“A sort of secret, hidden propaganda of a cultural kind”: The Political Warfare Executive, *Choix*, and Literary Propaganda in the Second World War[1]

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Graham Greene resigned from his post in the British Secret Intelligence Service just before D-Day in early June 1944. Greene’s reasons for resigning remain unclear; his official biographer Norman Sherry speculates it was because he correctly suspected his superior Kim Philby of being a Soviet agent, but did not want to betray him.[2] This was not the end of Greene’s career in covert government service however, as he undertook a brief, further stint with another agency which remains largely unknown – the mysteriously named Political Intelligence Department (PID) of the Foreign Office, where he ran a section with the writer Antonia White, producing what he described as “a kind of *Reader’s Digest* magazine called ‘Choix’, to be dropped over France” (quoted in Sherry, *Graham Greene*, 187). As Greene recalled:

> It was supposed to have been a sort of secret, hidden propaganda of a cultural kind. I mean not obvious political propaganda but making the French aware of what had been going on in literature while their country had been occupied by the Germans. I was criticised severely by the chief of the department. The poem [by Paul Éluard] was called “Liberté”. It was thought flippant to open with a French poem and take up the whole first page with a poem. It was not propaganda, you see, but I stuck to my guns (187).

Greene was largely dismissive of his brief tenure at the PID.[3] He claimed not to remember how many copies of the magazine were produced, and stated his belief that none had survived, even going so far as to suggest that "[t]he aeroplane crews probably threw them away rather than waste time dropping them" (187). By the second week of the following month he was on the way out, writing to his mother on 12 July that his 'half-time release from government service' had been granted and that in a few days he would be starting work at the publishing firm Eyre and Spottiswoode (187).

The disengaged nature of Greene's recollections may reflect his lack of interest in this phase of his wartime work, or perhaps masks an unwillingness to revisit his intellectual involvement with a sensitive agency that deliberately tried to obscure its operations and personnel from outside scrutiny. For the "PID" was in fact a cover name used by the Political Warfare Executive (PWE), a secret service responsible for propaganda to enemy and enemy-occupied Europe.[4] *Choix* was indeed a digest designed for distribution in France which featured literary material, but rather than a trivial production thrown away by aircraft crew the magazine reprinted material by many of the most significant mid-century Anglophone and European authors, including T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, and Virginia Woolf, and achieved circulation figures in the hundreds of thousands.[5] Continuing in print after Greene's departure, the magazine ran to twelve issues, all of which – contrary to his recollection – have survived.[6] Furthermore, *Choix* was just one of a range of PWE-sponsored cultural publications that circulated in newly liberated Europe in 1944-46, providing a major but almost unknown vector by which modern Anglo-American and European literary texts were disseminated in countries recovering from war and the relative cultural isolation of occupation. Projecting a highbrow vision of contemporary culture, aesthetically modernist and politically liberal, its producers aimed to re-open

lines of literary exchange between Britain and France and to stake a claim for British cultural influence and relevance in post-war Europe.

This article undertakes a case-study of the development and dissemination of *Choix*, to illuminate these aspects of the PWE's operations and its publications program. After outlining the origins and structure of the PWE, we focus on the organization's Editorial Unit and its International Digest program before examining the Italian *Il Mese*, the first of the digests and a publication which pioneered the approach to design and editorial selection followed by *Choix*; the second half of the article examines the production and distribution of *Choix* itself. Our analysis draws on the surviving papers of the PWE in the UK's National Archives, including the minutes of the Anglo-American Joint Publications Committee (JPC), the main source of information regarding the publication and distribution of the magazine.[7] This account of a hitherto unexplored wartime publication program contributes significant new information to broader debates in the field of modernist studies, and presents a new understanding of ways in which modernist authors and literary works were co-opted as tools of publicity and cultural diplomacy in the mid-twentieth-century.[8] In this context, Greene's suggestion that his editorial choices were "not propaganda" appears uncharacteristically naïve or characteristically disingenuous (quoted in Sherry, *Graham Greene*, 187).

The Political Warfare Executive: Formation, Structure, and Activity

While its better-known counterpart the Ministry of Information (MOI) took charge of British propaganda to audiences at home and in neutral countries, the Political Warfare Executive was tasked with producing and coordinating propaganda to enemy and

enemy-occupied territories.[9] By necessity, this was secret work: campaigns were often conducted in concert with military developments, requiring considerable security, and some aspects of the PWE's mission, which involved disseminating misleading or threatening materials to enemy populations, meant that the British government took pains to distance itself from direct association with the organization's output or existence.[10] Secrecy was also maintained internally; many individuals employed by the PWE had only the barest conception of the nature of the organization's operations, and in several cases it appears that authors and intellectuals recruited as *ad hoc* employees were unaware of the agency employing them, and believed that they were working only for the Foreign Office or the BBC. This confusion poses problems for researchers trying to identify those who – wittingly or unwittingly – contributed to the agency's work.[11]

Formed in 1941, the PWE organized operations across a range of media forms, from simple "white" propaganda leaflets and broadcasts which advertised their British or Allied origin and sought to provide accurate news to occupied populations, to covert "black" operations, which concealed their origin and spread malicious rumors and disinformation intended to damage the economy and morale of enemy military personnel and civilians. Of these black operations, most famous were the radio units operated around the PWE's "country" headquarters at Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire. Run by *Daily Express* journalist Sefton Delmer, these beamed fictitious (and sometimes obscene) propaganda into Germany and other occupied European territories and aimed to convince listeners that broadcasts were being made from inside the countries in question.[12] It was here that Muriel Spark was employed during the war's later stages, and it was these operations which attracted much of the later public controversy, and the attention of authors such as David Hare.[13]

The PWE's remit went far beyond Delmer's burlesque operations however, which formed only a small part of its propaganda output. Bush House in central London served as the PWE's "city" headquarters and was the base from which many of the organization's information operations were conducted; it was also the home of the BBC's European Services, with which the PWE constantly and often fractiously coordinated. It was at Bush House that the Bloomsbury Group writers David Garnett and Quentin Bell served as PWE officers, devising and promoting campaigns to be undertaken by citizens in occupied countries to sabotage the Nazi war effort.[14] Many of the PWE's print operations came to be run out of 43 Grosvenor Street however, less than a mile and a half to the west, and by January 1944 this building housed the Leaflet Committee, the Production Unit, and the Editorial Unit. In this arm of the agency, editors and writers worked to produce a variety of pamphlets, magazines, and books to be distributed in occupied and then liberated Europe. "White" leaflets and publications such as *Choix* were typically collaborative Anglo-American efforts, produced by Britain's PWE (in collaboration with the MOI) and the US Office of War Information (OWI), under the oversight of the Anglo-American JPC.[15] The scale of such operations was vast: one document estimates that over 60 million propaganda leaflets were dropped by air by the Allies during operations in France in August 1944.[16] The nature of PWE-OWI relations is unclear – one document suggests that collaborative work on the Italian digest *Il Mese* had proved "entirely satisfactory", but Garnett's official history of the PWE points to various tensions between the agencies, culminating in Minister of Information Brendan Bracken's refusal to permit integration of PWE-OWI operations, writing of the Americans that "The people who control this organization are incompetent, shifty, and hare-brained".[17]

As the war's tide turned towards an Allied victory, political warfare entered a new phase. Writing in December 1943, senior PWE official H.A. Paniguian observed:

> The liberation of any of the Occupied countries will confront us with a unique opportunity and responsibility in the field of Printed Propaganda. In every occupied country, the bookstalls and news stands are filled with enemy-inspired propaganda. It is safe to assume that these will disappear as soon as the German forces have been driven out. Before the daily and periodical press of the various countries can be reorganised […] there will be a gap, during which the British case can be put before the masses of these counties.[18]

The International Review Digest project

Key to this phase of PWE activity was the "International Review Digest project", of which *Choix* was a major part. The project was launched towards the end of the war with the aim of disseminating cultural propaganda to newly liberated European countries: an OWI report produced in early 1945 suggests that it was initiated in mid-1944 between the PWE's Editorial Unit and the OWI's Publications Division, extending a joint effort in printed propaganda that had begun the previous year.[19] These publications were to be jointly financed and edited by the British and American agencies, often with further editorial input from representatives of the nation for which the publication was intended.[20] Reflecting Greene's comments to Sherry, the OWI report summarizes the aims of the digests thus: "The over-all purpose of these magazines is to bring the liberated countries up to date on social and political thought,

scientific, literary and artistic achievements, through articles from leading magazines and extracts from important books, broadcasts, and other documents. The American interest in this is to give the American story its proportionate weight" (*OWI in the ETO*, 17). At least five digests were produced in addition to *Choix*: *Il Mese* ("the Month" – for Italy),*'t Venster op de Vrije Wereld* ("The Window on the Free World" – Netherlands), *Idag og Imorgen* ("Today and Tomorrow" – Denmark), *Verden Idag* ("The World Today" – Norway) and *Eklogi* ("Choice" or "Selection" – Greece). Digests for post-war Bulgaria and Romania were also discussed, but it seems that these never saw fruition.[21] *Choix* ran to twelve and *Il Mese* to twenty-four issues, many more than their counterparts, none of which ran to more than six.

