**Contemporary Poetry and Prose**

*Contemporary Poetry and Prose* was an avant-garde magazine edited by Roger Roughton that ran for ten issues between May 1936 and autumn 1937. Despite its abbreviated lifespan, the magazine functioned as one of England’s primary venues for surrealist work. Roughton’s magazine demonstrates many of the tensions between aesthetic innovation and political commitment that underwrite a wide swath of 1930s cultural production. Roughton was an impassioned communist, adhering more strictly to Stalinism than his continental counterparts, most of whom were inclined towards Trotsky. In his essay ‘Surrealism and Communism’, Roughton declared that surrealism ‘can be classed as revolutionary in so far as it can break down irrational bourgeois-taught prejudices.’ For Roughton, the priority given to revolution in both Soviet ideology and surrealism made the two compatible. Yet, his political commitments, particularly his strict adherence to the Communist party line, did not entirely determine the direction of his magazine. In addition to translations of Francophone surrealist writing, *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* frequently published British surrealists David Gascoyne, Humphrey Jennings, Shelia Legge, and Hugh Sykes Davies as well as writers such as Dylan Thomas, e.e. cummings, Isaac Babel, and Wallace Stevens; although the magazine lacked visual art, it featured poems by painters Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí. The second issue, a ‘Double Surrealist Number’, was timed to coincide with the International Surrealist Exhibition in London at the New Burlington Galleries in June 1936.

**References and further reading:**

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Contributor: Thomas S. Davis