Koenraad Claes's excellent work of periodical history begins and ends with the "Total Work of Art"(1). That term, as Claes clarifies it in his introduction, roughly translates Richard Wagner's Gesamtkunstwerk, the mouthful Wagner used to describe his dream that music, words, acting, costumes, scenery, et al. would come together to create a transcendent artistic whole. While writers from various disciplines have deployed Gesamtkunstwerk in many different contexts -- artistic, political, social -- Claes uses "Total Work of Art" to mean "an artistic project whereby several art forms are joined to strive for a combined effect that could not be achieved separately, the whole greater than the sum of its parts"(10). What makes this term especially interesting when applied to magazines (little or not) is that we don't usually think of them as works of art at all, let alone total ones, because the periodical is a genre "never closed" and, as Claes observes rightly, "inherently miscellaneous"(89). But the little magazines of the late-Victorian period are a special and interesting case, well deserving of the close attention Claes pays to them.

Although Claes doesn't get caught up in fine distinctions, he defines "magazine" as a periodical that offers original (not reprinted) multigeneric works by several authors. What of "little"? That term, as Claes explains, fully emerges in a landmark study by Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich. The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography (1947) identifies its titular periodical with an audience fit but few. Intentionally few (not the mass audience that unabashedly commercial enterprises targeted) and also "fit" in a very particular sense: not the audience of the elite periodicals (say, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine) but one open to innovative artistic work that other periodicals wouldn't publish. Still, Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich were interested only in Modernist periodicals. Claes is part of a group of scholars (Ian Fletcher, Laurel Brake, Marysa Demoor, Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, Mark Lasner, Rebecca Mitchell, and Margaret Stetz, to name some) who claim the late-nineteenth century little magazines as subjects worth studying. How these magazines came to be, what they aspired to, what they achieved, and for whom they were written are the rich stories Claes tells in his book.

Claes begins not at the end of the nineteenth century but in the middle of it, with The Germ, the aptly titled Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) production which came and went in 1850 and which, Claes notes, "would eventually function as a type for the entire [little magazine] genre"(22). Since each number sold no more than 100 copies and there were only four issues, only about 400 copies of the magazine existed by the time it folded. Nevertheless, The Germ spread its agenda widely, and that agenda manifested itself both in what its contributors wrote and in the style of the magazine itself. Claes analyzes both. Like the little magazines themselves, Claes aims to bring together form and content, and he describes in exceptionally fine detail the magazines he selects. With respect to The Germ, Claes attends to the neat typesetting and the way short texts get their own page, a fact that Claes highlights because "all contributions are presented as being of equal weight, a design statement that invites the PRB's desired reception of the magazine as the output of a cohesive group of equals"(24). The PRB's message is thus enacted in the layout itself.

In every chapter, Claes tags the following bases: a group/coterie/set (PRB, the Arts and Crafts Movement, Decadent) coalesces and produces a little magazine that aspires more or less (or in the case of the Savoy, not at all, but weirdly so) to be a Total Work of Art. The Germ was the earliest incarnation of this aspiration, and not long after its demise, the Oxford and Cambridge Review and its undergraduate editor William Morris took up the charge. (He along with Edward Burne-Jones and others less notable, all of whom funded the magazine themselves because neither university contributed a shilling.) Here again, Claes's packed descriptions bring the magazine to life. He not only identifies its material elements (the particular letterpress, size of margins, number of columns, type of paper) but also evaluates their significance in relation to the practices of nineteenth-century periodicals. What's more, he includes 41 "figures" displaying some of the most important objects he examines.