Choix and the other post-D-Day digests grew out of a range of magazines and periodicals developed in the earlier phases of the war, which were dropped by air in occupied Europe and intended, as Garnett observed (185), to pierce the intellectual and cultural blackout resulting from Nazi occupation. Although most energy had been devoted to war news material with a two-to-three-week cycle of relevance, the agency had clearly become aware of the need to make a longer-term cultural appeal to an educated or influential readership. A 1943 PWE guide outlined the motives driving the production of periodicals for occupied France:

> The intellectual activity of France goes on in spite of German occupation; publications like the Revue des Deux Mondes, the Revue du Paris, not to mention Sept Jours, etc. continue. The Revue du Monde Libre is our answer, but the formula is basically that of the Readers Digest [*sic*].
>
> This type of publication is devised to satisfy, at least to some extent the hunger of the educated Frenchman for unpolluted food for thought. It goes

without saying that like everything else we prepare, it should have a definite propaganda slant.[22]

La Revue du Monde Libre measured 11 x 14 cm and was airdropped in occupied France from 1943-44; like the digests which followed, each issue was a mini anthology of features and essays on literature and culture, but unlike the digests these also carried war news. A range of prominent British and French writers appeared in its pages, including T.S. Eliot, Paul Éluard, E.M. Forster, André Gide, Stephen Spender and Rebecca West. Eliot's contribution to the November 1943 issue – "Des organes publics et privés de la cooperation intellectuelle" – is an indicative example. Writing to his friend John Hayward on 4 Oct 1943, Eliot mentioned that the previous week he had written "a few pages to offer to the air-service periodical dropped over France in large numbers", indicating that he had a clear conception of the nature of the commission.[23]

Great importance was attached to these periodicals through the later stages of the war, as indicated by a January 1944 PWE report on printed propaganda. The report's introduction states that the "present activities of P.W.E. in the realm of Printed Propaganda are devoted mainly to periodicals", while an annex to the report addresses the formation of the "International Review-Digest Project", and suggests that in six regions in which the PWE operated – France, Germany, Italy, the Balkans, Low Countries and the Scandinavian "Northern Region" – "the provision, verbatim or 'digested', of extensive quotations from the Press, books, etc., in periodical form, could be a most effective aid to European unity".[24] The general interest magazine *Reader's Digest* is again acknowledged here as the anthological model for the proposed publications and certainly appears to have influenced the design of the PWE's

international digests, which were also small in size, 128 pages in length, feature title pages very similar in appearance, and likewise present prose in two columns. The PWE and OWI may also have been aware of the growing transnational propaganda potential of this hugely popular middlebrow US magazine: several foreign editions of the *Reader's Digest* had been launched in 1938, and a highly successful South American edition entitled *Selecciones* followed in 1940 (from 1941 this was increasingly produced with the assistance of Nelson Rockefeller's Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs).[25] The original US *Reader's Digest* of this era carried a wide range of articles extracted from American newspapers and magazines, addressing international relations, science, and the unfolding war, as well as more frivolous lifestyle and humorous features. Literary contributions were relatively few and far between: across January-June 1944 only two articles were indexed under "fiction" and one under "poetry", and in July-December only three entries were indexed under the heading of literature (one was a book review, and another a feature entitled "What they're reading" – there was no poetry category in this index).[26]

Although there is some evidence that *Reader's Digest* granted (and later withheld) permissions for some editions of the Anglo-American digests to re-use certain materials, from the available indexes of the era *Choix* does not appear to have reproduced articles previously carried by its US antecedent.[27] However, several of the US current affairs selections for *Choix* were taken from publications regularly extracted by *Reader's Digest*: these included the *American Mercury*, the *Atlantic*, *Collier's* magazine, *Harper's*, *Life*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. The names of a clutch of distinguished US journalists, namely Louis Bromfield, Richard E. Lauterbach, Archibald MacLeish and Ira Wolfert can also be found on the title pages of both digests, and both *Choix* and the *Reader's Digest* published stories by James Thurber

towards the end of 1945. Overall, however, as we shall see, contributions selected for inclusion in *Choix* and *Il Mese* were considerably more highbrow than those which tended to feature in the *Reader's Digest*. Wartime issues of the US magazine carried occasional essays by writers such as Rebecca West and Stefan Zweig, and at least one brief excerpt from an essay by W.H. Auden, but overall its editors showed little interest in the Anglo-American or European modernist writers who featured so heavily in the French and Italian digests.

The reference to "European unity" in the January 1944 report meanwhile hints at the political ambitions of the digest project, even if further allusions to these are vague – the report blandly proposes the inclusion in the digest of region-specific material as well as:

> Documents on United Nations' life and intentions;
>
> Political pronouncements of a major order, with commentaries;
>
> Literary, Scientific and Economic articles;
>
> And any themes on which it is necessary that there should be common agreement throughout the Western World ("Regional Organization" report).

The intended audiences were to be "influential readers in every country of Europe", indicating a desire to exert leverage on the future direction of post-war European politics. The report also states cryptically that "[t]he importance of this enterprise being based on London, and in particular on P.W.E., with American cooperation, will not escape attention"; implying that the digest project presented an opportunity to press British interests in Europe in the face of a dominant American propaganda machine. The report concludes with a bold affirmation of the PWE's "unique" skills and capability

to realize the plan, building on the organization's experience of producing similar publications for France (*La Revue du Monde Libre*) and Italy (*Il Mese*). All that is required is the "authority" to take the project forward and "settlement of the situation vis-a-vis the Ministry of Information" ("Regional Organization" report).

Michael Shelden suggests that Greene's role as editor of *Choix* was "to use art as propaganda"; as such, the magazine existed firmly towards the white end of the spectrum, amplifying and promoting independently produced literary material rather than requiring authors to follow an ideological line, and refraining from attacks on opponents in favor of positive projections of liberal democratic culture.[28] The PWE papers nevertheless show that the propaganda value of promoting Anglo-American interests through such cultural initiatives had been recognized at this relatively early stage. John McMillan of the PWE's Editorial Unit wrote to Paniguian in April 1943 that "we should not lose sight of the god-sent opportunity which may occur of giving, to all men and women in all the countries of Western Europe, a series of authoritative works designed to buttress up the badly shaken fabric of what, in shorthand, one may define as the 'Western values'."[29] McMillan acknowledges that such plans may appear premature, but advocates producing an international library of texts along the lines of Penguin and Pelican books, as part of a post-war program of European reconstruction:

> I still hold that there can be no greater contribution to the unity of Europe than an authoritatively inspired and popularly conducted international library, cheap enough to be within the reach of all.
>
> Things being as they are, the English must take the initiative. (McMillan to Paniguian, April 22, 1943).

McMillan foresaw that six months after the war's end Western Europe would have been "flooded simultaneously with communist and capitalist propaganda […] to an end which one need hardly define". He argued that something like his planned range of texts would likely emerge in any case "under private auspices", but that the British government should understand the potential force of the plan and be prepared to support and profit by it: an analysis which anticipated the debates that would define British information policy in the later 1940s (McMillan to Paniguian, April 22, 1943).

The Launch of the Digest Project: *Il Mese*

The first digest to be published was the Italian *Il Mese*, which appeared in October 1943. In design and editorial approach *Il Mese* clearly established the digest model later followed by *Choix* and the other titles of the International Review Digest project; it was characterized by an internal PWE report as the "first example" of these new "organ[s] of Allied understanding" ("Regional Organization" report). Like *Choix* it measured 12 x 18.5 cm and had 128 pages; its contributors were a similar blend of British and American modernist writers and liberal critics or thinkers, whose work appeared together with material drawn from mainstream, often highbrow, magazines and periodicals. The first issue, dated on its cover October 1943, featured articles on the progress of the war and cultural matters taken from publications including the *Illustrated London News*, the *New York Times Magazine*, *New Writing* and *The Listener*. It also carried some contributions by Italian writers, including the anti-fascist journalist and activist Carlo Roselli and the socialist cleric Luigi Sturzo. The first issue concluded with a translation of Stephen Spender's poem "The War God".[30]

As it evolved, *Il Mese* reflected a growing sophistication in understanding of effective cultural propaganda, undergoing what the January 1944 report described as "a radical transformation" since its first appearance. Planned originally as a purely British-sponsored publication, *Il Mese* soon came under the direction of a joint Anglo-American committee, and after various turf-wars between agencies who sought to control the initiative, a compromise appears to have been reached with the establishment of the JPC in spring 1944 which achieved the ambition of "a totally integrated Anglo-American project". This sophistication was evident in editorial choices and balance of content, as the "proportion of 'escapist' or indirect propaganda material to the proportion of direct and obvious political content" was "enormously increased", after "very explicit indications from the field" that this approach was desirable. "There is little doubt", the report continues, that the magazine's transformation is "symptomatic of what may occur in all the more or less war-shocked territories which P.W.E. – O.W.I will be called upon to operate, from the earliest moment of invasion" ("Regional Organization" report).

