

## Introduction

In a January 1940 article, E. M. Forster wrote, '1939 was not a year in which to start a literary career'.<sup>1</sup> He was referring, of course, to the beginning of the Second World War for Britain, which officially began on September 3, 1939.<sup>2</sup> The first bomb had yet to fall on British soil when this article was published; nor had the fall of Norway to the Nazis, which occurred in April of 1940 and led to much more severe paper rationing and attendant decreases in publication.<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly these and other wartime assaults and deprivations would colour British literature in the following years, as well as the attitudes of writers, reviewers, and critics. But the seeds of the idea that literature, and culture in general, were already in real trouble were sown earlier, during the widespread disillusionment that spread through the thirties, by such events as the rapid rise to power of Hitler and the victory of Franco's fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War.<sup>4</sup> The high Modernist ideals of the post-Edwardian era and the concerns of the so-called 'pink decade' from 1931-38 were further undermined by the uncertainty and fear produced by Nazi aggression in Eastern Europe, the cynical Molotov-Ribbentrop pact signed by Germany and the Soviet Union, and the appeasement policies of the Chamberlain administration. War seemed inevitable to all, not only literary figures, in the months prior to September of 1939. Only 21 years had passed since the end of the First World War, then still deemed 'the war to end all wars' and the bloodiest and most nightmarish Europe had yet experienced. The spectre of a new, more far-reaching war began to loom. The ideas that civilisation was failing, that a new dark age might well be beginning, and that the death of culture was a potentially real threat, became widespread in the literary world well before war was declared. The ideological oppression represented by both Hitler and Stalin and the dawning realisation of what totalitarian

states do to literature and culture in general figured prominently in writing, late in 1939. This fear is the theme of many works completed during that year: Virginia Woolf's novel *Between the Acts*, T. S. Eliot's treatise *The Idea of a Christian Society*, H. G. Wells' book *The Fate of Homo Sapiens*.<sup>5</sup> These and many other texts explored the idea that the prologue to the war marked the end days of western civilization and culture.

Because of this pervasive dread and acknowledgement of the hardships in publishing and elsewhere that seemed inevitable in the coming days, many of the 'little magazines,' the invaluable literary periodicals that for most of the century preceding had provided access to new writers and their work, as well as the best from established literary figures and some of the finest literary criticism, fell under the axe in the last months of 1939. These included *Fact*, Eliot's *Criterion*, *London Mercury*, *New Stories*, *New Verse*, *Twentieth-Century Verse*, *Seven*, *Purpose*, *Wales*, *Fact*, *Welsh Review*, *The Voice of Scotland*, and *Cornhill Magazine*.<sup>6</sup> According to Philip Ziegler in *London at War*, authors blamed publishers, who in turn blamed authors, for the seeming loss of literary nerve that led to the end of circulation of these periodicals, as well as a slowing of publishing in general; Ziegler states that 'few new books were commissioned [and] many under contract were cancelled or postponed,' and as for the authors, 'the quantity and quality of new typescripts declined' and the question 'How can I write with the world in this state?' was posed to publisher Geoffrey Faber by authors several times during the first months of the war.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the pressures on publishing, public demand for reading material rapidly increased during the war. Book sales increased 50 per cent from 1938-44, despite the paper shortage, first with classic, 'serious reading' such as Nineteenth Century novels, Milton, and religious poetry of the past in demand, and then with contemporary works.<sup>8</sup> Fear of air raids and invasion made

escapist literature popular, especially those works from the past that described a less volatile time. The blackout, with its corresponding closures of theatres, cinemas, sporting venues, and other public entertainment facilities, contributed to this increase in demand as well.<sup>9</sup> The advent of the Blitz further encouraged the demand for new, contemporary literary responses that could provide a sense of shared experience and allow for attempts at communal understanding of the nightly destruction. The loss of some public libraries to the bombing paradoxically made new works even more sought after.<sup>10</sup> Yet, despite this sharp increase in demand, and the answering rise in new works published, the Second World War has often been critically interpreted as a war without adequate literary expression, a silent war. This reputation began during the war itself, was a mainstay of literary analyses of the period for most of the later Twentieth Century, and endures in some quarters even to the present.

In an article entitled ‘The Ivory Shelter’ in the October 1939 edition of the *New Statesman*, Cyril Connolly, a popular critic and reviewer, made his own observations on the current state of literary affairs in relation to current events:

There can be little doubt that somewhere between the Munich sell-out of last September and the defeat of the Spanish Republicans early this year, a significant change began to develop in the attitude of the literary and artistic ‘left’. There are signs, not merely of a bitter disillusionment about the real power and meaning of democracy in England, but also a bitter revulsion from all political platforms. Many young writers and artists seem to be feeling now that they put too much trust in parties and catchwords, and that a withdrawal is necessary in self defence [...] [they are released from] the burden of anti-Fascist activities, [and] the subtler

burden of pro-Communist opinion... The fight against Fascism is in the hands of the General Staff, and there is no further use for the minor prophet [...] nostalgia will return as one of the soundest creative emotions, whether it is for the sun, or the snow, of the freedom which the democracies have had temporarily to discontinue.<sup>11</sup>