While Claes takes both the periodicals themselves and their agendas seriously, he recognizes the youthful excesses -- not to mention the pretentiousness -- of these productions. How can one not laugh at the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine's "unfeigned infatuation with Tennysonian Arthurian chivalry"(28)? But Claes also shows the magazine contributors making fun of themselves and their own publications, as in Selwyn Image's 1888 woodcut for the front cover of Century Guild Hobby Horse. Of this woodcut (see below),
Claes remarks that Image uses "the well-known image of the knights whose lower extremities disappear into a caparisoned toy to dispel the popular misconception that there was no place for humour in Aestheticism"(50). Notwithstanding such self-parody, the Century Guild Hobby Horse aimed in all seriousness to create a "Total Art project" that would, observes Claes, "stimulate a whole new fashion in artistic book design"(36-7), influencing every late-Victorian little magazine that came after. Emerging from the Century Guild of Artists (1882), each contributor to the periodical was equally important -- from the typesetters and hand-press workers to the illustrators and writers. The Century Guild Hobby Horse, Claes writes, "calls into question the distinction between fine and applied art" by showing "how the appreciation of 'Beauty' can be introduced into everyday life," and by addressing its readers without "esoteric jargon" as "implied connoisseurs"(43). The same claim can be made for Claes's book. While he occasionally gestures towards theorists such as Adorno, Bourdieu, and Genette, he has no interest in writing above (or below) the level of an intelligent reader who wants to learn about and appreciate the complexities of the late-Victorian little magazine.

Among the marked strengths of this study is the one Claes identifies in his introduction: each chapter can be read as a standalone piece, the book backwards or forwards -- moving from the mid-century art and literature. The opening paragraphs of each chapter provide enough historical context so that a reader interested in, say, the little magazine-as-Christmas annual can dive into chapter 6 without having to poke around in other chapters to understand it, or even read the introduction. That said, a reader (or, perhaps, a reviewer) who reads from beginning to end starts to anticipate how the chapters will unfold. To ensure that each chapter can stand alone, Claes must repeat historical context or re-explain terms. The book's conclusion is by far its weakest element, a tacked-on summary entitled "Inconclusions" that recovers ground well trodden by the time we reach the final pages. But these are minor objections when weighed against the quantity of fresh material Claes offers.

The most fascinating chapter of the book describes two of the least known little magazines: the Pagan Review and the Page. As Claes wittily explains in chapter 3, each of them served as a portfolio for its lone contributor; each was born from "the labours of one mind and two hands"(107). The Pagan Review came from William Sharp, a Scot born in 1855 who went to London, fell under the spell of D.G. Rossetti in the 1870s, and wrote in all genres. By the time he inaugurated the Pagan Review in 1892, Sharp had already published novels under the name Fiona Macleod -- one of his gender-crossing pseudonyms. Having created so many personae, why would he need contributors for his review? He could be all of them -- and was. Under the name W.S. Fanshawe, for instance, Sharp published the magazine's first "literary contribution," entitled "The Black Madonna," which Claes calls "a prose poem interlaced with short dramatic passages about the worship of a black statue of the Virgin Mary, here, however, blasphemously identified as a both beautiful and fearsome avatar of Astarte, a Middle Eastern deity of sexuality and war"(89). Thus flaunting his paganism, Sharp used the magazine not only to print his own literary experiments but also, just as importantly, to shock Mrs. Grundy. Understandably enough, the Pagan Review had only one number since Sharp soon realized he could not produce enough content on his own and had no interest in getting contributors (or perhaps no hope in getting them, although hilariously enough, Sharp posing as editor W.H. Brooks did "invite submissions"(88) in terms that we may now enjoy). Sharp seems to have shed no tears over the magazine's demise. To announce it, he sent a card to each subscriber (the text of which Claes reproduces) in which the editor reports "The Pagan Review has returned to the void whence it came"(95).