The fourth issue of *Il Mese* reflected many aspects of this "transformation".[31] Unlike the first issue it was illustrated, and featured less war news and more cultural content, indicative of the shift away from the provision of short-term propaganda content to an attempt to engage readers with material more geared towards longer-term cultural diplomacy. Contributors were drawn from across Europe and included Karel Čapek, André Malraux, Edgar Stern-Rubarth and Stefan Zweig; Britain was represented by figures including Samuel Courtauld, William Chappell, Harold Nicolson, Clare Sheridan, and Edith Sitwell. Despite the increasing focus on "escapist" propaganda, it is striking that both issues of *Il Mese* retained in the PWE papers feature contributions by writers employed by or associated with the organization. These

include Stephen Spender, Peter Ritchie Calder, Richard Crossman and Kathleen Raine, suggesting that even the “indirect” material reprinted by such publications was still often drawn from a community of intellectuals who understood and actively contributed to the wartime propaganda effort.

If *Il Mese*’s coordination and content reflected the evolving mechanisms of cultural propaganda, its modes of distribution moved to take advantage of the newly liberated media environment. After years of occupation during which publications such as this were airdropped and then covertly circulated on the ground, *Il Mese* was likely the first propaganda periodical to be converted to conventional commercial methods of distribution, and evidently achieved considerable sales and readership amongst its target population. “PID” Adviser on Italian Publications L. Montano reported on *Il Mese*’s “continued popularity” following a two-month visit to Italy in April-June 1945, when Italy’s liberation had been completed. Montano claimed that *Il Mese* was exceptional in Italy due to the range of its “habitual readers”, from “simple people” to the philosopher and politician Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Battista Montini, a senior Vatican cleric responsible for the Holy See’s foreign affairs.[32] Back numbers “are always sought after, and constantly thumbed for reference”; according to Montano the first six issues were reprinted and published as a single volume, of which 30,000 copies were then sold south of Florence. In the north all available supplies sold out in a few days, and a new anthology taken from the first fourteen issues was prepared. Montano’s claims are bold: he writes that “[t]here is little doubt that IL MESE is at present the most popular medium of information about foreign countries, and probably the most useful channel available for the democratic re-education of the wider Italian public.” While the digest’s future was uncertain, such was its popularity that he raised the possibility that it might continue as an Italian concern, a fortuitous scenario where

“British interests [could be] safeguarded without financial obligations” (Montano report).

A separate PWE report dated May 1945 further trumpets the success of *Il Mese*: a wholesale newsagent named Giorgi who oversaw the distribution of the digest tells the report’s author that an initial circulation of 3,500 copies has risen to 12,000 copies per month, and that 15,000 copies have been ordered for June, making *Il Mese* markedly more popular than comparable Italian periodicals (Giorgi noted that he distributed just 500 copies of the literary magazine *Aretusa*, for example, and that whereas copies of this publication were always returned ‘not even one copy of the “Mese” [was] sent back’).[33] By July 1945 circulation had apparently reached 120,000; a Foreign Office memorandum suggests that this figure could be doubled or trebled if supplies were available (“International Review Digests”). Almost all copies in Rome were sold through a network of 350 book-stalls (only 200 were distributed to book shops), and a series of book-stall holders interviewed for the PWE report confirm its popularity: a salesman at a book-stall on the Via Emanuele Filiberto states that 75 copies were sold in two days, for example. The report also canvassed four readers’ opinions. The first, characterized as a “cultured, 27 year old lawyer”, praises its wide range of content – “everyone can find something of particular interest” – and suggests that *Il Mese*’s “merit lies in the fact that it is not a propaganda publication, or at least if it is, this is not apparent.” A “professor of the Liceo” meanwhile – the desire to reach educated and influential readers is palpable – praises the coverage of the war but would also like “more space to be devoted to literature and more examples of English and American literary productions of the last few years” (“Consolidated Report”). Such glowing reports should be regarded with suspicion, but are nonetheless suggestive of the extent to which *Il Mese* emerged in liberated Europe as a commercial, cultural,

and propaganda success. They also show how these qualities were entwined: as the PWE were already aware, commercial distribution of a publication meant that its target audience was far less likely to respond to it as "a propaganda publication".[34]

Choix

Following the success of *Il Mese*, further periodicals in the digest model soon followed. Of these, the French-language *Choix* became the most successful in terms of circulation, at its peak reaching hundreds of thousands of readers in Belgium and France. *Choix* published recent work by prominent authors and intellectuals from Britain, America, and Europe, in volumes that distilled significant recent cultural developments into an attractive and easily accessible format for the newly liberated Francophone territories. It appears that the journal's launch was tempestuous, however. As noted, Greene's account indicates a tension between his literary interests and the propaganda aims of his bureaucratic masters, while Shelden suggests that Greene played only a perfunctory role as editor: "It did not matter that his French was bad. claim of the selections were reprints from English and American magazines, and French translators were easy enough to come by" (Shelden, *Graham Greene*, 309). The archive is frustratingly silent about many aspects of the editorial polices and arrangements concerning *Choix* (and the other digests), although a reference to *Choix* having "lost its editor rather abruptly" at a meeting of the JPC on 24 August 1944 presumably refers to Greene's departure the previous month.[35] That same day a representative of *Choix*'s printers complained that they had become so confused by "duplicate layouts, different people's ideas on choice of type" that "the job has become unmanageable for us".[36] The writer stated that the job was "seriously interfering with

other work" and asked for the firm to be released from the job. Paniguian lamented that "an editorless publication was bound to make difficulties for everyone concerned" but affirmed that *Choix* was "very important for our work" (Paniguian to McMillan, August 25, 1944).

Disappointingly, the PWE's archive retains almost no documents relating to specific editorial decisions determining the composition of *Choix*, but from the limited information and biographical accounts available it appears that after Greene's departure the magazine's driving forces were Antonia White and Kathleen Raine. White was a highly regarded writer, whose debut novel *Frost in May* had appeared in 1933. She had edited the PWE publication *Accord*, and her biographer suggests she was responsible for the translation into French of the *Choix* pieces ("Regional Organization" report).[37] Raine was a scholar and poet with strong links to the English modernist sphere, whose poetry had been published in such venues as the Cambridge literary magazine *Experiment*. She also worked on PWE publications such as *La Revue Du Monde Libre* and was a close personal friend of White ("Regional Organization" report).[38]

Figure 1: *Choix* no. 1

Choix first went to press in September 1944. It was intended to appear on a monthly basis, but thereafter does not seem to have been produced or distributed according to a strict schedule or necessarily in numbered order, and the rate at which it appeared and the date at which production ceased is unclear. *Choix* certainly gave the appearance of being a monthly publication – its front cover (fig. 1) and first page carried the strapline "Les écrits du mois à travers le monde" – but like *Il Mese* issues were numbered rather than dated, and while the content of articles addressing the progress of the war obviously indicates the time of their original publication, exact

dates were almost always omitted, presumably as a means of prolonging shelf-life and extending opportunities for circulation.[39] Also like *Il Mese*, throughout its existence *Choix* featured only a very small number of specially commissioned articles (these are explicitly acknowledged as such), with most contributions taken from a range of periodicals, magazines, and newspapers from both sides of the Atlantic. The Greene-edited first issue of *Choix*, for example, featured material drawn from publications including the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Daily Express*, *La France Libre*, *Horizon*, the *Listener*, the *New Statesman*, the *Nineteenth Century*, the Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post*, the *Spectator*, *Time and Tide*, the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, and *Zana Denas* (a magazine published in liberated Yugoslavia). It also featured several extracts from recent books. Most of the articles focused on literature, culture, or the progress of the war, but there were also a smaller number of pieces covering historical, political or scientific matters, and one general interest piece extracted from a *Daily Express* report on a Mexican radio program. The cultural contributions included a *New Statesman* essay by V.S. Pritchett on the French poet and novelist Anatole France, a selection of cartoons by French artist Maurice Van Moppès ("Momo"), and a mournful selection of creative texts; most prominently a long extract from Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom The Bell Tolls* (1940). In addition to Éluard's poem "Liberté", it featured W.H. Auden's 1939 poem "Musée des beaux arts", printed in English under its initial title "Palais des beaux arts", and a thirty-four-line excerpt from the third section of T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" (1942), printed in English and a French translation by Madeleine Bosco and André Gide, which had first appeared in the Moroccan review *Aguedal* in 1943.[40] The final item in the first issue was Federico García Lorca's twelve-line poem "Casida del Llanto", printed in Spanish under the title "El Llanto" ("The Crying"). Inside the back cover was a list of books by prominent French authors published outside

France during the occupation of 1940-44. The writers listed including Louis Aragon, Julien Benda, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, further evidence of *Choix*'s mission to "bring the liberated countries up to date" without giving the appearance of state-driven didacticism.

The authenticity conveyed by the reprinting of previously published material was clearly understood by PWE propagandists: a 1943 report described how the airborne digest *Revue de la Presse Libre* had been "designed to provide Frenchmen with an idea of what the free press of the world is saying on subjects of major interest to France. Direct quotes are given without commentary, thus reducing the impression of propaganda to the minimum."[41] PWE official Thomas Barman recalled in a 1968 memoir that "[i]t was known to many of us that people in occupied Europe preferred papers and periodicals produced for the British public to publications specially prepared for them in their own language. They believed that if they could eavesdrop on what the British people were told, or could read their newspapers over their shoulders, they would be getting close to the truth about the war."[42] It is also possible that the free quotation and reprinting of material in such publications was itself designed to encourage further reprinting and subsequent recirculation of articles and the ideas contained within them. *Choix* appears to have proved a useful source for other publications: the OWI report notes that articles lifted from the digest were often reprinted in the French press, indicative of the specific value of a digest format in the barren media landscape following the Nazi retreat (*OWI in the ETO*, 17).

Throughout its run *Choix* continued to publish works by significant Anglophone and French writers. Not all of the contributions were contemporary: the second issue featured four poems by Robert Frost from the 1910s and 20s in English with French translations, and D.H. Lawrence's "Letter from Germany", originally written in 1928

and published in the *New Statesman* in 1934.[43] But most material was recent, such as an abridged version of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's newly published *Lettre à un otage* (1944), and the 1939 version of Frank O'Connor's short story "First Confession", which initiated a convention by which each issue ended with a short story or extended extract from a recent work of fiction. These would include works by Virginia Woolf (the posthumously published short story "The Man who Loved his Kind" from her collection *The Haunted House* (1944), in *Choix* no. 4), V.S. Pritchett ("The Saint" from *It May Never Happen* (1945), no. 6), John Steinbeck (a series of extracts from the novel *Cannery Row* (1945), no. 7) and Eudora Welty ("The Wide Net" from the 1943 collection of the same name, no. 12). Although *Choix* featured journalism and cartoons extracted from the *Daily Express*, these literary selections made by Greene, Raine, White and others established the journal as an organ of relatively highbrow transatlantic writing. Greene's own cross-generic brand of fiction is not reflected in the composition of the first issue; indeed, across the dozen issues popular writing is conspicuous by its absence, while Priestley-esque "broadbrow" wartime radicalism is thin on the ground – although the selections from works by American writers sometimes buck this trend (Harry Brown and John Steinbeck, for example). Conversely, the selections also avoid formally experimental writing. In form and content, therefore, *Choix*'s horizons were relatively limited, and conformed to a safely canonical, politically uncontroversial Anglo-European brand of modernism. It is also notable that, without a named editor, and without an editorial column or a letters page, the journal can appear an antiseptic and generally humorless production. If Cyril Connolly's *Horizon* is the publication which *Choix* most closely resembles in terms of its literary selections and its pan-European ambitions, it also lacked the literary cut-

and-thrust debates which sometimes bubbled among the pages of its British antecedent.

Figure 2: *Choix* nos. 1-12

The appeal of *Choix*, however, did not simply lie in its literary content, but also in its design and visual character. In appearance *Choix* was a sophisticated and striking publication – each issue was printed with a different colored cover (fig. 2) – and as the journal evolved it featured greater numbers of illustrations. Several issues featured cartoons by Carl Giles, Osbert Lancaster and James Thurber among others, including material from the *New Yorker* and *Collier's* magazine. The magazine also began to cover contemporary art through lavishly illustrated features; the fourth issue featured an essay by Herbert Read on Henry Moore (originally published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*), accompanied by nine pages of black and white copies of Moore's shelter drawings (fig. 3) and four plates (two in color) showing further designs and sculptures by the artist.

Figure 3: *Choix* no. 4, pp. 58-9.

Choix no. 9 featured an extract from Eric Newton's book *War Through Artists' Eyes* (1945), accompanied by sixteen plates (seven in color) of reproductions of works by contemporary British artists, including Edward Ardizzone, Paul Nash, John Piper, Eric Ravilious and Graham Sutherland. *Choix* no. 10 featured ten black and white plates reproducing works by Mexican artists including muralists Roberto Montenegro and Diego Rivera, while the final issue carried an article especially written for the magazine by William Gibson, Keeper of the British National Gallery, surveying the work of six contemporary artists working in England including Barbara Hepworth, Ben Nicholson, and Graham Sutherland.

Figure 4: *Choix* no. 12, pp. 60-1.

This was accompanied by sixteen plates, with five in color, including a reproduction of Sutherland's 1940 watercolor "Small Boulder" (fig. 4) which is almost life size (the original measures 14 x 24 cm), indicating the extent to which the magazine engaged audiences with a sophisticated and polished portrait of the British wartime art scene.[44]

Distribution and reception

Greene's recollection that *Choix* was "dropped" by air in France gives the impression that the magazine was released from Allied aircraft over occupied territory in the manner of propaganda leaflets – a haphazard method of dissemination at best, with little means of targeting specific and receptive readerships. In fact, the distribution of *Choix* was carefully planned and executed, and indeed exemplifies an impressive logistical operation undertaken under the constraints of wartime conditions, and one which in many ways served as a prototype for cultural propaganda operations of the Cold War.

Despite Greene's claims, *Choix* was not a covert publication. Without acknowledging the involvement or existence of the PWE, each issue nevertheless advertised its Allied origin, declaring that *Choix* was 'Publié par The Fleet Street Press, East Harding Street, London, E.C.4 pour les services d'information alliés'.[45] Like *Il Mese*, it was intended for open sale in liberated French-speaking regions; this is clear from the minutes of a JPC meeting on 14 December 1944, at which a distinction was drawn between "behind the lines" publications and those, like *Choix*, produced for areas now controlled by the Allies.[46] *Choix* openly circulated across France and French-speaking regions of Belgium and Luxembourg, as well as in French colonies

in North Africa, with records showing air shipments to Algiers, Casablanca, Oran and Tunis.[47] Other documents suggest that the journal was disseminated beyond Francophone territories: shipments of *Choix* were made to Stockholm in July and August 1945, for example, and at least one Flemish issue of *Choix* was published in March 1945.[48] Minutes suggest that Dutch, Danish and Norwegian versions of *Choix* were in production, although it is not clear whether this refers to direct translations of *Choix* into these languages or to the digests *'t Venster op de Vrije Wereld*, *Idag og Imorgen* and *Verden Idag*, all of which differed in appearance and content from their French counterpart.[49] Like *Il Mese*, *Choix* was also distributed to refugees: in June 1945 30,080 copies of the seventh issue were earmarked for "Displaced Persons", and large numbers also reportedly circulated in DP camps in Germany.[50] Furthermore, in July 1945 a request was made from Italian-speaking Trieste for shipments of 5,000 copies each of two numbers of *Choix* (in addition to copies of *Il Mese*), a request that is surely politically significant (JPC minutes, July 26, 1945).[51] The city area of Trieste at this time was a disputed territory, claimed by the nascent communist regime of Yugoslavia but controlled by an Allied Military Government. Glenda Sluga has described how the joint Anglo-American Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB) controlled all official media outlets in the area and sought to project positive impressions of Britain and the United States, specifically promoting a democratic future for the territory.[52] In this context it is possible to see how the digests formed a nexus between the propaganda of the Second World War and operations in the very earliest stages of the Cold War – the production and distribution of the Greek digest *Eklogi* in 1945-46 as part of a wide-ranging program of overt and covert anti-communist propaganda is further evidence of this.[53]

Although *Choix* was printed – at least to begin with – in Britain and initially dispatched across the channel by air, once in France the magazine was distributed commercially in partnership with Hachette, one of the country's largest chains of bookshops and a firm which had a monopoly on distribution.[54] A Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) report dating from December 1944 indicates that *Choix* was sold on a commercial basis from the beginning, since it features a column representing sales to French distributors. Intriguingly the cover note accompanying the table states that this figure "also includes several hundred copies of each item which were distributed free to editors, officials, etc"; this suggests that, just as *Il Mese* had made its way onto coffee tables in the Vatican, the PWE saw *Choix* as a means of targeting influential opinion formers in France – another technique that anticipates the modes of cultural propaganda later refined by the Cold War Information Research Department (IRD).[55] According to John B. Hench, PWD/SHAEF's decision to sell publications on a commercial basis in Italy and France followed the disappointing experiences of PWB/AFHQ in distributing material gratis in North Africa following the Torch landings of November 1942; selling material commercially enabled the speedy co-option of existing distribution channels through which the agencies could target elite audiences more likely to read the pamphlets and books (152).

In Belgium too, the magazine appears to have been sold as if it were a commercial publication – by April 1945 it was being advertised at kiosks across the country using handbills with an enlarged image of the magazine's cover.[56] None of the twelve issues of *Choix* features a price on the cover, but according to the OWI report the magazine sold for ten francs in France and eight in Belgium (*OWI in the ETO*, 17). This made it considerably cheaper than other literary and cultural journals in post-liberation France – *L'Arche* cost thirty francs, *Fontaine* cost forty, *Les Oeuvres Libres*

cost forty-five, and *Poésie 4* cost twenty-seven.[57] At a meeting in January 1945 the question was raised of whether the price of *Choix* should be increased to 15 francs, still well below the prices of its apparent competitors. The digest's modest price helps to account for its vast sales figures.

It is clear, therefore, that *Choix* reached a wide range of European destinations and achieved sustained commercial distribution. Beyond this, it is harder to gauge how successful it was. According to the OWI report *Choix's* circulation rose from 20,000 to 311,000 by the end of 1944, with 250,000 copies printed for France and 50,000 for Belgium, and the remainder sent to Francophone readerships in Africa and the Middle East (*OWI in the ETO*, 17). While this suggests a massive uptake, other reports indicate significant fluctuations in circulation. Figures for the shipment of the first three issues in the SHAEF report state that 74,600 copies of the first issue were shipped to France, followed by a huge increase to 174,700 copies of the second issue, and a massive drop to 17,800 of the third.[58]

There were considerable regional variations in the uptake of the readership: at the January 1945 JPC meeting it was stated that *Choix* was not selling fast in France and was "in no sense competing with any French material". At the same meeting it was reported that in Belgium, by contrast, *Choix* was selling very well and that "the Belgians were asking for more" – it was suggested that the print order be reallocated accordingly.[59] While minutes of the following month's meeting also indicate that too many copies were being printed (it had been decided to cut the print run for France from 250,000 to 150,000), by March it was then reported from Paris that "[c]irculation was on the increase".[60] It appears that this increase in French circulation was achieved, in part, by improvement in the logistics of the operation: since February of that year, Hachette had been distributing material by rail to most areas of France,

which enabled more efficient and even distribution, since bundles of material could be thrown out at sites along the way instead of shipping large quantities to one location (JPC minutes, March 13, 1945). In light of this, *Choix* continued to be printed in large runs – a single shipment of the sixth issue to Paris on 1 May 1945 contained 100,000 copies, while cross-channel shipments of the eighth issue from 2-8 August contained 160,000 copies.[61] These figures were far in excess of comparable French publications: according to Caroline Hoctan, *L'Arche* had a circulation of 30,000, of which 15,000 were exported, *Fontaine* had a circulation of around 15,000 of which 3000 were exported, *Les Oeuvres Libres* had a circulation of 12,000, and *Poésie 4* also had a circulation of 12,000, of which 6 or 7000 were for export (91, 325, 402, 448). A Foreign Office memorandum of July 1945 concedes that the digests "have obviously profited by the absence of normal competition", and suggests that if periodical publishing industries in Europe had been functioning ordinarily "there would have been less chance of a foreign language monthly from London competing with domestic products of Rome and Paris" ("International Review Digests"). However, the author notes, access to "important copyright material" from Britain and the US "has given them a flying start in the race and their leading position could easily be consolidated". Nevertheless, the circulation figures were clearly considered impressive at the time: the author notes that these were in excess of the combined British circulation of *The Times*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Economist* and *Spectator*. Another report claims that the cost of production of the digests was more than covered by the revenue, despite the fact that the publications carried no advertisements.[62]

Beyond the raw circulation numbers, evidence to suggest what readers thought of *Choix* is limited. The US artist John Ferren, head of the PWB's Publications Division (1943-45) and Chief of Publications & Display Section of the Allied Information Section

in Paris (1944), reported regularly on the reception of *Choix* in France, and was consistently positive about the magazine's impact and circulation.[63] Reporting from Paris on 4 September 1944 regarding the imminent arrival of the magazine, he claimed that "[a]ll reaction comment here confirms that this will have an assured success" and estimated that it would sell "very nearly the same quantity" as the magazines *Voir* or *Ensemble*, recommending a printing of 200,000 "in view of the rapidly expanding territory" (Ferren to Commanding Officer PWD/SHAEF, September 4, 1944). However, beyond Ferren's assertions of a receptive audience, further evidence is hard to come by in the PWE papers.[64] At a JPC Meeting on 8 March 1945 it was reported that a large number of letters from readers had been received by the "PID", but frustratingly neither the letters nor the JPC's analysis seem to have been retained.[65] Reporting from Paris in June 1945, George Langelaan observed that *Choix* had 'made itself a clientele'; in August, more expansively, he reported that the magazine was "acclaimed as the best success of its kind in the last 10 years. It sells everywhere from station-bookstalls to the best booksellers. There are no unsolds, and in large towns like Le Mans, Bordeaux and Toulouse, odd numbers can be found on the black market […]. In Toulouse, I met people who have copies bought in Paris."[66] Langelaan continued to suggest that *Choix* was "the only Allied publication which has acquired a definite and faithful, and still growing, clientele."

A handwritten note in a Foreign Office file meanwhile suggests that one French publisher was planning to produce "a Digest magazine exactly similar to 'Choix' as soon as the latter disappears."[67] Whatever the case, within the Allied propaganda apparatus the digests were evidently viewed as successful: towards the end of 1945 the Psychological Warfare department of the Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia (SACSEA) recommended publishing a monthly digest including a "high

percentage of articles of Far Eastern interest, aiming at a publication on the lines of Choix and Il Mese, rather than pure British Digest [*sic*]."[68]

The sheer size of these print runs is particularly striking given the relatively esoteric contents of the magazine and wartime shortages of paper and ink. Of course, the raw numbers of copies distributed did not necessarily directly equate to a readership: Ferren noted that it was hard to determine how many copies were unsold or unread since unsold copies were immediately redistributed and damaged copies were pulped (JPC minutes, March 13, 1945). Equally, once sold, a single copy might well have been shared between several members of a household or social grouping. The scale of *Choix*'s circulation remains extraordinary however, particularly when compared with the readership of both French and British magazines and literary venues at the time. *Horizon*, a magazine in many ways akin to *Choix* in terms of its featured authors and editorial ambitions, only had a print run of 10,000 – itself a number greater than many other little magazines of this era.[69] The august and well-established *Times Literary Supplement* never surpassed 44,000 sales per issue, while John Lehmann's *Penguin New Writing***,** often lauded for its crucial role in forging the British literary sphere during the 1940s and its "remarkable reception", still only peaked at 100,000 first-printing copies in the immediate post-war period and thereafter rapidly declined.[70] The same pattern was evident regarding the publication of the individual texts: for example, Eliot's "Little Gidding" had a first print run of 17,000 copies – itself an impressive number, but still only a fraction of the number who potentially saw the translated extract of the poem a few years later in the first number of *Choix*.[71] The journal therefore has a claim to be one of the most widely distributed British literary publications of the 1940s.

Beyond these raw numbers however, *Choix* played a major role in lifting the cultural blackout which many believed had suffocated occupied Europe over the past half-decade. This apparent blackout was of great concern to the British intelligentsia as the post-conflict rebuilding process began: a *Horizon* editorial (reprinted in *Choix* no. 8 as "L'Avenir des Petites Revues") noted that at the war's end, while "all over the world a host of 'little magazines' are putting forth their blooms", it was unlikely "if any reader of HORIZON can claim to have set eyes on more than half a dozen of these since the war, and many will not even have heard of them".[72] *Horizon* called for the "immediate loosening up of the restrictions which affect the sale and interchange of magazines throughout the world, […] to promote an orgy […] of exchange and insemination, and so make free for those who need it the penicillin of the Western Mind" (224). *Choix* may not have produced quite the desired orgy, but its digest format and cosmopolitan choice of recent material in translation took some of the first steps towards this renewed exchange, allowing European populations separated by closed borders, censorship, and occupying forces access to core artistic and intellectual developments emerging in Europe and the United States at this time.

