

Wartime Text and Context: Cyril Connolly's *Horizon*

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Abstract

This thesis examines the literary journal *Horizon*, its editor Cyril Connolly, and a selection of its editorial articles, poems, short stories and essays in the context of the Second World War, from 1939-45. Analyses of these works, their representation of wartime experience, and their artistic merit, serve as evidence of a shared and sustained literary engagement with the war. Collectively, they demonstrate *Horizon*'s role as one of the primary outlets for British literature and cultural discourse during the conflict. Previous assessments of the magazine as an apolitical organ with purely aesthetic concerns have led to enduring critical neglect and misappraisal. This thesis shows that, contrary to the commonly held view, *Horizon* consistently offered space for political debate, innovative criticism, and war-relevant content. It argues that *Horizon*'s wartime writing is indicative of the many varied types of literary response to a war that was all but incomprehensible for those who experienced it. These poems, stories and essays offer a distinctive and illuminating insight into the war and are proof that a viable literary culture thrived during the war years.

This thesis also argues that *Horizon*, as a periodical, should be considered as a creative entity in and of itself, and is worthy of being studied in this light. The magazine's constituent parts, interesting enough when considered separately, are shaped, informed, and granted new shades of meaning by their position alongside other works in *Horizon*. Chapters in the thesis cover editorials and editing, poetry, short stories, political essays, and critical essays respectively. Analyses of individual works are situated in the context of larger concerns in order to demonstrate the coherence of debate and discourse that characterised *Horizon*'s wartime run. In arguing that *Horizon* is a singular creative entity worthy of consideration in its own right, this thesis locates itself within the emerging field of periodical studies. Further, by arguing that the magazine demonstrates the value of Second World War literature, it articulates with other recent attempts to reassess the scope and quality of that literature. More specifically, this thesis offers the first focused and in-depth analysis of *Horizon*'s formative years.

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