In ‘The Ivory Shelter,’ Connolly lamented the difficulties arising due to the severe cuts publishers were currently making in available titles and to the sense of doom and melancholy that seemed to pervade British life. Rather than merely make apocalyptic forecasts, however, as so many other writers were, Connolly put forward the idea that the war, despite the dangers it posed to writing and culture, was not necessarily a death knell. Writing could occur in wartime, and though at first Connolly believed ignoring the war to be the best possible course for artists, he modified his stance. The writing that did appear was completely different to that embodied by the patriotic, romantic, popular poetry of Rupert Brooke during the First World War, but it was also different from the horror and disillusionment of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen’s poetry of protest. None of this could be known in 1939. The future, bleak as it was, could still be shaped, understood, and debated in aesthetic as well as political terms. ‘The Ivory Shelter’ served as a manifesto of sorts, laying out the initial reasoning behind the realisation of what Sheldon describes as Connolly’s long held dream to publish a ‘little magazine’ of his own: *Horizon*.<sup>12</sup>

*Horizon*, specifically its output during the Second World War, constitutes the focus of this thesis. Connolly’s manifesto became a reality, and *Horizon* would prove one of the most durable, high quality periodicals of the war years and beyond. This thesis aims to critically analyse *Horizon* during the years of the war, 1939-1945, documenting and assessing its output in

order to provide the first substantial account of one of the war's most significant publications. The concentration on the magazine's wartime run is intentional, both to emphasise the immense variety and quality of material published in *Horizon* during this period and because dealing with the post-war years as well would sacrifice detailed analysis for superficial comprehension. Such an historical focus also sharpens the argument against those who judge the war years as deficient in quality writing: *Horizon*'s pages provide persuasive evidence to the contrary.

The idea that, as far as literature is concerned, the Second World War was a silent war has endured in most critical analyses of the literature of the conflict, and it began in the commentary of wartime writers. Connolly himself is guilty of helping to establish this critical tradition. He was one of the many wartime literary figures guilty of disparaging wartime culture. In his editorial 'Comment' for the December 1944 issue of *Horizon*, he claimed that the magazine's 'first five years have witnessed a decline in all the arts,' and that

Books are becoming as bad as they are ugly; newspapers continue to be as dull with four pages as they were once with forty; reviewing has sunk to polite blurb-quoting; nothing original is produced: Journalists grow sloppier, vainer, more ignorantly omniscient than ever; the B.B.C. pumps religion and patriotism into all its programmes; mediocrity triumphs.<sup>13</sup>

In later chapters it will be demonstrated that Connolly did not always hold this opinion, particularly during the early years of the war. Particularly during the last five years of *Horizon*'s run, from 1945-1949, he grew ever more disillusioned with the literary culture of the decade and this opinion stayed with him for the rest of his life.<sup>14</sup> Connolly always believed, as he

established in his semibiographical 1938 book *Enemies of Promise*, that the only truly worthy thing a writer of talent could accomplish was to write a great novel.<sup>15</sup> He considered criticism and editing, while satisfying, to be distractions from this higher purpose.<sup>16</sup> Connolly never wrote a great novel, and because he could not consider his other literary pursuits as worthy, he believed himself a literary failure. Andrew Sinclair states that as ‘the chief editor’ of the wartime London literary scene, Connolly ‘undervalued’ his contributors, even ‘put his own failure as a writer of masterpieces on to his whole generation [...] this allowed the culture of the war decade to be trashed as neo-Romantic and of no importance’.<sup>17</sup> Sinclair’s indictment is true, but unfair in that it lays so much of the blame on Connolly. Connolly was not alone, amongst his contemporaries, in dismissing wartime literature and art. Many other literary luminaries who were contributors to *Horizon* were often guilty of denigrating the wartime period themselves, in a way becoming their own worst enemies by influencing subsequent critical reaction for decades.

Auden’s poem ‘1<sup>st</sup> September 1939,’ which critic Robert Hewison calls ‘an honest expression of defeat and retreat’ from the literary concerns of Auden’s ‘low dishonest decade,’ introduced the idea that the previous decade’s writers could not adequately respond to the conflict permeated meditations on the war at its outset.<sup>18</sup> Auden’s departure, along with Christopher Isherwood, to the United States shortly before the war began, served, for many wartime writers, as ultimate proof of this shortcoming. Two years later, Randall Swingler, in the May edition of the periodical *Our Time*, described the end of the Auden era in relation to the war:

The war has put an end to that literary generation. All their fantasies have been outdone by the reality. Auden’s conspiracies, legendary plots, amazing assaults

upon social life, look silly and childish now before the blatant conspiracies and villainies of real politics. Nothing is left of their imaginings but the twilight, peopled by the ghosts of literary values long defunct.<sup>19</sup>

A popular theme in the British press during the early war years was expressed in the question, ‘Where are the war poets?’ Comparisons were often made with the Great War, along with the judgement, fair or not, that the literature of the present conflict was somehow inferior. This opinion was not only held by Fleet Street: ‘The Times and other papers asked why this war produced no poets. The poets wrote essays on why they couldn’t write poetry’.<sup>20</sup> Tom Harrison, founder of Mass-Observation, the famed and innovative sociological, word-on-the-street survey organisation whose reports often found their way into *Horizon*’s pages, was also afflicted by despair regarding writing in wartime, or at least with what had been published in the first two years of the war.<sup>21</sup> His essay ‘War Books’ appears in the December 1941 issue of *Horizon*, and it characterises this despair:

For two years, urged on by the editor of *Horizon*, I have read literally every book which has anything to do with the war, reportage, fiction or fantasy. Every month I have tried to sum up my curious learning into a report for *Horizon*. Month after month I have let the editor down. For I have become totally, immeasurably bogged, engrossed in bad reading. Ninety-five per cent of it is stuff I would never have read, or even imagined could be written, before.<sup>22</sup>

In a 1941 letter to the *Partisan Review*, George Orwell, many of whose best essays were published in *Horizon*, claimed that

So far as I know, nothing of consequence is being written, except in fragmentary form, diaries and short sketches for instance. The best novels I have read during the past year were either American or translations of foreign books written several years earlier. There is much production of anti-war literature, but of a one-eyed irresponsible kind. There is nothing corresponding to the characteristic war books of 1914-18.<sup>23</sup>

The idea that potential writers only just coming of age during the war could not produce adequate literary responses because of the very nature of wartime upheaval of normal experience was another argument put forth at the time. Stephen Spender, Cyril Connolly's co-editor for the first two years of *Horizon*'s run and himself a frequent contributor, describes in his autobiography *World within World* his belief that the only decent wartime literature was that which ignored context:

The writers who surmounted this situation of the world victimized by its own power, were those who best resisted the imprisoning pre-occupation of this age with its own time. They could do this either because, like T. S. Eliot, they had devoted themselves to the task of relating their time to other times, or because they were fertile anachronisms, the survival-heroes of a period of luxuriant, cultivated, well-watered individualists.<sup>24</sup>

For writers to negatively interpret their era is by no means an uncommon occurrence. But wartime literature was subject to a criticism coloured by a very real fear of the end of culture, and by the severe political and cultural disillusionment that followed the end of the war. The resulting perspective was unusually negative, and because it was shared by numerous writers of the Second World War it has been seized upon by numerous critics in more recent years to further their own denigration of wartime writing.

The conception of World War II as a silent war has continued as a popular theme in analysis and criticism well after the war years, even until relatively recently. One of the results of this enduring myth is that published criticism of the period is relatively rare, especially in comparison to the hundreds of books on the literature of the First World War. Works that offer any insight into Horizon's wartime role are rarer still, and, other than this thesis, extensive analysis of the magazine in wartime is nonexistent. One recent critic that has helped to perpetuate the silent war myth is Paul Fussell, who in his 1989 book *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, provides an example of this take on the war and its literary representation:

Compared even with the idiocies of Verdun, Gallipoli, or Tannenberg, it was indescribably cruel and insane [...] it was a savage, insensate affair, barely conceivable to the well-conducted imagination (the main reason there's so little good writing about it) [...] as novelists like Thomas Pynchon and Joseph Heller have understood well after the fact, the war was so serious it was ridiculous [...] but if the Second War was that serious, it was never, like the first, imaginable as romantic [...] if loquacity was one of the signs of the Great War—think of all those trench poets

and memoirists—something close to silence was the byproduct of experience in the Second War. So demoralizing was this repetition of the Great War within a generation that no one felt it appropriate to say much, either to understand the war or explain it.<sup>25</sup>

Fussell quotes Peter Conrad, another subscriber to the idea of the silent war, from his article ‘Tones of Fear’ in the July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1978 edition of *New Statesman* to reinforce this argument: ‘When in 1939, the catastrophe occurred a second time, the imagination was more reluctant to be enticed in to the fray. This was a war to which literature conscientiously objected’.<sup>26</sup> Fussell’s *Wartime* is, as its subtitle suggests, a survey of cultural response to wartime in general, from both the British and American perspective, and one of its central themes is that the war was so devastatingly brutal as to be beyond understanding, hence Fussell’s repeated assertions that no decent literary responses to it were produced, particularly in Britain.<sup>27</sup>

Robert Hewison also espouses the view that the Second World War was a low point in Twentieth Century literary achievement. In the introduction to his 1977 book *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-1945*, Hewison states that ‘Literary critics are generally agreed that ‘great’ literature did not come out of the Second World War—at least not until it was over—and there is little reason to alter this judgement’.<sup>28</sup> Hewison’s argument hinges upon this judgement of Second World War Literature, in that *Under Siege* seeks to explain why this was the case. Penny Pittman Merliss’s 1987 *In Another Country: Three Poets of the Second World War* is an attempt to validate the poetic efforts of Alun Lewis, Sidney Keyes, and Keith Douglas, but she, too, devalues the Second World War in comparison to the First, and begins by stating that ‘[t]he

poetry of the Second World War dwells quietly in the shadow of the first, its muted despair and disillusionment a distant echo of the anguish exploding in the trenches'.<sup>29</sup>

The Fleet Street appeal, 'Where are the war poets?' called forth replies even at the point it was first voiced, Cyril Connolly's 'Under your nose' in his 'Comment' for January 1941 being only one of many responses.<sup>30</sup> Some recent critical and interpretive texts, have increasingly sought to dispel the silent war myth, and demonstrate that the literature of the Second World War is indeed of high quality. The first recent critical work to celebrate this wartime corpus was Linda M. Shires' landmark *British Poetry of the Second World War*. Shires begins the preface to her 1985 book with an immediate indictment of prior World War II literary scholarship:

It is hard to believe that a decade of poetry could be summarily dismissed as a blackout period for art; yet this is still the generally-held attitude towards the 1940s. A myth about this poetic period flourishing in England and America runs as follows: during the war and post-war years, it was impossible to create poems with a keen intelligence, a clear head or a direct voice [...] coherent poetic structures were abandoned or lost in a punch-drunk Apocalyptic fervour and wartime hysteria [...] perhaps no modern decade has been stereotyped so unfairly.<sup>31</sup>

Shires attributes much of this distorted view of wartime literature, particularly poetry, to the influence of fifties poets and critics directly connected with the Movement; the disparagement of neo-Romantics, surrealists and Apocalyptics, including Dylan Thomas, and the simplification of the entire decade to a period consisting solely of these influences, was in effect a 'self-assertion,'

an attempt to present the Movement as the continuation of ‘genuine’ poetry, taking over where Auden left off, with the forties merely a ‘hallucinatory’ interlude.<sup>32</sup> Shires defends Second World War poets by stating that those ‘prolonging the forties myth’ mistakenly ‘chose the poetry of 1945-50 as representative,’ when clearly ‘there are two distinct periods in the decade, war and post-war, which should not be confused’.<sup>33</sup> In pleading the case for Second World War poetry, Shires’s work has been integral to recent efforts to re-evaluate the validity of the conflict’s literature.

At the same time, Shires also introduces a reading of *Horizon*, and particularly of Connolly as editor, that separates the magazine and the man from this newly granted critical respectability. While she admits that *Horizon* ‘helped keep literature before the public eye in a magazine format’ and ‘fulfilled noble aims’ by reminding readers of ‘a civilization worth saving,’ she diminishes its importance by stating that this was accomplished ‘in spite of its snobbery’.<sup>34</sup> She complains that ‘*Horizon* did little for new poets,’ and that the magazine was ‘creatively cautious, even timid’.<sup>35</sup> While she is forced to admit that *Horizon*’s cultural impact was formidable, Shires believes that overvaluing the magazine has been a symptom of the misappraisal of Second World War writing in general, because of Connolly’s failure to print new poets. *Horizon* did print many new poets, but it printed poems by established poets of the 1930s, which seems to be part of the reason Shires characterises the magazine as ill-suited to her argument. But *Horizon* was not merely a poetry publication, and Shires does not consider its other offerings. In seeking to stake a claim for wartime scholarship, she feels the need to unnecessarily devalue what she sees as a traditionally esteemed work of the period, its best known periodical. The bias against *Horizon* has been sustained in another recent critical treatment that is otherwise celebratory of Second War Literature: Andrew Sinclair’s *War Like a*

*Wasp* has been previously quoted in this chapter as evidence of Connolly's disparagement of wartime writing. Sinclair's book is historical criticism, and his subject is Fitzrovia and its inhabitants. Sinclair admits that Connolly was the most esteemed editor of the Fitzrovians, but faults him for not respecting his work, and by extension that of his contributors. As was stated before, Connolly's bias against the 1940s was, largely, a post-war development, born of the disillusionment of the latter half of the decade. Sinclair laments that 'the Fitzrovians have not been considered as a literary group because they did not keep together' after the war, but he conveniently omits the fact that Connolly was instrumental in creating the literary scene they inhabited, and that *Horizon*, as one of the few outlets open to them, helped them cohere as a group in the first place.<sup>36</sup>

Adam Piette's *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry 1939-1945* also finds value in Second World War British writing, but as a means of condemning wartime culture rather than demonstrating the quality of the conflict's literature.<sup>37</sup> To this end, Piette quotes a paragraph from Connolly's October 1943 'Comment' as evidence of the negative effects of propaganda on wartime literature:

It is very difficult in England to realize how intense is this onslaught across the Channel against the human body and the individual soul. This may be partly due to insular lack of imagination, partly to an instinct which tells us to keep our heads, that we may stamp out these atrocities the quicker for not having grown hysterical about them; it is also due to an almost universal castration complex that makes us refuse to face the facts of torture, and to an animal instinct for ignoring the suffering which does not concern us.<sup>38</sup>

Piette claims that this quotatio, ‘a tissue of modish Freudian jargon, dubious anthropologizing and special pleading masked as patriotic cunning,’ shows that Connolly was attempting to downplay, and possibly ignore, atrocity stories from occupied Europe, which he cites as evidence of the adverse effects of artistic reaction away from ‘government horizontal integration propaganda’.<sup>39</sup> But, as in many other cases, some of which will be explored later in this thesis, Connolly is quoted out of context to serve someone else’s argument. In the same ‘Comment,’ in the very next sentence, Connolly states that ‘we cannot ignore them’ [the facts or the suffering].<sup>40</sup> Mark Rawlinson’s argument in his *British Writing of the Second World War* ‘that the material events of military conflict, notably lethal wounding, require symbolization and discursive mediation if war is to function as an instrument of political policy’ follows a similar logic to Adam Piette’s argument, but Rawlinson sees British wartime writing performing an active role in the conflict, rather than merely reflecting it.<sup>41</sup> Rawlinson cites Connolly, despite his calls for state support of writers, as a rare exception, a writer who ‘dismissed talk of unity as the coin that purchased consent to violence’ and who wisely ‘equated war with the disruption of the private sphere’.<sup>42</sup> Connolly, as will be discussed later, has also often been quoted out of context in attempts to portray his, and the magazine’s, views as completely dismissive of the war. Rawlinson praises Connolly for avoiding the war, and thus avoiding the violent undercurrent the critic sees in ‘real’ war literature, but he nevertheless misjudges Connolly. His assessment, like Piette’s, Sinclair’s, and Shires’s, is derived from an assumption, based on a quotation taken out of context, about the politics of *Horizon*, and Connolly, that has been passed down since the war without sufficient question.