Conclusion

The date at which production of *Choix* officially ceased is unclear, but by June 1945, the MOI was keen to wind up the International Review Digest program and replace it with a uniform *British Digest*, which the Ministry would produce and control itself (to the irritation of the PWE and Foreign Office the decision was apparently taken at an MOI meeting at which no FO representative was present) ('International Review Digests').[73] Agreement was reached to cease production of *Choix* and the other digests after the tenth issue in September 1945.[74] However, the fact that the eleventh

and twelfth issues of *Choix* in November and December were still produced shows that some attempts were made to resist the MOI's immediate take-over of propaganda for liberated Europe and consequent side-lining of the PWE.[75] An unspecified delay to the closure of the digests was negotiated with the MOI in July 1945, but thought was also given around this time to transferring the digests to private ownership, with McMillan privately meeting *Economist* editor Geoffrey Crowther who was "extremely interested" in continuing publication of the digests.[76] The British Council meanwhile considered the digests "of the very highest value" and "very much regret[ted] their demise", although interestingly the Council's Brian Kennedy-Cooke observed that the body would not be able to take the digests over "in their present form, owing to the political nature of much of the contents".[77] Of more practical concern was the fact that contributions were becoming harder to source after the end of the war in Europe: British newspaper and periodical proprietors who had been happy during the war to allow material from their publications to be translated "free of charge" had begun to exhibit 'signs of reluctance to continue their generous attitude' ("International Review Digests").[78] The twelfth and final issue of *Choix* appeared towards the end of 1945, featuring an extract from George Orwell's essay "You and the Atom Bomb", which had been published in *Tribune* on 19 October 1945. A memo produced eight days earlier had already sent the previous year's issues for pulping, and with that *Choix* appears quietly to have ceased production.[79]

This unmarked demise is symptomatic of the magazine's overall place in literary history. Emerging as part of a colossal and unprecedented wave of Allied wartime propaganda, with no named editor to cement its place in library catalogues or histories, it was then succeeded by other information organs after barely a year. Despite its massive print runs, the absence of *Choix* from accounts of this period is therefore

unsurprising, even amidst the general boom of attention accorded to literary periodicals in recent years.[80] And yet, as this article has argued, recovering the history of *Choix* contributes important new elements to our understanding of mid-century modernism, and of how this intersected with crucial moments of geopolitical conflict and developing practices of cultural diplomacy. Most directly, *Choix* demonstrates the critical role such wartime publications played in dispelling an intellectual and cultural blackout in France, as recent works by leading writers of the Anglosphere such as Auden, Eliot, Spender, and Woolf (to name only a few) were translated and rushed to liberated audiences hungry for new material. This selection was by no means ideologically neutral, and *Choix* should also be understood as an important link in a wider cultural lineage, consolidating certain canonical versions of interwar literature by neatly "digesting" these for the purposes of post-war international projection. The extent to which the contents pages of *Choix* overlap with those of magazines such as *Horizon,* and with later venues such as *Encounter,* suggests that *Choix* promoted a strand of inter-war writing highly influential in many critical accounts but increasingly contested by recent scholarship as selective and partial.[81]The geopolitical salience of this canon has been the subject of widespread critical debate, and as Jonas Staal has recently observed: "The framing of a non-propagandistic modernist art proved to be the ultimate form of democratic propaganda; modernist art is still celebrated as a symbol of the free West today."[82] First extracted by the PWE, Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) was later translated into Russian by the CIA and air-dropped into the Soviet Union, for example (Saunders, 248). *Choix* delineates, therefore, a mode of cultural diplomacy that would be refined and expanded by western governments in decades to come, and shows that the roots of the cultural Cold War lie firmly in the work of agencies established during the Second World War. Aspects of this were hardly novel,

of course. During the First World War large numbers of propagandist books and other publications had been distributed on the Home Front under commercial imprints; during the Second World War the MOI revived this practice, operating covert funding arrangements with publishers including Oxford University Press and Penguin in the interests of preserving the appearance that the production of literature continued through "normal publishing channels."[83] Arrangements for *Choix* took this a step further however, anticipating Cold War methods adopted by agencies including the IRD of publishing and circulating journals and books which had the appearance of being commercially produced but which had in fact been coordinated and funded by covert propaganda departments, an arrangement most notoriously associated with *Encounter*, but one which extended to a far greater range of magazines, journals, and textbooks in the era. The size of *Choix*'s print runs certainly indicates the advantages and possibilities presented by wartime mobilization of cultural production and printing facilities.[84]

Most significantly, however, the archives of the PWE reveal the extent to which D-Day was not simply a military offensive by the Allies but was also conceived as a massive, carefully coordinated cultural campaign, with works by many of the era's most significant writers and editors mobilized in an attempt to secure a prominent role for Anglophone modernism in post-war French intellectual life. Graham Greene dismissed the significance of his role in the PWE's Editorial Unit and downplayed the value of the digest project. But for the officers of Anglo-American propaganda agencies during the war, and for the hundreds of thousands of citizens who flocked to purchase these publications at the bookstands on the newly liberated continent, such innovative organs came to be crucial vectors through which positive projections of

Britain and the United States could be advanced and European rapprochement could occur.

Notes

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[2] Norman Sherry, *The Life of Graham Greene: Volume Two: 1939-1955* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1994), 182-83.

[3] As Sherry notes (187), Greene did provide a clue to his employment by the PID in his novel *The Comedians* (1966), in which the English hotel-owner Brown recalls that during the war he served 'in the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, supervising the style of our propaganda to Vichy territory, and even had a lady-novelist as my secretary' (Graham Greene, *The Comedians* (London: Vintage, 2004), 59.

[4] The actual "Political Intelligence Department" was a non-secret Foreign Office department that was closed in 1943; its name was adopted as cover. See Ellic Howe, *The Black Game: British Subversive Operations against the Germans during the Second World War* (London: Queen Anne/Futura, 1988), 1.

[5] Analysis of the interactions between modernism and official war culture in *Choix* extends a field of scholarship previously explored by Patrick Deer in *Culture in Camouflage: War, Empire, and Modern British Literature* (2009).

[6] The 'Political Warfare Executive and Foreign Office, Political Intelligence Department: Papers' (hereafter 'PWE papers') in the United Kingdom's National Archives in London contain just four issues of *Choix*, but a complete run of the magazine has been acquired by Durham University Library. Many issues are also available on the open market from used book dealers.

[7] Most PWE papers were deliberately destroyed at the end of the war; what survives in the National Archives is poorly organised and features many duplicated documents (Howe, 6-7). The JPC was composed of representatives from the United States Psychological Warfare Division (PWD) and Office of War Information (OWI), and from their British equivalents the Ministry of Information (MOI) and the Political Intelligence Department (PID) (an example of the PWE using PID as cover when interacting with external agencies).

[8] Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), has recently led work evaluating the extent to which Cold War understandings of modernism as an abstract artform were conditioned through covert state influence. This builds on broader scholarship on the "Cultural Cold War", led by historians such as Hugh Wilford, and often responsive to the work of Francis Stonor Saunders in *Who Paid the Piper* (London: Granta, 1999).

[9] For a survey of the evolution of British propaganda bodies across the twentieth century, see Philip Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999). The historiography of the specific operations of the PWE is surprisingly limited. Many of the main studies were written by those with direct experience in the agency (e.g. Michael Balfour, *Propaganda in war, 1939-1945: organisations, policies and publics in Britain and Germany* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); David Garnett, *The Secret History of PWE: the Political Warfare Executive, 1939-1945* (London: St Ermin's Press, 2002); Howe, *The Black Game*). The memoirs of PWE black broadcasting guru Sefton Delmer also provided influential, popular, but highly tendentious accounts of the organisation: see *Black Boomerang* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1962). Literary historical scholarship has occasionally probed the PWE in relation to specific authors such as Muriel Spark or David Hare (see, for example, Victoria Stewart, *The Second World War in Contemporary British Fiction: Secret Histories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) and Marina MacKay, "Muriel Spark and the Meaning of Treason", *Modern Fiction Studies*, 54, no.3 (2008): 505-522), but the biographical details surrounding many other authors and their involvement in the PWE is often hazy and elusive.

