that the line they quote as “Yellow mother custard,” dripping from a dead dog’s eye, is in fact “Yellow matter custard,” a playground chant (and brutal oral text). *Alice* inspires the grotesque as well as the idyllic.

Jaques and Giddens’s book is based on extensive research at major repositories of *Alice* materials, including the Harry Ransom Center and the Houghton Library. These institutions are fine for funded scholars, but younger and poorer readers might do worse than to explore local libraries. I went to the Philadelphia Free Library and the Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books at the Toronto Public Library. Neither disappointed. Both have a wide range of materials and dozens of editions, including first editions and editions before 1907. Both have borrowable materials including books, movies, musical adaptations, translations, graphic books, and audio books. Any child, and many an adult, would be enchanted by the old editions, the adaptations, and paraphernalia. *Alice* is still as entertaining, amusing, and accessible as Dodgson intended.

GILLIAN FENWICK

University of Toronto

Lise Jaillant. *Modernism, Middlebrow and the Literary Canon: The Modern Library Series, 1917–1955*. London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2014. 211 pp.; \$99.00 ISBN 9781848934931

Lise Jaillant’s *Modernism, Middlebrow and the Literary Canon: The Modern Library Series, 1917–1955* consists of a series of case studies that represent the early years of the Modern Library. Jaillant argues that this reprint series challenges the notion of cultural categories as “immutable givens” (149) by highlighting the fluidity between highbrow and middlebrow culture during the interwar period in the United States. As an emblem of this cultural moment, the Modern Library marketed many genres side by side, affirming that their diverse selection of genre fiction, modernist novels, and scientific works constituted the “world’s best books” (18). In this slogan, the qualifier “best” remains deliberately ambiguous, neither signifying “best-selling” works, nor “top-quality” prose, but rather forming a hybrid association between the two.

When Albert Boni and Horace Liveright launched the Modern Library in 1917, the term “middlebrow” had yet to permeate the United States’ lexicon. While the term became common parlance in

Britain in the 1920s, reflecting Europe's clearer distinctions between class boundaries, Jaillant posits a pseudo-egalitarian period in the United States during the inter-war years, when modernism had yet to establish itself in a hierarchical relationship to genre fiction. In fact, the Modern Library proved that difficult – i.e., modernist – fiction “could be more commercially successful than genre fiction” (67). By offering modernist fiction at an accessible price point, the Modern Library widened the market for these challenging works. In so doing, Jaillant argues, the series challenges the notion of the middlebrow as an autonomous sphere and redefines it as a field of translation, where publishers render difficult concepts and literary techniques accessible to a larger reading public.

The Modern Library's eclectic collection of genres spoke to a rising middle class of professionals, whose careers dictated that they acquire specialized forms of knowledge. The Modern Library capitalized on a general unease with the compartmentalization of information that resulted from industrialization. Accordingly, the Modern Library imagined its readers as “cultivated amateurs,” who wanted to develop generalist forms of knowledge, both scientific and literary, beyond the scope of their professional demands (25).

While Jaillant aims to pay attention to a wide range of texts, canonical writers dominate her argument. Nevertheless, some of these case studies represent the book's strongest work. The chapter titled “Woolf in the Modern Library: Bridging the Gap between Professional and Common Readers” challenges Woolf's well-known reputation for scathingly indicting the middlebrow. Instead, Jaillant differentiates Woolf's reputation in the United States from her characterization in England. Jaillant describes the United States as the cultural zone where Woolf could effectively communicate her vision of a “collaborative reader-writer relationship” (84). While Woolf advocated for the “deprofessionalization of literary interpretation” (89), this argument did not carry in the United Kingdom, where her reputation as a Bloomsbury elite negated her attempted self-fashioning as an autodidact.

Jaillant's book distinguishes itself from other academic studies of reprint series by attending to the American political milieu, particularly feminism. Chapter one, “H.G. Wells, Science and Sex in the Modern Library, 1917–31,” traces the Modern Library's “hesitant feminism” (32). On one hand, Albert Boni and Horace Liveright, the progenitors of the series, positioned the Modern Library at the vanguard of women's suffrage, publishing *The Woman Question* in 1918. This collection publicly marketed the Modern Library's support

of the women's rights movement. On the other hand, the series marginalized women authors, embracing "a modern discourse that associated gentility, moralism, and censorship with femininity" (32). Viewing women as the backbone of the anti-obscenity leagues, the Modern Library feared that having women authors in their series would make their entire canon of works appear puritanical and austere. Accordingly, the series supported the suffrage movement, without actually publishing very many women authors.

Overall, the book aims to show that the term "middlebrow" signifies differently depending on time and place. In attending to the political climate of the United States, Jaillant argues that the clear distinction between high literature and middlebrow culture was not always self-evident. Other than the book's introduction and a brief conclusion, case studies dominate the work, with each chapter focusing on its titular author. Rather than attending to publishers Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer, or Albert Boni and Horace Liveright, this book seeks to analyze the Modern Library through its authors – H.G. Wells, Sherwood Anderson, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Willa Cather, and William Faulkner. The result speaks more to the spectrum of author responses to reprint series than to the genesis of the Modern Library. For example, Sherwood Anderson believed that "reprints could transform his work into classics" (53), but Willa Cather believed that reprints benefitted the publisher, not the author. Instead, she wanted "fewer, [but] better readers" (115), preferring the higher royalties from quality publications, rather than the slower economic benefits afforded by the canonicity cheap reprints could cultivate.

I imagine that this book will be of interest to three scholarly communities: academics working in middlebrow studies; scholars of modernism, who would like to know more about how canonical modernists reacted to reprint series; and scholars interested in the authors on which these case studies focus, who may not choose to read the entire book. The compartmental nature of the case studies makes this possible, but may also frustrate scholars looking for a more detailed history of the genesis of the Modern Library. Still, the extensive archival work on which Jaillant builds these case studies brings the biases of these authors – their aspirations for canonicity or their desire to impress a particular class of reader – to life and succeeds in demonstrating the fluid nature of the term "middlebrow."

KRISTINE SMITKA
University of Alberta