Connolly is quoted often, and not only out of context, because his writing style easily lends itself to quotation. Critical works analysing the literature of the Second World War are not yet especially numerous, but they almost all quote Connolly, usually from *Horizon* 'Comments,' for one reason or another. The sources reviewed above are those that deal unnecessarily severely with Connolly and *Horizon*, or misjudge his perspective, but plenty of others use Connolly to put forth cogent arguments about the value of wartime literature. Sebastian Knowles's *A Purgatorial Flame: Seven British Writers in the Second World War* is one such book: in it, Knowles argues that 'the Second World War was no less a literary war than its predecessor' and that 'the conventional depreciation of its poetry has never been justified.' Connolly's 'Under your nose' response to the 'Where are our war poets?' appeal is used to demonstrate that 'the Second World War was, in literary as in military terms, a civilian's war'.<sup>43</sup> In the introduction to his 1966 anthology *Writing in a War: Stories, Poems, and Essays of the Second World War*, Ronald Blythe describes one of the appeals of *Horizon* was its internationalism in a time of nationalistic temperament, saying that 'an island fortress must always be on its guard against provincialism' and citing *Horizon* as the perfect antidote.<sup>44</sup> Whether scholarly works celebrate or denigrate Connolly's contribution, through *Horizon*, to wartime literature, they generally use Connolly to further basic arguments about the period, using other writers as their primary sources. Connolly, being highly quotable, is mentioned in passing, but he only serves as a subject himself in his biographies. His magazine has also been overlooked as a subject of most works on the period, with one important exception.

Michael Sheldon's *Friends of Promise: Cyril Connolly and the World of Horizon* is the sole work thus far to concentrate extensively on *Horizon* and Connolly's role as editor. Sheldon examines the entire 10-year run of the magazine, and explores Connolly's gifts, and liabilities, as

editor of a surprisingly enduring and undoubtedly influential wartime periodical. He acknowledges that ‘from the beginning Connolly was the central figure at *Horizon*,’ and understands his gifts as a writer, claiming that ‘he was expert at swiftly dissecting a subject into its most important parts and then summing up his views in one or two memorable sentences’.<sup>45</sup> He also offers a believable hypothesis to explain Connolly’s ‘difficulty with literary form’ and his related inability to create the great novel he so desired:

He could never make up his mind whether his talent was best employed in fiction, criticism, informal essays, or autobiography. Elements of each can be seen struggling against the others in almost all his books. He liked to think that his destiny was to write a great masterpiece of fiction, but as his only published novel—*The Rock Pool*—demonstrates, he lacked the skilful novelist’s ability to develop a range of strong characters and a compelling plot.<sup>46</sup>

As insightful as Shelden’s book is, however, it is a biography, albeit one containing doses of interpretation and contextual analysis. As he admits: ‘My purpose in this book is to give these stories [about *Horizon* and its staff] the sustained and detailed attention they deserve, and to do so in a way which blends literary history with criticism and biography’.<sup>47</sup> Shelden is more concerned with the connection between the life of Connolly, and to a lesser extent the lives of Peter Watson, Stephen Spender, Sonia Bronwell, and the other people responsible for *Horizon*’s daily workings, than he is with Connolly’s mutable attitudes towards the war and politics, or the interplay between the magazine, its contributors and its readers. The magazine is a backdrop for the lives of his subjects.

This thesis is the first extended critical work to take the magazine itself as its primary subject, and to treat it like a unified creative entity. The heady amount of interesting material *Horizon* contains prohibits an exhaustive analysis of the magazine in any one study. Instead of a superficial survey, this thesis analyses the magazine during the Second World War, from 1939-1945, and focuses on a representative selection of its contents. The eight editorials, seventeen poems, eight short stories, eight political essays and eight critical essays have been chosen because they collectively offer insight into the relationship between literature and experience in wartime. Wartime informed the selection process, but these works nevertheless provide an accurate illustration of the magazine's inherent variety and quality. Although the selection is a limited portion of the magazines contents delineated by the war years, this thesis covers far more territory, and provides more in-depth analyses of individual pieces, than any previous study of *Horizon*.

'Little magazines' have only recently begun to be considered worthy of serious critical analysis and scholarly study. For the majority of the period since 'little magazines' began to appear, in the late Victorian era, they have been 'mostly ignored by critics and historians,' states Wolfgang Görtzschacher in his compendium of analyses and interviews, *Little Magazine Profiles*.<sup>48</sup> There are a variety of reasons for this, including their existence outside established publishing traditions and their support of non-mainstream artists. Critical consideration of magazines as more than simple collections of artists' works is only a recent development. The study of magazines as literary entities, complete in themselves, is an even more recent prospect. In their article 'The Rise of Periodical Studies,' Sean Latham and Robert Scholes explore the idea of treating the periodical as a single text, worthy of critical analysis. The authors state that literary critics 'have been too quick to see magazines merely as containers of discrete bits of information

rather than autonomous objects of study,' and explain that 'we must [...] insist on the autonomy and distinctiveness of periodicals as cultural objects' with particular import given to cultural milieu and the interrelationship of context, text and readership, with both the magazine and its readers influencing their culture.<sup>49</sup> Latham and Scholes stress the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach that can take into account all aspects of a magazine, from its advertisements to its relationship with other periodicals; their ideal situation calls for multiple authors, because, as this thesis demonstrates, a single author operating under a single discipline is necessarily limited in focus.<sup>50</sup> The *Modernist Magazines Project*, which 'aims to refine and enhance the record through the production of a scholarly resource and comprehensive critical and cultural history of modernist magazines in the period 1880-1945,' is one such effort.<sup>51</sup> The *Modernist Journals Project* is another current undertaking attempting 'to become a major resource for the study of the rise of modernism in the English-speaking world, with periodical literature at the center of this study'.<sup>52</sup> These projects recognise the importance of intensive study of Twentieth Century periodicals, which is still in its relative infancy. This thesis, while it does not claim to be comprehensive, is an attempt to demonstrate the value and worthiness of one such magazine, *Horizon*, for further critical engagement. *Horizon*, while historically recognised as significant, has never before enjoyed the sustained and focussed analysis this thesis will use to demonstrate its worthiness for further study. Rather than attempting to analyse every part of *Horizon*, this thesis focuses on representative sections to suggest the value of the whole, and argues that *Horizon* deserves scholarly attention.

Considering *Horizon* as a literary achievement in itself necessitates serious consideration of its editor, Cyril Connolly, whose often idiosyncratic and always interesting literary tastes, as well as his own editorial 'Comment' contributions, gave the magazine its impetus, form and

spirit. The first chapter of the thesis explores Connolly's editorship, beginning with concurrent accounts of his editing, particularly those provided by Stephen Spender in his various autobiographical accounts of the wartime period. Evidence of Connolly's strong editorial control of the magazine and the influence of his character will also be examined in the biographies of Connolly. However, the primary focus of the chapter will be Connolly's editorial 'Comments,' what they reveal about his editing, and how his vision for the magazine, particularly in relation with the war, changed over the course of *Horizon's* wartime run. The second chapter focuses on the poetry of *Horizon*, examining a selection of poems that represent literary reactions to wartime and demonstrate the civilian nature of the conflict. The third chapter performs a similar function with *Horizon's* short story contributions, establishing that the short story was a form uniquely suited for representing wartime experience as it happened, without the mutability of hindsight. Chapter four examines the debate on war aims that took place in *Horizon's* pages, in the form of contributed essays. It establishes how the magazine's contributors reacted to each other, and reveals that *Horizon* was, indeed, a forum for ideas from all quarters, and was not at all averse to discussions of the war and politics. In the final chapter, the critical essays that were the unique providence of *Horizon* during the war years are the subject, in particular those that deal with the relationship of high art and low, culture and class. These demonstrate that *Horizon*, far from being averse to unusual topics, encouraged a unique debate about the nature of art and served as one of the first periodicals engaged in cultural analysis. A brief conclusion re-emphasises the interrelationship between the magazine, its editor, its contributions and contributors and how their combined effort created an unequalled blend of quality writing, ideas about culture, and the interplay of art and politics, all in a wartime context.

Any given issue of *Horizon* provides an eclectic choice of material. Essays on the war and current geopolitics by economists and historians are present, as are commemorative pieces harkening back to the art and culture of pre-war decades. Most numerous are contemporary creative submissions, including new poetry by Spender, MacNiece and Auden, George Orwell's essays on popular culture and his numerous reviews, short stories by Elizabeth Bowen, and a multitude of other contributions from nearly as many authors that are truly representative of most of the 1940s literary scene. One of the most important and impressive roles *Horizon* played, much like other 'little magazines' before it, was to introduce new poets and prose writers, including Alun Lewis, one of the most critically acclaimed military poets of World War II in subsequent decades. *Horizon* improved the reception of other, already somewhat established writers, such as Dylan Thomas. It introduced new art by young artists, such as Lucian Freud. Every issue ended with a section of reviews of the few books that were being published during the period. In general, *Horizon* accomplished just what Connolly hoped it would from the outset: it provided a sense of culture, literary legacy and continuity during the largest, costliest, deadliest war in human history.

*Horizon*, along with John Lehmann's *New Writing*, became one of the two most prominent reviews during the war years in Britain, serving as a forum for discussion of everything from the geopolitics of the thirties to the new socialist movement during the last years of the war, and arguably contained the better writing of the two. Essays concerning the post-war future of Britain and the world appeared often, as did prose and poetry portraying London during the Blitz, the North African campaign, the invasion of Western Europe, the Eastern front, the Pacific theatre, and everything in between. Throughout its run, however, *Horizon* continued to present the literary products both of the 'The Ivory Shelter' and of the war, not just works of poetry and

fiction, but essays about literature from the last century, discussions about the consolation of French and British literary and cultural theories, and submissions from Americans such as Clement Greenberg, Eudora Welty and Henry Miller. To say that the pieces far removed from the wartime situation were not relevant would be a mistake. In the midst of powerful nationalist ideas, both in the rampant propaganda at home and in the ideological foundations of the enemy states, the appeal to internationalism, in culture and art as well as the geopolitical realm, coloured the pages of *Horizon* from the outset. This was most obvious in Connolly's own 'Comments,' as well as in the publishing of foreign authors and the intensive search for new works once Europe was reopened.

The essays, poetry, short fiction, reviews, and especially the editorials that comprised each issue of *Horizon* were not only shaped by the wartime condition, for they in turn shaped the perception of the magazine's readership about wartime. *Horizon* was not solely responsible for this of course; other periodicals such as John Lehmann's *Penguin New Writing* and *Our Time*, numerous books, and even government pamphlets and other propaganda played crucial roles in creating the legends, myths, and general memory of Britain, especially London, from 1939 to 1945. But *Horizon* was significant in that it upheld Connolly's original intent to such a point that, in the minds of its educated British readers, the war, despite its terrible nature, did become justified as a battle for the right to be creative, to allow culture to exist and thrive, to make the world safe for good writing and good writers. *Horizon* is a clear example of text affecting context, as well as the reverse: Britain's large role in the formation of the United Nations, later government support and subsidy of the arts, and even the labour victory in the 1945 election, can be seen as evidence for the power of the ideas espoused in magazines like *Horizon*. Its format changed from issue to issue; in some, essays all but completely edged out poetry and short

fiction, while in others the latter held sway. Some issues utilized Connolly's editorials, to the point of being centrepieces, while others omitted 'Comment' altogether; occasionally letters appeared in its place. The themes, not just of the poetry and fiction, but of the critical and interpretive essays and even the political socioeconomic pieces, run the gamut from Modern to thirties left-wing, from Edwardian to neo-Romantic. Thus, there is no easily discernible central message, no overwhelming political bent or bias, and yet the material is never simply objective or journalistic. One of Connolly's most important concerns throughout the magazine's run was to provide what he deemed to be quality writing, regardless of source or type, a decision which often set *Horizon* aesthetically above other magazines of the period<sup>53</sup>. Perhaps the most important aspect of *Horizon* is its inclusiveness. Connolly's editorial talent helped ensure a mix of unique quality. Because of its eclecticism in general, *Horizon* provides perhaps the best cross-section of British literature during the war years. By its very nature as a periodical, appearing every month from January 1940 until mid 1949, it was able to present the changes in attitudes, opinions, hopes, dreams, and fears of a nation at war without the doctoring and glossing-over that so often appears in texts written after the war. Reading *Horizon* makes the war seem much more vivid and uncertain than it does from the perspective of hindsight; it offers a glimpse of any number of individual moments, and allows the reader to feel the war's presence in increments of weeks, rather than as a neatly defined and structured whole.

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<sup>1</sup> E. M. Forster, 'Books of the Year,' *The Listener*, 11 (January 1940), 86.

<sup>2</sup> John Gooch, 'Introduction to UK Section,' in *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, edited by I. C. Dear (New York: Oxford UP, 1995) 881-882.