[10] The fact that Garnett's official history of the PWE was written immediately after the war but was withheld from public release until 2002 indicates the secrecy which continued to surround the agency during the Cold War period.

[11] Stephen Spender, for example, offers a cursory and opaque account of his PWE service in *Journals: 1939-1983* (1985) and downplays the organisation's secret status – of particular significance given Spender's later role in Anglo-American cultural propaganda work through *Encounte*r.

[12] Delmer's *Black Boomerang* gives a bombastic account of these operations and of the author's PWE career; see also Garnett, *Secret History of PWE,* and Lee Richards, *The Black Art: British Clandestine Psychological Warfare against the Third Reich* (Peacehaven: psywar.org, 2010).

[13] Spark describes her experiences in the memoir *Curriculum Vitae* (1992) and draws on these directly in her novel *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973) (see Beatriz Lopez, "Muriel Spark and the Art of Deception: Constructing Plausibility with the Methods of WWII Black Propaganda", *The Review of English Studies*, 71, no. 302 (2020)). Hare's BBC television play *Licking Hitler* (1978) presents a fictionalized account of Delmer and his unit.

[14] Various documents in the PWE papers attest to these efforts – see, for example, the records in the file "Transport Campaign: policy directives" in FO 898/348, The

National Archives, Kew, UK. All files in the series FO 898 are from the PWE papers in the National Archives.

[15] There was evidently considerable manoeuvring between the British agencies for control of these operations; a PWE memo from November 1943 notes that the PWE's more sensitive "impact" publications "should not be mentioned" to other agencies (memo from H.A. Paniguian to Osborne, November 11 1943, FO 898/474). The OWI was formed by the USA in 1942, and was involved in both domestic propaganda in the USA and covert psychological warfare abroad.

[16] Memo from Frank A. Kaufman to General Robert A. McClure, Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart and Robert E. Sherwood, June 19, 1944, FO 898/456. Kaufman was Chief of the Leaflet Section, PWD/SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force).

[17] Report to the PWE Standing Leaflet Committee, January 3, 1944, FO 898/430; Bracken is quoted in Garnett, *Secret History of PWE*, 358. For further details of general PWE/OWI collaboration and tensions, see Garnett, 349-64.

[18] Memo from H.A. Paniguian to Director of Finance, December 16, 1943, FO 898/474.

[19] *OWI in the ETO: A Report on the Activities of the Office of War Information in the European Theater of Operations: January 1944-January 1945* (London: OWI, 1945), 17. See https://archive.org/details/owiinetoreporton00unit/mode/2up [accessed 30 June 2022].

[20] The US portion of funding was in fact paid by Britain under Reverse Lend-Lease arrangements ('International Review Digests', memo by F.R. Cowell dated 3 July 1945, FO 924/217).

[21] Minutes of 22nd meeting of Tripartite Committee, Friday February 16, 1945, FO 898/415; Minutes of MOI-PID meeting "to Discuss Servicing to the Balkans", December 8, 1944, FO 898/159. The PWE was also involved in at least one other digest project: in March 1945 the agency launched *Ausblick* ('Outlook'), a digest for German prisoners of war in Britain and the Middle East, and a joint Franco-British-American digest for liberated Germany entitled *Neue Auslese* ('New Selection') appeared towards the end of that year. See 'Prisoners of War Directorate, P.W.E. Progress Report no. 1 on Work among German and Italian Prisoners (For period 21st January to 28th February 1945)', FO 898/330, and letter from Margaret Munro to F.R. Cowell, 25 October 1945, FO 924/217.

[22] "Leaflets, Publications and Books: Instructions on Policy and Practice", n.d. (a draft of the document is dated 29 March 1943), FO 898/435.

[23] *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The War Years, 1940−1946* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 479, n. 1.

[24] "Regional Organization and the Conduct of Printed Propaganda: A Report to the P.W.E. Standing Leaflet Committee", revised following a meeting of the committee on January 3, 1944, FO 898/430.

[25] Joanne P. Sharp, Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xiv; Lisa A. Ubelaker Andrade, "Connected in Print: Selecciones del Reader's Digest, U.S. Cultural Relations, and the Construction of a Global Middle Class, 1940-1960", *Palabra Clave*, 22, no. 4 (2019): 1-32, 5.

[26] "Index to the Reader's Digest", *Reader's Digest* 44, no. 266 (June 1944): 123-128, 125, 127; "Index to the Reader's Digest", *Reader's Digest* 44, no. 272 (December 1944): 123-128, 126.

[27] Letter from H.L. Green to Mrs Pike, 16 July 1945, FO 924/217.

[28] Michael Shelden, *Graham Greene: The Man Within* (London: Heinemann, 1994), 309.

[29] Memo from McMillan to Paniguian, April 22, 1943, FO 898/435.

[30] The poem was published in *Il Mese* as "Il dio della guerra".

[31] The PWE papers include only the first and fourth numbers of *Il Mese*.

[32] L. Montano, "Report on visit to Italy, April 4th to June 8th", June 11, 1945, FO 898/174. Montini later ascended to the papacy as Paul VI in 1963.

[33] "Extract from Consolidated Report on Conditions in Liberated Italy No. 67", May 10, 1945, FO 898/174.

[34] During discussions between the PWE and MOI in June 1943 regarding the distribution of *Panorama* magazine in North Africa, it was "unanimously agreed that, for purely propaganda reasons, all the advantages lay in selling" the publication (memo from S.E. Mangeot to Lieutenant-Colonel Fairlie, June 24, 1943, FO 898/435).

[35] Memo from Paniguian to McMillan, August 25, 1944, FO 898/477.

[36] Memo from unknown writer to L. Francis, August 24, 1944, FO 898/477.

[37] Jane Dunn, *Antonia White: A Life* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998), 276.

[38] White's diaries and Raine's memoir both refer to their work for a wartime propaganda agency (never named as the PWE); both accounts also describe their turbulent friendship. See Antonia White, *Diaries 1926-1957*, ed. Susan Chitty (London: Virago, 1992), 181 and Kathleen Raine, *The Land Unknown* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), 178-79.

[39] Exceptions to this pattern are *Choix* nos. 6 and 7, which in an unexplained deviation from editorial policy explicitly cite the dates on which several articles were first published.

[40] Catharine Savage Brosman, "Gide, Translation, and 'Little Gidding'", *The French Review*, 54, no. 5 (1981): 690-698, 690.

[41] "Aircraft propaganda to France", n.d., FO 898/430.

[42] Thomas Barman, *Diplomatic Correspondent* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), 117-18.

[43] The Frost poems were "Reluctance" and "Mowing" (1913) and "Mending Wall" and "Acquainted with the Night" (1928).

[44] *Exultant Strangeness: Graham Sutherland Landscapes* (Kendal: Abbot Hall Art Gallery, 2013), 36.

[45] At some point during its existence the nascent French administration appears to have become involved in the publication of *Choix*: a notice posted to advertise the closure of the journal in the December issue states that it was "officially sponsored by the French, British and American Information Services" ("Draft Notice re Termination of Digest", attached to letter from Adams to Dennis Routh, 9 October 1945, FO 924/217). The nature of French involvement is unclear, however.

[46] Minutes of JPC meeting, December 14, 1944, FO 898/471.

[47] These shipments are recorded in various JPC documents in FO 898/472.

[48] "Summary No. 56 Material Shipped up to 25th July, 1945", FO 898/472; "Summary No. 59 Material Shipped up to 15th August, 1945", 898/472; Minutes of JPC meeting, March 8, 1945, FO 898/471. Leaflets and other printed propaganda materials in the PWE papers show that it was common practice to produce versions of the same item in both French and Flemish for distribution in Belgium.

[49] Minutes of JPC Meeting, February 8, 1945, FO 898/471.

[50] "Summary No. 51 Material Shipped up to 20th June, 1945", FO 898/472; Minutes of JPC Meeting, July 26, 1945, FO 898/472.

[51] An August 1945 report requested 20,000 further copies of each issue of *Il Mese* for Trieste and stated that distribution and circulation should be coordinated with the United States Information Services (Report by Lt. Col. Pemberton-Pigott on visit to Allied Information Services, HQ 13 Corps Trieste, from 12-15 August 1945, 898/142).

[52] Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 116.

[53] S. Mervyn Herbert, J.H. Waddell and John Amery, "Establishment proposals for H.M. Embassy, Athens. Information Department", December 6, 1945, FO 898/416. For an extended account of *Eklogi* see Gioula Koutsopanagou, "Moulding Western European Identity: The role of the Central Office of Information's International Digest

and its Greek version *Eklogi* (1945–1960)", *Media History* 23, nos 3-4 (2017): 391-404.

