet could hardly be seen at readings, similarly reflect Monro's insistence that 'I am not concerned with poets but with poetry'.[70] Brinkman suggests that by the end of its tenure, the Poetry Bookshop had become a spot for celebrity poet hunting, part of the tendency Timothy Galow identifies for audiences to be intrigued by the person of the modernist poet rather than their books, but these broadsides and their publication contexts show just how far that was from Monro's intention.[71] For many scholars of modernist materiality, personality, authorial intention and fine printing form a triad:

> This fidelity to authorial intention, with regard to both literary and bibliographical elements [in the first edition…] suggests that, in an era of mechanical reproduction, a first edition expresses a personal, auratic quality not found in subsequent reproductions […] Whatever else it may have had, the frequently anonymous and reprinted poetry of mass print culture had little aura.[72]

Through productions like this broadside, the relationship is recalibrated: instead, it is precisely in 'the frequently anonymous and reprinted poetry of mass print culture' that Monro locates the aura of modern poetry for modern audiences, trusting that it can withstand the distance from the voice or hand of the poet required to enable integration into the reader's life. As broadsides, poems like Pound's speak differently than in a finely produced, small-run book, both widening their address and gesturing more emphatically to the contemporary moment.

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[69] In Anne Ferry, *Tradition and the Individual Poem: An Inquiry into Anthologies* (Stanford, Calif, 2001).

[70] UCLA, 'The Younger Poets', 1.

[71] Brinkman, 'Modernism, Commercialism and the Poetry Bookshop'; Timothy W. Galow, 'Literary Modernism in the Age of Celebrity', *Modernism/Modernity*, 17 (2010), 313–29.

[72] Bartholomew Brinkman, *Poetic Modernism in the Culture of Mass Print* (Baltimore, 2017), 51.