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- <sup>3</sup> Michael Sheldon, *Friends of Promise: Cyril Connolly and the World of Horizon* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) 48.
- <sup>4</sup> Sebastian Knowles, *A Purgatorial Flame: Seven British Writers in the Second World War* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990) xix.
- <sup>5</sup> Robert Hewison, *Under Siege: Literary Life in London 1939-1945* (London: Methuen, 1988) 5-6.
- <sup>6</sup> Penny Pittman Merliss, *In Another Country: Three Poets of the Second World War* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1987) 14.
- <sup>7</sup> Philip Ziegler, *London at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) 55.
- <sup>8</sup> Linda M. Shires, *British Poetry of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 15.
- <sup>9</sup> Philip Ziegler, *London at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) 53-55.
- <sup>10</sup> Linda M. Shires, *British Poetry of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 15.
- <sup>11</sup> Cyril Connolly, 'The Ivory Shelter,' *The Selected Works of Cyril Connolly*, volume 1, edited by Matthew Connolly (London: Picador, 2002) 315.
- <sup>12</sup> Michael Sheldon, *Friends of Promise: Cyril Connolly and the World of Horizon* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) 3.
- <sup>13</sup> Cyril Connolly, 'Comment,' *Horizon*, 10, No. 60 (December 1944) 367.
- <sup>14</sup> Connolly's introduction (pages vii-x) to *Ideas and Places* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd, 1953), a collection of his essays from *Horizon* and after, provides ample evidence of this belief: Connolly, regarding his post-war 'Comments,' states that 'on looking back, I think that perhaps I was a little crazy and that the idea of decadence hugged and haunted me as if I were some Hebrew prophet; gangrene was spreading while I was powerless as a fly waving and buzzing among its silent comrades on the poison paper' (ix).
- <sup>15</sup> Clive Fisher, *Cyril Connolly: A Nostalgic Life* (London: Papermac, 1995) 166-67.
- <sup>16</sup> Connolly's introductions to *Ideas and Places* and *The Condemned Playground* (London: Routledge, 1945) include examples of this belief. In *The Condemned Playground*, Connolly states that 'like most critics I drifted into the profession through a lack of moral stamina [...] my epic and my novel fell so short of the standards which my reading had set me that I despaired of them and, despairing, slipped into the interim habit of writing short-term articles about books [...] the habit grew and conquered' (vi). As for editing, Connolly claims in *Ideas and Places* that 'the profession, though delightful, is in the long run unwholesome for an author' (x).
- <sup>17</sup> Andrew Sinclair, *War Like a Wasp: The Lost Decade of the 'Forties* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989).
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid. 115; W. H. Auden quoted in Ibid. 115.
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in Linda M. Shires, *British Poetry of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1985) 3.
- <sup>20</sup> Arthur Calder-Marshall et al, 'Why Not War Writers? A Manifesto,' *Horizon*, 4, No. 22 (October 1941) 236.
- <sup>21</sup> Philip Ziegler, *London at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) 178.
- <sup>22</sup> Tom Harrison, 'War Books,' *Horizon*, 4, No. 24 (December 1941) 417.
- <sup>23</sup> George Orwell quoted in Sebastian Knowles, *A Purgatorial Flame* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990) xv.
- <sup>24</sup> Stephen Spender, *World Within World: The Autobiography of Stephen Spender* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1951) 287.
- <sup>25</sup> Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behaviour in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989) 132.
- <sup>26</sup> Quoted in Ibid. 133.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid. 132-133. Interestingly, despite his argument that the Second World War was silent, Fussell extols the 'civilized and civilizing' *Horizon* as a bastion of culture during turbulent years, but he argues it was a unique response, an example of 'British eccentricity,' and that, 'as a cultural act, it was as stubborn as Churchill's political behavior' (210-11).
- <sup>28</sup> Robert Hewison, *Under Siege* (London: Methuen, 1988) xii.
- <sup>29</sup> Penny Pittman Merliss, *In Another Country* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1987) 1.
- <sup>30</sup> Cyril Connolly, 'Comment,' *Horizon*, 3, No. 13 (January 1941) 5.
- <sup>31</sup> Linda M. Shires, *British Poetry of the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1985) xiii.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid. xiv.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid. xiv.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid. 16-17.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. 16-17.
- <sup>36</sup> Andrew Sinclair, *War Like a Wasp* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) 9.
- <sup>37</sup> Adam Piette, *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry 1939-1945* (London: Papermac, 1995) 4.
- <sup>38</sup> Cyril Connolly, 'Comment,' *Horizon*, 8, No. 46 (October 1943) 222.
- <sup>39</sup> Adam Piette, *Imagination at War: British Fiction and Poetry 1939-1945* (London: Papermac, 1995) 188-89.

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<sup>40</sup> Cyril Connolly, 'Comment,' *Horizon*, 8, No. 46 (October 1943) 222.

<sup>41</sup> Mark Rawlinson, *British Writing of the Second World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000) 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 153.

<sup>43</sup> Sebastian Knowles, *A Purgatorial Flame* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1990) xvi-xvii; xxiv.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Blythe, *Writing in a War: Stories, Poems, and Essays of the Second World War* (London: Penguin Books, 1966) 17.

<sup>45</sup> Michael Shelden, *Friends of Promise: Cyril Connolly and the World of Horizon* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989) 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 10.

<sup>48</sup> Wolfgang Götschacher, *Little Magazine Profiles: The Little Magazines in Great Britain 1939-1993* (Salzburg: Salzburg University, 1993) 1.

<sup>49</sup> Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, 'The Rise of Periodical Studies,' *PMLA*, 121, No. 2 (March 2006) 517; 519.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 529.

<sup>51</sup> Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, editors, *Modernist Magazines Project*, The Centre for Textual Scholarship, De Montfort University, Leicester <<http://www.cts.dmu.ac.uk/modmags/index.htm>>. The project's website notes that the first related conference is to be held at De Montfort University in the summer of 2007.

<sup>52</sup> Sean Latham, Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman, editors, *Modernist Journals Project*, Brown University and the University of Tulsa <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/about.xml>>.

<sup>53</sup> In his small guidebook to the medium, *Little Reviews: 1914-1943* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1943) which was published in the early days of *Horizon*'s run, critic Denys Val Baker noted that the magazine 'has certainly won much admiration by its refusal to print bad poetry or bad stories,' and offers this contemporaneous view regarding *Horizon* in comparison to John Lehmann's larger *New Writing*:

It could not hope to fill the gap [left by the folding of numerous other literary magazines] entirely, but by reason of its qualifications, and its sternly avowed purpose of avoiding all artificiality, it offered a new anchorage to a large group of intellectuals who found themselves, while considerably in sympathy with the *New Writing* movement, a little concerned lest its revelling in the activities of bricklayers and coal-miners should curtail unnecessarily the appreciation of culture in its purely aesthetic sense (47).

This is not to say that *Horizon* eschewed non-established writers, or those without University degrees. Christopher Hilliard provides a much updated perspective on *Horizon* and the working class, stating that because of the milieu of Fitzrovia and widespread military service, 'the war brought promising writers in the forces into contact with working-class writers [and] junior members of the literary establishment such as Lehmann and Cyril Connolly' (Christopher Hilliard, *To Exercise Our Talents: The Democratization of Writing in Britain* [Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2006] 165).