[54] According to records in the PWE papers *Choix* and other printed material was transported by air to France until the end of 1944, and by ship from January 1945 on (FO 898/471); John B. Hench, *Books As Weapons: Propaganda, Publishing, and the Battle for Global Markets* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 153.

[55] Letter from Thomas Kernan to Lt. Col. Mitchell-Innes, December 16, 1944, FO 898/205. For the IRD's targeting of "recognised leaders of public opinion", see Defty, *Britain, America and Anti-Communist Propaganda, 1945-1953*, 167. See also Hugh Wilford, *The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War: Calling the Tunes?* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), esp. 52-64, on the evolution of the IRD, its links to the PWE, and its engagement with the literary intelligentsia.

[56] Minutes of JPC meeting, April 12, 1945, FO 898/471.

[57] Caroline Hoctan, *Panorama des revues à la Libération 1944-1946* (Saint-Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe: Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine, 2006), 91, 325, 402, 448.

[58] Startlingly, the figures state that 128,900 of the second issue were either lost or in transit ("Shipments and Distribution – France to December 5, 1944", FO 898/205).

[59] Minutes of JPC meeting, January 25, 1945, FO 898/471.

[60] Minutes of JPC meeting, February 22, 1945, FO 898/471; Minutes of JPC meeting, March 13, 1945, FO 898/471.

[61] "Shipments to France Between 26th April and 2nd May, 1945", FO 898/471.

[62] "British 'Readers' Digests' for Europe", 26 October 1945, FO 924/217.

[63] Ferren had previously served as PWB's Chief of Publications in the Italian Theater (letter from C.D. Jackson to many, January 13, 1944, FO 898/137), but by September 1944 had moved to Paris (letter from Ferren to Commanding Officer PWD/SHAEF, September 4, 1944, FO 898/477). An accomplished abstract artist, Ferren had lived and worked in Paris from 1931-39, and his career presents an intriguing nexus between the interwar Parisian avant-garde and the United States propaganda machine as it developed during the Second World War and Cold War – he also served US interests in the Middle East during an artist's residency in Beirut in early 1960s. See Sarah A. Rogers, "The Artist as Cultural Diplomat: John Ferren in Beirut, 1963–64", *American Art* 25, no. 1 (2011): 112-123.

[64] This indicates a prevailing and unavoidable imbalance in the historiography of wartime propaganda, which inevitably focuses on the documented production rather than the largely undocumented reception of publications and broadcasts. Attempts to address the imbalance in the research for this article have been largely fruitless; for example, keyword searches of the archives of French newspapers *Le Figaro* and *Le*

Monde and Italian newspapers *Corriere della Sera* and *L'Unità* from the period under study have not yielded any discussions of *Choix* or *Il Mese*.

[65] Minutes of JPC meeting, March 8, 1945, FO 898/471.

[66] Letter from George Langelaan to PWE's French Section, 4 June 1945, INF 1/666; George Langelaan, "Report on Hachette's Distribution in France", 27 August 1945, INF 1/666. These lines are quoted in Valerie Holman, "Carefully Concealed Connections: The Ministry of Information and British Publishing, 1939-1946", *Book History* 8 (2005): 197-226, 226.

[67] Note by Alan Dudley, n.d., FO 924/217. The name of the publisher is illegible but appears to be "Sch[…]ber".

[68] "Activities Report no. 15 for two weeks ending 8th December 1945", FO 898/284.

[69] Stefan Collini, *Common Writing: Essays on Literary Culture and Public Debate*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 160.

[70] For *Penguin New Writing* see A Trevor Tolley, *The Poetry of the Forties* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 19. For *The Times Literary Supplement* and other publishing venues at this time see Peter Marks, "Publishing and Periodicals", *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the 1930s* ed. James Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 63-80, 64.

[71] Marina MacKay, *Modernism and World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88.

[72] "Comment", *Horizon*, April 1945, 223-24, 223. *Choix* no. 11 concluded with an extract from "La marche a l'etoile" (1943) by "Vercors", the pseudonym used by resistance fighter Jean Bruller, founder of the clandestine publishing house Les Éditions de Minuit. Intriguingly Bruller's novel *La Silence de la Mer* had been published in Britain in a translation by *Horizon* editor Cyril Connolly as *Put Out the Light* in 1944, the previous year.

[73] 'One successor publication appears to be *Echo: Revue Internationale*, a French-language digest periodical produced from 1946 and similar in appearance and editorial approach to *Choix*. An Italian version (*Eco Del Mondo*) and Belgian, Dutch and Polish editions were also produced. McMillan appears to have moved to the MOI's successor the Central Office of Information (COI) at some point in 1946 to take up a role overseeing production of *Echo* and its companions (letter from McMillan to Cowell, 28 August 1946, FO 924/560).

[74] The exception to this was *Eklogi*, where responsibility was transferred to the Anglo-Greek Information Service (Minutes of a meeting at the MOI, June 4, 1945, FO 898/472). By August 1946 *Eklogi* was being overseen by McMillan as part of the COI digest programme (McMillan to Cowell, 28 August 1946, FO 924/560).

[75] This tension is hinted at in a letter from the MOI's Director General Cyril Radcliffe to PWE's Deputy Director Alec Bishop on April 7, 1945, which makes very clear that MOI

consider that France and Italy are now their "exclusive concern" (and therefore no longer enemy territory which fell under the domain of the PWE). Radcliffe further observed that "Excellent and acceptable" as *Choix* and *Il Mese* were, the MOI wished in future to disengage from the Americans and instead "to promote an organ that is more closely tied to the range of direct British publicity" – namely the *British Digest* (letter from Cyril Radcliffe to Alec Bishop, April 7, 1945, FO 898/154). According to a letter from the PWE's Walter Adams to the MOI's Dennis Routh, the publication of three other digests also ended around this time: the final and sixth issue of Denmark's *Idag og Imorgen* appeared in October-November, the final and twenty-fourth issue of Italy's *Il Mese* in November-December, and the final and eighth issue of the Netherlands's *'t Venster op de Vrije Wereld* in November-December (Adams to Routh, 6 October 1945, FO 924/217). Their termination was advertised with a notice in each publication (Adams to Routh, 9 October 1945, FO 924/217).

[76] Letter from William Montagu-Pollock to Dennis Routh, 23 August 1945, FO 924/217; "Transfer of Official Magazines to Private Ownership: Some Technical Problems", 23 October 1945, FO 924/217; letter from F.R. Cowell to Alan Dudley, 9 August 1945, FO 924/217.

[77] Letter from Brian Kennedy-Cooke to William Montagu-Pollock, 17 August 1945, FO 924/217.

[78] The US proprietors of the *Reader's Digest* also withdrew permission to reproduce material freely in Allied digests around this time, explaining that "now the war in Europe is over and normal publishing conditions are returning [we] must regretfully retain exclusive magazine use of [our] material" (Letter from H.L. Green to Mrs Pike, 16 July 1945, FO 924/217). As discussed above, this does not appear to have affected *Choix* directly, however.

[79] Memo from E.C. Tyley to Walter Adams, October 11, 1945, FO 898/537.

[80] See Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker, and Christian Weikop (eds), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009-13); Suzanne W. Churchill and Adam McKible (eds), *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman. *Modernism in the Magazines: An Introduction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

[81] See Barnhisel's *Cold War Modernists* for discussion of this lineage. Barnhisel notes that *Encounter* looked primarily "backward" (166) to the 1920s modernists and 1930s Auden circle, rather than to younger or emerging writers – *Choix* and *Encounter*, although separated by a decade, promoted many of the same names and projected similar notions of cultural "prestige" (152). As with *Choix*, the planners of *Encounter* also saw *Horizon* as a guiding spirit: initially they worried that *Horizon* was too literary to adopt as a direct model (148), but Hugh Wilford suggests that *Encounter* editor Spender continued to attempt to "transform the publication into a latter-day version of *Horizon*" (cited in Barnhisel, 151).

[82] Jonas Staal, "Propaganda Art: From the 20th to the 21st Century," PhD Diss (Leiden University, 2018), 35.

[83] Minutes of Co-ordinating Committee, September 14, 1939, INF 1/867, quoted in Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1979), 8. On the covert publication of propaganda using commercial imprints during the First World War see Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: Literature as Propaganda 1914-18 and After* (London: Batsford, 1989), 15-16, and Mark Wollaeger, *Modernism, Media, and Propaganda: British Narrative From 1900 to 1945* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 16.

[84] We expand upon this interaction in James Smith and Guy Woodward, 'Anglo-American Propaganda and the Transition from the Second World War to the Cultural Cold War', *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Cold War Literary Cultures* ed. Greg Barnhisel (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).