One ought not underestimate the research that Claes has undertaken to bring this material to readers. These aren't bits and pieces culled from others' research. Beyond the entertaining elements, Claes presents illuminating analysis: in comparing the Pagan Review's "sober wrappers" with J.M. Whistler's title page for The Gentle Art of Making Enemies (1890), both included as figures in the book, he demonstrates his exhaustive research and his copious knowledge of late-nineteenth century art and literature. He brings together pieces to help readers understand the relation of the little magazine -- even one as obscure as the Pagan Review -- to the late-nineteenth-century artistic world. Likewise, he shows how the little-magazine-as-catalogue emerges in the unpaginated, irregularly issued Page (1898-1901) -- a one-man band assembled by the woodcut designer Edward Gordon Craig to showcase his own work. Tracing the connections between this odd periodical and the Arts and Crafts movement, Claes explains that Craig designed bookplates and used the Page to promote his work but also produced his version of a Total Work of Art-- an easier thing to do when just one contributor is doing it. At once catalog and art object, Claes observes, "[e]very copy is ... hand-numbered ... to give them added value for the book/periodical collector, but conceptually this also makes each copy a unique work of art"(101). Since the Pagan Review and the Page each had just one contributor, one might question whether either one can be called a magazine. And if the Pagan Review had only one "issue," is it a periodical or just a book? But questions like these furnish part of the pleasure of the chapter and the book as a whole.

The little magazines aspired to be at once little, carefully crafted, and innovative -- a hard combination to achieve, for obvious reasons. Subscribers and advertisers funded the little magazine, but the very idea of its littleness and its Total Work of Agenda precluded both large subscriptions and substantial pages of advertisements. So how did these magazines achieve both financial solvency and artistic independence? Claes answers this question for each of his main periodicals, and his work on their advertisements is particularly absorbing. The ads in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, for instance, appeared on "a single, unnumbered page," and besides the magazine's own publisher, the advertisers included various others "decidedly unscholarly as well as unliterary"(32). In the Century Guild Hobby Horse, the ads offered "a list of endorsed artists/artisans with annotations on the services these provide"(41). Indeed, Claes makes one of his most
revealing points in his analysis of the *Yellow Book* (the little magazine that non-specialists would be most likely to know about) when he analyzes its marketing strategies and advertisements. Rather than being "the quintessential avant-garde publication of the period," he shows that the *Yellow Book* was "a singularly successful attempt to gain entrance for the avant-garde into the living rooms of a broad readership that liked the idea of owning beautiful books" (108). In spite of its small size and other little-magazine-ish aspirations, then, the *Yellow Book* sought a larger audience.

While so much else of what Claes says about the *Yellow Book* has been said before, his close attention to its finances is new. Having earlier denied that a "financially disinterested art" (57) had existed or could exist, Claes shows how the Bodley Head's way of publishing the *Yellow Book* made such an art financially viable. The magazine was designed to create a commercial demand for itself, generating a desire for the beautiful book and its high cultural contents and seeking out more subscribers. In the early numbers, Claes points out, the *Yellow Book* anachronistically featured uncut pages and tissue guard paper. What's more, the periodical offered its readers pictures--such as an Aubrey Beardsley drawing--"tipped in" on detachable pages (121), so that readers got a separate work of art as a bonus. (Claes gives detailed information on supplemental items not only in relation to the *Yellow Book* but wherever such material appears in the periodicals under consideration). The *Yellow Book* had a larger advertisement section than its little magazine brethren; however, those sections were separately paginated and even distinguished between a "List of Books in Belles Lettres" (books published by the Bodley Head) and "external advertisers" (133). Above and beyond these observations, Claes explains that it is difficult to know whether these separate advertising sections (along with the inserted prospectuses) were always issued with the magazine because "readers and librarians ... expurgate[d] them from their copies, and there may not be a single publicly accessible holding of the *Yellow Book* which contains them all" (122). Did Claes consult every publicly accessible copy of the *Yellow Book*? If so, this too should be recognized.

While Claes mounts a central argument in each of his chapters, readers are most likely to relish his careful, lively descriptions and descriptive analyses of the magazines themselves in the context of the larger world of late-Victorian English art (fine and applied, literary and commercial). The book will serve not only specialists in the Victorian periodical but also readers new to periodical studies looking to understand what these magazines have to offer. They will find a wealth of information here that might move them to investigate the varied nooks and crannies upon which Claes has shed light.

Lisa Rodensky is Professor of English at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts.