THE RISE AND FALL OF SEVEN ARTS MAGAZINE

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Our favorite divas!
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Editorial Statement

The editors selected 14 letters that are most relevant to our mission statement. In Lowell’s letters, we have corrected spelling errors that were unimportant and very evidently a mistake, e.g. missing a letter in a word. If the editors were unable to decipher what word Lowell meant to write, we left it as it was and footnoted our suggestions. We are not trying to speak for either writer, only offer suggestions. The editors want the focus to be on the people and content in the letters, rather than punctuation or spelling errors.

Mission Statement

The editors have dedicated this presentation to the short, but prolific and rich lifespan of a little magazine that called for pacifism during World War I. The epistolary relationship between poet Amy Lowell and The Seven Arts founder James Oppenheim provides a firsthand account of how the war impacted the literary world and why Oppenheim’s April 1917 magazine issue led to its swift downfall.
June 28, 1914
Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria assassinated. WWI Begins

July 1 - 18 November 1916
Battle of Somme

March 14, 1916
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

July 17, 1916
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

June 15, 1917
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

January 1, 1917
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

June 22, 1917
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

August 11, 1917
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

September 14, 1916
Lowell writes a letter to Oppenheim

April 6, 1917
The United States Declares war on Germany

July 30, 1917
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

September 17, 1917
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

September 18, 1917
Oppenheim writes to Lowell

August 17, 1917
Oppenheim writes to Lowell

September 20, 1917
Lowell writes to Oppenheim

26 June 1917
American troops arrive in France

9 December 1917
American Declaration of War on Austria-Hungary

8 January 1918
President Wilson Announces 14 points program for peace
Oppenheim was born on May 24, 1882, and his family moved to New York City shortly after, where he would remain until his death. He took an interest in writing as a young man and wrote short stories, poetry, articles, and published multiple books. Oppenheim was a Modernist poet and wrote extensively about psychoanalysis later in his life. Through his interest in psychoanalysis and Carl Jung, he met Dr. Beatrice Hinkle. Dr. Hinkle would then introduce him to Annette Rankine, a wealthy widow who would finance Seven Arts.
Rankine was born on March 23, 1881, in Detroit, Michigan. She was married to William Birch Rankine on February 23, 1905, and he was a wildly successful figure in hydroelectric power development and practiced law in New York. Mr. Rankine died quickly after their wedding, leaving her with his immense fortune and prominent status.

Rankine struggled with her mental health throughout her adult years and her behavior became increasingly erratic around the time she financed *Seven Arts*. When Oppenheim staunchly objected to the war, she withdrew funding and committed suicide soon after.
Amy Lowell

Lowell was born in 1874 to a Boston Brahmin family. In her 30s, she decided to become a poet and published her first poem at 36. She is credited with popularizing Imagism in America and is closely associated with poets such as Ezra Pound, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), and Richard Aldington.

Lowell is also known for her biography of John Keats, editing work, and translating. She took a keen interest in Oppenheim and Seven Arts. She often financially contributed to it and kept herself involved with the magazine.
The Seven Arts was founded in 1916 with help from Waldo Frank and Van Wyck Brooks. Its first issue was published in November 1916 and its last issue was published almost one year later in October 1917.

Some reoccurring contributors to the magazine include Randolph Bourne, Amy Lowell, D.H., and more. The short lifespan of the magazine is attributed to Oppenheim’s political commentary and lack of funding.
In this issue of “Seven Arts”, Oppenheim pays full attention to the War, fully expressing his pacifist views on World War 1.

This edition was particularly profound as it solely consisted of Oppenheim’s original writing, passionately providing us with his strong point of view in 9 full pages.

After this edition was released, one of the benefactors of Seven Arts, Annette Rankine took extreme measures in response. Given his intense opposing views and her history of mental health, she took her own life.

On page 9 he notes, “At this moment it so happens we are roused, an emotion of nationality raises us, a realization of ourselves is brought home to our hearts. But we know how swiftly our great moods pass and leave behind them little more than idle words and wishes”.

This edition, and the tragic actions that followed, exemplify how the War greatly impacted the literary world in aspects of business and personal life.
Stop being a pacifist!

Lol no
March 14, 1916 – Lowell tells Oppenheim that she edited and gave feedback on the play he was working on. She agreed to do this for him when they met in New York but she was held up getting “Six French Poets” back into print for Macmillan. Lowell gives more feedback and says she will be in New York for two days and while she doesn’t have time for a planned meeting with Oppenheim, she says he can stop by her hotel if he has more questions.

July 17, 1916 – Lowell tells Oppenheim she dined with Louis Untermeyer and Jean Starr Untermeyer, and they discussed Seven Arts and its message. Lowell confirms she will send Oppenheim a piece of work for the first release of Seven Arts. Lowell shares her excitement for the upcoming magazine as well as Oppenheim being an editor for it.
September 14th, 1916 – Lowell writes Oppenheim thanking him for his critique of her poem, and asks if he could be a bit more articulate in its weaknesses. This letter establishes their respectful relationship and Lowell’s appreciation for Seven Arts. At this point, the war has not yet begun. This letter does not contain much tension or thoughts about the war.

December 15th, 1916 – Lowell expresses how she disagrees with Oppenheim’s critiques and asks to talk further about his thoughts on them. Despite being firm in her opposing opinions, she remains respectful through this letter. She does not necessarily argue with him, but she states her opinions strongly. The war has still not yet begun at this point, so the letters do not contain any worry pertaining to the war.
January 29th, 1917 - Lowell compliments Oppenheim on his poem selections, particularly two by Richard Aldington. She also asks about getting a check sent, but reiterates that the check is only necessary if it’s to his convenience.

June 15, 1917 - Lowell shares a poem Oppenheim requested with him, and while she is happy for it to be in Seven Arts she is content eitherway because it will be part of the larger book she is working on. Lowell shares a poet, Richard Hunt, that she wants Oppenheim to look at for the Seven Arts.

June 22nd, 1917 - Lowell conveys her joy for the approval of her poem, “Guns and Keys” from Oppenheim and Louis Untermeyer. She further explains how she intended to represent Japan, fearful of how it could’ve been perceived.

July 30th, 1917 - Lowell expresses her own position on the war, contradictory to some of the points Oppenheim has made. She does this for 4 entire pages, elaborating on the need for alliance as countries act as individualists and the positions of reactionaries in the context of the war. She supports her arguments with historical evidence (i.e: Napoleon, Roman Empire, etc.)
Overview of Letters, continued: 1917

August 11, 1917, Lowell writes Oppenheim saying that while she respects his pacifist views, she does not align with them. Lowell hoped that a revolution would not ensue and advocates for the removal of King Wilhelm II from the Prussian throne.

September 18, 1917, Oppenheim writes back and says that he intends to stop writing about the war, but isn’t going to make any promises. He offers to return the check.

August 17, 1917, Oppenheim writes back and agrees. He says that their views are not so different.

September 20, 1917, Lowell replies and says she isn’t happy that he won’t promise to stop discussing the war, but remains friendly with him. She believes America’s involvement in WWI is the only way for it to end and asks for a few days to consider if she wants her money back.

September 17, 1917, Lowell tells Oppenheim to “stick to the arts and abandon your policy of criticizing the present war policy of the government,” and contributes $200 to the magazine.

September 29, 1917, he writes back and says that the magazine is closing up, but hopes to start back up again after the war and found another wealthy investor.
CONCLUSION

The editors wanted to highlight how WWI impacted Little Magazines, the dynamics of Oppenheim and Lowell’s friendship, specifically regarding their political views, and how unafraid Oppenheim was to lose funding for publishing his views.

Even though Lowell pressured Oppenheim to omit political discussion, he admirably held to his goals. While it may be easy to overlook The Seven Arts due to its short lifespan, the magazine must be recognized for its courage and the tragedies that were associated with it. The Seven Arts is also a testament to just how free that freedom of the press was and continues to be in the literary world.


